

## I! Cleaner 121

Chapter 121 The Awakening Madman\_1

[Name: Heart of Ambition (Corruption, Pride, Domination)]

[Appearance: A heart that continues to beat eternally even after being removed from the body. Approaching it recklessly will let you hear the whispers of demons, arrogantly demanding you to reveal your own ambitions.]

And the stronger the ambition hidden within a person, the deeper the roots of pride in their heart, making them more easily attract its attention and temptation.]

[Ability: Demon's Heart, self-abnormality amplification, Sovereign Domination]

[Cost: Open your heart, inviting it to witness your ambition and pride.]

[File: The heart of a Near-God Level Great Demon, once heavily damaged and plunged into a long-term slumber. During this time, it was sent as a rare exhibit to an underground auction due to its trait of continuing to beat even after leaving the body.]

It was auctioned off by a member of the Lionheart Family and nourished by the deep ambition within his younger brother, causing it to awaken once more. It devoured the brother's heart, replacing it, and has continued to this day.]

[Evaluation: An Anomalous Object with virtually no combat capability. But the nobler the user's status and the greater the power they hold, the more terrifying its effects become.

A mere member of the Old Nobility, soon to be abandoned by time, cannot manifest its strength. If it falls into the hands of a true power figure, or even a King from The Twelve Kingdoms, it will make this world feel fear.]

[Contamination Value: 11 (3.3 – Bobby Layne) (2.3 – Leon Laine)]

[Your Contamination Value has increased.]

[Current Contamination Value: 2.3]

To make this world feel fear...

Looking at the undoubtedly highest evaluation among the Anomalous Objects he had encountered so far, Leon finally had some concept of the Black Goat's level during its heyday.

Although the Black Goat's heart was also severely damaged, it always remained in a "wild" state, unlike the Yang Jiao, which fell into the hands of the director and had even its authority destroyed in the past. It still basically maintained its original hierarchy, and its powers were quite frightening.

For those "dominated" targets, it possessed near-absolute control over life and death...

Pretty good.

...

"What are you doing?!"

Still not shaken off the shock from being "used," he once again felt the "activation" from the other party, even stronger than imagined, and couldn't help but panic. The young man reached out desperately to grab Leon's arm, struggling with all his might while shouting desperately,

"What are you doing! What exactly are you doing?!"

"..."

Without answering his question, Leon, his clothes soaked with blood, his body bearing pain like being cut by a thousand knives, slowly closed his eyes. Using the strengthening effect of "I Am the Demon," he pushed the Heart of Ambition to its current limit.

"Buzz!"

An invisible wave of souls rapidly spread with the two as the center, and the entire Ryan Manor instantly "quieted" down.

Nobles, officials, servants, butlers, gardeners... Everyone within the manipulation range of the Heart of Ambition was dragged into that invisible pyramid.

"Standing" on the second layer of the pyramid, Leon looked at the hundreds of thousands of purple-black souls around him and felt the decay far worse than mud around him. He finally made up his mind.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!"

With a series of collisions between flesh and hard objects from his sequential "naming," fireworks of flesh and ironstone bloomed within Ryan Manor.

Climbing tall buildings and leaping off, sprinting to collide with rocks, diving into the nearest scenic lake... A multitude of rotten souls full of greed and political plotting were extinguishing at an average rate of two per second.

"Stop it!!!"

Watching Leon's rampant slaughter, the soul of Bobby Layne, tossed outside the pyramid, couldn't help but roar in fury,

"Do you not know what you are doing? You and the Purification Bureau have agreements with the kingdoms; random killing of ordinary people is absolutely forbidden! Do you know what will happen to you if you do this?"

"Hmm? What did I do?"

Carefully identifying the evil-flooded souls below and extinguishing those utterly decayed flames one by one, Leon tilted his head slightly, delivering his slightly surprised response.

"Wasn't this all your doing?"

"You!!!"

Having obliterated yet another rotted soul, in this "pyramid" without any other spectators, Leon, having shaken free of all restraints, turned to calmly narrate,

"During this investigation mission, I unexpectedly suffered an ambush from you and was trapped in this manor.

To pry into the secrets of the Purification Bureau, you threatened me with the lives of the Layne family members. If I didn't reveal the Bureau's secrets, you'd kill one person every second.

Unfortunately, I'm just a freshly promoted small employee and know very little about the Bureau's intelligence, with no way to answer. So these people could only die in vain..."

"You're talking nonsense!"

Unexpectedly, this bucket of water splashed back on his own head, and Bobby Layne's soul was instantly filled with rage as he shouted at Leon,

"You can't cover this up! So many people died suddenly, the Purification Bureau will definitely investigate you! By then..."

"Investigate how?"

Leon continued his "work" calmly as he responded with utter serenity,

"Did you get something wrong? The one who merged with the Anomalous Object is you, not me. Could I have used your Anomalous Object to kill your clansmen?"

"???"

"As for other more special investigation methods..."

I only acted within this pyramid, and you seem to be the sole witness, right? And once everything is over, I won't waste your filthy soul either—it's prepared to be fully digested by the Black Goat.

So how are they going to investigate? Investigate you, who will have even your soul decomposed? Or investigate these people who were entirely controlled by you and know nothing at all?"

"..."

"Hmm... actually, it's not entirely secure."

After some frowning thought, Leon's soul calmly stated,

"If the Bureau truly values this greatly, willing to use objects involving causality, or mighty Anomalous Objects that reverse time, they might indeed reveal what I did, but... are you worth it?"

"You... you... damn it!"

Realizing he truly couldn't do anything to Leon and forced to watch helplessly as everything he had got destroyed bit by bit, Bobby Layne's soul couldn't help but howl in resentment,

"You madman! You damn madman!"

Madman...

Upon hearing his words, Leon's movements paused for a moment as he recalled himself prior to joining the Purification Bureau, ready to charge into the Department of Road Administration with a knife.

"Seems like I might be a bit."

After forcefully extinguishing the last irredeemable flame, observing the other souls with somewhat warm colors, Leon stopped his hand and exited the pyramid, reaching out to seize Bobby Layne's throat with seriousness,

"If I were indeed crazy, it must have just occurred on the 28th of last month... Do you have any other last words?"

Chapter 122 Negotiating with.....\_1

Bobby Layne walked away peacefully.

Despite the expression of rage on his face and the eyes brimming with hatred and reluctance, there was a sense of satisfaction and happiness that emanated from deep within...at least, that was what Leon thought.

Before he could utter his last words, Leon forcibly extracted the "Heart of Ambition," finally eliminating the Duke of Lionheart's primary heir. Surrounded by the fallen members of the Layne family, utterly exhausted, Leon plopped down and casually rested his hand on the Black Goat's head.



\*Damn it...I fought so hard, drenched in blood, only for this thing to reap the biggest benefits...\*

Watching the soul fragments surge in his soul vision, almost forming a river, Leon rubbed the Black Goat's forehead silently.

[Name: War Cornerstone (Corruption, Wrath, War)]

[Appearance: ...]

[Ability: Demon Horns, Malice Amplification, Endless Blood Battle]

[Cost: Recognized, can be used without any cost]

[File: ...]

[Evaluation: Thanks to your careful nurturing, the repaired authority has made this anomalous object a terrifying weapon of war once again. If you bring it into a large-scale war, you will have a temporary Undying Body and inexhaustible stamina until one side completely collapses, ending the battle.]

[Contamination Value: 8 (2.5)]

[Your Contamination Value increased.]

[Current Contamination Value is: 2.5]

\*Not bad. Although it used to be a little piece of junk, it absorbed nearly two hundred sinful souls in one shot and repaired the broken authority. At least it finally looks a bit like a Great Demon, but...\*

"Stop it!"

After delivering a smack to the back of the Black Goat's head, knocking it to the ground as it indulged in absorbing souls, Leon scolded,

"Your limit is 8 points. If you keep absorbing, that's all you'll get. Don't overdo it!"

"You?!"

Enraged by the hit on the back of its head, the Black Goat turned to curse, but upon seeing the fierce Soulfire in Leon, it inexplicably lost its momentum and argued,

"Though we can't continue to get stronger, we can still stock up! Maybe one day..."

