

食い詰め傭兵の 幻想奇譚

3

Fantasie Geschichte
von Söldner in
großer Armut

Illustration
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THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF A BROKE MERCENARY

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- VOLUME 3 -

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[Unlucky Slime]

「私はついに、
私の二部のありからしき場所を
突き止めたのですよ」

「ってことは、次の仕事は
それに関連した話ってわけだな？」

ぱつと顔を輝かせ、ラピスがテーブルの上におそらくは
冒険者ギルドの掲示板から剥がしてきたのであろう依頼票を広げる。

食い詰め傭兵の
幻想奇譚 3

シェーナ

森で倒れているところを、
ロレン達に保護されたが、
その後、死の王となる儀式を受けて暴走した。
ロレンによって討伐されるが、
その際に憑りつくことで消滅を回避。

クラス

若くして頭角を現し、
国からも将来を有望視されている
冒険者パーティのリーダー。
だが、女にだらしない面も。
今回は、かつての母校にきて
試験の手伝いをしている。

アンジェ

クラスのパーティメンバーの二人で魔術師。
今回は、女にだらしないクラスの
お目付け役として同行するが、
案の定学校で女子に囲まれる
クラスに早くもうんざり。

ラピス

ロレンが冒険者として初めて組んだパーティに、
回復職として帯同していた神官。
ラピスの持つある秘密がきっかけで、
以降もロレンと一緒に行動することになる。

ロレン

所属していた傭兵団が壊滅したため、
冒険者に転職した元傭兵。
身の丈ほどもある大剣を
自在に扱う臂力を持つ。
基本的に粗野に見えるが、
意外に学もある。
死の王シェーナが憑りつき中。





「つてことは当然、逃げる先のアテもねえよな？」

「そっちもそうだろう!」

「ツイてねえな……どうやりや振り切れんだよ、あれ」

背後から迫るスライムの壁は付かず離れず

といった微妙な距離を保ったまま、

ロレン達を追いかけている。

CHAPTER 49

HEARING ABOUT DESTRUCTION

A rumor was going around, that a city had been destroyed.

‘They’re probably talking about Hanza, right?’

As the winged girl floating in the corner of his sight pointed out, Loren, sitting alone in the Adventurers Guild’s bar, was staring at the cup of cheap alcohol in his hand.

A village being destroyed wasn’t that uncommon, but a whole city falling was bound to be a ruckus.

Unlike villages, which popped up and disappeared all the time, a city was there for a long time and was more advanced, as well as have a name for itself. If something like that were to be destroyed, there would be many casualties of people and assets.

On top of that, Loren wasn’t completely unrelated when it came to the city of Hanza, and during his last quest, it was destroyed by a certain someone.

There wasn’t a public announcement, and it was under investigation from neighboring nations, but the city of Hanza and the villages around it were destroyed completely. Although it was on a small scale, a city-state had been destroyed, and the other city-states in the region glared at the remaining land.

All of them saw it as an opportunity to expand their territory, but Hanza shared borders with several of them. People at the guild were betting on which one would attempt to seize it first.

Of course, if they do it poorly, they will receive the label of an aggressor nation, and for now, none of the nations were too keen on getting their hands on the land, where the citizens all disappeared for an unknown reason, at a moment’s notice. Apparently, the race to investigate and check out the empty land had developed to where bloodshed had started, but that was something Loren wasn’t aware of.

‘Liquor tastes pretty weird. This is the first time I’ve had any.’

The girl who was curiously looking inside the cup in Loren's hand was the daughter of the president of Hanza, who Loren was supposed to take back to the city.

The girl named Shayna, during the quest that Loren was on, was turned into the highest ranking undead, a <<No Life King>>, by whoever it was that destroyed the nation, and was defeated by Loren.

Of course, no matter how experienced of a mercenary Loren was, there was no way he could defeat a <<No Life King>> on his own, and there were different reasons why he was able to, but anyways, this girl who had been defeated by Loren, cut off her spirit from her body and escaped death by possessing Loren's body, and has been doing so until the present.

"You can taste it?"

Shayna raised a finger to her lips when Loren unthinkingly muttered out loud.

Loren was the only one who could see the girl.

At first, Loren thought she was a ghost floating around, but when he asked her, she said that she was just information reflected on his eyes, and it wasn't that her spirit was right there in front of him.

When he asked her why, she said that if she let her spirit out, people who could see spirits could see her, and her existence would be exposed.

Shayna's spirit currently existed within Loren's spirit, and when looked at from the outside, although they might feel something strange, Loren's spirit acted as a cloak and made hers hard to find.

Loren did have some complaints about how his body was being used, but it didn't seem like there was anything weird happening to him, and there was no way he could tell Shayna to leave, since if she did, she would die completely, so he decided not to think about it.

'Our senses are linked, so I can sense what you're sensing up to a degree.'

At her response, Loren couldn't help but think that there would be a problem or two that would emerge from that.

It felt like it would be fine if he could discuss with his partner, who seemed to know everything, but although his partner was supposed to be a woman who was going by as a priestess, if he tried to tell her that he was sharing his body with an undead, he knew for a fact that it wouldn't bring anything good for him.

"A normal priest would try to exorcise... but I can't help but think she'll treat me like a guinea pig..."

Loren knew she wouldn't do anything that might kill him, since they were in fact partners, but it also meant that as long as he didn't die, she could do anything she wanted with him.

Loren decided that while there was nothing wrong, he would keep quiet about it, but when he thought about the fact that there was the spirit of a young girl inside him, an inexplicable feeling washed over him. A slight creepiness, an uncomfortable feeling.

No need to worry. I usually have the sense sharing turned off, and I sleep early and wake up late.

Loren wasn't sure how to express her current state, but he did think it was kind of strange for an existence that became an undead say that she slept early.

'I'm also happy that you talk to me... but I think it is better if you don't talk out loud. People would look at you funny.'

Now that she mentioned it, Loren looked around slightly, and although there was quite a bit of people in the guild that day, he couldn't find anyone that was looking at him or making notice of him.

It was unknown to him, but when he was there at the bar before, some adventurers had called him a freeloader.

That time Loren had beat one of them up pretty bad, and Lapis, who was treated like his wallet, had injured the other one pretty bad as well.

That incident had spread around quite a bit through the bar's waitresses, so unless the person hadn't heard about it, no one wanted to mess with him.

Of course, if they saw the size of the great sword he had beside him and had sense to their mind, they would realize the strength and skill Loren must possess to be able to

use it, and would keep from messing him with him, but there are always exceptions.

“Huh? Loren? Starting the morning with a drink again?”

The person that called out to Loren was a girl wearing the clothes of a priestess, with her black hair tied up in a ponytail swaying behind her.

The girl, whose looks would make eight, nine people out of ten look back at her if they walked past her, walked up to Loren’s table with light footsteps and eyes sparkling with curiosity about pretty much anything, and without asking for permission, naturally sat down in the seat in front of him.

“Drinking without any food to go with it isn’t good, you know? Ah, excuse me, could I have a cup of the same thing he’s having?”

The girl that stopped a waitress and started ordering things right after she sat down was Lapis, who had been working with Loren from a little while back.

She was a priestess of the Knowledge god, and was the lender of his debt, but in fact she was demon kin, who were the black sheep of the world, and was currently was living far away from the land of demon kin.

“Is it okay for priests to drink first thing in the day?”

“Nowhere in the precepts of the Knowledge god does it say that you can’t drink.”

She said with a cool face as she took the glass that the waitress brought her.

As Loren raised his glass to his lips, thinking that she could’ve ordered something better, since she had the money to do so, Lapis held the glass that was handed to her with both hands, asked him wonderingly.

“By the way Loren, did you pay for that?”

“I paid before I got it. Got the hazard pay from last job, after all.”

The last job itself was the incident where Hanza was destroyed and Shayna became an undead.

For the job itself, Shayna was considered dead, the city was destroyed, so it was far

from being a success, so it was considered a failure, and although it wasn't because Loren fought a <<No Life King>>, it was the cause of him weakening and getting hospitalized.

The job had him at a deficit, but he still received subjugation rewards for the zombies and revenants he defeated along the way, and although it wasn't even close to being enough to pay back his debt, he did have some money on him.

He used that money to pay for his drink, but as soon as he said that he did, Lapis gazed at him with disbelief, dumbfounded.

"Loren... actually paid!?"

"Hey, why are you looking at me like that?"

"But... It's Loren we're talking about you know?"

"Don't act all surprised like that. Shouldn't you be telling me to pay my debt instead of using it on drinks?"

"I told you I won't extort."

That was indeed one of the conditions for Loren to borrow money from her.

But if she actually wasn't going to do so, it kind of thinned the feeling of reality that he had borrowed money from her.

In addition to that, Lapis wasn't going to put interest on it, either.

Loren thought that if she wanted to make his debt larger, she should put interest on it, but Lapis didn't seem to be concerned about that at all.

"I'm not trying to make money off of you, anyway."

Lapis said as she took sips of liquor from her glass, but if that were true, Loren couldn't understand what she wanted to accomplish by lending him all that money.

"Thirty gold coins isn't an amount that you could return easily, either."

Several adventurers sitting near them spewed the drinks in their mouths or choked

on their food and started coughing when they heard the amount that rolled off Lapis tongue.

Loren spun the glass in his hand lightly, knowing it couldn't be helped.

The amount that Lapis just mentioned was the total that he had borrowed from Lapis, but if you think about it normally, it was an unbelievable amount.

Three gold coins was enough for a family of four to live well for a year.

This meant that Loren borrowed the ten years' worth of living expenses for a family of four.

"I guess adventurers don't make that much, huh."

If they were surprised, Loren guessed that it meant thirty gold coins was a lot of money.

But when Loren was in the battlefield back when he was a mercenary, among the generals and well-known mercenaries, quite a few of them had magic weapons and armor that costed hundreds of gold coins.

It wasn't once or twice Loren had thought that if they died in battle, he could take those for himself.

It meant that generals and mercenaries could make that much and have connections that let them get their hands on such equipment, and Loren decided that compared to that, a debt of thirty gold coins wasn't too bad.

"It's not that adventurers don't make a lot, it's that they don't know how to make profit."

Lapis said that with a cool face, but for the last quest, Lapis had the same treatment as Loren did, and would be at quite a deficit.

But since she said that with such confidence, his curiosity got the best of him, so he asked her.

"So, you mean that you made profit out of the last job?"

“Yes, of course.”

Lapis answered like it wasn't a surprise, but Loren couldn't understand what she did and where she went to be able to brag so confidently about making profit.

“We didn't get that much for defeating the zombies, right?”

“It was only a little bit.”

“You didn't spend much for preparations so that was enough to be profit?”

“About that...”

Lapis leaned forward onto the table and lowered her voice.

When Loren followed her and leaned forward onto the table as well, Lapis covered her mouth with her hand and whispered.

“I picked up quite a few things...”

“Wait a second.”

“Even if you tell me to return them, there's no one for me to return them to.”

“That's...”

She had a point.

The whole nation had perished, so as Lapis said, even if she took something from there, there was no one to give it back to.

“It's not a large amount. I was too focused on carrying you. I just took some stuff from the clinic and the shops around it. Oh, and I also brought the simple furnace that you made, so don't worry.”

“That's not the problem... I guess it's fine.”

There were no people in Hanza, and there wasn't a government either, so it was basically a lawless area.

People that go there would of course, take whatever they could find, and Loren couldn't help but think that it was better for the stuff to be in Lapis' hands than people like that.

That was why he stopped pursuing the matter, but he decided that he should still say something, so he declared.

"This time it's fine, but don't make it a habit."

"You're right. I'll be careful about that."

Lapis nodded obediently, but how much that meant would be unknown until the time came, so Loren gulped the rest of the liquor in his glass while glancing at Shayna, who had a troubled smile on her face.

CHAPTER 50

ACCEPTING THE JOB

“By the way Loren, I forgot to mention something important.”

Loren moved away from Lapis, who was still leaned towards him, telling him that she wasn't done talking, and ordered another drink from a passing waitress.

She gave him an awkward expression when he put the coins that paid for it in her hand, but immediately switched to a customer service smile and walked away across the counter.

Loren was shocked at the fact that even the waitresses might be thinking that it was weird for him to pay, but Lapis reached over, grabbed his shoulder, and forced him to turn and face her, not giving him a chance to be upset.

“Are you listening?”

“Yeah. What did you forget?”

“As you may know, I have a mission.”

Lapis sat back down in her chair, satisfied that Loren faced back towards her, but Loren had no idea what she was talking about, and cocked his head with a suspicious look.

“What are you talking about?”

“My arms and legs and eyes.”

When she said that, Loren remembered that her limbs and eyes were prosthetics, but cocked his head again, wondering if it was as extravagant to say that it was her mission.

“Other than my mission to gain experience in this world and become a great person, I had a mission to recover my body parts.”

“You were searching for them?”

“Yes... but sometimes I think maybe it’s fine even if I don’t.”

Shayna tripped when Lapis said so nonchalantly.

Loren worried that if this was enough to make her trip, she would hurt her knees or her waist, but then remembered she was astral and there was no need to worry about that.

“Anyways, I’m looking for parts of me.”



‘Umm, what exactly is Lapis?’

Shayna asked Loren, who was looking at Lapis, who was emphasizing what she said by raising her fist.

Loren thought about how to explain it to her but guessed that since the girl in front of him was in fact a No Life King, and even if she found about Lapis’ identity, she wouldn’t go around telling people, so he silently told her what Lapis was.

‘Demon kin, I see. It makes sense. After becoming what I am right now, I can see that she isn’t human, but she wasn’t anything I’ve seen before, so it makes sense that she’s demon kin.’

Loren was impressed that she found out so much by herself.

Shayna gave him a proud look, then pointed at the great sword next to him.

‘That’s not an ordinary great sword, either. I’ll have to observe it more to know details, but it seems to be able to easily break through the defensive barriers of a No Life King, as well as heal you.’

Loren looked down at the great sword, thinking if what Shayna just said was true.

When he fought the Shayna before, his attacks reached her without any problem.

This was against a No Life King, which had strong defenses against both physical and magical attacks.

Loren had figured that the curiosity-filled demon in front of him had something to do with it, but when he thought that it was something Lapis had readied for him, he also thought that if it was from Lapis, it wasn’t strange for it to have such abilities.

Loren then unexpectedly felt soft hands on his cheeks, and his head was forced in the direction of Lapis.

“Loren? Are you listening?”

“My bad, I wasn’t.”

Loren decided that being honest was better than telling her that he was listening, then

have it backfire on him. Lapis let out a discontented growl, but immediately released him, put her hands on the table, leaned over close to his face, and said with a stronger tone.

“I’ll say it again, okay? I’ve located a place where a part of me might be.”

“Which means that our next job has something to do with that place, right?”

“Exactly!”

Lapis showed him a quest form that she must have gotten from the quest board with a beaming smile.

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食い詰め傭兵の
幻想奇譚 3

She rotated the form towards Loren, and after looking through it, Loren stared at Lapis' face.

"It's a bit embarrassing if you look at me like that."

"It's nothing like that. You sure this is really a quest meant for adventurers?"

The explanation on the form was indeed something that would make Loren stare at Lapis suspiciously.

Seeing Lapis smile and nod, as if to say of course, he went over the form again to reconfirm what he had just read.

This is what it said.

'By Volf Adventurer Training School

This year's graduate practical training will be combat training in the school's underground dungeon. We have put out this quest because we want adventurers to accompany them. The reward is thirty silver coins per person. We request that you accompany this year's graduates into the dungeon. At the same time, escort them when needed.'

"Adventurers are trained?"

Loren looked around at the adventurers sitting near him, finding that hard to believe.

Not that he was any better but seeing them drinking and babbling first thing in the morning, it was hard to believe that they were trained.

Loren himself wasn't trained, and yet he called himself an adventurer.

At Loren's question, Lapis replied slowly, as if choosing her words carefully.

"On paper, that's their goal... but if I remember correctly, they're an institution that take talented children of aristocrats and citizens and raise them into future heroes and braves."

"Like Klaus?"

Loren recalled the red headed young man that he met during the quest to Hanza.

Klaus had a Gift, abilities that only those with the aptitude for being a hero or a brave, was rumored to have the backup of the adventurers' guild or some nation, and to Loren, the image of a trained adventurer fit him perfectly.

"Yes, Klaus probably graduated from such an institution."

"If that's the case, I'm not really on board with this job."

To put it simply, it was an institution that raised people like Klaus, and it meant that there might be many with similar personalities as him.

Loren didn't mind being looked down upon too much, but if someone asked him if he was fine with going where a lot of those kind of people were, he would have to say no.

"So, what does this final exam and what you're looking have in common in the first place?"

"So, this Volf Adventurer Training School has a large dungeon underneath it."

Lapis told Loren that there were quite a few dungeons around the world and building an adventure training school on top of it was quite common.

The various tools and resources found in the dungeons was what brought people to it, then people start businesses off it, the businesses then bring even more people, and the area will continue to develop.

The reason for building a school on top of a dungeon was by doing so, teachers with abilities above a certain level would gather, and talented youngsters would gather and be taught under their guidance.

These talents would be the force against the dungeon if anything were to happen, and the school itself was expected to be a lid for the dungeon entrance.

"Usually only the shallow floors are open to students, but for this particular training, the whole thing is opened."

"It's not like it's school property, right? Isn't it okay to just go in there as adventurers?"

“If it was a different dungeon, yes.”

Lapis frowned as she continued.

“The dungeon under Volf Adventurer Training School is a bit of an exception. The school’s executive rights to the dungeon has been recognized, so outsiders can’t step in.”

“And why’s that?”

Loren didn’t understand the merits of having exclusive use of a dungeon.

The resources inside of it was traded on the market expensively, but not allowing people to go in would bring complaints from adventurers, and it didn’t seem like the students and teachers there would be able to make a lot of money from exploring it.

“There are many speculations. Its difficulty is low compared to its size, there lies resources that they want to themselves, something is sealed underneath, there might be troubles that occur if they let people who don’t understand the situation step inside.”

Lapis believed that all of them were just rumors, and the only fact was that the Volf Adventurer Training School had exclusive rights to the dungeon underneath it.

“I’m not that interested, but what you’re looking for is down in that dungeon, right?”

“There’s a high probability, I believe.”

Only for that part did Lapis nod with a serious look on her face, and Loren let out a long, thin sigh.

“I guess it’s fine. It’s not like we have any other jobs to do. Let’s go with that one.”

“As expected of Loren, you make it so much easier. I’ll go sign up the two of us. Leave the transportation and preparation to me.”

As soon as she got Loren’s approval, Lapis snatched up the quest form and started walking over to the guild area with delighted steps.

As Loren saw her off, a waitress brought the glass of cheap liquor he had ordered, and

when he received it, although it didn't even taste good, he took a large mouthful.

'Onii-san. Isn't your weapon a bit too large for exploring dungeons?'

The great sword that Loren had used before was quite large as well, but the pitch-black great sword he was currently using was even longer than that.

It wasn't made for skirmishes in tight spots, and it hadn't been long since he started using it, so he couldn't use it at the level that he used his old great sword, which he had been able to use like a part of his body.

Therefore, when it came to going into tight spaces like dungeons, he might not be able to use it sufficiently enough.

"Well, if it's a bit wide enough, I can still use it pretty well."

If the job description was correct, the main job was to accompany the school's students, not fight something.

In the case of an emergency they would have to fight to keep the students from dying, but Loren was being optimistic, thinking that if wasn't, there was no need to fight at all.

'I think it would be better to have some sort of spare weapon.'

"That's true, but... my debt would increase even more."

Although he knew Lapis wouldn't come to collect it herself, having his debt increase wasn't something he felt good about.

He would need a good amount of silver coins, even for just an ordinary weapon.

"If I'm not careful, I might be forced to buy something weird... I guess I'll ready a dagger somehow."

The hazard pay that he received should be enough for that much at least, and even if he couldn't he could buy scrap iron and use the little furnace that Lapis had brought back from Hanza and make one.

Even if he were to do so, he would have to do it in secret, or Lapis might get upset that

he didn't rely on her, and Loren swirled his glass of cheap liquor, thinking about how troublesome it was.

CHAPTER 51

ARRIVAL AFTER REUNION

“So, why are you here?”

When Loren asked the red headed man in a not-so-friendly voice, the man flinched, but managed to answer him in a clear voice.

“What’s so bad about me taking a job for my alma mater?”

In front of Loren, who was surprised at how small the world was, sat Klaus, who he had worked together with on his last job.

Since copper ranks like him and Lapis was able to go on the same quest as iron ranks like Klaus and his party, it meant that the quest had no rank limitations.

Sitting next to Klaus was the magician named Ange, the knight named Layla, and the priestess named Roll.

After Loren and Lapis had decided to take the job at the adventurer training school, Lapis had gone and registered them and prepared. The next day, when they boarded the carriage that the guild provided, they met Klaus and his party inside.

“Weren’t you hospitalized?”

“I was. Since that priestess of yours treated me like a dog.”

Even though Klaus put it like that, all Lapis did was smile, and didn’t react to it.

“It was just mental damage and bruises from being whipped so I was able to get out after they healed. We decided on this job since we agreed on taking a simple job after what happened during the last one.”

“So, what you’re saying is that this job is easy?”

“If nothing happens, yeah. All you need to do is follow the students. Easy, right?”

Something about Klaus' words nagged at him, but it did sound like an easy job.

In any case, Loren's goal wasn't to follow the students and earn money, but it was to go inside the dungeon and search for Lapis' body part, which meant he had to think of ways to either do so without them noticing, or luring them towards where he wanted to go, making his job far from being easy.

"Most of the students who take this exam are pretty capable. The only monsters you meet in the early floors are low rank ones like goblins and kobolds. It's more difficult for a problem to happen than them failing the exam."

"You shouldn't underestimate goblins. You should be wary of them."

Klaus stirred slightly at Loren's quiet mutter.

Goblins were monsters that even villagers who were slightly strong could defeat, and it wasn't clear what to be wary about.

But he felt the weight of Loren's words, and knew he couldn't ignore them.

"This is an honest warning. Remember it."

"I-I see. I'll keep that in mind."

For a second, Klaus thought Loren was joking, but judging from his voice and expression, he understood that Loren was indeed giving him a warning and decided to receive it honestly.

"Anyways, one of yours has been glancing at me the whole time. Does she want something from me?"

Loren had noticed the gaze of Ange moving between him and outside the carriage ever since the conversation between him and Klaus started.

Ange seemed to think that she hadn't been noticed, but to Loren, it was so obvious, he wondered if she really thought he hadn't noticed. Getting looks wasn't the most comfortable, so he decided to ask.

"Oh, Ange... come on, Ange."

“Well... I heard that you were the one who saved me during the last job.”

When they were moving together during the last quest, an attack from a bone dragon had left Ange with critical injuries.

During that attack, Loren had saved her from the dragon’s jaws.

Ange had learned this not long ago from the rest of her party and had been stealing glances at Loren because of that.

“I guess something like that might’ve happened.”

“Please let me thank you, Loren. If you didn’t save me there, I would’ve died back there.”

“Sorry about taking away your boyfriend’s highlight there. He’ll definitely save you next time.”

Loren didn’t say that out of sarcasm, but because he realized during the last quest that Klaus had feelings for Ange, and the next time the situation occurred, Klaus would do so.

“Yes, I’ll look forward to that.”

“Something like that not happening again is the best, though.”

Although a hero arriving in the moment of need sounded good, Loren believed that not getting into such situation in the first place was important.

“Ange, I’ll try my best to meet your expectations.”

“Klaus...”

Loren looked away as they locked hands and stared into each other’s eyes.

The carriage that the guild had readied wasn’t that large, and the only parties that accepted the quest was Loren’s and Klaus’, so they were the only ones in there.

And currently there was a pair of a young man and a young woman looking at each other, holding hands, and whispering sweet things to each other.

It couldn't be helped that Loren felt uncomfortable, so he looked around the carriage, holding back the urge to jump out, and saw Layla and Roll in bad moods, glaring at the two, who were in their own little world. Meanwhile Lapis' empty eyes wandered all over the place, with a face like she had reached enlightenment.

Loren wished they would hurry up and arrive at their destination, but physical distance wasn't something that would grow shorter by wishing or praying for it to do so.

From the description given when they left Kauffa, even though they left early in the morning, they wouldn't reach the city which the Volf Adventurer Training School was located until in the evening.

Loren concluded that he should just go to sleep.

Someone in his former mercenary group had said, most things pass while you're asleep, and when he heard those words, he thought that it was just the words of a lazy person, but in his current situation, those words seemed like gold to him.

"Lapis, I'm going to go to sleep. Wake me up later."

"Okay, Loren. Sweet dreams."

Loren faced out the window and closed his eyes and waited for sleep to take him, listening to Lapis', who sounded like she was keeping something bottled up in order to make herself sound calm.

How much time had passed since then?

Loren woke up to a light shaking.

He shook his head to get the rest of the sleep out and raised his body from leaning against the wall of the carriage and then realized that Lapis was shaking his shoulder.

"The driver says that we'll arrive at the city soon."

"I see. Thanks for waking me."

"No problem."

When Loren looked away from Lapis and into the carriage, Loren was surprised at the sight before his eyes.

Klaus and the girls, who had been sitting in front of him, were all fast asleep, snoring with their mouths wide open.

He wouldn't have thought much of it if it was just one or two of them, but seeing that it was all four of them, Loren couldn't help but feel there was something artificial about it and glared at Lapis.

"What did you do?"

"They built out such a pink atmosphere, I used <<Sleep>> without thinking."

Loren realized he made a mistake.

Because he had escaped into sleep first, there was no one to stop Lapis' acts.

If Loren was awake, he could've stopped Lapis from using magic, but with extreme stress piling up and no one to stop her, she had taken hard measures.

"Don't you think this is a bit too rough?"

"It's okay. I used the spell secretly, so they shouldn't remember it."

Although Lapis said it with confidence, Loren couldn't fully trust her.

A priestess being able to use magic was already abnormal, but to use that magic on people that weren't even enemies was, thinking from common sense, wasn't something tolerable.

While Loren worried that if one of them somehow noticed, it could bring about a critical result, Shayna made a large circle with her arms.

'It's okay, Onii-san. The red-headed person and the others fell asleep without noticing anything.'

When he asked her how she knew, after he went to sleep, she apparently pulled her astral body away from his and examined what was happening outside, and that was when Lapis used her spell against Klaus.

'I only went out for a bit, so Lapis didn't see me.'

He wasn't sure if Lapis could see Shayna in her astral form, but it was easier to set up measures if he assumed that she could.

Shayna nodded solemnly when he thought they could never be too careful.

"Is something wrong, Loren?"

"It's nothing. Just getting a slight headache from this situation."

"I see, take care. Anyways, that's our destination."

A long time had passed during his sleep, with the sun's rays slowly turning redder and redder, and from the window, Loren could see a large city in the distance.

Kauffa was quite the size when you looked at it from the outside, but this city was even larger, and Lapis told him that it was called Montelgal, and that it was a trading city.

It wasn't that it had a local specialty or anything of the sort, but the resources and tools the adventurer training school distributed to the stores was what stimulated business across the city.

"On top of that, children of aristocrats who enroll in the school as well as their relatives come and go frequently, so merchants who target them gather as well, so there's a lot of activity."

"Not a kind of place I'm familiar with."

It was common for normal residents to distance themselves from mercenaries.

