**Chapter 64: Catch him (2)**

I begged Diana’s pardon and immediately went after the two women who had been taken by the guards with Lammel.

It wasn't long before I spotted them being accompanied by guards.

They weren't handcuffed, but rather, they were talking to the guards with serious faces, receiving something and then parting ways.

"⋯What⋯"

"⋯Lammel."

"Oh, no, it really was⋯ when I saw it from a distance earlier!"

"Hmm. So, did you bribe them to get free?"

"That's it! It doesn't make sense otherwise!"

It was a plausible story.

I remember the captain of the guard who showed up when Idelbert and Diana were arguing also accepted a soul stone and walked away laughing.

'But wasn't she forced to back down because Idelbert and Diana were too strong for her?’

Of course they're not in that weight class.

Then how the hell did they get away from the guards?

That makes sense if they didn't do anything stupid in the first place⋯

They must have done something they could get away with.

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The truth of the case was shocking.

Very, very surprisingly, Jubeel and Joy Hog had done nothing wrong!

It was all a mistake by Lammel, who had seen them interacting with the guards from a distance and immediately assumed they were under arrest.

" Lammel, Balkan, you didn't believe us!"

"You're so mean. You're going to taste the chill of the sword."

You've gone too far, you bastards.

"Put your hands on your chest, both of you, and think of all the things you've done."

Joy Hog, who's normally sane, but turns into a raving drunk when she's drunk like all dwarfs, and Jubeel, who's always been a bit of a mental case.

Honestly, when they were taken away by the guards and sent to prison, I was like, "Oh, finally?" and I was convinced.

At my words, Joy Hog and Jubeel clutched their breasts in agony.

"Uh-huh-"

"Aaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Jubeel immediately squirted her breast milk in Lammel’s face.

Lammel yelped in surprise, and then her eyes rolled back in her head and she passed out.

Look at that. How can I not believe it when she told me they were taken away by the guards?

Joy Hog looked at the stunned Lammel and coughed sharply.

"Hmph. Whatever. I didn't do anything to deserve to be taken away. On the contrary, I got a request."

"A request?"

"Yep. It's a big one. Not as big as the Academy's, but pretty lucrative. Well, I need your opinion on whether to take it or not, but we'll talk about the details tomorrow when the whole party's gathered."

Okay. No rush if she wasn't going to be taken.

We exchanged a quick goodbye and parted ways.

Jubeel scooped up Lammel, who was covered in white milk.

"Is she okay? She looks traumatized."

"Huh? I'm sure she'll be fine. She freaks out, but she secretly loves it. Her reactions are the most delicious, and she often tends to my mammary glands."

I see.

It's not an easy relationship.

The next morning, I'm walking down to the lobby of the Explorers' Alliance after my duel with Idelbert when a strange man approaches me.

I reflexively looked at him through the status window.

[Gellan LV. 30]

[Stamina:(9) Strength:(10+2) Agility:(12+6) Wisdom:(6) Finesse:(8+3)]

[Blessings and Curses currently possessed by Gellan: 3]

Now that the stats and even the number of Blessings for a level 30 Grand Explorer look about right, one question is answered.

I had questioned this at one point when I noticed that late level 20 Explorers were getting a definitive status window censor.

At the time, I intuitively assumed that they were getting a secondary job change around level 20, and that they were getting additional stats with every level up⋯.

Now that I've grown up, I analyzed Gellan's status window, and I was right.

‘Starting at level 25, your stats will increase by 2.’

For me, I've been getting 1 free point per level up, but after level 25, I'll be getting 2.

It seems like just yesterday that I was feeling a bit overwhelmed by a mid-level explorer opponent.

[Nam Soo-jin LV.16]

[Stamina:(8+10) Strength:(8+10) Agility:(7+10) Wisdom:(1) Finesse:(2)]

Now we're almost equal based on simple stats total, despite the nearly double level difference.

[◆ Blessing of ???]

- ???

- Stamina+10 Strength+10 Agility +10

'Of course, that's because the stat increases from the Blessing of the Question Mark are enormous.’

That said, I’m not ready to rest on my laurels just yet.

I need to become even stronger than I already am, if only to uncover the identity of the mysterious blessing.

I may not be able to fight Idelbert or Diana, Zernier would be tough, and Serif would be a bit of a stretch.

Suddenly, I remembered the level 40 Paladin I'd seen in the temple, the golden-armored Paladin that stood by Serif's side.

Yeah, I should at least reach that level⋯

"Hey, you. Are you listening to me, or are you deliberately ignoring me?"

After a few moments of agonizing silence the guy leaned in close to me.

"Oh fuck!"

I jerked my head back in surprise.