"Stock up for what?! Stop now!"

Glaring at it in annoyance, Leon explained,

"So many people died this time. The Bureau might send someone down to investigate. If they come and see you full of soul fragments, I won't be able to talk my way out of it!"

"Ah?"

The Black Goat looked baffled and muttered,

"What do you need to explain? Wasn't it all you...ouch!"

After giving it a slap on the head, Leon emphasized seriously,

"This was all Bobby Layne. Trying to extract information about the Purification Bureau from me...he went insane...I wanted to stop him...but was powerless...in the end, I could only..."

"..."

"What does that expression mean?"

"Nothing..."

After hearing Leon's "story," the Black Goat responded speechlessly,

"If he did everything, why did he die instead of you?"

"Because of you."

Smacking the Black Goat's head, Leon "explained" without a hint of emotion,

"Bobby Layne's spree of slaughter allowed you to absorb a large number of souls, repairing the authority the Director shattered, hence significantly boosting your power. Afterward, relying on the Holy Spirit pendant, I forcedfully approached him, using you to suppress his heart's domination ability, letting me kill him in one strike!"

Hearing this, the Black Goat retorted,

"But...since when can I suppress its authority of domination? Your explanation is too far-fetched!"

"Whether you have the ability isn't important, what matters is 'you' said it."

Having long prepared an excuse, Leon flashed a smile reminiscent of the Red-haired Director, squinting as he replied,

"No one knows Yang Jiao or Yang Xin's body better than you. So, if you say you can do it, then it surely can!"

"Then why did only villains die?"

"Because of internal family power struggles threatening Bobby Layne's position; or maybe because the more evil targets are harder to control, he seized the chance to eliminate dissidents; or perhaps due to your interference and protection, he couldn't target good people..."

After listing three options, Leon seriously reminded,

"Don't be so rigid. You have the say now, and how things went should be determined by whatever you decide! Hmm...thinking of that, there actually is something that needs handling."

Looking at the Heart of Ambition, forcibly extracted and temporarily placed on Bobby Layne's corpse, Leon frowned and inquired,

"What's your heart situation now? With Bobby Layne's soul consumed, does it still possess self-awareness?"

"It should...still have it?"

Hearing Leon's inquiry, the Black Goat seemed unsure and said,

"This is the first time I've been split into seven parts...not sure about the details...maybe you should ask it?"

"..."

\*Why did I even bother asking you.\*

Casting a wordless glance at the Black Goat, and relying on the "I Am the Demon," Leon reached out to grasp the Heart of Ambition, about to speak when a high-pitched male voice, resonating with a resemblance to Bobby Layne by six parts, echoed in his ear.

'Release your filthy hand!'

After hurling a word of mild anger, the Heart of Ambition coldly hummed through the soul,

'I overheard your conversation, so have you come to beg me to keep it a secret?'

"It's not a request, it's a demand, though you can refuse."

Gently touching the Holy Spirit pendant on his chest, Leon replied with a calm demeanor,

"But if you refuse, I will use this to weaken you to about the same strength as the Cornerstone, and then have it erase your awareness to prevent you from leaking information to the Purification Bureau."

'You dare?!'

Infuriated by Leon's threat, the Heart of Ambition flared up with anger, thumping violently and demanding,

'If not for your entertaining slaughter, a lackey of the Purification Bureau like you isn't even fit to converse with me! Especially with your vulgar and weak heart...'

\*Seems there's no room for negotiation.\*

As Leon listened to the furious thundering at his ear, he shook his head and grasped the Holy Spirit pendant.

But just as he was about to act, the raging voice of the Heart of Ambition abruptly subsided, then, with hesitation, it remarked,

'Your heart...hmm...it's not so bad after all...'

Forcefully piercing through Leon's defenses, glancing at the colossal, unimaginable ambition buried deeply, the Heart of Ambition fell silent momentarily before softening its stance a slight, extending an amiable offer:

'How about...you let me be your heart, and I'll keep the secrets from the Purification Bureau...is that okay?'

"..."

Regardless, in this incident, the greatest beneficiary was the Black Goat and its master Leon. Agreeing to the Heart of Ambition's terms now would practically invite the Purification Bureau to investigate, so Leon, of course, couldn't agree.

"I refuse!"



'How dare you refuse me?'

With much effort in putting aside its pride to offer an olive branch, only for Leon to reject it outright, the Heart of Ambition was incensed, shouting harshly,

'You!...won't you reconsider?'

"..."

"???"

\*Damn it! I've never lost my demonic prestige like this before!\*

Watching Leon and the Black Goat's astonished expressions, the Heart of Ambition pulsated with shame, wishing desperately to take back its words and silence all who had heard them.

But after stealthily bypassing Leon's mental defenses and witnessing the ultimate arrogance seemingly destined to rule the heavens, and the enormous ambitions far more challenging than ruling the Kingdom, the Heart of Ambition found itself reluctant to lose such a perfect host. For the third time, it issued a proud invitation:

'I beg you, let me be your heart! I promise to do everything you say!'

## Chapter 123 Opening the Book and Feeling at Ease\_1

\*Wasn't it... could you at least have a little dignity as a Great Demon?\*

Seeing the other version of himself not just fawning but utterly shameless, the Black Goat felt a surge of anger and an intense sense of crisis.

When he persuaded Leon to stand by his side earlier, the reasoning was that the soul was exceedingly arrogant and definitely wouldn't be as obedient as himself. But looking at this dog's attitude now...

Damn it! Is it this competitive to be someone's lapdog now?

...

"It's deceiving you!"

After getting horribly outmaneuvered by his own soul and encountering cutthroat competition, the Black Goat's fury surged as he menacingly said to Leon,

"It's arrogance personified! Based on our understanding of it, this guy would never be so compliant. So, it's probably just stabilizing you and waiting for a chance to report to the Purification Bureau! Hurry up and act!"

'You?!!!'

Watching Leon suddenly squint and grab the pendant again, the Heart of Ambition, having been ruthlessly backstabbed, flared up furiously.

Before I was split into seven pieces, I was undoubtedly number one. You, a pathetic third, are only ranked there because the fourth was Sloth and couldn't care less to compete with you!

You, a trashy number three, just found a suitable host before me, and now instead of bowing before the big brother, you're plotting to instigate him to take me down?

\*You're forcing my hand!\*

Disgusted by the sixth behavior of their third brother, the Heart of Ambition ground its metaphorical teeth and raised the stakes,

'Aside from those damned horns, over the years I've found the whereabouts of the stomach and tail too!

As long as you erase its will and let me be your heart, not only will I obey you completely, but I'll also reveal the locations of those items to you!'

???

You're even adding to the competition?

Seeing Leon looking a bit tempted, and realizing the situation might be turning unfavorable, the Black Goat shuddered and hurriedly raised the stakes,

"Do I need you to tell me where those other items are? Once Leon climbs to the top of the Purification Bureau, we'll have all kinds of ways to get others to investigate!

Plus, who are you to compete with me?

I've been cooperating... with the Purification Bureau for years, staying next to the director of the Zodiac Branch Office, learning countless hidden secrets and mysterious tales!"

At this point, the Black Goat sneakily glanced at Leon's soul and, seeing it seemingly leaning towards him again, relaxed and continued,

"Leon! As long as you crush it, I'll answer whatever you ask in the future!

Haven't you always been curious about Emma's experiences and that red-haired woman's past? Just erase its will, and I'll tell you right away!"

"You! Damn it! I can also offer him money! Power! A chance to reach the pinnacle!"

"Laughable, those things are garbage in the face of absolute power!"

"I think you're the garbage one!"

"You're garbage! The most garbage! You're worse than that blasted thing!"

"..."

Watching the two sheep fighting tooth and nail to serve him, Leon remained silent for a moment before making a decision.

Only kids make choices, adults want it all!

Just that...

"Stop arguing, the heart is definitely not yours."

As the Purification Bureau's top-class discipline on par with [The Emma's Remnant Scripture], the "Director's (Anomalous Object) Training Manual" stated that one must never trust any intelligent Anomalous Object. Regardless of their subservience, skepticism should always be maintained.

