

I! Cleaner 131

Chapter 131 You're simply a born Duke! (Two in one)_3

"These old nobility are the rotten flesh parasitic on the Kingdom, which must be excised. However, if not done properly, the wound will bleed incessantly.

Father once ousted three consecutive Ministers of Finance and eliminated many small to medium families in an attempt to control the Kingdom's finances personally, which then triggered an intense backlash.

The result of their struggle was that the entire Kingdom's finances were paralyzed for half a year, successively revealing a deficit totaling nearly six trillion, almost collapsing completely. Six years ago, the national defense war couldn't even fully cover the military expenses, and the deficit has been accumulating to this very day."

She paused here, picked up a pen, and scribbled something on Leon's file, then continued,

"So one mustn't rush such matters. If the cost of excising the old nobility is temporarily paralyzing this nation, it will only cause an even greater disaster, so it must be done step by step.

And the current situation is actually just right, especially with our newly appointed Duke of Lionheart... hmm... do you know what he once said?"

Looking at the part circled in the file, the Princess recited in a calm voice,

"As for the royal family and the nobility, they are just lice growing in the crotch. Once the blood-sucking pains, they should be grasped and squeezed to death!"

?!!!

Completely unaware of Leon's 'Rebels' identity, the Minister of Defense was utterly shocked upon hearing the Princess's words.

However, just as he was about to speak, he noticed the Princess's usually steady mouth curve slightly upward almost imperceptibly.

"Though it's not the most appropriate metaphor, it's not wrong."

Not angered by being compared to lice in the crotch, the Princess closed Leon's file, opened the report regarding the inheritance situation, and then smiled as she said,

"Duke of Lionheart... hmm... Duke of Louseheart... upon thinking about it, it's quite ironic.

This Duke who sees the nobility and the royal family as lice has now become one of the most robust lice in this nation, possessing the ability to leech extensively off the Kingdom. I am curious to see how he will act...

Oh, by the way, take a look at this."

After handing over the report, the Princess, who usually furrowed her brows, surprisingly chuckled lightly and then pointed at the records in the report with interest, saying,

"The Earl, who fainted on the spot after being scolded by him, actually placed a cabbage in his bedroom and then proclaimed that this Duke of Lionheart, Leon Laine, will rot faster than his cabbage!"

Cabbage... does that mean at most two or three months?

After glancing at the report, the Minister of Defense couldn't help but frown, recalling the look of adoration in his daughter's eyes when she mentioned Leon.

"Princess Veronica..."

The Minister of Defense sighed internally and then took the initiative to ask,

"What do you think, how long can this Duke sustain himself? Will he be liquidated after the Ryan Family is completely divided?"

"He won't be liquidated."

The Princess shook her head after thinking,

"Except for that Earl whom he offended to death, the other nobility wouldn't care about an empty-shell Duke. However, the Ryan Family might not live longer than that cabbage.

After losing family members from the military and the Department of Road Administration, the Ryan Family's influence in the military has completely bottomed out, leaving only one seat in the Upper House in the political arena. In business, there seems to be a bit left, but it's all propped up by military and Department of Road Administration orders.

In military, politics, and business, the Ryan Family now holds none. What kind of person would it take to support this soon-to-collapse setup?"

Chapter 132 Originally it's not luck... or maybe it's also luck?_1

""Indeed, the Ryan Family's current situation seemed destined to collapse completely within two months.

Upon hearing the princess's assessment, the Minister of Defense couldn't help but shake his head as well, *a peculiar sense of melancholy emerging in his heart.*

No matter who became the new Duke of Lionheart, he would only be able to watch helplessly as the Ryan Family fell apart. And the princess and himself, who were both trying to keep things together, were not much better off.

The influence of the Old Nobility was deeply entrenched, and nearly a third of the twenty-something major departments were controlled by them, clinging to the country's body like fat lice, ravenously sucking its blood.

The merchants and members of the Lower House, initially supported to counter the Old Nobility's control over the Upper House, had once played a restraining role, but after a hundred years of development, they too had become unmanageable, now using their legislative power in the Lower House to desperately seize benefits for themselves.

With the support of both the Upper and Lower Houses, the Kingdom's regulation of commercial activities had become increasingly lax in recent years. Commerce in the Kingdom was clearly booming, yet the tax revenue was rapidly declining.

The nation's wealth began to frenziedly concentrate in the hands of the big merchants and the Old Nobility, growing ever fatter, while ordinary people and the Kingdom itself were becoming increasingly emaciated and weakened.

These maladies might have been barely contained, but the war six years ago had torn everything apart. The Kingdom's finances were now in continual deficit, military preparedness was lax, and rebels roamed unchecked. All these issues teetered on the brink of explosion.

Even though, through the efforts of consecutive royal administrations, financial power had been returned to the royal family, and he himself, as part of the "Princess's faction," had been elevated to the position of Minister of Defense, gaining the ability to intervene in military affairs, the overall situation remained bleak.

Should the princess's reforms eventually fail, unable to sweep away these chronic ailments, then the entire Kingdom would be no more than a slowly rotting cabbage...

...

"Princess Veronica!"

At that thought, the gray-haired old man took a deep breath, made an effort to straighten his slightly hunched back, and said solemnly,

"After the Ryan Blood Night, there were quite a few real positions left vacant in the military. I'm planning to seize some more if Your Highness has no other matters to discuss, then I'll take my leave."

"Nothing more."

She shook her head, noting the Minister of Defense's increasingly white hair since their last meeting. Warmth flickered in the princess's eyes as she added a caring remark,

"Your complexion doesn't look well lately. Please take better care of your health. I understand time is pressing, but if you collapse from exhaustion, all our efforts over the years will truly be in vain."

"Certainly!"

Responding to the princess somewhat ambiguously, the old man declined her offer to see him out, striding from the room with two young officers. Once his footsteps faded entirely, the door was tapped softly a few times.

"Come in."

As the door creaked slightly open, a young man wearing a dark wool coat with an air of weariness on his face and shoulders slumped, entered and plopped into the chair opposite the princess.

"You handled things quite well this time."

