# - Declaration of Slave Subordination

Here is the English translation:

I felt the changes stirring within my body as I clenched and unclenched my fist.

[Nam Sujin LV.51]

[Health: (17+18) Strength: (20+11) Agility: (20+11) Wisdom: (10+14-3) Technique: (21+16)]

[Free Points: 0 points]

The moment all three physical stats broke through the wall of 30, a tingling sensation spread through my muscles along with a subtle pleasure.

As I took a breath and flexed slightly, my newly strengthened muscles bulged visibly under my armor.

While stats don't affect muscle size, I could tell their density had increased significantly.

'I'll be able to lift heavy things more easily and move faster now.'

Indeed, I immediately felt the weight of Bunny on my back and the Scale Armor around my body become lighter.

Given that my equipment consisted of a 2m giant axe and full-body armor made of hammered Relic Alloy, the weight was considerable. But from now on, it would be much less burdensome.

That wasn't the only change.

Without delay, I immediately opened my status window.

I'd been through some pretty shitty experiences on this Labyrinth trip too.

If Kkachili had died while facing the Elder Lich, I would have fallen into the Heart Demon.

I was also tricked by the illusions shown by the Jealousy Worshiper.

And I endured all kinds of torture while drugged by Lilith.

So I was worried I might have been cursed or something.

[◆ Blessing of the Victory-Leading Flag] NEW!!

—The flag wielded by the Hero who ended the Great War raised the morale of allies and struck fear into enemies.

—If the target feels 'fear' towards the caster, the effect is doubled.

As if congratulating me for overcoming all those crises and returning alive, the Labyrinth bestowed a new blessing upon me.

—Creates a field within a 200m radius.

—All stats +3 for 'allies' within the field

—All stats -3 for 'enemies' within the field. If conditions are fully met, this applies permanently even after leaving the field.

And it was quite an outrageous blessing at that.

"Holy shit."

A curse involuntarily escaped my lips the moment I confirmed the details of the blessing.

I had no other way to express my amazement at the contents that far exceeded my expectations.

A blessing with wide-area buff and debuff abilities.

And not just some barely noticeable buff, but an insane +3 to all stats. Converted to levels, it could close a gap of nearly 7 levels... No.

Considering the debuff applied to enemies, it could reduce the gap by almost 15 levels.

'Right. The enemies!'

—Creates a field within a 200m radius.

This wasn't just applied to me alone.

A blessing that divides allies and enemies based on my judgment within the field, and applies to all of them...

'Not just humans, but maybe even monsters...'

If this blessing functions as I think it does.

It might be comparable to the highest-tier miracle that Serif was going to bestow upon me, one that would draw upon the church's resources...

No, it might even surpass that in performance.

Twitch. Twitch.

Realizing I had gained a blessing beyond imagination, I felt the fatigue from all the hardships I'd endured completely vanish.

At the same time, my body tingled with the urge to test out this blessing as soon as possible.

For a brief moment I considered going back into the Labyrinth to try it out, but I could test it on the surface too.

In any case, all that suffering had paid off.

"Phew..."

I looked at Diana, who let out a small sigh of relief beside me.

There were no notable changes visible in her status window.

"I'm not sure if I should say this is fortunate, but you didn't receive anything this time."

Perhaps sensing my gaze, Diana smiled softly and waved her hand as if to say not to worry.

Due to the Curse of Lust, even if she gained new blessings they would be applied as lewd curses, so for her, not receiving a blessing was actually a relief.

"More importantly, Balkan has now provided a solution."

I smiled back at her smile.

That's right.

Now we can normalize all the curses that have been tormenting Diana until now.

"Ugh, uuugh—! ——!"

We heard the screams of Lilith, the one responsible for normalizing Diana's condition.

"Eek! W-What's happening all of a sudden?!"

"Set down the backpack for a moment."

Kkachili, who was carrying the backpack, was startled by Lilith's thrashing kicks from inside.

I slightly opened the backpack that Kkachili set down and checked the status window of Lilith, who was trembling after being trained by the Cunt Vibrator for the past week.

[Lilith lv.60]

[◆ Curse of the Cunt-Defeated Succubus] NEW!

— Since ancient times, succubi were a superior race that dominated and toyed with males.

— However, you have been so hopelessly defeated by a male's cock that you have become the first succubus to be subjugated in both body and mind.

— You will feel happiness the more you act for the sake of the male who has become your only master, and deep sadness the more you betray your master's virtue.

— Health -5 Strength -5 Agility -5 Technique +10

Lilith, who had reigned as the master of succubi, became the first succubus to be completely subjugated to me in both body and mind.

The Subjugation Cuntmark engraved on Lilith's lower abdomen, marking the first case of a succubus being defeated by a male, darkened further and turned pink.

The moment I saw that cuntmark, my incubus instincts told me.

Finally, that arrogant succubus had completely submitted to me.

"Ugh—, ugh——"

Lilith seemed to have fully realized this fact as well, letting out sounds from behind her gag that were hard to tell if they were laughs or cries.

It was a bit disappointing that her physical stats decreased while her technique increased, as if to say a cunt-defeated succubus's final destination was to be nothing more than a baby-making onahole.

But it was quite pleasing that the curse eliminated even the slightest possibility of Lilith betraying me.

"Ugh! Uhuugh—!!"

Lilith cried out through her gag, as if saying that was enough now, please remove the Cunt Vibrator.

"How dare you raise your voice before your master?"

"...!! Ugh, ugh— ugh—"

Lilith flinched at my voice and quickly lowered her tone, but it was already too late.

I immediately tied up the backpack again, restraining Lilith's movements, then covered the bread bag over her face as I closed the backpack flap.

"...Won't she die like this?"

Kkachili, who had felt Lilith climaxing from the Cunt Vibrator on her back for the past week, quietly expressed her concern.

"Did you suddenly feel like forgiving her?"

"No. Absolutely not."

Kkachili immediately shook her head with a serious expression.

She had also heard about what Lilith had done to me.

Ellie and Diana found out too, so it would be unfair if only Kkachili didn't know.

"Now that you've captured her like this, Master, we should make the most use of her. But I'm worried she might die too quickly if she keeps climaxing like this..."

"Despite how she looks, she's on par with me in pure strength. She won't die just from repeated climaxes."

Right now she's experiencing repeated uterine climaxes from a Cunt

Vibrator shaped exactly like my cock, but Lilith is a level 60 monster.

Even I couldn't guarantee victory in her domain, the Tentacle Maze.

If Lilith hadn't been defeated by my cock, it would have been truly impossible to subjugate her like this.

After confirming Lilith's changes, I looked around at the other party members.

"Wawawa! This sensation is definitely...!"

"My udders are tingling...!"

The blonde twin-tailed tank Rubia and the cow beastkin swordswoman Jubel had also gained quite nice blessings.

It must have helped that they were at the very front lines during the Elder Lich subjugation, facing death.

"Tch. Am I the only one who didn't get a blessing? And it was my first Labyrinth trip in a while..."

Only the dark elf mage Nuer complained about not receiving a blessing, clicking her tongue.

[Nuer Arencia LV. 48]

But that's not to say her contributions were small.

Her experience and judgment at nearly level 50, along with her excellent magical technique, helped solidify the core of our party even further.

"We can go again next time to get one."

The rewards for completing the Elder Lich subjugation posted by Deputy Union Leader Yonel Freya included not just money, but also a long-term party contract with her.

"Next time, huh... Alright. When are we going on the next Labyrinth trip?"

"For now, let's settle the rewards today... and I was thinking we should watch the situation for a while."

"Situation?"

"The Labyrinth's precursor cycle is coming up in a little over a month."

"Ah."

The precursor phenomenon that brings changes to the Labyrinth.

Unless there was a special reason, there was no need to deliberately enter the Labyrinth during a period when unpredictable changes occur.

Idelbert always said:

Don't become endlessly arrogant just because you've gotten stronger.

You had to humble yourself and always remain modest before the Labyrinth.

Otherwise, you'll die prematurely before achieving your goals.

In addition to my goal of rescuing my little sister, now that I had more precious people I wanted to protect... I didn't want to throw away my life like an old shoe either.

"Then we'll be staying on the surface for a while. Well, with the money from selling breast milk this time, we won't have to worry about starving."

"Checking our blessings and taking time to adapt to our new powers is absolutely necessary for explorers aiming for deeper levels! I'm all for it!" "Then I guess I'll drop by the academy after a long time..."

Fortunately, the party members went along with my opinion.

When you decide not to enter the Labyrinth for a while, there's usually pushback for various reasons including livelihood.

Though they acted strangely at times, they were party members who respected and followed the leader well, which was really good for me.

"Then let's go to the Explorers' Union right away to settle up."

"Hehehe! Sounds good!"

The money-grubbing Jubel nodded vigorously with a sinister laugh.

Though we'd meet occasionally to coordinate as a party before entering the Labyrinth, it was better to settle accounts as quickly as possible.

"Since we've returned to the surface after a long time, I should prepare a delicious meal for tonight."

"Then we'll head home first!"

Diana smiled as she prepared to host a feast, while Ellie waved at me, excited by the fresh air of the surface she hadn't smelled in a long time.

"Okay. I'll come after finishing up here."

I waved back with a smile.

Even though we'd returned to the surface, there was still much to do.

Settling the Elder Lich subjugation reward, long-term party contract with Nuer.

I also needed to get Jirnier to repair the weapons and equipment that got wrecked in the Labyrinth, and most importantly...

"Master. What should we do with her? Take her to the inn?"

"No. Hand me the backpack since I need to form a Familiar Contract. You've worked hard, so go home and rest."

"Yes sir!!"

I had to prepare for the Familiar Contract with Lilith.

"What? So you brought her all this way to form a Familiar Contract? I know someone who's good at mediating contracts."

Just then, Jubel raised her voice after overhearing my conversation with Kkachili.

"...Familiar Contracts require deep magical understanding, but Jubel knows someone like that?"

"Wow. That's a bit hurtful. I may not look it, but I have pretty wide connections, you know?"

"It's amazing your relationships haven't been destroyed with that eccentric behavior..."

As the party members naturally started to brush off Jubel, I asked her:

"Who is this person?"

"Someone you know well too."

"Someone I know well?"

She chuckled and tilted her head along with her udders.

"Just follow this big sis."

The central area of the Explorer District.

The commercial strip lined with weapon shops and other stores catering to explorers.

[Congratulations on opening! May you be buried in money!]

Jubel barged through the door of an herb shop with a large wreath out front.

"Customer incoming!!!"

"Aw shit... Huh?"

The woman who was about to curse upon hearing Jubel's voice tilted her head when she saw me wearing a helmet.

"Balkan?"

