**Chapter 71: Catch Them (9)**

-Kagagagagak!

Gurmimi barely managed to block the axe swinging in front of her eyes.

The shock-sensitive illusion magic immediately collapsed, revealing a rabbit head with a puzzled face.

Gurmimi's mind raced with a single question.

"How could you see through the illusion?"

How did he even know about illusion magic?

Illusion magic is a very tricky and delicate magic.

Even the same mage can't easily distinguish between reality and illusion unless they've studied it deeply.

And the woman who was using illusion magic at her side now was a mage who was quite skilled at it.

Reichem’s eyes widened as she watched Gurmimi's form in the distance.

Her magic had been seen through by a man who, at first glance, didn't seem to have the slightest connection to magic, a man who was so large and full of hard muscles.

It was different from their first meeting, when they'd had a tracking map and a sense of anticipation.

If you were a good explorer, you could make such judgments on instinct.

But now, what the hell?

With a clearly hostile enemy right in front of him, he’s not looking at the tracking map.

Is this even possible?

It made sense if someone blessed with the timely ability to see through illusory magic had followed them into the Labyrinth.

'No one witnessed the use of illusion magic in the Labyrinth City, so when did they get the information? And how? No way. Did we get caught?’

Balkan glanced at Reichem, who had slowed to a crawl in the distance, her eyes rolling back and forth.

‘Yeah. Think about it.’

He didn't answer their question since it would only put more psychological pressure on them.

And that psychological pressure will lead to burdens, which will naturally create gaps.

So what he needs to do now is swing the axe harder and harder!

-Kagakakakak!

Gurmimi tilted her straight sword, deflected the axe, and swung her sword upward from below in a circle.

-KANG!

Balkan didn't dodge, but slashed down the blade coming for his throat with the Zirnier axe in his other hand.

-Kaang!

He was only planning to parry the sword, but the blade snapped in two.

"What?"

Gurmimi's eyes widened in disbelief. She must have been surprised enough to freeze for a moment.

This was his chance.

Zzzzzzzz!!!

"Kaak!"

The axe that Idelbert had given him grazed the nape of Gurmimi's neck.

The sensation of cutting through flesh tingles through my fingertips but it was not a satisfying result.

Gurmimi's agility was such that even in that situation, she used her rabbit-like leaping ability to narrowly avoid the axe.

"Kuluk, gehek-!"

But when I say slightly, I mean slightly damaged.

Gurmimi grabbed the broken sword and clutched at her bleeding neck, which had been slashed by the axe blade.

Her white rabbit fur was stained with red blood. In a flash, Gurmimi pulled a vial of potion from her waistband and held it to her mouth.

"Talian-!"

She called urgently to Reichem, but it was futile.

"Your friend is about to be caught, isn't she?"

"⋯⋯"

Reichem and Gurmimi were too confident that they would succeed in her plan.

In other words, they were certain that the illusion magic would be undetected.

That confidence was completely shattered under the status window, and the tide of battle turned.

"We got the mage, Balkan, we're coming!"

Joy Hogg and Jubeel shouted as they tied up Reichem.

With Balkan holding Gurmimi, the party had a general idea of the situation and decided to capture the pesky mage first. Still, her proximity to the seventh floor portal made her a high risk for escape.

Leaving Hitolis behind to back up Balkan, the party pounced on the illusion mage, Reichem, who was bluffing away in her Gurmimi disguise.

A single mage was no match for two tanks, a swordsman, two mages, and a cleric.

As a result, Reichem unleashed a barrage of spells, but was quickly captured by the party's synchronization.

Gurmimi glanced at the scene and made a quick decision.

‘Let's run.’

They were careless and outnumbered. The ambush plan went awry and they shouldn't have fallen to the eighth floor in the first place.

‘That asshole!’

Gurmimi gritted her teeth as she stared at the helmeted man in front of her, Balkan.

'That bastard ruined the whole thing by interrupting at every crucial moment. ‘

Pushing the regret aside, the red rabbit's eyes found a way to save herself.

She turned toward the blue glowing ascension portal.

At the same time, Gurmimi's thighs swelled up, and magic power began to gather within them.

[◆ Blessing of Windy Legs]

- Temporarily increase your Agility by a large amount.

- Permanently decreases Wisdom by 1 per use of Blessing (currently -3).

– +4 Agility, additional +8 Agility when using a blessing

Gurmimi steeled her resolve.

The permanent drop in Wisdom was a great price to pay so she decided to use a Blessing that would give her a huge stat boost to compensate.

Zzzzzzzzzz!

"Kahaak!"

Balkan, however, was not the kind of benevolent villain who waited patiently to see the hero's transformation.