Instead of taking offense at the visitor's rudeness, the princess waved the new Duke of Lionheart's file in her hand, then smiled as she inquired,

"A person just newly added to the Ryan family tree, whose hair isn't even blonde, managed to become the new Duke of Lionheart... How did you do it?"

"Very simply."

The weary young man lifted his eyelids, pulled two dice from his pocket, and placed them on the table, then explained without much energy,

"Without doing anything, the chance of the old Duke choosing him was only three percent. But if five to seven heirs were eliminated, elevating his succession rank to the top five, the probability increased to fifteen percent.

"Then, by secretly infiltrating the hospital, finding the old Duke's medication and tampering with it using alchemical supplements to quicken the heart, and kidnapping the old Duke's butler's granddaughter to coerce him into deliberately provoking the Duke's emotions, the probability rose to thirty-six percent."

Though no one touched them, the two dice on the table shook and changed with the young man's story.

First, one die stood on its edge, the other showed three points; then one showed one point, the other five; followed by one showing three points and the other six—exactly matching the young man's figures.

"Lastly, ordering a cartload of fruit from the Banana Fruit Company and secretly unlocking the cart's wheel lock at an intersection to overturn and block the road to the hospital, delaying Leon's arrival until the old Duke was at his most emotionally charged moment, increased his chance to sixty-six percent..."

As the weary young man spoke, the dice turned, both showing six points up, ending his explanation.

"After that, it's up to luck."

Pointing to the dice on the table, the weary young man summed up,

"As long as events unfold within that sixty-six percent range, he'll be chosen by the old Duke; if not, someone else will become the new Duke."

"I see."

After hearing the account, the princess lightly clapped her hands twice, then praised,

"It's a truly fascinating ability. Even after collaborating with you several times, it still feels incredible listening to you recount it. Things that seemed unrelated, when done according to your requirements, could always bring any success rate up to about sixty percent..."

"It's not about sixty percent, it's sixty-six percent."

Correcting the princess's words seriously, the weary young man gestured to the dice on the table,

"The die on the left is the tens digit, the die on the right is the units digit. The dice go up to six points only, so the maximum success rate is sixty-six percent."

"So, have you considered using two ten-sided dice instead?"

"No, only these two dice can achieve that effect."

"Oh well..."

Blinking with slight disappointment, the princess took out a blank check, placed it on the table, and handed it over.

"This is the agreed payment. A pleasure working with you."

"Sorry, but there's an additional fee required this time."

Folding the check and putting it away, the weary young man said seriously,

"You didn't tell me before that Leon Laine was also an employee of our Sixth Purification Bureau and quite favored by the director. My actions this time carried considerable risk, so the price should be ten percent higher than we agreed."

"I can accept the fee increase."

Frowning slightly, the princess did not counter, instead, after contemplating, she proposed,

"But since this additional fee wasn't part of our original agreement, as compensation, you also have to use those two dice to answer one more question for me."

"Fine."

Nodding in agreement, the weary young man picked up the dice to ask,

"What is it you'd like to know?"

"The same as before."

Taking a deep breath, the princess slightly closed her eyes and softly said,

"What exactly must I do to save this country?"

Chapter 133 Divination?_1

Again with this question?

Hearing the princess's words, the lethargic young man pondered for a moment. He didn't immediately throw the dice. Instead, he suggested,

"Your Highness Veronica, although the results of my dice only reflect the present moment and, in cases involving a long time span, the conditions and outcomes often change, but they don't always change

every time. Since the last time you asked this question, only a few months have passed. If you ask again now, the result shouldn't be much different, so it's best to ask a new question."

"No, I'll stick with this one."

The princess shook her head, speaking calmly,

"This is my innate responsibility, and it's my only hope at the moment. What else could I ask about?"

"Since you insist, very well."

After shrugging helplessly, the lethargic young man released his right hand, and two dice tumbled onto the table, bouncing a few times before landing on two bright red ones.

"Due to the Ryan Family matters, your chance of saving the Kingdom has indeed increased by two points since last time, reaching eleven percent."

The lethargic young man spoke as he lightly tapped the table with his knuckles, causing the two dice to roll again.

"Next is controlling the military department and cooperating with the Minister of Defense. By filling the vacant positions left by the Ryan Family, the probability will increase by another two points. Next, join forces with the Prime Minister and intervene in the Upper House to suppress the Old Nobility. Then

unite with the Old Nobility to suppress the Lower House and introduce bills to restrict certain commercial activities and increase taxes. After doing these, the probability will rise to twenty-six points. After that, find a way to become the Queen and take advantage of clearing the rebels and resisting the new wave of invasion. Seize the opportunity to reclaim military, financial, legislative, personnel, and other powers, and promote a group of officials who share your vision. By then, the probability would leap to fifty-one points..."

It was indeed similar to the last time.

Listening to the gradually increasing probability and these things she was already planning to do, the princess couldn't help but smile, then slightly shake her head.

Indeed, if she accomplished all this, she'd certainly have the ability to save the country, but these tasks were not as simple as ordering a carriage load of fruit or secretly removing its wheels.

Each and every suggestion he made would require countless days and nights of exhausting effort and tough negotiations over years to implement. *The road she had to walk was still very long...*

"Clatter, clatter!"

Just as the princess was listening attentively, for some unknown reason, the dice on the table, after reaching "fifty-one," did not continue to "sixty-six," but instead started to spin rapidly.

Under the wide-eyed gaze of the lethargic young man, the two dice on the table spun faster and faster, eventually causing the hardwood desk to emit black smoke and a pungent burning smell to fill the entire room.

What was going on?!

Although Anomalous Objects were almost impossible to destroy this way, the lethargic young man instinctively reached out to stop them, trying to forcibly halt the dice, but as soon as his hand touched them, the rapidly spinning dice cut into his palm.

As he hurriedly withdrew his hand in pain, the two blood-stained dice clattered against each other a few times and eventually stopped moving. Two sharp corners pointed towards the ceiling, lying quietly in the small pits worn into the table.

"..."

Seeing the lethargic young man's stunned gaze at the dice, the princess couldn't help but feel a pang in her heart and hurriedly asked,

"Why are the two corners, which represent 'zero,' facing up? What does this mean?"