It couldn't be helped, because it was a job that made a living off a detestable action called war.

The mercenary group Loren was in was quite disciplined compared to most, but they weren't everyone, and sometimes there were people who didn't look any different from bandits.

That was why they weren't welcome in lively places with normal people, so they naturally grouped with their own.

Lapis took a sharp breath as she guessed those situations from Loren's casual remark, but immediately replied.

"You're an adventurer now, so now it'll become a place that you'll be familiar with."

"Could be."

"Of course, it will. Oh, when we arrive, we're going to go straight to the adventurer's guild, so getting a room will be after that."

She knew how tired both were, so Loren asked her.

"It can't wait until after we get rooms?"

"Since it's already this late, if we go to the inn first, the reception will close. We need to report that we arrived safely, and that we are the ones who accepted the job."

"Would there still be rooms left?"

Loren guessed that since it was a lively city, rooms would be quick to fill up.

When he was a mercenary, it was common for them to race for rooms at inns that accepted mercenaries, and those who lost had to camp outside the city.

"It should be fine, but in the worst case, we can get the guild to show us alternatives. It's a guild in a large city like this, so they should have a few places."

"Shouldn't we wake Klaus and the girls?"

They were on the same quest as them.

It hadn't been long since they met, but Loren believed that Klaus the girls weren't bad people and didn't want them to oversleep.

"Let's wake them up when we get a bit closer. If they start playing up again, my killing intent will start surging up again."

"Agreed."

Loren agreed to Lapis' excuse, knowing that they didn't mean harm, but it wasn't

tolerable for those who were watching, either.

CHAPTER 52

ENCOUNTER AFTER ARRIVAL

Although the carriage was stopped at the city entrance, it was sent into the city without much of a search.

The other travelers were searched thoroughly, and when Loren traveled to different cities when he was a mercenary, they would be searched and examined very strictly and took a very long time before they could enter, but they were let in so easily it was quite anticlimactic.

According to Lapis, the carriage itself was prepared by the adventurer's guild, and the driver was a guild staff as well, so it pretty much meant that the guild vouched for them, so they were able to enter without harsh examination.

Although one may think that if you disguised your carriage as the guild's or steal one you could enter and leave any city you want to, but Lapis explained that there were passwords and keys that linked the carriage to the driver, so if one of them were wrong, the carriage would not be considered one of the guild's.

Also, there was a heavy regulation that anyone caught disguising his carriage as the guild's or using it illegally would receive the maximum penalty, regardless of who it is.

In any case, after they safely entered the city and were swayed by the carriage a while longer, they reached the city's adventurer's guild.

After thanking the driver and getting off the carriage, they realized that they forgot to wake up Klaus and the girls, but they told themselves that they would wake up on their own, or the driver would wake them up, and went to take care of their work.

Their actual job was to be at the school, so all they had to do right now was report to the guild that they arrived, and hand them the certificate they had received when they accepted the quest back in Kauffa, so they were done in no time.

"Let's ask one of the staffs about rooms, and let's take a good night's rest."

It was already dark outside, and the school was already closed, so if they were to go there the next day, all they had to do was rent rooms and rest.

Lapis wasn't one that liked to go to noisy places, and although Loren had been taken to the entertainment district by his fellow mercenaries when they visited cities like this, currently there was no one to invite him, and he didn't know the city well anyway, and if he wanted to drink he could do so at the guild, so there was no reason for him to go out.

"For tomorrow, is it fine to go to the school after breakfast and meet our client, the principal, for instructions?"

"It's fine with me, but is it okay for us to be so laid back?"

"I heard that they choose teams to enter after the accompaniment arrives, so they don't enter the dungeon all at once."

"That... could be troublesome."

Hearing Loren's opinion, Lapis gave him a curious look and asked him a question.

"What's troublesome?"

"There's going to be a few teams that enter the dungeon, right? If all of them go in at once, I don't know how large the dungeon is, but they would know that a few allies would be in there with them."

"Ah, so if only one team enters, they would be in there alone and unaided, so the difficulty could increase."

"Exactly. Well, for your own goals, would it be more convenient if only a few of them go in the dungeon?"

Even though the job was to accompany the testing group that entered the dungeon, they also had to search for Lapis' body part, and they would have to move around the dungeon without anyone else noticing.

Loren thought that if there were other groups near them, it meant a higher chance of Lapis getting seen while moving on her own and wouldn't be favorable for Lapis.

“Well in that case, there’s other ways of doing things.”

“Give me an example, just for reference.”

Loren asked her, knowing that she would give him a good-for-nothing answer, and Lapis answered him in a matter-of-fact way.

“Disable all of them...”

“Right, got it. Only a few of them going in would be more favorable to me than you.”

The thought of rendering students unable to move, even if it was for the sake of Lapis, made Loren’s heart ache.

Loren was willing to help her if she was going to try to be secretive, but when the thought of ‘when it comes to disabling students’ crossed his mind, he realized that he was assuming that she would make him do it somehow, so he shook his head to chase those thoughts out of his head.

“You don’t have to worry. I’ll take care of it easily in secret, without them even realizing it.”

“Don’t. They’re students taking an exam, you know? How are you going to take responsibility if they fail?”

“There’s always next year.”

“You know I won’t help you with that, right?”

“I bet you won’t.”

Lapis stated without any disappointment.

As Loren thought that if she did attempt to do so, he would have to stop her, Lapis gave him a nonchalant smile and waved her hands in front of her chest.

“I’m just joking, okay? I’ll find some other way when the time comes.”

“Your jokes make my blood run cold, you know that...?”

“Then let’s warm it up with some drinks and food, shall we?”

Lapis invited Loren to the guild’s bar, saying that it was a good time to get dinner.

Unlike the guild in Kauffa, the staff in this guild had no way of knowing about Loren’s situation.

At Kauffa’s guild, the waitresses would take Loren’s order even if he didn’t have any money because they knew that Lapis would come afterwards and pay for it, but it didn’t work that way at other places, so Loren’s only options was to find some way to pay for food with the money he had or eat with her.

“You’re not going to say that you want to eat all alone, right?”

“Of course not.”

Meals eaten alone didn’t taste that good.

Loren possessed enough sentiment to feel that.

“Then let’s eat together. It seems that we don’t have to worry about rooms, either.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“This guild runs an inn in the floors above. I went ahead and rented two rooms, so we don’t have to worry about sleeping outside.”

Loren was familiar with bars running inns in the same building, but he didn’t expect the adventurer’s guild to run both a bar and an inn.

One would think, how many things the guild was dealing in, but both bars and inns were facilities that adventurers needed and thinking about how some guilds ran weapon and equipment shops as well, it wasn’t that surprising.

“We don’t know how long we would be in the dungeon until we hear the details tomorrow. We might have to live off rations for a while, so let’s treat ourselves to some good food.”

Even Lapis couldn’t get her hands on details such as how long the exam was going to be, but when adventurers went to explore dungeons, they would be in there for days,

even weeks sometimes.

It was almost impossible to find food or water inside dungeons, and the food and water they bring with them had to be compact as possible, so they would end up eating rations the whole time.

This time they were going in with students, so Lapis guessed that it wouldn't be that long, but also guessed that the school might limit food to rations to let the students get used to it.

"Well, I don't think there is a need for us to do the same as them but eating good food right next to students eating rations doesn't feel too good either, though."

"I agree with you on that one."

Loren sat down at the corner of the bar, but he pushed the menu towards Lapis without even looking through it.

Lapis, who was looking through the menu, trying to decide what to order, saw the menu that Loren pushed towards her and gave him a puzzled look.

"Order mine too. You're paying anyway."

"You can order what you want, you know?"

Lapis said so, without denying the fact that she was paying, but Loren shrugged.

"I've eaten at bars often when I was a mercenary, and the only thing we've said when ordering was 'give us meat and alcohol', and we would get our food. I don't know what I should order."

"That's interesting... What did you do say in Kauffa?"

"The waitress gave me recommendations."

Since Loren was at the guild's bar very often, he became acquaintances with the waitresses that worked there.

At first, Loren asked them to give him food and drinks, but after getting friendly with each other, they started giving him recommendations and told him which dishes were

good and to try them at least once.

Loren was thankful for the information, as he didn't really care about food, but it was the first time he'd been in this guild's bar and didn't know any of the waitresses.

He guessed that he would just have to order food and alcohol, but since he was with Lapis, he decided to leave everything up to her.

"You should show some interest in this kind of thing too, you know?"

"On the battlefield, if you have food, that's more than you could ask for. You're lucky if it tastes good, but as long as it filled your stomach it's fine if it doesn't, right?"

Not having any food wasn't uncommon, so it was quantity over quality.

It wasn't once or twice that eating wasn't something to enjoy, but instead it was an action to keep you from starving.

After going through such experiences repeatedly, you would stop caring what went in your mouth.

"That's pretty dull, but then again, it was when you were a mercenary."

While muttering under her breath, that she just needed to slowly reform him, Lapis started thinking about what to order for Loren.

Leaving that to her, Loren looked around the bar.

The atmosphere wasn't much different than the bar in Kauffa.

A fun atmosphere that was sometimes noisy, sometimes unruly, and a bit dirty.

As Loren thought that the atmosphere shouldn't be too different because it was used in the same way, he narrowed his eyes at a group that was out of place.

It was a very young group.

The group seemed unbalanced, with three men and one woman, but they seemed quite friendly with each other, and were talking to each other in hushed voices, glancing around the bar with curiosity. In front of them was a simple meal and cups,

they didn't look like they contained alcohol.

He started observing them, thinking that it was rare for adventurers to come to a bar and not drink alcohol, but his sight immediately blocked by a group of rough-looking adventurers.

One of the adventurers from the group began to bother the lively looking girl with short black hair.

Her companions, the three young men, stood up to stop him, but the rest of his group blocked them and couldn't help her.

After confirming that the girl looked uncomfortable and her companions were getting blocked by the other adventurers, Loren stood up from his seat, not saying anything to Lapis, who was still looking at the menu.

Bothering waitresses and employees was common among mercenaries as well, and it was laughed off if it didn't go too far, but if a mercenary did that to a customer, as he was, he couldn't complain if he got beaten up by the rest of his group.

To Loren, who had been taught that by his former companions, couldn't ignore what was happening in front of his eyes.

"Loren?"

Lapis stopped Loren, who had started to move towards the quarrel, without looking away from the menu, and told him.

"I don't mind you doing it, but don't kill them, okay? You don't want to go to prison before we even start the job, don't you?"

"Don't worry, I know. I'll go easy on them."

"It's disturbing other customers, so go shut them up quickly."

Lapis told Loren that she would order the food in the meanwhile, not worried about him at all, and Loren told her to leave it to him, and continued walking over to the quarrel that was still going on.

CHAPTER 53

A WARNING AFTER THE INTERRUPTION

Loren, walking over to where the dispute was taking place after receiving Lapis' unmotivated sendoff, was surprised when he saw the group who seemed to be the victims.

He knew that they were young, since he had seen them from afar, but when he got closer, he saw that they were still at an age that could be considered children.

To Loren, they looked around fourteen or fifteen, which was still considered as children.

It depended on the region, but most places considered sixteen to be the start of adulthood.

The group of adventurers that were bothering them were a lot older than them.

One of the adventurers, who was a few years older than Loren, grabbed the hand of the girl and tried to pull her away.

The girl getting pulled away had short black hair and looked lively, but her face was colored with surprise and confusion. The three boys that were trying to stop it from happening yet being cut off by the other adventurers was a well-built boy with a blonde crew cut, a frivolous looking boy with slightly long brown hair, and a short, timid looking boy, also with brown hair that was in a bowl cut, wearing clothes like those of a priest.



While Loren looked around at them, both the kids and the adventurers froze, looking dumbfounded, as they saw him walking towards them.

“W-who are you supposed to be?”

The adventurer grabbing the girl’s arm asked him who he was.

Loren didn’t answer him, but instead observed the face of the girl who had her arm held for a while.

After a moment, as the girl looked back at him, wondering what he was about, Loren asked her.

“You’re not playing with each other, right?”

“N-no! They suddenly told me to drink with them...”

“Ha! We saw some kids wandering around in the bar this late, so we just said that we’ll show you how to play!”

The girl tried to shake him off, but she wasn’t a match for him, and the adventurer still had a tight grip on her.

After confirming the situation, he asked the three boys that were being held back by the adventurers.

“You guys need help?”

‘P-please help!’

“Shut up! We don’t need help!”

“Cloud!”

The one that asked for help was the well-build boy with the blonde crew cut.

The one who made the bullish remark was the frivolous looking boy, and the one that stopped him was the one with the bowl cut.

The boy with the crew cut had a better physique than the other two, but since he was

the first one to ask for help, Loren guessed that he was either timid or he was that desperate, and both weren't good tendencies.

But since he walked over to help them, he decided that their personalities weren't of importance.

"The hell, are you? You trying to poke your nose into our business? No one called you, so back off!"

The adventurer holding the girl's arm started ranting, but Loren paid no attention and grabbed his wrist.

"I don't think it's smart for kids to be in a bar, you know?"

An ominous noise sounded from where Loren was grabbing the adventurer's wrist.

The adventurer was forced to realize what the sound was before he could even start to wonder what it was.

It was the sound of his flesh and bones screaming.

While his bones were creaking, his flesh was being crushed, blood circulation stopping, and his fingers becoming numb, Loren looked into his eyes and continued, without even batting an eye.

"Bothering kids isn't something adults should do."

"G... Gah!? Y-you! Let go! Let go!"

The adventurer let go of the girl, but the pressure from Loren's hand that threatened to crush his wrist didn't lighten.

He tried to shake Loren off, but he couldn't move his hand at all, as if it was fixed in the air, and all he could do was watch as it was getting crushed inside Loren's grip. He couldn't bear it anymore and called out to his companions, who were still holding the boys back, for help.

"Hey! Let go of them! Help me with this guy! My wrist is going to get crushed!"

Seeing their companion wailing, the others realized the abnormality of the situation

and surrounded Loren, but Loren paid no attention, and continued to slowly crush the wrist in his hand.

“Stop! Let go!”

The adventurer screamed as he saw blood drip out through Loren’s fingers.

It was proof that his wrist wasn’t broken but was the crushed to the point where the bone shards were ripping through his flesh and skin, and he realized that soon enough, he wouldn’t be able to use his wrist ever again.

“Let him go!”

One of the other adventurers pulled out a short blade without thinking.

Although it was a bar, it was run by the adventurer’s guild.

The adventurer knew that he would be punished for using a weapon, but he was completely swallowed up by Loren’s presence, and couldn’t make calm decisions anymore.

“I’ll let him go if you guys back off. So, what do you guys say?”

Even with the white blade glistening in the dim light of the bar, Loren didn’t flinch and didn’t let go either.

All that changed was his gaze towards the adventurer who pulled out the blade.

Until now, no matter how bad their attitudes were, he looked at them as people, but suddenly his gaze was one that was looking at an object.

Since Loren was looking at them, the adventurers found that out whether they liked it or not.

Because they found out, they realized that they had done something irreparable the moment they drew their blades.

If they backed off as Loren said right now, they would be labeled as cowards who ran away even after drawing their weapons.

But if they attacked Loren, the outcome waiting for them would be worse than one crushed wrist.

“Any longer, and he won’t be able to use his arm again.”

During that time, Loren’s fingers had continued to dig into the arm further and further.

The bones were already completely crushed, and the bleeding had been going on for quite a while as well, but it was still at a point where if the adventurers took him to a high-ranking priest and made a large donation and received a high class healing Divine Art, he could recover.

That was why Loren confronted them with a choice.

Continue like this and face irreparable results, or risk their reputation falling slightly and back off.

Both didn’t let them off scot free, but Loren decided to at least give them a choice, and soon enough the adventurer that drew his blade put it away and raised his other arm towards Loren.

“Alright... we’ll back off. So please let him go.”

“You’re not lying, right?”

“If we lie here, we’ll be at a point we can’t get back from. We’ll back off, so let him go! He’s already foaming!”

When Loren looked back at the adventurer whose wrist he was holding, he saw that he was already unconscious, and was foaming at the mouth.

It seemed that the pain and the shock of seeing his bone ripping through his flesh and skin was too much for him to handle.

When he let the adventurer go, his limp body crashed down on the floor, and his companions picked his body up in a hurry.

“Going to say, ‘remember this?’ or something like that?”

Loren asked the adventurers as they recovered their companion’s body and were

about to leave, but the adventurer that drew his weapon shook his head.

“We’d rather you forget our faces. If someone like you remembers us, we can’t even hit on girls carelessly.”

Loren was impressed that with the way they made sure they sowed no seeds of future trouble when they decided to back off, they lived up to their names as adventurers.

If he were against atrocious mercenaries or some thugs, they would be foolish and say lines like what Loren had said and he would remember their faces, but Loren couldn’t help but feel the decisiveness in the adventurers’ attitude of cutting ties with any sort of trouble.

“You should choose your opponent wisely.”

“We’ll keep that in mind.”

The tags swaying on the chests of the retreating adventurers were copper.

After seeing that they weren’t even iron ranks, Loren couldn’t help but feel a bit sorry for what he did.

Most adventurers were iron or copper ranks, and their numbers were many.

Even within the same rank, they ran the gamut, and Loren wondered around where they would be, but they quickly vanished from his sight.

While he decided that judging from their skill there wouldn’t be any retaliation against him later, the girl that he helped nervously called out to him.

“Umm... Thank you so much.”

“Don’t worry about it. You guys just caught my attention a bit.”

Loren’s decision to help them was based on his own agenda.

Loren waved his hand at the girl, as he wasn’t looking for any thanks.

“But you saved me!”

“Glad that you’re safe, is what I’d like to say. But you guys are still kids, right? If you hang out at places like this, you’ll get hit on by some weird people, you know?”

He could’ve also said that it was because they seemed open and easy to hit on, or that they seemed easy to play around with.

On top of that, Loren couldn’t help but give them a warning regardless if it was none of his business because they still looked like children.

“We’re sorr-”

“Hey old man! Who do you think you are to scold...”

“Stop it Cloud. He helped us, remember?”

“Come on, Al! There’s no reason for us to get...”

“I said stop it.”

Out of the three boys that were walking over, thanks to the adventurers holding them back running away, the frivolous looking one started turning on him, while the one with the bowl cut was stopping him as best as he could.

If they were a bit older.

If they were, for example, Klaus’ age, he would’ve felt like educating them a bit further, but they were younger than Klaus, at an age that Loren considered as children.

He turned around, ignoring them since educating them wasn’t his job, but the well-built boy with the blonde crew cut jumped in front of him.

“My name is Ain, the leader of this party. Please let us thank you.”

“I don’t need thanks. It’s something I did on my own. None the less, you should choose where to chatter wisely. Especially if you can’t deal with things with your own strength.”

“W-we’re sorry. We wanted to take a peek at the bar’s atmosphere as a change of pace.”

It seemed like they had some circumstance, but that wasn’t something for Loren to

know.

He pushed past Ain, who was about to say something more, and walked back to the table where Lapis was waiting without looking back.

“Welcome back, Loren. You didn’t break anything this time.”

Loren let out a nervous laugh at the words Lapis said to him as soon as he got back.

If he punched or kicked, he would’ve broken this and that, as Lapis was expecting, but Loren knew that as well.

“I’ll dry up in no time if I keep paying fines or compensation every time something happens.”

“No doubt.”

“But I’m still surprised that the ones being picked on were a party as well.”

“Is that so? If that’s the case... fate might bring us to them again soon enough.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“We’ll see. I’m not that confident on this, so I guess we’ll have to look forward to it.”

Loren looked at Lapis, who was still flipping through the menu, not being able to choose what to order, and sighed, thinking about how what she mentioned wasn’t something that they would want to look forward to.

CHAPTER 54

CONFUSION AFTER BEING SURROUNDED

The next day, Loren went with Lapis to their client, Volf Adventurer Training School.

The retaliation from last night's adventurers ended as a worry, so he was able to spend the night at the inn peacefully, getting more than enough sleep and rest.

This was the first time he'd ever seen a school and entered school grounds.

He knew that it was a place to educate children with knowledge, culture, and experience, but Loren had been taken care of by a mercenary group ever since he remembered, so he had never gone to school before.

Most mercenaries had never gone to schools before, and many of them couldn't do calculations, and couldn't read or write either.

In Loren's case, he learned how to calculate, as well as read and write, from his group's clerk because it would be inconvenient when dealing with job contracts, so he could do so at a general level.

"From what you've told me, it seemed like it was a very capable group."

Lapis sounded very impressed as they passed through the school's gates.

"I've never heard of a mercenary group that made sure to educate their members like that."

"You sure? It was the norm for us. Of course, there were some who didn't want to since we were a bunch that became mercenaries, but almost everyone could read and could at least write their names."

"That's quite absurd, you know? If you go to a nearby village and ask the residents to write their names, most of them can't do it."

"Well, villagers don't sign contracts."

“That’s not exactly the problem...”

Environments where children could get proper education wasn’t common.

Lapis knew that in some nations, only people high classes could do so.

But hearing that a mere mercenary group would give such education to the whole organization, Lapis thought that it was more abnormal than special.

“Either the leader was an outstanding person, or he was just crazy...”

“Hey Lapis. What do you think that is?”

Loren’s weirdly tired voice pulled Lapis, who was muttering to herself while immersed in her thoughts, to reality, and she looked towards where Loren was pointing.

Shrill voices sounded from a crowd at the end of her sight.

A thick wall of young girls was surrounding something.

Loren and Lapis couldn’t see from outside what was in the middle, but the voltage of the cheering and screaming from the girls were almost at their peak, so it seemed like there was something incredible in there.

“This is a school, right?”

“It should be. It might be break time or study hall or something.”

Lapis knew that if it was class time, there was no reason for such a crowd form, but it was currently still early morning, and was hard to think that it was already break time.

Then she scanned the area, thinking that it would be a good time for teachers to come and break it up, and confirmed that there were a few of them in the area. But for some reason all of them had resigned looks on their faces and were watching the girls from afar, and none of them went over to them.

“What’s going on?”

“Don’t know. In any case, it’s got nothing to do with us.”

As Loren said that, immediately losing interest since the crowd just caught his eye and no more, there was movement within the crowd.

Lapis sensed that whatever was in the middle started to try to break through but seeing that the shrills increased in volume every time that the thing pushed through the crowd, whatever that was being surrounded was something that gave them joy just by touching them.

“Something’s coming out.”

“Is that some sort of egg?”

As soon as Loren said that, a red headed man dressed in something that looked like a suit toned in navy blue managed to break free from the crowd and showed himself.

The man’s face, which looked a few years younger than Loren’s, was familiar to both Loren and Lapis, but because of where he came out of, they couldn’t help but stare at him with confused gazes.

“Good thing you guys are here. You’re on your way to talk about the job, right? Let me go with you.”

“Klaus? I won’t ask you why you’re here because I know you’re taking the same job, but what were you doing?”

The man who looked quite tired from getting through the crowd was none other than Klaus, who was dressed up slightly.

Behind him were a countless number of girls staring at Klaus’ back with gazes of envy and adoration, but Klaus paid no attention and started talking to Loren.

“Well, I told you this is my alma mater, right? I kind of dressed since this is the first time I’ve been here in a while... but I got surrounded by the students.”

“Those students are still waiting behind you.”

“Ah, this is troubling. Hey girls, you still have classes, right? I need to go to the principal to talk about a job.”

“Are you going to be an inspector for the dungeon exploration exam!?”

They could see the crowd getting excited when one of the girls asked Klaus.

After stopping the girls, who were starting to move to surround him again, with his hand, Klaus answered the girl's question with a troubled smile.

"Yeah. I'm here to take the job as an adventurer."

"Klaus for this year's exam!?"

As the rustling got louder, Klaus backed off slowly as the girls tried to close their gap and told them in a smooth voice, as if trying to appease them.

"I guess so... I need to go talk with the principal about that. So... w-wait, Loren! Why are you trying to leave me behind!?"

Loren and Lapis, who didn't want to deal with it, were walking away, but turned back, annoyed, when Klaus called out.

While the hostile gazes of the girls turned towards Loren, Klaus hurriedly ran over to Loren and for some reason gave him a resentful look.

"We've accepted the same job. You can go with me, you know?"

"You're busy, right? We could've gone and taken care of it while you deal with your cute juniors... Where are the usual three at?"

"I told them I'm going to come to the school to get the job explanation, but they told me to go alone... The three of them graduated here as well, but for some reason they don't like coming here with me."

Loren wasn't surprised, as he glanced at the girls behind Klaus, who were still looking at him with hostility.

It seemed that Klaus was very popular among the students, and it wasn't surprising that any girls that were with Klaus would be met with hostility.

Loren could understand why Ange and the other girls didn't want to come, since they would have to deal with a horde of girls that were giving even him harsh looks, even though he was the same gender as Klaus.

“I’m a graduate so I can show you around. So please let me go with you. I can’t escape even if I tried.”

He said to Loren in a small voice, but since it was so small, he had to get closer to Loren to say it.

It was a troublesome case for Loren, but when he thought about it, a portion of the students were attending the school because they were talented, but many of them were from a high class.

He didn’t know what kind of repercussions he could face later if he treated them harshly, and if Klaus was thinking the same thing, he could understand why Klaus wasn’t being so hard on them. Understanding Klaus’ predicament, Loren decided that leaving him here was pitiful.

“Can’t be helped, I guess... Alright, let’s go.”

When he grabbed Klaus’ shoulder and pulled him towards the direction they were going, the girls that surrounded Klaus cried out at the slight rough treatment.

“What are you doing to Klaus!”

“Don’t touch Klaus with those dirty hands of yours!”

“Where are you taking him? We’re not done talking with him!”

Klaus went pale at the things they yelled at Loren.

To Klaus, who knew what kind of person Loren was, knew that insulting him was a very dangerous thing to do.

It wasn’t surprising that he went pale because he was the cause of those insults.

He panicked and tried to stop the girls, but before he could do so, Loren stepped forward facing the girls, who went silent for a moment at the atmosphere that Loren was radiating, and said in voice that wasn’t loud, but could still be heard clearly.

“Shut up. You want to get messed up?”

It wasn’t as if he had his hand on the great sword on his back.

But the girls went pale all at once when they heard Loren's voice, filled with killing intent.

Not only that, the girls that were closer to Loren started foaming at the mouth and dropped unconscious.

On top of that, regardless of whether they were conscious or not, students who wet their pants or skirts started popping up, thus becoming even more chaotic.

While screams, wails, and howls flew around, Loren was shocked at the situation that he had caused.

He thought they would shrink away at the most at his coercion, and didn't expect them to foam and faint, or even incontinence.

"Aren't they a bit too fragile?"

"No, that made my own blood run cold too."



As Klaus said that with a pale face, Lapis, who was standing near them, stared at Loren with intrigued face.

Her expression looked more like one of suspicion after witnessing something mysterious, rather than being surprised at Loren's coercion.

As Loren wondered if she felt something, Shayna popped out from the side and giggled.

'I think mixing a bit of a No Life King's vibe with Onii-san's killing intent was the problem.'

When Loren sighed at what she'd done, Shayna flew around in his sight, as if she couldn't hold back her anger.

'They called Onii-san's hand dirty, you know!'

Shayna said angrily how it was unforgivable, and Loren wasn't sure how to respond.