The former explorer and retired ex-party member.

The harpy beastkin mage Ramel was looking at me.

Author's Note:

Updated the female move illustration collection and general illustration collection.

# - Declaration of Slave Subordination (2)

The harpy beastman mage Ramel was one of the few trustworthy figures in this Labyrinth City.

With her mid-level explorer skills, she had never committed trolling in the Labyrinth, nor had she revealed her desires out of selfishness.

Above all, even though she could have drained the party's lifeblood, she recognized her own shortcomings and encouraged us to venture deeper, making her a moral person who left the party on her own.

“Familiar Contract?”

“Yes. I was hoping Ramel could help facilitate the contract.”

I could speak my intentions to Ramel without reservation.

The Familiar Contract with Lilith.

The possibility of Lilith, who had even been cursed, refusing my wishes was almost nonexistent, but making her my familiar would bring several advantages.

“If I establish a Familiar Contract, I’ll be able to summon my familiar anytime, anywhere.”

Just like when Lilith's Nightmares appeared or when Idelbert summoned his cat familiar, Shuding.

For example, it would mean I could call Lilith, who is in the Labyrinth, with just a gesture while I’m on the surface.

Also, if Lilith were to suffer a fatal injury during battle, she would automatically be recalled to my side.

I would be able to use a level 60 Nightmare much more strategically.

“There’s no reason not to establish a Familiar Contract.”

Since Lilith had also formed a contract with her Nightmares, she could facilitate the contract, but there was always the chance she might pull some trick during the contract.

In that regard, Ramel was an excellent choice. “Alright. Since it’s your request, of course, I can help.”

Fortunately, Ramel readily agreed to my request.

“Phew. I was actually wondering who to ask for help with this, so thank you.”

“Thank you? If it weren’t for the severance pay you gave me, I wouldn’t have even had enough to open this shop.” Ramel chuckled as she looked around the shop.

I followed her gaze and examined the store.

The interior wasn’t particularly special, but the potions and herbs displayed on sturdy metal shelves caught my eye.

“High-grade potions? You’re selling these at this price?”

There were high-grade and top-grade potions, as well as high-quality herbs that helped with Mana and even Divine power recovery.

The top-grade potion was six gold coins. The set of herbs for Divine power and Mana recovery was four gold coins.

It was an expensive price, but considering it as the cost of an extra life, it was quite reasonable.

Thinking back to when I had overpaid five gold coins for a high-grade potion during the potion hoarding incident, I still felt my head getting hot.

“A friend from my academy days secured a position at the Claysia Trading Company. Thanks to that, I managed to get these… Well, still, the best sellers are those over there.”

As I turned my eyes to where Ramel pointed, I saw items displayed in a regular glass case.

[Mid-level Stamina Enhancement Herb]

—If you brew this for your weak husband, you can enjoy a hot night for two hours!

* No refunds after consumption as there will be no change in size.

[Low-level Erection Enhancement Potion]

—For 30 minutes after consumption, the male organ will not soften!

* No refunds after consumption as there will be no change in size.

[Labyrinth Mountain Pregnancy Confirmation Ovulation Induction Potion]

—This potion starts ovulation immediately after consumption, attracting and pulling in sperm that enters the vagina, guaranteeing 100% pregnancy! \* No refunds after consumption.

These items, with detailed descriptions attached, seemed far more useful in everyday life than the top-grade potions.

“I had about 50 of those prepared for today, but they’re already sold out, and those are all that’s left.”

“That’s incredible sales.”

The items in the display were at most two or three. Considering the sun was still high in the sky, it was truly astonishing speed.

If I were to compare it to a restaurant, it would be like running out of ingredients before lunchtime.

It was nice to see that the business she started after retirement was doing well.

“The Pregnancy Confirmation Ovulation Induction Potion…”

“……!”

“Th-That…”

I felt the subtle gazes of my party members at my mumbling.

Ramel instinctively glanced at my lower half, then quickly cleared her throat, her face turning red.

Perhaps she recalled the sight of my belongings that she had inevitably seen during our Labyrinth explorations.

“Um, um. You might not need it, but most women living in Labyrinth City absolutely need those to have a satisfying night.”

“Tch. I’ll only buy it if I ever need it.”

Jubel, who had crouched down and was staring intently at the Pregnancy Confirmation Ovulation Induction Potion, clicked her tongue.

“Well, it seems like Jubel will never need it in her lifetime.”

“What…!”

At my calm reply, Jubel’s eyes widened in shock.

“To be honest, I agree with Balkan’s opinion…”

“So do I.”

“Ugh…!”

Caught in the wave of ridicule from Rubia and Nuer, Jubel reached for the potion and headed toward the register where Ramel was.

“Alright. With this, I’ll lose my virginity in three years… no, three years is too short… in a year, no, even a year is too short… I’ll do it in three years!”

“Jubel, are you finally trying to become a criminal?”

“Damn it. I’ve signed a long-term contract, and I’ll lose the party’s inspection in three years…”

Ever since Jubel had been breastfed by me, I had developed a slight animosity toward her.

Rubia and Nuer’s combined efforts to ridicule Jubel were quite sharp.

“Ugh… Balkan! They’re making fun of me…!”

“Well, why did you do such things? Accept it with a repentant heart since it’s karma.”

“Ugh, you too…!”

Jubel clung to me, shaking her legs, but all I could say was that.

“Pfft…!”

Ramel, watching our party, burst into laughter.

“This party hasn’t changed at all. Just like the old days.”

“If you miss us, come visit the inn and tavern sometimes. I’ll be on the surface for a while. Oh, and please give me seven recovery herb bundles and about two ovulation induction potions.”

While I was on the surface, I planned to check my blessings and focus on training in Mana and Divine power, so Ramel’s herbs would be a great help for my training.

As for the Pregnancy Confirmation Ovulation Induction Potion…

Even if it’s not now, there will be a time when I’ll need it later.

“Ha, cough…! As expected, Balkan. You’re quite generous.”

Ramel flinched at my gesture pointing to the ovulation inducer, but now that she had become a merchant, she smiled as she packed the potions and herbs.

“If you buy this much, I’ll have to repay you, right?”

Ramel added one more top-grade potion and herb bundle, as well as an ovulation induction potion.

It was a service worth nearly ten gold coins.

It was a kindness that didn’t betray the friendship we had as former party members.

Moved by this, I rushed over to Ramel and tightly grabbed her harpy claw.

“Whew……!!!”

“Oh my. So much… thank you.”

“Cough. Cough!! Well, this is nothing.”

Then, with her face flushed and clearing her throat, Ramel moved her harpy wings to sneak another top-grade potion into the wrapping, then glanced at the backpack strapped to my back.

“Is that…?”

“Oh, this is the one I’ll be forming a Familiar Contract with.”

I set the backpack down and showed Ramel the Lilith inside.

“Whoa…!”

The moment Ramel caught a whiff of the slick pool of fluids in the waterproof backpack and the arousing pheromones of the demoness wafting in, she gasped and fell backward.

“Ugh— ughhh—”

The damp bread bag was now half-torn and no longer functional, and the continuous pleasure had left her pupils dazed, indicating that Lilith was barely conscious.

“Is it possible?”

I placed my hand like a support on Lilith’s shoulder and asked, and Ramel, who had been staring blankly at us, opened her mouth.

“The Familiar Contract requires preparation.”

“Preparation?”

“Yes. The target you want to form a Familiar Contract with must fully recognize you as their master…”

At Ramel’s words, I tapped the palm of my hand resting on Lilith’s shoulder.

Flinch!

The trembling Lilith looked up at me blankly.

I moved my hand to loosen the gag in Lilith’s mouth and gently tapped her cheek, calling her name.

“Lilith.”

“Yes, Master…♡”

Her pronunciation had become slurred after being disciplined for over a week.

Having completely become Lilith’s master, surpassing even the title of Balkan, I quietly looked at Ramel.

“Is this enough?”

Ramel nodded blankly.

“As the master of the familiar, you have the duty to control, govern, and care for her. Do you understand?”

“I understand.”

At my answer, Ramel, who was facilitating the Familiar Contract, nodded.

She also spoke to Lilith, who was kneeling at my feet and bowing her head.

“As a familiar, you must serve, respect, and dedicate yourself to your master for life.”

For an ordinary person.

“Whether in joy, sorrow, pain, or hardship… your will does not matter. You cannot defy your master’s absolute commands. You will dedicate your entire life to one master from now on.”

Expressions that might cause even a little hesitation in front of someone truly loved.

Moreover, these words were not just simple expressions; they would become the pillars of Lilith’s life going forward.

She would serve her master unconditionally, even if it meant enduring the most painful tasks, remaining absolutely loyal, and serving her lord as a familiar.

“Even so, will you dedicate everything to your new master?”

“I dedicate all of myself to my new master…♡”

Without a moment’s hesitation, Lilith nodded and kissed my feet in submission.

Wuuuu—

At that moment, I felt a sensation as if my heart and Lilith’s womanhood were connecting.

No, beyond the heart and womanhood… it felt as if our souls were intertwining.

In that instant, Lilith and I clearly recognized each other’s existence.

Lilith’s soul was integrated beneath my soul.

It was the moment I welcomed my first familiar, who would be with me for a lifetime.

# - Catching the B.J. Thief

It was a strange feeling.

The sensation of souls intertwining, Lilith's and mine, spiritually mixing.

It was a feeling difficult to express in words, a sensation beyond human perception.

Male and female, master and slave, and so on.

In that moment, far removed from the relationships humans have established through language, Lilith's very existence intertwined with my soul.

——!!

Aside from me, I faintly sensed the presence of another being that held a stake in Lilith's soul.

The one who had been Lilith's sole master before me.

The one who had directly bestowed a part of their womb upon Lilith.

The demon of lust.

Suuuu—!

The remnants of the demon of lust still lingering in Lilith's womb spilled forth wicked magical energy.

‘...What is this?’

I tilted my head as I felt that magical energy.

The response of the presence was surprisingly faint.

The quality of the magical energy itself was quite high.

It was as chilling as the demon worshiper of wrath, Goth, whom I had once clashed with... no, even more so.

However, I felt no particular hostility or murderous intent emanating from the magical energy.

‘Is it unable to move as it wishes due to being sealed?’

That seemed highly likely.

If not, there was no way a subordinate who had given up a part of their precious womb would remain silent while declaring lifelong slavery to a complete stranger.

As I gradually embraced the soul of Lilith, which was becoming subordinate to me, I shouted toward the magical energy of the demon of lust.

“Sorry about that. I'll make good use of your subordinate from now on.”

In truth, I wasn't really sorry.

Wasn't it the demon who cursed and tormented Diana?

There was no reason to like it, and plenty of reasons to hate it.