"It means... this time, it didn't fully succeed."

Glancing at the dice stained with his own blood and the rings of blood left on the table, the lethargic young man covered his still-bleeding right hand, frowning,

"The question you asked involved a Leon Value of over sixty... What I mean is, a True God level existence noticed our probing and thus blocked this inquiry."

A True God? How did this end up involving a True God again?

As someone aware of the existence of the Purification Bureau and Anomalous Objects, the princess also knew some intelligence about True Gods, understanding that they weren't as grand and generous as described by believers. Her expression immediately tightened.

"Could it be... that a True God will descend upon the Kingdom in the future?"

"Probably not."

The lethargic young man shook his head at these words, hesitating slightly,

"A True God level existence doesn't necessarily mean it's a True God. While I didn't see the appearance of the one involved, judging by the size, it seemed to be a human, just with multiple wings on its back, and..."

And strangely familiar...

Recalling the vision he had just seen, the image of the black-haired, black-eyed, slightly lean "True God" with multicolored wings on its back was firmly imprinted in his memory. The lethargic young man reassured,

"And it may not even be targeting the Kingdom. If it really is a True God, you might conflict with a believer of interest to them in the future, or have some cooperation, or perhaps meet several times consecutively. These incidents have a probability of being detected by him and interrupting the probing.

However, with our Purification Bureau here, there won't be significant problems. Numerous True Gods have attempted to descend before, but all were eventually driven back. No True God can remain long-term in this world, so you don't need to worry too much."

But that was a True God! How could I not worry?

Hearing the lethargic young man's words, the princess couldn't help but take a deep breath and then asked,

"So, can you try to roll the dice again? To confirm the situation."

"Sorry, that's truly not possible..."

Raising his still-bleeding palm, the lethargic young man waved it in front of the princess, helplessly saying,

"That existence's personality seemed relatively mild. After discovering my probing, he didn't get angry, only gave a slight punishment.

But if I continue to recklessly probe the future, although getting killed is unlikely, at the very least, I'd be bedridden for several months."

"Alright, thank you for your efforts."

Sighing in disappointment, the princess silently took out a checkbook, not only paying the agreed-upon fee but also adding a generous bonus. She then advised,

"After some time, if that True God is no longer watching you..."

"Then I'll immediately make up for this result, and notify you quickly of any anomalies."

After providing this assurance to an "old customer," the travel-worn lethargic young man took out a bandage, wrapped his injured right hand, decisively took his leave, retrieved his stored suitcase, and headed to the Purification Bureau.

Although the bureau chief was relatively easygoing, the headquarters had set quite stringent management rules for his precious abilities, which could easily change the situation.

Especially regarding whereabouts, every place he went and everyone he contacted must be meticulously reported, so only during the gaps following task completion could he sneak out to earn some "extra money."

And he had already delayed almost two days helping a new colleague ascend to the duke's throne; any further delay in his return to task settlement could result in facing headquarters' scrutiny alongside the new colleague.

Pushing open the heavy door to the Purification Bureau, towing the suitcase through the dim hallway, he saw sunlight illuminating the end of the corridor, with the director's office door seemingly open. Hesitating slightly, he decided not to return directly to his office, but instead, he took out a prepared task report and headed to the director's office.

"Director, I've returned from the investigation... ah... my apologies."

Ready to speak, he noticed others in the office and politely apologized, then instinctively glanced at his colleague in the room.

A young man with black hair, black eyes, and a slightly narrow frame looked back at him with mild surprise...

Chapter 134 Evaluation_1

Damn it!

When he saw the familiar back, the lazy young man couldn't help but shudder all over, as if someone had opened his skull and poured a bucket of icy water mixed with ice shards into it, making him feel completely unwell.

Although he hadn't seen "that person" from the front during the dice-throwing process, except for not having wings on his back, this person's hair color and figure were almost identical to the one before him.

Especially when this person noticed him and turned to glance in surprise, the expression was practically carved from the same mold!

No wonder he felt "that person" looked familiar. Even though he hadn't interacted with him during the process of promoting him to the position of Duke, he'd seen his back in the newspapers twice in the past two months.

Once, it was when the cash register at Charl Department Store collapsed, and he was buried under a mountain of Gold Wheels. More than half of his body was trapped, which was captured in a photo by a reporter from The Sun News.

The other time was recently when he was found battered and lying on the ground at the Ryan Manor. That photo was also taken by the police and made it to the front page of The Sun News...

Shocked that the newly confirmed colleague had True God level potential, how should I face him? Should I start flattering him immediately or hold back a bit before doing so?

Urgent, waiting online!

...

Why is this person so strange?

Under the complex gaze of the lazy young man, Leon felt a chill in his heart. After a moment of silence, he awkwardly tugged at the corners of his mouth and smiled politely at the other.

However, to his great surprise, the person shivered suddenly at his goodwill, then instinctively took a half-step back...

What's his problem?

Just as Leon was baffled, the Red-haired Director also noticed the young man's abnormality. After thoughtfully observing both of them, she smiled and said,

"You're back pretty quickly this time... Leon, you can call him Tom. Although he looks young, he joined us a few years before Emma. He's already in his thirties and is also a First Level disaster handler."

A First Level disaster handler?

Hearing the title, Leon immediately grew solemn.

The Director had once told him that those assigned as First Level disaster handlers were usually ace employees from various Purification Bureaus, people who could independently lead teams to handle large-scale disasters.

Among the elite of the First Level disaster handlers, as soon as there's a vacancy in the director position of the 75th Sub-Bureau, they might very likely be promoted to fill it. The two First Level disaster handlers of the Virgo Bureau currently belonged to this category, far surpassing the ordinary First Level handlers as ace elites.

That also meant this strange young man before him was already a "half-step director level" powerhouse.

"Senior Tom."

Since the other was an old-timer and one of the aces in the Purification Bureau, and Leon, despite having undergone two lifetimes, was indeed not yet seventeen in this life, having only half the other's age, he politely addressed first,

"I'm Leon Laine, a new employee confirmed this month, currently just a Level Three accident handler. I hope you can guide me more in the future."

"You... you're too polite..."

