# Chapter 50: The Reason to Become Stronger

"Good morning, Rica."

"Ah, porter. Did you get some sleep? Oh.. Your cheeks look quite swollen."

I barely managed to escape from the room.

They were sucking on my cheeks so much from both sides.

My cheeks have swollen up.

My face is covered in saliva. It feels gross.

"There were some circumstances."

"Huh. What about the young lady and Yuria? Are they not up yet?"

"No. They're still sleeping. I didn't bother waking them up. Let's just let them sleep, shall we?"

"Uh.. Is that okay?"

It would be Rica's duty to wake up the young lady, but right now that room is in a somewhat den-like state.

If you go in carelessly and get caught in their sleep talking, you might end up becoming a body pillow.

I barely escaped.

Yuria and Lady Lea have the common trait that their sleeping habits get worse when they drink.

"Well, it's not like we have anything to do today anyway. If we wake them up now, it'll just drain our energy."

"That's true... I agree. Honestly, when those two are together... it's a bit much."

"Wait, is it okay for you to talk about the young lady behind her back like this? This is gossip. Is it okay to do this about your lord?"

"No! Don't make me the only bad person after we talked together!"

"Hahaha."

This person seems like a good type to tease.

Should I say she's good to pick on because she has a stiff image?

Maybe because she's experienced life in a knightly order, she has a good sense of hierarchy and order.

From the moment she confirmed I was the young lady's man, her manners towards me improved subtly.

"Let's go to the market together before those two wake up."

"Together? Now?"

"Yes. We'll have Olivia watch the house. Let's go buy some soup for hangover relief. And get some fresh air while we're at it."

"Not a bad idea. Let's go together."

"Ah, on the way, let's register at the martial arts hall together too."

"Oh! That sounds good!"

She's really happy when I suggest registering at the martial arts hall to exercise together.

As expected of a muscle-brained pure female knight. She seems to love exercise.

"Olivia. Are you sleeping?"

"Yes...?"

Olivia comes out walking along the wall as I call her name.

Judging by her messy hair and face full of drool marks, she must have been sleeping soundly.

"We're going out to buy some food. Guard the house while we're gone. If anyone comes, just pretend no one's home."

"Um, can't I... come along too.."

"No. It's hard to take you around. See that sofa over there? Sit there. I'll buy you a snack when we come back."

"Okay.. I understand..."

She looked dejected, but didn't cling to me anymore.

Yesterday she was really in bad shape, but after providing her with warm food and a comfortable bed, she seems to have regained her senses a bit.

Maybe she's found comfort in the fact that I, a fellow Earthling, am here?

I hope she stays in this sane state like this.

"By the way, was that child someone you knew from before? Or someone from your hometown?"

"You mean Olivia?"

"Yes. From what I saw, it seems she can't see."

She must be wondering why I specifically bought a blind girl with money.

A sane person wouldn't buy a blind slave.

She might have doubts.

There could be some impure intentions.

"She is from my hometown. She knows quite a lot about the labyrinth too. That's why I brought her."

It's best to hide as much information about Olivia as possible.

Moreover, I can't tell Rica a secret I haven't even told Lady Lea.

"I see. You always seem to help those in trouble."

"Me?"

"Yes."

But I don't?

Why would I help others?

I only work as much as I'm paid for.

Didn't I keep my mouth shut about the magic tower's test subjects too?

If I really wanted to help those in trouble, I would have been rolling around as a corpse retrieval team member that doesn't even pay.

"Even if you deny it. That's how I see it. No matter how much money or compensation is offered. It's not easy to throw yourself into danger like that."

She seems to be talking about how I saved her.

Well, I wasn't in my right mind back then either.

The reward the young lady offered.

Was it 20 gold per person?

To be honest, looking back now, it wasn't worth risking my life for.

Yet I made up reasons and rushed in to save them.

"You came into the labyrinth to save Erica and me after the great change, not knowing what state it would be in. Despite only being together for half a day. You even incurred debt to an adventurer to save us. And I heard you went through severe things in the underground city too. Not just anyone can do such things."

Rica seemed to be attaching great meaning to my actions.

As if talking about a knight she admires.

She tried to praise and admire my actions.

If I were a person full of vanity, I might have felt proud at her words, but.

I don't move according to such justice or chivalry.

"I just moved for money. If the young lady hadn't offered compensation. I would have abandoned you and Erica. Don't thank me. Thank the young lady."

Rica nodded at my words.

"I'm always grateful to the young lady. She's my benefactor. Of course, the same goes for you. In the end, you're the one who saved me. If it weren't for you, Erica and I would have died."

Why is she trying to praise me like this?

What's the reason for trying to raise my favorability?

"...No, Rica. What is it? What do you want? Why are you praising me like this?"

"Hm? I'm praising you because I want to, why?"

"No. You're suddenly building me up so much, I feel like you must have some ulterior motive."

"Hahaha. It's nothing. Really."

Rica looked into the distance.

As if picturing her future self.

"I feel like a big crisis will come at some point. I just have that feeling somehow. When that time comes, please take care of the young lady."

"Aren't you the bodyguard knight, Rica?"

"If, just if. If I really become unable to protect the young lady. That's when I'm asking you. Of course, I'll protect the young lady until I die, but. If by any chance, a time comes when my hands can't reach her. I hope you'll protect the young lady then."

"No, Rica. Don't say such unnecessary anxiety-inducing things suddenly. Why are you talking like someone who's about to die? Are you sick?"

"No, porter! Don't you have any sense of mood? I'm trying to set the atmosphere here. What kind of reaction is that?"

"Ugh. It's so cheesy, I'm getting goosebumps. What do you mean a moment when your hands can't reach? Just protect the young lady to the end, Rica. It's just a matter of getting stronger, right? You said you'd get stronger."

"I have to get stronger. Honestly, when I felt the gap with Yuria. I was mortified enough to die."

Rica revealed her feelings from yesterday.

When she was overwhelmed by Yuria's pressure and almost drew her sword without her master's permission.

She says she was mortified to death then.

It was one of the few moments of shame in her life.

"I've been constantly thinking I need to get stronger. There are labyrinth city study abroad students in our knightly order too. Every time I knelt before their power. I wanted to go to the labyrinth city too. I came like this thanks to the young lady. But I'm still weak."

Rica seemed disgusted with her powerless self.

Her eyes were full of desire for power.

I could feel her desire to become stronger.

"By the way, there are labyrinth city study abroad students in the knightly order?"

"Of course. It's an open secret. There are probably many nobles from other countries hiding their identities and training in this city too? Mana adaptation and abilities are great blessings that are hard to obtain outside the labyrinth city."

"I guess that's true."

Mana adaptation and abilities are like specialties of the labyrinth city.

To have a similar experience outside, you'd have to go to inhuman magic realms or unexplored areas called uninhabited zones.

Those places are basically demonic realms.

Places where you just die from mana poisoning before any adaptation or anything.

"Anyway, I wanted to ask you to take care of the young lady. The young lady told me yesterday. If you're involved in labyrinth trips. It feels like we can almost certainly make it out alive. She seems to have tremendous faith in you."

"That's..."

Even during this great change, I rolled around like crazy and managed to get out with the young lady alive.

That experience seems to have given Lady Lea faith in me.

"It's not like I can definitely save everyone."

"Well. Yesterday I went to the guild to gather information about Yuria and met an adventurer named Hachi. He said the same thing. That this labyrinth trip would have been wiped out if it weren't for you."

"That too is just a coincidence."

"I thought you'd say that, so I've been tracking the porter's actions until now."

"Wait, you investigated me? Is it okay to admit so boldly that you did a background check?"

"It can't be helped. You're the man the young lady is in love with. Shouldn't I know what kind of person you are?"

That's true.

In the end, Rica is the young lady's bodyguard knight.

To protect the young lady in a place like the labyrinth city, it would be essential to investigate the people around her.

"Porter, do you know?"

"Know what?"

"That there have been almost no deaths in parties you've been part of since you obtained the spatial pocket. This has already gone beyond the realm of coincidence. This time too, I died because of the variable of the great change. If it weren't for that, we would have completed the labyrinth trip safely again."

"Wait, Rica. Don't deify me too much. I just prepared well..."

"That's exactly the important point. Your spatial pocket allows you to prepare any kind of item. An owner with a bag of unlimited capacity who fills that bag to the brim with relief supplies using their own money. Just that alone dramatically increases the survival rate of a party."

That's true.

The survival rate in the labyrinth does change depending on how thoroughly you prepare.

"So, you're asking me to keep being part of the young lady's party, right?"

"Yes. Porter, you probably think you'll just help with conquering the upper levels and then leave. But I hope you'll come with us into the underground city too. It's reassuring when you're around."

"I won't make an exclusive contract."

"That's fine. But we don't plan to enter the labyrinth without you. We'll adjust to your schedule. This is the confirmation I got from the young lady. Without the spatial pocket owner. We won't enter the labyrinth. We need your strength to protect the young lady."

It seems Rica, rather than the young lady, said they won't enter the labyrinth without me.

Her role is to protect the young lady.

The reason she wants to get stronger in the first place is to protect the young lady.

So it seems she doesn't want to take the risk of entering without me.

"Above all, the young lady wants to go down to the end of the labyrinth."

"...The end of the labyrinth?"

"Yes. She talks about it every night. That something there is calling her."

The end of the labyrinth.

Of course, the master of the labyrinth is waiting at that end.

The master of the labyrinth is calling Lea.

Why? For what reason?

I don't know. But it wasn't a good thing.

There were occasionally cases like this.

People who go down due to the labyrinth's pull.

You could say being assimilated by the labyrinth is similar to this.

"We don't know what's at the end of the labyrinth."

"I know. Honestly, I don't want to go down that far either, but. The young lady's will is so firm."

"You're not asking me to go down there with you, right?"

"Can't you just come down with us, take a quick look, and come back?"

"No! Are you crazy!?"

I'm willing to go down to the 7th floor as per Yuria's wish.

But below that?

Asking me to go down to the bottom of the abyss is crossing the line.

"Let's stop talking about the labyrinth here. Let's buy some hangover soup."

"Ah, I didn't bring my wallet."

"It's fine. I'll buy it. I wasn't planning to ask you to pay anyway."

"Is that so. Sorry for just mooching off you."

"It's nothing. Treat me next time."

"I will. After we finish the next labyrinth trip. I'll buy you a drink."

"Sounds good."

The hangover soup in this world tastes like tomato.

You can think of it as a slightly spicy and thin stew made by boiling tomatoes with peppers and meat.

It feels like something you'd want to eat with rice.

But in this world, the concept of rice soup is rare, so it's common to dip bread in it.

"The spatial pocket really is convenient."

"It is."

You don't have to worry about food smells.

Even if you buy food with strong spices, you can go anywhere without being self-conscious.

"So this is the martial arts hall."

"It's the most famous martial arts hall in the labyrinth city. If you pay the monthly fee, you can use the exercise equipment freely. If you pay for personal instruction, they'll train you too."

It's basically like a gym in another world.

If you pay the monthly fee, you can come and use the exercise equipment freely.

If you want PT, you can separately learn weapon use or combat techniques from trainers (former adventurers).

It's truly the labyrinth city's gym.

"You said you didn't have money, right?"

"W-well. I left my wallet at home..."

"I'll pay your fee for this month."

"Really? Sniff..! Thank you...!"

Rica already looks like her hands are itching to lift weights.

The monthly fee was 10 silver, I think? I can pay this much.

I have money from the young lady anyway.

Rica only signed up for equipment use.

I decided to receive personal training.

What Rica lacks is ultimately mana adaptation and abilities, not skills.

So she didn't need separate personal training.

But I needed separate personal training.

I don't know how to handle weapons at all.

I only know how to blindly swing a sword, but I don't know how to perform systematic movements with it.

The sling shot is amazing, but that feels like all I have.

"You're signing up for warrior attribute education, right?"

"Yes. As a warrior."

"Understood. There happens to be one person available who can provide warrior education. Could you wait a moment?"

"Sure."

The female employee at the martial arts hall lobby introduced me to a former adventurer.

Since I've accepted Shaka's legacy, I think it's right to walk the path of a warrior.

"It seems to be that person."

"Oh.."

As Rica and I sat in chairs waiting for the instructor, soon a large man approached us.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Gon, who will be in charge of your education."

A shirtless man covered in tattoos.

A barbarian warrior named Gon with skin as black as if he'd gotten a tan.

He became my instructor.

# Chapter 51: A Thousand-Year-Old Elf's Whining

"Hmm. An Easterner as a warrior. It doesn't suit you."

Instructor Gon looked me up and down and stroked his chin.

He's already dissatisfied before even starting the training.

As I was wondering how to respond to this blatantly racist remark, the female knight beside me snapped and shouted.

"Wait. Are you looking down on him because he's an Easterner?"

"Hm? No. It's just that Easterners don't suit being warriors. I'm not looking down on them. Easterners are a race suited for mages, swordsmen, or hunters."

"Why are you trying to judge that on your own? There must be some Eastern warriors too."

"Hmm. You don't know anything. The labyrinth isn't a place you enter to do what you want. It's a place where you can barely survive by extremely enhancing what you're good at. Class distinction based on race is natural."

"What?"

"Hey, woman. You seem like a novice who hasn't fully adapted to mana yet. Let me explain. Warriors are in the vanguard, taking all the attacks meant for team members while also attacking. Basically, you need to be big. To take hits with your body, you need tough vitality. Mental strength to endure pain is also essential."

"Are you saying Easterners lack that?"

"I'm not looking down on Easterners. Look at it objectively. The man who will be my trainee is small and scrawny."

"....Certainly."

"No, Rica. If you're going to take my side, do it properly. Why are you agreeing?"

"Ah, sorry. But.. you are quite small for a man."

"...."

That's true.

I'm slightly taller than the young lady and about the same height as Yuria.

Rica is a bit taller than me.

It can't be helped. Humans in this world are all tall.

At least Olivia feels definitely shorter than me.

Anyway, I don't meet the height suitable for a warrior that this man Gon demands.

"And don't misunderstand. I don't mean Easterners are weak. Easterners are generally small and scrawny, so they're fast. Agile and sharp. That's why there are many assassins among Easterners. And because many have keen senses, they're especially suitable for hunters or guides."

"In short, you're saying I'm just not suited for being a warrior, right?"