He did feel a slight happiness that she had gotten angry for him, but the resulting chaotic situation seemed a bit too much.

When he told Shayna that he was happy, but to tone it down next time, although she looked like she wasn't satisfied, she nodded and blinked out his sight.

"I felt an odd presence just now."

Lapis told him, still staring in Loren's direction.

Although Shayna only used a slight amount of her power for a fraction of a second, Lapis had felt it, so Loren, astonished at her senses, played dumb.

"I didn't feel anything."

"Really? Was I imagining it... no, maybe Loren is just a very scary person? Scary enough to make such a horrible scene?"

"The students here are probably too fragile. I've been in battle and I've come back from battlefield, remember? It must have been too much for kids that haven't experienced real battle."

As Loren decided to go with that explanation, Lapis, although she looked like she wasn't convinced, couldn't think of any other explanation, so she stopped investigating.

"Is that so? Anyways, let's get back to work."

"You're going to the principal's office, right? I'll take you there, follow me."

As Klaus took the lead, Loren and Lapis started talking in low voices.

"Didn't his attitude become way too good compared to the first time we met him?"

"Maybe he holds everything inside. He's waiting to stab us from behind when our guards are down."

"I'd prefer if you said I reformed, but... whatever..."

Since Klaus, who was a graduate, was guiding them, there was no worry about them getting lost in school grounds.

With Klaus, whose shoulders drooped but didn't stop leading them, in the lead, Loren and Lapis left the havoc behind them.

CHAPTER 55

SELECTING AFTER MOVING

“Volf Adventurer Training School was built in honor of the achievements of an adventurer from about three hundred years ago, named Volf.”

Klaus was giving explanations that no one asked for as he lead Loren and Lapis down the hall.

Lapis was listening quietly, thinking of it as more knowledge, but Loren couldn't feel interested even if he was told the name of an adventurer from hundreds of years ago.

Most mercenaries' thought processes were impulsive or simple, and few of them thought in long terms.

Loren had some of those tendencies as well.

The member that was in charge of his education constantly told him to fix it, so he reformed some of them, but this bad habit tended to show itself when he couldn't seem to find any interest in the subject.

While thinking that his financial situation was one of those, Klaus' explanation continued.

“I don't need to explain anything about Volf, right? He has an innumerable amount of achievements, and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that most students here set him as their goal.”

“What are some of his achievements? Unfortunately, I don't know too much about common information because of priestess training and such.”

Although Lapis asked that, Loren guessed that it was a lie.

In the first place, Lapis was one of the demon kin, who lived in one part of the continent, and it was suspicious if she even trained to become a priestess.

It was also very unlikely that Lapis wouldn't investigate information beforehand.

Since she knew that their destination was Volf Adventurer Training School, it would definitely be strange if she hadn't done any research.

Then came the question of why she was making Klaus explain, so he asked Lapis why in a whisper.

"It's like checking to see if I'm right."

She was comparing the information that she had to Klaus' information.

"Let's see. I'm not sure if they are true or not, but there are countless stories of him slaying dragons, and countless discoveries or ruins. There is even a story about defeating and sealing an evil god."

"Don't people think that they're fake?"

Lapis asked him in a chilling manner.

If it was the Klaus from before, he would have been angry that she had called the deeds of an adventurer that he admired fake, but it seemed that he was indeed reformed, as he just let out a troubled laugh instead of lashing out.

"It's true that it sounds unbelievable just by hearing stories. But there is evidence that support a number of them. That evidence is the dungeon spreading under the Volf Adventurer Training School."

"What?"

If the subject was about the destination of their job, Loren was interested.

Klaus was surprised at Loren's sudden interruption since he had been silent the whole time, but he immediately showed a soft smile and continued his explanation.

"The dungeon under the school is said to have been created by Volf."

"It's not like he dug it, right?"

Loren felt that itself would be quite a feat, but an adventurer's achievement being that he dug a dungeon didn't sound cool at all.

“It’s said that he put the existing dungeon under his control.”

“You can do that with dungeons?”

“It’s also said that he solved the mechanics of the dungeon core, but there’s no record of that. But if you look at the dungeon, it would make you think that it might be true.”

According to Klaus, there was a distinction in difficulty for each floor.

It was structured as a training ground for dungeon exploration, and it was said that Volf made it that way for the adventurers for later generations.

Earlier floors having little danger and the danger level increasing for deeper floors was the same for other dungeons, and Lapis said maybe this dungeon wasn’t special, Klaus answered.

“This dungeon has ten floors, but you can only go to the ninth floor. You need the principal’s permission to go into the tenth floor.”

“So you’re saying that that’s where the evidence of Volf’s achievements are?”

“Exactly. I’ve only been there once before I graduated, though. If the students can make it to the ninth floor during this exam, they could go to the tenth floor as a reward.”

Klaus explained that they would get permission before the exam began.

That was a good piece of information to Loren.

The reason that they accepted the job was because a part of Lapis’ body might be located in the dungeon, and from Klaus’ explanation, he guessed that there was a high chance of it being in the tenth floor.

Then it seemed like their goal would easily be achieved if they followed the students into the tenth floor after then managed to make it to the ninth floor.

On top of that, he now found out why this dungeon wasn’t open to the public.

He wasn’t sure what kind of protection there was, but it seemed like there was a mechanism that prevented outsiders to break into the tenth floor and steal those evidences of Volf’s achievements.

“By the way, the exam will continue until the students give up, so you should be prepared for being down there for a while. The longest I know of is one month.”

“So you would have to stick with them the whole time. It’s not much of a profitable job, huh.”

“Yeah. That’s why graduates are mostly the ones that take this job, but why did you guys decide on this job?”

Loren wondered how he should answer Klaus’ question.

He couldn’t straight up say that they had business with the dungeon.

“We were interested. Both Loren and I aren’t proper adventurers, so we were interested in what kind of place a training school was.”

Unlike Loren, Lapis was able to answer the question immediately.

At her answer, which was so smooth it seemed scripted, Klaus looked convinced, while Loren away to hide his exasperation at Lapis’ reaction, which seemed prepared beforehand.

They finally reached the principal’s office.

The job was from the school, but their client was none other than the principal.

So of course they would go meet him, and when they arrived, Klaus opened the door to the office.

“Welcome! I’m the principal of Volf Adventurer Training School, Volf the Tenth!!”

Klaus stiffened at the sudden loud sound that came from across the doorway, while Loren covered his ears and Lapis swiftly hid behind him.

Loren saw Klaus’ knees shake from taking the full brunt of the sound, while he and Lapis were able to react him time, with a chill going down his back, but the chill got even worse after he saw the person who was supposed to be the principal.

Across from them was a man like a small mountain.

He was wearing formal clothing that matched his title of principal, his scale was way different than ordinary people.

Loren was on the tall side as well, but the man sitting down at the desk across the room was so big that his line of sight didn't differ from Loren's even though he was sitting down.

"What are you standing there for! Hurry up and get inside!"

Looking at the walls shake with his ears still covered, Loren pushed Klaus, who was frozen in place, with his elbow, while wondering if it was really necessary to shout like that.

Klaus slowly stepped into the principal's office, with a stretched smile on his face.

"I-it's been a while, principal. You look well, as usual."

"Glad to see you're in good health as well!"

His voice was still loud, as expected.

Loren flinched at the voice, which he could still hear clearly even though he was covering his ears.

Lapis, who was still hiding behind his back, had her hands on her head, trying to endure the loud sound.

"H-hey principal. Could you lower your voice a little bit please?"

"Shut up Klaus! Do you think I haven't heard of your deeds after you graduated this school!"

"I'm sorry about those cases..."

"Hmm? You are? It does seem that you're a bit different than from what I've been hearing about you."

The tone of his voice dropped slightly.

It was still loud, but it was bearable without having to cover his ears, so Loren put his

hands down and Lapis popped her head out from behind his back.

“You’ve had a change of heart, Klaus. Looks like you’ve learned some humility.”

“Sorry for worrying you.”

The principal snorted as Klaus bowed his head.

“If you were still the same as I’ve been hearing, I was going to teach you a lesson or two before the job, but it doesn’t seem like I need to anymore.”

“I’ve been blessed with the opportunity already.”

“You were lucky.”

Klaus and the principal were having a conversation that Loren didn’t understand, but it seemed that they came to a settlement.

Anticipating that, Loren called out to the principal, who was looking at Klaus with a satisfied smile, while shifting into a position that he could run away at any time.

“Hey, is it alright if we talk about the job now?”

“Oh, sorry about that. I heard that one of my former students was causing trouble, so I thought there was a need to give him a warning, but I didn’t need to.”

“Happy to hear that, but don’t get your voice up again.”

After hearing Loren’s words, which he said thinking that the principal might be the one who needed a warning, the principal looked at Lapis, whose head was peeking out from behind Loren’s back, and looked back at Klaus.

“Seems like this year we’ve got people who are quite skilled. Klaus, are they the cause of your reform?”

Klaus looked down in embarrassment as the principal glared at him again.

“It’s embarrassing to say, but yes they are.”

“Hmm. Hey big guy, it seems that I need to thank you.”

“I’m pretty sure I lose to you in size, but I don’t care much about being thanked, so can we talk about the job?”

At Loren’s urge, the principal put two stacks of paper on top of his desk.

Although the papers were normal sized ones, Loren thought it interesting that they looked like little bits of paper in the hands of the principal, then walked up to the desk and took one of the stacks.

“This is the roster for the students that will take the exam next. There will be two groups, one with Klaus’ party, and the other with yours. You will enter the dungeon with them.”

“My name is Loren. The one behind me is Lapis. It’s the pair of us that received the job.”

From behind Loren, Lapis softly slid the document that they had received from the adventurer’s guild in Kauffa in front of the principal.

After going through it, confirming that there were no mistakes, he put it in one of his drawers.

This meant that it was accepted, and it would be returned to them with the principal’s stamp after the job was done.

“The job description is accompanying the testers. Assisting them is not allowed in general, but if they ask you for advice, you can do so. Everything that happens down there is their own responsibility, and even if they lose their lives, the responsibility won’t fall on you.”

“You don’t mind rescuing them, right?”

“Of course. But if that happens, come straight back up. The testers will have to make maps as they go, but I will provide a map of the dungeon for you beforehand.”

Since the exam was already done many times before, they were able to make a close-to-complete map, and in the case of an emergency, they were to use it to return to the surface.

If the testers received help from the proctors, it was impossible to measure their skills.

Which meant that the exam would end when it is deemed that they need assistance.

“The exam is over once they get past the fifth floor, but it is fine to go as far as they can. Of course, the number of floors they get past ties in directly with their evaluation. To put it backwards, the exam won’t end until they get past the fifth floor. If they give up, that’s where the exam ends. Any questions?”

“I heard from Klaus that if we reach the ninth floor, you’ll allow us to enter the tenth floor. Is that true?”

“It is indeed. You’ll reach the stairs to the tenth floor if you defeat the keeper on the ninth floor, to be exact. The place is usually sealed, but I’ll give the pass to the students.”

“Isn’t that kind of shabby to be called a reward?”

“If you could take something, that is allowed as well.”

The words of the principal, who said it with a grin, was unexpected to Loren.

He thought so because permission to take something from where things related to the adventurer Volf was an exceptional reward.

“The same goes for the proctors. If you could take something, I dare you to try. But I won’t take responsibility for anything that happens, so keep that in mind.”

“Oh, so there’s some good-for-nothing trap or guardian, I’m guessing.”

The principal’s attitude told Loren that there was something down there that would prevent people from doing so, and it wasn’t something that students or low rank adventurers could face off against.

It must be that when encountered, if you didn’t take anything it would let you through, but if you did you would have to defeat it or get past it to leave the dungeon.

“So, out of the two parties, who will be in charge of which?”

Loren looked at Klaus, but he told Loren to pick first.

Since Klaus was a graduate, he must have the confidence to do fine with any party he ended up with.

After thinking so, Loren looked back and forth between the stacks of papers with the information of the parties on them, and then took one of them in his hand.

“Let us be in charge of this party.”

“Very well. But... any basis behind your decision?”

When the principal asked Loren, he answered with his eyes scanning the surface of the papers.

“I guess this is what you would call fate.”

Lapis, who was still hiding behind Loren’s back, peeked over his shoulder and took a look at the papers in Loren’s hand.

Lapis saw that the party leader was Ain, and the descriptions of the other party members, and realized that it was the party that Loren had helped the night before at the bar, and knew that was why Loren chose them.

CHAPTER 56

INTRODUCTION TO DEPARTURE

It didn't take long for them to introduce themselves.

Mostly because it wasn't the first time they've met each other.

Loren knew they were quite young when he met them at the bar, but when he looked at them in daylight, he couldn't help but feel conflicted when he saw the hint of youth in their faces.

"Loren, you do look a bit old for your age, after all."

"Yes I know, so you don't have to remind me."

Loren didn't know his exact age.

If he counted from his earliest memories, he should be slightly over twenty, but he didn't know the exact number.

No one around him really cared, and he didn't care about it either, since it wasn't necessary information for a mercenary.

The fact that it was a profession which didn't guarantee that you would live to an age which you would worry about getting old was a factor, but looking at the young students, he couldn't help but feel old.

"It's okay Loren. You're still young."

"That doesn't make me feel any better. Anyways, how old are you, Lapis?"

"Oh, Loren. I didn't know you had such a roundabout death wish."

"Oh come on..."

"I'm kidding. I'm just as old how I look."

Apparently, looking young but having lived for a very long time, which was the case for many demon kin, didn't apply to Lapis.

But this was coming from her own mouth, so he didn't know if it was true or not.

"Hey, the two of you. Thanks for being our proctors."

The one that came up to them and greeted them was Ain, the leader of the party that Loren and Lapis' oversaw.

Although he was still a boy, he was well built, wearing a hauberk and was carrying a long sword and a round shield, which was standard equipment for a warrior in the front line.

His blonde crew cut gave him a rough impression as well.

"We don't need a proctor though."

The one who muttered that was the smaller boy named Cloud.

He was wearing leather armor like the one Loren was wearing, but had fewer parts and only covered his chest, and he had an estoc hanging at his side.

Loren guessed that he was a swordsman who relied on speed during fights.

"Stop it Cloud. He's an adventurer. He's going to become scary if you make him mad."

The one who whined was the boy with the bowl cut named Al.

He was wearing priest's clothes with similar design to Lapis' and had a mace with him.

When Loren asked, Al had said he was a priest in training to the Supreme god, but his weak and timid nature did not make it seem like he was.

"Thanks a lot for last night! You really saved me there!"

The one who called out to him in a lively voice was Feim, wearing a robe and holding a wooden staff, like an orthodox magician.

She was a magician, as her appearance was, and told them that she could use one spell

per day.

“Do you think they could make it to the ninth floor?”

Loren asked Lapis quietly after they were introduced, and Ain and his companions were getting ready to enter the dungeon.

Loren and Lapis had already brought what they needed into the school along with their equipment. Lapis’ belongings were in a backpack on her back, but Loren didn’t have one since he had his great sword strapped on his back.

Instead, he had a pouch hanging from his left arm, and he also had a knife hanging on his left waist, that he had purchased for this job.

“Loren, you can use knives too?”

Lapis moved the conversation into a completely different direction.

“Yeah, somewhat. I used them to slit enemies’ throats on the battlefield.”

He drew the knife as he said that, but although it was shaped like a knife, it was way longer than what a knife should be, and the thickness of the blade was like that of an axe or a hoe.

“That looks more like a short blade than a knife. I’m surprised the shop had something like that.”

“This was the only knife at the shop in Kauffa. Its durability is top notch, but no one was buying it since it was so bulky, so the owner sold it to me for ten silver coins.”

“I could’ve readied one if you’d told me.”

“It’s a spare weapon anyway. It’s fine as long as it’s sharp and durable.

Lapis snorted in discontent at Loren’s response.

On the books, the equipment and the great sword on Loren’s back was all bought at the weapon shop in Kauffa, but behind the scenes, Lapis seemed to have brought it all and sold them to Loren through the shop. She didn’t say so herself, but it was quite obvious at this point.

His debt to Lapis had grown to thirty gold coins, which was a small fortune, but he knew that the equipment wasn't something that could be bought with that amount.

If he asked Lapis to get him a spare weapon, she was sure to bring him something expensive, and although it would be a good deal when compared its actual worth, but Loren didn't have the capacity to be increasing his debt again by several gold coins.

"So, how are they?"

"Their skill levels? It might be a bit tough."

As she looked at Ain and his party packing their things, the evaluation that she gave them was a quite a rough one.

"They could probably manage to get to the fifth floor, but any further might be hard."

On the map that the principal gave them were detailed descriptions of locations of traps and monsters that spawned on each floor.

Lapis used that information to calculate the difficulty of each floor.

"That's only if assuming the monsters in this dungeon are the same as normal monsters."

"What's the difference?"

Loren asked Lapis, feeling confused.

Since he used to be a mercenary, he had never been inside a dungeon, and he didn't know about the differences of normal monsters and ones that spawned in dungeons.

"To put it simply, monsters which bodies are left behind when they die are normal and monsters which are sucked back into the dungeon, leaving a part of their bodies, are ones that are spawned by the dungeon."

"They are different in power?"

"Yes. It depends on things like the size of the dungeon."

Lapis said he shouldn't underestimate them just because they look the same.

But the dungeon they were entering was one that was used for training students, so Lapis guessed the monsters were either the same or weaker than normal ones.

“When it comes to the worst, we’ll just have to have them get wiped out...”

Lapis started muttering things that were surprisingly dark.

Loren immediately responded.

“You’re going to stop by the bottom floor before we go up to report? I won’t help you, you know?”

“This is where you should stop me. Why are you planning to just watch me do it?”

Loren looked away at her response.

The two of them were casually talking about things that would be problematic if Ain and his party overheard them.

“Now that I think of it, if your body part is in the tenth floor, how did it get there in the first place? There’s stuff that an adventurer from three hundred years ago collected, right?”

The thought occurred that Lapis was a demon kin that walked the continent from that time, but if he were to believe what Lapis had told him, she wasn’t alive that long ago.

When Loren told her that a part of her being down there didn’t make sense, Lapis thought to herself for a moment and answered him, choosing her words carefully.

“It’s most likely that... my parents sneaked inside. Either there is a side entrance somewhere, or it wasn’t even remotely difficult for my parents to infiltrate it...”

She said it like it was easy, but this dungeon was property of the school’s, and the entrance was heavily guarded, to the point where there were no stories of anyone being able to infiltrate it.

But if Lapis’ parents, who were demon kin as well, were able to walk in and out easily, it meant that the security was mostly meant for humans.

“What in the world are your parents?”

“Do you want to meet them next time? I’ll invite you if you want.”

Lapis smiled as she said that, but when Loren saw it, he felt that there was some other meaning included as well, but he decided that he should be honest.

“Not really... Anyways, what made you believe that a part of your body is here?”

Lapis looked disappointed when Loren said he didn’t want to go, but at Loren’s question, she suddenly took Loren’s right hand.

Loren was slightly surprised when Lapis grabbed his hand, but Lapis paid no attention and asked him, still holding onto his hand.

“Loren, do you know that your right hand is here?”

“Yeah, of course. It’s my right hand. It would be weird if I didn’t know.”

“It’s the same thing. It’s a part of my body, so I have a vague feeling of where it is.”

Although she explained that knowing your right hand is there and knowing that a part of your body that has been ripped off is in a certain area is the same feeling, Loren couldn’t really understand it.

But Loren thought that it was something that he couldn’t understand no matter how long he thought about it, so he decided not to ask Lapis about it any further.

“Let’s say that we rely on that feeling, the problem would be how do we get all the way down there.”

“The final measure would be immobilizing the four of them with <<Sleep>> or something, and then go down and...”

“You guys ready?”

As soon as Lapis started scheming again, Loren confirmed with Ain since they seemed to be finished packing.

While Lapis stopped talking, Ain started cheering his party up as they picked up their bags.

“The passing mark is the fifth floor, but our goal is the tenth floor.”

“We can do it. No problem.”

“Can we really do it...”

“Of course, we can! We trained and studied hard for this.”

What Ain had said caught Loren’s attention.

From Lapis’ eyes, they weren’t skilled enough to reach the bottom floor, but apparently their goal was to reach it.

If that was the case, if they could manage to achieve their goal, Lapis’ goal would be achieved as well, without having to resort to more violent methods, and that would be better.

“If only advice would be enough for them.”

“I don’t think you should get faint hopes up.”

Loren thought that it would be a lot easier if they could help them directly, but the students were the main actors for this job, and Loren and Lapis were the side characters.

“Let’s help them without them knowing and keep them going forward.”

“Yeah.”

“Hey, the two of you, let’s go.”

At Ain’s call, Loren and Lapis and the students walked towards the entrance of the dungeon.

The entrance was inside the school building.

It was to keep anyone other than the students from entering, but they would have had to consider the worst case scenario, someone sneaking inside the school, so Loren walked while looking around, searching for traps.

CHAPTER 57

DEPARTURE AFTER ENCOUNTER

The image that Loren got when he thought of a dungeon entrance was quite a showy one.

But the entrance of the dungeon he was about to enter was a simple one that was way different from what Loren was imagining, being stairs that extended below from one of the rooms of the school.

Loren felt anticlimactic, but he braced himself again, as he told himself that the entrance had nothing to do with the difficulty of the dungeon itself.

Loren and his group ran into Klaus and his group at the room leading to the dungeon.

Loren saw Ange behind the group of students lead by Klaus, which was made up of four girls for some reason, but seeing her sour face, he laughed a bit as it was clear that she wasn't happy about the situation Klaus was put in.

"You guys going down too?"

Loren nodded, but he cocked his head as the group of girls Klaus was leading directed gazes of hostility at him.

He wondered if it was that unpleasant for them to see him be friendly with Klaus, who seemed to be popular and liked by everyone in the school. He then recalled the documents that the principal had handed him concerning the examinees.

"Aren't your members a bit different?"

Loren didn't remember the details of the other group, but he did remember that it wasn't a party full of girls.

On top of that, all the girls were dressed as swordsman, and he was sure that the structure wasn't so deviated.

“We heard that Master Klaus was going to be proctoring, so we had the group switch with us.”

The one who answered was one of the girls standing behind Klaus.

The strong willed looking girl with blond pigtails in vertical spirals, speaking for all the girls, spoke to Loren without any fear and with her chest puffed out.

“It would be foolish to lose the chance to have Master Klaus, who was called a prodigy during his time as a student, to proctor us.”

“Who’s this?”

Loren asked Klaus, not even trying to hide air of ‘I wasn’t asking you’, and Klaus answered him with a slightly stretched smile.

“Parme Pentatonic. I’m sure you’re not interested, but she’s a comtesse from a certain nation.”

“Be thankful, adventurer. I’m not someone you would normally be able to speak to.”

Even though she said that as she looked down on him, Loren didn’t even look at her and asked Klaus again.

“Are classes and ranks in effect in the school?”

“Officially students are treated as students, regardless of class... but it’s true that talented students and students born of high class assert authority sometimes... sorry.”

“Why are you the one that’s apologizing?”

Loren sighed as Klaus’ voice became smaller and smaller.

He guessed that Klaus was embarrassed at the things that he’s done until now, but as one that was watching him correcting his ways and attitude, he felt that Klaus didn’t have to act so ashamed.

“That’s right! There’s no reason for Master Klaus to apologize to someone like this...”

“Hey you, how about you be quiet for a bit. Especially if you like me.”

Klaus stopped Parme calmly, with a shadow cast over his face.

Loren didn't really care how much the girl went at him, but not having to deal with it didn't hurt either.

Losing interest in the girls, Loren turned his attention to Ange, who was standing behind them with a sour face.

"That's a scary face you're making there."

"You understand how I feel, don't you?"

"I've got a good guess. But if you're like that, wouldn't it worry Klaus and not look good to the students?"

Ange might not have cared about the students, but when Loren pointed out the possibility that she could be worrying Klaus, her expression went slightly back to normal.

Glancing at some of the wrinkles still left on her forehead, Loren looked around her.

"What happened to the other two?"

"Boycott. This time it's just me and Klaus."

Loren remembered that there wasn't a limit on how many could take the job at once.

It seemed that Layla and Roll decided that they didn't want to deal with this atmosphere and refused to come.

"Then why didn't you refuse to come as well?"

"Are you saying that I should let throw Klaus into a crowd of girls all by himself?"

Loren tried to step away from Ange, slightly overcome by her sudden threatening look, but Ange kept closing the gap.

"Listen. It's true that Klaus is good looking and is quite skilled. And thanks to you, he's lost his arrogance and his personality became rounder. But still. His quickness when it comes to making moves on girls hasn't changed at all!"

“I don’t remember fixing that part of him, either.”

It’s not that he didn’t remember, but it was that he didn’t know about it.

Seeing that the rest of Klaus’ party were women and all of them had feelings for him, Loren guessed that he was somewhat fast at making moves, but regardless, it didn’t really harm Loren in any way.

“If I let Klaus go into a dungeon with no one to keep an eye on him. By the time they come back, all of them will have hearts floating over their heads!”

“Uhh, okay.”

“If he’s careless, in a few months he’ll have girls flocking all over him, telling him ‘this is your child, acknowledge it!’”



Loren thought that was saying too much, but when he glanced at Klaus, he was looking away with a pale face.

Hearing Ange say that, some of the girls around him had their eyes wide open with surprise, but some of them were blushing with happy looks on their faces.

“I have to stay with him to prevent that.”

“That’s quite a disaster you have to deal with. Good luck.”

After giving Ange a half-hearted voice of encouragement, Loren walked up to Klaus again, put his hand on his shoulder, and pulled him closer.

“Don’t overdo it, alright?”

“Ahahahaha... Thanks for the warning, I guess.”

Seeing Klaus laugh weakly, Loren got the feeling that he was already beyond saving.

If crime of passion was the reason behind his group getting wiped out, he could face an extreme loss of face, and Loren could only pray that he wouldn’t come back to hear such stories.

“So, who’s going first?”

Seeing that Loren was finished talking, Lapis asked to everyone in the room.

The stairs into the dungeon was in the corner of the room, but it wasn’t wide enough for all of them to go down at once, and since there were two groups, one had to go before the other.

Loren didn’t think one was more advantageous than the other, but decided that it was better for the students to talk it out among themselves.

“We’ll let you go first. Got it?”

“Wait a second. Don’t decide it on your own.”

Parme, who was looking down on them to the last, and Ain, who was talking head on.

The conversation between party leaders started out quite heated, but their main point was to make the other party go first.

As Loren wondered what made them so desperate to make the other go first, Lapis whispered into his ear.

“Both parties don’t have a thief.”

Loren realized now that she mentioned it.

Ain’s party consisted of two warriors, a magician, and a priest.

Parme’s party were all swordsmen, so there wasn’t a thief in sight.

The school was one that trained adventurers, so they would be training thieves as well, but it was strange that either parties didn’t have one.

The usefulness of a thief went without saying when exploring dungeons.

Various traps set here and there or hidden doors.

Opening locks on doors and chests all required the skill set of a thief, so not having one was very strange indeed.

“The aristocrat girls don’t have one most likely because they look down on the job and didn’t invite one to join them.”

It wasn’t surprising that aristocrats would look down on such jobs.

There was also no way they would go out of their way to learn the skills of one.

Even so, going down into a dungeon without having one seemed dangerous even to Loren, who had no experience exploring dungeons.