Unconsciously hiding his dice-scarred right hand behind him, the lazy young man forced a congenial smile.

"There's no need to talk about guidance; I just came a few years earlier than you. It's better for us to learn from each other, learn from each other..."

Still unable to grasp the disposition of this "future True God," and fearing to roll the dice lest he reveal himself, the lazy young man looked to the Red-haired Director and said,

"Director, I just came to report the task, nothing urgent. Since you still have matters to discuss, I won't disturb you."

"Okay."

Squinting at the oddly behaving lazy young man, then at Leon, who seemed to have a good impression of him, the Red-haired Director nodded, taking the task report,

"Just give me the report, you can go busy yourself."

"Alright."

Once the lazy young man walked out of the Director's office, and the sound of his leisurely footsteps gradually faded, the Red-haired Director turned to Leon and asked with a cheerful smile,

"Little Leon, what do you think of this Senior Tom?"

What do I think?

Hearing the Red-haired Director's words, Leon thought for a moment and replied,

"Senior Tom seems to be quite amiable, but there's a long-standing stain on his collar, his nails are trimmed rather roughly, and the leather parts of his shoes and luggage weren't well maintained, severely cracked. It seems... he's a bit careless about little things?"

"You observe quite carefully, but that's not what I'm asking."

The Red-haired Director shook her head, her gaze narrowing as she softly said,

"Little Leon, when you have the time, check his soul with that sheep, see if there's anything strange about his soul."

?!

Leon was slightly taken aback at the words, then frowned.

"You suspect him..."

"I don't suspect him. The standards for recruitment in our Virgo Bureau are different from other branches. While not everyone here may be good, they won't be completely bad either. I'm asking you to check his soul state primarily because I'm worried about the people behind him."

"Who's behind him?"

"He has some connection with the Aquarius Director."

The Red-haired Director explained,

"Tom was once an official in the Ministry of Finance. Because the King consecutively ousted three Ministers of Finance, the Ministry was thrown into chaos for quite a while. Then he... well... at that time urgently needed a large sum of money, so he did some unscrupulous things, losing the Kingdom's reserve funds.

After joining the Purification Bureau in desperation, the Aquarius Director seemed to discover some kind of potential in him, helping him create an anomalous object almost tailor-made for him. Although the Aquarius Director's identity is confidential and they've hardly interacted directly, it's better to be cautious."

"Understood."

Nodding to remember the task, Leon quickly shifted the topic back and tentatively asked,

"Director, about the Demon's Heart confiscated from the Ryan Family..."

"It's already been sent to the headquarters, just wait for the inspection!"

The Red-haired Director frowned at the words, recalling the bureau's plummeting performance rankings, and took a bitter gulp of tea, speaking irritably,

"Don't worry yourself over it. Once the bureau finishes the investigation and proves you're fine, what's yours will be yours! With me covering for you, others can't take it away!"

"Oh, well, that's good then."

Good, my ass!

Seeing the seemingly pleased Leon, the Red-haired Director grew furious.

"I asked you to do an investigation task! Investigation!"

"After you identified a suspicious target, why didn't you come back and call for reinforcements? Instead, you directly engaged him? Your clothes in the photo were soaked with blood! Is this what you learned from Emma?

Let alone failing to stop that thing, letting it cause numerous extra casualties, almost completely destroying a major noble!

Do you know? The evaluation for your task this time is absolutely the lowest in the bureau! The absolute lowest, just barely better than a failed mission by a tiny bit!"

Chapter 135 What do you want to do??_1

Only slightly better than failure... isn't that still a success? Although the bureau's evaluation might be low, as long as he completed the investigation into Yang Xin, he'd have the Devil's Badge and Holy Spirit Badge added to his collection. While at it, he also got rid of a whole bunch of rotten scumbags.

So, by his own standards, this mission was a resounding success. Hmm... but he still had to hold back, absolutely had to hold back. The director was obviously quite upset right now, and it wouldn't be a good idea to show too much happiness and risk getting into trouble with him.

"I was reckless."

To avoid the "window to the soul" from exposing his true thoughts, Leon quickly lowered his head and "dejectedly" self-reflected,

"After completing the basic investigation and narrowing down the targets to those five individuals, I should have returned to the bureau immediately to request support. I shouldn't have gone off to investigate Bobby Layne on my own.

"Originally, I thought that even if I was discovered accidentally, relying on the Holy Spirit pendant and Witch's Broom, escaping wouldn't be a problem. But his compatibility with that heart was so high that not only was flying prohibited, but the entire manor was sealed off. I really had no choice..."

You absolutely had a choice! You were at least ninety percent doing it on purpose! Remembering Leon's busybody nature, the Red-haired Director couldn't help but glare at him, contemplating the possibility that this little troublemaker did it deliberately.

Leon was usually very cautious. Even in the Purification Bureau, he would unhesitatingly run away at the slightest sign of anything out of the ordinary. This time he didn't come back to call for reinforcements but instead took the risk of confronting the target. He likely discovered a bunch of dirty deeds the Ryan Family had been up to during his investigation, then lost control of his anger and deliberately approached Bobby Layne early to resolve him personally.

But Bobby Layne's compatibility with the Demon's Heart was indeed astonishing. Faced with this low-probability event, Leon's original plan to just take him down was shattered, and he ended up being trapped and unable to leave, which eventually led to the Ryan Blood Night.

As for the over two hundred people who died, the files show they were mostly individuals starting at death row, perfectly fitting the group he loathed and even hated. He probably wasn't unable to save them; he simply didn't intend to save them!

The kid has turned bad... Watching Leon "dejectedly" admit his mistake, but whose muscles and posture were so relaxed, showing no real sincerity in his confession, the Red-haired Director ground his teeth in frustration.

This little troublemaker had been with the Purification Bureau for just a month and had already learned to repeatedly brush against the rules' limits to satisfy his excessive sense of justice without actually making mistakes. Just like an old hand who has been in the game for years!

Damn... Who the hell did he learn this from?

Without any sense of having led the rookie astray, the Red-haired Director, after roughly deducing the "truth" of that night, glared once more at the pretending Leon but ultimately couldn't bring himself to say anything.