The second or so that Gurmimi prepared to use the Blessing was too long for him. Without delay, he swung his axe.

He was going to cut off her legs.

Kudduddup.

‘The axe won't come out?’

Gurmimi had slightly higher stats than Balkan, such as strength and agility.

And right now, Gurmimi's leg was an explosion of muscle and magic.

The strength was such that even Zirnier's axe could not easily cut through it. The blade was blocked by bone and muscle and could go no further.

"Off⋯ Aaaaaaahhhh!!!!"

With that, Gurmimi took a step, her thighs tightening.

It was not a normal stride.

"Balkan-!"

Joy Hog's shout came from the far side of the portal, right next to the captured Reichem.

A stinging pain shot up his back, accompanied by the sensation of his arm being stretched.

Gurmimi was moving at breakneck speed, the axe embedded in her thigh, and Balkan, who was clutching the handle tightly, had come along for the ride.

The suddenness of the situation caused him to roll around on the ground, but he didn't lose his grip on Gurmimi.

Aldente tried to extend her jelly arm, but she couldn't reach Gurmimi or Balkan. The speed difference was too great.

"Get up to the seventh floor!"

Balkan said urgently and grabbed Gurmimi by the thigh.

The next moment, a blue portal of ascension swallowed Balkan and Gurmimi.

Joy Hog watched in horror, then quickly tossed the captured wizard into Gregor's pack.

"We're right behind you!"

The rest of the party bunched together and stepped through the portal.

At the end of the eighth floor, which was suddenly silent, only two portals glowed in the darkness.

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With the sensation of floating, the landscape around them changed instantly.

I've never been on the seventh floor before.

Gurmimi gritted her teeth and managed to cross the ascension portal.

"Kaak!"

Gurmimi couldn't keep up with her speed and slammed into the wall of the Labyrinth immediately after stepping through the portal.

I, whose body was intertwined with hers, also hit the wall of the Labyrinth and fell to the floor. Luckily, Gurmimi was cushioning me, so I wasn't too badly hurt.

And I hadn't let go of the axe in my hand until that moment.

The blessing had already expired, and Gurmimi's thighs were looser than before.

Not too flabby, not too firm, just right for chopping.

I raised Idelbert's axe with my right hand and brought the blade of Zirnier's axe down.

-Kaaaah!!!

Like a sculptor chiseling marble with a hammer.

Zirnier's axe vibrated loudly, digging into the bone and muscle of her thigh in an instant.

The pain was so great that Gurmimi let out a pitiful scream.

Gurmimi, who was still trying to stab me in the back, lost her grip on the broken sword in unimaginable pain.

I immediately kicked out and knocked the sword away.

Then, as she was struggling, I struck again.

-Kaaaaaang!

Another blow, and Zirnier’s axe, embedded in Gurmimi's thigh, sliced through bone and flesh and popped out.

This time, there was no scream.

Grunting and gritting her teeth, Gurmimi's body sagged. She had passed out.

"Hah."

I sighed and flopped down on my butt against Gurmimi's stomach

"Finally, I got you. You asshole."

Overall, I was lucky. It was also because Gurmimi focused on running away rather than fighting directly. If it had gone to a war of attrition, I would have been seriously injured.

"This bitch is the reason I've been through the portal so many times."

Pfft!

I slammed my fist into Gurmimi's stunned rabbit head.

I'm glad she took the up portal instead of the down portal.

Going to the ninth floor would've been a surefire way to die, but the seventh floor is much better. It's the way back to the surface anyway.

"Gurmimi's here," I think to myself, "and the Joy Hog party will find her on the tracking map.

I'm told the seventh floor is an average sized floor. They'll find me in two days, no matter how long it takes.

And that means we'll be alone for up to two days.

If we're lucky enough to be near each other, they'll be here in a day, but I'm not that lucky.

"Fuck."

Footsteps came into my recovered perceptual range, and there were quite a few of them.

My hand naturally tightened on my axe. With a sigh, I assessed my opponent.

Not Joy Hog party, at least. There are far more of them.

About thirteen. There was no hesitation in the clatter of heavy armor and the steady strides of the men. As if there's nothing to be wary of on the seventh floor.

Even if I wanted to duck, there was nowhere to hide in this open space.

I stood up quietly and faced the approaching opponents with my hand on my axe. If they were outlaws, I would resist, but if they were good explorers, I would⋯

Then I stopped in my tracks.

"What the hell, how did you get here already?"

They were neither outlaws nor explorers, but a familiar face.

A golden-armored paladin, Serif's escort.

[Nate Elin LV.40]

A group of investigators from the temple, led by her, watched me with interest.