Especially when they offer seemingly enticing conditions, it's crucial to remind oneself that most Anomalous Objects are born from extreme emotions and experiences, or are even part of some Outer God or evil entity. Trusting them is committing a crime against oneself and the world at large.

After repeating the "Director's Training Manual" to himself several times and suppressing the impulse to agree, Leon felt the immense disappointment emanating from the Heart of Ambition's soul and cautiously suggested,

"However... if you're willing to cooperate and prove that Bobby Layne did everything this time, I might reapply for you after the bureau checks you."

'Fine! Ahaha! Good! Good!'

Though it couldn't "ascend in one step" and replace Leon's heart immediately, the Heart of Ambition was still overjoyed, repeating "good" several times.

As for when it could truly rise to power... hehe, once he uses me a few times and experiences the absolute control over everything, the kid will eventually beg me to be his heart!

"Leon! Did you forget what that red-haired woman told you?"

Feeling the Heart of Ambition's smugness, the dethroned first lapdog Black Goat hurriedly said,

"How can you trust the words of a demon? At times like this, you need to be ruthless! If you don't erase it and it turns around to inform the Purification Bureau..."

"You're right, I indeed can't easily trust the words of a demon."

Giving a sideways glance at the soul of the Black Goat, with its vile intentions leaking out, Leon dryly reminded,

"And have you forgotten that when I hold you, I also have soul vision and can see more clearly than you? If it was lying, I would have spotted it by now, alright?"

"..."

Exposing the first lapdog's scheming, rendering it speechless, Leon shifted the target for the second lapdog back to Bobby Layne, then looked down at his blood-soaked coat.

While preparing the motive and means for crime, corroborating his story with the Black Goat, and bribing the remaining eyewitness, the only thing left unexplained was why he lost so much blood but wasn't wounded...

Taking a deep breath, Leon looked around, found a relatively clean spot to lie down, and gripped the Holy Spirit pendant tightly.

Commit fully to the act!

...

"Knock knock knock."

"Come in."

After knocking on the director's office door, a short man rubbed his hands with anticipation and asked impatiently,

"Well... I don't actually have anything urgent, just wondered how long the person you mentioned who can appraise items will be before they're back at work?"

Isn't Little Leon here yet?

Hearing the short man's question, the red-haired director furrowed his brows slightly, then after sensing the situation of that hair of his, he replied,



"He went on a field assignment yesterday to track down the whereabouts of an Anomalous Object. If he isn't here yet, he might have found something, investigated through the night, and is now catching up on sleep. If the task is done, he should be here soon."

"That's good... haha, by the way, what task was he on? Just so happens my 'friends' are free, maybe I could..."

"Hmm? Jerry, are you being so kind to newcomers?"

Knowing well what the short man was thinking, the red-haired director smirked and teased,

"But I'm afraid you can't help. It's just a regular investigation task. While he lacks a bit of experience, Leon is steady and reliable. I trust his handling!"

Chapter 124 Person with Enough Weight\_1

Critic News: "Ryan Blood Night, Over a Hundred Officials and Personnel with Casualties!"

New Industry News: "Massive Loss of Middle-level Members of Ryan Family, Arms Company Suspected of Shutting Down!"

Royal Mail News: "Solemn Remembrance of Ryan Family's Fallen Members"

Corner Alley News: "Lionheart Fallen? Kingdom's Two Pillars Might Withdraw from the Stage of History"

The Sun News: "Shocking! The Ryan Family Massacred Last Night, the Culprit Is..."

"..."

\*A simple investigation nearly led to the annihilation of a family? Is this how you reassure me?\*

After reading the front-page headlines of more than a dozen newspapers, the Red-haired Director felt a rush of blood to his head, as if he were going to float away.

\*Year-end is approaching! The end-of-year reviews are almost here!\*

\*At a time like this, a massive casualty event occurs in the Capital City, and the deceased are from the Old Nobility. This would send the fledgling Virgin bureau's performance this year plummeting straight to the bottom!\*

Moreover, apart from the performance collapse, there appeared to be an even worse scenario...

Looking at the front page of The Sun News, the photo of Leon stretching his bloodied hand towards Bobby Layne's body even in death, coupled with the bold and enlarged label, "Culprit," the Red-haired Director couldn't help but sigh deeply, feeling overwhelmed.

\*Although it's just The Sun News, not the Capital Times or the Royal Mail News, how did you end up getting yourself thrown into a death cell while out on an investigation?\*

...

"What? The Ryan family is gone? And it's the handiwork of that damned rebel?"

"Sit down, sit down!"

Seeing the policewoman sprang up from her chair upon hearing the news, the scar-faced brawny man couldn't help but frown and motioned her to sit back down.

"The Ryan family is still here, just that nearly two hundred core members and some high-ranking clansmen died all at once. The old Duke suffered a severe blow, and he's probably on the brink of collapse."

"As for the culprit... it might not be that rebel; the Ryan family's incident is quite peculiar."

Taking a deep drag off the cigarette in his mouth, the scar-faced brawny man pondered aloud,

"Though that rebel did appear at the scene and killed the primary heir, Bobby Layne, there were no signs of other intruders in the manor. It's unlikely for him alone to have wiped out the Ryan family's middle-level members in one night."

"And, according to the old Duke's testimony, he was awakened at midnight by a maid who put scissors to his neck, forcing him to abdicate early in favor of his brother Bobby Layne. I'd say what happened to the Ryan family yesterday seems more like internal strife."

"I see..."

Upon hearing this, the policewoman slightly relaxed; then, with flickering eyes, she asked hesitantly, "If it's an internal strife, why not investigate thoroughly who the culprit is instead of locking that rebel in the death cell?"

"Yisha, get used to using your brain!"

The scar-faced brawny man tapped his forehead with a finger while smoking, answering calmly,

"Whether that Leon the rebel is the culprit doesn't depend on what he did but rather on which scenario is more suitable: 'rebel assaulting a duke's family' or 'a duke's family internal strife.'"

"I don't understand..."

"Simply put, the truth doesn't matter; benefits and stance do."

After extinguishing the cigarette on the table's glass top, the scar-faced brawny man pointed with his nicotine-stained finger at the stack of newspapers on the table, patiently explaining,

"Notice anything? Except for The Sun News which treats it as amusement, the other newspapers either commemorate the fallen, describe the situation, or focus on the event's impact. No one gives a clear answer regarding whether it's internal strife or an attack."

"These newspapers aren't avoiding the scoop or waiting for our investigation results; rather, people behind them have reminded them not to rush to take sides. It's better to wait until the wind direction is established."

"Wind direction?"

"I mean the intentions of the Old Nobility represented by the Ryan family, the reformist faction led by the Princess, and the loose alliance formed by new nobility, big merchants, legislators, and the Prime Minister."

"These three forces are the real leaders of the Kingdom. The consensus they reach after competing and vying will be the only correct direction."

Upon explaining the concept of wind direction, the scar-faced brawny man lit another cigarette and spoke slowly,

"Among them, the reformist faction represented by the Princess prefers the event to be seen as noble internal strife, giving them an excuse to take action against the Old Nobility and relieve the Minister of Defense's pressure."

"And as for the loose alliance, they would prefer it to be a rebel attack because the rebels' disruptive behavior affects merchants the most, which in turn affects legislators supported by the merchants and the Prime Minister who needs their votes."

"So, if this is determined to be a rebel attack, they can urge the other two parties to cooperate and prioritize dealing with the rebels to stabilize the business environment."

\*Kind of understood, but also kind of didn't...\*

The policewoman pondered with a furrowed brow before asking,

"Then what about the Old Nobility? What do they think?"

"They don't care."

Hearing the policewoman's question, the scar-faced brawny man chuckled slightly, revealing a peculiar smile.

"Be it internal strife resulting in deaths or being attacked by rebels, both are equally disgraceful for them. 'Internal strife' gives the Princess an excuse to cut into them, and 'attacks' will lead to losing more seats to legislators due to their inability to handle the rebels."

"In any case, regardless of how the 'Ryan Blood Night' is ultimately characterized, they have already lost the most."