After all, although this little troublemaker was infuriating, he truly was an excellent subordinate, hardworking with impressive talent, diligent with a great attitude... Besides the excess of justice, compared to the pile of eccentric problem-makers in the bureau, he was already the least problematic.

And those who died this time, you couldn't say they deserved it, but they certainly were unspeakably evil. Even hanging each one could be considered a bargain for them. If he were in Leon's place, he might also have been "too late for rescuing," so he'd still have to cover for him a bit this time, to avoid any real trouble coming out of bureau investigations.

Sigh... There's no such thing as a perfect employee. Tolerate, tolerate.

After silently reciting "It was me who recruited him" several times, the Red-haired Director comforted himself and let out a long breath. Then he viciously opened a drawer, took out some task orders, slapped them on the table, and looked at Leon with ill intent, saying,

"Alright, stop reflecting. Emma helped you with quite a bit while you were out, but there's still some left. Now that you're discharged from the hospital, catch up!"

You little troublemaker, making decisions without consulting me, I'll work you to the bone!

"Okay!"

Hearing there were new tasks to do, Leon felt his spirits lift, strength and confidence surging simultaneously as he eagerly took the task orders to look through.

He now had twelve badges, but only five slots, and one was locked by [Materialism], really not enough. The only way to expand the number of slots was to acquire more Anomalous Objects; these tasks fit right into what he needed.

...

In Pav County, a large number of goats had gone missing. Six herdsmen went looking in the mountains and vanished for three days, only to turn up 800 kilometers away in a brothel, claiming they didn't know how they got there...

Under Master Wilde's Morning Star Troupe, although performances had been ongoing, no one seemed to have touched the food sent into the theater, suspected of a special case occurring...

An arsonist had appeared in Louthier Arcade. Witnesses saw him carrying numerous fire-starting tools, walking through several streets and alleys in the wealthy district at night. Witnesses needed to be contacted to trace his whereabouts...

After browsing through the task orders for a while, Leon couldn't help but furrow his brow.

Why are these all investigation tasks again? And they don't even seem to have much to do with Anomalous Objects?

Especially those so-called herdsmen. They found receipts and tickets for selling goats and claimed they were kidnapped to the brothel. What's there to investigate? The remaining two situations were just as absurd...

If I were to guess, the truth of these three matters is probably like this.

One group denied dirty deeds despite crossing borders, another was a "superior" troupe not accepting free food, and the third was likely Rebel arsonists trying to cause chaos. What anomalies could be found here?

With a flourish, Leon moved the three task orders to the back, deciding not to rush to deal with the first two and tackle the arsonist first. He then looked down at the last task order in his hand.

To go to the Rose Manor of the Marseiny family, rescue the only daughter of the Charl Department Store owner who was kidnapped?

Marseiny... weren't they the family that colluded with the Scales Gold Sect, causing the Holy Spirit descent incident? Speaking of which, to continue with my [Practitioner] Badge, it seems I'll have to start with the Scales Gold Sect, just the right chance to probe into their situation!

"I'll do this one first!"

Having finally found a task suitable for himself, Leon's furrowed brow slightly relaxed as he signed his name on the task order and handed it back.

Going to Rose Manor to save someone... hmm... sounds good.

Seeing the task order Leon handed back, the Red-haired Director nodded in agreement. Leon getting released so quickly was also thanks to the owner of Charl Department Store, so having him handle the matter seemed fitting.

However, just as the Red-haired Director was about to sign his name, completing the task assignment, he unexpectedly noticed Leon's eager expression.

"..."

Marseiny... Ryan... Marseiny... Ryan... another noble family up to no good, this little troublemaker better not be planning something big again.

"Don't rush the task."

Quickly halting his signature, the Red-haired Director warily watched Leon and said,

"Walk me through how you plan to execute this task?"

"Huh?"

Slightly stunned by the Red-haired Director's attitude, Leon thought for a moment and responded,

"Since it's a rescue, I'll probably opt to infiltrate at night, first investigate the situation in the Marseiny family, then..."

And then create a 'Marseiny Blood Night,' huh?

"You're switching it to daytime!"

Fearing that Leon might launch into something big again out of excitement mid-investigation, the uncertain Red-haired Director quickly stopped him,

"Besides, you won't need to investigate. The hostage's location has been found by the bureau. Go to the Chief Jerry's office on the first floor and let his 'friends' take you there!"

Chapter 136 Untitled_1

"Has the bureau already found the hostage's location?"

Hearing the red-haired director's words, Leon couldn't help but be slightly stunned and then asked somewhat unwillingly,

"Director, back then, the Holy Spirit from the Scales Gold Sect was brought in by the Marseilles family. Their relationship with the Scales Gold Sect is quite close. It's such a rare opportunity, should we just..."

"Stop! You just stop right there!"

Seeing that Leon was actually "harboring ulterior motives," the red-haired director couldn't help but shudder abruptly. He crossed his hands firmly in an emphatic "STOP" gesture.

"This time, just focus on rescuing the people! Don't get involved in anything else! Especially with those people from the Marseilles family, the less contact you have with them, the better!"

After making his request to Leon, the red-haired director reminded him with a headache,

"Do you really think the affairs of the Ryan Family are over just like that? Right now, forget about the post-event observation period. You haven't even entered the review period yet. The investigators from the main bureau will be arriving in the next few days.

If, by any chance, after you come into contact with the Marseilles family, something happens to someone in their family, even if it's just someone choking to death on a drink, the intensity of the scrutiny you'll face will be heightened once more!"

"..."

After experiencing the powerful effects of the Gold Level [I Am the Demon], Leon naturally grew more eager for the Holy Spirit Series badge effects, which were quite similar to those of the Demon Series.

But just as the director had said, the suspicions on him hadn't been completely cleared. He needed to tread carefully for now to avoid attracting the investigators' suspicion and unnecessary trouble.

Anyway, the review was expected to end in about a week. The Scales Gold Sect wouldn't collapse anytime soon, nor could the Marseilles family go anywhere. At worst, he could wait another week!

"I will be cautious."

Having heard the red-haired director's advice and promised not to act recklessly, Leon, holding the task order, was just about to leave when he suddenly seemed to remember something. He hesitated at first, then spoke somewhat bashfully,

"Director, can I take a leave next week?"

Although he had only been employed for just over a month, Leon had already taken more time off than he'd spent "on the job." And after botching the last assignment and being absent for more than a week, he was barely back for an hour before asking for leave again; even Leon himself felt a bit guilty about speaking up.

However, when it came to his "easily getting leave" trait, the red-haired director seemed quite accommodating, directly pulling out a notebook and pen from a drawer and saying casually,

"Sure, sure. Your injuries haven't fully healed yet, and you haven't been home much during the investigation these days. It's normal to ask for leave... How long do you need?"

"Well... I'm not really sure either..."

Leon hesitated for a moment before asking in return,

"How long does a typical noble succession ritual take? Do you know?"

A noble succession ritual?

The red-haired director pondered it and replied,

"About one to four days, I suppose? For titles below that of earl, most properties are limited, with little real power, so it usually doesn't take long. A banquet to entertain guests and it's finished; it can be wrapped up in half a day.

As for higher titles, those are generally held by large families. Changes in their titles can affect many things. The royal family might even send an envoy to witness, plus there are internal presentations of family history, transfer of ownership, clan elder meetings, and other matters. It probably takes at least three to four days."

Was it really that complicated...?

Upon hearing this, Leon couldn't help but furrow his brow.

"If all the relatives, friends, and guests are dismissed, with just simple reporting to the royal family, and most key family members are dead, how short could it be?"

"Then it might only take a day... But what major noble family would do that?"

With some surprise, the red-haired director blinked his eyes, and then looked up with an expression of puzzlement.

"And why do you even ask? Are you taking a leave to attend some big noble's ceremony?"

"Uh... You could say so..."

Scratching his head awkwardly, Leon, who hadn't figured out how to explain the situation yet, tried to explain as tactfully as possible,

"Director, do you remember the excuse I used when I was investigating Yang Xin?"

"Sure, recognizing kin with the Ryan Family, what's up?"

"Well, nothing much... just that I succeeded in recognizing kin, and in a very, very successful way too..."

Clenching his fists slightly in hesitation, Leon looked at the red-haired director's face full of incomprehension and said with a rather helpless expression,

"Let me put it this way: I am now the officially recognized twenty-ninth Duke of Lionheart. My succession ritual is set for next Tuesday."

"..."

"???"

"!!!"

Shock! The newbie who just got his tenure after a month in the office asked for leave because he's actually going to inherit a dukedom's assets?

And even more critical, the original first successor was killed by Leon himself! Could it be that he did this to inherit the title...

But that can't be right! Leon shouldn't be that kind of person, and the Ryan Family is in shambles because he "didn't rescue them in time," leading to the death of many key members. They're on the brink of collapse. Who would first destroy the Ryan Family and then inherit an empty shell of a title? But... but...

But how do you end up acknowledging kin and becoming a duke?

Faced with this sudden twist of fate, even the well-versed red-haired director couldn't help but widen his eyes in shock, and was at a loss for words for quite a while.

After a brief pause, regaining his composure from the shocking news, the red-haired director said with a rather peculiar expression,

"You're not joking with me, right?"

"I'm really not joking with you. I'm genuinely going to inherit a title..."

After briefly explaining what he knew about the situation, Leon said helplessly,

"I'm truly not interested in this title from the Ryan Family, but no matter how I refused, it didn't work. They just went ahead and submitted my name.

They were worried that I wouldn't cooperate, so they even drugged my hospital meals with sedatives and had over twenty guards watching outside my hospital room. I only managed to knock them down and escape when I was slightly better..."

"..."

Well, no wonder you came back so quickly. It turns out you weren't released due to old Charl's intervention; you simply broke out after inheriting the title...

Clicking his tongue with a somewhat speechless look, the red-haired director said with a complex expression,

"Why didn't you mention something this important sooner?"

"I wanted to tell you earlier. But when I first came back, before I could say anything, you kept asking about what happened during Ryan's Blood Night. After I explained, Senior Tom came in,

then you had me check Senior Tom and scolded me for taking the risk of approaching Bobby Laien, and then you gave me an assignment. I never had the chance to speak..."

"..."

Well, it seems... that's indeed what happened?

Recalling the previous situation and realizing it was indeed the case, the red-haired director couldn't help but open his mouth, before asking very perplexed,

"Then, since you escaped, why are you asking for leave to attend the succession ritual? Also, what do you really think about being a duke?"

"I mentioned just now that I'm truly not interested in the title. The reason for asking you for leave is that I feel it's only at the succession ritual that I will have the chance to completely rid myself of this hassle."

After a slight hesitation, Leon said,

"Director, tell me, if I were to announce at the succession ritual that in my capacity as duke, I donate all of the Ryan Family's assets to the royal family, what would happen?"

Chapter 137 Director's suggestion_1

To donate the Ryan Family's entire estate to the royal family?

Hearing Leon's words, the Red-haired Director sat up a bit in surprise.

Even though the Ryan Family was already on the brink of collapse and would soon have most of its assets taken by various factions, leaving only an empty shell,

even this shell would be enough for an "ordinary person" to live a lavish life for a lifetime. Why would he think of donating it all?

"Because the salary from the Purification Bureau was already enough for me to spend, and can even allow our family to live quite comfortably. Although inheriting the Duke's title would bring even more wealth, it would also drag me into endless troubles, completely disrupting Anna's life. In comparison, I think it's better as it is now."

After briefly explaining his reasons, Leon thought for a moment and added,

"Of course, I also have the intention of avoiding suspicion this way. After all, if I were to inherit the Duke of Lionheart's title, I would become the biggest beneficiary of the Ryan Blood Night. The Investigators sent by the Bureau might overthink it, so it's better to force them to quickly find someone else for the dukedom, and get rid of this burden as soon as possible."

So a whole duke family's wealth was just a heavy burden to you?

Staring into Leon's eyes and confirming he was speaking sincerely, the Red-haired Director slightly raised her eyebrows, then glanced at the toad pendant on Leon's chest.

It made sense... if he had a strong desire for wealth, he probably wouldn't be able to resist this Holy Spirit with the authority over wealth. So, making such a choice wasn't hard to understand, yet...

"Why did you choose to donate to the royal family?"

The Red-haired Director thought for a moment and then seriously reminded him,

"If your goal was simply to pressure them, getting those people to pick someone else for the dukedom, I wouldn't recommend donating to the royal family because they might not accept it.

After all, it would look way too much like seizing property. The Old Nobility is not weak either, and if not handled properly, could lead to a massive backlash, which is definitely a big problem for the royal family.

Moreover, even if you didn't donate to them, given the royal family's current momentum, they might still manage to grab thirty to forty percent of the wealth. If they handle it well, there's even a chance for fifty percent. They might not want to take this risk, and the possibility of being directly rejected is not small."

"..."

Could it develop like this?

Hearing the Red-haired Director's words, Leon was slightly stunned and then was glad he hadn't rushed into action but sought her advice first, otherwise he would be in a tough spot if the royal family really refused the donation.

Fully realizing the gap between himself and the Director in this regard, the always modest and eager-to-learn Leon immediately lowered his stance and proactively asked for guidance,

"So in your opinion, what would be the best course of action?"

"Simple!"

Snapping her fingers crisply, the Red-haired Director smirked and said,

"For such an important dukedom ritual, the Princess would undoubtedly be present. You could directly use the entire Ryan Family as a dowry and propose to her on the spot~"

"..."

"What?!?!"

"Trust me, this is absolutely the best approach."

Seeing Leon's jaw drop at her plan, the Red-haired Director, getting her own back for a previous shock, felt quite pleased and said with a smile,

"Your ultimate goal is simply to force them to pick someone else for the dukedom, am I right?"

In those people's eyes now, you and the entire Ryan Family are like fish on a chopping board, unable to escape being carved up regardless of how you might struggle. So, no matter how ridiculously or absurdly you act as a Duke, it would have no impact on the result. "

Even if you donated the Ryan Family, it wouldn't really matter. Anyway, you can only donate the wealth of the Ryan Family, and the more important Upper House seat and influence in the military and Department of Road Administration are not something you can donate. These core elements can only be taken by other noble in-laws.

But if you used the entire Ryan Family as a dowry to propose to the Princess, then the situation would be completely different."

With Leon's bewildered expression, the Red-haired Director declared confidently,

"If you actually succeeded in your proposal, the Princess could swallow the Ryan Family's wealth and the Upper House seat whole, and then rightfully occupy the Ryan Family's positions in the military and Department of Road Administration, fully injecting her influence.

In this way, the number of 'departments' the royal family could basically control would have reached nine. Coupled with other 'departments' they couldn't fully control but still wield some influence over, more than half of the Kingdom's administrative departments would be under the Princess's influence.

Plus, with the Ryan Family's vice-chair seat in the Upper House, the royal faction would have a presence in both houses of parliament, and even if the Old Nobility and Parliament united, they'd barely be stronger by twenty to thirty percent.

If you then factor out the infighting and plots when they join forces, the Princess faction and non-Princess faction would essentially be fifty-fifty. The reform measures she had always been thoroughly blocked from implementing would have a chance to be forcibly pushed through, striking a heavy blow to the entire Old Nobility tier.

Once they figured this out, they might get the urge to want you dead on the spot, let alone having someone else take the dukedom!"

"..."

Watching Leon go from complete shock to astonishment, and finally to silent reflection, the Red-haired Director, satisfied with indulging her quirky sense of humor, summed up with a smile,

"If you do as I suggest, the worst outcome would be successfully shedding the Duke identity, and in the best result, you might even marry the Princess and directly become a Prince!

Little Leon~ How's the idea I gave you?"

"..."

The idea was good, but if only you wouldn't mess with me in the process.

By this point, Leon had realized his Director's penchant for pranks had flared up again, and this proposal was clearly just her joking around with him.

"Thank you for the reminder, Director."

Marking down this ultimate trick for losing the Duke identity as soon as he used it, Leon said with a darkened face,

"But I suppose it isn't necessary to really propose to the Princess, right? As long as I mention my intention to propose, they should drive me off the Duke seat."

"That could work too, but aren't you even slightly considering it?"

The Red-haired Director smiled,

"Judging by the Princess's approach, she'd absolutely accept upon hearing your proposal terms. She is reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the entire Capital City, don't you have even the slightest..."

"No!"

Seeing the Director had entered a nonsensical mode, Leon, having already gotten a solution to his problem, naturally didn't want to stick around and be further teased, so he sternly left the Director's office.

"With the backlog of work from the past few days, I'd better get busy if there's nothing else."

"Mm-hmm, off you go then~"

Watching Leon leave with a smile, the Red-haired Director, now in a much better mood, picked up a stack of documents and continued to work. However, when the sun started to set slightly, she suddenly exclaimed as if annoyed, opened a drawer, and took out a family photo tied with hair.

She had first been busy with official business, then caught up in seeking amusement, and forgot to return the anomalous object Jerry had stolen from Leon!

Chapter 138 Badge Activation_1

Not knowing that his sister's family portrait was in the hands of the bureau chief, Leon, who had already "absent without leave" for several days, left the chief's office and headed towards the end of the hallway on the first floor, identifying the nameplates on the doors along the way.

Harry... Spike... Tom... Jerry... looks like this is the one.

After confirming he didn't find the wrong office by checking the nameplate that read "Jerry Baker (Level Two Crisis Handler)," Leon was about to knock on the door when he suddenly felt an unsettling sensation spreading through his body, as if he was standing on a high platform, being watched by countless pairs of eyes.

"Squeak!"

When Leon suddenly turned his head to look over, the rats in the shadows were frightened, squealing and running away, while a small troop of ants that had sneakily crawled to his feet scurried away as if they had encountered an anteater, and a pair of flies resting on the corridor overhead flew to a distant corner even before Leon's gaze landed on them...

So... were these his "friends"?

Watching these snakes, insects, rats, and ants scurrying away rapidly, feeling those "glances" cast upon him, Leon blinked thoughtfully, starting to make some guesses about Jerry's ability.