“They wouldn’t need one if they are going to ignore chests, and it is possible to detect traps if you look carefully enough or poke the ground in front of you with a stick.”

Lapis pointed to one of the girls, who had a long stick as tall as she was along with her weapon.

Lapis guessed that she had the role of hitting the floor and walls to check for traps.

“On the other hand, Ain and his party probably didn’t have anyone to learn the skills. They seem like a group of close friends anyway.”

“Then couldn’t they have added a thief into their party? There isn’t a limit for how many can be in a party.”

It was common for a party to have four or five members.

This piece of knowledge was based on the experiences of many adventurers, where any lower than that would make it harder to detect and deal with dangers, and any more would slow the group down.

Of course, if you were to ignore efficiency, you could pair up with someone else or invite however many people you wanted to.

“I’m guessing that they weren’t acquainted with anyone who’s a thief. The four of them look like they’re a closed community, in any case.”

Lapis said that because they were a party that consisted of close friends, they couldn’t invite anyone from outside their group even though they knew they needed a thief.

Although on a different scale, similar situations happened among mercenaries as well.

When the number of members decreased for whatever reason and they try to increase members by letting some in from other places, many of them don’t want to do so.

Because of this, they try to fill the holes left open by themselves instead of recruiting more people.

“It’s the same thing as villagers not liking outsiders.”

“That’s a pretty blunt way to put it...”

“So that’s why both of them want the opposing party to go first and test the waters.”

Loren let out a nervous laugh as Lapis rounded the conversation up, and the argument between Ain and Parme seemed to have reached a conclusion.

When Loren looked at them, he saw Parme red with frustration and Ain with a proud look on his face.

“Alright, you guys first.”

“You’d better remember this, commoner. You’ll pay a high price for this.”

Parme grinded her teeth but didn’t seem to argue with what was decided. She gathered the other girls and with Klaus, who was continuing to bow his head, and Ange, who was still in a bad mood, and went down the stairs into the dungeon.

“But wouldn’t letting the other go first only matter if you were going the same way?”

If they took different paths, going first or last wouldn’t matter.

Lapis answered Loren’s question without even trying to hide her exasperation.

“If they use the method taught by the school, they would take the same road.”

“What’s that supposed to mean.”

“I took a peek at the school’s curriculum before we came... and it seems that when it comes to exploring dungeons, they teach the students to put their left hands on the outer wall and stay next to that wall.”

“I heard that method doesn’t work if the exit to the dungeon is in the middle of the maze.”

If you were trying to exit the dungeon by following the outer wall, the exit had to be somewhere on the outer wall.

“In that case they make use of the map they drew on the first round and start over.”

“Sounds like you would need a lot of patience.”

Loren stifled a yawn as he watched Ain and his party getting ready to draw a map and discussing when to enter, thinking that exploring dungeons wasn’t something mercenaries, who were mostly short tempered, would do.

CHAPTER 58

RUSHING IN AND EXPLORING

“Alright, let’s head in.”

Ain suggested after a while had passed since Parme and her party had descended the stairs.

It seemed that along with letting Parme go first and letting her clear the way, he also had the thought of not going in right after her.

Both weren’t the coolest, but this time Loren was a proctor, so he knew that he had no say in what Ain decided.

“It’s not the most respectable action.”

But next to Loren was a priestess that didn’t care about their position.

The students gave her hostile looks as she said what Loren, who was walking beside Lapis without a sign of being intimidated, didn’t even say out loud without hesitation, and her complaints flowed towards him.

“In the first place, the ulterior motive of letting women walk in front and ensuring your own safety isn’t good. If I were the examiner, I would deduct a lot of points.”

“Adventurers aren’t knights, after all. Maybe they’re taught to do whatever they can to survive.”

That was something relatable to mercenaries as well.

In general, the battlefield was accepted to be a place where the ones who survived were in the right. Actions based on the manners and courtesies of knights were applauded, but if you died doing so you would end up being laughingstock.

“Just saying Lapis... you would use whatever and whoever you could to get your hands on unknown knowledge, won’t you?”

When Loren pointed that out, Lapis stared at Loren and crossed her arms.

“Hm? Maybe they’re quite capable.”

“I’m getting worried if I should keep being in a party with you.”

As Loren looked at Lapis with a stretched smile, after a while Lapis laughed and told him that she was joking, but Loren decided that he would be happier off not wondering if she was really joking or if she was being serious.

“Also, it’ll probably fall short of their speculations.”

“Why is that?”

Lapis asked him, but at the same time they reached the bottom of the stairs and Ain, who was in front, opened the door to the dungeon.

The passageway on the other side was dark, and Loren saw that the passage split into two corridors a short way down.

“It’s too dark. Feim, light the torch.”

“Got it.”

Feim used a flint to light the lantern that she was holding.

Ain the others gave a sigh of relief as the light shone across the walls.

“Okay, let’s go.”

Ain and Cloud stood in front, and Al and Feim followed behind them.

The corridor was wide enough to fit two of them side by side, and the ceiling was high enough that the light from Feim’s lantern didn’t reach it.

Seeing how high it was, Loren judged that there was more than enough space for him to swing the great sword on his back.

“The ceiling is pretty high.”

Loren nodded to Lapis, who was looking up.

“There’s enough room for me to swing my great sword.”

“Loren, how can you see all the way up there?”

Loren realized as she pointed it out.

The light from Feim’s lantern didn’t reach the ceiling.

That meant the ceiling was still covered in darkness, and there was no way Loren should be able to see it, but when he looked up again, he could see the stone ceiling very clearly.

“...I told you before that I have good night vision. This amount of light is enough for me to see it faintly.”

“I see.”

Lapis seemed to have lost interest at Loren’s response and didn’t poke any further, but inside, Loren was freaking out.

When he called out to Shayna, who was inside him, she answered immediately.

‘Eyes of the undead can see through the darkness.’

Loren thought that Shayna could sense what he was feeling, but apparently Shayna could restore her own senses into his organs as well.

To the undead, darkness was always near them, and were able to perceive things in the dark.

The eyes of Shayna, most likely because she was the highest ranking undead entity, a no life king, seemed to see through darkness itself, and by synchronizing her sight with Loren’s eyes resulted in him being able to see where the lantern’s light didn’t reach.

He thought that maybe Shayna could’ve told him beforehand, but he thanked her, knowing that she did it for him.

While he was talking to Shayna, the group had continued down the corridor and reached

the first crossroad.

If they were following the school's teachings, they would go to the left, and without even discussing it, Ain and his party started down the left corridor.

"I think that Klaus and his group went right."

Lapis cocked her head as Loren whispered to her.

Based on the school's curriculum that she peeked at, going to the left, as their group had done, was the standard, but Loren denied it.

"Parme and her group went first, but don't you think they wouldn't put up with clearing the way for Ain and his party?"

"That's kind of understandable."

"That's why I think they probably went right. They would get the same results if they put their right hands on the wall anyway."

This method of conquering the dungeon worked as long as you followed the outer wall, so it didn't matter which side the wall was on.

If you integrated the rest of the method properly, all you needed to do was pick a wall and follow it.

Then if the other group guessed that their group would follow the manual, they would have chosen to go down the right path since they didn't want to clear the way.

"Aren't you going to tell them that?"

The actions of Ain and his party was based on the thought that Parme and her group would make sure it was safe, but if Loren was correct and they weren't following them, the direction they were going in was still dangerous.

If Loren warned them that Parme and her party weren't moving in front of them, Ain and the others would be more alert, but Loren didn't feel like telling them.

"They haven't asked me. My job is to be a proctor, so my position is being able to give them advice if they ask for it."

Loren thought that there wouldn't be anything that would be life threatening since they weren't far from the entrance and they were still in a shallow floor.

The chances of something alarming happening was slim even if they didn't realize Parme's group wasn't in front of them, and even if something did happen, Loren was told by the principal that the students were responsible for heading back, so Loren didn't feel any responsibility.

"And if they ask for help in such a shallow floor, it would be impossible for them to reach the bottom floor."

"You've got a point."

Lapis agreed with Loren's words and shifted her eyes to the two in front.

Although they had the tip of their weapons touching the walls and floor, they were moving quite fast under the assumption that they were taking the same path Parme's group did.

The priest and magician followed behind them.

Loren thought it was a formation that was vulnerable to sudden attacks from behind, but when he thought about it, the ones at the back was him and Lapis, so if anything came up from behind, they were the ones who would have to deal with it.

"Aren't we acting as pretty good shields?"

Even if the monsters were produced by the dungeon, Loren doubted that they would be smart enough to recognize students from proctors.

"Maybe making use of your proctors well is also part of the exam."

"If that's the case, I can't willingly be used if I didn't get warned beforehand."

"From the looks of that principal, I can't deny the possibility that he just forgot to tell us."

Loren recalled the giant he saw in the principal's office.

He indeed looked like he didn't care about details.

Judging from his name, he most likely had the blood of the ancient adventurer in his veins, but if you were to ask if the child of a hero is a hero, many times that wasn't the case, and even if he possessed the power to become a hero, there was a possibility that he was a failure as an educator.

"It's all part of the reward so we can't really complain."

"The reward seems pretty cheap then, no?"

"It's closer to volunteer work, I guess."

The two of them were having hushed conversations as such while they were walking, but there was a reason behind it.

They were very bored.

They were moving along quite fast, but Ain and Cloud were still on the lookout for traps and enemies, meanwhile Ain and Feim were ready to use magic or divine arts at a moment's notice.

Although all of them were on alert, no enemies were appearing.

They didn't encounter any monsters on the path that Ain was taking them, as if Loren's guess was wrong and Parme's party came this way already and took care of everything.

"I guess it's because we're on a shallow floor."

"Nothing coming out is kind of creepy."

"Is it?"

Monsters not popping up meant that they had a lot of free time, but it also meant that they weren't in danger, and Loren thought that was a good thing.

But Lapis denied his thinking.

"As long as this is a dungeon, even if it is on a shallow floor, there should be points where monsters spring from."

And if there were points where monsters appeared, no matter how large the dungeon

is, the chances of not coming across them were slim.

But the group hadn't even seen a glimpse of a monster yet.

"Doesn't that mean that we're lucky?"

The one who joined their conversation was Feim, who was still holding the lantern.

The other three were too busy being on guard to join their conversation, but since all Feim was doing was holding the lantern, so she had the time to be able to do so.

"I hope we'll be able to put it off as luck."

"You're so pessimistic. You'll start looking old like the guy next to you, you know?"

All Loren could do was scratch his head at the unexpected attack, while Lapis covered her mouth with her hand and turned her back to Loren, her shoulders shaking uncontrollably.

Loren knew that she was laughing, but he was aware of the fact, so he couldn't really complain.

"It's okay mister, I like people who look older."

"Pfff!?"

Lapis spurted for a different reason than before at Feim's unexpected words and started coughing.

Loren continued to scratch his head, not sure how to respond to her words.

It did seem like she was complimenting him, but she still mentioned that he looked old so he couldn't find anything to say, since he wasn't sure if he should be mad or thankful.

'Onii-san, is this person an enemy...?'



While soothing Shayna, whose voice rang out in his head with a freezing feel to it, Loren started worrying if he could finish the job safely, as it seemed that the dungeon wasn't the only thing that posed a threat to him.

CHAPTER 59

CONSIDERING DURING BATTLE

Loren and his group finally ran into monsters after they climbed down to the second floor.

In the end, they found the stairs to the second floor before they encountered any monsters, but they ran into four goblins in a small room that they stepped in a short distance from the stairs.

Ain and his party immediately prepared to fight them.

Their speed was one of those who had trained quite a bit, and Loren, who didn't expect much of them, thought it would be okay to give them a passing grade.

He then looked towards the goblins in front of them.

They were monsters that had given him a hard time in an ancient ruin that spawned them endlessly, but if they didn't have the numbers, they were normal and weak in general.

But Loren's brows furrowed at the goblins that they encountered since seemed even weaker than the ones he imagined were weak.

If he didn't learn that the strength of the monsters depended on things like the scale of the dungeon, he would've thought that the goblins were struck with some illness, since their hands were trembling, trying to hold up their shabby daggers and shields.

As Loren decided that it wouldn't even be a match against these monsters, Ain and Cloud, who were the frontline, raised their weapons and yelled.

But there was one that attacked before they even moved.

It was the magician, Feim.

Of course, Loren would've felt disgusted if she used the one spell she could use in this

situation, but Feim didn't use a spell neither the staff in her left hand. But instead she hung the lantern on her staff and pulled out a dart from her robe pocket with her right hand.

The dart that shot out from her hand sunk itself into the shoulders of one of the goblins.

But the dart's needle wasn't that long.

A goblin's skin was quite thick and had the defensive capabilities of leather armor, so Loren didn't think that a dart that barely penetrated it would even make it flinch.

But in contrary to his expectation, the goblin that got hit by the dart dropped its weapons and started rolling on the floor, clutching the area where the dart hit it.

'Yes! It's working!'

"That's pretty nasty. The needle was dipped in poison."

Lapis watched Feim, who raised her fist, with half opened eyes.

Loren wondered whose thoughts were more nasty. Feim's, who had thought of using poison, or Lapis, who immediately saw through the poison, but his thoughts were blown away by the sound of sword hitting against sword.

When he looked over, he saw that Ain and Cloud had started fighting the goblins, and Ain had taken on two of them since he had a shield, and Cloud was handling the last one.

Ain's fighting style was very passive.

He used both this sword and his shield defensively, and didn't seem like he was trying to deal damage to his opponents.

But from the perspective of keeping the aggro of the two goblins, he was doing his job as the front line.

Cloud was using his speed to apply blow after blow.

Estocs specialized in thrusting and stabbing, so they weren't meant for swinging and

clashing with other weapons.

That was why you would try to get under your opponent's guard and be constantly attacking, but in this case, the goblin was so weak it could not keep up with Cloud's movements.

But even so, it tried to block Cloud's attacks with its shield and dagger, then put in a counter, but Cloud didn't go far in, but instead attacked then retreated immediately so the goblin's attacks couldn't reach him.

But to Loren, Cloud's way of fighting, continually dealing small cuts to a weakened goblin, just looked like he was playing with it, and wasn't the most pleasant thing to watch.

"Al! Now's your chance! I'll hold it down so hit it!"

"Ehhhh! It's still moving though!"

"That's why you have to make sure it doesn't move anymore!"

Holding his mace with both hands, Al slowly walked closer to the goblin that Feim had immobilized, while Feim put her foot on the goblin's back to keep it from moving.

"Hurry up! The poison isn't that strong!"

"Ugh... Okay..."

Al swung the mace in his hands with tears in his eyes.

The goblin that Feim was pinning down squirmed and struggled to escape, but Feim stomped down with more force, not letting it go.

"Take this!"

With a yell that sounded a bit disheartened, the mace was swung down, aimed at the goblin's head, but it missed and hit its back around the scapula with a blunt sound, and the goblin cried out in pain.

"Haaa!"

The next blow hit the goblin's arm that it raised to cover its head and it bent in a weird direction.

As the goblin's cries got even louder, Al wiped the sweat from his forehead and looked at his mace, confused.

"Why isn't it hitting?"

"Well, of course it wouldn't hit since you're closing your eyes as you swing it down..."

Loren unthinkingly said so out loud.

As a proctor, he wasn't supposed to help them unless they asked for it, but he felt that Al might hit Feim this kept going on. Even if it didn't happen, he felt sorry for the goblin, not being able to be released from its misery.

"But if I swing down with my eyes open, I'll see things that I don't want to when it hits..."

"Then don't. Why did you even become an adventurer? Honestly..."

As Loren started yelling, Lapis wrapped her arms around his waist, hugging him from behind so he couldn't grab Al.

Al, who was looking at Loren in confusion, remembered that the goblin was still alive, and swung his mace down again.

"Lapis, why'd you stop me?"

"I understand how you feel, but you've got to keep it in. It's beyond the job of a proctor, and this exam is most likely meant to teach them these things."

"But still..."

"Yes, I didn't know it would be this bad as well. They say it's the exam for graduating, but there must be a wide range for quality among the graduates."

A complaining look appeared on Loren's face for a while, but he eventually clicked his tongue and patted Lapis, who was still hugging him, on the head.

He meant that it was okay for her to let go now, but Lapis didn't let go of his waist.

"Hey, Lapis?"

"Loren, your waist is a lot thinner than I thought."

"Don't worry, it's still thicker than yours. Anyways, so this dungeon is school property because of that too?"

When Loren asked, Lapis let go of his waist with a questioning look on her face.

"The dungeon spawned the goblins, right?"

"Yes, since there isn't anything that would let monsters in from the outside."

"So that means those weak looking goblins were spawned by the dungeon for the sake of the exam, right?"

At Loren's words, Lapis turned towards Ain and the other students.

Ain, who still wasn't going on the offensive, was still dealing with two goblins, and Cloud was still giving light cuts to the goblin he was against as well.

The goblin that Al and Feim were trying to kill was still struggling under Feim's foot due to Al's accuracy being so bad, and Feim was trying to stick another dart into its back.

"Loren, it's true that the strength of the monsters change depending on the scale of the dungeon, but dungeons don't spawn weakened monsters on purpose, you know?"

"But..."

"Think about it. If you were to spawn weakened monsters, why not just spawn ordinary monsters that are just that weak. Why would you go through the trouble of spawning them in a weakened state?"

"Don't ask me something I can't answer."

Loren gave up, knowing that there was no way he would know something Lapis didn't.

Lapis folded her arms in front of her chest and frowned at Ain and the others, who were still fighting.

“Since you say that the monsters are weakened, they must be weakened. Then the problem is what is causing it.”

Just in case, Loren turned his focus to Shayna and asked her if it was her doing.

He thought maybe her energy drain weakened the goblins, but Shayna told him it wasn't her.

“I don't believe the dungeon would do something inefficient like spawning monsters in a weakened state. Then there would be two possibilities.”

“What's the first one?”

“They were somehow weakened after they were spawned.”

“Second one?”

“The possibility that the spawn system is malfunctioning.”

“So, you don't know which one the cause is?”

“There's not enough information.”

Loren sighed, because either way, it meant that there was something going on in the dungeon.

He'd rather have had another one of Shayna's pranks as the cause, than have trouble come his way, but that wasn't a possibility anymore since he had already asked her.

“I only smell trouble...”

“I would want to head back as well if it wasn't for a part of my body being down here... but then that would mean that on top of failing the job, we would have to pay a penalty, so that's a problem as well.”

“Just out of curiosity, how much would the penalty be?”

“Five times the reward. Can you pay that Loren?”

“You know what my wallet is like right now, right?”

Of course, there was no way Loren could pay the penalty with what he had in his wallet.

He didn't know what disasters would await him if he failed to pay the penalty, but he knew that it wouldn't be something to look forward to.

“I won't blame you if you decide to leave on your own, you know?”

Loren guessed that Lapis would be able to pay the penalty without difficulty.

Lapis gave him a troubled laugh, as if that were true.

“Yeah, right. We accepted this job because I wanted to in the first place.”

“If you say so.”

After a countless number of attempts, Al's mace finally hit the goblin's head.

The goblin stopped moving, as the blow finally killed it.

Monsters spawned by the dungeon would be absorbed by it, leaving behind a part of its body as material, but nothing was left behind when the goblin disappeared.

“Huh? Why?”

“Interesting. I guess there are times when they don't leave behind materials.”

Al looked around, while Feim seemed interested at the unexpected result.

Behind them, Cloud finally killed the goblin he was fighting and ran towards Ain, who was still holding off two of them.

The goblin that Cloud killed sank into the ground and disappeared, but nothing was left behind yet again.

CHAPTER 60

TALKING WHILE WALKING

After the fruitless battle with the goblins, Loren and the group found the stairs to the third floor without encountering any monsters again.

The fact that they weren't encountering any monsters at all made it obvious that there was something weird was happening, so Loren thought Ain and his party would feel uneasy, but they were far from being uneasy. In fact, they were rejoicing at the fact that they didn't encounter any more monsters.

"At this rate, we'll reach the fifth floor in no time."

The other students nodded happily at Ain's words, but in Loren's eyes, if they were to become adventurers at their current level, the possibility of all of them surviving for a year was equivalent to him suddenly being able to use magic tomorrow.

He seemed to have been misled by the fact that they were examinees, realizing that those who took exams weren't always ones who had the ability to pass.

"Seems like they would have a short run."

Lapis muttered indifferently, as if she was thinking the same thing, and all Loren could do was nod.

"By the way Loren, have you noticed?"

"That there's no sign of blonde pigtails and her party?"

Lapis pouted slightly at Loren's response.

Loren guessed that she expected him not to know and ask her, and start the conversation from there, but Loren couldn't pull off feats such as feigning ignorance and asking back, when the answer was clear as day to him.

On their minds was the party that entered before them, led by Parme with Klaus

proctoring them.

According to the map given to them by the principal, there should only be one set of stairs that led to the levels below, and since they were moving so smoothly, it wouldn't be surprising if they had caught up to them by now.

But there was no sign of them at all, which raised Loren's concern.

"Their skill levels are higher, and they have more combat experience, so they must be moving a lot faster than us."

"It doesn't seem like we passed them either."

Ain and his party took quite a while to defeat the weakened goblins.

It was unlikely that they had overtook Parme's party.

"Maybe they already made it down to the fifth floor."

"Hmm?"

Lapis growled as she spread out the map and checked their pathing, making sure the students couldn't see it.

"It depends on how skilled the other party is. If they are like ours, they shouldn't be able to get past the fourth floor."

"If you're talking about Parme's party, they are near the top when it comes to swordsmanship alone."

Feim interrupted Lapis' muttering.

Ain and the rest of the party were ahead of them, but she had slowed down to where they were.

Lapis' mood worsened as Feim came over, but Loren covered Lapis' face with his palm, as her expression started becoming stern, and decided to ask her a few things.

If it wasn't related to exploring the dungeon, it didn't count as advice or warnings, so it was a move based on the calculation that it didn't stray from the limits of a proctor.

“Is that blonde pigtail called Parme that strong?”

“Of course. The girls in her party are all swordsmen that are in the top ten for this year’s exam.”

“What is this difference in level between the two groups?”

“Hahaha, you think so too?”

Feim laughed, but it wasn’t a laughing matter for Loren.

And if what Feim said was true, it meant that Parme’s group was already at the fifth floor or even further.

“We’re not nobles and we’re not talented either. We’re just a group of ordinary people.”

“Wait, I thought the training school was meant for raising talented people.”

Loren turned towards Lapis, since she was the one who said so, and Lapis nodded, telling her she wasn’t lying.

“That’s the basis. But you know, even if you’re talented, there are people with greater talents than others.”

Loren knew that was true.

A wide range would exist, and on one side of the spectrum would be those with incredible talent, while ones who were just barely more talented than most would be on the other.

“It’s fine for the people at the top, since they could work hard together, but for people in the middle and below, we feel inferior when we see those people who are called prodigies.”

“Yeah, I’m beginning to get what you’re saying...”

From what she had just said, although the school slogan was to raise talented individuals, but it seemed that they were accepting those that weren’t talented at all.

Loren started wondering why they would do that, but Lapis gave the answer.

“It’s because some people find relief when they see and know that there are people below them. It may be effective, but it’s quite a worthless thing they’re doing.”

“Hahaha, it’s not all that bad. We’re taught how to fight and given education properly, after all.”

Loren wondered if Klaus knew about this, but he concluded that he most likely didn’t.

It was because if he did know, he wouldn’t have let Loren in charge of a dropout level group.

“We get support funds from the nation as well.”

“Judging from that, the school’s probably receiving some sorts of funds as well.”

They were having to enroll the ordinary along with the talented, just so they could raise extraordinary individuals.

When considering the flow of money going into the school from the nation as tips or rewards, the principal could surprisingly be categorized as a corrupt individual.

That’s what Loren concluded, but Feim’s words rejected it.

“It’s likely that the school is receiving funds, but I doubt that the principal knows about it.”

“Why’s that? Isn’t he the one in charge?”

“There are other people in charge of the school’s finances. You know that the principal is the descendant of the adventurer this school was named after, right?”

Loren already guessed that from the principal’s name, and then realized.

“He’s just letting them use his name.”

“Even he’s being hired, to be exact.”

Lapis added.

Loren wasn’t sure if the principal knew about this, but he knew that if he did know, he

wouldn't agree to do so.

"We're not sure what the principal thinks about us, but we're not expected to pass this exam in the first place."

Feim drew a conclusion to the conversation, but to Loren it seemed like a very dangerous matter.

Under ordinary circumstances, Feim and the rest of the students wouldn't be able to pass this exam, be branded as failures, and would be forced to continue being students or go find a different way to make a living.

But the current dungeon wasn't spawning monsters at all for some unknown reason.

They were still only on the third floor, but Loren guessed that it would be similar enough on the fourth and fifth floors.

If this went on, it would mean Ain and his party passing the exam even though they weren't skilled enough and would be sent out as full-fledged adventurers.

This wasn't good for Ain and his group, and it wasn't good for whoever would become their client.

"I have a question."

Lapis raised her hand.

"Is the priest named Al the same?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"He told us that he was a priest of the Supreme god. Unlike the other gods, not anyone can become priests of the Supreme god."

It was the strongest god of them all and was considered a being above all the other gods, and in order to become a priest, you needed social standing as well as skill and ability.

Since Lapis knew that, she couldn't understand how a priest of the Supreme god was with Feim and the others, who knew they were drop out level.

“Al is a bit different. His name is Alford Veronica, and is the second son of a noble.”

If he was a noble as well as a priest of the Supreme god, Loren wondered if he had the social status and ability.

His skill with his mace was disastrous, as he saw when he failed to kill the goblin multiple times, but if his skill as a priest was high, it was something that could be overlooked.

“Al didn’t only become friends with a bunch of ordinary commoners like us, but he’s someone we could rely on to help us with his knowledge and divine arts.”

“That’s someone reliable?”

The attitude that Al had shown Loren a short while before didn’t make it seem like he would be reliable at all and he couldn’t believe it, but he was stunned to see that Feim was being serious.

“Well, he is a bit timid and can’t use his weapon at all.”

“I can hear you...”

Al said with a laugh as he walked in front of them, but Feim didn’t pay any attention and continued.

“But he’s still reliable, you know? We only made up our minds to take the exam because Al encouraged us that we would be able to get to the fifth floor, and if we could get past it, the tenth floor isn’t a dream.”

“I’ve watched you guys listen during class and train hard. Of course, we might not be able to do things well, but if we work together, we’ll definitely be able to do it.”

As Al said that in a timid voice, the others nodded.

At the sight of students that were considered dropouts trying their best to pass the exam, Loren asked Lapis, who was standing next to him with a bored look on her face.

“You think that’s a likely story?”

“I don’t know. One of them could awaken to new powers. One of them could have skills

like Loren's berserk. Hard for me to say."

"There's always the possibility of our expectations being wrong, right?"

"Being hopeful isn't a bad thing. Maybe."

Lapis managed to squeeze words out that wasn't even on her mind.

Loren thought that there was no need to say it like that, but if their current situation continued, the party would pass the exam, regardless of their skill level.

They were just walking without running into any obstacles, after all.

"Hey, there's the stairs to the next floor!"

The other three ran forward at Ain's voice.

As Loren watched their backs, he wondered if he should be worried at the fact that they got through the third floor without encountering any monsters, which hinted that something was wrong with the dungeon, or if he should worry about the children in front of him, who were moving ahead without realizing.