"..."

\*Who cares about winners and losers!\*

\*I listened all this while and still don't know what will happen to Leon. Not knowing how to ask directly, the anxious policewoman repeatedly clenched her fists before probing cautiously,\*

"So, Director, what do you think will happen eventually? What fate awaits that damned rebel?"

"That's not up to me to decide."

Glancing at the policewoman's wrinkled sleeve corner, the scar-faced brawny man casually turned towards the window, smoking and continued indifferently,

"It depends mainly on the Princess. While legislators and merchants carry weight, their scattered goals make the alliance loose. If the reformist faction led by the Princess is persistent, they will eventually retreat."

"So how things unfold really depends on whether someone influential in the Princess's camp can stand up and reinforce her determination to target the Old Nobility."

\*Someone influential... I understand!\*

A little while later, after the scar-faced brawny man extinguished his cigarette and turned around, the policewoman had already disappeared.

But the brawny man didn't seem too concerned about his competent subordinate's abrupt departure. Instead, he leisurely returned to his desk, unfolding a map of the Capital City.

\*Let me think... Next month's plan should be to demolish the theater in the southeast of the Capital City. So when it comes to setting the defense, let's draw the line to the west first~\*

Chapter 125 Being the 0108 director is not easy~\_1

What? Little Lyon has already been taken away?

Listening to the situation relayed by the gentle woman in front of him, the Red-haired Director instinctively squinted his fox-like eyes and asked with an unpleasant expression,



"How did it happen so quickly? In a case of this magnitude, normally, wouldn't it take three weeks to investigate?"

"I also find it a bit strange."

Emma, who took the Red-haired Director's order to pick up the person, but ended up empty-handed, frowned and said,

"Although leaving the death row is a good thing, the person who took Leon away must have a very special identity. No matter how I asked, the people over there wouldn't tell me anything."

"That part isn't hard to guess."

After squinting his eyes and pondering for a moment, the Red-haired Director, familiar with the situation in the Capital City, spoke,

"The Duke of Lionheart is the vice-chairman of the Upper House. Although the Lionheart Family has declined considerably in recent decades, they are still recognized as representative of the Old Nobility's dignity, so this case is indeed quite troublesome.

The only ones who can interfere in a case of this magnitude, taking someone away before the investigation is complete, apart from us, are the chairman of the Upper House, the Prime Minister, and the Princess who represents the King's will."

When saying this, the Red-haired Director glanced at Emma to observe her expression and then continued to explain,

"Due to the coup six years ago, the chairman's seat in the Upper House is temporarily vacant, and it's unlikely the Prime Minister could respond so quickly, so the person who took him could only be the Princess."

"I see."

Hearing this, Emma nodded and then said calmly,

"If it was the Princess who took him away, Leon's safety should no longer be an issue... Do you need me to go over there and bring him back?"

"No, the less we intervene in normal society, the stronger the suppression effect of the Watcher's Palace, and the lower the intensity of Abnormalities within that range.

Moreover, the Princess taking him away might actually be the best result. As long as she can overpower the Prime Minister and the merchants' association, Leon can return on his own, but it might take ten days to half a month of confinement."

After rejecting Emma's offer, the Red-haired Director couldn't help but sigh as he looked at her eyes, as calm as calm could be.

"Emma, six years ago, when I couldn't agree to help with that favor, were you..."

"Director, let's not talk about the past."

Interrupting the Red-haired Director, Emma lowered her gaze slightly and spoke calmly,

"Back then, I was immature and didn't understand your difficulties. You took me in despite the pressure, and that was already incredibly difficult. I shouldn't have made such excessive demands."

"..."

"But you still haven't given up. Have you?"

Looking at her good friend who avoided her gaze, the Red-haired Director rubbed his brow vigorously and then said, full of weariness,

"With your skills, you haven't needed to practice firearms for a long time, yet in the past two years, you've focused specifically on sniping, and even made an agreement with Little Lyon to have him use that goat's \*soul vision\* to help you once..."

"That shouldn't violate Bureau regulations, right?"

For the second time interrupting the Red-haired Director, Emma said calmly,

"I won't use any Anomalous Object, and Leon won't know anything; it has nothing to do with the Bureau.

Even after I complete my revenge, I don't plan to run. I'll turn myself in immediately. Can't a life for a life be fair?"

"Yes, of course it can..."

Seeing her gaze, ten times firmer than a rock, knowing he couldn't possibly persuade her, the Red-haired Director reluctantly nodded, harboring one last hope,

"And what about your daughter, is she prepared?"

Hearing the Red-haired Director's question, Emma remained silent for a moment before evading the question,

"There are already 997 people named Alman dead beneath the redwoods in front of my house, two more won't make a difference."

Sharply catching the brief hesitation in her eyes, the Red-haired Director quickly said,

"But really, can't you wait a little longer?"

"I've waited for six years..."

"Since you've already waited six years, why not wait just a little longer, not too much longer, just for another month."

Gently holding Emma's arm to prevent her from leaving, the Red-haired Director spoke softly,

"Think about your daughter, her birthday is coming soon. I have no right to stop you from seeking revenge, but why not wait one more month and spend her last birthday with her, okay?"

"..."

"I'll... I'll think about it..."

"You think about it first, and when you decide, remember to let me know in advance."

Letting go of Emma's arm and watching her leave his office, the Red-haired Director leaned back in his chair, full of melancholy, wishing for nothing more than to drown his woes in drink.

First, there was the promising newcomer, whom he praised highly in front of the Taurus Director, inexplicably caught up in the Ryan Family's internal strife, and now suspected of being the murderer of noble families.

Next, his good friend and the Bureau's ace employee, after enduring for six relentless years, was finally ready to abandon everything to avenge her family betrayed and executed during the coup.

Apart from these two issues, he still had to keep a close watch on the aristocrats colluding with the Scales Gold Sect, prepare a countermeasure for the True God behind the Red Brick Road Hospital incident, reprimand and deal with the clearly overstepping Scales Gold Sect, investigate several recent Anomalies appearing in the Capital City, and initiate an investigation into the Aquarius Director...

"Sigh!!!"

After a heavy sigh, and feeling overwhelmed, the Red-haired Director grabbed a bottle, downed a large gulp of tea, then pulled out a discarded File, listing out all the issues to be resolved on its back, and sat in his chair pondering deeply.

Originally, Little Lyon's matter was the most urgent, but since he was taken from death row by the Princess, it's no longer an immediate concern. He just needed to prepare for the Bureau's ensuing investigation.

Emma's issue was a bit more pressing, but there wasn't much he could do at the moment, relying on her daughter's birthday to buy time, hoping for a solution soon.

As for the rest... the investigation into the Aquarius Director would take time to confirm; the several Anomalies in the Capital City could be dealt with by sending other Cleaners; the True God behind the Red Brick Road Hospital had been quiet so far.

And after the Scales Gold Sect caused trouble, worrying about his retribution, they've long since gone into hiding, ceasing almost all activities, with no leads on them whatsoever, even the nobles colluding with them are now...

...

"Knock, knock, knock."

Just as she was fretting over the list on the desk, wondering where to begin, a knock sounded at the office door.

"Come in."

With the Red-haired Director's response, the office door swung open, and a dark-faced, kind-looking old man, bloodshot eyes and all, strode in carrying a bag of things.

"Who are you?"

Facing the Red-haired Director's curious inquiry, the old man didn't immediately answer but placed the cloth bag on her desk before speaking,

"I'm the owner of the Charl Department Store. This is the Purification Bureau's branch in the Capital City, right?"

After briefly introducing himself, old Charl untied the cloth bag, taking out four locked metal boxes, and arranged them on the desk.

"In these four boxes are something you call 'Anomalous Object.' When I encounter an insoluble problem, if I meet its conditions, it answers and helps solve a question."

Is this.... an Anomalous Object delivered straight to us?

Covering the list on the desk with his hand to keep it from the man's view, the Red-haired Director nodded, squinting his eyes slightly,

"Yes, this is indeed the Purification Bureau, and we do handle Anomalous Objects. But we don't typically accept employment, and even our existence is confidential.