"That's right. You're not suited for being a warrior. The same goes for knights."

He must mean the tanker position doesn't fit racially.

Rather, he says I'm suitable for damage dealers like swordsmen, assassins, or hunters.

He says I'm small and scrawny so I'm good at hitting vital points nimbly.

Somehow it sounded to my ears like "Asians have a high critical hit rate."

"I'll still try learning for now. If it doesn't work out after trying, I can change, right?"

"Is that so."

"Yes. It's better to try and give up than to give up without trying, right?"

"Your mindset is suitable for a warrior. Alright. Are you starting from today?"

"I have somewhere to go today. I'll come from tomorrow."

"Good. Come whenever you want. Except during lunch time. Meals are important."

"Yes."

The warrior Gon went back after saying that.

He feels more straightforward than rude somehow.

Like a barbarian, he probably doesn't mince words.

"He was quite a heavy man."

"He was. His voice was really deep too."

"To be honest, I want to fight him once."

"You mean that person just now?"

"Yeah. I think it would be a good match after I adapt to mana and get a bit stronger."

"Huh."

Rica raising her fighting spirit.

What she lacks isn't skill but stats.

If she successfully goes through a few more labyrinth trips, she'll definitely grow rapidly.

I should take the young lady's team into the labyrinth sometime soon.

I'll improve my skills against monsters in the upper levels.

The young lady's team will gain experience in the upper levels, adapt to mana, and obtain abilities.

'It might be a bit much to take Yuria in too.'

There's a high possibility of them getting carried too much.

People tend to become complacent when they have insurance.

Just Yuria's presence might make them think 'It'll work out somehow' or 'Yuria will help in dangerous moments.'

Even if they try not to think that way, they'll unconsciously rely on her.

If they plan to continue labyrinth trips in the future, they need to roll on their own strength.

For outsiders whose only purpose is mana adaptation and abilities, it might be good to get carried and level up quickly, but that's not Lady Lea's goal.

We should go the orthodox way.

'In that sense, it might be better if I step out too...'

From the perspective of the young lady's team, I'm also someone to rely on.

So I might also be an obstacle to the growth of the young lady and her party members.

Blindly relying on someone can become a fatal weakness.

I've seen many cases of people becoming useless after the death of a lover they relied on, or a companion or leader.

People with strong individualistic tendencies or selfish people have strong mental strength.

Those who desire communication or bonds with others aren't suitable for the labyrinth.

"Your expression looks serious. Do you have something on your mind?"

"Huh? Ah. I was thinking that my presence might be hindering the growth of Rica or Lady Lea."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Like if you rely on me or something..."

"Pfft."

"What is it? Why are you laughing?"

"No. It's funny. Porter, you're weak."

"What? No, I'm not weak!"

"Aren't you? Your physical abilities might be good, but your skills are poor."

No, is that so?

Well, it's true.

"Your strengths are calmness, quick thinking, and the spatial pocket. Your combat ability itself is similar to the young lady's, isn't it?"

"No, I'm still stronger than the young lady."

"It's good that you're stronger than the young lady."

Rica laughed and patted my shoulder.

Come to think of it, Rica is right.

I'm in a position where I need to get stronger too, but it seems I looked down on the young lady's party too much.

Right, if we're just talking about combat ability, I'm at a similar level to Lady Lea's party members.

Although my physical abilities have improved through mana adaptation, I'm not particularly good at fighting.

If we're at similar levels, there won't be one-sided reliance, so it shouldn't be a big problem to go in together.

What I need to be careful of is the existence of a deus ex machina.

As long as there's no problem solver who can resolve any crisis alone, it's fine.

The current Yuria is a deus ex machina for the young lady's party.

An adventurer who's about to become a gold badge won't have any trouble in the upper levels.

Upper level monsters would be swept away with just a light wave of her hand.

Her existence would be a fatal obstacle to the young lady's party's growth.

"Let's take a break this week. Shall we enter the upper levels next week?"

"We're going in from next week? Good. But the labyrinth control shouldn't be over yet, right?"

"I heard it will be lifted around next week. The atmosphere is to refrain from entering the underground city. There should be no problem entering the upper levels."

We can clean up the upper levels before the subjugation operation starts.

And the situation doesn't improve just by blindly blocking labyrinth entry.

We don't know what kind of problems adventurers with reduced income might cause.

"I have somewhere to drop by for a moment. Do you want to go home first, Rica?"

"Then I'll lightly work out here and go back."

"Okay. See you later."

It seemed Rica was going to start exercising right away today.

I'm planning to drop by Raphanel's atelier for a moment.

I haven't told her about the side effects of the etherealization ring yet.

I need to tell her about the problem of clothes falling off and the color ghosts that popped out as a side effect.

"Hm? It's Sion. I was waiting for you to come. You weren't thinking of running away with the ring... were you?"

"Run away? No, I ended up in jail because of this ring."

"Hm? What do you mean? Don't tell me.. you tried to rob a bank? You didn't go into the women's bath, did you? Or just enter anywhere..."

"No! No, this thing has too many problems."

"Problems?"

"Yes. I knew it didn't make you invisible, but when you use this ring, all your clothes fall off."

"Hm? All your clothes fell off?"

"Yes. It only etherealizes the body, so all the clothes just fall off? Thanks to that, while I was testing it, people suddenly gathered and I was arrested for public indecency. They were throwing stones at me saying I was a naked ghost."

Actually, it was my fault for experimenting in an open space where people could gather at any time.

For now, I blamed it all on the ring and confronted Raphanel.

All of this is ultimately a ploy to buy the etherealization ring more cheaply.

If I just insist there are defects, Raphanel will stammer that there's no way her item could be like that, and eventually lower the price.

If I could just fix a few shortcomings of the etherealization ring, it would be an insanely broken item that I must acquire, but if I buy it at full price, it would probably cost more than the price of one slave.

"Eh? No, that can't be. Let me see it for a moment."

When I handed over the etherealization ring, Raphanel removed the jewel embedded in the ring, put on a magnifying glass, and checked the rune characters engraved on the jewel.

"Oh my. There was a mistake."

"It's strange, right?"

"I see.... It was set to etherealize only the body."

"I almost went to jail for public indecency and lewd behavior while testing the ring. Raphanel. How are you going to take responsibility for my efforts?"

"Ugh.. Well.."

"All of this happened because you asked me to test the etherealization ring."

"Ah..."

"Give me compensation."

"Ugh..."

Raphanel closed her eyes tightly.

"I'll give you compensation... so please stop glaring at me."

"Ooh. What kind of compensation will you give me?"

I hope she gives me a few potions for free.

"It's not much but.. if I'm okay... if you don't mind..."

"What?"

What is she suddenly saying?

Why is she slightly pushing out her chest?

What are you doing now!

Are you trying to build up to marrying me under the pretext of giving compensation?

"No, Raphanel."

"Hmm..?"

"What do you mean 'if I'm okay'? No, who would take an old maid elf over a thousand years old! How is that compensation!"

"Gack!!!"

I slapped Raphanel's outstretched chest.

Raphanel fell back in shock.

"Ugh. I mustered up courage in my own way."

"Put that courage back. I'm a bit tired because there are strangely many people courting me these days."

"Ugh.. Why can't I be happy?"

"Isn't that the sorrow of long-lived races?"

"Damn it. I want to get married too."

"No, why haven't you married yet in the first place?"

To be honest, she's extremely pretty, intelligent, and has an amazing figure despite being an elf.

No, why is she still unmarried?

How can an over-thousand-year-old beautiful old maid elf exist in this world?

"Well.. There was no suitable partner. When I was young, I poured all my youth into research... Now that I want to get married, there are no suitable elves."

Certainly, elves themselves are a rare race.

Should I say they're an endangered species?

They don't come out of their own territories much.

But if you look, you should definitely be able to find some, right?

"Aren't there still many elves in the great forest under the World Tree?"

"They are.. uncivilized."

"What?"

"How are forest elves any different from barbarians?"

"Oh.. Is that so? I don't know much about elves."

"I... I don't have the courage to go back to vegetarianism. Give up the convenience of the city and live in the forest? That's... too much."

"Ah."

Forced veganism would be quite tough.

"But when I try to find civilized elves. They all already had owners. Or there were flaws in their personalities. Sion, do you know?"

"Know what?"

"Most elves over 300 years old are stuck-up old fogies."

"...."

"They have stereotypes and such. Should I say they have a certain mindset? That, their unique disgusting stubbornness or prejudice... They have that. So I'm not actually attracted to other elves. They're all narrow-minded old geezers. But if I try to date young elves.. they all treat me like a grandmother..!!! An elf that's only a hundred years old.. They're completely babies."

"Huh.. Then what about humans over a hundred years old? They're the same hundred years, do you treat them like babies?"

"Humans are different! When humans are 100 years old, they're old people. You can't calculate the same time equally. Elf ages should be calculated in elf terms."

"It's complicated."

I won't even live to 100 anyway, so I just look at Raphanel and think she's old and that's it.

But from the perspective of other elves who can live as long as Raphanel, she seems to be seen as a grandmother.

How should I compare it?

Right, saying a thousand years old feels too old to grasp well, but if you say 67 years old, it suddenly feels more like a grandmother. It's similar to that.

From an elf's perspective, Raphanel is indeed a grandmother.

"Marry me.. I don't want to die an old maid.."

"No! Why are you doing this to me!"

"Waaah. Do it! You don't see me as a grandmother, right!"

"Y-you're crazy!!!"

Raphanel crying and saying she wants to get married.

I had to listen to her ramblings for a while.

It seems Raphanel is on her period right now.

This was a periodic "please marry me" event.

# Chapter 52: The City's Earth-Bound Spirit

"I'm sorry for my unseemly behavior. I've been feeling a bit lonely lately."

"You've lived alone for about a thousand years. Are you still lonely?"

"For intelligent beings, the feeling of loneliness never disappears until death comes. And stop mentioning my age. Do I look old to you? Do you want to get hit?"

Well, if you're a thousand years old, aren't you old?

I had such doubts, but I didn't voice them out loud.

If I teased her more, I felt like I'd really get a knock on the head.

"Anyway, Raphanel, please do something about that ring. I can't use it properly in its current state."

"Yes, yes. I understand. I'll fix it and adjust it again. And as compensation for this incident, I'll give you a half-price discount coupon."

"A half-price discount coupon?"

"Yes. You can buy any item in this shop at half price. Here, take it. You're the only one in this city who has this discount coupon."

"Ooh!!!"

A coupon that allows me to buy anything in Raphanel's atelier at half price.

This can be considered really amazing.

'Half price. If I can buy anything at half price, I should buy the most expensive item here.'

What would be good? Most of the displayed items were potions.

Unless it's an elixir, I didn't want to use this coupon on a single-use potion.

'The best would be accessories.'

Raphanel mainly deals in potions and accessories.

Among these, there are quite a few with outrageous effects.

But if you look carefully, there might be items close to artifacts that you absolutely can't find on the market.

'I want to ask Olivia what's good, but...'

Even Olivia, who could be considered the labyrinth strategy guide itself, didn't know much about Raphanel's atelier.

No, she seemed to have almost no knowledge about anything other than the labyrinth. Whether she forgot or really didn't know.

'The game Olivia played was probably a game focused on the labyrinth.'

She knew almost everything about the labyrinth, down to the types of monsters by version, but had almost no information about the storyline or the labyrinth city.

It felt like she just focused on game strategy and completely skipped the story.

Anyway, since I couldn't expect information about Raphanel's atelier, I had to look for good items myself.

"What's the most expensive thing here?"

"Hmm. The most expensive thing. Right, there's the dragon pearl."

"What?"

Dragon pearl?

No, why is there a dragon pearl here?

"Don't you know about dragon pearls? If you're from the East, you should know? It's similar to a dragon's mana heart. Don't you know? It's like a dragon's core."

"No, I know what a dragon pearl is. I'm asking why it's here."

The dragon pearl is that thing, right?

The round jewel that dragons hold in their mouths.

"I received it as a gift from a dragon when I was traveling long ago. It was before I settled in the labyrinth city. Quite an old memory. I should have firmly grasped that fellow before it ascended. Sigh."

"No, you're talking about grasping a dragon? Were you indiscriminate about race? There must be quite a size difference."

"No, what are you saying! Size difference? Huh. You rascal."

Raphanel tries to knock me on the head.

I quickly stepped back and covered my head.

"As long as they look similar to me, that's fine. Isn't it enough if we can have children?"

"Can dragons polymorph too?"

"Polymorph is like a privilege of higher life forms. Most long-lived spiritual beings can do it, right?"

"Ah."

It's one surprise after another.

Talking with this person makes me realize that the world I've fallen into is much broader than I thought.

"Anyway, that's the most expensive thing among the items I have. The price would be about 13,000 platinum coins. By the way, half price is 13,000 platinum coins."

"That sounds like an amount larger than the empire's 10-year budget."

"That's right. It's that precious of an item."

It's amazing that even such a precious item can have a price tag.

To begin with, platinum coins are currency that ordinary people can't even see.

While gold coins are commonly used, when you get to the realm of platinum coins, it becomes too big for an individual to handle.

It's a unit used by large merchant guilds, nobles, or those of equivalent status when measuring budgets.

"Isn't there anything else? Among items that can be bought in gold coin units?"

"Hmm. Among expensive items in gold coin units, there's the magic pouch. But you already have a spatial pocket, so that would be meaningless."

Raphanel thought for a while and then brought out something.

"How about this?"

"A finger?"

"It's an item called the monkey's paw."

"Ah, no. I'll pass on that."

The monkey's paw that grants wishes.

I already know about this old and worn-out urban legend.

I've never seen anything good come from using that.

It's better not to touch such things at all.

"You recognize the danger of this item. Is it the power of spirit vision?"

"No. I just roughly know what it is."

"I see, as expected of someone from the mysterious East. You have a lot of knowledge."

Raphanel grinned.

She probably deliberately offered it to check if I knew about the monkey's paw or not.

"Well, these are about the expensive items. I think the ones you can buy with the money you have now will mostly be of ambiguous performance."

If you go all the way to platinum coin units and get really expensive, there might be no side effects.

But moderately expensive items come with side effects.

To solve these side effects, you need to use other items to counteract them.

I didn't have that kind of money right now.

Above all, I haven't even received all the rescue compensation from the young lady yet.

I heard the family's retainers will enter the labyrinth city with the compensation within this month, so I have to wait until then.