CHAPTER 61

ARRIVING AFTER MINDING THEIR BUSINESS

Loren's worries became a reality.

They had found the stairs to the fourth and fifth floor without encountering any monsters, the reason still unknown.

"This is crazy."

It wasn't surprising that those words escaped Loren's mouth.

After all, the exam was about exploring the dungeon, but it had only taken them half a day, according to Loren's senses, to reach the fifth floor, which was the passing line.

It wouldn't be surprising if it would take much longer, and the speed that they were going through was unnatural.

But that was something that couldn't be helped.

After all, they didn't encounter any monsters, and on top of that Ain's party didn't come across any traps either.

That meant they had been able to walk all the way down to the fifth floor, which of course wouldn't take them long at all.

Loren then asked Lapis, who was holding the map.

"Hey... are these guys lost?"

"Good point you've realized there Loren."

Lapis had been looking at the map, making sure that it wasn't visible to Ain and the others, and made a remark as if she was a detective talking to her assistant.

"There's something wrong with them. They sometimes go in roundabout routes, but

most of them had been the shortest routes possible. It's as if they know which path to take.

After being told that, Loren looked at the party in front of them.

The one that was drawing their map was the magician Feim.

But the one who was deciding where the group went was Ain, who was the leader of the party, and he sometimes discussed it with Al.

"This map marks the locations of traps as well... and they should have been caught by a few of them already."

"They didn't activate?"

There were only two reasons for the traps not activating that Loren could think of.

The first was the trap not activating.

The other was someone disabling the trap before Ain and his party had reached it.

If it was the first one, it meant that there was something wrong with the dungeon, and if it was the second one it was most likely Parme's party that did so, but if it wasn't, they would have to put into consideration a third party.

"Doesn't seem like we need to worry about the light one."

"I agree. He doesn't seem like the type to scheme things."

The remaining three were all suspicious.

They couldn't tell if they were scheming something or cheating yet at this point, but one of them possibly possessed information regarding the map of the dungeon that only the proctors were supposed to have.

"Is the exam finished once you reach the fifth floor?"

"No, it officially ends once you find the stairs to the sixth floor. Choosing to go on further is up to the examinees."

“I see. Hey you guys.”

Loren called out to Ain and the others.

His action wasn't something to be proud of as a proctor, but to Loren it was something that had to be done, and he was going to have Lapis turn a blind eye as well.

“What's wrong?”

Ain suspiciously replied.

He was well built, and his crew cut gave him a rugged impression, but his fighting style showed that he wasn't aggressive, and Loren guessed that he had more of a defensive way of thinking and acting.

Loren started making his point.

“The exam ends once you find the stairs to the sixth floor, right?”

“Well, yeah. Basically.”

“Then can you guys withdraw from the exam here?”

Ain became speechless with surprise on his face at Loren's sudden proposal, but in his stead, Cloud walked closer to Loren and butted in.

“Hey, what the hell are you...”

“You guys started realizing it too, haven't you? It's an exam but you only ran into monsters once. It's also weird that you haven't been caught by a trap either.”

At Loren's words, Cloud lost his momentum, and Ain looked away from him.

It seemed that although they thought that it didn't hurt to have an easy exam, they had realized that something was wrong, and were wondering if passing the exam like this would mean anything to them.

If so, Loren thought he could still expect something from them, but Al suddenly joined in.

“That doesn’t make any sense. This exam was prepared by the school. If there was some trouble, the school would have cancelled the exam before it even started.”

“T-that’s right! It’s not cancelled, so there’s nothing to be embarrassed about!”

Cloud found his momentum again and started shouting again, and Loren scratched his head.

“I wasn’t talking about embarrassment. There are troubles you could find before, and there are some that you can’t. Don’t you think that the dungeon malfunctioning during the exam is unnatural?”

“It could’ve been adjusted like this!”

Loren couldn’t understand why anyone would lower the difficulty of the dungeon for an exam.

The school might be able to do so, since it managed the dungeon, but if the school was doing so, they would be a corpse maker, not a training school.

“It’s an exam for students who are going to become adventurers. Why would they want to lower the difficulty?”

“That’s...”

Cloud was at a loss for words, but a helping hand was offered to him.

“It might be the school trying to help students gain confidence by clearing the dungeon.”

“T-that’s right! That’s another possibility...”

“Let’s say that possibility exists. Then the teachers of this school are god forsaken idiots, you know?”

Helping someone succeed at something was indeed a method to boost confidence.

Loren knew that, and he had seen it been done many times when he was a mercenary.

The experienced mercenaries would plan it to give the new recruits confidence and courage, but he remembered that it was quite a difficult thing.

Because it didn't have any meaning if the new recruits found out about it.

Not letting them find out about it, as well as making sure that the plan worked, was what made it so difficult, and it wasn't something that could be done by lukewarm adjustments. Like their current situation, if the students knew that the difficulty was lowered, it didn't have any meaning whatsoever.

"Then what to do you want us to do!?"

"I told you. How about heading back to the school and reporting it to the principal and the teachers. You might have to redo the exam, but it should be better than passing it like this."

"You've got to be kidding me! You're telling us to fail it, after coming all this way!?"

"I'm not joking, I'm being serious. And if you want to talk about passing or failing, in my eyes you guys are a bunch of failures. Even if you become adventurers, you'll be lying under the dirt within a year."

"But that's just your opinion, isn't it?"

Al stepped in yet again as Cloud couldn't find anything to say.

"Only the gods know the future. As someone that isn't even close to being a god, I don't think you could see what our futures are."

"I think I could make a prediction, can't I?"

"Predictions could be wrong, can't they?"

"Do you think it would be wrong?"

"I don't think anyone here asked you for advice, am I wrong?"

Since the examinee pointed out that he was going outside the boundaries of a proctor, there was nothing more Loren could say.

If things went wrong, they could report that he got in the way of the exam, and he could get penalized.

Loren had tried to look out for them, giving them advice even though they didn't ask for it, but he wasn't willing to take it that far, and although Feim had a trouble look on her face, Cloud and Ain seemed to agree with Al, so he decided that there was nothing more he could do.

"Alright, my bad. I tend to stick my neck into other people's business."

As Loren showed signs of backing off, the party went back to moving forward with Ain looking worried, Cloud with a grim look, and Al immediately losing interest in Loren.

As Loren slowly walked after them, Lapis walked up and said to him.

"Good try Loren."

"Sorry about that. It's my fault if our job evaluation goes down."

"It's fine. I'm getting a vague feeling that this job will end in failure again anyway."

Loren's face darkened at the words, failure again.

Loren's success rate after he became an adventurer was very low, in fact, the only job he succeeded in was picking herbs, and he had failed everything after that.

If he failed one again, he wouldn't be able to make any money, his reputation would keep going down, and the rumor that he was leeching off Lapis would gain authenticity.

"I shouldn't be worrying about others right now."

Loren let out a mocking laugh, while Shayna said words of encouragement in his head.

"It's not Loren's fault that the jobs are ending in failures though."

"That might be true, but results are everything, after all. There's no excuse as long as it's considered a failure."

As Lapis saw Loren droop his shoulders, she wondered if he was the one who needed a boost in confidence by success, but for some reason whenever Loren took a job, even ones that seemed easy brought upon situations that made them become exponentially difficult.

If they accepted an easy quest, he would notice what she was trying to do, and if by any chance, that job became difficult and ended in failure, it would end up with Loren losing confidence even further.

Lapis glanced at Loren, who was walking next to her, and continued thinking.

She guessed that maybe instead of trying to get an easy job, pick a random one, and if it ended in failure, she would find a reason to convince him that it wasn't his fault, and comfort him that way.

"I think your reputation at the guild is rising, though. I write up reports every time, and they are always surprised that we manage to survive."

"That doesn't make me feel any better... It's either being stubborn about living or having bad luck."

"If I say that those count as skill, the children would say that not encountering monsters count as luck, won't they?"

"If this crappy luck of choosing jobs that end in failure is skill as well, then I'm..."

"Ah, let's stop this Loren. This is going to become an endless loop of negative thoughts."

Lapis stopped Loren from thinking any further with a straight face but filled with panic inside.

She thought he would start thinking positively if she talked about positive things, but she didn't expect his mind to go towards the opposite vector.

Once his thoughts went in that direction, anything she said would be taken negatively, and would be difficult to follow up.

"Anyways, about our current problem. Do you think they would head back after finding the stairs to the sixth floor?"

"Definitely not. They said something about going down all the way, too."

"Then do you think the sixth floor will not have any monsters as well, like the past few floors?"

That was a question Loren couldn't answer.

From what he had seen from the floors above, it wouldn't be surprising if the floors below would be the same, but there was one thing that caught his mind.

"I don't know, but there's probably a reason why the passing line is the fifth floor, and they don't require going down any further."

"Yes, oh. We're almost at the stairs leading down. Let's see what their reactions are."

Loren thought that was a quite spiteful way of looking at things.

And the others let out a resounding shout of joy as they found the stairs that lead down to the sixth floor.

CHAPTER 62

CONTINUING AFTER PASSING

“This means we passed the exam, right?”

Feim said while peeking down the stairs leading down to the next floor.

“Yeah, but we’re going to go for the deepest floor.”

As Ain nodded and declared so, Cloud nodded as well.

Al had a satisfied smile on his face, and Feim looked back towards Loren and Lapis with a slightly worried face.

“No reason to look over here. We’ve got nothing to say.”

“We’re only proctors, after all.”

Loren answered with dissatisfaction on his face, while Lapis answered with a smile on her face, but with her voice filled with sarcasm.

After glancing at the two of them with hostility in his eyes, Ain looked back towards his party members and said to them with fresh resolve.

“Okay, we’re going to reach the bottom floor and take Volf’s fortune and show the whole school that we’re this capable.”

“Yeah then all those noble brats will be so frustrated.”

“We can do it. Even if we can’t do it alone, if we work together, we definitely can.”

As they huddled and got ready, Loren watched them in silence, dissatisfaction still covering his face.

He really wanted to tell them to head back, but when he calmed down and thought about it, Loren and Lapis had business on the bottom floor as well, and in order to get

into the tenth floor, they needed the permit that was given to the students.

Putting that into consideration, although telling the students to go back was appropriate suggestion, having them go on was better for their own business.

“Can I ask you something?”

Lapis interrupted Ain and his party’s conversation.

Since Lapis was the one that called him, not Loren, Ain gave her a questioning look, but Lapis didn’t take any notice and asked what she wanted to.

“About the permit to the bottom floor. May I ask what it is and who has it?”

“Why do you want to know?”

As expected, the one who started was Cloud.

But he was a lot quieter than when he lashed out at Loren.

Lapis was a neat and clean priestess when she didn’t say anything, and even when she did, as long as she didn’t expose her wickedness, so to say, she was affable, and on top of that, she was quite beautiful.

It seemed that Cloud couldn’t lash out at her in the same manner as he did to Loren.

“I’ve heard that it will become more dangerous from here on, so I want to gather as much information that could be useful in the case of an emergency.”

“In that case, I have it.”

Ain answered Lapis’ question.

Ain took out a silver necklace from underneath his breastplate, and on the chain was a silver ring.

“May I take a look?”

“Y-yeah, I don’t mind.”

After asking for permission, Lapis defenselessly walked up to Ain, took the chain around his neck, and took a careful look at the ring on her palm.

The chain was still around Ain's neck, so Lapis' body was very close to his, and as Loren saw Ain's face get flushed, he couldn't help but get a bored feeling.

"I see, this is the key. Thank you."

After examining the ring for a while, Lapis pressed the ring and the chain onto Ain's chest and thanked him with bow and a smile on her face.

This made Ain's face even redder, but Lapis immediately walked back to Loren without taking any notice.

"T-that was good enough? Then let's go down to the sixth floor now."

Ain managed to declare so, with his face still flushed and voice slightly flustered.

No one disagreed, and the group, led by Ain and Cloud, were met by a totally different sight than what they had seen in the previous floors.

"What... is this?"

No one in Feim's party could answer her question, while Loren and Lapis were speechless at what they were seeing.

At the bottom of the stairs was a stone corridor, like the previous floors.

But the difference was that there were transparent, but at the same time clouded, mucus scattered everywhere.

On top of that, the mucus was squirming its body and slowly moving along the floor and walls of the corridor.

"This is pretty disgusting.

Behind Ain and the others, who were standing there speechless, Loren couldn't hide his disgust as he looked around at what the light from the lantern was shining on.

Lapis, who was looking around curiously at the sight, squatted down beside the

nearest blob of mucus and stared at it for a while, then stood up and told them the identity of the mucus.

“These are slimes.”

“Slimes? You mean slimes as in those kinds of slimes?”

Even Loren, who had grown up on the battlefield, heard about slimes before.

Of course, he had seen some, since they sometimes popped up after battles had ended.

They were indefinite blobs of liquid and were categorized as simple and inferior monsters with no will or emotion at all.

They possessed different elements sometimes, based on the environment they live in, but they were slow with low defenses, and could be easily killed by destroying their cores with something as simple as a stick.

“I think these are probably slimes.”

“Oh man... we’ve come to a bad place.”

The students’ gazes focused on Loren when he muttered that.

Feim gave him a puzzled look, while the other three looked at him as if he was stupid.

“It’s only a bunch of slimes. What are you so scared for?”

Cloud crushed one under his boots as he said that.

It was easily crushed since it was mostly liquid, and it spread across the floor weakly as its core was destroyed.

“What I’m scared of is none of your business.”

‘Ha! If you’re scared of monsters like these, you must not be much in the first place.’

Cloud continued to make fun of him, but Loren ignored him.

“Lapis, do you have a torch?”

“Yes, I do.”

Loren pulled out his large knife hanging from his waist with his right hand and held the torch Lapis had handed him in his left.

Lapis lighted the torch with a flint, and Loren raised it high over his head.

“What’s he doing?”

“Don’t mind him. Let’s go. We haven’t met Parme’s party yet, so they should still be ahead of us.

Nodding at Ain’s decision to move one, Cloud moved next to him at the front and started walking ahead.

Walking behind Feim and Al, Lapis said to Loren, sounding slightly impressed.

“Loren, you know how scary slimes can be.”

“These guys are dangerous. They don’t have any unnecessary thoughts or emotions, after all. That makes them able to accurately respond to prey. It’s true they’re slow and can be killed easily... but if the conditions are met, they could even take down experienced mercenaries.”

“Any experience?”

“In a battlefield before.”

Loren said with a grim look on his face.

Loren went silent for a moment, recalling that time, and started telling her the story.

“It was a terrible battle. Well there aren’t any battles that aren’t terrible. Anyways, I’m not sure who was playing around, but there was a lot of magic used, and lots of allied and enemy soldiers died, so after the battle there were way too many bodies to clean up.”

“That’s... According to one research, slimes are creatures that appear in places where mana is built up or disturbed, so I guess a slime spawned there.”

Lapis told Loren that if enough magic was used in situations such as battles, the mana in the area becomes disturbed momentarily.

And when water, blood, and corpses are added to that disturbance, slimes are born.

Loren had experienced such a battle, but in general, slimes were creatures that ate anything they found that could be consumed.

“There were so many bodies, we decided to let it eat some of them.”

“Ah... I can already see how it ended.”

“We knew it would grow bigger as it ate, but we didn’t expect it to multiply.”

Regardless of how it spawned, slimes were living creatures.

Of course, they would grow when they ate, but slimes proliferated by splitting into two after they had gotten large enough.

The slimes, which had an abundant supply of bodies to consume, grew rapidly and multiplied, and continued that cycle.

“In the end, there were so many slimes, they became like a giant tidal wave in the battlefield.”

Loren muttered about how much of a nightmare that was.

The slimes ate everything they could, including water and dirt along with the bodies, and multiplied in number and size, then started consuming everyone in the area, allies and enemies alike, and that was the horror that Loren had experienced.

“A giant wave full of melting bodies mixed with a lot of other things...”

“I don’t need an explanation. What will you do if I start imagining it?”

“I still have nightmares about it sometimes.”

“You’re making me lose my appetite... Well, at this rate, today’s dinner will be disgusting rations...”

Since she rejected an explanation with such a disgusted face, Loren didn't need to force one.

But when he looked around, hoping that the students would now feel some of the feelings of dangers that he was feeling, but they just had disgusted expressions on their faces and didn't seem to feel any sense of danger at all.

Seeing that, Loren decided that it was hopeless, but then Lapis snuggled up next to him a lot closer than she needed to.

"Lapis?"

"It's nothing special, but I just thought that this is probably the safest place right now."

Loren could understand some of what Lapis meant by that, so he didn't say anything and continued walking.

To those who didn't understand the situation, it seemed like they were just flirting with each other, as Ain immediately looked away, while Cloud clicked his tongue and glared at Loren.

Al immediately lost interest in them and turned around, but Feim was looking at Lapis, who was hugging Loren from the side.

"Are you two in that sort of relationship?"

"What do you mean, that sort?"

"You know..."

"Feim, there may be a little bit of what you are expecting, but this is different from that."

Feim turned red as Lapis interrupted her question in a flat voice.

"If you understand our current situation, you would understand that this is the safest position... but I guess it's a bit difficult for you to know that."

"Safe?"

Since Lapis had used the word safe, it meant that they were currently in danger.

But Feim seemed like she didn't feel the amount of danger that Lapis was currently sensing.

"Feim! Don't mind them. Hurry up, we can't move on because you're the one with the lantern!"

Feim was still wondering about Lapis' words but chased after the others when Cloud called her.

"Man, it's full of slimes. What do we do about this?"

"It's a lot of work, but let's crush them one by one. It won't hurt to lessen every possibility of danger."

Agreeing to Ain's suggestion, Cloud and Al started stomping and hitting the slimes on the floor and walls one by one.

Ain also started running his sword through the slimes' cores, so their progress slowed down.

"They won't last two seconds if something attacked us right now."

Lapis, who was still clinging onto Loren, said it like it was someone else's problem, but Loren's eyes followed Ain and his party.

"Do you think there's something that would attack with all these slimes around?"

"I wish there would be."

Lapis lowered her tone and hung her head.

Slimes were creatures that consumed anything that they could.

In a situation where so many slimes existed, Lapis couldn't imagine something other than slimes being there.

"Hey! I found something!"

Lapis' thoughts disappeared as she heard Cloud's loud voice.

CHAPTER 63

UNABLE TO DECIDE AFTER BEING ATTACKED

Something was lying on the floor down the corridor, where the light from the lantern didn't reach.

Miraculously, there were no slimes in that area.

It had leather armor around it with long brown hair sprawled all over, and to Loren, it looked like a person.

"It's one of the girls from Parme's party."

Cloud, who had slowly walked up towards it, quickened his steps as he saw what it was.

It wasn't certain if the girl was conscious or not, but she didn't react to the footsteps nearing her and continued lying face down on the ground.

"H-hey?"

Cloud called out with fear in his voice, but the girl still didn't move.

Cloud turned back to his companions, but none of them had an answer.

"Is she... alive?"

There was no way for them to know how long the girl had been lying there.

But with so many slimes in the area, it would be weird if she had fallen unconscious somehow and managed to be okay.

Then it would be normal to assume that she was dead, but Ain and Cloud couldn't tell if the girl lying before them was dead or alive.

"What do we do?"

“Um, let’s see.”

Ain, who didn’t know how to deal with this, poked the girl with the tip of his sword.

The girl didn’t react to it.

As Ain and his party looked at each other, deciding that she was indeed dead, the girl’s body suddenly started twitching.

As Ain and Cloud took a few steps back, the girl’s twitching body somehow rolled face up.

“Ahh!?”

One of two let out a cry of surprise.

In any case, they had seen the girl’s face.

What they saw was a mask-like face, like a bad craftsman had made it.

Her eyes were half open, but instead of her eyeballs, they could only see black voids under her eyelids.

Her mouth was open as well, but they couldn’t see her teeth or tongue.

Since she had a pretty face, the hollow holes that her eyes and mouth had become gave a strange air about her, and even after she rolled face up, her body was still twitching and didn’t show any signs of stopping.

“W-what is this!?”

Cloud lashed out in disgust.

As if responding to Cloud’s voice, something started gushing out of the girl’s eyes, nose, and mouth.

“Is this a slime?”

Ain said in a shaky voice as he saw what had come out of the girl’s body.

It was indeed as a slime, as Ain had said.

It seemed to have attacked the girl in some way and killed her, then invaded her body through any places it could find and trampled through her insides.

“Then that means...”

Cloud paled as he realized that the body in front of him was nothing but skin.

It meant that nothing that should be inside a body was left inside, and that was inside was the slime.

Although it wasn't reading Cloud's mental state, the girl's body erupted from the inside and splattered.

The slime that had eaten her insides had jumped out from inside.

Its body, which was usually transparent, was bright red, as if it hadn't been long since it ate all the girl's flesh and blood, and inside its translucent body, they could see the parts that hadn't been digested yet floating around.

“Ugh...”

Cloud's reaction slowed at the sight before him.

There was no way a slime would look past an opportunity that its prey stopped moving.

“Cloud, watch out!”

Ain's response was quicker since he didn't everything that Cloud saw.

He blocked the slime's body with his shield and pushed Cloud back, but the slime started to reach for Ain's body, along with the shield.

“You!”

Ain tried to shake the slime off by swinging his shield, but there was no way it was going to fly off so easily.

He was so focused on his shield, he didn't see the rest of the slime that were in the

girl's body crawling and reaching towards him.

By the time he realized, one of them caught his right foot and the one on his shield started reaching for his hand, and he fell into utter fear.

"H-help me!"

'Ain! Damn it! Let go of him!"

Cloud got back to his senses as he heard Ain's call for help, and he thrust his estoc into the slime that was grabbing Ain's foot, but to a slime that could only be killed if its core was destroyed, a thrusting weapon such as an estoc wasn't effective at all.

The slime, unfazed at the strikes, covered up to Ain's ankle, and his boot started to change color as it started dissolving.

"Ow!? Damn it! My hand is burning!?"

In the case of the girl, they killed her somehow and then proceeded to enter her body and ate it away from the inside, but this time, since Ain was struggling or since it grabbed onto a bad location, it started eating away at Ain before killing him.

Ain's hand and the part of his arm that the slime was covering started melting and inflaming and started turning red and black, as if acid had been poured on there, and Ain screamed as he tried to peel it off.

"Al! Do something!"

"Do what..."

Cloud's estoc didn't even make the slime flinch, and there was no way he could grab it bare handed, so he asked Al for help, but he didn't have a way to peel the slime off either.

"Um, the way to deal with slimes is..."

While Ain and the others were shouting about, Feim was reaching all over her robe, trying to look for something to deal with the situation.

Her gaze repeatedly went towards Loren, and Loren was aware of it, but he didn't say

anything since she didn't ask him anything, so he silently watched Ain, with Cloud and Al pacing around him, but after a while he sighed, looked at Feim, and pointed to the torch that he was holding over his head.

Feim pondered about what that meant, but eventually she seemed to have thought of something, as she took a small bottle out of her robe, ran past Ain and the others, and poured the thick contents onto the dead girl's body as well as here and there in the area.

"Ain! Hold your breath!"

After shouting a warning, Feim smashed the lantern next to the body.

The pieces of the lantern flew about, and the fire that was burning inside it spread onto the body and turned into a large flame.

"Feim!? What are you doing!?"

"We learned in class that the only way to get rid of slimes wrapped around a body is to burn them!"

Burning slimes was known as one of the most effective methods against them.

Sometimes it wasn't depending on the species, but most slimes hated fire since most of their bodies were made up of water.

What Feim had poured over the body was oil.

It was oil used for lanterns, which were made to burn especially well.

The fire that started spreading had started burning the slime that was wrapped around him.

As black smoke started rising and emitting a bad smell, the slime either seemed to realize that it was burning or seemed to feel the pain, as it started retreating from Ain's body.

But Ain wasn't getting out unscathed either, since he was so close to the flames and the heat.

He had turned his face away from the smoke and smell from the burning slime, but he started getting burns on his body.

But after waiting for an opportunity for the slime to weaken its grip, Ain had managed to peel them off his arm and leg, and rolled out of the spot, coughing and taking care to shield his burned arm.

“You okay Ain!?”

“Damn it! That was horrible!”

“I’m going to treat you with medicine and bandages because I still want to save up my healing divine arts.”

Ain was saved from falling prey to the slime, but he wasn’t in a good shape.

There were holes in his boots, and his left arm, which he held his shield with, was swelled up and had burns all over it.

And due to the flames, he had light burns on his face and neck, and Al started putting medicine and bandages on them.

“How would you rate how they did in that situation Loren?”

Lapis had been watching the whole thing in silence, and asked Loren, still clinging onto his waist.

Loren thought for a moment, keeping his torch above his head, and answered.

“I’m not that experienced as an adventurer, so.”

“How about as a mercenary?”

“I guess it was okay? Especially throwing the fire without hesitating.”

Slimes were quite tough against physical attacks.

Even if a part of their bodies were crushed, cut, or ripped, they wouldn’t flinch since they didn’t feel pain.

If you didn't have a way to accurately destroy the core, it was common for the situation to become like what Ain and Cloud had shown.

To prevent that from happening, you would need a way to exterminate it quickly, and one of them was to kill it with fire.

If you had a magician that could use plenty of spells, depending on magic was a way, but if you had a magician that could only use a few spells like in the mercenary company that Loren was a part of, or if you were in a situation where no magicians were there, burning slimes were usually the only option they had.

And in if you or one of your companions were caught by one, the only way to pull it off was to burn them along with the slime.

Even if you tried to crush the core, you could end up hurting whoever was being attacked, and the slime would find a way inside the body through the injuries.

One of the reasons that Loren was holding a knife and was holding a torch above his head was so that if a slime attached itself onto him, he could immediately crush its core with the knife, or if he couldn't, use the torch to burn it along with his body.

Loren knew that the great sword on his back wouldn't do anything against slimes.

"Wouldn't it be better if we give up and head back?"

Loren suggested so, seeing Ain's condition, with all the medicine and bandages on his body, but he backed off as Ain shook his head and Cloud glared at him.

"We told you, we're going to the bottom floor!"

"I heard that, but what about your light? You have an extra lantern?"

When Loren said that, Cloud looked at the burning girl's body and the slime and looking at the fragments of their lantern scattered about, realized that they had lost their source of light.

Loren thought that breaking the lantern to light the fire was quite a violent method, but he knew that there wasn't much time for Feim to open up the lantern and transfer the kindling, so he didn't think that she should be blamed for throwing it on the floor, but Cloud seemed to have a different thought.

“Hey, what are we going to do? We still have a long way to go!?”

As Cloud drew closer to Feim with a grim face, she looked around at the others with an awkward look on her face.

“We don’t have any spare lanterns?”

“I have one. It’s okay Cloud, we’re fine.”

Al took some fire from the flames erupting from the girl’s body along with a bad stench and lit the spare that he had brought.

The party seemed relieved as they regained their source of light, but then their attention went to the burning body.

“One of them dropped out here.”

“The problem is whether they headed back or kept going... Judging from Parme’s personality, I think they probably moved ahead.”

“Klaus is with them, but then again, he’s only a proctor. If he didn’t say anything, I’m sure Parme would’ve continued ahead.”

“What should we do?”

At Cloud’s question, Ain thought for a moment while rubbing his injured arm, and eventually declared strongly.

“We go forward. We can’t go back only this much.”