So, could you tell me how you know about us and why you want to give us this Anomalous Object?"

Looks like I found the right place.

Hearing the Red-haired Director's words, old Charl, exhausted, breathed a sigh of relief and pointed to the boxes on the desk with a bit of excitement,

"It told me!"

"A few days ago, my daughter was kidnapped and still hasn't returned. So I asked it a question, and it said to deliver it here to you, and my daughter would be saved!"

Daughter kidnapped?

Catching the key phrase, the Red-haired Director raised an eyebrow, recalling the information Jerry's rat friends gathered and the Holy Spirit incident report submitted by Leon.

Lionheart Ryan, Rose Marsini, Shield York.

These three noble families teamed up against Charl Department Store, failed, and found themselves driven into a corner. The Holy Spirit they summoned was dealt with by Leon, so they resorted to kidnapping the Charl Department Store owner's daughter...

"It can be done!"

Promising old Charl, the Red-haired Director placed the four small boxes into her drawer, glanced at the relieved old man and said with some difficulty,

"However, although we can save your daughter, I'm afraid you'll have to wait a while, I'm sorry..."

Wait a while longer?

Hearing the Red-haired Director's words, old Charl, having just relaxed slightly, tensed anew, hurriedly inquiring,

"Why wait? Can't she be found and returned soon?"

"She could originally."

With a half-genuine sigh, the Red-haired Director said with a rather complex expression,

"But we have very few employees skilled at finding people. The person best suited for this got into a little bit of trouble recently."

Pinching his right thumb and index finger to indicate a "tiny bit," the Red-haired Director said with an expression of "helplessness,"

"He got tangled in the Ryan Family incident, even framed as the culprit of the 'Ryan Blood Night.' Although the Princess wishes to protect him, many of the councilors backing the merchants' association's big businessmen are refusing to let him go, so the Prime Minister and the Lower House haven't resolved it yet..."

"Tell me that person's name!"

Although tormented by his daughter Emma's abduction, after years in the business world, old Charl immediately understood the Red-haired Director's implication and straightforwardly promised,

"I am the vice-president of the merchants' association. As long as I can ensure my daughter's safety, I can get your person out in two days tops!"

Chapter 126 Strange Interrogation\_1

"Are you the one called Leon?"

After hearing his name, Leon, who was heavily bandaged on his hands and shoulders and fixed on the hospital bed, struggled to turn his head. He saw an old man with graying hair and muscles on his brow knotted into a "JII" shape.

"And you are?"

"You don't need to worry about who I am."

Without answering Leon's question, the old man, with two guards, said with an iron-like face and expressionless demeanor,

"You just need to know that you are now the primary suspect in the Ryan Blood Night case and are under investigation."

So... is this man an interrogator from the Secret Investigation Bureau? But shouldn't interrogators have assistants? Why bring guards instead? And they don't seem to be ordinary guards?

Glancing at the two guards behind the old man, from their erect posture and the calluses at the base of their thumbs indicating handling guns, Leon roughly guessed their profession, which made him furrow his brows and turn his head back.

"Hmm?"

Noticing the subtle change in Leon's expression, the old man's eyes narrowed slightly, scrutinizing Leon's profile with an eagle-like stare, coldly questioning him,

"Do you have an issue with the military?"

After giving the old man a sidelong glance, Leon racked his brain to guess his identity while unceremoniously retorting,

"Can't I have one?"

"Watch your mouth!"

As expected, like the typical trope in countless classic films, after Leon's provocation towards the high-status seeming old man, the two guards full of admiration for him immediately furrowed their brows in anger and shouted,

"Do you know..."

"Stop!"

Raising his hand slightly to signal the guards behind him to refrain from revealing their identity, the old man's tightly pursed lips twitched upward ever so slightly, as he sized up Leon and said,

"You want to know my identity?"

"I already know."

Although the Black Goat was not present to observe the old man's soul, Leon, judging from the man's expression and tone, vaguely felt that this man had a soft spot for "talented troublemakers," so he boldly exposed,

"The fabric on your chest has an odd sun-faded mark, likely from some medal. While you're not wearing epaulettes, your clothes have slots for them.

The two guards behind you have callused thumbs and are wearing boots issued to sergeants, but sturdier than typical ones, likely those of lieutenant-level officers. Moreover, they seem to be at most thirty years old.

Having two thirty-year-old lieutenants as guards with frequent opportunities to wear medals, there should only be a few such people in the entire military. And the only one who could be vaguely connected to me is just one person."

After sneaking a glance at the old man, who, despite maintaining a poker face, seemed quite satisfied with the situation, Leon subtly let out a sigh of relief before calmly saying,

"You're the Minister of Defense, right?"

...

"You see! What did I tell you!"

Seeing that Leon exposed her father's identity after just a couple of looks, the female police officer stopped outside the hospital room couldn't help but feel a sense of relief.

"I said he was smart! You should've just asked directly whatever you wanted. Why go through all this trouble? Geez..."

After complaining to her mother for a bit, she was about to rush into the room when someone grabbed her arm and pulled her back.

"Don't make trouble!"

Quickly stopping her reckless daughter, the middle-aged woman breathed a sigh of relief, then pinched her waist firmly.

"Ouch!"

The female officer was displeased by the pinch and turned her head, about to say something, when she met her mother's infuriated eyes.

"Behave yourself! Haven't you caused enough trouble already?"

Recalling how her daughter burst into her bedroom yesterday telling her that the suspect in the Ryan Blood Night case was innocent and was only there to help her investigate the rebels, the middle-aged woman got angry all over again, giving the officer's thigh another hard pinch!

"Ouch!"

"Let it hurt!"

Dragging her troublesome daughter away from the room to prevent her from causing chaos inside, the middle-aged woman scolded her angrily,

"Do you have any idea how much your father risked to cover for you this time?"

"A lot, a lot..."

"And telling your father to see the Princess, claiming it was a chance to suppress the Old Nobility, and that the Princess would certainly agree... Do you think this is something you can dabble in? Are you out of your mind!"

"Yes, yes..."



"And! What's your relationship with that man? He's willing to risk so much to help you investigate and hasn't sold you out yet?"

"Just a friend..."

"Nonsense! Do ordinary friends ever go to such lengths? And I asked around at your bureau; everyone says they saw you two pulling and tugging at each other!"

"Maybe we were arguing..."

"So what were you arguing about?"

"Just some casual quarrel..."

"Was the stir-fry good?"

"Not bad, not bad..."

"..."

Not bad, my ass!

Watching her daughter tiptoeing to peek into the hospital room, mindlessly responding with 'uh-huh' and 'yeah' while absent-minded, the middle-aged woman got angry again and pinched her unruly daughter once more.

"Ah!"

Finally snapping back to reality, the female officer covered her thigh and ran a few steps away before complaining,

"Mom! Why do you keep pinching me?"

"You deserve it!"

...

Listening to the chattering of his wife and daughter outside the hospital room, the sudden tightening breaths of the two officers behind him, and seeing Leon with a somewhat strange expression, the old man felt slightly embarrassed, took a deep breath, and instructed the officers behind,

"Go! Tell them to keep it down!"

"Yes!"

With a formal reply and the young officer leaving the room quickly, their face slightly strained, the noise outside finally quieted down, although subdued whispers and a few muffled sounds could still be heard occasionally.

"Since you've guessed it, I won't hide it."

Forcing himself to ignore the commotion outside, the old man, who still showed signs of his once-upright stature despite a slight stoop, said seriously,

"I am indeed Yisha's father. I got the decree from the Princess to pull you out.

But this wasn't due to Yisha's pleading; it was necessary for me as the Minister of Defense. Tell me, what exactly happened at the Ryan House that night?"

What happened that night?

Leon couldn't help but chuckle at the question before sincerely answering,

"What was bound to happen finally did."

"..."

"Before we get into this overdue good deed, I have some questions for you too."

Glancing at the old man's tightly furrowed brows again, Leon earnestly inquired despite the officers' glaring eyes,

"On the noon of the incident at the Ryan House, I was on the same vehicle with your daughter. She was escorting a rebel. Are you aware of what happened to her and her husband?"