"I understand for now. It doesn't seem like the right time to use the discount coupon yet."

"There will definitely come a moment when you'll use it. Everything becomes useful if you keep it long enough. Then you can use it when that time comes."

"Yes. I'll use it when there's something good next time."

Since there's no need to use it right away, I decided to put it in my inventory for now.

It's not a coupon with a set expiration date, so if I keep it, there will surely be a use for it someday.

"Ah, right. I should have told you about the side effects of the ring too."

"That's right. We didn't talk about the side effects. Yes, what kind of side effects were there?"

"Well, I saw about three strange female ghosts."

"Female ghosts? Three? Huh. Keep talking."

I talked about the three color ghosts I saw when I was confined after being mistaken for a monster-possessed person in the empty lot that day.

"An ash-colored woman with her eyes covered by a bandage, a black woman with her eyes covered by her hair. Lastly, a dark red woman with eyes dyed completely black."

"Do you know about them? They even mentioned Raphanel's name."

"Those are... the Three Villainesses."

Raphanel started speaking with a serious expression.

Three villainesses passed down like legends of the labyrinth city.

Beings similar to the bogeyman that, along with the labyrinth master, keep the children of the labyrinth city awake at night.

"They're closer to spirits than color ghosts. They're ambiguous beings that are neither gods nor ghosts called Loa. It's difficult to explain, so you can just roughly think of them as earth-bound spirits of the city."

Earth-bound spirits of the labyrinth city.

Semi-divine beings called Loa.

"They go around looking for fun things and play mischief. You know, things like no matter how much you search the house, you can't find one sock. Or something you definitely put away carefully has disappeared. Things like that."

"All of that is their doing?"

"That's how it was believed in the old days. Whenever something inexplicable happened in the labyrinth city, all blame was put on those three villainesses."

"Huh.."

"It seems the side effect of the ring is drawing their attention."

"No, isn't this side effect too severe? I thought it would just have some sexual side effects. To think that famous villainesses of the labyrinth city are showing interest in me."

"The side effect I expected was just ghost touch. It seems your spirit vision and the ring's side effect have caused some unknown interaction."

Raphanel's expression became very serious.

To think I've been marked by famous earth-bound spirits of the labyrinth city.

I thought they were just insignificant color ghosts, but when told they're named earth-bound spirits, I started to tremble a bit too.

"Hmm. They spoke to you about 3 days ago?"

"Yes. I haven't seen them even once since then."

"Did you feel fear from them?"

"Well, rather than fear, I felt more like I was screwed. I thought something was going to happen because strange things appeared..."

"Then you weren't scared of them themselves?"

"Huh? Well. Hmm."

Let me recall the memory of that time.

Right, those earth-bound spirits didn't feel frightening.

"Yes. I don't think I was particularly afraid of them themselves."

"I see. Yes. Huh. How strange. Could it be that your wavelengths matched..."

Raphanel was surprised.

What, were they supposed to be scary?

I only thought their bodies were sexy.

I thought they were color ghosts because their attire was provocative and their words were too perverted.

"For the three sisters to just tease you and leave. That's quite strange. They didn't break your mind. They didn't take anything. They just showed their genitals and talked dirty. How curious."

"Is that good?"

"That's still unknown. But it means there's something to your spirit vision. Did they appear when you were alone at night too?"

"Ah. Well, I haven't slept alone even once in the past two days..."

"What? You... you've been going around seducing women. Just because you look a bit cute, you're going around seducing women.. Why don't you touch me..?"

"No! What do you mean seducing women! It had nothing to do with my will!"

"That's the excuse of Casanovas. Damn it. I'm always stuck in this room... Sigh. Enough. Wait a moment."

Raphanel took out some paper, wrote something, and then handed it to me.

"What is this? An amulet?"

"It's like a letter of recommendation. Take that and go to the black market."

"Where in the black market should I go?"

"Find the voodoo specialty shop in the black market. The owner there is a voodoo practitioner from the South. If you show that to him... you'll probably be able to join."

"No, wait. What do you mean voodoo? Isn't that dangerous?"

"Voodoo practitioners are also the ones who understand Loa the best. He'll understand your situation better than I do."

My situation.

Even I don't know what kind of situation I'm in.

I trembled a bit at the thought that I might find out if I go see a voodoo practitioner who's an expert on Loa.

"I understand for now. Then I'll be going now."

"Alright. Come back to receive the etherealization ring in about two weeks. By then, I should be able to improve almost all the problems and side effects."

"Okay. I'll come back around then."

"Ah, and don't be alone at night before you meet the voodoo practitioner. Understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

I left the shop.

I intended to just extract some compensation, but I unintentionally realized I've gotten involved with strange things.

Of course, there were no particular problems for the past 2 days.

According to Raphanel's thinking, it's because I slept with someone.

She said there's a very high possibility that the Loa will appear again the moment I'm alone.

'I guess I'll have to sleep hugging Yuria tonight too.'

This can't be helped.

I've got a good excuse to sleep hugging Yuria.

I returned to Yuria's apartment with a happy heart.

# Chapter 53: The Sorrow of a Reincarnator

"What did you say..!?"

"Well, I'm sorry. While you were gone, I suddenly got a call from the guild. It looks like I have to go out of the city for a bit."

After eating the hangover soup and Lady Lea returned to her lodging, Yuria also started preparing to leave.

It was even a top-secret mission to leave the city for a few days.

It seemed like some incident had occurred and she was going out to deal with the aftermath.

"Out of the city? So suddenly?"

"Yeah. It seems some strange guys have entered the city recently. There was a commotion in the slums yesterday because of that. When we looked into it, it seems to be connected with outside forces... You understand, right?"

"Ah.. Yeah."

Yuria mumbled her words.

She's probably going to kill someone.

Murder or torture.

I couldn't know what Yuria would be doing, but it wasn't something I could dare to stop.

Yuria is the sword of the guild.

Especially since her mother is the guild master.

Yuria is also deeply involved with the guild, and as the adventurers' guild is a core institution of the labyrinth city, it's involved in various incidents and accidents.

It's natural that Yuria also has to step up when problems occur in the city.

Even if I don't want to send her, I currently have neither the power nor the justification to hold Yuria back.

The guild doesn't belong to just one person, the guild master.

The guild master is just a person who represents and manages the adventurers' guild.

No matter how strong Moira's influence is, she can't fight against the entire leadership of the city.

Still.

Knowing all these circumstances, I cautiously try to whine a bit.

"I can't go with you, can I?"

"Hehe. You want to be together. But I'm sorry. I have to go and come back quickly. Please watch the house with Olivia until I come back."

Yuria, who was packing her things in a hungover state, threw aside her luggage and hugged me tightly when I whined.

"Have a safe trip. Be careful."

"Yeah. Sorry for leaving so suddenly. Wait just a little. I'll be back soon."

Yuria kissed my cheek lightly and then hurried away.

I wonder what happened.

Probably there's a reason she's not telling me.

Since outside forces are involved, I think it might be related to the recent kidnapping incident in the slums.

I decided not to dig too deeply.

Because some information can endanger your life just by knowing it.

I just need to guard this house with Olivia until Yuria returns.

I'll start training from tomorrow too, so time will pass quickly.

"Um.. Did Yuria leave..?"

"Yeah. She just left."

"I see..."

As soon as she realized Yuria had left, Olivia clung tightly to my side.

"F-finally.. It's just the two of us.."

"Hey Olivia. Wait. What are you doing?"

"N-no.. Don't push me away.. Stay still.."

Olivia hugged me from behind and wouldn't let go.

She even buried her nose in my back and smelled me.

"Sniff.. Haa... I feel relieved.. Um.. Sion.. No, master."

"Y-yes..?"

"Don't.. don't let me sleep alone.. When I sleep alone.. I feel anxious.. At least while Yuria is gone.. Can't we sleep together..?"

I needed to sleep with someone anyway because of those earth-bound spirits or whatever, the Loa.

This is good for me.

I was going to ask Olivia to sleep together, but it's nice that she asked first.

"W-well, I understand for now. Let go. I need to clean up the table."

"Okay.. I'll help you.."

"No, just sit on the sofa. I'll clean up."

I felt like it would get messier if I let her help.

It's difficult to entrust her with tasks since she can't see.

"Um.."

"Yeah. What is it?"

"Can I.. talk about Earth...?"

"Sure, when it's just the two of us."

"Okay... Hehehe.. I wanted to talk about Earth.. There was no one to talk to.. It was so hard being alone.."

I'm a half-successful person in the labyrinth city.

Thanks to the spatial pocket ability, I don't have to worry about money, and recently women have been flocking to me as if my luck with women has turned around.

However, Olivia's case was different from mine.

She said she was born in a small minority tribe village in the South, and as soon as she became an adult, she ran away to the labyrinth city.

From this "ran away" phrase, I could already smell the harsh hardships.

There's no way a small village would allow individual freedom.

In communalism, individual personality and freedom are always secondary.

Moreover, if women's rights were thrown to the dogs, she was probably raised as one of the cogs in the community from the moment she was born.

She said the tattoos like scribbles on her body and unknown characters were also engraved without her will.

How painful it must have been.

It must have been a kind of halleh.

"I tried so hard.. not to forget by myself. About the information of this world. And my family.. and the dog I raised.. I tried so hard to remember everything."

I wonder how she ended up falling into this world.

Olivia's voice trembled severely.

"But I've forgotten almost everything. Their faces. Their voices. I can't remember anything."

"Olivia."

"What should I do? The labyrinth stuff.. it's my last weapon. I absolutely can't forget it, so. I memorized it to death, but I can't remember my parents' faces at all."

I approached her and patted her back.

Overwhelmed with sorrow, Olivia buried herself in my arms and cried for a long time.

My chest is damp. It's wet with tears and snot.

"I-I'm sorry..."

"It's okay. These things happen."

"Thank you.. You're so kind..."

"We're from the same hometown."

Olivia seemed to like the phrase "from the same hometown" and came to hug me again.

And she cries again.

She probably didn't have many situations where she could pour out her true feelings and cry.

Since reincarnating in this world, she must have lived constantly watching out for others.

So I just let her cry.

I cried a lot on the streets alone in the beginning too.

No money, can't fight, and couldn't even read the writing of this world.

Before I got the spatial pocket, I couldn't even buy a piece of bread freely.

"I'm so glad... To meet someone.. from Earth like me.. I'm so glad.. That there's someone who understands everything I say.."

Computer, air conditioner, airplane, cell phone, mobile game, NPC, and so on.

Countless words that don't exist in this world.

The only person who can understand all of these without any problem.

The first person in her life after reincarnation who could be called a companion.

With such a person appearing, she seemed to want to rely on me in many ways.

"Please.. don't abandon me.. I'll do anything you want. Don't throw me away saying I'm useless.. I'll memorize and recall everything about the labyrinth to death.. Please.."

"..."

Olivia begging not to be abandoned even if her usefulness runs out.

Even while forgetting her parents' faces, she tried to remember information about the labyrinth by any means necessary.

Even when I first found her in the slave shop, she was half out of her mind, reciting the labyrinth strategy guide by heart.

She knew that it would definitely be useful someday.

In fact, before becoming a slave, she tried to use the labyrinth information herself to make a name for herself.

"Alright. Olivia. I won't abandon you."

"R-really... Promise.. Make a promise too.."

"Pinky swear?"

"Yes.. Pinky swear..."

I hooked my pinky with Olivia's and promised.

Not to abandon her.

'As long as she doesn't cause problems.'

There's still a lot of information I haven't heard.

Also, when another great change occurs someday, that is, when the labyrinth is updated, I'll need someone to tell me the information.

"Thank you... For promising.."

"It's nothing."

As I stroked her back, Olivia buried herself even deeper in my arms.

"I want to... get closer..."

"Aren't we close enough already?"

"No.. Not just.. physically closer.. I want to be.. in a more intimate relationship with you, master.."

"Intimate relationship?"

"Yes.. So you won't just leave.. Please embrace me more.."

"Are you afraid I'll leave you behind?"

"I'm scared... The labyrinth is.. dangerous.. Even with the information I give you.. it's still dangerous.."

That's right. The labyrinth is dangerous.

No matter how much information Olivia provides, in the end, it's me who has to act on it.

You never know when you might die.

That's why Olivia is saying now that she wants to get closer.

"How can we get closer?"

"Well... Like this..."

Perhaps because she can't see and misjudged the position, Olivia kissed right next to my lips.

"Th-that wasn't... your lips...?"

"Yeah. It was slightly to the side."

"Ah.. Ah.. O-one more time.."

She tried to kiss my lips again.

"Ah.. This isn't it either.."

"That was my nose just now."

"O-one more time.."

Finally, Olivia managed to kiss my lips with difficulty.

"Did I succeed...?"

"Yeah. That was successful."

"Um.. With this.. Have we gotten a bit closer...?"

"Well. Maybe we've gotten a little closer?"

"Thank goodness..."

Olivia's actions can't simply be dismissed as love.

This too must be her own survival strategy.

I am Olivia's current master.

From her perspective, I'm someone from her hometown who doesn't treat her badly.

If I abandon her, she doesn't know where she'll end up.

That's why she's acting out love right now.

No, whether this is an act or not doesn't really matter.

In any case, the fact that she needs to make a good impression doesn't change.

Well, whether it's real love or fake love isn't really important.

What's truly important is whether I'm satisfied with Olivia's actions.

'Satisfied. Very satisfied.'

Olivia was cuter than I expected.

All she could come up with after racking her brains to make a good impression on me was just a kiss.

Should I call it a virgin-like idea?

She didn't offer her body asking to be taken, and it was interesting that she felt shy and thought we had gotten closer just by pressing lips together.

"I have to go out for training from tomorrow too. You'll be alone at home a lot."

"Okay.."

"I'll prepare meals for you before I leave. Make sure to eat properly even when you're alone."

"Yes..! Thank you for caring.."

I'm planning to go to the martial arts hall from tomorrow morning.

After exercising a bit, I need to go to the black market in the afternoon to learn about Loa.

And I'm thinking of borrowing and reading the Monster Dissection Appreciation book that's said to be in the library.

'I've heard about monsters from Olivia, but it's better to learn separately.'

I should prepare as much as I can before the subjugation operation starts.

I'll also have to proceed with conquering the upper levels with the young lady's party.

