**Chapter 7: Warm Night (1)**

Do you know how it feels to be dropped into another world with nothing at all?

"A short stay is 7 silver coins. An overnight stay is 10 silver coins."

"No way. Why is it so expensive?"

"Where else can you find an inn this cheap in Valerus? If you don't like it, look elsewhere."

I've been kicked out for the eighth time.

I've been looking for a place to stay since dusk, but I didn't find one until darkness fell.

The reason, of course, is that I have no money.

The money in my possession is only four silver coins.

'If I had goblin ears, I could have exchanged them at the Explorers' Alliance.’

However, I haven't seen Grumpy, who was carrying the backpack with the goblin ears, since we crossed the escape portal.

Maybe she saw an opportunity and ran away.

Either way, I'm now pretty much penniless.

The night is getting deeper and deeper, and I can't even find a place to shelter from the cold for the night.

"...Now that I think about it, you have a strange helmet but a fine body. How about this: I'll only charge you 5 silver coins for the stay."

The plump landlady, who could easily have a BMI of 45, made a ring with her left hand and repeatedly thrust her right middle finger through it.

I've been to eight inns and the reaction is the same.

I've heard dozens of sex and mating requests in the last half day.

If it's already like this, how much more outrageous sexual innuendo will I hear in the future? I was already starting to feel afraid.

"Madam, imagine if you suddenly turned into a man and then recall what you just said. How do you think I feel right now?"

"You bastard-"

"Judging from the way you immediately swore at me, I guess the owner knows the seriousness of your condition. Do you think a man with normal taste would care about your body? You're greedy for money, that's why you're so fat, you pig!"

"Stop right there, you asshole!"

Pushing aside the innkeeper, who followed with a flushed face as if her anger had reached its peak, I walked aimlessly through the darkened streets.

Most of the shops were closed, perhaps because of the time of day and few people walked the streets.

I didn't get far before I got lost. It's not surprising when you think about it since I don't know the way.

On the bright side, I'm not lost, I'm in the process of finding my way.

'Should I ask the guards again and find a cheap inn⋯'

The thought of starting the process all over again made my head hurt.

Having emerged from the dangerous labyrinth, I'm stuck in a rut. It's not easy to sleep at night.

As I searched for a lighted inn, I stumbled upon a curious scene.

In a dark alleyway between buildings, I found a group of people huddled together by dim lanterns.

I wondered what they were doing in that dark, out-of-the-way place.

In the light of the lanterns, they are as motionless as rats.

"⋯Why are they doing that?"

I asked a guard who happened to be passing by what they were doing.

The female guard looked at me with an annoyed expression on her face, scanned my upper body, and suddenly cleared her throat.

"Beggars. They're a pest everywhere in the Labyrinth City. Explorers with missing limbs, failed businessmen, people who can't pay their debts and are bankrupt. They're all down on the street for their own reasons."

Something tells me they were homeless beggars.

"You don't take them in?" I asked.

"We don't care about worthless things that are dying every day because they don't have the strength to live. If they were doing that on the side of the road, I'd be all over it, but it's much nicer to see the disgusting things lying there in the dark on their own. Oh, but don't worry, we'll get rid of the bodies. By the way, I don't recognize you from anywhere-"

I thought, letting the guard's words slide as she naturally moved on to flirting.

‘Homelessness isn’t so bad.’

Still, sleeping in a group is better than sleeping alone and risking danger.

I'm not in the Labyrinth, so why bother?

As much as I would have loved to sleep in an inn with a comfy bed after my ordeal in the Labyrinth, I couldn't afford it.

I had to compromise with reality.

I managed to shake off the annoying guards and stepped into the dark alleyway.

The beggars numbered about six.

As I approached, I smelled a faint odor. They hadn't washed in a long time.

There were similar-looking bowls and utensils around them, but they seemed to be eating.

I could feel some of their eyes on me. It was dark, so I couldn't see their expressions but I could sense that they were a little surprised.

I thought to myself, "It's normal for people to wake up when they feel someone moving around in their sleep." I thought, "I'll let it go.”

"I'm sorry to wake you up. I'm just going to stay the night, so please go back to sleep."

"Uhhh. Uhhh...okay."

He seemed flustered, but agreed, so I slipped away and lay down.

As I lay down on the hard dirt, I could feel the fine dirt and stones scraping against my bare skin.

It was quite annoying and uncomfortable, but I had to put up with it.

I tried to fall asleep, imagining I was rich and lying on a fancy mattress, but I couldn't fall asleep because it felt so foreign.

I imagined myself lying down on a stone bed with a modest amount of money, and I soon realized that I was having a bad dream.

Rustle. Rustle.

"Hah, hah, hah. Coming to my feet to satisfy our libidos, you're like an angel."

"I know. I was just thinking of picking one up and fucking it tomorrow, but I guess I won't have to."