Even my words about swallowing the subordinate that had merged with a third of your womb elicited no special reaction from the sealed demon of lust.

It merely trembled and spilled forth lewd and lascivious magical energy.

Eventually, the strange sensation of our souls connecting faded, and when I opened my eyes.

Smooch…♡

Lilith was planting kisses on my feet.

“Lilith.”

“Smooch, smooch. Smooch…♡ Ah, hehe, Master…”

As she mindlessly kissed my feet, she finally regained her senses and looked up at me, and I roughly patted her head.

“Ugh… Hehe…”

As I roughly patted her head and even her face, Lilith's eyes were pricked, but she accepted my touch with a smile on her face.

Indeed, the results of the vaginal training using a dildo modeled after my own penis were remarkable.

Even in a desperate situation, Lilith, who had been trying to find a way to survive, had become so corrupted by pleasure that she ended up forming a Familiar Contract that she would have to dedicate her life to.

“Hand.”

As I extended my right hand and said that.

“Yes!”

Lilith, panting, placed her right hand on top of mine.

“Other side.”

“Yes…!”

The same went for the left.

“Good. Good. Well done.”

“Hehe… Did I do well…?”

“Yep, yep. Good girl.”

As I roughly patted the head of the now obedient Lilith, she squatted on the floor and playfully rubbed her soft cheeks against my thigh.

“…What, is the Nightmare like a puppy…”

As I was testing how much Lilith would follow my words, Ramel, who had stayed behind to mediate the Familiar Contract while the party members were outside, watched the scene with a dazed expression, rubbing his thighs.

Well, this level of achievement wasn't too bad.

‘At least now I won't have to worry about being backstabbed by Lilith.’

If I had managed to subdue her mind and form a Familiar Contract only to be backstabbed, that would be a betrayal close to fate, and I would have no choice but to accept it humbly.

“Thank you for helping with the contract mediation, Ramel. It was urgent, and thanks to you, we finished quickly.”

“Uh, uh. Yeah.”

Ramel, who grabbed my outstretched hand in a daze, nodded.

“I'll stop by whenever I have work. You sell such good potions and herbs.”

“If you do that, I’ll be grateful. If you come often, it’s rewarding to procure good items. These days, the streets are a bit chaotic, so it wouldn’t hurt to carry extra potions.”

“Well, the Labyrinth City is always like that.”

As I casually smiled and shrugged my shoulders, Ramel shook his head.

“Still, it’s a bit serious these days. Last week, even the Union Leader was attacked.”

“Excuse me?”

My thoughts momentarily halted at the unexpected words. What did I just hear?

“The Explorer Union Leader… my mentor was attacked?”

“Oh, not the Union Leader. The Deputy Union Leader… Wait, you didn’t know?”

A small sense of relief washed over me at the fact that Idelbert hadn’t been attacked.

In response to Ramel's question, I could only nod blankly.

After all, we had just arrived on the surface a few hours ago.

“Ah. Well, we did look like we had just returned from the Labyrinth… I should let the others know.”

“Last week was when we had just set out from Eden, so what happened in between?”

“Well, I don’t know the details since I’ve been retired… I picked up bits of conversation from guests who come by, but I heard that there was an ambush while he was sleeping at the mansion? The culprit hasn’t been caught yet.”

“Wow…”

Hearing that the Deputy Union Leader had been attacked by an unidentified assailant brought an unnecessary sense of unease.

‘Is there really such a crazy bastard out there?’

It meant that someone insane enough to ambush a power figure of that level was active in this Labyrinth City.

But the worse point was…

‘I have to report the Elder Lich subjugation reward to the Deputy Union Leader…’

Not to mention, I had also left the safe that I had taken from Bio, the leader of the territorial clan in the back alleys and a servant of the Sloth worshiper, with the Deputy Union Leader.

The Deputy Union Leader had boasted that he would unlock it, but I was curious if there had been any progress.

‘Speaking of which, Lilith mentioned that the Sloth worshiper headed to the surface…’

Could it be that they ambushed the Deputy Union Leader to retrieve that?

I shook my head at the overwhelming thoughts.

I still couldn’t be sure of anything, so I needed to check on the Deputy Union Leader’s status first.

“Is he conscious?”

“Yeah. I heard he even went to work at the Union not long ago.”

Fortunately, it seemed he wasn’t seriously injured.

Well, after all, the Deputy Union Leader, Yonel Freya, was a person with the peculiar power of the Blessing of the Protected Species.

It would be very difficult to kill that girl, who attracted all sorts of gentle small animals and whose hostility diminished the closer one got.

“Thank you for the good information.”

“Don’t mention it. Buy a lot next time.”

“Heh. Just make sure to have plenty prepared.”

Waving goodbye to Ramel as he handed me the packaged items, I pulled on Lilith’s leash, who had completed the Familiar Contract, and left the store.

And as soon as I stepped outside, party members with anxious expressions, like puppies waiting for their owner, approached me.

“Hey, hey, hey. Balkan. We just overheard some serious talk from the explorers passing by…”

“They said the Deputy Union Leader was attacked.”

“Oh, how did you know? Did you hear it from Ramel too?”

As Jubel stepped forward as the representative and tilted her head, I nodded while looking at them.

“Let’s head to the Union first.”

In the center of the Explorer District.

The building of the Explorer Union, standing taller than other structures, was enveloped in a strange silence unlike usual.

Although the atmosphere of the Explorer Union had changed to a somewhat calmer one with the Deputy Union Leader managing the surface branch instead of Idelbert, it was now even more pronounced.

The reason could be guessed from the entrance of the Explorer Union.

Clank!!

“Identification first.”

An explorer from the Union, fully armed and on guard, stopped us as we tried to enter the building.

Glancing.

I felt a gaze trying to pierce through the visor.

The guard explorer seemed to recognize me to some extent.

After all, for an explorer on the surface, it would be harder not to know me, Idelbert's disciple.

The fact that I was being blocked like this was proof that the security was more stringent than I had imagined.

“…Since when has the security of the Explorer Union been this strict?”

“Recently. It seems you just returned from the Labyrinth?”

“I was in the Labyrinth for quite a while.”

“I hope you understand. There’s the matter of the Deputy Union Leader’s attack… and right now, a rather high-ranking individual is here.”

“A high-ranking individual?”

“Sorry, but I can’t disclose that.”

The guard explorer slightly bowed his head.

Feeling their polite demeanor, I realized once again that I had grown stronger.

‘Before this trip to the Labyrinth, there had been subtle signs of disdain.’

Perhaps it was because the atmosphere and energy I exuded had changed?

A bead of cold sweat trickled down the foreheads of the observing explorers.

Tap, tap.

I gently patted the shoulder of the guard and handed over my Intermediate Explorer badge.

“Alright. Good work.”

“…! Thank you. Intermediate Explorer Balkan, Nuer. And the other party members. Confirmed.”

As I offered words of encouragement without engaging in any special power struggle, the startled female guard explorer smiled slightly.

“…Did you see that just now? They’re worried about me? Ha. What should I do? I might be a little popular?”

“You’ve gone crazy. Haven’t you been to the tavern where that guy works? As long as you don’t act like a randy beast, they treat customers really kindly.”

“…You mean someone with that kind of energy works at a tavern? Goodness… Is there a secret menu there?”

Leaving behind the excited chatter of the guard explorers, I entered the Explorer Union, and the lobby, which felt slightly less crowded, came into view.

“I’m here to see the Deputy Union Leader.”

“Ah. The Deputy Union Leader is currently unavailable…!”

Since there was no long line that usually stretched out, I went straight to the counter staff, but the flustered employee made an X sign with their arms.

“What do you mean unavailable? Has she arrived?”

“Y-Yes, she has, but… it’s not possible right now!”

I tilted my head at the employee, who was desperately shaking their head.

From the atmosphere, it seemed the Deputy Union Leader was indeed present.

“Are you saying it’s not possible even though I’m here?”

“Eek! Y-Yonel?!”

As Nuer peeked her head out from behind me and glared at the counter staff, the employee shook their head vigorously.

“W-Well, it’s still not possible! I’m sorry! There was an order not to let anyone else in today…! Kyaah?!”

Chirp, chirp!!

A yellow chick landed on the head of the counter staff, who was shaking their head.

A small animal used by Yonel Freya to keep watch.

Chirp, chirp!

As the chick pecked at the counter staff's head, the employee tilted their head as if to ask if this was real.

“Ah, d-does that mean I can let them in…? Just Mr. Balkan…?”

Chirp, chirp!

As if to say, “Can’t you understand that?” the chick continued to peck at the employee's head, and I felt a strong sense of unease.

“…Why just me?”

Today, why did the Deputy Union Leader, who had ordered that no one be let in, revoke that order just for me?

That question was answered as soon as I stood in front of the Deputy Union Leader’s office.

‘…Is that what it meant by a high-ranking individual?’

Bowing slightly.

The members of the royal knight order, clad in armor, standing in front of the Deputy Union Leader’s office, gave me a small nod.

Creeeak.

As they opened the door, the scenery inside the Deputy Union Leader’s office came into view along with…

Two plump girls sipping tea.

The person sitting in the guest seat was none other than Deputy Union Leader Yonel Freya.

With bandages wrapped around her head, she waved at me.

“Oh, you’ve come, Balkan. Let me introduce you. This is…”

“No need to be so formal.” A calm yet haughty voice.

“I know her… quite well.”

Drawn in by that voice, I looked again at the girl seated in the main seat.

“O-O-Oh, long… time… hick…!”

She had tried to speak casually but ended up biting her tongue, and tears welled up in her nature-infused green eyes.

The blonde girl, who had ruined her plan to greet me naturally, turned her flushed face away and waved her hand at me.

“O-Oh, it’s been a while… B-Balkan…”

In response to that gesture, I deeply bowed and lowered my head.

“It’s been a while indeed, Your Highness.”

The knight who saved me and the second princess I saved.

Celsia smiled softly.

# - Catching the B.J. Thief (2)

Sluuurp.

Celsia poured me a bright yellow liquid.

"Woah, it's tea brewed with Moonlight Flowers. Sip it slowly and savor the aroma."

"Thank you, Princess."

"...So, how is it?"

"...I haven't even tasted it yet."

"Ah, right..."

I detached the lower part of my helmet to drink the tea, and inhaled the aroma of the tea Celsia had poured.

I didn't know what Moonlight Flowers were, but the fragrance was so luxurious that I couldn't believe it was just brewed from a few petals.

As I took a sip of the tea, which smelled like refined lavender, my body and mind relaxed.

The comfort of the warm tea and soft fragrance calmed my mind, which had been confused by Serif's sudden appearance.

"It's good, this..."