Even though I'd never met him before, the words came out of my mouth.

Fuck. What the fuck are you doing, a fucking asshole, sticking your face in a man's face?

A visceral revulsion welled up in me toward the man, whose name was Gellan.

He looked like some kind of douchebag and he was an insane faggot who was trying to get in the face of the same guy.

"What the fuck, did you just swear at me?"

"I was a little surprised that you just stuck your face in my face, and I apologize for the swearing, but what's going on?"

I apologized politely and asked what the problem was, since it was my fault for swearing in the first place but Gellan didn't seem to like it.

"Ha. Forget the apology, just answer the question. What kind of trick did you pull to get in as a disciple of the Alliance Leader?"

"What?"

"Did you sell your body, give her your dick, or did you take advantage of her weakness?"

I felt my mind go blank at the sudden bullshit.

‘What is it, you asshole?’

How could anyone be so blatant as to point this out right off the bat? With so many prying eyes?

I looked at Gellan's eyes, and they were full of shit. He looked like he was losing his mind.

"Alas, in the end⋯"

"This is why love is dangerous. Once your eyes go crazy, you plunge in without backing out, I tell you. This is why I don't make men. It's bothersome."

"...Isn't it that you can't make them?"

The people who appeared to be Gellan's party members tried to stop Gellan while being aware of the whispering onlookers around them, but his resistance was too strong.

"Tell me the truth! How did you become the Alliance Leader's disciple?"

From the sound of it, he was probably jealous of me for becoming Idelbert's apprentice⋯something I didn't understand.

"My master came to me first, and she kept asking me to be her student, so I did it⋯ why are you fucking with me, you asshole?"

Idelbert had asked me to be her student first.

There was no respect and no politeness so I didn't feel the need to respect the man in front of me.

There's no reason to honor someone who doesn't respect you.

"You, asshole? The Alliance Leader?! Don't be ridiculous! It's obvious, you seduced her with your body!"

Even though I told him the truth, Gellan denied it.

Moreover, there was a hint of inferiority in his tone.

I looked down at Gellan, who was about my height.

For a man in this world, he has a relatively sturdy body and is tall...

‘Is this really a male?’

I even felt a little sympathy for him.

In that moment, I instinctively realized what Gellan’s problem was.

Because he had a weak body, even his mind had become sick.

"⋯Yes. Think as you will, and be strong."

"⋯You bastard!"

As I spoke these words of pity and sympathy, Gellan's fists clenched tightly as if he sensed my good intentions.

I casually turned on my heel and stepped back into the elevator reserved for the Alliance Leader.

Gellan's body jerked to a stop as he lunged for me.

The elevator was only for the Alliance Leader and her apprentice, me.

No other explorer is allowed to ride or even touch it.

‘If you touch it, the Alliance explorers will beat the crap out of you.’

"Well. Come on! You can become an apprentice if you try hard enough!"

Woohoo-

The elevator doors closed as I finished speaking.

Gellan's face contorted in humiliation was quite a sight to behold.

The elevator doors opened with the sound of an alarm. I stepped back into the training room and saw Idelbert.

"Why did you come back up? Did you forget something?"

Idelbert looked at me with a question mark above her head.

‘It's going to take a while for Gellen to calm down.’

It would be better to do something productive, though it would be nice to rest.

"I've been having so much fun dueling with you, Master, it's addictive, and I'm back for another round."

"⋯hmm."

Boom! BANG!

Idelbert, whose black cat tail began to wag like a whip, gave me a rare belligerent smile, then released my wrists and approached me.

"This master is very pleased that her pupil has become so aggressive."

I instinctively took a step backward at the sight of her. The momentum was unexpected.

Perhaps I had misjudged her, but I had made a mistake.

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"⋯Balkan isn't dead, is he?"

"I don't know. Maybe he's dead. Jubeel, give him a shot of breast milk. It's shock therapy."

"Finally, my turn."

A voice came from somewhere.

Ah, yes. I've definitely gotten my ass handed to me by Idelbert and barely made it back to the inn.

I had just met up with Joy Hog's party to schedule our next trip to the Labyrinth.

I opened my eyes from exhaustion and saw a cow's udder.

"Jubeel. If you keep that up, I'm going to rip your udder off, or do you want to be a mutt?"

Turning pale, Jubeel quickly covered her udder. The rest of the party giggled at the sight. Only Hitolis, the priest, blushed.

"Hmph. Well, since we're all here, I suppose we should talk about this request."

Joy Hog cleared her throat and began to outline the request.

"Do you all remember the staff of the shaman Hobgoblin we took last time?"

At the same time, a horrible memory began to play in my mind.

Get out of my head, Hobgoblins!