So let's enjoy today's rest as much as possible for now.

From tomorrow, I'll have to move busily again.

# Chapter 54: Loneliness

Olivia nodded with difficulty.

She doesn't like being separated from me.

She was trying to find peace of mind through me, an Earthling.

But I can't keep holding her in my arms forever.

'If I have her learn bard education, won't it naturally foster independence?'

This is a kind of rehabilitation training.

It's about constantly showing her that she can do something on her own, making her able to endure even when I'm not around.

Olivia thinks her only weapon is knowledge about the labyrinth.

I'm giving her another weapon. The weapon of music.

"Okay, it's decided. Let's start from tomorrow."

"Okay.."

I can't take Olivia into the labyrinth anyway.

So it's better to have her work as a bard outside.

I can't waste manpower.

The labyrinth city isn't very kind to those who don't work and just eat for free.

"Shall we eat dinner and rest now?"

"Um.. Could you.. maybe.. wash me..?"

"Hm? Ah. It must be hard to wash alone. Sure. Why not."

Yesterday Yuria helped her, but today Yuria isn't here.

It's my job to wash Olivia.

After eating dinner with her, I headed to the bathroom.

When living at the inn, even washing every day was a chore.

Going to the well and washing with cold water was the daily routine.

But this house is different.

The bathroom structure is somewhat like a traditional Japanese bathroom.

If you light a fire in the furnace behind the house, the water in the bathtub warms up.

There was enough firewood to last until next spring.

Once I light the fire, the water should heat up quickly.

"Wait in the bathroom first. I'll light the fire and come back."

"Um, I'm sorry for troubling you.."

"It's fine. I wanted to get in the bathtub after a while too."

I lit the fire in the furnace connected to the bathroom with a flint.

Lighting fires was quick because I've been using flints like eating meals for the past 6 months.

Steam rose from the water.

If it gets too hot, I can mix in cold water to adjust the temperature.

"Alright, I'll undress you first."

"Okay..."

I took off the brown shirt Olivia was wearing.

Olivia was a bit shy, but she quietly waited for me to undress her.

Olivia trembling slightly.

Her reaction was interesting.

She feels shame at having her clothes removed by someone else, but on the other hand, she looks somewhat excited.

Is she happy about being undressed by me?

I'm not sure what she's thinking, but I decided to finish taking off her pants and underwear too.

"Olivia."

"Yes..."

"Hmm. Have you thought about hair removal?"

"H-hair removal...?"

"Yeah. It's grown quite bushy."

If there's too much hair, it's difficult to manage.

"Let's do hair removal, shall we?"

"Um.. It's hard for me to do it alone..."

"I'll do it for you."

"Okay...!?"

"Here, sit down."

I sat Olivia on a chair of appropriate height.

It's not that I have a hair removal fetish or anything.

But still, if there's too much hair, it's a bit much, right?

'I promised to do hair removal for Yuria too. I'll practice on Olivia first.'

Right, I promised to do it for Yuria too.

This is a necessary process to get closer in my own way.

"Alright, spread your legs slightly. That's it."

"L-like this....? It's so embarrassing..."

"It's okay. We're living under the same roof, what's the big deal."

"Ugh..."

Olivia was embarrassed but finally spread her legs slightly.

I quickly brought a razor and soap to make lather.

'This is kind of sexy.'

It's absolutely not that I have any bad thoughts.

How should I put it, you know. When someone's naked with their legs spread, it can't help but be sexy.

"I'll apply the lather."

"Okay...."

Olivia's voice seemed to be getting smaller and smaller.

I applied lather to her pubic area.

I rubbed the area covered with fat that protects the uterus, following the curve of the pubic bone.

As I gently rubbed the mound covered with pubic hair while applying lather, Olivia slightly bit her lower lip.

"Uuh..."

Her reaction is interesting.

Even though it's not a particularly sensitive area, Olivia seemed to be feeling something just from the fact that someone was touching her pubic area.

"Alright, I'm going to use the razor now. You need to stay still."

"Okay.. Uh..."

I lightly placed the razor and gently scraped.

Olivia's hair fell down mixed with the lather.

It would be a big problem if I hurt her by being too rough.

I scraped off her pubic hair with the razor blade, being as careful as possible not to cause any injuries.

"Okay, it's done. It might sting a little."

"Is it all finished...?"

"Yeah. It's clean now."

Not a single hair remained.

As I satisfyingly stroked the clean mound, Olivia suddenly grabbed my hand.

"I-it's embarrassing..."

"Oops. Sorry. I got carried away because I did such a good job."

"Ah... Hahaha. What's that about."

I ended up stroking it because I was so satisfied with how well I did the hair removal.

"Alright, sit here. I'll wash your hair."

"Thank you... Um, since coming to the labyrinth city.. This is my first time experiencing such luxury.."

Warm water and soap.

She's moved just by these two things.

After washing Olivia's hair, I put her in the bathtub.

It was big enough for two people, so I got in facing her.

"Ah..."

Olivia accidentally touched me while fidgeting with her feet.

"S-sorry..."

"It's fine."

I grabbed Olivia's foot.

"Ah...!"

What tiny feet.

Yuria's were a bit big, but Olivia's feet were small like her small build.

She's small all over.

Her breasts are small too. Her face is tiny.

"You need to eat more. You're all bones."

"Ah.."

Being close, I keep wanting to touch her.

"You can wear this as clothes. It might be a bit big, but it should be good as pajamas."

"Is this... perhaps your clothes, master?"

"Yeah. It's my pajamas, but let's have you wear it to sleep tonight."

"Okay..!"

Olivia seemed somehow happy when I lent her my clothes.

The sun has set.

It's time to sleep now.

"Well then, good night."

"Okay.. Um.. Do we have to sleep hugging tightly?"

"Yeah. We have to."

To prevent the city's earth-bound spirits or whatever Loa from getting involved, it's necessary to sleep with someone else.

But since I don't know the exact criteria for this sleeping together, I decided to just sleep hugging. I don't want to risk anything bad happening by keeping a distance.

As I hugged Olivia and closed my eyes, fatigue soon washed over me.

Maybe because I had a full day today, I'm getting sleepy quickly.

It's better to go to bed early if I want to start moving again tomorrow.

"Um... Master..?"

Olivia called out to Sion.

Of course, Sion, who had fallen asleep as soon as he lay down, didn't respond.

"Hello... Are you asleep..?"

Olivia tried calling out to Sion again, but still there was no response.

"Hehe..."

Olivia confirmed that Sion was asleep.

She grinned.

"He... Hehe..."

Olivia turned her body to face Sion, who was hugging her from behind.

"Just falling asleep right away... isn't that... a bit much..."

Olivia had secretly hoped that Sion would touch her tonight.

Because anxiety can sometimes be relieved through intercourse.

While receiving hair removal, Olivia started thinking she wanted to mix bodies with Sion as he caressed her.

At first, she thought she would inevitably lose her purity since she became a slave.

But after being with him for two days, she realized Sion was more of a gentleman than she had imagined.

His kindness was charming.

He had a tendency to speak bluntly, but his actions were not like that.

"If you're so nice... to just anyone... You'll get stabbed in the back later... Like me.."

Olivia whispered, nestled in Sion's arms with sad eyes.

You shouldn't trust just anyone.

You shouldn't carelessly give your affection to others.

This was the truth Olivia had learned in the labyrinth city.

"Just in case... so no strange people get close... I'll... watch over you from beside you..."

Olivia had one more ability she hadn't told Sion about.

Her sound wave detection can discern lies from others.

It requires a high level of concentration, but somehow, if the distance is close, she could feel that a person's heartbeat trembles subtly when they lie.

Through this subtle trembling, she can tell whether the other person is lying or telling the truth.

It's a subsidiary effect of sound wave detection, and a new function Olivia discovered.

As Raphanel said.

Abilities are ultimately tools, and these tools can have completely different effects depending on the user.

Just as Sion's spirit vision goes beyond simply seeing and enables possession and regression.

Somehow, Olivia's sound wave detection allowed her to sense the heartbeat of subjects at extremely close range, and through this, she could distinguish whether they were lying or telling the truth.

"You... didn't lie to me.."

When she asked if he wouldn't abandon her, he answered that he wouldn't.

It was clearly the truth. Sion will not abandon her. Even if she loses her usefulness.

That was enough.

"I'm not sure if I dare to have romantic feelings for you.. but I'm confident I can do my best.. I don't want to be alone.. Loneliness is.."

For intelligent beings, the emotion of loneliness is a curse that doesn't disappear until death comes.

That's why intelligent beings form relationships with others and build societies to avoid being consumed by loneliness.

Olivia had cut herself off from the world until she met Sion.

She had the idea that she would return to Earth someday and that she was fundamentally different from the humans of this world.

Because of that, Olivia was always lonely.

She thought no one could understand her.

This cursedly cruel world always pushed her to the edge.

Every time she was consumed by the feeling of loneliness, Olivia's mind crumbled a little more.

It's different now.

Someone who understands her situation has appeared.

A person who can remember and recall Earth.

Only Sion. She can't do without him anymore. Only Sion can soothe this terrible loneliness of hers.

She doesn't mind if he makes love with other women.

Whether as a legal wife or concubine, it doesn't matter.

She just wanted.

For him to always be by her side, erasing this terrible loneliness.

For that, she could do anything.

# Chapter 55: Bug Hunting

While Sion and Olivia were asleep.

The night grew deeper.

And especially in the slums where darkness lay thicker, those who had turned their backs on the world were moving around silently.

"Ugh.... My head.."

A man soaked in alcohol was walking through an alley in the slum's shantytown.

He was scum who enjoyed making vagrant children beg and using the money they collected to buy alcohol.

From his perspective, the dregs of the slums were no different from bugs.

Bugs that were fun to play with. They had no value beyond that.

A man with such a dirty personality that it wouldn't be strange if he was stabbed to death by vagrant children at any time.

Four men with covered faces approached him.

"What the hell. You bastards. Are you trying to jump me now?"

The man shouted in his drunken state.

He had adapted to mana quite well and was confident in his fist-fighting skills.

Although he had lost the courage to enter the labyrinth after losing two fingers.

He was scum well-versed in exploiting those with lives as low as his own.

Known as a notorious ruffian even in the slums, he thought he could easily take down these men who came to find him at this hour.

"You crazy bastards who've lost your minds? You think I'd be scared just because you come at night! You must think four people can take down one person. Not a chance. You maggots. Alright, come and die today."

The man's fist tensed.

He used to be an adventurer back in the day.

He had about two abilities, and he was confident he could take down any number of cripples from the slums, whether four or five jumped him.

He had done it several times already.

There had been plenty who tried to kill a drunk man in the dead of night.

Experience-based arrogance gave him courage.

Not realizing it was recklessness, the man rushed towards the four men who were silently staring at him.

"Huh?"

His chest feels hot.

The man blankly looked down at his chest, feeling pain as if burned by fire.

"W-what's this."

Somehow a knife was stuck in his chest.

A dagger with a pitch-black blade.

It seemed the blade was deliberately dyed black to prevent it from reflecting moonlight.

He didn't even see the knife being stabbed. There was such a huge gap that he couldn't even feel the movement.

"Cough...."

Before he could stop them, the men rushed in and stabbed knives into the man's body.

They stabbed daggers indiscriminately before he could even resist.

Judging by their lack of hesitation, they were men well-versed in killing people.

He flailed and swung his fists, but they didn't touch the men's bodies.

Only then did the man realize.

That these masked men were several levels above him.

They were at least silver badge level strong ones.

After realizing this fact, he wondered.

Why would silver badge level strong ones, and four of them at that, come all the way to the slums at such a late hour to kill him?

There was no good reason.

Although he had exploited some vagrant children and dregs of the slums, he had never once caused trouble in the open.

He had lived quietly oppressing the weak in the shadows.

Why would four silver badge level strong ones come to swing knives at him?

It didn't make economic sense.

With enough money to hire four silver badge level strong ones, it would be better to leave the slums.

The man couldn't understand at all.

He hadn't done anything noticeable enough to deserve being killed so brutally.

"Gah..!"

Finally, a pitch-black dagger pierced the man's heart.

The man wanted to scream belatedly, but.

Now he couldn't even make a proper breathing sound.

Because another dagger pierced through his back.

Blood fills his lungs.

His scream sank, drowned in the muffled blood.

"Guhk."

Bright red blood filled his chest and burst out through his mouth.

His sense of smell was paralyzed by the scent of blood strong enough to erase the smell of alcohol.

The man had to collapse, retching at the smell of his own blood.

Despite hearing his voice, the slum dwellers in the shacks didn't come out.

The man was usually a nuisance who enjoyed making a ruckus while drunk.

There was no need or loyalty to come out and check the situation.

Everyone in the alley wished for the man's death.

Stab.

Stab.

Stab.

Only the noise of clothes tearing and skin being ripped spread through the alley dyed in darkness.

Only the unpleasant sound of muscles being cut and bones breaking soothed the silence.

The mutilation of the fallen man continued for a while.

It was a kind of ritual.

An offering beyond murder.

Perhaps it was a game.

Like catching a bug and tearing off its limbs.

The heretics also mutilated the dead man's body with joy.

As if crushing and tearing apart a bug to kill it.

"Haa.. Haa.."

"Take the head. Dissolve the body."

"Yes.."

The men pulled off the bright red head of the slum dweller.

Then they sprayed acid solution on the remaining body to dissolve it.

The corpse of the dead slum dweller melted completely and seeped into the ground, disappearing.

Only bloodstains remained at the entrance of the alley.

They were deeply satisfied that they had prevented the slum dweller's resurrection.

Since the body was gone, he could never be revived.

Even that head would be taken to the labyrinth.

The nameless slum dweller would face permanent death.

"This makes five."

"Still not enough."

The man wearing a veil spread his fingers to count the sacrifices.

The man wearing a mask made of goblin skin shook his head.

Five wasn't enough.

They needed to take two more.

More sacrifices were needed to open the door.

More abilities were needed.

-Crash.

While the men were choosing their next target, the sound of a glass bottle breaking was heard.

Someone had walked into this darkness.

The men all turned their heads to stare in the direction the sound came from.

They sensed a presence. One person.

"It's an ability holder. Catch them."

At the words of the man wearing a goat mask, they hid in the darkness again.

If they just catch two more ability holders, they can return to the cozy labyrinth.

They had to meet their quota even if it meant pushing themselves.