"Right?! Hehe. I'm glad it suits your taste." Celsia smiled slightly after confirming my reaction.

I took a sip of tea and glanced at her.

'Has she adapted to the Blessing's stigma?'

After collecting the [Blessing of the Weak and Useless Magician], Celsia had struggled to adapt to her constantly changing body.

But seeing her wearing clothes that suited her current form, it seemed she had succeeded in adapting.

'Besides, she even came outside...'

After her body shrunk due to the Blessing of the Weak and Useless Magician, I heard that Celsia had been living the life of a shut-in, confined to her room.

She could remotely control her armor, but that was it.

She looked visibly uncomfortable even at the last birthday party...

Seeing Celsia's calm demeanor in front of the Deputy Union Leader, it seemed her social skills had returned quite a bit.

Sluurp. Sluurp.

...Although she occasionally glanced at me, her face slightly flushed, and then quickly turned her head away.

"Hoo...?"

The Deputy Union Leader, who had been watching the scene with interest, put down her teacup and said to me.

"I heard the story from the Union Leader who arrived earlier, but how was this Labyrinth trip? Balkan."

"The Elder Lich subjugation was successfully completed, and we succeeded in subjugating the Jealousy Worshiper Karellos. Here is the proof."

Thud.

The eyes of the two petite women turned to the object placed on the table.

The Soulstone that appeared after beheading the Jealousy Worshiper Karellos.

The Deputy Union Leader nodded after confirming the Soulstone filled with ominous Magical Energy.

"This filthy and sticky Magical Energy... Yes. It's definitely the Jealousy Worshiper's Magical Energy. I heard that those who were brainwashed by the Jealousy Worshiper are also receiving treatment."

"The temple is working hard. There are a few remnants left, but one of them is imprisoned in the temple's dungeon."

"Good work. I don't know if there's any more information to be gleaned... but I'll have to check. Oh, and."

Snap!

The Deputy Union Leader snapped her fingers, and a yellow chick waddled over and placed a thick money pouch, a wooden box, and a piece of paper on my lap.

30 gold coins. A necklace-type Stamina Enhancement Artifact. And.

"This is the reward for subjugating the Elder Lich and the Contract document with Nuer. Nuer's seal is already stamped on it, so feel free to use her until you get tired of her. And the reward for capturing the Jealousy Worshiper—"

"Our royal family will handle that, not the Explorer Union."

Celsia's lips were slightly upturned as she said that.

"The Queen praised you personally."

"...The Queen, me?"

"Yes. You caught a demon worshiper after decades, and you took the initiative to eliminate one of the kingdom's greatest dangers, so there should be a reward commensurate with that achievement... The reason I came to the Explorer District was to convey the Queen's words."

I was wondering why Celsia had come to the Explorer District, but I never dreamed it was to give a reward for eliminating a demon worshiper.

Celsia smiled slightly at my reaction and reached into the air.

Whoosh.

After rummaging through the subspace for a moment, she held a scroll with the royal seal.

That scroll must be the scroll containing the Queen's words and rewards.

Swish.

Celsia stood up smoothly from the sofa and unfolded the scroll with a serious expression.

I immediately got up from the sofa as well.

The person in front of me was Celsia, but not Celsia.

The monarch of the kingdom to which Labyrinth City belonged, a being who represented the Queen.

There was no one in this city with higher authority than her, and I, a mere Intermediate Explorer, had to kneel before that lofty being.

As I knelt in front of the petite Celsia, I could see her meager chest and slightly hollowed-out cute belly button.

"Intermediate Explorer Balkan."

I immediately lowered my head so that my trembling eyes would not be noticed, and listened to Celsia's voice.

"Yes."

"In your capacity as an Intermediate Explorer, you have succeeded in eradicating the forces of one of the seven demons who brought the kingdom to ruin."

The image of the old woman I had seen before overlapped with Celsia's face as she recited the Queen's message in a solemn voice.

What would that Queen, who had seriously considered my reaction when she asked me to marry her daughter as soon as we met, prepare this time?

"To dream of the resurrection of the demons sealed by the previous Hero, and to destroy the faction of those who seek to plunge the world into chaos once again... is truly like a great mark left on the world by a new Hero."

From Celsia's lips, who took a short breath, came words I had never expected.

"I bestow upon you the fourth rank of the Five Orders of Nobility, Viscount, along with the surname of the previous Hero, Auster."

Nobility.

In this world divided by status, it was the most certain hierarchy and class.

No matter how scarce Intermediate Explorer-level personnel were, they were not as valuable as nobles with their own achievements and titles.

Nobles were a select few born with chosen bloodlines.

At this moment, I, who had received the title of Viscount and the surname Auster.

I had become a noble with a surname and title that I could pass on to my children.

Houses, Artifacts, Relics.

These were valuable assets and items that everyone wanted, but they could be bought with money, and they were just items.

But status was different.

Status was not clearly visible, but it was simply ingrained in people's hearts and minds.

Why else would there be the saying, "Even if they're fallen, they're still nobles"?

Even if a wealthy nouveau riche and a fallen noble were in the same space, people would line up next to the noble.

There was nothing bad about having a lot of money, but once wealth reached a certain level, its value gradually faded.

But a noble bloodline alone revealed a significant difference from others, and its value shone even more brilliantly as it went higher.

Money, fame, power.

By the standards of ordinary people, two of the three elements that symbolized success could be solved simply by obtaining a title.

'Of course, there's a significant difference even among nobles...'

The fact that they could be lumped together and called 'nobles' was a huge merit in itself.

'If someone threatens me, it would really be risking their own life to threaten me, and if they try to kill me, they'll be executed for murdering a noble.'

Just imagining such things made my heart flutter.

If the rumor that I had obtained a noble title spread.

In Labyrinth City, as well as inside the Labyrinth, those who dared to talk trash to me, pick a fight, or try to plunder me would all be extinct.

I wouldn't bother picking on vulgar words like "I want to get pegged" or "I want to dive in and kiss your dick," but if they had any sense, they would take care of themselves.

"Are you happy? Balkan... No, should I call you Lord Auster now?"

It was none other than Deputy Union Leader Yonel Freya who woke me up from my happy reverie.

Celsia, who had recited the Queen's message, seemed to want to talk to me more, but she checked her wristwatch and left the Deputy Union Leader's office.

Perhaps she managed the cycle of her body changing by time.

She whispered as she left that she would be in the Explorer District for the time being, and I could only hope to see her again.

"Haha... Just call me as usual."

"Hmph. I see. It's been a while since I've seen someone receive a surname and title directly from the Queen. Was it... the first time since Diana stopped the resurrection of the Demon of Lust?"

"Diana received a noble title?"

I asked blankly at the news I was hearing for the first time.

Could it be that Diana was a noble?

"No. I don't remember her receiving one. Instead, she was told to draw attention so that she wouldn't be dragged around for troublesome matters after her retirement. In front of all the other nobles and ministers." "..."

"Well, Diana was young back then."

I stared blankly at the Deputy Union Leader, whose appearance was that of a petite child, but whose voice sounded as if she was reminiscing about a distant past.

The more I heard about Diana's past, the more surprised I was by her vigor and toughness.

I think I know why Diana has so much lust.

She lived like a flame, so all of the ripened and matured woman's vigor was focused on lewdness.

"It would have been difficult to refuse the Queen's gift in a public setting..."

"So she ended up receiving the surname Ordia. Come to think of it, you received a better surname."

"...Is this surname good?"

Auster.

Balkan Auster.

I don't feel anything special.

"The previous Hero who ended the Great War... Isn't that the surname that Mother Earth used before she ascended? The previous King personally bestowed a new surname after seeing her raise the flag of victory with the south wind. The church will be horrified when they hear this news."

At the Deputy Union Leader's words, who was suppressing her laughter, I blankly opened my status window.

[Nam Sujin lv.51]

[◆ Blessing of the Victory-Leading Flag]

—The flag wielded by the Hero who ended the Great War raised the morale of allies and struck fear into the hearts of enemies.

What caught my eye was the Blessing I had newly acquired.

A Blessing with the Hero's description, the newly bestowed Hero's surname.

Moreover, rumors had begun to spread in the Eden branch of the church that I was the Saint of Mother Earth, the being to which the Hero had ascended.

"...Tsk..."

My mouth felt dry for no reason.

Even I thought the situation was incredibly coincidental.

Would the church dismiss this situation as a coincidence?

'Or would they overreact and revere me as the Saint of Mother Earth?'

I would be relieved if it was the former, but the latter would make the situation a bit complicated.

'If I'm not careful, they might try to restrict all sorts of sexual acts, saying, "A Saint wouldn't do this!"...'

The church I had seen so far might really do that, so I was deeply troubled when.

"—kan. Balkan?"

"Ah, uh, what."

"...I don't mind if you speak informally, but are you trying to treat me disrespectfully as soon as you become a noble? That's a bit..." "Ah, no. I was a little dazed for a moment... What's wrong?"

I waved my hand at the Deputy Union Leader's words and asked back, and she made an awkward expression and lowered her head.

"As the Deputy Union Leader of the Explorer Union, it's embarrassing to say this... but I couldn't keep my promise to you."

I had guessed this from the rumors that the Deputy Union Leader had been attacked and the bandages wrapped around her head, and now those words flowed from her mouth.

"The Demon of Sloth's worshiper stole the vault you entrusted to me... or rather, the orb inside it."

# - Reorganization

The Deputy Union Leader told me about what had happened on the surface a few weeks ago.

"We succeeded in unlocking the vault you entrusted to us."

Yonel Freya was referring to the vault I had left with her.

They had succeeded in unlocking the vault that I had seized from Bio, the head of a turf clan in the back alleys and a minion of the Sloth Worshiper.

The item inside the vault was none other than the Sloth Worshiper's Orb.

Even someone who had never been exposed to Magical Energy would gain the enlightenment to use it the moment they held it.

And for those who already wielded Magical Energy, it was a precious artifact that allowed them to wield even more powerful Magical Energy.

'It was because of that that it was more dangerous when I caught the Jealousy Worshiper.'

Like the state of Divine Sword Unification, the Jealousy Worshiper, who had directly embedded the orb into his body, became one with the artifact and unleashed even more powerful mental attacks.

"Since it was a dangerous object, we were going to coordinate opinions on destroying the orb when you returned."

Since such an item was in the vault, Yonel Freya, as the Deputy Union Leader of the Explorers, had no choice but to make a decision.

She vowed to destroy the orb as soon as possible, and…

"And that night, the Sloth Worshiper launched a sudden attack."

Before they could even prepare, the Sloth Demon Worshiper, along with Chimera beasts, raided the mansion.