“Let’s all hold oil and kindling for the slimes. And even if we see Parme’s group or Klaus, don’t go near them.”

“There’s a good one burning right now, so let’s get the fire from there.”

The slime that had attacked them was being burned along with the body, was writhing on the floor with its movements getting slower and slower.

Ain and the party decided that it was okay to leave it like that and started getting fire from the flames burning its body.

“I’ll hold the lantern this time. If this one breaks, we’re done for, so keep that in mind.”

“Burn it if you think you’re in danger. Got it. Ain, if it hurts, I’ll lend a shoulder?”

“I’m fine.”

Ain decided to throw away his shield, since it had been dissolved here and there by the slime, and had been burnt by the flames on top of that.

They would’ve taken equipment from the dead girl’s body, but Feim had already burned everything, leaving nothing useful for them to take.

“Feim, mark this area on the map, just in case. Other slimes will probably eat everything after the fire dies, but we still have to report it when we get back to the surface.”

“Okay.”

“Alright, let’s go.”

The party started moving forward at Ain’s call.

As Loren started following them, he realized that Lapis, who was still clinging onto him, was pulling his sleeve, so he looked towards her.



“Loren, I’ll leave finding the opportunity to you.”

“Opportunity? What opportunity?”

“This and that. Breaking away from this party, for example.”

Lapis suggested abandoning the job without any hesitation and looked at the backs of Ain and the others who were walking ahead of them.

“You’re not planning on dying with them, aren’t you?”

“Well, yeah... but without them we won’t be able to get to our destination, right?”

“It’ll work out. Just leave it to me, Loren.”

Lapis said with confidence.

Lapis had said there was a way, so she certainly had something up her sleeve, but using that meant that they would be leave Ain and his party and going off on their own.

Loren sighed at the fact that Lapis had given him the responsibility of finding the opportunity, and started thinking.

CHAPTER 64

SUDDEN CHANGES AFTER CONTINUING

While Loren's thoughts were elsewhere, Ain and his party continued ahead.

They crushed or burned every slime that was in their way, since one had ambushed them and injured Ain, so their pace was slower than before, but they were still moving forward.

But their situation was getting worse.

Ain still had enough strength left to walk on his own, but since he had burns on his arm and left his shield behind, he wasn't able to fight to his content.

And for Cloud, who was lending Ain his shoulder, it was already proven that his estoc wasn't effective at all against slimes, so he couldn't play his role as a front line properly.

But Al and Feim were able to drive away the slimes, so they could still manage to continue.

But even that was due to them having oil and fire, and even if they managed to keep the flames, they didn't have an unlimited supply of oil.

The oil was fuel for the lantern as well and they had to leave some for the way back, so they had to use it sparingly.

"This is going downhill."

Lapis muttered while clinging onto Loren's back.

Cloud and Ain gave them harsh looks, thinking that they were flirting with each other without considering time and place, but Loren was sensing something wrong with Lapis, as she didn't let go at all.

At first Lapis continued to dodge his questions, but when Loren kept on asking, she finally told him what was going on.

She told him that her limbs, which were prosthetics, weren't moving properly.

After she explained that she was clinging onto his body to hide it, Loren immediately decided to carry her on his back.

Loren had experienced a situation where Lapis couldn't move her limbs before.

She couldn't move them because a spell that dissipated mana was used, and since her prosthetics ran on mana, they malfunctioned temporarily, and she couldn't move.

So, Loren thought that the same thing was happening, but Lapis shook her head.

"It's not that there isn't any mana. It's more like it's not transmitting properly..."

Looking at Lapis not giving him a clear answer, Loren guessed that she wasn't fully aware of what was going on.

"I can move them if I try really hard, so drop me in the case of an emergency."

Although Lapis whispered that to Loren, there was a reason why he didn't want to carry her on his back.

It was because they had no idea where the slimes could attack from.

Slimes were made of mucus so they could climb almost anywhere and crawl into the smallest of cracks.

Whether it be in the trees or inside stone walls, they climbed and crawled into any place they could and attacked their prey.

He had only been against slimes in the battlefield, but he had seen mercenaries and soldiers being killed by slimes that fell from trees, jumped out of openings in baggage, or jumped out from within piles of bodies.

If such slimes existed in a dungeon.

Loren understood that it was a place that was full of places to hide and ambush.

Hanging on the ceiling and dropping on the heads of prey that passed below, oozing and reaching out of cracks in the walls, and since there were cracks on the floor as

well, there was no telling where they could attack from.

In this situation, carrying Lapis on his back, which was his biggest blind spot, meant that it increased the danger for both, so it made him even more anxious.

On top of that, the students that he was proctoring would keep on looking at him, thinking that they were flirting.

It was a situation which anyone would flinch at, and it wasn't a good atmosphere.

"Hey, why don't we head back?"

"Shut up you perverted bastard."

They continued searching for a while, and whether they were lucky or unlucky, a short while after they found the dead girl's body, they came across the stairs to the seventh floor.

Ain and the others were happy at first, but what awaited them at the bottom of the stairs was a denser population of slimes than the floor above.

"Is the sixth floor and below breeding grounds for slimes, by any chance?"

"I don't think so..."

Feim answered Loren, who sounded fed up as he saw the innumerable slimes on the walls and floor, with surprise in her voice.

"...Isn't this bad? Even if we reach the bottom, will we have enough oil to get back to the surface?"

Cloud started complaining, but Al pointed to his bag and answered.

"There's still enough oil in my bag. It's okay, it should be enough for the way back."

"Why do you have so much oil?"

"It's a dungeon. I thought we would get lost. So, I brought a lot more oil than we would normally need. Good thing I did."

“But if this goes on, wouldn’t it become impossible to go forward?”

Al answered Ain’s justified question with confidence.

“Parme and her group will probably have gotten rid of a bit already, and there’s no reason for us to deal with every single one of them.”

“They could’ve headed back after that girl died...”

“Then they should have bumped into us. We didn’t meet them, so it means that they are still ahead of us.”

Ain and Cloud couldn’t find any words of refute, so they looked at each other, nodded, and started moving.

Feim looked at the three of them with worry, but still chased after them, while Loren watched their backs for a while before he started slowly walking after them.

“Hey, this isn’t related to your body part, right?”

As he asked Lapis while walking after Ain and the others, Lapis shuddered on top of his back.

He turned, thinking that something had occurred to her, but when their eyes met, Lapis shook her head over and over.

“I don’t know what part of my body is here, but no matter what it is, it won’t cause situation a situation like this. Trust me.”

“Well, I’m not that suspicious of you, anyways. But this isn’t normal at all, is it?”

“Yes. Assuming the floors below are in a similar state, I’ve never heard of slimes covering half a dungeon.”

After saying that, she went silent for a moment, and opened her mouth again.

“Something I’ve never heard of before. This is very interesting.”

“Don’t be a greedy scholar here. We’re not sure if we can even make it out alive.”

Ain and his party were the ones currently taking care of the slimes, but if Loren and Lapis had to head back by themselves for some reason, Loren was the one who was going to have to deal with them.

Lapis had extra torches in her bag, but when it came to chasing slimes off on the way to the surface, it would become exceedingly difficult the lower they went.

“Even I’m not such a girl that prioritizes her hobbies to satisfy her curiosity in this situation.”

“That’d be fine if it were true.”

Surprisingly, Lapis had a dangerous air about her that she would enjoy her hobbies to the point of ruining herself.

Loren felt so and let out a weak laugh as he realized that if something were to happen, he considered the options of knocking Lapis out unconscious and drag her across the floor if he had to but left out the option of abandoning her.

“What’s so funny?”

“It’s nothing.”

As he answered Lapis and continued walking, Shayna appeared in his sight, batting her wings.

‘It’s okay Onii-san. I’ll use my power as a No Life King to its full potential to get you and Onee-san to the surface if I have to!’

As Shayna declared with her fists in front of her chest, Loren told her that he was looking forward to it, and then realized that due to him thinking, he was quite behind and started to walk faster, but then stopped abruptly.

“Loren?”

Lapis, suspicious at Loren’s sudden stop, called out but Loren didn’t say anything and looked down at his feet.

Loren felt slight tremors under his feet.

Although it was very slight, but if he could feel it across a stone floor, it meant that something was happening in the corridor ahead, and when he looked up, he saw something that he wished that he hadn't.

It was the sight of Ain and the others running back as fast as they could.

They were running with all their might, without any regards to the slimes that they were crushing under their feet.

As for what they were running from, Loren saw a large wall of slimes that filled the whole corridor, gushing towards them like a flood.

Loren's face stiffened, and he immediately turned around and started running back the way he came.



“Hey proctor! Why are you running away!?”

“I don’t want to die!”

“Then at least run after we run past you!”

“Can’t afford to do that!”

There was nothing Loren could do against a wall of slime that filled the corridor barreling towards him.

All he could do was run, praying that it didn’t catch up to him.

Even if he tried to burn them with his torch, against that, he could only imagine himself getting crushed by sheer number.

“Where the hell did they come from!?”

When Loren shouted, Cloud shouted back.

“We don’t know! They just came from the other side of the corridor!”

“Move your legs if you have the strength to move your mouths! We’ll get caught!”

“Guys! This way!”

After Feim’s cry, Al shouted out, and Loren sensed that they weren’t behind him anymore.

When he looked back, all he saw was a semi-transparent wall of slime, and didn’t see a trace of the students that were running behind him.

“Did they get swallowed!?”

“No, I think they ran into a side road.”

Since Loren was carrying her, Lapis was able to see everything, and told him all that happened.

Apparently, Ain and the others had ran into a branching corridor to wait for the wall of slime to pass.

“Would you call this getting separated or losing sight of them!?”

“Does it really matter?”

“Of course, it does! Depending on if it’s them getting separated on their own or if it’s me losing sight of them, it would affect the success of the job!”

“You’re worried about that in this situation...?”

“I mean, if I ran after then ran past, we would’ve gotten caught...”

Even as he spoke, Loren’s speed didn’t falter.

On top of Loren, who was running at a distance from the wave of slimes, Lapis looked back at the wall of slime crashing towards them and said with a sigh.

“I’m sure you can worry about that once we get out of this situation, don’t you think?”

“Definitely.”

Loren felt that she had a point, so he shelved the problem and continued running through the corridor with all his might, at a speed that seemed impossible to reach for someone with a great sword and a person on his back, without tripping on the slimes beneath his feet.

CHAPTER 65

MEETING AGAIN AFTER RUNNING

Slimes were slow.

That couldn't be said in general, considering the wall of slimes that was closing in on Loren from behind, but normal slimes were indeed sluggish.

That was why Loren guessed that maybe instead of dealing with every single slime that they came across, running through at a pace they wouldn't get caught would be the correct way to explore a slime infested dungeon.

That was how fast Loren was running after they separated from Ain and his party.

Of course, the wall of slimes didn't let him run slower, but Loren slipped past slimes that reached for his feet, dodged ones that dropped from above, and dashed through the dungeon using only the light from his torch as his guide.

"Loren, do you have a destination in mind?"

Lapis asked Loren as she turned back every now and then, checking the distance between them and the slimes, and Loren answered her without dropping speed.

"Not really."

"Yeah, I knew that..."

The map that they had received didn't help at all.

Loren was running through the corridors so fast that they couldn't pinpoint where their current location was.

Since they lost their location, and with nothing but stone walls and floors everywhere, there was nothing to distinguish them and no signs of anything they could use to find it.

On top of that, they couldn't even use the method of putting your hand on the wall.

The method only worked for the outer wall, but they didn't know which wall was the outer one.

To put it simply, they were lost.

"What do you think happened to them?"

At first Lapis didn't know what Loren was talking about, but then realized that he was talking about Ain and the others and sighed.

"Hey stop that. You're tickling my neck."

"Oh, sorry about that. I don't care at all. They won't be of any help in this situation anyway."

Just because they went off in a side corridor didn't mean that they were safe.

A portion of the slimes could have gone after them, or they could've run into another pack of them.

But regardless of whether they survived or not, it didn't change Loren and Lapis' current situation.

"Rather than that Loren, you've been running for quite a while now, but are you okay?"

His bag and equipment, including his great sword.

On top of that, Loren was running with Lapis on his back as well.

Lapis knew that constantly running with such weight on his back would be sapping his strength.

She became worried about him, but Loren didn't seem to slow down at all.

"The battlefield is a harsh place."

Wet sounds erupted from under Loren's feet since he was crushing slimes under his feet.

If he slowed down, he would get caught by the slimes, but if he ran too fast, he could slip and crash onto the ground along with Lapis.

Loren's skillfulness on his movements and body balance, making him not too fast nor too slow, made it seem like every mercenary could do so.

"It's said that the ones who run out of steam die first. That's why the first thing we were trained on was to continue running. We had to wear equipment and hold bags, and sometimes even other members. Your weight is nothing compared to them."

"About that Loren."

Lapis tried to change subject, but her words were cut off by a sudden floating sensation.

When Lapis looked around, wondering what happened, her blood ran cold when she saw that Loren had ran right into a hole in the middle of the corridor.

Running into traps usually meant death, but Loren easily landed at the bottom and continued running.

Instead of being a trap of instant death, apparently it was just a hole that forced victims to a lower level.

Lapis was relieved when she realized that, but her expression hardened again as she realized that they had jumped down to the eighth floor.

"What was that?"

When Loren, who stayed calm, either not realizing they were on the next floor or didn't care, asked Lapis, she remembered what she was going to say and started to talk, but saw the numerous slimes coming down the hole like a waterfall and tapped Loren's shoulder.

"They're coming Loren!"

"They won't stop chasing just because the floor changed, huh..."

As Loren muttered bitterly as he sped up, Lapis leaned forward, put her lips right next to Loren's ear, and told him what she had meant to tell him earlier.

“It’s about my arms and legs not moving.”

“Out of mana?”

“No, there’s enough mana in the area. Way more than enough, actually.”

Lapis’ limbs, which ran on mana, weren’t moving, but she said that there was enough mana around them.

Nothing came to Loren’s mind, since he wasn’t a priest or a magician, but he did understand that it was strange.

“What do you mean?”

“Would you understand if I told you that they aren’t functioning properly because the mana around us is too thick?”

He didn’t completely understand, but he did get what she was trying to say.

Anything could be harmful when it was too abundant, and it seemed that in their current situation, it was mana.

“Do you know the cause?”

“No. But if you can buy me some time, I could possibly adjust them.”

“Time, huh.”

Loren glanced back.

The wave of slimes that was chasing after them even after dropping down, was still coming after them without slowing down.

Buying enough time for Lapis depended on how much longer Loren could run.

“There’s no one else, so if I could get my arms and legs moving, I could burn away the slimes with magic...”

“Wait Lapis.”

Loren interrupted Lapis.

As Lapis wondered what happened, she saw someone pop out of a side corridor, and understood why Loren stopped her.

“Klaus!?”

The person that popped up from a side corridor and started running beside Loren was Klaus, holding Ange in his arms.

Lapis realized that she was interrupted because it would’ve been bad if she had been overheard by them. She then looked back and saw that the number of slimes had increased and understood the circumstance that Klaus and Ange had been put under.

“You two have been chased as well!?”

“Hey! It’s you guys! What a coincidence!”

“Not a good one, I can tell you that.”

Apparently, Klaus and Ange were being chased just as Loren and Lapis had.

It seemed that when they reached the big corridor, they saw another wall of slimes coming towards them and started running in the same direction as Loren.

The wall of slimes had sped up due to merging with the slimes that had been chasing Klaus.

“What happened to the students?”

“We got separated while running away from that. One of them got engulfed by a slime head first, and I couldn’t save her.”

“I came across her a little while ago. Her body was filled with slime, and one of the students in my group got injured from it. Burn it next time and don’t leave behind trouble for me.”

“We couldn’t afford to!”

As he saw Ange, who was stiff in Klaus’ arms, nod at him, he realized that Klaus really

couldn't afford to.

If there were too many slimes that dropped onto the poor girl's head, they might've had to run and not been able to burn her body.

But leaving trouble for other examinees was still out of the question.

"Anyways Klaus. Do you know where we are?"

"Unfortunately, I'm too busy running. On top of that, I'm carrying Ange, so do you think I could run while checking the map?"

"Not much of a difference as us, huh."

Loren had guessed as much, but he was slightly disappointed when he heard the words come out of Klaus' mouth.

But since there was the possibility of Klaus being disappointed in the same fashion, Loren decided that the feeling was mutual.

"So, I'm guessing you don't have a destination in mind either?"

"Same for you, right!?"

"Unlucky... How are we going to lose that thing?"



「つてことは当然、逃げる先のアテもねえよな？」

「そっちもそうだろ!？」

「ツイてねえな……どうやりや振り切れんだよ、あれ」

背後から迫るスライムの壁は付かず離れず

といった微妙な距離を保ったまま、

ロレン達を追いかけている。

The wall of slime chasing after them kept at a distance, not coming closer nor falling farther away.

Loren thought that having Lapis burn it away with her magic after regaining control of her limbs, but now that they had grouped up with Klaus and Ange, they couldn't do anything reckless.

"The floors weren't like this when I took the exam!"

"Then what happened?"

"How would I know!?"

"We should get to the ninth floor."

Ange joined the conversation from in Klaus' arms.

Ange, who had her arms around Klaus' neck on top of being carried by him, said with a flushed face.

"If we can get to the keeper on the ninth floor, that's a safe area where dungeon monsters won't come into."

"Even if you say so Ange, we don't have the key to get in there. Only the examinees have the key, so even if we made it, we would be stuck there surrounded by slimes."

"Wouldn't it be the same even if we made it to the tenth floor?"

As Loren butted in, Klaus, who had experienced the exam, told him.

"The tenth floor is where Volf's fortune is stored, but there's a transport gate to the surface there."

"Then won't you be able to take anything you want once you reach it?"

All you would have to do is take as much treasure as you could and jump into the gate.

Loren thought that would be possible, even with a guardian around, but Klaus said otherwise.

“But the guardian is in front of the gate, and the gate isn’t open. If you don’t take anything, the gate will activate, but if you try to take something, you can’t use it until you defeat the guardian.”

“You would have to get to the tenth floor in the first place for either to happen, though.”

As Ange finished the explanation, this time Lapis, who was on Loren’s back, continued the conversation.

“If that’s the case, I’ve got an idea so let’s head to the tenth floor.”

“An Idea?”

“I can’t say right now. Only that there’s a chance for us to be saved. So, let’s look for the keeper on the ninth floor, and access the tenth floor.”

At Lapis’ proposal, Klaus and Ange looked at each other for a moment and immediately nodded.

They concluded that if they didn’t have a better idea, they should stick to Lapis’.

“Then let’s think about our current location and how to get to our destination.”

“Leave it to me. I’ve been down here quite a bit, so I’ll know in time.”

“I think we should focus on getting away from that before we think about anything else, though.”

At Loren’s words, the other three looked behind and saw the semi-transparent wall, sighed, and while Loren and Klaus sped up, Lapis and Ange clung onto their partners, trying not to get in their way.

CHAPTER 66

SAVING AFTER GRASPING THE SITUATION

Doing something about the slimes that were chasing them was top priority for Loren and Klaus.

Even if they were trained or had the power of a Gift, Loren and Klaus were only human, and couldn't escape the boundaries of fatigue.

Even if they could move for long periods of time, it didn't last forever, and they knew that they would eventually tire and get swallowed by the slimes chasing them.

"Klaus. Go hack at it for a bit. I'll carry Ange in the meantime."

"You want me to go in there and kill myself!?"

"It's okay. I believe in you."

"I don't trust that unfound trust of yours!"

Loren thought maybe he could do it, but seeing how Klaus declined, it seemed that his <<Boost>> ability wasn't as convenient to be able to upset overwhelming quantity.

"Not as useful as I thought."

"The thought of trying to do something about that with just a sword is ridiculous!"

Loren thought that shouting would just make him tire faster and shorten the time for the slimes to catch up, but he did acknowledge the fact that he was the one that made him do so, so he decided not to say anything.

They continued running, but after turning a few corners and running through straight corridors, they realized that the pressure that they couldn't feel the pressure from behind them anymore.

Slowing down slightly, they looked back and saw that the overwhelming number of

slimes had disappeared.

“Are we saved...?”

“What? How? I mean, we should be happy if we’re okay, but...”

The fact that they were saved all too soon and so suddenly without notice, made Klaus suspicious that something worse might come their way, and started looking around.

As Loren braced himself for whatever would come next, not understanding their situation, Shayna appeared in front of him.

‘It’s okay Onii-san. I took care of the slimes.’

Shayna said proudly, wanting to be praised.

Not sure what to do except to appreciate her efforts in his mind, and when Loren asked her for an explanation, apparently Shayna had used her powers as a No Life King to save them from the wave of slimes.

‘I used energy drain on the slimes and weakened them to death.’

Slimes were very inferior and simple creatures.

Of course, if many of them group, they became threats that even Loren and Klaus couldn’t deal with, and they had just experienced it, but individually, they weren’t strong at all.

Shayna had drained the life out of each one of them little by little, so that Lapis wouldn’t notice, and wiped them out.

The effects didn’t show immediately since there were too many of them, so even if a bunch of them had died it didn’t make much of a difference, and because she couldn’t strengthen the powers due to Lapis’ high senses.

‘I can’t do this too often. Onee-san almost noticed.’

If Lapis found out that the astral body of a No Life King was residing within his own, both Loren and Shayna had no idea what sort of actions she would take.

They had a feeling she would try to purge the No Life King as a duty of a priest, or she might follow her curiosity and start to view Loren as a target of observation.

Or it might be something completely different, but in any case, the one thing they did know was that it wouldn't be anything good, so both Loren and Shayna were being careful not to let her notice and didn't want her to find out.

After reminding her to be careful, Loren opened his mouth, trying to convince the others otherwise.

"Maybe it found other prey somewhere else?"

"Wouldn't that be the students? We need to go help..."

"You trying to catch the attentions of the slimes again by moving around recklessly?"

Loren stopped Klaus, who set Ange down and started to wander off, and although he had a worried look on his face, he knew that Loren was right and stopped trying to go off.

"Then what do we do?"

"First of all is our current location. You can find it out with some time and walking, right?"

"Yeah, let's start with that."

Klaus and Ange were given a map since they were proctors as well.

Loren followed as Klaus spread out his map and started walking.

Ange didn't have a problem with her body so she could walk on her own since the threat of the slimes had passed.

But Lapis' limbs, which were prosthetics, were still unmoving so she was still gripping onto Loren's back, but there was no way they could tell Klaus and Ange that.

"Did your priestess get injured?"

"Don't worry, I'm just here because I want to."

Lapis' response to Klaus was unfriendly.

It might've been a reaction to Klaus being careless around women, and while Loren smiled, thinking that this is what meant to be unapproachable, but Ange frowned and glared at him.

As they followed Klaus, who smiled nervously and sped up to escape from Ange's glare, a moment later he pointed at a spot on the map.

"We're right here."

Loren couldn't help but doubt him at the quick identification of their current location.

He didn't really think that Klaus would be able to find it.

But when they started moving, the corridors matched what was on the map, which meant that Klaus indeed knew where they were, and Loren looked at him in surprise.

"It's not a big deal. I've been down here many times back when I was a student."

"This is the first time I've ever felt glad that you're with me."

"You aren't really complimenting me, are you."

When Loren told Klaus that there hadn't been anything to compliment him about, he seemed to know that, as he shrugged in silence.

In any case, since they knew their location, they didn't have to fear getting lost, since the location of the stairs were shown on the map.

Loren and Klaus were indeed worried about the students, but if they tried to go look for them it would place themselves in danger, so they aimed for the stairs to the tenth floor, deciding that they should return to the surface and explain the situation to the principal first.

Klaus suddenly stopped, put his hand to his ear, and started listening carefully.

As Ange asked Klaus what he was doing, Loren and Lapis heard what Klaus seemed to have heard.

“Did you hear that?”

“It sounds like a person’s voice... but we’re the only ones down here, right?”

“Yeah, so that means its most likely one of the students. So...”

“You’re going to go check, aren’t you? Go ahead, but keep your eyes on the map, alright?”

Klaus was a good person in general.

That was why dishonesty angered him and he couldn’t be cold to those who were attached to him.

But then again, if he kept putting his hands on whoever became attached to him, he was nothing but an unprincipled bastard, but if Ange could do something about that part of him, Loren had started to believe that he could become quite a decent person.

In this situation, Loren wanted to get out of the dungeon as soon as possible, but he knew that since Klaus heard someone that could be one of the students, he couldn’t just leave.

“Thanks. My hands are pretty full just trying to protect Ange.”

“I’m busy enough with Lapis alone, so don’t expect much.”

“Won’t we be able to manage one or two more if we work together?”

“You do realize that you’re basically saying that you’re willing to leave behind five, six of the students out of seven, right?”

“That’s...”

Klaus started pondering Loren’s words, but Loren was already thinking that leaving some of them behind couldn’t be helped.

He would help if he could, but helping others was meaningless if it meant posing danger to himself.

“How about you worry about it later and go check on the voice...”

Pinpointing the location of a sound within a dungeon was a difficult thing to do.

On top of being unsure of which direction the sound was coming from due to echoing off the walls, the corridors themselves reflected the aspect of a dungeon, where even if you heard a sound, it could be coming from the other side of the wall.

But as they moved relying on the cries they heard intermittently, they managed to reach the location where the sounds originated.

There, Loren and the group saw Parme on the verge of tears, stuck inside a transparent wall all the way under her arms.

Her blonde roll pigtails were messy, and tentacles that had spouted from the transparent wall were trying to pull her completely in.

Parme tried to resist but since she had nothing to hold onto, her struggles were in vain and she was slowly getting pulled into the wall.

“Parme!”

When Klaus called out, Parme’s face, covered in tears, brightened for a moment but she immediately shook her head and stopped him from coming closer.

“Please don’t Master Klaus! Just leave me and save yourself!”

“I can’t do that!”

“I’m beyond saving. Once I’m swallowed, there’s no way to escape. The parts that are already swallowed are being eaten away at... If you will show me mercy, please burn these slimes along with myself!”

“But...”

In the case that it was apparent that the victim couldn’t be saved, burning them along with the slimes could be considered as an act of mercy.

Feeling yourself slowly melt away and eventually suffocating to death was a harsh way to die, and Parme didn’t want to die that way, but Klaus didn’t have the determination to burn her while she was still conscious.

“If you can’t, please walk away. I don’t want to show myself getting eaten by these slimes.”

Parme said so because she knew she would cry and wail and plead for her life disgracefully, but with Klaus’ personality, he couldn’t choose the option of leaving her.

When he walked up to try to pull her out, more tentacles emerged from the wall and started reaching for him.

“Damn... I can’t even get close...”

“Hey Klaus, watch Lapis for a minute.”

Deciding that she could at least stand in place, he lowered her down and gave her the torch he was holding, and tapped Klaus’ shoulder, telling him to stand back. He then walked towards where Parme was stuck.

Of course, the tentacles reached for him as they did for Klaus, but Loren didn’t even try to dodge them and let them wrap around him. He slowly reached over Parme, who was watching him dumbfounded, and grabbed the base of her neck.

“What? Excuse me...?”

“One, two...!”

Along with a shout, Loren mustered up the strength in his arms and forcefully pulled Parme’s body out from the wall.

Some ripping noise reached his ears in that moment, but he paid no attention to it and threw her behind him, towards the others, then calmly ripped the tentacles that were wrapped around his body, and leisurely walked back towards them.

“I knew you were strong since you used that great sword but... incredible.”

“Anyone can do this if they train long enough.”

As Klaus shook his head rapidly, telling him there was no way, Loren wondered if it really wasn’t.

As Klaus started rejoicing that they had saved one of the students, Parme, who had

been thrown on the ground, let out a sharp scream.

When Loren and Klaus looked towards her, wondering what was wrong, they saw Parme on the floor, her face bright red with tears in her eyes, and covering her chest with her arms.

She was almost completely naked.



The two of them looked back towards the wall where Parme had been captured, saw her ripped up clothing and undergarments floating inside, and understood the situation.

“So that was the ripping noise I heard before.”

“It was already melting, so it wasn’t your fault.”

As they finished up their conversation, they looked towards the girls, as if they were looking for agreement, but as soon as Loren turned, a lit torch flew towards him.

Ange’s staff was thrown towards Klaus and hit him straight in the face, causing him to bend over in pain, while Loren managed to catch the torch, turned away from the girls, and started burning the wall of slimes.

CHAPTER 67

REORGANIZING AND HEADING FOR THE BOTTOM FLOOR

Parme, who had been rescued, covered her face and sobbed for a while, but with Lapis and Ange comforting her, she slowly started to calm down.

In the meantime, Klaus looked up again to check on her, but he was silenced by Ange's iron fist, while Loren was busying himself burning any slimes that got close.

When Parme finally calmed down, Ange took out a thin blanket out of her bag and covered her, while Lapis checked on her injuries.

Since she had said earlier that she was already being eaten, Lapis had expected harsh injuries, but although the injuries weren't light enough to take easily, they weren't too serious either.

"The injuries aren't bad, but the state and the range is the problem. Loren, can I use <<Healing>>?"

Lapis judged that if left alone, it would leave behind scars for sure.

As she asked Loren, thinking that a girl of her age with such scars all over her body was too pitiful, Loren simply nodded.

"It's fine so go ahead and heal her."

"You sure?"

Lapis prepared to use her healing divine arts as soon as Loren approved.

A priest's healing divine arts was a lifeline not only within the dungeon, but to adventurers in general.

Klaus was confused at Loren's decision to use one of the limited usages on Parme.

“Well, it is a bad move considering our situation.”

Parme had lost all her equipment and was more of a burden than anything.

So Loren knew that using divine arts on injuries that wasn't a threat to her life would be confusing to anyone.

“She's training to become an adventurer. She should be prepared to have scars on her body.”

“Could be. But it's fine, I guess.”

As Loren patted Klaus on the shoulder, telling him not to think of it too hard, he stopped arguing.

Next to them, Lapis was about to use <<Healing>> on Parme.

“God of Knowledge, please heal her using the method you could find within that stupidly large amount of knowledge you possess.”

“Those aren't the words of prayer, are they!?”

“Prayer isn't bound to specific forms.”

When Lapis touched Parme's body along with a plausible explanation, the divine arts quickly displayed its effects, as the injuries from the slimes started healing.

“Is it just me, or is the healing working really well somehow?”

“Those who believe will be saved.”

Seeing Parme's injuries disappear and returning to healthy looking skin, Ange asked Lapis with sweat running down her cheek, as if she were seeing something perplexing, but Lapis responded in a solemn tone.

“So how is it, actually?”

“No idea. Don't ask me.”

Although Klaus asked him, Loren had no way to answer.

He guessed that the basic specs of being a demon could have had something to do with the effectiveness of the divine arts, but for some reason he couldn't look past the fact that the prayer might have had something to do with it as well.

"In any case, blonde rolls can move now so let's get moving. Nothing good will come out of staying here for too long."

"I apologize... for the inconvenience."

Parme hung her head, the attitude she had shown before entering the dungeon was nowhere to be seen.

Feeling that being ashamed the whole time wasn't good for the atmosphere, Loren tried poking some fun at her as a joke.

"But are we going to pull her around with only a blanket around her?"

"I-I'll accept it."

Loren had said it expecting her to complain, but to his surprise, she had easily complied.

As Parme's face turned bright red, Loren became troubled as he didn't know what to do but help came from Lapis.

"Ange and I could at least lend you underwear."

"It's an emergency, so we'll go with the size that fits better."

Adventurers tried their best to pack as little as they could.

It was obvious since they would have to be moving constantly, so whenever they went exploring or on subjugation, they only took the absolute minimum of what they needed.

Even to them, extra underwear was essential, so Lapis and Ange carried around a few changes with them.

Some might wonder why they would do so in the limited space in their bags, but the jobs of adventurers often got them injured as well as dirty.

From experience, adventurers knew that wearing dirty or contaminated clothes would worsen their injuries or cause illnesses.

Rarely did they have any room to take extra clothes, but always having extra underwear or underclothes, which constantly touched the skin, was the common understanding.

“I brought an extra pair of boots, so I’ll lend you those.”

Magicians could often take more things since they didn’t have heavy equipment to worry about.

Ange seemed to be so and brought an extra pair of boots, in case the pair she was wearing got ruined by a trap.

“For the top... mine is too big. Ange, yours seems like a perfect fit.”

“Grrr...”

“The bottom... Hmm? Yours slips off, huh. I guess I’ll lend mine then.”

“This doesn’t make any sense!”

“For clothes... Loren, lend her one of your shirts.”

“Here.”

With the difference in height between Loren and Parme, his shirt reached down and easily covered her all the way down to the middle of her thighs.

“I don’t know how to thank everyone... I’ll repay this debt someday...”

“Worry about that if we manage to get back to the surface. It’s not certain we can get out of here yet.”

Stopping Parme from bowing her head, Loren told her in a matter of fact way, not letting any emotion into his words.

If he somehow gave her some measure of hope, and that hope was to be crushed, the emotional drop would be a hard one.

So that was why he couldn't let her feel saved in a situation where they had no idea what would happen.

"Parme, do you know what happened to the other members of your party?"

"I'm sorry Master Klaus. My hands were full just trying to run away, and before I realized, I was caught inside the slimes... so I don't know what happened to them."

When Parme told Klaus that she didn't know, although he looked disappointed for a moment, he immediately regained his composure and patted her on the head to try to comfort her.

"Master Klaus..."

As Parme's cheeks turned red, Ange started coughing very loudly.

As Loren was watching the three of them, Lapis spread her map of the dungeon and walked up next to him.

"Do you long for things like that?"

"Not even a bit. Doesn't suit me, and I don't want anything like that."

"Sounds like you. By the way, are we going to go to the keeper on the ninth floor like this?"

Parme joining them could be taken as an accident, but it just meant that they had another person they needed to protect, so Loren decided that it wouldn't have too much of an impact on them.

But in fact, they had to hurry harder than before to defeat the guardian on the tenth floor, so they could send Parme back to the surface.

"Klaus and Ange, the two of you go ahead and protect Parme. Lapis and I'll take care of the enemies."

"But... No, you're right. Got it, leave her to us."

The first had to do something about the keeper guarding the exit of the ninth floor, and Klaus was about to argue when Loren said that the two of them will take care of

it, but he quietly obeyed him, as if he had thought of something.

Impressed at how quick Klaus now was to understand, Loren lead Klaus and the others down the corridor with Lapis, who regained control of her limbs, walking next to him.

“So, this is where the keeper is...”

A short time after they had rescued Parme.

The only monsters they encountered on the way were slimes, and by either burning or slipping pass them, the group managed to reach the area on the ninth floor where the keeper resided, but what awaited them wasn't a keeper blocking their way, but an unmoving stone doll with its hands and knees on the ground.

The doll, which would've been taller than Loren if it stood up, wasn't damaged at all, but for some reason it didn't show any signs of moving.

“Is this the so-called keeper?”

When Loren asked Klaus, who knew more about the dungeon than he did, he nodded.

“It's a stone golem that the school made. But to see that it stopped functioning...”

“This is supposed to be strong, right?”

When Loren asked for confirmation, both Klaus, who was knowledgeable of the dungeon, and Lapis, who was knowledgeable in general, nodded at the same time.

“It's not as strong as metal type golems, but stone golems are still powerful. But to be able to cause a breakdown like this...”

“Lucky for us, but the problem is who did it.”

They now didn't have to fight it to enter the tenth floor, but the problem was who or what was it that broke the golem.

After all, it was hard to think that whoever did it would be satisfied by doing this, which meant there was a high possibility that the being would already be in the tenth floor, which they were about to enter.

If that was the case, they would most likely face whoever it was down there.

“There’s no damage on the golem’s surface. If I remember correctly, it had an auto repair ability, but if it took enough damage to cause a breakdown, it repaired itself to fast.

Klaus said as he examined the golem.

“Then how did this guy stop like this?”

“For a fair method, Isn’t there a divine art that could deal damage without inflicting wounds?”

“Are you talking about <<Force>>? That’s one of the few attacking divine arts.”

Klaus knew that if the golem was defeated by magic, there should be signs of burns or damage, but there wasn’t so he thought of the possibility of divine arts.

Against his thought, Lapis immediately shook her head, denying the possibility.

“<<Force>> is indeed a divine art that inflicts just the impact to an opponent and barely leaves any wounds, it is but a beginner level divine art, so its power isn’t much. Do you think it would be enough to defeat a stone golem?”

“That’s...”

“The only people who might be able to do that would be a very high-ranking priest. Then what would such a priest be doing here? And why would he defeat the keeper?”

“No idea about that one.”

There was too little information to make a judgment.

As Loren easily gave up, Lapis asked Klaus.

“What other methods would there be if they weren’t fair?”

“I hope I’m wrong, but there’s a password that acts as a deactivation key for the golem and it changes every month... and of course the teachers know what it is. If you pay them enough, you might be able to get them to tell you what it is.”

That was an obvious act of misconduct.

Which was why Klaus hoped he was wrong, but with the sight in front of him, he had to put it into consideration.

“Either way, we need to go down.”

“That’s true.”

“Then let’s hurry up and go. All of you, don’t be surprised no matter what comes out.”

On the other side of the unmoving golem, was a single door.

Judging from where it was, Loren guessed that it was the entrance to the tenth floor and signaled Lapis, who was standing next to him, and when she saw it, she walked up and turned the knob. After confirming that it didn’t open by pushing and pulling on it, she put her palm on the door and started muttering something.

CHAPTER 68

REUNION AT THE BOTTOM FLOOR

The door to the bottom floor easily opened after Lapis put her hand on it and muttered a few words.

It happened so quickly that Loren wondered if there was actually a seal.

“What did you just do?”

To Klaus, what Lapis had just done was unbelievable, as his eyes became wide open with surprise, in contrast to Loren.

Seeing his reaction, Loren understood that the door had been sealed properly, but when he thought about it, whatever Lapis had just done wasn't something that could be done ordinarily and realized that it shouldn't have been shown to the other. So, he panicked and looked towards Lapis, wondering how she would react, but she answered like it was nothing.

“I tried copying the wavelength of the mana used to undo the seal. I examined the key, after all. It's quite simple.”

“Huh? What?”

Since Klaus was a swordsman, he was about to stand down with Lapis' explanation, but this time Ange, who was a magician, let out a confused voice.

On the front among the members there, Ange was supposed to be the expert on mana, so Loren was alarmed that her confused response would cause more suspicion towards Lapis, but Lapis easily responded to this as well.

“A thief that came to confess at the temple I was training at secretly taught me this technique when I told her I was going to become an adventurer. You shouldn't think that a thief can't touch something just because you sealed something with mana.”

As she told Ange that it was a technique of a thief, she stopped looking suspiciously at

her for now.

Since it was outside of her expertise, she couldn't say if what Lapis said was true or not and decided that there was no reason to be suspicious of it.

"Is that story true?"

Seeing that the conversation was now done, Loren quietly asked Lapis, and she answered him in a hushed voice.

"It's true that a handful of thieves know the technique of picking locks using mana. But the source of the technique is us."

In this case, us didn't mean priests of the Knowledge god.

Loren understood that since Lapis was a demon, the technique sourced from them.

Loren wondered why they decided to develop and spread the technique to thieves, even though it was only a handful of them, and was worried that when Klaus or Ange had the opportunity to travel with priests of the Knowledge god in the future, the level of skill and techniques they would expect from that priest would be very high.

"Okay, the door is open. It's a waste of time just standing here and chatting, so let's get going, shall we?"

As Lapis insisted that there was nothing more to talk about, the group started going down the stairs on the other side of the open door.

The stairs leading to the tenth floor was longer compared to the ones for the upper floors, but other than that, it was almost the same, and the group reached the tenth floor.

They immediately realized why the stairs were longer than the others.

The bottom floor wasn't a dungeon like the floors above, but instead it was just a wide space.

In places across this wide space were showcases packed with many kinds of items and tools.

The ceiling was high and had light sources installed so it was possible to see across the whole floor, and Parme let out a voice full of admiration as she put her torch against the wall.

“This is Volf’s legacy...”

The things that were more valuable were stored inside the showcases, but everything else was stored adequately, with some were just piled up next to the walls.

But even those radiated its own mana, while the gold, silver, and jewels were shining brightly, and one look told them that it was worth a fortune.

“The last time I’ve been here was before graduating, but it’s quite a sight, no matter how many times I see it.”

Klaus looked around with slight nostalgia.

From what Loren had heard, Klaus was quite the honor student and had been here before, so he asked him out of slight curiosity.

“Hey Klaus, were you able to take something from here?”

“No, I returned to the surface without taking anything to avoid fighting the guardian. I didn’t want to put my companions in danger.”

When Klaus looked Ange with a smile, she looked back at him with flushed cheeks and a spaced-out expression, while Loren and Lapis overtly sighed and looked away.

Meanwhile Parme looked at the two of them enviously.

“Alright, anyways.”

“You’re the one who asked.”

“Anyways! Where would the preceding visitors be?”

The tenth floor was vast.

And due to the showcases, there were places they couldn’t see, and wouldn’t be surprising if someone or something would be lurking there.

On top of that, because of the items radiating mana all around the place, it was hard to sense others that might be there, so Loren felt that it wasn't a situation where they could let down their guards.

"I was expecting there to be an ambush or two."

Since the keeper on the ninth floor was deactivated, it was almost certain that whoever did it was on the same floor.

And that someone was most likely someone participating in the exam, with a high possibility of fraud.

So, Lapis had expected that person to consider that they would be coming behind him and ready something to hold them back or even set an ambush, but it seemed that her prediction was wrong, as they didn't meet anything of the sort.

"Nothing happening doesn't hurt."

"You're so naïve, Klaus."

As Lapis said with a sigh, Klaus looked at her, not sure what he said wrong.

"Nothing here means that the person has already finished what he came here for, you know? It means that he finished it before we even got a chance to find out what it was."

"That's... I guess that's true."

"On top of that, if it was one of the students, he would know that we would find out that he attempted fraud, so even if we return to the surface, he would already be running away. Well... as proctors, it wouldn't affect our job results even if he gets away."

Reporting the facts and letting the school decide what happens after could count as doing their jobs as proctors.

Then it was easier if no one was there on the bottom floor and nothing happened.

"Lapis, you didn't forget why we came here, right?"

"Of course not. I'm looking for it right now."

In the same way Loren and the others were scanning the area, Lapis was doing the same, except she was actually looking for the part of her body, which was what she and Loren had come here for.

But still, whether it be one of her arms or legs or eyes, if the actual thing was just sitting around there somewhere, she would have to explain it to Klaus and the others somehow, so she was trying to think of a good explanation.

As Lapis decided that in the worst case, she would have to put them to sleep, one of the showcases in the corner caught her eye.

Although all the expensive looking items were stored inside the showcase, on top of that particular one was a transparent jewel.

Lapis walked over to it and reached for the jewel on top of the showcase, which was on the same height as her eyes, took it, raised it above her head, and peered in to it with one eye.

“Umm Lapis? Sorry to bother you... but I don’t think we have time for that.”

“You’re right.”

Lapis obeyed Klaus and put the jewel back on top of the showcase.

But Loren managed to see her only pretend to do so and drop the jewel into her sleeve.

“Is that it?”

“Yes, I’m glad it’s easy to carry around.”

“What is it?”

“Looks like my left arm. Not bad, but not good either, I suppose.”

Loren didn’t know the principle behind how Lapis’ left arm was processed into the transparent jewel that she had snuck into her sleeve.

And he didn’t know how the jewel will go back to being her arm, but seeing that she wasn’t distraught or worried, he guessed that there wasn’t a problem.

“But if you take that, wouldn’t the guardian wake up...?”

“This isn’t part of Volf’s fortune so it should be fine.”

Lapis told him that if the guardian was for those who tried to take part of Volf’s fortune, it shouldn’t react to them, since her arm wasn’t part of it.

Thinking that they could escape without having to worry about involving Klaus and the others in danger, started looking around for the exit, deciding that they should leave as soon as they could.

But then he realized that he couldn’t even find the entrance that they came through.

“The entrance vanished?”

“I-it closed up as soon as we set foot inside this floor!”

When Parme, who seemed to have seen it happen, said so, they all glanced at each other.

Now that they thought about it, if one could go back up the way he came, he wouldn’t have to face the guardian, and although it would take longer, they could take whatever they want to.

They then realized that the entrance got blocked off in order to stop anyone from doing so and would have to go through the guardian.

“Now that I think about it, it was that sort of system.”

“Don’t forget something so important.”

As Klaus said with a laugh, Loren hit him in the chest with the back of his hand, and started looking for the exit, ignoring Klaus, who sank to the floor clutching his chest, while Ange and Parme rushed over to help him up.

After a while, Loren saw where the rows of showcases ended.

On the other side was a slightly vast empty area, and on the wall across it, was a door.

Seeing that there was nothing else like it, he guessed that this was where the guardians

were as well as the exit to the surface, and called the others over to head over there, when he saw four shadows standing in front of the door.

As he was about to call out to them, he heard something cutting through the air, flying towards him.

He immediately drew the great sword on his back and used it as a shield, and immediately after, he heard something hard hit the flat of the blade.

“What’s going on!?”

The sound caught the attention of Klaus, and while watching him run over with his sword drawn, Loren rested his great sword on his shoulder, and bent over to pick up what had bounced off it.

“A dart, huh.”

“You’ve reached here faster than I thought.”

The one who called out was the priest Al, who was part of Ain’s party, who they separated from when running from the wave of slimes.

But the one who attacked was Feim, who was standing next to him with a smile on her face.

“If you would’ve gave up and one back, it would’ve saved us so much trouble.”

“How should I take the fact that you attacked me?”

The tip of the dart glistened.

It was most likely poison, and Loren was sure that throwing it at him wasn’t an accident.

“That’s a warning not to get in our way until we reach our goal, of course.”

On both sides of Al, who said that, was Ain and Cloud, with their weapons drawn.

For a moment, Loren thought that they were all in in together, but Ain and Cloud’s

faces were expressionless, and their eyes were unfocused.

“Hey, those two...”

“Oh, I used <<Hypno>> on them to make them my pawns.”

Feim answered instead of Al.

In her hand was a crushed piece of paper instead of a dart, and she then threw it towards Loren with a shout.

“<<Fire Bullet>>”

The piece of paper that was thrown started glowing, and instead of disappearing it shot bullets made of fire.

As Loren cut through them with his great sword, Lapis shouted a warning.

“Be careful! They are supplementing their use of magic with scrolls!”

“What are they thinking?”

Due to the special method of making them, scrolls that contained magic could be used not only by magicians, but by those with other jobs as well.

Using them caused the effect of the magic written on the scrolls, but not many were distributed in the market and were also very expensive, so they weren’t used very often.

“I’m doing what needs to be done to achieve my goals, of course.”

The smile on Al’s face wasn’t the same as the timid looking priest that they had traveled with.



CHAPTER 69

RECOMMENDING AFTER LISTENING

“You have some time to tell us about it?”

Al cocked his head at Loren’s question.

“I’m not sure. I haven’t achieved my goal yet, and...”

Al’s gaze turned away from Loren.

Klaus was slowly inching towards Al, but he stopped as he turned towards him.

“The prodigy of our school is here as well, so wouldn’t it be a disadvantage to me if I spend too much time talking?”

“Shouldn’t you at least give us a reason why? We’re supposed to be your proctors.”

While saying that, Loren was wondering if he could close the gap between him and Al and cut him down before he could make a move.

But the answer to that thought was a no.

On top of Feim keeping them in check by dangling another scroll from her fingers, Ain and Cloud, who were hypnotized, were standing in a position where it was impossible for him or Klaus to make a move on Al.

“Even if we go back up, we can’t say that we don’t know anything.”

“Do you really think you’re going to be able to return to the surface? Well, whatever.”

Al sighed at Loren’s words, but it didn’t seem like he was going to do something against them without explaining anything.

“It’s nothing much. Although I may be the second born of a noble household, don’t you think that I won’t be able to succeed even if I became an adventurer?”

“I think that would depend on your attitude.

Loren didn't think one had to be reborn to be successful as an adventurer.

Of course, he couldn't deny that talent would play a big part in it, but he couldn't agree to the idea that Al couldn't succeed because he was the second born of a noble house.

“It would've been different if I was talented like Klaus.”

“I won't say that people think in different ways, so go on.”

“Luckily, I had enough knowledge to become a priest, and was able to smuggle many different documents when I left my home.”

When Al studied those documents, looking for information that could benefit him, he found one that had information on the Volf Adventurer Training School, which he was going to enroll in.

“How much do you know about Volf's achievements?”

“Just a little.”

Loren forgot most of the things Klaus told him right after he arrived at the school.

It was mostly because he wasn't interested since it was all useless information to him, but as Al continued his explanation, he wished that he paid better attention.

“Volf achieved many things, but what piqued my interest was the story that he sealed an evil god and put it here.”

“An evil god?”

Loren's brow furrowed at the shady word that popped up, but he had a vague feeling that Klaus had said something like that and tried to recall it.

“I think Klaus mentioned it along with slaying dragons and ancient ruins.”

“You weren't listening to my explanations, were you...”

Klaus sighed, but Loren didn't feel the need to follow up, and prompted for Al to continue.

“I’m a priest of the Supreme god... But what if I were to revive an evil god and become its priest?”

“Ah?”

“It means that I could become that god’s high priest.”

Al declared proudly.

Loren looked away from Al, who was standing there pleased with himself, not sure how to respond, and turned towards Lapis and the others who were behind him, looking for help.

Loren understood up to thinking of a different method, since if Al continued to serve one of the most well-known gods, he would be one priest among many.

But reviving an evil god that no one worshipped and become its high priest seemed like a good and bad idea at the same time, so he didn’t know what to do.

“Hey Lapis. Can you switch with me?”

“No way Loren. From that conversation, anyone could see that there’s no use talking to him. Please don’t push trouble towards me.”

Lapis made a very unpleasant face, so Loren had to give up on leaving the situation in her hands.

Even Lapis, who was willing to hardships for knowledge, didn’t seem to want to deal with Al at this point, and it was plain that she was going to let Loren finish out the deal.

“Ahh... I want to check, just in case.”

Scratching his head, Loren shifted his gaze away from Al to Feim, who had a nervous looking smile on her face.

“Why are you over there?”

“I mean, I don’t have talent as a magician. Even if I graduate and become an adventurer, I’ll just end up with random adventurers who tell me what to do and work all day, you know? So, I thought maybe it would be worth to bet on Al, who’s trying to make a name

for himself right now.”

“He’s talking about an evil god... but you’re not being threatened?”

“Hmm... But he said he’ll give me money, and it seems that the evil god sealed in here isn’t seen as an enemy by the other gods.”

Feim said that if it was a powerful being that could be a threat to the other gods, there would be records or legends about it in every church.

But there was no church that told of such a being sealed under the training school.

“So, I thought that there wouldn’t be a big deal.”

“If the evil god isn’t a big deal, there wouldn’t be much good coming out of serving it.”

“Oh, you might be right.”

Loren and the others watched with bored expressions as Feim’s response seemed like she had just realized it, while for some reason Al had a proud look on his face and informed Loren, who didn’t want to deal with them anymore.

“We’ve already found its body.”

“What?”

An evil god being sealed there was already a fishy story, so even if Al said that they found the body, you didn’t have to be Loren to think that he was lying.

But Al confidently pulled out an item from the pocket of his robes.

It was a box about the size of his palm.

It had complex patterns on its surface, which had a metallic glint to it, and Al raised it above his head to show Loren and the others.

“This is the body of the evil god that Volf sealed.”

“Looks pretty cheap.”

The designs were indeed complex, but there weren't any ornaments or gold or silver colors on it either.

The box itself had a metallic glint, but Loren guessed that it was probably iron, not noble metal.

It looked like something that a local blacksmith could make after paying a few silver coins, but according to Al it was where the evil god was sealed.

Loren, wondering how serious Al was, decided that he should be cautious just in case, and brought his great sword under his arm.

"Assuming that the box is what he says it is..."

Lapis called out, as if she had realized something.

As Loren stood in front of her, hoping that she would just switch with him, she said something unbelievable.

"Isn't that the reason behind the dungeon not spawning normal monsters and being overrun by slimes?"

"As expected of a priestess of the Knowledge god. You're probably correct."

Loren had a feeling the expectations of priests of the Knowledge god just got higher, but that wasn't important.

Rather than that, what Lapis had said shocked everyone else.

"Lapis, what's that supposed to mean?"

"Slimes are creatures that appear when the mana in an area is too thick or disturbed, so if a being that's called an evil god is about to awaken, those things could happen, don't you think?"

"T-then the current dungeon is..."

Lapis nodded at Ange's words of panic.

"The so-called evil god inside that box that's about to revive is the cause. The appearance

of all the slimes, as well as the dungeon malfunctioning is all because of that.”

The dungeon was usually managed by the school, and the bottom floor was sealed off so no one could enter.

Then it was hard to believe that Al could’ve timed everything so perfectly in order to revive the evil god.

Klaus was about to point that out, but Lapis said the answer before the words came out of his mouth.

“It’s probably coincidence.”

“Huh?”

“It’s coincidence. Well, if something like an evil god’s guidance existed, you could say that it was meant to be.”

“It was the guidance of the evil god.”

“I guess it was meant to be then.”

Al asserted, and Lapis acknowledged.

As the rest of them looked at them, not sure if they should be surprised or exasperated, Lapis continued her explanation.

“In other words, the future high priest over there plotting to revive the evil god, and the evil god was about to awaken, would typically be called coincidence, but could be called a necessity if you put the evil god’s guidance into consideration.”

“So, you’re saying that they aren’t related?”

As Loren asked for confirmation, Lapis nodded honestly.

“The evil god started to awaken when I started plotting to revive it. What else would you say other than it was meant to be!?”

Al seemed to want it to be a necessity, but to Loren and the others it was nothing but a bad coincidence.

But because of it, at least one of the students was dead, so they weren't going to let it pass as a joke, but when they considered if that was enough to kill Al and Feim, the answer was a no.

"What do we do?"

"Um... I think the correct thing to do would be capturing them and handing them over to the school."

Klaus answered Loren's question without confidence.

"Then let's get it over with."

"How can a bunch of adventurers possibly manage to capture me?"

As Loren stepped forward to apprehend Al, Ain and Cloud stepped in his way, brandishing their weapons.

Behind him was Feim, who was getting ready to throw another scroll, so they had to deal with these obstacles somehow to get to Al.

"If I could just awaken the evil god..."

Al was thinking that he had nothing to be afraid of if he could awaken the evil god while Ain and Cloud were keeping Loren and the others busy.

The only way they would know if that was correct or mistaken was if the seal was undone, but there was one thing that Al was mistaken about.

The documents that Al had taken did not mention anything about how to undo the seal, but since it was so loose that the mana from it was affecting the dungeon, he decided that it would be undone with a final push. As he prepared himself to feed his mana into it, two blunt sounds echoed across the floor.

As Al turned towards the sound, wondering what had happened, gulped as he saw Ain and Cloud, who he sent to keep Loren busy, spin around and fall to the ground.

Loren, who raised the tip of his great sword in front of Feim's nose as she was trying to activate her scroll, narrowed his eyes and said in a small but cold voice.

“Give up. Or I’ll cut you to pieces.”

Al thought that it was just an empty threat, but the killing intent behind Loren’s words were real, and he could only watch with wide eyes, as Feim drop the scroll in her hand and sink to the ground, while forgetting to even breath.

As the box dropped from Al’s strengthless hands and dropped to the floor with a sharp sound, Al dropped to the floor like Feim, not being able to stand the pressure behind Loren’s words.

CHAPTER 70

BEING SUMMONED AFTER REVIVAL

“I guess it’s all settled now?”

Seeing that Al and Feim had no will to fight anymore, Klaus asked Loren, but Loren didn’t say anything and just shrugged.

He was able to subdue them with only coercion, but he felt that it was mostly due to Shayna, who was puffing out her chest proudly in the corner of his eye.

It was hard to think that they, as future adventurers, even though they were currently students, would lose the will to fight at one glance.

“Tie them up with rope or something for now. It’ll be troublesome if they start acting up again.”

“You mean all of them, right?”

Klaus sent a pitiful glance towards Ain and Cloud, who were on the floor.

The two were in a bad state, as they seemed unrelated to this matter, but they were used by Al and ended up being knocked out by Loren.

Klaus wondered if they really needed to tie them up, but since they weren’t sure if they were still under the influence of <<Hypno>> or not, there was a need to neutralize them.

Klaus knew that, but he couldn’t help but feel bad for them.

“All of them. Unfortunate for them, but let’s just put it as mismanagement of their companions.”

“Okay.”

Klaus nodded and started tying Feim and Al with the rope that Ange had brought out

of her bag.

“What should we do now?”

Lapis, looking at the process, asked Loren.

“Well... I guess we go back to the surface using the transport gate, right?”

“What should we do about that?”

Loren turned to where Lapis was pointing, and his face hardened as he saw what was there.

In his sight was the box that Al had dropped, which supposedly sealed an evil god inside.

The box, which had been an ordinary metal box when Al had been holding it, was lying on the floor, but some of the designs on its surface started emitting an eerie purple light.

“Oh, come on... Don’t tell me...”

“For some reason, I agree with what you’re thinking.”

It was already proved that the abnormality of the dungeon, which was supposedly caused by the near revival of the evil god, and what Al had been planning were unrelated.

In that case, Al already being apprehended, with no more will to fight, was a separate problem than the evil god’s revival.

“Don’t tell me it’s going to revive right now!?”

“Such bad timing.”

Loren started to panic, but on the other hand, Lapis was very calm.

Of course, it wasn’t because she had a way to deal with what was happening before them.

“W-what’s going to happen!?”

As Parme, who had been watching everything quietly, cried out in dismay, the box on the floor slowly started glowing brighter and started emitting flashes of purple light, and anyone could see that it wasn't normal.

"Ah, the evil god is reviving to save me in my time of trouble!"

"Klaus, smack him and shut him up, will you?"

When Loren told him, seeing Al crying out, becoming all emotional and wiggling on the ground like a worm, Klaus sighed and struck him on the back of the head.

Al lost focus for a second, but he quickly recovered and pushed Klaus away, and started crawling towards the box, glowing with intense light.

"Now, lend me your power!"

"Shut up and stay asleep."

Loren said with a frown and dropped his heel onto the back of Al's head.

Along with a very blunt sound, the blow seemed to have knocked him out, as Al's body gave one last shudder before he stopped moving.

Everyone else thought he was dead, but Loren didn't seem like he cared, as he kicked him back and turned to the box.

"What do we do about this?"

"I don't think there's much we can do at this point."

As Lapis said in a give up tone, Loren thought for a moment and said to her like the thought just popped up in his head.

"How about we pretend we didn't see anything and return to the surface?"

"I think it's a bit too late for that."

Klaus and the others gave a bored look at Loren's heartless proposal.

Lapis said out loud as she continued looking at the box with a great deal of interest.

“I think something is coming out.”

“I was afraid it would be something like that.”

Nothing had gone right for Loren ever since he quit being a mercenary.

He had started acknowledging his bad luck, so he already had a vague feeling that he wasn't going to be able to just walk away from it like throwing away rotten food.

“It's coming. Brace yourselves, everyone.”

If they were to trust what they had been hearing about what was in the box, it meant that whatever was coming out was an evil god.

If they witnessed something like that manifest in the current world, who knew what else could happen.

As they prepared themselves at Lapis' warning, the box on the floor started emitting the brightest light yet.

Loren kept his eyes on the box, and within the blinding light, he saw the shape of the box crumble and increase in area, reshaping itself.

Eventually the light died, and a young-looking man stood in front of them.

He had sleepy eyes and unkempt hair.



His clothes were ordinary ones you could find anywhere, but what caught Loren's attention was his sleepy eyes.

His eyes were purple.

"Whew. Where is this place?"

As the sleepy looking man turned towards Loren and Lapis, scratching his head, Loren raised his great sword and glanced at Lapis.

Lapis caught Loren glimpsing at her, realized what he was wondering, and shook her head.

Only demons had purple eyes.

Loren believed that a demon had come out instead of an evil god and wasn't sure if he should be relieved that it wasn't an evil god, or if he should be worried that he may have to confront a demon.

He looked at Lapis, wondering if it was someone she knew, but from her response, it didn't seem like it was.

"No answer, huh... Whatever, I guess I'll start off with finding someplace to sleep."

"Who are you?"

The man, who stifled a yawn, lost interest in them and started to turn away when Loren called out to him.

The man opened his mouth to answer his question, but after opening and closing it repeatedly, he eventually sat down.

"Too much work to answer."

"Are you the evil god that the adventurer named Volf sealed?"

Loren decided that since there was a story, his question wouldn't be too far off from the truth, and the man laid down onto his side and answered him, not even bothering to look at him.

“Yeah. I remember people calling me the evil god of sloth. There were so many people trying to kill me back then, it was troubling.”

“So, you’re an evil god?”

“Does that really matter? All I want to do is be asleep.”

The man rolled over towards Loren and continued.

“I remember the guy named Volf. I let him seal me because he said that I could sleep all I want to. I wonder why I was able to break out?”

“The seal most likely deteriorated over the years.”

Lapis said quietly.

“There is no such thing as a seal that lasts forever, after all. If hundreds of years passed, the chains would loosen.”

“Oh, that much time has passed, huh. Then I guess Volf is already dead.”

The man pulled himself up and sat crossed legged.

“Then I guess that means a lot of things have changed outside. Looking around sounds fun. Even though it sounds like a lot of work.”

“Is there the option of being sealed again?”

Loren asked out of desperation, but the man shook his head.

“At first I thought it would be fine to be sealed again and continue sleeping. But it’s quite uncomfortable inside. I’d rather sleep on a soft bed if I could.”

“There’s no way we could let an evil god out of here!”

Klaus raised his sword and shouted.

Next to him, Ange pointed her staff towards the man and prepared to cast a spell.

After looking at the two of them, annoyed, the man turned his gaze towards Loren,

who was still not sure what he should do, and Lapis.

“What about you two?”

“Difficult question. I would prefer if you would behave.”

“What if I said I don’t want to.”

“That’s...”

“Ahh whatever. Listening to your answer is too much trouble.”

Loren thought it was selfish of him, since he was the one who asked, but the man didn’t seem to care, as he put a finger on the floor and started writing something.

Klaus moved before even considering what the man’s actions were.

He used <<Boost>> to close the gap between them in an instant and swung his sword at the man’s neck before he could even react.

Everyone thought that the man’s head would fly off with blood flying everywhere.

But reality betrayed their expectations, as although Klaus’ blow met the man’s neck, his blade moved no more.

“What!?”

“Your skills aren’t bad, but your weapon is. You probably won’t even be able to cut my nails with something as blunt as that.”

Klaus jumped back, shocked that his blow hadn’t even made a scratch.

The man didn’t seem to care about following, as he continued to write on the floor, and retreated his finger when he was done.

“I’ll leave something to keep you guys busy, just in case, so have fun. If fate allows, I’ll see you... that might be too troublesome, actually...”

After saying that, the man’s body started sinking into the floor.

Apparently, he was thinking of retreating as he summoned something, but Loren couldn't follow, as the words that the man had written started glowing.

"Putting meeting again aside, how about you name yourself?"

Loren asked the man, knowing there was no way to stop him, and as he continued sinking deeper into the floor, he looked at Loren with sleepy eyes, and said one last thing before he sank completely.

"Evil god of sloth, Dauna Slotharcadia. I have a feeling we'll see each other again."

After those last words, he sank through completely.

At the same time, a pitch-black, unstructured lump appeared from underneath, as if it traded places with the man.

"Another slime!?"

As he cried out, wanting a break from slimes, the giant black slime that had been summoned started moving towards them.

CHAPTER 71

EXTERMINATING AFTER RETREAT

As the slime came closer and closer, Loren and the others stepped back farther and farther.

Meanwhile Feim, who had been conscious the whole time, was still tied up together with Al and the other students, who were unconscious.

Loren and the others were pulling Ain and Cloud, who had been knocked out, away from the slime as they retreated, but the slime ignored all the showcases and the items littered around it and continued to chase after them.

“Do we burn it?”

Loren suggested a method that was very effective against slimes, but Klaus disagreed.

“Fire is no good in here. It would burn the cases and items around it. I won’t stop you if you’re willing to pay for the damage.”

“I can’t let my debt get any bigger.”

Although some of the items were protected, but there were things such as documents and paintings that were stacked up without any protection as well.

If they were to use fire, there was no telling how much damage it would cause.

Of course, the bill would be sent to Loren and Lapis would be the one who would pay it, so Loren’s debt would skyrocket.

“Loren let’s burn it. I’d love to be the one to do it.”

“Lapis...”

Lapis’ eyes sparkled at the idea of Loren’s debt increasing.

As she started pulling at his sleeve, excited that she could increase his debt without any effort, Loren sighed at softly pushed Lapis towards the slime.

Lapis, who was now unintentionally right in front of the slime, panicked and hid behind Loren's back.

"What are you doing!?"

"Shut up. I'll burn it so go get tangled in there!"

"No way! Who would benefit from me being covered in tentacles and slimes... Would you, Loren?"

She dropped her voice and asked hesitantly, with a meek face, and when a question mark appeared on Loren's face, she raised her fists in front of her chest with a determined look on her face.

"If Loren, who's always getting the short end of the stick, will benefit from it, I, Lapis, will gladly go and be covered with tentacles and slimes. Here I go!"

Loren grabbed Lapis' collar and threw her behind him as she started walking up to the slime and cut down the tentacles that were reaching for her.

"I'm jealous that you two are so close, but are we going to keep on retreating like this?"

Klaus didn't have his weapon drawn.

He couldn't because he was pulling Al and the others with all his might so they wouldn't get caught by the slime.

Ange and Parme were helping, but they could only carry one between the two of them, so Klaus was dealing with three of them on his own.

"Can't we run past this thing once we reach the entrance?"

Although it was a giant slime, it wasn't wide enough to fill up wall to wall, so there was space around it.

Loren thought it would be possible to run past it, dodging its tentacles, but Klaus shook his head and said in a bitter voice.

“While carrying them?”

Al and the others, all tied up, were quite heavy.

Loren and Klaus could carry one of them each and run, but there were four of them, and if Loren were to carry two of them, he would be considerably slower, and it would increase the risk of getting caught by the slime.

And even if they were to let the girls carry them, even one would be hard, and they wouldn't be able to dodge the slime, much less run.

“Fighting wouldn't really work either.”

Loren cut through more tentacles that reached forward.

Although they were cut, the tentacles were almost liquid, so even if they were splattered everywhere, they were absorbed by the main body and nothing changed.

“There's no end.”

“Ange, can you do something with your magic?”

Ange, who was pulling Ain's body, shook her head.

“I can't do anything about a slime that large with my magic!”

“This isn't good.”

They were able to keep a distance between them and the slime while discussing what to do since it was slow, but they couldn't do so anymore.

The slime suddenly sped up.

Loren thought that it got irritated that it couldn't reach its prey, but it was a slime, which shouldn't have any emotions, so he couldn't understand why it suddenly sped up.

The slime barreled towards them.

Surprised at its sudden change in speed, Parme slipped and fell on top of Cloud, who

she had been dragging.

As the slime attacked, not missing the opportunity, Loren threw Al, who he had been carrying, grabbed Parme's hand, and pulled her back with all his strength.

"Ahh!"

Parme sank right into Loren's arms, letting out a cute scream that didn't fit her personality, but there was no way for Cloud to escape.

His body was immediately pounced on by the slime and was swallowed whole.

"Ahh... I..."

"Don't think about it! It was an accident, got it!? Go help Ange if you've got time to think."

As Parme was stunned in his arms, as she heard noises that sounded like bones breaking from inside the slime's body, Loren slapped her on the cheek and pointed towards Ange.

Loren muttered under his breath as he watched her stagger towards Ange in bewilderment.

"Should we just feed these guys to it and run while it's busy with them?"

"I can agree to that."

As Lapis started kicking Al's body forward violently, Feim, who was being carried by Ange, started struggling, so Ange and Parme had to hold her down.

"Well, we have to have the culprits so we can explain to school..."

"Wouldn't one of them be sufficient?"

"Cloud's death was an accident, but Ain was just being used."

"Then how about handing over Feim as the culprit and leaving this one?"

When Loren pointed at Al, who was still being kicked forward by Lapis, Klaus went

silent with an awkward expression.

Even though the revival of the evil god was just a coincidence, Klaus didn't seem to want to show Al much mercy since he had plotted it in the first place.

But he didn't seem to think that it was enough to feed him to the slime, so all he could do is keep his silence.

"I agree with leaving all of them behind!"

Ange, who was carrying the struggling Feim with Parme's help, agreed with Loren.

It seemed that it was because it was just too much work, rather than really wanting to leave them, so she was leaning towards dropping the extra weight and making sure to save themselves.

"Let's just leave them! We can just let Parme do the testimony."

"I-Of course I'm planning to testify..."

Parme, flustered that she was suddenly mentioned, agreed, and when Ange looked at Klaus, he turned towards Loren with an uneasy air around him.

"Then I guess we'll go with leaving them when it comes to the worst..."

"Loren!"

Right as Loren made the heartless decision, Lapis let out a warning.

The slime, which had been consuming its prey, suddenly stopped and started chasing after Loren again, faster than before.

The slime seemed to have sped up since it wanted more after it finally tasted its first prey, and Loren, who was closest to it, was a second too slow to respond.

"Damn it!"

Loren cursed and lifted his great sword in front of him like a shield and was pounced on by the slime while in that position.

Loren, as he was taken in by the slime all the way to his shoulders, moved his great sword around and tried to peel it off him.

“Loren!”

“Don’t mind me! Run past it while you can!”

The black blob that tried to swallow him slowly stole his ability to move due to its viscosity.

As he still struggled, Loren stopped Lapis, who was about to run towards him to help, and yelled at them to escape while he kept it busy.

“But!”

“Just go! I can handle this on...”

The slime covered his head before he could finish.

Although he was able to take a deep breath before it did, he knew that he would end up like Cloud if he couldn’t do something before suffocating, so he started swinging his great sword around.

If he could destroy the slime’s core, the slime should die, and he would be free.

The problem was that he couldn’t see it since the slime was pitch black, and that even if he managed to find it, he might not be able to crush it since he couldn’t move his arms like he wanted to, but he knew that acting was more important than thinking, so he continued swinging his sword recklessly.

‘Onii-san! I’ll help!’

Loren frowned as he heard Shayna’s voice in his mind.

(Lapis will notice!)

‘But if I don’t help, Onii-san will die! We can worry about that later!’

The slime’s grip on him tightened as time went on, and Loren’s movements were getting slower since he was trying to move while holding his breath.

If he couldn't do something, he soon wouldn't be able to move a finger, and would either be crushed or suffocate to death.

(I guess I don't have a choice! Do it!)

'Here it goes! Energy drain, full power!'

With Loren's permission, Shayna deployed her ability without restraint.

The energy drain, powerful enough to kill normal slimes in an instant, started eating away at the black slime from inside, but as expected of a slime summoned by an evil god, its grip on Loren showed no signs of weakening.

But at the same time, Shayna channeled the life energy siphoned from the slime into Loren's body.

Loren, who was almost out of air, converted the life energy into strength and started swinging his great sword again.

(Don't screw with me! No way I'm going to be eaten by a slime!)

Something clicked in the corner of his mind.

Although he was suffocating, with his newfound strength, Loren's arms started moving at a speed incomparable to the speed he was moving before.

Even with close to no air, relying on just the strength Shayna was giving him, the great sword started accelerating, overpowering the slime as it started ripping through it, the pieces starting to fly around splattering all around, and somehow managed to find the core.

As he felt the sensation of his sword hitting something, Loren put more strength into his arms and pushed. Eventually the core split in half, and his sword struck the floor.

At the same time, the coreless slime couldn't keep itself from dying, losing its viscosity, and as it spread across the floor like plain liquid, Loren managed to take a deep breath to come back to life, before falling to his knees, and dropping to the floor with a splash.

CHAPTER 72

WORRIED AFTER WAKING

“I think we should do something about ending up in the hospital every time Loren, don’t you think?”

As Lapis told him as she sat down next to a hospital bed, peeling a fruit with a knife, Loren let out a growl, complaining that it wasn’t like he wanted to be sent to the hospital, as he sat up.

They were in the hospital in Kauffa, and it was a place that he became familiar with ever since he became an adventurer.

Loren wouldn’t have been surprised if he had woken up in the hospital where the training school was at, but he was bewildered when he woke up to find out that he was at the hospital in Kauffa.

“I left Klaus and Ange back at the school. They have to report what happened during the exam, after all.”

The transport gate on the floor where Volf’s legacy was stored was set to transport the user to a room within the school, but Lapis explained that she had messed with the settings to be able to transport people to other locations.

Telling Klaus, Ange, and Parme that she had to take Loren, who was unconscious, to a hospital, she sent the three of them to the surface, while she took him and jumped to the city of Kauffa.

“You were in very bad shape. You were covered in slime and unconscious, while your arms and legs were shaking, just like a newborn fawn.”

“How did you explain to Klaus and the others about being able to mess with the transport gate settings?”

“I told them it was because I’m a priestess of the Knowledge god.”

Thinking that the expected quality of priests of the Knowledge god just got even higher, Loren decided not to think about it, and tried to imagine what he was like based on Lapis' description, but immediately stopped.

When he thought about it, it probably wasn't the prettiest thing to imagine, and imagining a man covered in slime, even if it were himself, wasn't the best thing to do.

"So, how's my condition?"

Loren knew that he had been close to death every time he had been taken to the hospital.

He had a feeling that this time was no exception as he asked Lapis but cocked her head with a frown.

"Strangely, it wasn't too bad this time."

Lapis put the fruit she was peeling onto a plate that was on top of a stool next to her, wiped the juice from her hands with a cloth, and picked up a piece of paper that was spread on top of it.

"Your injuries this time is a dislocated shoulder and damage on the tendons of every joint. On top of that, a few pulled muscles and internal bleeding here and there."

Loren was aware of the symptoms she listed.

Usually after the sensation of something fitting into the corner of his mind, he would fall into a strengthless state, but this time it seemed that Shayna had compensated what he had spent by channeling the energy drained from the black slime using her energy drain.

But on the other hand, the energy was too much for Loren's body to handle so as a result, it was damaged as if he had severely overworked it, especially around his arms.

"It will take a few days for it to heal completely."

"Isn't that a bit too fast?"

From what he had heard, it wouldn't have been surprising if it took twice as much as Lapis had said, but Lapis puffed out her chest and told him.

“You have an excellent divine arts user right here, after all.”

“Sorry about that. I’ll be in your care.”

“But to put it the other way, it means that you’ve suffered injuries that’s going to take a few days to heal, even with a divine arts user like me. You understand that’s quite severe, right?”

Loren honestly nodded at Lapis’ glare.

He did think that his injuries were a lot lighter than he had expected, but he understood that his injuries were still quite severe.

On top of the, he couldn’t move his body like he wanted to, so he had no way to tell her wrong.

“So, how long was I out?”

“About three whole days. Klaus and the girls finished the reports and are already back.”

She said that she went to ask them about how everything ended just a while ago, as she reached for a different piece of paper on the stool.

“Al, who was the prime culprit, was sent back to his parents, and seems like he was sent straight to a monastery. He probably won’t be able to come out under the sun his whole life.”

Lapis explained that in aristocratic society, monasteries were used to send off those who couldn’t be shown in public.

There was no way for outside people to know if they were actually sent to monasteries or if they were sent to someplace darker, but apparently those who were never walked under the sun again.

“On the books, Feim has dropped out of the school, but in fact she was expelled. I’m not sure where she is now. She isn’t a noble so she wouldn’t be sent to a convent, so she there’s a chance she actually became an adventurer.”

There was no need for a license to become an adventurer.

With her lightness, Loren thought it wouldn't be surprising if she became one.

But what would happen after was beyond his imagination, and she wasn't someone that Loren wanted to meet again.

"Cloud... is treated as killed during the exam. His body... since it was swallowed by the slime, and because of what Loren did... what was left of it was gathered and buried. Ain is treated as retired from exam, and what to do now is up to him."

Putting Al aside, since Ain was very close to the other two, Loren wasn't sure if he could deal with the fact that one of them betrayed for money and the other got swallowed by a slime and died.

It would be quite a shock and coming back from it was completely on his will, so all Loren could do was pray that he could find rest.

"Parme failed the exam and will have to take it again. All I could say that it was unfortunate that her whole party was wiped out, and it can't be helped."

"What happened to them?"

"One of them died. We saw her. They probably won't be able to retrieve her body. The other two are missing. The school has sent down search parties, but chances of their survival are very slim."

Three nameless students had died in the dungeon, but apparently it wasn't that unusual to the school.

It was unfortunate that they got caught in the appearance of the slimes due to the revival of an evil god, but adventurers losing their lives due to unlucky circumstances wasn't an unusual thing.

"Klaus brought a message from Parme. It says, 'I will make sure to repay you. If you ever travel close to my home, please come pay a visit'. You're so lucky Loren. It's an invitation from a pretty girl, you know?"

Lapis joked around, trying to lighten the mood, but Loren murmured under his breath.

"Blonde rolls aren't my type."

“Oh, that’s unfortunate for her. Then do black hair ponytails suit your tastes?”

Loren frowned silently as Lapis asked him, pointing at her own hair.

If he said it did, it would be somewhat strange, and if he said no, it would get awkward.

No matter which he chose, it wouldn’t be the best answer in the situation, so he could only give her silence.

“No response is a little bit sad too, though.”

Lapis didn’t really look sad at all, but Loren changed the subject.

“What happened to the job?”

Their job was being exam proctors.

He knew that they didn’t fail, but if one were to ask if it was a success, Loren couldn’t really say so either.

The exam itself had become messed up, but they weren’t the ones who caused it.

They were unrelated and not responsible for the student named Al trying to seize Volf’s fortune, but Loren wasn’t sure if they did proper jobs as proctors.

“The school considered the job a success. Klaus said that the principal promised they would.”

Lapis threw the paper back onto the stool, took the plate with the fruit on top of it, and cut the fruit into six pieces.

After taking one and giving the rest to Loren, she threw it into her mouth and started chewing delightfully.

“It would’ve been something to protest about if it was considered a failure. Most of the things that happened weren’t even because of us.”

As Lapis said after she swallowed, Loren asked her another thing, while looking at the plate of fruit in his hands.

“What about the revived evil god?”

“It’s already been reported to the principal and the adventurer’s guild. All the questioning tired me out.”

There were no documents or legends about the evil god of sloth, and even the principal who was a descendant of Volf, didn’t hear anything from his predecessors.

The box that it was sealed was within the records of all the items in the floor, but it was recorded that it was an unknown object and was treated obscurely.

“Thinking about him is a waste of time. No one knows where he went. He called himself an evil god, so there’s no way he left any tracks, either.”

“Was he... demon kind?”

The eyes of the revived evil god were purple.

In this world, the only ones with purple eyes were demons.

“I’m not sure.”

“His features were indeed so, but he is a being that was sealed hundreds of years ago. It’s hard to tell if he’s a demon just by the color of his eyes. If I go home, maybe I could find some records about him...”

Keeping in the urge to ask what kind of home she came from, Loren asked her another thing.

“What about your arm?”

“This?”

Lapis swung her left arm.

It didn’t look any different, but Lapis looked at it with a satisfied smile.

“It’s finally flesh and bone. Only this arm, though.”

“Congratulation, I guess?”

“Thank you. I hope we can keep this up and get my whole body back.”

After saying that, Lapis’ expression suddenly turned into a serious one, surprising Loren, and put her arms on the bed, putting his face closer to his.

“So Loren, do you have anything to say to me?”

He couldn’t think straight as she looked right at him from such a close distance, and almost opened his mouth, but he willed himself to calm down and close it.

It wasn’t like he didn’t know what she wanted him to tell her.

He had let Shayna, who was inside him, use her powers as a No Life King to its fullest to survive the slime’s attack.

There was no way Lapis wouldn’t notice it, but Loren wanted more time before talking about it.

But her expression was too serious to not say anything, so after thinking as fast as he could, the one answer he arrived at reached his lips.

“Sorry for making you carry me all the way to the hospital every time, Lapis. Thank you.”

When Loren said that with a meek expression on his face, although her face reddened at his unexpected reply, Lapis still puffed out her cheeks in dissatisfaction.

“Is that not what you were looking for?”

Loren played dumb, knowing that it wasn’t the answer Lapis wanted, but after a long sigh, she pulled away from Loren, scratching her head.

“It’s fine. I’ll be satisfied with that for now.”

As he knew she meant she will wait until he was ready to talk about it, Loren nodded back at her.

“Thanks.”

Even if she knew, she would play dumb until he told her.

Loren slowly closed his eyes, grateful for Lapis' kindness.

He still needed a few days to recover completely and needed to recover his lost strength, and he started feeling tired and sleepy from talking too long.

"Rest well for now. Let's go find another job once you're feeling well."

He felt Lapis stand up.

She seemed to have guessed that Loren was falling asleep, as his eyes closed, and decided to leave the room.

"Oh, I'll take the hospital bills and payment for my divine arts from your rewards, okay?"

"Doesn't seem like there'll be much left."

As Loren sighed, guessing that her payment would be more expensive than the hospital bills, he felt Lapis let out a small giggle.

"I hope we will succeed on our next job and make some money."

She then said good night, and Loren felt her presence disappear from the room.

As his eyes continued to remain closed, Loren felt worried if such a job will ever come his way, but he yielded himself to his drowsiness and started falling into a deep sleep.



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