Otherwise, they would have to face the morning outside the labyrinth.

The children of Hawa drew daggers from the shadows.

They silently welcomed the one who had come into the alley dyed in darkness on their own feet.

It was a beggar.

An unsightly beggar wearing only a ragged straw mat.

A faint energy was felt.

A faint energy that suggested he had adapted to mana about 2 or 3 times.

Moreover, from the smell of alcohol emanating from the beggar, they could easily tell that this one was also soaked in alcohol.

Like the man they had just killed, he was probably a slum dweller living a lowlife after giving up on being an adventurer.

There were plenty of such people in the slums.

Those who live recklessly, intoxicated by old nostalgia, with the vague abilities they obtained when they were active as adventurers.

They were like cracked blades, weak enough to break at any moment.

Lowlifes that the silver badge level strong men didn't need to fear, who could be crushed at any time.

The children of Hawa, as before, drew their knives to gather sacrifices and rushed towards the beggar.

Melting into the darkness, they charged like arrows.

He would lose his life without even being able to resist.

That nameless beggar was no different from the sixth offering.

BANG-!!

"!?"

The head of the man wearing a veil was smashed into the ground.

He flailed at the impact that shattered his face.

He couldn't even react to the beggar's movement.

An impossible speed, and furthermore, a terrifyingly strong force.

Gold badge? No. Above that.

"...!!!"

The beggar left the fallen heretic and crushed the jaw of the heretic trying to stab his back with his elbow.

Only then did the children of Hawa realize that their opponent was no ordinary beggar.

That beggar-like appearance was a trap.

The faint energy was also a disguise to lure them in.

They noticed too late.

The guild's hound had caught their scent.

It was too late to run away.

Spider webs had already spread throughout the entire alley.

"You there. Fox mask. Stop right there."

At the beggar's voice, the heretic trying to escape stopped in his tracks.

To inform others of their existence, at least one person needed to escape alive.

But they were already moths caught in a spider's web.

A thread hung around the neck of the fox mask.

Silver thread so thin it was invisible to the eye.

It was hanging everywhere like a spider's web.

Move and your head will fly off.

It was a trap set by the guild's spider.

"I came because the smell of blood was so strong. How many have you eaten?"

No one answered the spider's question.

They weren't the type to spill information even if they died.

The spider knew this too.

The heretics were notorious for keeping their mouths shut.

They would never open their mouths through ordinary methods.

So they had to be captured and subjected to extraordinary methods.

"I declare. You will eventually open your mouths."

The spider smiles.

Kill and resurrect.

Wound and heal.

There's no problem if they're fed drugs to make them spill the truth.

It's something he's done countless times.

There hasn't been anyone who threatened the city and was caught by the spider's hands who didn't spill information.

"Ugh...."

The heretics thought.

The worst situation would be dying, being resurrected, and being dragged to the torture chamber.

Being tortured isn't a problem.

Pain is also part of the path of enlightenment.

However, what they truly feared was leaking information about their comrades during that process of pain.

They were going to die anyway.

If they die, they'll be resurrected and dragged away.

Then not being resurrected would be the best option.

Death was the expected course.

The heretics all finished their thoughts at once.

Their bodies must not remain intact to die by this person's hands.

Their flesh had to be destroyed and annihilated.

Because they wouldn't be able to withstand leaking information in the torture chamber.

The heretics activated magic without chanting.

The marks engraved on the back of their heads glowed slightly.

Their heads and upper bodies will fly off simultaneously.

The body will be destroyed to the point where it can't be resurrected.

The spider realized they were trying to self-destruct.

If they self-destruct and the corpse is damaged, he won't be able to revive them, so he has to kill them before they die.

"Oh no."

As the spider twitched his left hand, the fox mask's head flew off.

He couldn't kill the others.

The heretics' blood and flesh that burst out in all directions created a blood mist.

The alley instantly became a mess with fragments of the exploded heretics.

"Nasty bastards. Alchemy, huh."

The spider picked up the fox mask's corpse, which remained relatively intact.

He managed to kill one in time.

Even this was quite a harvest.

"I wonder why they were trying to take only the heads."

The spider took out the 5 heads that were in the men's sacks.

There was no commonality in age, gender, or race.

However, the fact that they were all former adventurers would be revealed later.

The fact that they were specifically hunting those with abilities would also be revealed.

Heretics who were subjugated long ago and resurrected in the labyrinth in that era are now sneaking into the streets.

The four entrances connected to the labyrinth are under strict surveillance.

They must be under 24-hour surveillance to respond immediately if anything crawls out.

Nevertheless, heretics crawled up. Like cockroaches.

They must clearly have some means that the guild hasn't figured out yet.

Either sending up souls to possess people's bodies, or a new entrance has appeared.

Or there might be a helper in the city assisting them.

The possibility of a helper is very high.

Or the spider couldn't ignore the possibility that besides the labyrinth entrances that exist one each in the east, west, north, and south of the city,

another entrance might have appeared.

"I'll find out if I revive him."

He was confident in extracting information.

If he revives the fox mask, he might be able to get some clues.

The spider melted into the darkness, carrying the corpse.

The platinum badge monster headed towards the church carrying the heretic's corpse.

# Chapter 56: Time for Growth

"Ugh. Olivia."

"Snore... Snore..."

"Her sleeping habits are no joke either."

When I opened my eyes, Olivia's arm was on my face.

I thought she would sleep quietly, but her sleeping habits are as bad as drunk Yuria's.

It's probably because she feels at ease.

I washed Olivia's face, who was still half asleep, dressed her, and went outside.

Today I planned to take Olivia to the bard training school.

Holding Olivia's hand, I walked down the street and entered a building where music could be heard.

This is the bard training school. It can be considered a place where all the musicians of the labyrinth city gather.

We were able to talk with the director of the training school.

"I'd like her to be taught lute playing."

"A blind person, huh. That's a bit..."

"Are you discriminating against her because of her disability?"

"No, that's not it. To teach a blind person, you need to be in close contact. To teach someone who can't see, you have to directly guide their hands."

"Close contact..."

"Yes. From what I see, this slave friend. She's your what, lover? Something like that. It wouldn't be good for another man to be in close contact. Feelings develop easily. It only takes a moment for feelings to develop just from touching hands."

"What are you talking about!"

Preposterous!

To think the bard training school was a den of inappropriate relationships.

"No, my friend. Why are you shouting? I'm seriously warning you. Having a good voice is basic for bards. If someone with a good voice stays close and chatters next to a friend who can't see, don't you think her heart would open up?"

"Huh."

The conversation with the director of the bard training school was terrible.

He said the basic conditions for bards are good looks and a pleasant voice.

Male bards who meet these two conditions were like walking generators of inappropriate relationships.

These crazy people.

So it was these bastards who released charmers into the labyrinth city.

"This is rotten."

"Um..."

"Hm? Ah. Sorry. No, I'm angry. He's saying they go around touching all the women with their faces and voices. Aren't you angry?"

"I... won't fall for other men."

"Ah, of course I know that. I trust you. I trust you, Olivia. But I can't trust those bard bastards."

The bard training school director is right.

When men and women get close and share musical empathy, naturally they want to hold hands, kiss, and sleep together.

Songs and dances are the most fundamental courtship behaviors in human history.

The desire to have children with humans who dance well and sing well is deeply embedded in human genes.

I can order a slave not to be distracted by others, but I can't control her inner feelings.

I didn't want to make her develop feelings for other men unnecessarily.

"Sigh. The bard training school won't work. I can't leave you, Olivia, among those men."

"Are you... worried about me..?"

"Of course. You're mine. I'd be angry if some other guy touched you carelessly."

If some unknown bastard touches a brand new slave I bought for 22 gold without permission, then there will be one more corpse in the labyrinth city.

I don't want to clean up corpses.

Moreover, if I decide to kill someone, I can leave no trace.

If I put all the evidence in my spatial pocket and forget about it, the corpse of the dead person will never be found again.

"Hehehe...."

When I got angry, Olivia clung to my arm more tightly.

I'm not sure what she's so happy about, but it's good that she seems to be in a good mood.

"Hmm. If you really want to teach that friend an instrument. I know one more place."

"Really?"

"Yes. They don't specialize in instruments, but they have the skills to teach."

"Where is that?"

"The Druid Club."

"The Druid Club?"

Calling it a club makes it sound a bit shabby.

Not a druid gathering or association, but a club?

"Yes. It's quite a large gathering, almost as big as the witch assemblies. It's a place where various races gather to exchange their cultures and skills. There are many druids there who know how to handle instruments."

It seemed that due to the druids' characteristic of not wanting to form deep human relationships, they created a club that could be disbanded at any time.

"Is it safe there?"

"Most of those who want to become bards ultimately aim for women. But druids are different. Should I say they're more decent? There are many friends with somewhat poor social skills. That's how druids are, right? They're closer to nature than the human world. You could say they value mental connection more than physical relationships. Even if feelings develop, it usually ends at the level of mental connection."

It seems like a much safer place to teach Olivia than the bard training school.

'Horaru wasn't very interested in romance or human relationships either.'

Horaru was only interested in honey.

Thinking that even Horaru joined the druid club makes me feel somewhat relieved.

If he hadn't been mentally controlled by the warlock, he would have been a truly harmless bear.

"I understand for now. We'll go to the druid club."

"Alright. Take care. Ah, by the way, don't go to the slum area. It seems a terrible murder case has occurred."

Nodding at the director's words, I left the training school.

Perhaps the director could be considered a benefactor.

He prevented a problematic situation before it could occur.

If I had carelessly left Olivia among the bards without knowing, she might have experienced something unpleasant, and I might have ended up killing a bard.

"This seems to be the druid club."

"What kind of building is it...?"

"It's a building covered in trees and plants. There must be a lot of insects in summer."

I didn't know such a building existed because I rarely had a reason to come to this neighborhood.

No, rather than a building, it looked like a house made by carving a huge tree.

Trees are growing on the tree, and flowers and plants are abundant.

It was a structure with an atmosphere quite different from the surrounding buildings.

"Hm? Sion!"

"Oh! Mr. Horaru!"

"Hello. Who's that next to you?"

"Ah, this is Olivia, a friend I brought recently."

"I see."

Horaru nodded after checking the collar around Olivia's neck.

You can tell someone is a slave if they have a collar around their neck, even without explicitly saying so.

"What brings you here? Are you hiring a druid? Want help?"

"Ah, no. I want to teach this child an instrument."

"Hm? Instrument? Don't you know where the bard training school is?"

"Ah, well. Those bard guys aren't very trustworthy."

"Ah... Because she's a girl. I see. Understood. Follow me."

This is fortunate.

I feel reassured knowing someone here.

Olivia and I followed Horaru to the leftmost room on the second floor of the druid club building.

As we got closer, we could hear the lute sound Olivia had mentioned.

It was a very pleasant performance.

While bards might play somewhat frivolously to stand out, the person in that room seemed to be handling the instrument simply because they loved music.

"Tiny. It's me."

"Hm? Horaru?"

When the door opened, a small badger was sitting in a chair.

It's my first time seeing a badger beastkin.

The proportion of beastkin was overwhelmingly high among druids.

"Here. This friend is a master of string instruments."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Sion. And this is Olivia."

"No, wait... Horaru. Who are these humans?"

"This blind friend wants to learn an instrument."

"So you introduced me?"

"Yes. You're good at string instruments."

"...Look, Horaru... I've already greeted two new people this month. If I expand my human relationships any further, I'll get dizzy."

"Sion here is my benefactor. If it weren't for him, I would have died in the labyrinth. Please help a bit."

"Sigh..."

The badger beastkin named Tiny put down the lute he was holding and extended his hand to me and Olivia.

"If he's Horaru's benefactor, I guess I have no choice. I'm Tiny. I'm an ordinary person who knows a bit about instruments."

The moment I shook his hand, I could tell.

He doesn't feel ordinary at all.

This person is a hidden master.

"So. I just need to teach this blind young lady an instrument?"

"Yes. She can sing quite well."

"Is that so? Hmm. Can you sing a short verse lightly?"

"Olivia, can you do it?"

"Yes.. Um, which song should I sing..?"

"The one you're most confident in."

"Okay..!"

Olivia cleared her throat for a moment and then sang "High Hopes" without accompaniment.

Although it was a song sung in a language no one but me and Olivia knew, Tiny and Horaru soon closed their eyes and appreciated the song.

"...."

"How was it?"

"Was that a song from your hometown?"

"Oh.. Yes.."

It is a hometown song since it's an Earth song.

"We'll start lessons from today. Your talent is excellent."

Tiny nodded and said to start lessons.

He seems to have really liked Olivia's singing.

He even said he wouldn't charge separate tuition fees.

He said he purely developed a desire to teach.

"Hehe. It's the first time I've seen Tiny react like that."

"Really?"

"Yes. He's a stoic person who doesn't express much emotion. He must have liked it. She sings well."

"That's good."

Horaru also highly praised Olivia's singing.

I knew she would be popular.

"I'll come pick you up later. Learn well."

"Yes..!"

With Horaru here.

And Tiny seeming like a stoic master type, I think I can trust and leave her here.

By the way, I feel a bit like a father.

Why do I feel good when Olivia gets praised?

'Well then...'

I should head to the martial arts hall too.

I need to take warrior lessons from the muscular barbarian Gon, who seems like he'd be good at rock-paper-scissors.

"Sion! You came."

"Rica. You're here today too."

"My body was burning up, I couldn't stand it."

When I went to the martial arts hall, Rica was in the middle of lifting weights.

Judging by how she was already drenched in sweat, it seemed she had been exercising for a while.

"Starting lessons today?"

"Yes. I need to train hard from today. But Mr. Gon hasn't arrived yet. He must be eating."

"I see. Then want to exercise with me for a bit?"

"I'll just warm up a bit."

"Good, good. Here, take these dumbbells."

Seeming happy to have found an exercise buddy, Rica lightly showed me the postures.

With zero experience in weightlifting, I followed Rica's instructions and felt my back and side muscles tighten.

"Good. Very good. Back muscles are important. If your posture collapses, you'll be vulnerable to enemies. That's right. Just one more. Good. Just one more!"

"Ugh...!!!!"

"That's it! Don't you feel your muscles tightening?"

"They're... tightening..!"

"That's it! That's exactly it. Good. Sion, let's increase the weight. A bit more. A bit more!"

"This is crazy..!!!"

Rica, this person is insane.

She's trying to push me to my limits.!!

"Hmm. Quite good. Mister, have you exercised for a long time?"

"Hm? Ah. I've been trained since I was young."

"I see. Very good. Yes, Sion. That's it. One more from there."

"Ugh.. Mr. Gon.. You too.."

At some point, Gon, who had finished lunch, came and was observing my movements along with Rica.

The two of them are getting along perfectly.

"A warrior should have lots of muscles. With lots of muscles, you can withstand even being stabbed by a sword."

"That's right. Gon's words are correct. With lots of muscles, you gain the endurance to withstand even broken bones."

"Exactly that. As this female knight says, ultimately the most important thing is overwhelming muscles. Technique? Before that, muscles need to keep up. Let's build stamina too. After this is done, 30 laps around the training ground."

"Damn...!!!"

Exercise and more exercise.

"Better than muscles is even bigger muscles!"

"Move. Even if you fall, get up and lift weights again."

"Hey. Is this bastard resting now?"

"Is this why you paid money to come to the martial arts hall! Don't waste money, stand up."

"Argh...!!!"

"Endure through evil."

"This is the path of the warrior you chose. Bear it."

"How about increasing the weight?"

"Sion, you can do it, right? No need to answer."

"You... bastards... Stop!!!!"

"Muscles grow when they're torn."

"It's important to push right to the brink of destruction. We're specialists."

"Does it hurt? Pain will make you stronger."

"The pain that doesn't kill you will ultimately elevate you to a better level, so lift the dumbbells."

"Sion. You can do it. Just one more."

"Stretching is important too. Let's loosen up those muscles."

"Argh!!!!!"

Pain.

Suffering.

And muscles.

At some point, their voices seemed to be replaced entirely with the word "muscles".

Is this exercise?

Isn't this torture?

"Isn't it?"

"What are you saying. You've rested for 5 minutes, now stand up."

"Ugh."

Tears came out.

Maybe it's sweat.

# Chapter 57: Assault

The black market where people of various races roam around.

After being tormented by Gon and Rica all day, I stopped by briefly before going to pick up Olivia.

"I heard it was around here.."

I need to find the voodoo practitioner.

I had to find a way to block those things called Loa that I saw that day.

"This must be it."

While wandering the black market, I found a shop decorated with skulls and covered in somewhat dangerous-looking paintings.

This is the voodoo supplies specialty shop.

"Hello."

"Welcome."

As I entered, a bald black man glanced at me.

Maybe because he was a black man covered in piercings and tattoos, he looked somewhat scary.

I should say he gave off a strong feeling of being truly versed in voodoo.

Voodoo is like South American shamanism, right?

It felt like I might get cursed in my sleep if I offended this man.

"Um, I came here recommended by Raphanel."

When I took out the letter of recommendation Raphanel gave me and handed it to the voodoo practitioner, he examined the paper for a while and then asked with a serious expression.

"If she sent you, something must have happened. What's the matter?"

"Well, you see."

I explained to him about what I saw.

About the three villainesses and what they tried to do to me.

"What, the villainesses just teased you and left?"

"Yes. Is this perhaps a serious situation?"

"It's serious if you consider it serious. Looked at differently, it could also be an opportunity. There are those who practice austerities their whole lives to communicate with Loa."

"I don't particularly want to communicate with them."

"Then try using this."

The voodoo practitioner handed me a small wooden box.

"It's a substitute doll."

"A substitute doll?"

"Yes. A doll that will endure the villainesses' mischief in your place. When you get home, put your lips to the doll's mouth and blow in your breath. Then the villainesses won't be able to distinguish between you and the doll. They'll torment the substitute doll instead of you."

"Is that really true! Oh!"

Yes, this is what I wanted.

A tool that will cleanly solve the problem I'm currently facing.

"But you need to check on the doll occasionally."

"I just need to check on it?"

"Yes. If you find the doll torn, come to me without fail. If it's dyed a different color, make sure to wash it. If it's not washed, they'll notice it's a doll. And if the doll disappears from the wooden box.. you've already been found out. There's no way if you can't find the doll before night comes."

"I guess I need to check this every day."

"Yes. And make sure to take the wooden box with you when you enter the labyrinth. Then there should be no problem."

"I understand."

If I had to sleep in the labyrinth, I needed to put the wooden box in my spatial pocket.

"The price is 1 gold."

"That's more expensive than I thought."

"This is cheap. I'm only charging the cost price because you're an acquaintance of Raphanel."

"I see.."

"That doll. It's quite valuable. It's very difficult to make."

Still, 1 gold is much cheaper than the price of a life.

"If you keep seeing the three sisters, come back again. We'll try a different method then. And even if they speak to you, never answer. The moment you answer means you're willing to 'communicate'. Even if they find out you can see them. You must not answer. If you answer, they'll keep tormenting you."

"I understand. I'll keep that in mind."

I left the shop carrying the wooden box containing the doll.

I felt relieved with this.

I felt at ease thinking I had solved all the immediate problems.

It's already the 4th day of frequenting the martial arts hall.

For the past 3 days, I've been doing nothing but physical training under Gon and Rica.

It seems I've learned how to increase muscle rather than how to fight.

Somehow it feels like muscles are growing quickly and my body is gradually changing.

Judging by the results showing in just 3 days, I think Shaka's legacy might be taking effect.

Anyway, as muscles grow, it definitely feels satisfying to exercise.

"You're a friend with fast muscle growth. Maybe being a warrior was your true calling."

"You didn't seem to approve at first."

"At that time, I didn't know muscles would grow this fast."

Gon seemed to quite like me.

He grins every time he sees me.

"By the way, Rica isn't here today."

"I'm not sure either. She didn't come."

"I see."

She was always lifting weights alone in the martial arts hall.

It seems something came up today.

Come to think of it, I don't think I've seen the young lady since that day either.

Yuria hasn't returned yet either.

I'm also living a busy life, exercising all day and falling asleep as soon as I get home.

Everyone is spending their time diligently.

"Um, I think I need to enter the labyrinth soon. When will you teach me how to fight?"

"I was planning to start teaching you how warriors fight from today."

"Finally!"

After 4 days, Gon told me to pick up a weapon.

There were 5 weapons in front of me.

These were the weapons Gon could teach.

"One-handed sword and axe. Hammer and club. And shield."

A one-handed sword with a wide blade suitable for slashing, an axe good for splitting skulls.

And a hammer that seems best for crushing bones, and a club that seems to perform above average no matter who uses it.

"Is there something to learn separately for the shield too?"

"Even the act of blocking well requires skill. Always take the shield and then choose one weapon."

"Yes, I understand."

An experienced warrior should be able to handle various weapons.

Unlike swordsmen who focus solely on swords or knights who handle spears based on sword techniques, warriors are those who can use anything as a weapon as long as they can grasp and swing it.

Therefore, it seemed they preferred weapons closer to blunt instruments rather than weapons requiring tremendous skill or proficiency or those with many aspects to delve into.

"The axe is good. It combines the advantages of blunt and sharp weapons. Clubs and maces are good too. Mass is violence."

"What about swords?"

"Swords are good too. You can drain the enemy's stamina by causing bleeding. Actually, anything is good as long as the center of gravity is well balanced."

After deliberating between the sword and axe, I picked up the axe.

It seemed good for both slashing and crushing by pressing down with its mass.

"The axe is an excellent weapon. Traditionally, there's a saying that it's good to wield an axe if you want to talk to monsters."

"What? Really?"

"Really. The axe is the most excellent means of communication. Now then, 300 repetitions of chopping firewood."

"Wait, 300 repetitions of chopping firewood..!?"

"The most important thing in handling an axe is ultimately the sense of splitting the target... feeling the 'grain'."

Gon told me to chop firewood until I could feel the grain.

Following his words, I started chopping the firewood behind the martial arts hall.

He even made me chop firewood while holding a shield, saying I needed to become one with the equipment.

"Can you feel the grain?"

"Something like the timing when it splits well? I think I can feel something like that."

"You understand what the grain is properly. Your learning speed is incredibly fast. Yes, as you said, that feeling of it splitting well is important. If you can grasp that, you can split the opponent in half whether they're wearing armor or harder than stone."

"Oh....!"

"Next, let's realize how to handle a shield."

When he told me to lift the shield, I took the most basic defensive stance I learned from Gon.

"Yes, that stance. Now, from here on, I'll beat it into your body quickly. After all, combat is something you learn by getting hit. From today until the day you enter the labyrinth, it's endless sparring with me along with basic physical training."

"Wait a moment!!!!"

BANG!!!

I lifted the shield more strongly to block Gon's charge.

I definitely blocked it, but my body floated up and was blown backward.

It wasn't something that could be dealt with by simply blocking.

It was the impact of colliding head-on with an oncoming car.

"Ugh."

"Just now, your body's balance was broken. Can't you withstand even this level of charge? Stand up again. Even if your body is blown away, try not to fall as much as possible. If you fall, it's over."

"No, are you telling me to keep balance in mid-air?"

"There are many large creatures in the labyrinth. Even high orcs are bigger than adult human males. Are you going to fall every time you're attacked? You said you wanted to become a warrior. If you're going to collapse so easily, get out and join the swordsman guild."

"Crazy. Your words are harsh. What do you mean skinny swordsman? That's a disgrace to warriors."

"If you don't want to hear insults about becoming a swordsman, stop whining and get up. I learned from my father while being cursed at too, so this is inherited scolding and inherited love. Warriors don't whine."

Gon said he would make me realize how to be pushed back stably without falling.

That was literally a method of learning through the body.

"For an East Asian with a small build like you, guts and stubbornness are essential. Stop falling over and over. If you fall, all your companions behind you will die too. Are you going to throw your companions to the monsters as food?"

"Sigh.. I'll try again."

"Good. Excellent. Endure. Endure. I said endure."

Gon charged at me again.

Even though it was a short distance, the pressure was enormous.

The large barbarian's charge alone was a huge violence.

'This man isn't teaching systematic techniques. I have to learn by getting hit. I need to grasp the senses Shaka left me through Gon.'

I gritted my teeth and stared straight at the charging Gon.

The most important thing for a warrior is ultimately the will to endure.

BANG!!!

Once again, Gon slammed into the shield, and my body floated up and was blown backward.

'If I'm blown away and fall like this, it's over.'

I need to land on both feet without losing balance from the blown-away posture.

Or endure to the end so that the body isn't blown away.

Both are difficult for me right now.

"Ugh..!"

I fell backward again.

As my back hit the ground, my lungs were compressed and my breath burst out.

I coughed incessantly and my vision spun.

"Does it hurt? Don't savor the pain. Swallow it and get up quickly."

"Ugh.. Isn't this teaching method too crude?"

"Don't question my teaching. If you will it, it can be done. That's the mindset of a warrior. Did you truly try to endure? Didn't you give up? You were scared of my charge. Why were you scared? This isn't a place where you can run away even if you want to. Endure to the end. There are companions behind you."

"Haa.. Damn it."

I stood up again.

"Keep your balance properly. Why do you give up on balancing when you know you'll be blown away anyway? Don't give up. Stand up. I'm going again."

For the next 2 hours, I literally practiced only enduring, and by the time the practice shield was tattered, I was able to stand on two legs after taking Gon's charge.

"Ha! You endured. To think you could do this in just one day. You're certainly fast. When your body is blown away by an opponent of a higher weight class. You just learned how to keep balance and not fall. Don't forget that sensation. You have enough muscle strength. If you have the will to endure, you can endure."

"Um, my back hurts too much."

"Don't exaggerate. We're moving on to the next stage."

"Next stage?"

"Yes. This time, you knock me down."

"What? Me? No, how is that..."

"You're questioning my words again. If you try, you can do it. Don't question. If I say you can do it, you can do it."

"Damn..."

After that, I kept repeating the action of charging at Gon.

"Put more strength into it! In the end, being a warrior is all about not falling and knocking others down!"

"Is that all there is to it? You bastard who only eats and mates."

"Oh my. Are you charging mindlessly without putting strength in your waist again?"

"Are you lacking in intelligence? If weight doesn't work, aim for my legs. Is your weapon just for decoration!"

"You bastard! You're not coming straight! Ram into me! Your charge has no soul! You inadequate fool."

Gon mercilessly pushed me away, struck me, and blew me away as I charged at him.

"Haa. Shit."

Curses come out naturally.

My body felt so heavy that it was hard to even stand up.

"Whew. Let's stop here for today. Still, you pushed me back a little just now. Your learning speed is fast. Excellent."

"Yes.. Thank you.."

He pushed me mercilessly during the strict training, but always praised the parts that deserved praise when the training ended.

How should I put it. He was truly like a master.

"So when are you entering the labyrinth?"

"In two days... no. I think in three days."

"Is that so? Come every day for the remaining three days. In addition to the enduring and pushing back I taught you today, I'll further develop your ability to shout battle cries, unyielding spirit, and pain tolerance."

"Ah, um.. Wednesday might be difficult."

"Why?"

"I need to go to the magic tower..."

"I see. Then I'll beat as much as I can into you in the remaining two days. How far into the labyrinth are you planning to go?"

"For now, just the 1st or 2nd floor of the upper levels."

"Aren't you skilled enough to go down to the 4th floor? If you form a good team, even the underground city might be possible?"

"For now, the underground city area is still under control so we can't go down.. and I have friends I need to guide right away. They haven't fully adapted to mana, so we can't go below the 2nd floor."

"So you're a guide. I see. Training newcomers is tough. Good luck. Clean up everything before you leave."

"Yes..."

Gon left abruptly.

After catching my breath for a moment, I got up, cleaned up, and left the martial arts hall.

The sun is setting. It's evening.

I need to go pick up Olivia quickly.

Tiny, Olivia's music teacher, should have gone home by now, so Olivia is probably waiting for me alone, eagerly.

I quickly walked towards the building where the druid club was located to hurry and pick up Olivia.

'I should take a shortcut.'

It seemed I needed to take a shortcut to get there before it got too late.

If I cut through the alleyway, I could go straight to the druid club building without having to go around.

I want to quickly bring Olivia home, eat dinner, and rest.

My muscles hurt too much. Especially my back ached so much it was hard to stand.

'What should I eat for dinner?'

As I was thinking about dinner while walking quickly through the shortcut.

I heard someone calling me from behind.

-Hey!

It's a woman's voice.

It's a voice I've heard somewhere before.

Ah! I remember. It's definitely.. the voice of one of the three villainesses.

Damn! I turned around!

It was already too late to pretend I didn't hear or notice.

I had unconsciously turned around at the voice I heard.

If it's one of the three villainess sisters as I expected, the best thing to do is to pretend I misheard and continue on my way.

"....!"

But what's this.

Behind me were not villainesses, but men wearing pitch-black masks and black clothes.

The men approaching me stopped in their tracks, perhaps surprised that they were discovered.

I too was so shocked by their appearance that I couldn't move.

The alleyway was quiet.

This place is usually deserted.

There weren't many people passing by.

Probably no one would come looking either.

"Shit."

I immediately drew a weapon from my spatial pocket.

At the same time, three men rushed towards me like arrows being shot.

A pitch-black dagger approaches.

If I couldn't block it properly, I would surely die.

# Chapter 58: Results of Training

Three assailants running towards me from the end of the alley.

The attackers, wrapped in black masks and dark clothes, blending into the darkness, flew at me like rippling shadows.

Instinctively, I drew out the shield from my spatial pocket and blocked the throwing daggers that were shot at me.

Bang!

The daggers thrown by the attackers stuck into the shield I was holding.

The impact was so great that my arm tingled, and I had to take several steps back.

Quite a destructive force. If I hadn't raised the shield in time to block the daggers, they would have pierced my head and chest, killing me.

'These crazy bastards.'

I immediately started to flee.

Unconsciously, I ran away to create distance between myself and them.

I could sense the murderous intent flickering in the eyes of the approaching attackers.

Along with a strong will to catch and kill me, I even felt as if they didn't see people as people.

Could these guys be the culprits behind the recent serial killings in the slums?

Various stories and rumors I had heard recently about several horrific murder cases came to mind.

Although the exact reason wasn't revealed, there were rumors about a group committing murders targeting the poor at night.

Since there were quite a few victims for it to be just a rumor, I vaguely thought that forces outside the Labyrinth City must be up to something.

Considering that Yuria went outside the city for work..

Given the circumstances, I could only think that the kingdom or empire targeting the Labyrinth City had released assassins into the city to cause trouble.

However, facing them directly felt different. The feeling was completely different from the rumors.

It felt more alien, more bizarre.

Something different from saying they were human like me..

That blind murderous intent of theirs showed a one-dimensional obsession that had been felt from the monsters in the labyrinth.

The simple purpose of killing people.

A somewhat inorganic sense of killing because they have to kill, regardless of individual pleasure or satisfaction.

The strangest point would be that I saw something in those guys just before I started fleeing.

My Spirit Eye caught the sense of discomfort wrapped around their bodies.

The three assailants chasing me smelled of the labyrinth.

'No way.'

The worst possibility flashed through my mind.

Through conversations with Olivia, I heard that those things were going to do something.

And through conversations with Raphanel, I heard that they might be able to come out of the labyrinth.

These weren't spies or assassins sent by forces outside the city to increase chaos in the city.

These were evil that had crawled up from the labyrinth.

Things that came up to kill people and extort their souls.

Heretics who believe in improper beings and dedicate their lives to that primordial evil.

These were things that had crawled up from below the level division of the 5th floor Underground City of the labyrinth.

It means they're at least Silver Badge level strong. And three such beings are chasing me.

What will happen if I'm caught?

I had a strong premonition that I wouldn't die peacefully.

'Three Silver Badge levels. I'll be caught up to soon. I need to make a move while there's still some distance.'

What can I do against enemies with an absolute gap in strength that I can never overcome?

I tried shouting for help while running away, but there was no response.

Because hardly anyone walks around this alley that I frequently use.

Most of the buildings built here are warehouses or empty buildings that haven't been filled with goods yet.

It means this is a place where no one would come at this time, even if it might be different during the day.

That's why there were no brave people to appear in response to my calls for help.

But I can't keep running like this either. I'll be caught up to soon.

Their running is faster than the wolf pups in the labyrinth, and I'm gradually running out of stamina.

To begin with, this body had just finished training with Gon until a little while ago.

My stamina is already at rock bottom.

This isn't going to work by just running away.

I had to confront them. But can I handle those crazy bastards alone?

Fear and terror rushed over me.

My chest felt tight and I felt like I couldn't breathe.

'Get a grip. If you're consumed by fear, it's over.'

There's a rumor that no corpse remains when killed by heretics.

The possibility of not even being able to resurrect is high. I absolutely can't be caught by those guys here.

Even if I die, I need to lead the situation so that others can retrieve my corpse.

Then let's use our heads for a moment.

Gon said that the most important thing in battle is momentum, and the next is using all the moves you have.

'Three Silver Badge levels are coming to kill me. It's difficult to win alone, and if I'm caught, there's a high chance not even my corpse will remain.'

Then I should call people who can fight in my place or retrieve my corpse.

But this is a world without cell phones or security buzzers.

Moreover, even if I shout here, my voice won't reach people outside the alley.

So I needed to let people know there was a problem here in the most eye-catching way possible.

What's the best way to attract people's attention on this late night?

It's not hard to think of.

Fireworks are the best for drawing attention on a dark night.

I took out the oil bottles I had stolen after receiving them as conquest team supplies last time from my spatial pocket and threw them in all directions.

It's difficult to shout and let people know I'm in danger, but it's easy to set fires everywhere and gather people mindlessly.

A simple but deadly way of thinking to commit arson since it's difficult to ask for help.

Since there are many warehouse buildings in the alley, wouldn't setting fires minimize human casualties?

Of course, the goods in the warehouses or construction materials might all burn, but it can't be helped.

I don't need to worry about the aftermath. I have to commit arson right now to survive. The heretic bastards will take care of the compensation.

Not setting fires and dying VS Setting fires and surviving.

I chose the latter.

If I've decided, let's not hesitate anymore and just do it.

Since there was no time to light fires with flint, I decided to use scrolls for instant firepower.

I took out the scrolls that Rien and Lady Lea had packed for me and recklessly tore them, sending fireballs flying towards the oil-soaked ground.

BOOM!!!

The fireballs exploded properly.

As the fire spread, hazy smoke rose into the night sky.

Arson successful.

The warehouses will burn brightly.

I'm really sorry to the warehouse owners, but this isn't my fault.

It's the fault of those heretic bastards trying to ambush people in the middle of the night, so I'm not guilty at all.

"Kuk..!!"

"A spatial pocket!?"

The heretics shouted in great surprise when they saw me take out oil bottles from thin air and set them on fire.

Unintentionally, I even heard the heretics' voices. Now they'll try to kill me to the end. This is insane.

Still, since I set the fires, people will gather in about 3 to 5 minutes from now, so I just need to hold out until then.

If I hadn't set the fires, I would have been surrounded by those three and stabbed to death, but since I set the fires, I just need to hold out well.

'It would be nice if they just gave up and left.. but they definitely won't let me go, right?'

Now that I've heard those guys' voices, conflict was unavoidable.

Alright, let's really stay calm from now on.

Gon said. The really important thing is momentum.

I'm out of breath and can't run away anymore.

If I'm going to be caught up to and have a knife stuck in my back anyway, it would be better for survival rate to face them head-on and hold out.

Good. From now on, I'm not going to back down.

Am I going to give up and die just because it's 3 against 1?

'I need to go pick up Olivia.'

To buy time, I needed to jump in desperately and break through.

I shouldn't get entangled with enemies of that kind.

At my pace.

I had to make the enemies get caught up in my momentum.

I had to charge at them.

"Eraiii!!!"

Letting out a sound that was either a battle cry or a scream, I ran towards the guys charging at me.

Rather than waiting still, it would be better to charge at the charging guys and create variables.

With my shield in front, I pushed against the daggers aiming for my vital points.

Because of the flames blazing all around, the guys could no longer hide in the darkness, and they were flustered by the intensity of the rising smoke and flames.

There's no better opponent for a head-on battle than a flustered assassin.

The most important goal is to not have my corpse destroyed even if I die.

I just need to take hits well without pain and endure with my body.

This might sound crazy, but this was pretty much the warrior's way I learned from Gon.

Taking hits without pain.

Enduring as much as possible.

Resisting to the end.

The memories of being beaten to death by Gon are embedded in my body.

My body will move reflexively to the pain.

Let's just not die before other people come.

I just need to protect my corpse.

Reinforcements will come soon.

'Let's hold out as much as possible.'

The blade of a black-dyed heretic assassin came aiming for my eye.

I didn't avoid it and plunged in.

Throwing away fear, I hurled my body towards the heretic with all my might, as if pushing against Gon.

Bang!

Did the charge work?

'It worked!'

I succeeded. The heretic I collided with head-on was pushed back by my charge.

The pressuring charge I had practiced dozens of times against Gon worked on the heretic.

"You son of a..!!!"

After sending one heretic flying and briefly indulging in joy, another heretic cut in from the side.

Bang!!

I sensed the attack with an almost bestial instinct and deflected it with my shield.

If I had been even a little late, a knife would have been stuck in my neck.

'Oh no! I'm screwed!'

But the price of deflecting the dagger was that my chest was left wide open.

Another heretic thrust a strange dagger into my open chest.

If I allow this, it's a fatal wound.

I'll die with a knife stuck in my heart.

People haven't come yet.

I need to hold out a little longer. Throw away the thought of dying and twist your body. As long as it doesn't get stuck in my chest, it's fine.

"Kuaaah!!!"

I let out a battle cry and jumped at the heretic while twisting my body as much as possible.

Thanks to that, the dagger that should have pierced my chest got stuck in my shoulder, and before my posture collapsed, I swung my axe half-mindlessly towards the heretic assassin's neck.

Gon's words that you can cut anything if you follow the grain came to mind.

I still don't understand this grain well. But I felt like the axe was being sucked into the heretic's neck.

A sensation of a critical hit about to occur.

Along with the feeling of a good grip, the axe precisely sank into the heretic assassin's neck.

Kwaduk!!!

The axe tore through the skin and half-broke the neck bone.

As blood gushed out, the assassin staggered, clutching the gaping wound on his neck.

He collapsed after taking just a few steps.

Judging by the lack of movement, he seemed dead.

There was no sense of having committed murder.

Those things were already classified as monsters within me.

But there was no time to savor the joy of taking down a Silver Badge level strong opponent with my own hands.

The axe was stuck in that guy's neck. I needed a new weapon.

I lost the axe as my posture collapsed, but I have my spatial pocket.

I immediately took out a one-handed sword and deflected the heretic's attack.

My senses become extremely sharp.

The longer the fight went on, the more I could see their attacks.

The two remaining heretics kept attacking relentlessly to kill me.

Blades pierced my body, tore my skin, and carved out chunks of flesh.

Pain, agony, extreme pain.

I have to endure. This is no time to savor the pain.

Rica said.

Pain that doesn't kill me makes me stronger, didn't she say?

Rather, this pain kept waking up my mind that was trying to become hazy.

Because it hurts, I rather feel that I'm alive. I'm not dead yet. Though my body is drenched in blood, I was still holding out.

My body has already reached a state where it doesn't move according to my will.

My vision is blurry. The sensation in my hands and feet is fading away, and my footsteps are becoming strange from the pool of blood spilled on the ground.

My strange footsteps oddly accurately avoided the heretics' attacks.

It's a sensation as if Shaka is controlling my body. No, I'm reading Shaka's memories.

Should I say my proficiency is increasing?

Shaka's remnants that he left behind and I have half-become one, sharing a single body.

Following instinct, I swing my shield to deflect daggers, and swing my sword to check the heretics delivering fatal blows. There's no awkwardness in these actions.

So abilities were ultimately the embodiment of techniques built up by someone.

The warrior's roar that makes enemies cower, the horse-head cutting that cuts down both horse and rider.

And all other skills called warrior abilities were ultimately techniques that could be obtained after long training and effort.

Abilities are tools that make it easier to use such techniques.

Abilities are ultimately just tools, as Raphanel said. I could now clearly understand what he meant.

And I finally realized how amazing Shaka's remnant is.

This was the collection and essence of techniques that the warrior Shaka had built up.

Yes, what was engraved in me was the 'essence' of a warrior.

As my mind became hazy, one of the techniques he left behind was now manifesting through my body.

I start counterattacking while avoiding the heretics' attacks.

As I pour out attacks, the two heretics step back.

Ah. I think I understand.

Now I can properly see what Gon was trying to teach me.

So this is the grain.

So this is what it means to endure.

I'm starting to grasp what battle is.

Fighting is ultimately dancing with your life on the line to the melody of death.

The approaching blades were no longer frightening.

Their murderous intent was just a small noise interrupting my melody.

Shaka sang, and I followed his song with my movements.

The warrior's song is being engraved in me. Was this the tune Gon was humming?

I danced to the song of the dancers.

Shaka, were you a barbarian too?

There was no answer to my question.

I just realized that his traces engraved in me had become a little closer to me.

Just then, cracks appeared in the masks the heretics were wearing, and soon they shattered.

I could see the flustered looks in the heretics' eyes.

They must be in a hurry too.

From their perspective, I, who had seen their faces, was an opponent that must be killed no matter what.

But they couldn't kill me easily, so they seemed frustrated.

How ridiculous. These vulgar bastards.

They're so desperate to take my life.

Not a chance. I absolutely won't die nicely.

Even after exchanging several blows, there was no problem. Rather, I was slightly overwhelming them.

Of course, I won't be able to go further than this because I've lost too much blood, but still, I held out without dying.

I can do this.

I took down one and two are left, so it's become easier than at first.

If I hold out just a little longer, I'm sure I'll be able to get out of this alley alive.

-Fire!

-The lumber storage is on fire!

People finally realizing there's a fire and running over.

Their urgent shouts are getting closer.

You're late. 3 minutes passed long ago.

Still, it's good.

Now there's really not much time left.

The two guys in front of me look like they're about to run away too.

If I hang on like this, I think I can catch those two guys as well.

Let's muster a bit more strength.

Shuk.

"Huh...? Kuk.."

Suddenly, I was stabbed in the side by an enemy approaching from behind.

No, I was pierced through.

A sword protruded through my stomach after piercing it. My vision spun at the sensation of my intestines twisting.

My thoughts stopped at the impossibly extreme pain.

My legs won't support me. Damn, I feel like throwing up.

As I struggled with the pain, the enemy behind twisted the sword piercing my side, tearing my intestines.

I think my kidney burst. My intestines are spilling out of my torn stomach.

I didn't have the strength to try to put them back in.

From the extreme pain, I fell forward and my face plunged into the pool of my own blood on the ground.

No, there were definitely three of them.

I killed one, and two were in front of me.

When did this guy appear behind me?

Were there four from the start?

Where were you hiding to do such a cowardly thing now..

Something that might be saliva or blood flowed from my mouth.

I can't do anything anymore. I feel like I'm going to die.

Shaka's song was cut off.

I could no longer feel his power.

As I writhed on the ground, the heretics hurriedly fled.

"It hurts...."

It hurts so much my teeth are chattering.

When the knife was stuck in my shoulder, I could bear it.

I could even bear it when daggers tore my skin and made wounds.

But I absolutely couldn't endure the side.

Being pierced through and having my kidney burst, it would be crazy to endure that.

It hurts so much I can hardly breathe.

Pain that feels like death.

It's 100 times worse than kidney stone pain.

"Kuhup..!!!"

As I writhed on the ground unable to get up, people approached me.

"Here!!! A patient!"

"What! Is he really alive!?"

"He's still alive! We need to move him to the aid station!"

As my consciousness was fading, I was loaded onto a stretcher and transported.

I survived a fight where I had prepared for death.

Although I caught one and let three escape.

This was clearly a victory.

# Chapter 59: Help Me

"Are you awake?"

"Ugh. Where is this..?"

"This is the aid station. People brought Porter-ssi who had collapsed."

"Ah, I see."

When I opened my eyes, Erika, the Pingchaeng Goddess Church priestess, was looking down at me.

This seemed to be a private room in the aid station.

Usually, 12-person rooms are standard, but for some reason, I seem to have been placed alone in a private room.

"For now, basic treatment for your shoulder and side is finished, but because the internal organ rupture was so severe, it looks like you'll need to recover for a while. Please be careful not to move too much."

"Yes, thank you."

"It's nothing. Fortunately, Porter-ssi's recovery ability is remarkably good."

Erika says my recovery ability is remarkably good.

Is that so? Objectively, my recovery ability wasn't that good.

Perhaps this too is an additional effect left by Shaka's remnant.

Improved muscle growth and increased recovery ability.

The great warrior Shaka truly bestowed upon me generously.

"Um, I'm sorry, but how long has it been since I was brought here?"

"About 3 days have passed. During that time, Lady Lea, Rica, and Rien or Olivia-yang also came and went. Ah, the Guild Master visited too."

"What, three days have passed? Huh."

"Yes. It seems Rien and Rica took care of talking about the Magic Tower and Martial Arts Hall matters, so you don't need to worry too much. And about Olivia-yang."

"What happened to Olivia? Has Yuria returned?"

"No, since Yuria-ssi hasn't returned yet, we're protecting Olivia-yang. Lady Lea is taking care of her."

"Ah. Well. Thank you. How should I repay this.."

"It's what Lady Lea decided. Thank her when she comes later."

"Yes, I'll make sure to thank her. And thank you too, Erika-ssi."

"No. Hehehe. It's alright. Well, there are other patients too, so I'll come back later. Here, the Guild Master left this Monster Dismantling Appreciation Book. Rest while reading this at least."

"Okay."

After delivering all the information she needed to convey, Erika went outside.

It seems most of the things I was worried about were taken care of by Lady Lea and my colleagues.

It looks like Rica told Gon, and Rien spoke to the Magic Tower.

I felt relieved that Lady Lea herself was taking care of the most important Olivia.

'By the way, to think 3 days have passed.'

Originally, today was supposed to be the day I visited the Magic Tower to conduct some experiments on abilities, but with my condition like this, I had to skip this week.

I was supposed to enter the labyrinth with the Young Lady's party.

It looks like I won't be able to enter this time either.

Feeling unnecessarily restless, I looked out the window.

The moon was hanging in the night sky.

I really almost died.

I nearly got killed outright by the sudden attack of the heretics.

What would have happened if I hadn't heard that voice then, and thus hadn't turned around?

I probably would have been killed with a knife in my back without being able to resist at all.

'It's chilling.'

I got goosebumps thinking about crazy heretics wandering the night streets.

How on earth did those guys escape from the labyrinth?

After the appearance of heretics, the entrance to the labyrinth would have been guarded more meticulously than usual by the guards.

Anyone with unknown identity or suspicious individuals were all subject to inspection.

But the fact that heretics still managed to sneak out means their methods must be quite ingenious.

Suddenly, I thought that the city itself seems to have become extremely dangerous since the Great Shift.

It seems I learned techniques well from Gon to be able to respond to the increased difficulty.

If I hadn't received mental training from Gon, I probably would have died at the hands of those heretic bastards.

Getting stronger is a good thing.

And the help from the villainesses was significant too.

If the villainesses hadn't warned me then, I would have died without being able to respond.

It seems they can't be seen as entirely bad beings.

It might not be bad to try talking with them if it's helpful.

"Yawn. I'm sleepy."

Let's stop the random thoughts here and go to sleep soon.

My body feels heavy. It would be good to just sleep for today.

Thud.

"What the..!"

Just before falling asleep, something fell on my head.

For a moment, thinking it was a bug, I was so startled that I jumped out of bed.

No matter that I'm entering my 7th month of life in another world, I'm still scared of cockroaches.

"Damn..."

After barely calming myself down, I checked what had fallen on my head to catch the bug... and I was dumbfounded.

"This is the substitute doll. Why is it here?"

The substitute doll I had bought for 1 gold coin from the voodoo practitioner had somehow fallen on my head, torn to shreds.

The doll that should have been inside the wooden box was not only torn, but it flew to me lying in the aid station room.

The meaning of this was clear.

"Ah."

The villainesses have discovered my existence.

What's more serious is that it's late at night, and this is a private room so I'm alone.

Yes, the torn doll escaped from the wooden box while I wasn't sleeping with someone.

All protective measures against the villainesses have failed.

-Hehehehehe!

-You tried to stop us with such a trifling thing?

-Rookie. You seemed to have used your head a bit. But it's useless.

I hear voices. The temperature in the room dropped sharply.

"Aaah! Erika! Erika help me! Is nobody there!? Help!!!"

I shouted, hoping someone outside would hear me.

I grabbed the doorknob and shook it frantically to escape.

It won't open. The door didn't budge at all, as if it were a concrete wall.

"Help me!"

No matter how much I shouted, there was no response.

It felt like I was shouting alone inside a soundproof booth.

-Shout all day long. See if anyone comes.

-Hey shorty. Stop resisting and come here.

-The little one crying is cute, isn't it? Should sister show you something nice?

The voluptuous villainesses are lying on the bed, beckoning to me.

If I respond to their call, I'll be tormented until my soul is sucked out.

'What should I do? It seems they came fully prepared.'

The voodoo practitioner told me.

Even if I encounter them again, I should never answer them.

-Hehehe. Little one. You thought it was fine as long as you didn't answer?

-You believe the words of that bald doll pervert? What is unverified information? It's pseudo-religion. Do you understand now?

-Superstition, shamanic beliefs. Just nonsense spouted by idiots who don't know anything properly.

The villainesses completely denied the voodoo practitioner's words.

They said it's fine as long as I don't answer, so why are they able to interfere with me even though I didn't answer?

The door won't open.

No matter how much I shout, no one comes to help.

"Hey. Little one."

"Huk."

Thinking I might as well break the door, I took out a club from my spatial pocket, when the substitute doll lying on the bed opened its mouth.

The torn doll sat on the bed on its own and grinned, curling up the corners of its mouth.

"This is still a doll with quite good internal materials, you know. Sew it up and carry it around. Let's talk through this when the sun is up."

"...."

"If you don't answer, we'll torment you. Whether you answer or not, you're already entangled with us."

I didn't answer until the end.

Whether the voodoo practitioner was a pseudo-religion or not, it seemed better not to answer them for now.

"Stubborn guy."

The doll collapsed again with a thud.

-Fine. Don't answer. We clearly said we'd torment you if you don't answer. So you wanted to be tormented.

-Oh~ That type? Hehehehehe. Good, good. I'm good at tormenting too!

-The shorty is completely frightened. Look at that expression. He looks like he'll cry if we just touch him.

The villainesses approached me.

They came as if flying through the air, grabbed my arms, and dragged me to the bed.

"No! Nooo!"

I twisted my body and tried to resist, but it was useless.

Their strength was ridiculously strong, and I was thrown onto the bed.

"Huk..!"

Two villainesses grabbed my arms, and the remaining one mounted me and grabbed my face.

-Rookie. Don't cry. We won't eat you. We'll just have a taste.

The gray-haired villainess with bandages over her eyes stuck out her snake-like long tongue and licked my face.

Sticky liquid covered my entire face, and the villainess licked my face carefully several times before stealing my lips.

"Mmph..!! Mmph..!!"

The villainess's long tongue entered my mouth.

It touched my tongue and then sucked and bit it for a long time inside my mouth.

I feel like I'm going mad.

Some unknown liquid that wasn't saliva kept coming from the villainess's tongue, and I had to swallow it.

-Hehehe. We can really touch him. So soft.

-I told you. This rookie owes us his life. We can interfere as much as we want.

-Kehehe. I'm next. This time I want to suck.

-Me too! Me too!

The villainesses lightly ignored my resistance and took turns sucking my mouth.

It feels like my energy is being sucked out.

With the villainesses mounting me like large dogs and licking my face, I can't even open my eyes.

-Whew. Satisfying. So this is what a kiss tastes like.

-It's on a different level from when we do it among ourselves!

-Gulp. Haah... I think I'm getting addicted.

The villainesses who had been playing with me for a while each gave their impressions.

They looked extremely satisfied.

But I'm more fine than I expected?

I thought my energy would be stolen. Rather, I feel strength in my body.

Could there have been some effect in the saliva they forced me to swallow?

I'm not sure, but I could feel that the pain in my side had almost disappeared.

-Hey. Rookie.

"Yes?"

-You owe us your life. You know that?

"Well, that. That's right."

Just before being ambushed by the heretics, the villainesses had alerted me to the enemy's presence.

If it weren't for them, there's a high chance I would have died without even leaving a corpse.

They are indeed benefactors. The problem is that they're demanding repayment of the favor.

-We're not being so nice to you, saving your life and giving you kisses, without any purpose.

-We, you see. We got involved.

-There's someone deep in that labyrinth who tied us to this stinking city.

-Either deal with that guy. Or make him release the binding on us. Do something about either of those...

-Otherwise, little one, you'll die from lack of energy after being sucked and bitten by us for life. Understand?

"No, what are you..."

-Either catch that guy deep down in the labyrinth. Or somehow figure out a way to release us.

-You survived once thanks to us. If you don't want to die, repay the debt.

-That warrior's remnants left in your body didn't just activate on their own.

-Little one. Who do you think sang the warrior's song for you?

"No way... It was you.."

-If you understand, go down to the labyrinth to repay the favor. Free us from this city.

-Answer, little one.

-Answer.

Could it be that when I was dying at the hands of the heretics, it was these women who sang the warrior's song and drew out my potential?

I see, they gave me much more help than simply revealing the identity of the heretics.

But the request to go down to the deep part of the labyrinth is really difficult.

I'm not sure how deep they want me to go.

"Why me of all people?"

-Because you're the only one who can see us properly.

-If you really don't want to, find another Spirit Eye owner.

-Hehehehehe. But you know what? For the past 300 years, you were the only Spirit Eye owner who could see us, feel us, and communicate with us.

"Ah."

I understand why the villainesses are obsessed with me.

They've already waited for 300 years.

During that long time, these three have been looking for someone who could see them and talk to them.

"Wait a moment. Okay, I understand. I get that you want to be freed. I understand everything. But how deep is this deep place? How far down do you want me to go?"

-Well...

-The end. Probably to the end of the labyrinth?

"No, what do I need to kill that requires going to the end of the labyrinth!"

The villainesses stopped laughing at my question and answered.

-The one who created a crack in this land.

-The collector of mysteries.

-The endangered species protection agency.

"No, what on earth is that?"

-Hmm. Ah! Right. You can call it the Master of the Labyrinth.

The Master of the Labyrinth.

The villainesses are telling me to catch the Master of the Labyrinth right now.

"That's impossible."

I answered immediately.

If I mistakenly accepted the villainesses' request, I felt like my life would really be screwed.

-There's no rejection.

-Please! Do it!

-I'll help you, little one. We're not just asking you to do it.

"No, how can I catch the Labyrinth Master? Are all three of you crazy? Look at my state. I barely survived against those heretic bastards."

-That's because you're still weak.

-Hey shorty. If you try, you can do it.

-For a warrior to be scared before even fighting. Tsk tsk.

I'm so dumbfounded I can't speak.

They're cursing at me for not going down themselves.

-You think we don't go down because we don't want to?

-We tried too. But we can't. We can't go down.

-Why do you think we're earth-bound spirits? We can't enter the labyrinth at all.

"This is driving me crazy."

There seemed to be no way out.

The villainesses had no hope other than me, and if I ignored their request, it felt like my life would fall into a pit of despair.

A fierce scene of tantrums where no one was willing to yield.

I made a decision.

"For now. For now, I'll try. Let's set the deadline until before I die."

-If you can't do it before you die, we'll take your soul? Is that okay?

-If you don't free us before you die, you'll experience something more terrible than wandering the nine hells.

-If you say you'll do it before you die but then slack off and play tricks, our relationship is over that day.

"Ah, yes. I get it!"

It's so brutal I can't even try to play tricks.

The villainesses immediately saw through my intention to just grow old and die.

Unintentionally, a new mission has been added to my life.

If there was a mission window, it would probably look something like this:

-Explore the 7th floor with Yuria

-Help Lady Lea grow

-Become a Gold Badge adventurer within 6 months

-(NEW!!!) Help the villainesses catch the Labyrinth Master

Somehow, each one has a high difficulty level.

I thought life was truly bizarre.

-We'll withdraw for today.

-Remember. You have to catch the Labyrinth Master.

-The longer you delay, the more intense our urging will become.

Soon the villainesses disappeared into the darkness.

I picked up the doll lying there as if nothing had happened and sat down on the bed.

I suffered because my ability was too good.

So this is the penalty of having an ability.

It was a sleepless night.