"Yisha told me."

Upon hearing this, the old man's expression turned somber, and he nodded,

"I've invited people from the Secret Investigation Bureau to the military to investigate everyone involved back then. Although it's been a long time, and the investigation may take a while, we should get a conclusion in one or two months."

"That's good, but her enemies should all be dead, so she might not need your conclusion."

Having received the answer he wanted, Leon couldn't help nodding before continuing his inquiry,

"You must have investigated me too, right? What about the compensation owed to my family?"

"Before you went to the Ryan House, Yisha had already given me a list. All pensions withheld will be compensated."

Pausing for a moment, the old man sighed, his ominously stooped posture becoming more pronounced.

"As for the serious misconduct in the pension disbursement, those involved are also being interrogated and investigated by the Secret Investigation Bureau, starting with me as the Minister of Defense.

Before coming to see you, I underwent the relevant examination. The lack of epaulettes and medals wasn't to hide my identity but because they were removed for the investigation.

Once everyone's investigation concludes, our punishments will unfold over two months, with the lightest being a salary deduction for a year, and the heaviest being total asset forfeiture and execution. The forfeited assets will be used to compensate the families who were cheated out of pensions..."

"Fair enough, I have no more issues."

After hearing the resolution of these two matters and witnessing the deep regret in the old man's eyes, Leon was slightly surprised and confessed directly,

"The report in The Sun News was accurate. Bobby Layne was indeed killed by me."

Chapter 127 Blood Night Effect\_1

As expected!

After hearing Leon's words, the old man slightly furrowed his brow and then asked,

"Why did you kill him?"

"Because the job required it."

Unsure of how much the old man knew about the "underwater world," Leon didn't immediately concoct a story but instead retorted,

"What do you know about the Purification Bureau?"

"I've learned a little."

Since he had already thoroughly investigated Leon's file, it was only natural not to ignore his work. After a moment of silence, the old man waved off two officers before speaking in a lowered voice,

"The royal family has a manual. Once a name is written in it, they can maintain their soul's 'silence' even when aware of the presence of anomalies, thereby avoiding attacks by anomalies. My name is also in it.

And since you mentioned the Purification Bureau, does this mean that the incident was not due to an internal conflict in the Ryan Family, but rather related to your Bureau's 'work content'?"

\*A manual that could keep the soul in 'silence'?\* It seemed not all "ordinary people" were unaware of the existence of anomalies, just that there weren't many.

After keeping this information in mind, Leon nodded and said,

"Yes, Bobby Layne merged with an anomalous object. He not only attempted to seize the anomalous object I was safeguarding but even threatened the lives of ordinary people to force me to reveal the Purification Bureau's secrets.

Although the Purification Bureau has rules prohibiting actions against ordinary people unless necessary, the situation was urgent at the time, and he was no longer considered human, so I had no choice but to kill him."

...

\*So that's how it was...\*

After learning the "truth" of the Ryan Blood Night from Leon, the old man compared it with other information he knew, and his tightly furrowed brow relaxed slightly.

If Leon had revealed the answer directly at the beginning of the questioning, the old man might have seized on several doubts to continue his inquiry.

But Leon first used two questions to "challenge" him, and after confirming his understanding of the Purification Bureau, he "reluctantly" disclosed the "real" situation of the Ryan Blood Night.

As the saying goes, a concubine is less worthy than a mistress, a mistress less worthy than a stolen wife, and a stolen wife less worthy than a wife yet to be stolen. The situation at hand was somewhat similar.

Compared to readily available answers, these hard-earned pieces of intelligence seemed inherently more credible, at least to the Minister of Defense, who only knew a little about the Purification Bureau. He basically believed Leon's words, albeit...

"If possible, I'd like you to change the narrative."

With a serious expression, the old man said to the slightly surprised Leon,



"For your Purification Bureau, you can say whatever needs to be said, but when others outside the Bureau ask, I hope you can cooperate with us to label the Ryan Family incident as an internal conflict."

\*Us?\*

Although Leon, as an "ordinary person," was not very familiar with the political landscape of the Kingdom, he'd heard vague rumors about who stood behind the Minister of Defense.

"Is the Princess planning to take action against the old nobility?"

"Yes."

Admitting Leon's judgment frankly, the old man with graying hair said,

"If you wish, you can put it more bluntly... This is a frame-up!"

After openly stating his intentions, the old man, with eyes as sharp as an eagle's, stared firmly into Leon's eyes, observing his expression closely as he swiftly explained,

"Regardless of whether it's rebels or internal conflict, the Ryan Family, with so many key members dead, is already doomed. However, the old nobility is a collective; even if the Ryan Family completely loses power, their vacant positions won't fall to anyone else but will be swiftly divided among other nobles.

By then, except for the Ryan Armaments Company becoming the Maseni Firearms Company, and those from the Ryan Family in the Department of Road Administration, Department of Finance, and Department of Agriculture being replaced by people named York or other surnames, everything will continue as usual. This country will see no change."

After briefly explaining the possible situations, the old man slightly raised his voice, looking serious as he said,

"But now it's different. As long as you're willing to cooperate and demonstrate that the Ryan Family incident was an internal conflict, it will create an excellent opportunity for the Princess to take a significant step towards a better direction for the Kingdom!"

"I don't understand."

Hearing this, Leon frowned in confusion and asked,

"Whether it was internal conflict or an attack by rebels, weren't the ones who died all from the Ryan Family? Why would this provide a good opportunity for the Princess?"

"Because the Kingdom needs to maintain stability. No department can or should have large-scale vacancies all at once."

Observing Leon, who clearly lacked understanding of political maneuvering—his knowledge wasn't even on par with his own daughter's—the old man considered for a moment before explaining as simply as possible,

"Among the two hundred-plus casualties in the Ryan Family, over a hundred were mid-level officials within various departments of the Kingdom, especially in the Department of Road Administration and the military, where these two alone saw near eighty vacancies.

Of the forty-seven subordinate branches of the military, one-quarter started accumulating files due to the incident, and two small sub-bureaus temporarily halted operations from losing their heads.

Although the old nobility will quickly fill these vacancies, it will take at least one to two months for the new officials to take over and become familiar with their work, and possibly more than three months to fully resolve the backlog. Some related departments might even experience inefficient operations for half a year or longer due to unfamiliarity."

After simply outlining the direct impact caused by the Ryan Blood Night, the old man continued with a serious expression,

"If just one noble family's internal conflict can result in such severe consequences, what if two families, three families, or even more nobles encounter issues one after another within half a year? This is the best pretext to act!"

If this event could be classified as internal strife, the Princess could argue in parliament to reduce the number of the old nobility in each department to curb their excessive power, citing the need to ensure the Kingdom's normal functioning.

Even if ultimately unsuccessful, a demand could be made for the old nobility to cede power, ensuring that a single noble family doesn't hold too many positions in any department to prevent related departments from coming to a standstill if a similar issue arises.

And when these nobles can no longer have numerous clansmen in a department, those who side with the Princess would have room to maneuver, potentially uniting with others to balance power or even reclaim control of key matters within that department!"

As he said this, seemingly envisioning the Princess's successful reform sweeping away years of accumulated problems in the Kingdom, the old man's face slightly reddened with excitement, his eyes filled with fervor as he said,

"Take the Ryan Family as an example. Just imagine, if the number of Ryan officials in the Department of Road Administration was reduced to half or even a third of its original number, could they still monopolize the construction of the Old Town like before?

And if the number of Ryan officials in military procurement also dropped to half of its original count, could Ryan Armaments Company still consume so much of the military's budget annually? If... what is it now?"

"Someone from Her Highness just arrived..."

One of the two young officers said with a peculiar expression as he entered the hospital room holding a dispatch order,

"The people sent by the Princess said... the old Duke of the Ryan Family is on the verge, and those in the top five succession ranks need to arrive quickly..."

\*The Duke of Lionheart is near the end?\*

Upon hearing the young officer's words, the old man was slightly pleased and immediately stood up from the bedside, decisively saying,

"In any case, consider my words first. An opportunity like the Ryan Blood Night won't come again. Your choice might become... what's wrong now?"

