**Chapter 59: Taking a short break (4)**

I have a favorite movie.

It's called Avengers Infinity War, and it's about saving the Earth from a crazy purple monster.

I love the scene in that movie where the blond space asshole builds a cosmic weapon for revenge.

The blast of energy, the blonde space asshole holding it back, and then the finished axe.

‘That's kind of like that.’

-Wooooooo

The massive furnace roared to life with a tremendous amount of noise and heat.

I wonder if this is what it would be like to see a nuclear reactor core in person.

Even from a distance, I could feel the enormous energy directly.

"Today is an exciting axe-making day!"

Zirnier endured the immense heat and energy with a straight face.

Making an axe could be so exciting.

Humming a tune, Zirnier stood at the anvil with a drunken stumble.

-Clang, clang, clang.

No. 1 raised the hammer in his hand and offered it to Zirnier and Zernier naturally took the hammer.

"Whoa."

She let out a faint breath, and her body, which had been swaying in a drunken stupor, gradually began to straighten up.

There was no longer a drunken woman in this workshop who refused to make spears, just the continent's only artifact-level blacksmith, the one that all smiths looked up to with envy.

"Well, then. Let us begin."

There was only Zirnier Besil.

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The steel glowed brilliantly as it came out of the furnace.

Number One grabbed it and carried it away, not even batting an eye.

I marveled at the steel, which didn't melt under the immense energy, and at No. 1, who held the hot object with such ease.

He placed the scarlet-colored steel on the anvil and secured it.

-Ka-ang!

Zernier swung her hammer.

Sparks flew as the hammer struck the steel.

A brilliant shower of sparks, glowing with a five-color light, rained down in a shower of sparks into the air.

The sparks that lit up the dark underground workshop were like a meteor shower lighting up the night sky.

-Ka-ang!

I stared at Zirnier swinging her hammer with a smile on her face against the backdrop of the meteor shower.

Obviously, I couldn't see her expression through the mask, but I could tell she was smiling genuinely at this moment.

With each hammer blow that echoed through the underground workshop, a blinding light burst from the steel.

Although it seems to be a casual swing, a single hammer blow conveys countless thoughts, hesitations, and a self-assurance.

-Ka-ang!

With each swing of the hammer, the shape of the steel changed and it gradually took the shape of an axe blade.

The dazzling light that had been emanating from it gradually condensed and began to embed itself in the blade.

A slight curiosity arose.

"What is that light?"

I asked the other mechanical arms, Arms 2 and 3, who were watching me from the side.

Arm 2 answered my question immediately.

It was writing on the floor with its body, as if it were playing with its fingers in a sandbox.

I read the words naturally.

"Me, do, mo, rm, pu, ⋯"

I don't know, phew.

What the fuck?

No. 3 slapped No. 2's body and scribbled on the floor.

"Relic, alloy⋯"

Relic alloy, its special steel made by melting relics.

Since it was made by melting down a rare artifact, the price was naturally exorbitant.

'I've heard it's something that only the highest ranked mid-level explorers can afford.’

Furthermore, the difficulty of smelting it is so high that few blacksmiths can handle it, and even using relic alloys doesn't necessarily produce relic-grade items.

It's a tricky substance whose results depend on the skill of the smith.

She forged the Great Helm I'm using now and it too emits a glow similar to that relic alloy.

‘Zirnier’s first work⋯’

It's no wonder she's called a relic-grade artifact maker.

The artifacts she creates, even though they are made by human hands, seem to be as close as possible to the artifacts of the Labyrinth.

Considering the Great Helm she made, the relic leather armor and relic alloys that Diana gave me, etc.

I've never seen a real artifact before, so I can't say for sure.

'Maybe my eyes are able to detect artifacts?’

Items that are relics or mixed with relics glow and I can see them, and items that aren't relics just look normal.

Hmm. That's a plausible theory.

-Ka-ang!

"Whoa."

I listened to the sound of breathing in the distance. A sweaty Zirnier was hammering away at the axe blade with a satisfied grin on her face.

"Yeah, that's what I fucking wanted to make!"

It was quite crude, but Zernier seemed to prefer it that way.

As I'd guessed from the double-edged axe my height was on display in the window of the weapon shop, where most people would see it, she had good taste.

When I thought she was done, I walked over to Zernier.

"Is it finished?"

"No. I've barely gotten the framework in place. I need to smelt it and do a few other things⋯ There aren't many soul stones for sale these days, so it might take a while longer to make it."

Soul stones? Aren't soul stones needed to make artifacts?

"⋯I thought you were just making weapons?"

I asked in confusion, and Zernier retorted with a look of disbelief on her face.

"What do you mean? Do you think I'm going to make a bunch of mundane stuff? My pride won't allow it."

Oh my. The pride of a master craftsman.

This was too good for me. An artifact, what a great weapon to make.

My mouth watered. I'm looking forward to it.