"By the way, this helmet is bothering me. Someone take it off."

I woke up to the cheap conversation and the now familiar noise of someone trying to remove my pants.

Asshole. I'm trusting people again.

It was only yesterday that I was instantly lavished with favors, then stabbed in the back and nearly raped, so why did I let my fatigue get the better of me and make such a rash decision?

- It's not like I'm in the Labyrinth, but is sleeping with a group of people more dangerous than sleeping alone?

Nam Soo-jin, did you get shot in the head?

I was so stupid to make such a quick decision.

Get a grip. Why would they be down here on the street?

Something is wrong with them, mentally or physically, and they've been relegated to the dark corners of society.

How would they have been able to fulfill their sexual desires in the dark, unwashed, and foul-smelling streets with no homes and no sunlight?

What did I believe in when I reached out to them? Unfounded faith, human affection, humanity?

I’ve been enough to know that no one cares about such things.

How could I think a few coincidences that saved me before gave me a false sense of confidence?

Get a grip.

Right now, all I have is my body, so I have to protect it and make it useful.

"Now get out of my way. Fuck you."

I tossed aside the respect. Those things don't deserve respect.

"What the fuck! He's awake!"

"Hey, grab him by the arms and legs, quick!"

I jammed my fist into the side of her jaw as she hurriedly tried to give orders to the beggars around her.

-Pfft!

My muscles, tense from the uncomfortable sleep, stretched and flexed, picking up speed.

Her eyes rolled back in her head and she passed out.

"Wow, Wang Chao in one punch?"

"⋯No way. Wang Chao has gone to the deepest part of the first floor of the Labyrinth⋯!"

With a single punch, the air around them changed.

A quick glance at their expressions showed that they couldn't believe what they saw.

"You, you bastard-!"

I ducked my head to avoid her grasp as she lunged for me.

-Zzzzz!

I immediately delivered a fist to her temple, and she fell to the ground with the same momentum as she was charging, never getting up again.

"⋯⋯"

The mood was literally fucked. The pale-faced beggars began to shiver and shuffle backwards.

I stared at them and said.

"Any of you assholes want more?"

"Uh, no."

As they had wanted to live, the answer came immediately. Even the desire to impose violent sanctions on their pitiful figures disappeared, leaving only disappointment.

"Take these assholes and get the hell out of here. If I see you again, I'll kill you."

As soon as the words left my mouth, they picked up the two stunned women and started running.

They probably went to another back alley.

"Fuck."

Yeah. Life sucks. Most of life is, but I don't know anyone else whose life sucks as much as mine.

"⋯Get some sleep."

It doesn't help to dwell on the negative.

Instead, I need to remember what happened today and use it as fertilizer for learning so that I don't have to go through the same thing again.

I closed my eyes and immediately fell asleep.

I was tired.

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Holy shit. Not again. Did they come with another group to settle a score?

‘No. I heard one footstep.’

It could have been the leader of the beggars' organization. I had to stay alert.

I stared at the owner of the footsteps, ready to draw my axe from my belt at the first sign of familiarity.

"Sorry, are you awake?"

A figure stood in front of me, looking much different than I expected.

Her appearance was far from that of a beggar.

Her shiny, well-cared-for black hair stood out even more in the faint moonlight, and she wore it down to one side, exuding luxury and elegance.

Her smooth skin was white and blemish-free, and her eyes, which were closed and secretive, were enough to mesmerize anyone in the world.

'Wow.’

But the most shocking thing was the large, well-shaped chest gloves.

H, or is it I? I don't know. I've never seen anything like it before.

She's wearing a clingy dress that emphasizes the curves of her body and her overwhelming breasts, revealing a vulgar body that is far from classy.

In a word, beautiful. I've never seen a more beautiful woman in my life, except for my sister.

Judging by her harmless aura and beautiful, well-maintained appearance, this is a woman I have to be wary of, not the one I was expecting.

"Who are you, reveal yourself."

I said, pointing the axe in my hand at the mysterious woman.

"Hmph."

Her gaze flickered to my axe for a moment, and then her mouth dropped open again.

"My name is Diana Ordia, and I run an inn next door to here called the [Cozy Winter Night]."

With that, she held out something in her hand to me. I was too distracted by her appearance to recognize what she was holding.

"⋯Soup?"

In her hand was a bowl of warm, steaming, thick soup with lots of bits and pieces.

The soup looked delicious at first glance, and my stomach gurgled.

I quickly grabbed my stomach, and Deanna smiled warmly at me.

"The nights are cold in Valerus, and a warm soup would be nice."

Yeah, it'll definitely be warm as she said. It might be so warm that sleep will come easily, almost like having taken a sleeping potion.

It was just yesterday that I was tricked into eating soup sprinkled with sleeping potion.

I opened my mouth slowly, remembering the horrible memory.