"Well..."

Looking at Leon, who was covered in bandages on the bed, the young officer said somewhat helplessly,

"The one on the bed is the fifth in line of succession for the Ryan Family..."

"..."

\*What?!?\*

Chapter 128 Is this too coincidental?\_1

\*The Ryan family... was truly finished...\*

Looking at the Duke, whose neck was bandaged and who couldn't even sit up, merely leaning against the hospital bed, the surrounding nobles couldn't help but harbor similar thoughts.

Having lost over two hundred family members overnight, with its core strength nearly wiped out, the only one capable of turning the tide, the Duke, had his neck's blood vessels severed, leading to excessive blood loss and heart failure. \*It seemed he was barely breathing anymore.\*

It could be said that the collapse of the Ryan family was completely in its final countdown. Apart from the shell of a Duke and a seat of the Vice Speaker in the Upper House, everything else would soon be divided among those present.

At this thought, the representatives sent by various noble factions for "witnessing" or "mourning" couldn't help but exchange glances, revealing knowing expressions to one another.

As one of the kingdom's twin pillars, the Ryan family's "legacy" was incredibly rich. Even though everyone had some familial ties after hundreds of years, compared to that vast "legacy," such feelings were truly insignificant.

As soon as the Duke handed over his title and breathed his last, countless mouths with sharp teeth would immediately come forward to gnaw away all of the Ryan family's bounty, leaving not even a bare bone behind!

\*Damn these jackals! I'd rather feed the benefits to dogs than give them to you!\*

The Duke knew precisely the style of these "familial" families. Looking at those seemingly respectful but actually malicious eyes, his murky eyeballs couldn't help but exhibit a deep venomous hatred. He then took what little air remained in his lungs and let out a heavy grunt.

"You speak! I'm listening!"

Upon hearing the grunt, the steward hurriedly bent down, bringing his ear close to the Duke's mouth. The nobles instinctively held their breath, and a sudden silence fell in the ward.

After a few gasps, the Duke finally managed to utter a few words with great effort.

"First... who is... the first in line? Why still... haven't... ah..."

The old steward naturally understood that the first in line didn't refer to the deceased Bobby Layne but to the new first in line after the Ryan Blood Night.

After quickly conversing with someone responsible, the steward adeptly adjusted the Duke's pillow, allowing him to breathe more easily, and then reported:

"He is almost here, the first in line is the closest, just in the building next door to this hospital. He will be here soon."

"Next... next to us?"

"Yes... next door..."

After hesitating slightly, the old steward still truthfully explained:

"The current first in line was originally third in line. Eight years ago, he had some conflicts with your brother... with Bobby Layne and was hit on the back of the head with a stick. Although he didn't die, he became paralyzed, with no sensation below the collarbone, so he can only..."

"Get out!"

Whether because of the situation of the first in line or upon hearing the name of the one who caused him to end up like this, the Duke couldn't help but fly into a rage, surprisingly managing to shout a disjointed command.

"Let him... the first... get out! Second! Second!"

\*Second...\*

Upon hearing this, the old steward gritted his teeth, then leaned in again to whisper:



"The second... is in an asylum. Back then, he was competing with Bobby... for the control of the arms company, and somehow, he went mad..."

\*Bobby Laien!!!\*

Hearing that name again, the Duke's heart rate, which had dropped to nearly forty, suddenly spiked to over eighty, a flush of color appearing on his pale, aging skin.

\*Damn it! Why were you in such a hurry? If you had just waited a bit longer! Just a few more years, the Ryan family would have been yours! You damned...\*

\*Thinking of his clever yet detestable brother, the Duke's eyes welled up with deep sorrow. After losing the ability to father children due to an injury when young, he had practically raised this brother as his son. Bobby Laien lived up to expectations, using tactics the Duke couldn't fully comprehend to ruin rival families, successfully elevating him to the Duke's position. So, the brothers' relationship had always been good.\*

\*But... but why were you so impatient?\*

\*I knew you longed for my position, but couldn't you wait even two years? Everything would have been yours after my death!\*

\*Recalling his brother's betrayal, the Duke's weakened heart throbbed with pain as he weakly said,\*  
"Three! Four! Five! Any of them... normal?"

"These three may be normal as individuals, but none are suitable. You might want to call in the next ones as well..."

The old steward sighed as he explained:

"The third and fourth in line are twins, not even two years old. The younger one can't even speak, and the fifth..."

"Here they come! The fifth in line is here!"

\*???

\*Another one impaired?\*

Upon seeing the wheelchair outside the door and the bandaged Leon seated in it, the Duke, slightly recovered, couldn't help but bulge his eyes, raising his hand to point and shout at the old steward:

"Didn't you say, three, four, five... all..."

"His skin is just injured, with some infection at the wound. But he is sound-minded."

\*The Duke's muddled eyes moved up and down, assessing Leon's condition, and he nodded slightly.\*

\*Though another patient, he appeared to be a capable adult, certainly better than the previous four!\*

"Then... then him!"

Feeling he was nearing his limit, the Duke firmly decided on the successor. He then instructed:

"Have him... come here! I need to tell him how to handle those... eyeing the Ryan family... coy..."

"Well... maybe you should consider some others?"

Slight hesitation marked the old steward's voice as he suggested:

"He has black hair, not golden. Plus, there are others eligible for inheritance after the first five..."

"Hmm?"

The old steward's hesitation and expression of wanting to speak but hesitating illuminated the fact that something was being concealed from him, leading the Duke to cast a stern gaze.

"You... hiding something... speak!"

"..."

"Speak quickly!"

Although worried about the Duke's capacity to handle the truth, being pressured to this point, the old steward could only lean in, reluctantly whispering:

"Your brother was killed by him."

\*?!!!\*

\*Countless overwhelming emotions, like a bursting flood, surged into the Duke's heart upon hearing the old steward's words.\*

\*Gazing at the person who'd killed his only brother, yet avenged him at the same time, the Duke's heartbeat doubled and then doubled again, skyrocketing to a hundred and sixty. In a final effort, he sat up from the bed, pointing at the bewildered Leon, shouting:\*

"You! You! You! ... Ugh!"

Duke of Lionheart, deceased.

...

[In the presence of all witnesses, the Duke of Lionheart nominated you three times to inherit the Duke's title. You have obtained the Silver Level Identity Badge "Duke of Lionheart."]

[Duke of Lionheart, one of the kingdom's twin pillars and the twenty-ninth Duke of the Lane family]

[Wearing effect: You naturally gain some favors when dealing with those who recognize noble status, else you face their intense hostility.]

[Advancement Route: None]

[Hidden Traits (Need not be worn): While you only nominally belong to the Ryan family, not by true bloodline, should this fact be revealed, this badge will undergo an unknown transformation.]

## Chapter 129 You're simply a natural Duke! (Two in one)\_1

\*This is just... outrageous! How can something so absurd happen?\*

Staring at the panel with a new silver badge shining brightly, not only were all the nobles in the hospital room stunned, but Leon in the wheelchair was also caught completely off guard.

Just a few days ago, he had infiltrated the Ryan Family, not only taking out their first heir but also methodically eliminating over two hundred of their core members, single-handedly orchestrating the Ryan Blood Night that plunged the Ryan Family into Hell.

Yet, the old Duke of the Ryan Family must have lost his mind, because not even five seconds after Leon was wheeled into the hospital room, he inexplicably named Leon as the next heir, making him the biggest beneficiary of the Ryan Blood Night incident...

Mad! Isn't this a trap?

As the ultimate beneficiary and a suspect of having the Ability to orchestrate the Ryan Blood Night, if anyone in the Purification Bureau had any common sense, they'd dispatch a whole team of Investigators to thoroughly scrutinize him from top to bottom!

"Everyone, please listen to me!"

Suddenly burdened with a hot potato weighing two tons on his face, Leon tightened his brows, not feeling guilty in the least but genuinely spooked, and hurriedly refused:

"I'm not interested in this title, maybe you should consider someone else..."

"You scoundrel!"