"No matter how skilled a craftsman is, if the materials are garbage, garbage will come out. The better the materials, the higher the price. I can't make a crappy product with my name on it, so it's going to take some time."

From the sound of it, it seems that none of the recently released soul stones are worthy.

Soul stones weren't something you could get just because you wanted them, so even with all those explorers entering the Labyrinth every week, there were only a small amount of them on the market.

Of course, Zirnier would always be in a position to get them, but this time, there didn't seem to be any desirable items for sale.

'I could just take the goods, but if I had a good soul stone, the quality would be higher and the time frame would be faster, right?’

I also felt a little guilty about taking too much. It's my weapon, I should invest in it.

"So, do you think this one will be useful?"

I pulled out the item from my waistband.

The Soul stone of the Minotaur Boss.

I don't know if it's enough for Zirnier’s level, but it's a miracle for my level.

"What, a minotaur soul stone? Never mind, I don't need that."

As soon as Zirnier saw the soul stone I took out, she smirked and waved her hand.

"⋯Wait."

⋯And just as I'm about to put it away, a hand grabs my arm.

"This isn't just a minotaur soul stone, is it?"

"Nope. It's an unusual object."

"I see."

Zernier stared at the soul stone.

She looked serious, the exact opposite of the sneer she'd given earlier.

"The seed of a beast born from the sperm of a 13th floor explorer. It's quite useful."

"⋯You can tell that much?"

"I need to know this much to be considered an artisan, but can I really use this? I feel like I'm taking something from a child."

"Of course you can use it. You're making a weapon for me."

And since the person making it is one of the best craftsmen in the Labyrinth City, I actually have to bow down and ask her to make it for me.

"Kwak. That's right. Right."

Zirnier smirked at my answer and took the souls tone.

"Since I'm supposed to make you feel good about yourself, and I'm supposed to get the ingredients, I'd like you to give me something to work on. If it's broken, I'll fix it."

After all, people should be good. If you give even a little bit, something will come back to you, right?

"So, do you think you could take a look at this helmet?"

"What? Are you trying to tell me that the first thing I spent days and nights making is a piece of shit, poorly designed, shoddy, second-rate junk that even a cheap weapons shop wouldn't use for decades?!!"

"⋯Uh, what kind of crazy shit are you talking about⋯"

I was just going to ask her to cut a small groove in it to make it easier to eat.

As if suddenly remembering the times when she had gone to the weapon shop swarming with dung flies for over a decade, thinking 'I wonder if someone has bought my helmet,' before I chose the helmet, Zirnier abruptly started to have a violent fit.

It took quite a while to explain the situation to Zirnier and calm her down.

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“Suddenly I have painful memories⋯"

Zirnier scratched her forehead as if the memory of those days was quite painful.

Well, for a woman of her pride, it must have been quite a sting to have her maiden work rot in that stinking armory.

"So you want me to increase the viewing angle a bit, and drill a hole in it so you can open and close it for eating?"

"Yes."

The Great Helm, with its tiny, thin eye sockets and breathing holes, was quite cramped.

‘Awareness is strangely taxing on the brain all day.’

It's much better as it is for simple defense, but it's inconvenient for me to have to wear the helmet and go about my daily life.

After hearing my request, Zernier looked puzzled.

"But why do you want to eat with your helmet on in the first place?"

"⋯⋯"

I've been almost raped so many times, would you believe me if I told you?

"No, you don't have to tell me. I'm sure there's a story. I'm also wearing one, so I understand if you don't want to show your face."

With that, Zirnier slapped her own mask.

I wondered if she had a reason she couldn't show her face, or if it was a personal trauma like mine.

Regardless, that mask. I honestly coveted it.

The ability to eat freely and wipe sweat from my forehead while completely covering my face, which probably affects my cognitive abilities.

Life would be so much better with that mask.

"Come to think of it, can't the helm have the same capabilities as your mask, Ms. Zirnier?"

"Oh, that's tough. This mask doesn't seem to do much, but it's an artifact from the 22nd floor."

"Holy shit."

The 22nd floor?

No way.

"Well, I don't know if you can get it, but if you bring me a similar artifact someday, I might be able to add some functionality."

"Okay. Thank you."

I nodded for now.

Zernier opened her mouth with a nonchalant expression.

"Well, then. Turn around and take it off."

⋯I was stunned for a moment by the statement but it made sense.

If I want my helmet repaired, I have to take it off.

"The best way to check your field of vision is face-to-face, but we don't have that option right now, so I'll use my hands to feel where your eyes and mouth are."

Following that, a declaration of 'I'm going to touch your face' was heard. Judging by her expression, it was an indifferent face showing no interest at all.

Aside from her love and passion for weapons, she doesn't even have a human heart!

"Don't worry too much. I won't hurt you."

I was lost in thought as I listened to Zirnier’s words.

‘⋯What should I do?’

After some deliberation, I put my hand on my helmet.