"We fought back as best we could… but we couldn't stop the injured one from escaping with the orb."

The Deputy Union Leader, with her innocent appearance, let out a sigh filled with self-reproach.

"I'm sorry. As Deputy Union Leader, I can't hold my head up, having failed to protect an item entrusted to us by a member of the Union."

I looked at Yonel Freya, who was deeply bowing her head in apology.

"Peep, peep…"

The yellow chick on her head also bowed to me, chirping.

"...You don't have to bow so deeply. How could you have known about the Demon Worshiper's attack?"

I smiled faintly and waved my hand at the Deputy Union Leader, who was showing deep remorse.

Before considering noble status.

As a mid-level explorer in the explorer industry, I was lower in rank than her, who had risen to the position of Deputy Union Leader.

But she was offering me a sincere apology.

'This is an opportunity.'

An opportunity to gain someone's trust.

She already had a good impression of me as an explorer.

At Celsia's birthday party, she promised to give me 'unsparing support,' and the reward I actually received for subjugating the Elder Lich was considerable.

There is no one more precious than a superior who is willing to offer a sincere apology to a subordinate and generously reinvests in them when they make great achievements.

When such a person humbles themselves and apologizes for their mistakes.

Which would be more impressive: to spew out curses, demanding compensation for the apology, or to generously understand that everyone makes mistakes?

"..."

Looking at the Deputy Union Leader, who blankly raised her head, her mouth slightly open in admiration… the answer was obvious.

"The Union Leader really has a good disciple… I will definitely repay this mistake soon."

I nodded, seeing the trust in me deepen in her eyes.

"Yes. More importantly… what happened to the Sloth Worshiper who escaped?"

"For now, Idelbert's familiar, Shuding, and three shadows are chasing the Sloth Worshiper who fled into the Labyrinth."

"Not your master, but your master's familiar?"

"The Union Leader is currently in the Outlaw Zone."

Come to think of it, I had also heard from the Beastfolk Priest Jellish in Eden that the situation in the Outlaw Zone had been unusual recently.

It seemed that Idelbert had personally stepped in to resolve the matter.

'Then I don't have to worry too much.'

No matter what anyone says, Idelbert is my master.

I can't even imagine her getting hurt or losing.

'...No, can I win?'

Maybe on the bed, but I have never won against her in combat.

I had barely managed to draw a few times.

'But now, wouldn't I be able to win one or two times out of ten?'

It had been quite a while since I last trained with her.

Once the repairs are done, it would be good to have a serious training session with her for the first time in a while.

"Anyway, we'll launch a counterattack as soon as we get information on their movements."

While I was continuing my random thoughts, the Deputy Union Leader subtly watched my reaction.

Reading the intention of her gaze, I smiled faintly.

"I'll help if there's anything I can do."

"I'm grateful that you said that. I'll make sure the reward is more than satisfactory."

In any case, I had to kill the Sloth Worshiper.

'Because I have to fulfill the Contract with the Sloth Demon sealed on the 15th floor.'

If I kill the Sloth Worshiper and complete the Contract, I can receive a portion of the demon's power.

After deciding to receive follow-up information about the Sloth Worshiper, I finished various reports and left the Deputy Union Leader's office.

Explorer Union Lobby.

"Keuk, hek, keuheek…"

Jubel, gasping for breath, trembled all over as she looked at the items placed on the table.

Each drop carefully squeezed out with the mindset of an artisan.

The gold coins, which far exceeded the profits of Firm Milk, which was sold while being chased by consumers who had been hit in the back of the head, were distributed as her share.

The amount, which was the settlement of the reward received for defeating the Elder Lich and the harvest obtained from this Labyrinth trip, greatly shook the reason of the money-crazed explorer.

Shiver, shiver, shiver…

Jubel held the gold coin pouch with trembling hands, gauging its weight.

"Heok, heok, heoeok…! Heok…! Hek, heeek…! Hueeek…!"

She panted like a beast, then stared blankly at me, stood up abruptly, and rushed towards me.

"I love you! Balkan! Ububuk—!"

I grabbed her lips with my index finger and thumb, as she naturally hugged me and tried to plant a kiss.

Jubel, whose soft lips were grabbed as if grabbing a duck's beak, struggled in embarrassment.

"Don't act up, Jubel."

"Uu, uuuu?!"

"Don't rub your breasts against my armor while pretending to apologize. Breast milk is hard to remove from black armor."

I calmed Jubel, who had lost her mind and was trying to hug the leader's body, who had brought her a huge profit, and shake her waist.

"Crazy bitch… how can she do that to a guy who just became a noble…"

"She's out of her mind… but maybe that's why she's not easily swayed by the malice in the Labyrinth…!"

Even after telling them that I had received a baronet title and a surname, the party members' reactions didn't change much.

'It would have been troublesome if the atmosphere suddenly became awkward, as if they were dealing with a high-ranking person…'

It was a little disappointing that there seemed to be no difference at all.

Rubia was also a noble, the granddaughter of Professor Mango Steele, so except for the fact that the queen had personally bestowed the surname, she didn't seem very surprised.

Nuer had seen many people as a member of the Explorer Union, so she didn't seem very impressed by nobles.

Jubel was just…

"Ubu! Ubububu!"

She was just Jubel.

But the reactions of other explorers who overheard our conversation were different.

"Crazy. A commoner explorer received a noble title…?"

"That's the first time that's happened in almost ten years…"

"Oh, no…! Does that mean I can't compliment the tavern staff by their surname anymore…?"

"Looking at that cow Beastfolk over there, it doesn't seem like that's the case…"

"Idiot. That's a party member. Are strangers and party members the same?"

"...Aren't they usually the same? How many parties are like that?"

Seeing the gazes of the explorers, who were gossiping in astonishment without even having time to feel jealous, I thought that this rumor would spread in an instant.

Explorers are, on average, very loose-lipped.

Without even waiting until tomorrow, I thought that the rumor that I had obtained a noble title would spread throughout the Explorer District by tonight.

And, as expected.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't our noble lord?"

The destination I arrived at after finishing the reward settlement with the party members.

The Weaponry Street in the Explorer District.

In the underground smithy of the most prestigious Weaponry shop on that street, a blonde half-dwarf greeted me with a bottle of alcohol in her hand.

"...If the First Princess calls a mere baronet 'noble lord,' how should I react?"

At my reply, Jirnier tilted the bottle and chuckled.

"Who cares? How much do you think I care about that in business?"

"Usually, people care a lot."

"Shut up. Take off your armor. You've wrecked it again."

This Labyrinth trip had been long, so Jirnier's armor had suffered a lot.

"What is this white stain…? I've never seen it before. Was there a Monster that left this kind of mark?"

"..."

"And there are one, two, four holes… oh? What is this crude patching?"

"A hole was pierced in a vital spot, so I had an emergency repair done by a blacksmith I found in Eden—"

"You've branded my newborn baby with a hot iron? Haa…"

Pierced by poisonous tentacles, cracked in places after being hit against walls and hammers.

Jirnier shook her head at the sight of the armor, which was comprehensively tattered.

"Can it be repaired?"

"It's so severe that it can't be restored even with self-repair magic, so it'll take some time, but…"

Jirnier, who had been dragging out her words, raised the corners of her lips.

"It's not like I can't repair it."

Indeed, it was the confidence of a blacksmith who was one of the best in Labyrinth City.

"Ah, Jirnier. Just a moment."

"Hmm?"

I stopped Jirnier, who was about to turn on the furnace and repair the armor, and asked her a question.

"Do you happen to know how to make rings? Something pretty…"

"Huh…?"

Glance.

As soon as she heard my question, Jirnier's gaze turned to the ring finger on my left hand.

After being frozen like that for a while, she…

"N-No way. You…?"

She looked at me with an expression that showed she was completely sober.

# - Reorganization (2)

“No. Please pretend you didn’t hear that.”

I swallowed the words I had just uttered.

Jirnier is the undisputed best blacksmith in Labyrinth City.

She hates making tools for archers and Magic Users.

And she really dislikes effeminate Weaponry like rapiers…

She’s the type of blacksmith who goes crazy for rough, tough, and wild Weaponry.

Asking her to do delicate work like a ring might be too much to ask.

“Ah, no! Why?!”

Contrary to my expectations, Jirnier strongly protested my withdrawal.

“I’ll make it for you! Your ring!”

“Well. But I thought you didn’t like this kind of thing, Jirnier…”

“No! I like it!”

Jirnier shouted, staring at me for a moment.

Whether it was an impulse due to the alcohol or some other feeling she harbored in her heart.

The half-dwarf’s cheeks were flushed red.

“…Engraving! I like engraving! Didn’t you see the axe design I made for you?! How much effort I put into that!”

“Well… certainly…”

Sensing the strange atmosphere, Jirnier hurriedly added.

I had no choice but to nod at her words.

There was a slight difference between ring engraving and Weaponry patterns, but they ultimately met in the broad category of engraving.

It would be best to entrust the work to Jirnier, who was skilled in anything she made.

If she strongly demanded it like this, it was a good thing for me, the one commissioning the work.

[I just hope she’s not good at making babies.]

“That’s rude, Bunny.”

While I was scolding Bunny, who had been quiet for a while before blurting out another shocking thing, Jirnier stared blankly at me and Bunny.

“You can communicate with it smoothly now? Seems like you’ve gotten closer?”

“Ah, yes. Somehow.”

“Hoo…”

Jirnier’s attention, which had been focused on the ring, shifted back to Bunny.

Her eyes were still full of interest.

“A Weaponry made from the byproducts of a demon has a consciousness.

That bitch holed up in the Outlaw Zone, too. Demons are really amazing.”

“…That bitch holed up in the Outlaw Zone, you say?”

When I quietly repeated the words Jirnier had casually muttered, she covered her mouth with a look of realization.

“Pretend you didn’t hear that. I shouldn’t have said that just now.”

“Could that bitch holed up in the Outlaw Zone be Puppeteer… the Demon of Greed?”

“…Huh?”

At my question, Jirnier looked back at me with a dumbfounded expression.

“Wait. How do you know that, Balkan?” That was what I wanted to ask.

How did Jirnier know about Puppeteer…

As I was thinking that, I realized her identity again.

The First Princess of the kingdom.

A blacksmith who had reached The Depths.

Even though she had left the royal castle to pursue her dreams, she would naturally be aware of the general situation.

‘Then… could I ask for help?’

A way to remove the Puppet Curse from Kkachili.

I might be able to get a hint from the mouth of a royal family member who held various pieces of information.

“Well, the truth is…”

In the most gloomy and powerless voice possible, I told Jirnier about the conversation I had with Puppeteer, who had possessed Kkachili.

Puppeteer, who was trying to make Kkachili into a puppet and take her into her own hands.

Her obsession with the ‘Unfulfilled Wish,’ and so on.

Recalling that time again, the anger towards the plunderer who insisted that my personal slave was hers slowly boiled up from the depths of my heart.

And when the story ended, Jirnier’s expression was…

“This is troublesome…”

It was literally filled with bewilderment.

“Your slave caught Puppeteer’s eye?”

“Yes. She seemed to want her quite a bit. She even tried to bind her with a Contract.”

“……”

Jirnier rested her chin on her hand in front of the blazing furnace, pondered, and then opened her mouth.

“You know the Outlaw Zone has been very noisy lately, right?”

“Yes.”

The Beastfolk Priest Jellish and Deputy Union Leader Yonel Freya had both mentioned it.

I heard that the scale of the commotion was quite large, with several members of the Royal Knights and guards, and even Idelbert, going there.

“Recently, Puppeteer released some of the low- and mid-level outlaws who were afflicted with the Puppet Curse.”

“…That Puppeteer, with her own hands?”

“Yeah.”

I could understand two things from Jirnier’s words.

First, Puppeteer could undo the Puppet Curse with her own hands.

Second, she had released all the low- and mid-level outlaws.

‘Strange.’

This didn’t make sense.

Most of those afflicted with the Puppet Curse didn’t even know they were cursed.

They didn’t have a status window like me, nor did they check for blessings one by one, so how would others notice a curse that they themselves didn’t know about?

‘Then, that means there’s a noticeable characteristic that even those who can’t see the curse can recognize.’

I knew of a similar case.

Nuer, the unfortunate dark elf magician who resisted the Puppet Curse and eventually became a Ttu-ttai.

“Don’t tell me. ‘Release’ doesn’t mean release in the sense of gaining freedom, but…”

“…They’ve all become idiots.”

Damn it.

I held my head at Jirnier’s agreement.

There were tens of thousands of people with the Puppet Curse.

Even if only thousands, or even hundreds, of them were ‘released,’ it would cause a really troublesome situation.

“In a state of idiocy, they’ll move according to their instincts. Most of them will regress to infancy and babble, but some of them…”

“Will move according to their instincts from their outlaw days.”

“…If it’s not just dozens, but hundreds or thousands, it’ll be difficult to deal with.”

Infantile idiot Ttu-ttais and outlaws who had lost their reason and were acting on instinct were mixed together.

The current Outlaw Zone must be a complete mess.

“I couldn’t figure out why the guy who was revived during the Late King’s era and made an inviolable Contract suddenly did something so drastic, but maybe your slave stimulated something in Puppeteer…”

I recalled the conversation I had with Puppeteer at Jirnier’s words.

“A lowly outlaw birth reaching the point of being close to an Unfulfilled

Wish…”

What on earth did Puppeteer, who had turned the Outlaw Zone into a mess, see in Kkachili?

My intuition as an explorer who had overcome numerous crises was telling me.

That the answer to that question contained Puppeteer’s purpose.

That if I wanted to protect the slave who had sworn allegiance to me, I had to poke and prod at that itchy spot. ‘Besides, the Late King’s era…’

From what I heard, the Demon of Greed Puppeteer had been unsealed quite a long time ago.

‘What kind of Contract did she make with the Late King? Did the royal family know about Puppeteer’s existence and condone it?’

Jirnier, who had been watching me continue to ponder, shook her head.

“…Don’t think too deeply about it. It’s a bit late to say this now, but if you get involved with such a being, you’ll be in too much danger.”

“There’s someone baring their fangs to steal my precious person, I can take on any amount of danger.”

I stared at Jirnier with determined eyes.

I have to protect my people, I can’t just stand by and hope that someone else will solve it for me.

If you want to protect your precious female, the male has no choice but to go into battle himself.

Perhaps sensing my determination.

“Haa. You really…”

The blonde, tanned half-dwarf in overalls sighed and held her forehead.

Soon, the corners of Jirnier’s lips twisted into a bitter smile.

“…That tough side of you, I really like it.”

Jirnier, with a mischievous smile, said while pounding her shoulder with a hammer.

“In a few days, Idelbert and the Royal Knights… my younger sister will be in the Outlaw Zone to have a meeting with Puppeteer about the Contract.”

I couldn’t help but be a little surprised by what she said as if it were nothing.

‘Was the reason Celsia said she would remain in the Explorer District even after the noble title conferment ceremony because of the meeting with Puppeteer?’

The Outlaw District is more barbaric, lewd, and rough than the Explorer District, but not everyone who lives there is a conscienceless piece of trash.

Regardless of the details of the Contract, they must be trying to have a meeting with the demon to return those who had unfairly become idiots to their original state.

“My sister wanted to see you anyway… have a conversation with her.”

“Thank you for the good information.”

“What. I was just muttering to myself, I don’t know if anyone heard me? Oh, and.”

Kwaaaaaaa!

Jirnier, who had smirked, activated the furnace and pointed to the tattered Weaponry with a hammer.

“I’ll have my babies all dolled up by then, so come back at the right time.”

At her confident appearance, I also chuckled and rummaged through my gold coin pouch.

Jirnier always refused, saying she didn’t need my snot-nosed money, but I had to show my sincerity at times like this.

“Ah, by the way.”

Jirnier, who had glanced around as if she had forgotten something, approached me with an embarrassed expression, her confident appearance from just now nowhere to be found, and whispered.

“How many… rings should I make…?”

The key to solving the Puppet Curse on Kkachili lies with Puppeteer.

If I could pester Idelbert or Celsia enough to get a seat at the meeting, I could convey my intentions to Puppeteer even a little.

But before that.

Paeeeng!

“Keheuk…!”

“Lilith. Are you sure about this?”

“Y-yes, Yehehe…! R-really…!”

Beneath Lilith, who was nodding her head vigorously with her leash pulled tight, was a Magic circle so elaborate that it was difficult for me to follow.

And in the center of that Magic circle.

“Are you really sure this will undo the curse…?”

Diana stood there with an expression that was half gratitude and half worry.

It would take Lilith at least two weeks to undo the Curse of the demon of lust on Diana.

I wanted to make her comfortable before more time passed.

# - Reorganization (3)

In the cozy winter night, at the Balerius Inn.

Unlike the inn newly built in Eden, the inns on the ground didn't have useful spaces like underground warehouses.

Therefore, the exorcism ritual was held in Diana's room.

"Are you sure this will... lift the curse?"

Diana, standing in the center of the magic circle drawn in the room, glared at Lilith and asked.

Distrust of Lilith was evident in her eyes.

She couldn't possibly trust the words of a demon worshiper, so her instinctive wariness was understandable.

"Don't worry, Lilith."

"Yes!"

I called Lilith's name to soothe Diana's mind.

Lilith scurried over at the call and stood respectfully by my side.

Even without trying, she exuded a sexy aura, modestly covering her womb with both hands, awaiting her master's command. Truly a model of a loyal and sexy maid.

'Maybe I should get her a change of clothes later.'

The leotard suit with a paizuri hole in the center of the chest, combined with that sexy body, had a devastating effect.

For my personal desires and the eye health of others, having her wear a maid outfit might be a good idea.

Tap! Tap!

The Succubus's tentacle tail instinctively hit the floor, revealing some resistance... but what could she do?

It was a matter of adaptation.

Lilith, who had fallen from a ruler to a familiar in an instant, had no choice but to obey my words.

Lilith knew this very well, so she controlled her tentacle tail to avoid offending me as much as possible.

"See? She listens well now. She'll definitely be able to perform the exorcism."

"...I guess she does..."

Diana frowned, watching the Succubus, who looked exactly like her old self, attending to me.

She seemed to have a lot to say, but didn't voice it.

Taking that as agreement, I refocused Lilith on the task and asked Diana.

"You'll have to stay inside this magic circle for two weeks. Are you okay with that?"

Lilith could draw on the power of a demon of lust to lift the curse engraved on Diana, but exorcism was never an easy task in the first place.

The more powerful and long-lasting the curse, the more precise concentration and powerful force were required.

Lilith said that she could perform such tasks more efficiently inside the magic circle she had designed.

Diana, looking at the magic circle drawn with Ellie's help, smiled faintly.

"If this curse can be lifted, what can't I do?"

She had longed for this for a long time, and now that it was finally happening, she wouldn't be bothered by such a small thing.

"There will be inconveniences in daily life, but Bell has agreed to help, so it's okay."

"It is only right to help the benefactor of my master."

Bell, the worshiper of gluttony, who was in the corner of the room, nodded vigorously.

"Not just because you want a sandwich, are you?"

"...gulp."

Bell swallowed hard with an excited expression at my question.

Bell, who had devoured hundreds of sandwiches made by Diana before going to the Labyrinth, was plump and chubby.

Who could possibly imagine that this was the mummy who used to eat human flesh?

Moreover, Bell, fascinated by Diana's cooking, had greeted her most enthusiastically as soon as she returned to the inn.

'I'd protect Diana, not put her in danger.'

Bell was a demon worshiper in her 50s, even if she looked like that, so she would be able to handle most situations skillfully.

"I should be helping you, but I'm sorry."

I told Diana that I would be going to the Outlaw Zone for a while.

To be exact, to Idelbert, who was in the Outlaw Zone.

'To participate in the 'meeting' to meet the Puppeteer, I need permission from a powerful figure like Idelbert or Celsia.'

Diana smiled bitterly and waved her hand at my words.

"I'm fine. It's unavoidable if it's to save Densi."

Diana used to be wary of Kkachili.

However, after hearing the story of Kkachili sacrificing herself to save me during the Elder Lich subjugation, Diana completely abandoned her wariness of Kkachili.

Since it was to save such Kkachili, Diana told me to go without hesitation...

But there was a hint of sadness in her expression.

"Instead, promise me you won't get hurt and come back."

"Of course."

When I spoke confidently to her worried voice as usual, Diana carefully opened her arms.

I immediately rushed into Diana's arms and hugged her tightly.

Strong enough to instantly dispel any sad feelings she might have.

"Hnn..."

Her full breasts and firm pectorals pressed down, and Diana's breath escaped.

I held Diana tightly in my arms and whispered softly in her ear.

"......"

Diana, who had seen Balkan off, felt her heart pounding wildly and gathered her hands over her chest.

Thump, thump.

In her chest, where his warmth still lingered, the words he had spoken continued to echo.

"Auster..."

Diana murmured the new family name he had acquired.

The family name of the first Hero? Such historical significance was of no importance to Diana.

Only one thought filled her mind now.

"Diana Auster..."

As she murmured that thought softly, her heart began to beat faster.

Diana, repeating and savoring that thought over and over again, lowered her face, which had turned as red as an apple.

'...I wanted to make him Balkan Ordia...'

It wasn't bad that she, not him, was receiving a new family name.

"I'm sorry, Mister..."

Ellie, with a gloomy face, got into the carriage and lowered her head.

Ellie, who had become a royal mage, had followed along to the Labyrinth for experimental purposes, but she had been away from her position for too long.

To organize the experimental data on Portal magic obtained from the Labyrinth, she had to return to the royal palace.

"Don't be sorry. You have a stable job, so it can't be helped."

"Should I quit being a royal mage and just go into the Labyrinth with you, Mister...?"

"You're saying that even after going to the Labyrinth this time?"

"Honestly, it's scary, but it's okay if I'm with you, Mister. Because you're you..."

I tapped the top of her head with the edge of my hand as she whined about not wanting to go to work.

"Ugh..."

"I can't stand to see you in danger."

Ellie was an excellent half-elf mage, but still too young.

...No, that's an excuse.

She had been an outstanding mage since her academy days, and now she was a full-fledged royal mage.

This trip to the Labyrinth proved that Ellie was more than capable of holding her own in the Labyrinth.

Why was I trying to keep her away from dangerous places?

It was clearly because she was a woman who had shared her body with me, and yet...

"...Just now... you looked like a dad, not a Mister."

Ellie said to me, meeting my gaze as I looked down at her with a subtle expression.

Not a Mister, but a dad.

Did she feel paternal love for the male who had tapped her womb?

"I don't even remember my real dad anymore..."

I could see Ellie's smile under the wide-brimmed hat, smiling with a complex expression.

"Somehow, this is... not a bad feeling."

Ellie, perking up her elf-like pointed ears, hugged me tightly.

I was about to pat Ellie's back, who was bored, when the horse pulling the carriage whinnied, unable to bear the boredom.

"Ugh. It's already time...!"

Startled by that, Ellie pulled away from my arms and got into the carriage.

Soon, she opened the carriage window and peeked her face out.

"I'll be back soon. Oppa."

"Mister, Dad, and Oppa all mixed together is a bit confusing."

Ellie smiled brightly at my murmur.

"What can I do? I like all three titles too much."

"...Come back safe. Don't skip meals because of research. Sleep well. Be careful of strange people. If a stranger talks to you, you have to escape with Portal magic."

"...That last part really sounded like a dad."

Ellie smiled at my overly worried words, but I wasn't joking.

Ignorion, the worshiper of Oman.

That terrorist, who had a history of attacking the royal palace, was looking for Ellie, who knew how to use Portal magic.

I wanted her to just stay holed up in the inn and do research, but Ellie's situation as a royal mage wasn't that easy.

Neigh!

The horse raised its front hooves and started moving the carriage.

"I'll be back!"

"Come back safe!"

Ellie waved her hand out the window.

I also waved back until Ellie became a dot and disappeared from sight, then I proceeded with the next task.

"Are you ready?"

"I finished it a long time ago, Master!"

Kkachili, carrying a backpack, placed her leash on the palm of her hand and handed it to me.

A slave who hands over her lifeline with such a calm expression.

Stroking Kkachili's head wildly at her loyal and lovely attitude, I thought of the raider who was trying to steal her.

'Puppeteer...'

I had to firmly hammer my intentions into that spiteful face.

Don't you dare touch what's mine.

The time when the sun rose in the middle of the sky.

Outlaw Zone.

A temporary camp set up to stop those who had been turned into idiots and rioters by the Puppeteer.

Following the guidance of a guard who recognized me, I arrived at Idelbert's bedroom, where she shook her head with a just-awakened expression.

"No."

"...I haven't said anything yet."

"Disciple. It's been almost a year since I saw your face. I can tell what you're thinking just by looking at the atmosphere."

"......"

"And I know very well that you're not the type to easily bend your will." Haaam.

Idelbert, who yawned widely and stretched, got up and wiggled her cat tail and hands at me.

"I should see how much my disciple has grown after a long time."

It meant that if I had grown enough to satisfy her, she would take me to the meeting with the Puppeteer.

I thought back to the last time I sparred with Idelbert.

'At that time, I was... level 30 or 40.'

[Nam Sujin LV.51]

[HP:(17+18) Strength:(20+11) Agility:(20+11) Wisdom:(10+14-3) Skill:

(21+16)]

[Free Points: 0]

[Current Blessings and Curses: 7]

Whenever that was, it was weaker than I am now.

# - Reorganization (4)

To stop those turned into idiots and rioters by the Puppeteer, a camp was set up on the outskirts of the Outlaw Zone.

At the entrance of the brothel district, rife with signs of copulation.

Dozens of guards stood watch over the camp, and occasionally, Royal Knights could be seen taking the idiots and rioters into tents.

Inside the tents, like in a guard's prison, the idiots and rioters, limbs bound, were locked in iron cages.

There weren't enough cages, so three or four were crammed into each.

"Aua, aauua…"

"Ttu-?ttai! Bua bua!!"

"Tta-ttai. Tta-ttai good! Tta-ttai!"

"Grrrr! Grrrr!"

"Krrr! Krrrkkrr!! Krr!!"

The idiots simply patted each other's breasts or buttocks and didn't cause much trouble, but the rioters, having lost their minds, were in bad shape, throwing punches and scratching each other.

Few were as skilled as the Dark Elf mage Nuer, who could cast spells in the Ttu-ttai state, but many were naturally physically gifted.

It wasn't uncommon for Outlaws of the warrior class around level 30 to throw punches.

Those had to be knocked unconscious or have their tendons temporarily severed to completely immobilize their limbs.

In that chaotic situation.

"Here, we caught more rioters."

"What? More here?! We're running out of cages! We need to transport them to the guard's underground prison again!"

"It's already full there too! We have no choice due to the lack of detention facilities. As a temporary measure, we'll cut the tendons of the rioters to completely immobilize them. We can compensate those with minor offenses later with healing or Potions."

The sound of the Knights arguing.

"May the grace of Mother Earth be with you. Miracle of healing—"

"Priest! We've brought more people injured by the rioters' rampage!"

"Put them over there for now! There are too many injured people already!"

The sight of priests dispatched from the Mother Earth Order healing the injured kept catching my eye.

"Disciple."

Turning my head at the voice calling me, I saw Idelbert walking ahead.

Unlike usual, Idelbert, with her long hair not tied up, wearing a comfortable sports bra and dolphin shorts, was looking at the same place as me.

That is, the blood-soaked camp.

"Yes, Master."

"What do you think when you see that?"

"...I wonder why the talks with the Puppeteer haven't progressed yet."

The scale of the damage was greater than I thought.

Hundreds of idiots and rioters were caged like chickens, and many civilians were injured by the rampaging rioters.

This was not a situation to be so leisurely.

We had to either deal with the Puppeteer, the person who caused this situation, or negotiate to calm this mess, anything.

"I don't know where you heard that news… but there's a reason why the situation is dragging on."

"Reason?"

"It doesn't seem like this will end with just suppressing the rioters or talks."

Talks are an act where people with problems gather and coordinate their opinions.

The fact that it won't end with such talks soon means. "Are you saying that a clash of arms is the only answer?"

Idelbert nodded at my question.

"The Puppeteer has clearly crossed the line, so our old hag Queen seems very pissed."

A section of the Labyrinth City was completely thrown into chaos, so how could she not be pissed?

I examined the equipment of the Royal Knights suppressing the rioters.

Each of them was wearing armor and weapons.

The fact that their atmosphere seemed sharper than when I saw them at the Royal Palace before was not just my imagination.

"So. Why did you bring your slave?"

Idelbert's sharp, cat-like gaze turned to Kkachili.

"Hiek…"

Flinch.

Kkachili instinctively trembled her shoulders at the sight of that wary gaze.

Compared to Idelbert, Kkachili was much weaker, and she probably remembered the fist massages she had received under the guise of training.

I pulled on her leash slightly to soothe Kkachili and said.

"The Puppeteer keeps coveting Kkachili."

"...What? Her? Why?"

I organized and told Idelbert what I had experienced and thought, with an expression of incomprehension.

"It's just a guess… but it seems like Kkachili is needed to fulfill the Puppeteer's 'Unfulfilled Wish'."

"......"

"She also has the Puppet Curse."

Halt.

After hearing my words, Idelbert looked around for a moment.

Looking to see if anyone was listening.

Soon, after confirming that no one was particularly listening to our conversation, she stared intently at me and Kkachili.

"...Really?"

Nod nod nod!

Kkachili nodded desperately.

"Why would I lie to my one and only Master?"

"Ha."

I replied calmly.

"You sly fox of a disciple."

Idelbert, as if dumbfounded, yet with a blush on her cheeks as if my answer wasn't bad, tapped and stroked my helmet with her black cat tail.

And then she approached a wide open space where there were no tents.

It was hard to call it a training ground… but the ground was flat and wide, so it was adequate for a decent sparring session.

"Ugh…!"

Idelbert, stretching and yawning, tied up her long hair and opened her mouth with a nonchalant expression.

"My sin of having a bewitching disciple is great. I'm very worried about taking such a disciple to a place where a fierce battle might occur."

"Would a disciple raised by Master die a miserable death in just such a battle?"

"You never know. Even a guy who seemed like he would never die can die from a minor mistake in a battle against a strong enemy."

"Still, please take me. Who knows? Maybe the disciple and the disciple's slave can prevent the countless blood that will be shed in battle."

Idelbert stood in the open space and looked at us without saying a word.

The reason she didn't say anything was probably because my opinion wasn't exactly wrong.

The Puppeteer's abnormal obsession with Kkachili so far.

—I couldn't figure out why the guy who was resurrected during the Late King's era and made an inviolable Contract suddenly did something so bold, but maybe your slave stimulated something in the Puppeteer…

Even Jirnier made such an assessment.

Kkachili's existence could be used enough as a bargaining chip in this complicated situation.

"Alright. If what you say is true, it seems like your slave can definitely be used."

Idelbert nodded after a long deliberation, as if she was convinced by those words.

"Then—"

"But."

Thud!

"It could be that I'm the only one who thinks that way, disciple."

Idelbert interrupted my words and stomped on the ground, causing the wind to spread widely, shaking Idelbert's ponytail and scattering sand around.

It wasn't just sand that was scattered.

A murderous intent concentrated to the limit.

If you were a living being.

A tremendous sense of oppression that would instinctively make you step back and be afraid if you were a living being.

The gazes of those who felt that tremendous energy were focused on the open space in an instant.

The dispatched priests, the guards on duty, the Knights executing the Outlaws, even the rioters who had lost their minds.

All of them raised the hairs on their bodies in the face of that tremendous sense of oppression and stared at us.