Before Leon could finish speaking, an old man with white hair and a luxurious outfit stepped out from the crowd, glaring disdainfully and chastising:

"This is the Duke of Lionheart's title! And it was personally designated by the old Duke on his deathbed! Do you think you can dismiss it with just a word?"

\*And what the hell does that have to do with you?\*

As a somewhat cultured person, Leon might have watched his language if this had been any other time, but right now, he was eager to get rid of this hot potato and shed his suspicion for orchestrating the Ryan Blood Night, so he wasn't going to be polite.

"Who the hell are you?"

After delivering a response that stunned the nobility, Leon quickly examined the old man's attire, finding a teal-colored coronet with three single feathers on his chest badge.

Although cameras existed by this time, their high cost meant they weren't widespread, so recognition still often relied on documents and badges, making the Kingdom's insignia law quite stringent.

According to insignia law, all badges had to be made following strict guidelines, especially the noble coat of arms representing identity, which must include coronet, shield badge, mantling, and cassock without omission.

Among these, the most important is the coronet symbol, used to identify rank. Apart from representing the royal family's Diamond King Duke, the five ranks of duke, marquis, earl, viscount, and baron must correspondingly use the colors of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and tin.

Moreover, under the royal family's diamond coronet, there would be a Robin as the badge, and under the five ranks, corresponding single feathers were required, symbolizing the nobles as vital wings supporting the royal family.

For the highest-ranking duke, the base is five feathers, and for the lowest-ranking baron, the base is one feather. Those who inherit a title and achieve significant merit can add an additional feather as an honorary marker.

The three-feather bronze crown on the badge of the white-haired old man indicated he belonged to the third-tier Earl in the Kingdom's rank system, the kind who had inherited the title but achieved nothing significant in his life.

"Ha, with such a big mouth, I thought you were some big shot, but it turns out you're just an Earl?"



Wanting to get rid of the troublesome Duke title quickly to avoid attracting the Purification Bureau's scrutiny, Leon decided to go all out, smirking disdainfully at the white-haired old man.

With the intention of offending as many people as possible, hopefully making them work to elect someone else as Duke, Leon endured the piercing pain from his skin and rose from the wheelchair, slowly walking over to the white-haired old man in front of everyone, and forcefully poking at the three-feathered bronze crown on his chest.

"A third-tier Earl, and only with the most basic three feathers... So you're a small fry, huh?"

\*Small fry? Me? A small fry?\*

After hearing Leon's "fair" evaluation of him and feeling the peculiar gaze from the surrounding nobles, the white-haired old man, staggered by the poking, flushed with anger, began to roar with rage:

"You!!!"

"What you? Am I wrong?"

Fearing his attack was insufficient to shake off the cursed Duke title, Leon secretly switched his badge, equipping the Silver Level [Elite Performer], then crossed his arms and slightly tilted his head, smiling derisively:

"A third-tier Earl with three feathers... Ha, the royal family's feathers aren't worth much, don't you know?"

Grovel to collect some tax, feign a disaster relief effort, or even send a lavish gift when the Princess was born, and you could have earned a feather from the royal family. You've already lived this long, and your badge still only has three feathers, how are you not a small fry?"

"I... I..."

"What I? If I were you, I'd have sliced my throat already!"

With the help of the Silver Level [Elite Performer], Leon's rather handsome face displayed genuine disdain and a cutting contempt.

"Believe me, you should just die soon."

Patting the sagging old face of the white-haired old man, Leon leaned closer and sincerely advised:

"Judging by your vigorous appearance, you could continue wasting food for another twenty or thirty years. If you hang yourself today, you might save the Kingdom a lot of money, which would count as a kind of service."

Chapter 130 You're simply a natural-born Duke! (Two in one)\_2

"You can imagine, if the royal family learned about your great achievements and, in their happiness, rewarded you with something as measly as a feather, wouldn't you finally break free from being a nobody? Wouldn't that be perfect, a win-win?"

Nonsense! Ridiculous! Damn you!!!

The white-haired old man, face flushed with purple from the utmost mockery and insult, was about to retort when he saw Leon's eyes.

\*There were two parts disdain, three parts scorn, and the remaining five parts were filled with sincerity.\*

This damn bastard was actually telling the truth! \*He genuinely believed from the bottom of his heart that it was more valuable for a 'nobody' noble like himself to die immediately rather than live!\*

"Gasp... gasp..."

After being struck by the sincerity in Leon's eyes, all the rebukes and even the most poisonous curses got stuck in his throat, turning into a blood pressure exceeding two hundred and a mouthful of thick, hot phlegm that burned like fire, causing the old man to roll his eyes and collapse stiffly backward.

What the hell?!

Leon, surprised by the sudden collapse of the old man after just two sentences, instinctively took a step back.

"You all saw it! I just poked him with my finger twice, it was he himself who fell over!"

"..."

Yes, we all saw it, you indeed only poked him twice with your finger, but you just stabbed his heart with at least a thousand verbal daggers!

Most nobles cared about their face, at least on the surface. Seeing an old man faint on the spot after just one rebuke and being stripped of his dignity and severely insulted, the dozens of nobles in the ward immediately fell into complete silence.

This new Duke of Lionheart was indeed somewhat reckless and indifferent. The white-haired old man's situation was a warning. If anyone else dared to speak up, risking such public embarrassment in front of so many in-laws might not be worth it.

After a short wait, several familiar nobles called for people to carry the old man out, and the entire group of nobles tacitly maintained silence. Even though no one reproached Leon again, surprisingly, no one suggested replacing him with another heir, essentially indicating a direct agreement.

After all, he was a successor of the Ryan Family, not theirs. The trouble couldn't affect them. As for the dignity of the nobility... let's laugh. Face meant nothing compared to tangible interests!

If the successor Duke of Lionheart had been shrewd and capable, everyone might have opposed it. After all, the more the new duke could protect the Ryan assets, the less there would be to divide among themselves. But now...

Seeing the new duke, who, during the Ryan Family's need for support, brazenly offended the in-laws and even caused a public scene, satisfied looks appeared in the eyes of the dozens of nobles.

Fine, a reckless fool with no cunning, no brains, and arrogance, is just the right fit as the new Duke of Lionheart for now!

It's just that after a month or two, when everyone has almost divided the Ryan family assets, this duke's tenure will likely end, right?

...

There were not many real power players in the Ryan Family who could decisively influence the inheritance of the title.

Aside from the old duke who "strongly supported" Leon, most were already killed or crippled by Bobby Layne, then suppressed into silence by Leon. What remained were only a few old or weakened cats.

The people with the most influence were the "in-laws" present in the ward.

Ignoring the strong opposition of the new duke himself, the Ryan Family in-laws took less than five minutes to decide to follow the old duke's will, allowing Leon, who had black hair and eyes, far from looking any part of the "Ryan," to become the new leader of over 90,000 golden-haired Ryan members.

This was... too absurd! It was simply child's play!

Upon learning from the officer who brought Leon into the ward how the new duke was chosen, the Minister of Defense felt both thrilled and annoyed.

Thrilled because his daughter assured him, patting her chest, that Leon wasn't someone who would side with the nobles. Rather than worrying about him colluding with the old nobility once he became a duke, it was better to worry that he'd upend the table altogether or even conspire with the rebels for another bloodbath, wiping out all of the Ryan Family in-laws in one stroke.

If Yisha's assessment was correct, having such an "un-noble" duke successfully take the helm would be a tremendous boon for the princess's reforms. Having an "insider" in the impenetrable Upper House was like stabbing a knife into the heart of the old nobility.

As for why he was annoyed...

"Your Highness! These old nobles must be dealt with quickly!"

Glaring angrily at the calm-faced princess behind the desk, the old man couldn't help but say,

"The Ryan Family's influence lies with the Department of Road Administration and the military, mainly in public infrastructure and arms procurement. But the core power of these crucial departments is still tightly controlled by the old nobility, and they can essentially hand off power without formal appointments! The candidate they've chosen is someone you just have to stamp your approval on! How can this be allowed?"

"Yes, I will, but it can't be now."

The princess behind the desk continued reviewing the "New Duke's" file, her expression serene as she spoke: