**Chapter 68: Catch Them (6)**

Gellan looked at Balkan with his blood-soaked axe.

'Such a dirty battle against a mere goblin⋯'

Of course, from a third party's perspective, it was a clean and concise battle.

Balkan brought his axe blade to the nape of the goblin's neck, and the cleanly severed head rolled to the ground.

"Well done, Balkan! There's another one on the right!"

"I already saw it."

I had a wide view of the battlefield and eliminated the threat long before the party leader, Joy Hog, gave the order.

-Clang!

Balkan swung his axe wildly, and the goblin blood on it splashed and made a straight line across the floor.

Battle over.

As an explorer, Gellan marveled at the brevity of the battle, wondering if he could have been just as good⋯no, maybe just barely⋯

As a man, Gellan disliked every single one of his actions.

His love for Idelbert drove him mentally insane.

He could not forgive Balkan for becoming Idelbert pupil.

"⋯Gellan, are you sure you want to do that?"

Slime Ain Aldente, who had seen Balkan's skills, whispered to Gellan with an anxious face.

 He wasn't the only one looking uneasy; the others in Gellan's party behind him were also looking at him with unease.

This was because Gellan had told them his crazy plan.

The plan was simple.

Capture the outlaw and steal the shaman Hobgoblin's staff.

‘Pretend it's a mistake and use it on Balkan.’

They'd been briefed on the Hobgoblin Staff's abilities in previous briefings. The power to turn men into ejaculating retards.

If they use it to turn Balkan into an asshole, Idelbert will be disappointed and abandon him.

And maybe, just maybe, he'll get her chance. Idelbert might even see him!!!

"Gellan. We only need to accumulate 7 more contribution points and we'll be able to move up to Intermediate Explorer, but if we do something like that and get caught, there's no telling what the penalty will be."

Of course, the other party members objected to his plan.

"Aldente. Just do as I say. I'm the leader of this party. Who do you think got us this far?"

Already driven mad with jealousy, Gellan dismissed the party's opinions.

Gellan's presence in this party was powerful.

He had brought this party to the point where they were on the verge of being promoted to Intermediate Explorers.

Everyone in the party knew it, and they had no choice but to follow his lead.

"⋯I see."

Gellan tore his gaze away from Aldente, who returned to her position with a grimace, and glared at Balkan, who continued to stare at the axe with a nonchalant air.

‘Let's see how long you can keep that attitude up.’

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The chilly air of the first floor of the Labyrinth, both unfamiliar and familiar, rushed through my body.

‘⋯?’

A strange tickling sensation.

It was like a faint energy, or should I say, tiny blue pellets floating in the air.

I recognized it as what people call magic, or mana.

As I entered the Labyrinth with Wisdom 1 elevated, a new change occurred.

My senses were awakened, and I felt more sensitive to new stimuli.

‘Still, I don't feel much of a dramatic difference.’

It's just a tickling sensation, but not the blinding sensation I felt when I raised my Finesse.

Anyway, we all made it through the portal safely, and we regrouped.

Our task from here on out is simple.

"We're going up to the second floor, mowing down any goblins that get in our way!"

We had quite a few battles on the first floor.

They weren't hobgoblins or anything, just goblins, so they weren't too difficult, but I didn't let my guard down.

‘That bastard's trying again.’

Gellan's constant glances at the goblins were annoying, but I didn't complain.

Anyway, they'll start coming out in earnest after the 8th floor.

 "⋯hmmm⋯"

After the fifth battle with the goblins, Joy Hog and Gellan's party's guide and tank, Aldente, put their heads together and looked at the map.

I looked at the map, too, with a bit of a hunch.

It was still a two-dimensional map, with a marker floating in the center.

I looked at it and felt a little suspicious.

“What? The marker location is the same as the last time I saw it?”

I think it was in this location two days ago when we gathered and checked the map?

 "⋯That's right, it hasn't moved from this area."

The Slime Ain, who stood about 180 centimeters tall, gave me a strange look, then stretched and nodded.

She was of neither gender, and somehow gave off a strange vibe that made me feel both fascinated and sorry for her.

"These fuckers⋯ must be thinking they're going to be chased today, but they don't want to leave the second floor, so why don't they go deeper?"

Joy Hog looked at the map with reluctance and nodded.

Why are these outlaws, who are nothing more than fugitives, waiting in the same place?

"Not for lack of food, I hope."

Aldente shook her head.

Looting low-level explorers returning from the Labyrinth would take care of that.

"Nor is it a lack of health."

Joy Hog chimed in.

Gurmimi, a senior member of the Blues Clan, was an explorer who had risen to the tenth floor in the past.

She might be even stronger now that time has passed. Even if she was alone, second-floor monsters would be no match for her.

Unless it's a matter of survival, I can only assume they're preparing for something nasty.

They entered the labyrinth, expecting to be pursued.

So, how can they take care of their own safety while also giving a big shit to the pursuers?

 The shittiest thing on the second floor.

That leaves the possibility of⋯.

“No way. A transition trap?”

 "Maybe."

"Holy shit."

I slapped my head at Aldente and Joy Hog's affirmation.

Shit. It's that damn transition trap again.

I shuddered at the outlaws' cunning plan.

Assuming you can escape the activation area of ​​the transition trap, there is no trap better suited to fooling and shunning people.

 ‘At best, we can find an outlaw, but if we fall into a transition trap, we're screwed.’

Even if we're lucky enough to fall into the nearest third-floor, we'll have a hard time chasing the outlaw back to the ground floor.

Joy Hog and Aldente announced this speculation to the party.

If the outlaws were indeed riding the atmosphere near the transition trap, they could react accordingly.

"If we can't react, all we can do is stick together. How do we avoid the transition trap?"

"Still, it's better than being unable to react and falling apart on different floors. Good job, Balkan."

My Agility 17 spec was barely enough to get me out of the transition trap.

Now, in this party, I'm the only one who's past Agility 17.

"If that's what's going to happen, we're going to have to step up."

"Cough. Sure."

Gellan grinned in a strangely lecherous way.

It made me want to punch him in the face, but I didn't raise my fist, knowing he got the point.

After the announcement, the party took a break.

The first floor is very large. It would take an average of 17 hours for a party of our size to walk through it, even if we walked diligently.

We still have a long way to go and breaks are essential to stay in shape.

With a large number of people, we were able to take longer breaks.

Even though we are now one party, we were originally different parties.

When it came to eating and resting, we would naturally stick together.

‘Diana's jerky is the best.’

I've been asking her to make it again, so I've been saving it, but it's still much better than other ready-made jerky.

"Well, why does it open? Oh my God. It's an open-faced helmet."

"Just sayin'."

The party watched in wonder as I opened the mouth of the helmet and munched on the jerky.

"⋯You know, your lips look surprisingly hard and firm. I thought they'd be full of scars, but your mouth is clean, and you look fit to suck on my cow's horns."

"Are you really crazy, Jubeel?"

"Kkkk. Just kidding."

Jubeel’s sex-dripping was something I had gotten used to, but for some reason, the party's stares had changed.

It was as if they had discovered an unexpected side to the furry woman who usually hung out with a group of men.

-Tsk.

Feeling uneasy for some reason, I quickly finished my meal and closed the opening of my helmet.

"Hmph. Hmm."

"⋯⋯."

Lammel coughed and Hitolis looked away, pretending not to.

I carefully tucked the bag of jerky into my arms and rose from my seat.

Now that we were done eating and resting, we needed to get moving again.

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After a few more battles and a long march with rest stops, you reach the end of the first floor.

A descent portal glows with an ominous red light. If we cross it, we'll fall to a random location on the second floor.

"Is everybody ready?"

Joy Hog shouted, and our party all nodded. Gellan's party looked at her like, "What the fuck is wrong with her?”

The outlaws were still in the same position, so this was the beginning of the real trickery.

"Let's sneak in."

We stepped through the portal, our bodies touching again.

Once I got over the slight sensation of floating, the landscape changed in an instant.

The stone tiles are much cleaner than the first floor. We safely landed on the second floor where traps are the main theme.

"⋯⋯"

An eerie silence descended immediately.

I stole a glance ahead and the portal glowed an ominous purple.

The worst transition trap on the second floor, the transition trap to the eighth floor was right in front of me.

If I made a mistake, I would be on the eighth floor as soon as I landed on the second floor.

"Phew!"

I felt like I avoided the landmine by a hair's breadth as sighs of relief erupted from all around. Thank God.

As I turned my gaze away from the danger in front of me, I soon checked my surroundings and two strange women were standing right next to the transition trap.