"If you want to climb to a high place and assert your opinion on important matters, you must show the martial prowess to match it."

The words of the powerless have no meaning, and no one listens.

If you want to make your voice known to the world, you need the power and authority to match it.

'...Her love for her disciple is truly unique.'

Even though she said that, Idelbert's true feelings seemed different.

This was a kind of show.

A show to let people know that she, the head of the Explorer's Guild, listened to and judged my opinion as an Explorer of the Explorer's Guild.

'Even if the work done after listening to my opinion fails, it means that if you want to hold someone accountable, hold the head of the Guild, not me.' My Master, who is full of affection and concern for her disciple, is scattering a murderous aura that would make me shit my pants so that her disciple won't be caught later.

As her one and only disciple, I had no choice but to repay my Master's grace.

Woo-woong—

Immediately activating [Blessing of Radiance] and [Blessing of the Dragon's Heart].

Drawing up the Divine power and Mana accumulated in my dantian and heart, I took a step forward.

It was a tremendous murderous aura that would have made me tremble like the others in the past.

"Are you ready to be 'persuaded' by me?"

Now, the steps I was taking forward were not trembling in the slightest.

This was also evidence of growth.

It meant that I had achieved the minimum achievement to assert my opinion, as Idelbert had said.

"Alright."

The Master, delighted by the growth of her disciple, smiled wildly and took a step forward.

I also walked towards Idelbert, matching her pace.

Sreureung—

Before I knew it, a huge battle axe was in my hand, and gauntlets were on Idelbert's fists.

The distance of dozens of meters was narrowed in just a few steps.

And then.

Kaaaaaaang!!!

With a chilling explosion, the Master's and disciple's strikes met.

# - Reorganization (5)

Here is the English translation of the Korean novel excerpt:

Kaaaaang—!

The gauntlet and giant axe collided, creating a sharp explosive sound.

Small sparks and a gust of wind rushed through the eye holes of the helmet.

From that first clash, I couldn't hide the corners of my mouth turning up.

'Idelbert is wearing gauntlets.'

Until now, Idelbert hadn't used her weaponry in our sparring matches.

Her body, trained like steel, was a weapon in itself, but she hadn't wielded the actual weapons she used against "real enemies" against me.

But now, she was facing me wearing the gauntlets she had used to hunt Jealousy Worshipers.

This was proof that I had surpassed the level where she could face me barehanded.

Feeling a small joy at having drawn out Idelbert's true strength, I tilted my head to the right.

Whoosh!

A fierce gust of wind tore through where my face had just been.

I wished she would go a little easier, but that wouldn't make for proper sparring.

I too had to face her seriously.

Whoom! Whooom!

At a glance, it looked like light jabs being thrown, but the power contained within was extraordinary.

The wind pressure following each strike felt like being cut by a blade just from grazing the skin.

Once a close-quarters fighter was allowed to approach, the long reach of the giant axe became a weakness.

The basics of combat are minimizing your weaknesses and maximizing your strengths.

Fwap!

I pulled my body back to widen the distance from Idelbert, but...

"Where do you think you're running off to?"

Idelbert wasn't one to just stand by and watch.

As Idelbert closed the distance between our bodies with the force of someone about to ravish their disciple, about to throw another punch, I raised my foot towards her fist.

I stared intently at the fist coming towards my solar plexus.

'My condition is good.'

Even without using [Blessing of Judgment Time], everything around me seemed to move slowly.

The conversations, breaths, and atmosphere of the people who couldn't take their eyes off our battle despite being startled by the sudden sparring match.

The killing intent flowing from Idelbert's fist as it dug deep into my solar plexus.

My right foot, extended to block her strike.

Flinch.

Even Idelbert's slight hesitation at that move.

All of it flowed leisurely in a single breath.

Just before Idelbert's gauntlet and the sole of my foot made contact.

Wooong—

Mana drawn from my heart enveloped my flat shoe, transforming into mana armor.

My Technique stat, currently the highest of my abilities, helped me utilize not only my body and mana, but even reverse the opponent's strength.

Idelbert's fist was blocked by my kick before reaching its impact point, but its momentum remained.

The impact, neither too strong nor too weak, was neutralized by the mana armor and pushed my body further away.

The distance created was about 2 meters.

This gap, this moment, was exactly the timing I had been waiting for.

Swoosh!

The giant axe I swung in a semicircle from behind my back fell instantly towards Idelbert's crown.

Idelbert grinned as she faced the sword energy sharply raised on that axe blade.

Fwoop!

Whether it should be called fortunate, regrettable... or shocking.

Idelbert raised her gauntlet above her head, grabbing the axe blade with her muscles and stopping its advance.

Red blood trickled down from the edge of the severed gauntlet.

Idelbert had defended against my strike at the cost of her own arm, even when I had aimed for the optimal timing.

The sword energy had cut through Idelbert's gauntlet and half-embedded itself in the smooth arm beneath, but failed to behead her.

The grip of the muscles holding the axe blade was so strong that no matter how much force I applied, the axe wouldn't budge.

'Where does such monstrous strength come from in that slender body?'

Shaking my head, I released the axe handle.

"Today is also my defeat—"

"Today, I lost."

Interrupting my words, Idelbert nodded with eyes full of satisfaction and excitement.

I tilted my head in confusion at that sight.

"Pardon?"

"Why do you look like that?"

"You're saying it's my victory?"

"...Are you trying to properly deceive me by claiming this is your first win? Look at my current state."

I examined Idelbert's appearance once again.

One gauntlet had been cut off by the sword energy, and her arm had nearly been severed in half... but Idelbert still had strength left.

'If this had been a real battle?'

Idelbert would have sacrificed her arm, pulled me in while I helplessly gripped the axe having lost control of my weapon, and pierced my heart with her fist.

And then she would have calmly poured a potion on her severed arm and waited for it to heal.

Only after running the simulation in my head did I realize.

That what I had thought of was the most ideal move for Idelbert.

'Just as Idelbert had strength left, I too had strength remaining.'

If this battle had continued to the end, who would have been standing at that end?

"My praiseworthy disciple."

Pat pat. Rub rub.

Idelbert rubbed my cheeks with her cat tail.

"This victory is worth a hundred cat tail praise stamps."

Those who witnessed Balkan and Idelbert's sparring match spoke about what they had seen with their mouths agape.

"What exactly did we just see?"

"Honestly, I couldn't see it properly. It was over in the blink of an eye..."

"...Did the Union Leader really lose? For real?"

Within their common sense, the battle just now was truly unbelievable.

Despite the presence of many royal knights and even guards, few had properly captured that high-speed battle with their eyes.

It was proof that each of their exchanges was powerful enough to slaughter even fairly skilled knights before they could even perceive it.

"...How is something like that even possible?"

"That person is the rumored Knight of Light, right? I think I saw light armor appear and disappear for a moment when blocking the gauntlet

earlier..."

"I guess that's the skill befitting a knight who protected the princess?"

"I thought it was just luck when they said he blocked the Wrath Demon Worshiper's strike, but it seems his fame isn't just for show..."

Those who witnessed the rumored figure who had protected the princess expressed their amazement at skills surpassing the spread rumors.

"It's just sparring after all. Why make such a fuss?"

"Right. And they're in a master-disciple relationship. A vulgar adventurer who makes a living in the Labyrinth. They might be trying to establish dominance over us royal knights by showing off their strength..."

Some sent envy and jealousy towards martial prowess far beyond their expectations, but...

"So, can any of you withstand even one exchange of those blows you just saw, even in a formal sparring match?"

"...W-well, that's..."

"We are knights who serve the king and are the face of the royal family.

Swallow your ugly emotions and look only at reality. There's nothing good that will come from badmouthing the Union Leader, her disciple, or the Adventurers' Union."

"......"

Their mouths were shut by their own comrades.

Balkan looked down at that noisy scene from the temporary infirmary building attached to the Outlaw Zone camp.

And while drawing up divine power, he asked Idelbert:

"It seems to have gotten too rowdy."

Idelbert, who could now skillfully handle the received miracle of healing, smirked.

"If you're jealous, come at me."

"What if I don't heal your arm? How will you face me then?"

"If my foolish disciple commits the unfilial act of cutting his master's arm and coldly leaves, wouldn't I close off my heart and commit suicide in the Labyrinth?"

"...Why are you saying such chilling things?"

"It means never betray me in the future."

Thud.

Idelbert, leaning her soft body against him as if tired, muttered quietly.

"...How did things go with that succubus?"

"Were you curious about that?"

"...Hmph. No matter how I think about it, the reason I lost this time is because I couldn't sleep."

Only then did Idelbert's eyes, which looked more languid than usual, come into view as she clicked her tongue.

The faint dark circles under eyes that seemed more drowsy than usual.

'Idelbert went up to the surface without even seeing me rescued.'

Though she said this and that, was she so worried inside that she couldn't sleep?

"You already know everything from the smell, even if I don't say anything."

"...Still, I want to hear the result from my disciple's own mouth."

Idelbert muttered in an anxious voice, perhaps worried that the male she cherished might have received a harsh lesson from another female.

Seeing Idelbert like that, something ticklish welled up inside.

"...Master, you really do have cute sides too."

Bang!

Unable to hold back and speaking his true feelings, Idelbert's cat tail slapped the floor hard.

As he silently looked down at Idelbert, her reddened earlobes caught his eye.

"...You crazy disciple. Don't get arrogant just because you finally won once in a sparring match with your master. Keep striving forward."

Idelbert, who had hurriedly muttered, absolutely refused to show her face.

...Though he could roughly guess what kind of expression she was making right now.

As he smiled slightly while imagining that sight...

"Master! Master!"

Kkachili, who had been standing guard outside the door, called out urgently.

"What's the matter?"

"Well, some kid keeps saying nonsense about being a princess—"

"Nngh—! Mmph!"

"Tsk. Stop struggling, kid. This isn't a place for children."

"Nngh, mmph!"

At the faint groans heard from outside, Balkan, who had been sitting on the bed, jumped up and ran out the door.

d1YvQXA1Wk80MHRHUTNWSVVNOW10aFlVWFJiZzBLMDZHMDJ qb1UvZkxaRXhUSzIzclFIclZlOXlRcmQ1VW9DMw

Bang!

And there...

"Nngh, mmph!"

Was a blonde, green-eyed girl struggling with her mouth covered by Kkachili.

"...Uh..."

Seeing Balkan's face frozen in shock, Densi blankly looked down at the girl whose mouth was covered by his hand.

Pwaah!!!

"I told you! Huff... already!"

The girl... the 2nd princess Celsia, who had finally regained her freedom after being released, shouted with her cheeks puffed up.

"I'm not a kid!"

Author's Note: In honor of Children's Day