Just then, from behind the window glass of the office in front of him, a golden retriever suddenly appeared. After curiously looking at Leon through the glass, the dog's head quickly retracted, and the door in front of Leon swung open as a short man hastily emerged from the office.

"You finally came back."

Before Leon could open his mouth, the short man grabbed him, pulling him into the office with a friendly expression, eagerly chatting him up,

"Ha ha, actually, I had some spare time when you were out on your mission and thought about lending you a hand, but the chief said it was just an investigation task and nothing would happen, so he didn't send me. I didn't expect it to get delayed for so many days.

Oh, by the way, did the chief mention my thing to you? I'm counting on you for the next part, and no matter the outcome, I assure you the compensation will satisfy you!"

"..."

???

Looking at Leon's puzzled expression, the short man's face slightly froze.

"The chief didn't tell you?"

"No..."

Leon responded, somewhat confused,

"The chief assigned me several tasks, one of which is to go to Rose Manor to rescue someone, and I need your help to guide the way, but she didn't mention anything else."

"Uh... it's okay, if she didn't say it, I can tell you myself."

Cursing his unreliable chief under his breath, the short man led Leon to the sofa in the office, patted the glass board on the table, snapped his tongue quickly against the roof of his mouth, creating a "click-click" sound.

"Woof!"

With a dog's bark, the golden retriever that had looked at Leon through the window appeared under the glass board of the coffee table... or inside the glass?

After scrutinizing the surprised Leon, the dog, weighing about thirty kilograms, used its nose to nudge the short man's hand through the glass, even licking him once.

"I'm not here to play with you, I need something!"

With a shake of his wet hand, the short man looked at Leon, then rubbed his face and throat, and strangely, started barking like a dog, occasionally mixing in some howls and grunts.

Under Leon's astonished gaze, the golden retriever inside the glass nodded, seemingly understanding the "dog language" of the short man, stood up, and walked to the side of the glass board, disappearing from view.

A few seconds later, it returned to the "scene," dragging a sturdy-looking mesh bag, laboriously walking towards the two men, then turning to fling it out with force!

"Clatter, bang!"

With the sound of hard objects hitting the glass, a whole bag of items was actually tossed out of the mirror by it, clattering onto the tabletop.

Blood-stained dance shoes, strangely fishy-smelling dried fish, a notebook with an eye on its cover, several spinning odd coins, a palm-sized model bed bound with chains, a Christmas hat riddled with holes... there seemed to be at least thirty to fifty items.

Staring dumbfoundedly at this heap of bizarre objects, Leon's heart skipped a beat, and then he said incredulously,

"Are these... anomalous objects?"

"Pretty much,"

the short man said with a greedy smile, rubbing his hands together eagerly.

"Anyway, you'll find out sooner or later, so I won't hide it from you. I have a bit of a... um... kleptomania, so the first anomalous object I got was related to stealing, and this pile is what I've accumulated over the years.

Don't worry, I'm a thief, but I have principles; I only steal from outsiders, not from acquaintances. Since you've joined our Sixth Bureau, you're part of us now, so I definitely wouldn't really steal from you."

"..."

Not really 'steal' from me, meaning he might 'fake' steal when unable to resist?

Noting this senior's "little quirk," Leon added extra caution and tentatively said,

"So, you want me to help because you know I have the ability to forcibly obtain intelligence about anomalous objects?"

"Exactly!"

Seeing Leon's unresistant look, the short man was overjoyed, promising with excitement,

"Over the years, I've gotten quite a few good things, but anomalous objects aren't like other items; without knowing their effects and costs, I'm truly afraid to mess with them, so I can only pile them up here. I have more anomalous objects than Emma, yet I'm stuck not moving up from Level Two.

When I learned about your ability from the chief a few days ago, I was practically over the moon! If you could help me identify these objects and make more of them usable, that would be a huge help. You can choose any of the anomalous objects I can't use as your own."

Help you identify some items, and then I can choose one freely?

Hearing this "NPC senior" issuing a task, Leon raised his eyebrows slightly, opened the badge panel for a look, and sure enough, the [Connected Party] badge was flashing continually.

([Bronze Level Hidden Badge "Connected Party" Activated: You have received resource support from within the organization. Complete the provider's conditions to receive said resource.])

So this is the effect of the Hidden Badge [Connected Party] activating before going to the Ryan Family. As expected of a hidden badge, just feeling a few items can grant an anomalous object – this exchange really is quite worthwhile.

Shutting off the badge panel, Leon didn't stand on ceremony. Instead, he took out some paper and a pen he carried with him, nodding with a smile.

"Then I thank you for your generosity, senior."

Chapter 139 Select_1

[Name: Joyous Dance Shoes (Doll, Heart)]

[Appearance: A pair of women's dance shoes stained with a substantial amount of blood, styled after a popular design from fifty years ago. They gained immense popularity in the entire Belleray County due to their association with a well-known dancer...]

[Ability: Graceful dance moves, infectious charm]

[Cost: Double stamina consumption, and cannot be voluntarily removed before losing the ability to move]

[File: These shoes were a favorite of a renowned dancer in Belleray County. She wore them to perform a record-breaking twenty-three spin dance, captivating nearly six thousand spectators at a grand show.

However, after the performance, she had to withdraw from her beloved stage due to a tendon tear. Yet, after years of silence, when she returned, she had regained the ability to dance.

This time, though, her dance was no longer a solo act. It made everyone dance along with her, unable to stop even when they fainted, forcing them to continue like puppets.]

[Evaluation: Upon wearing them, you become the ultimate dancer. Everyone who witnesses your dance will join in, dancing irresistibly until your stamina is depleted or until your muscles are completely torn.]

[Contamination Value: 2.5]

...

[Name: Dehydrated Mermaid Jerky (Transform, Element)]

[Appearance: A dehydrated and sun-dried dugong corpse...]

[Ability: Transform into a mermaid, brief water control]

[Cost: Unable to drink water for 48 hours]

[File: Ariel, a Level Three Crisis Handler from the Libra Division of the Purification Bureau (male), once used this anomalous object to transform into a female mermaid. He infiltrated the Sea Race, attempting

to gather intelligence under the guise of a mermaid, but unexpectedly caught the eye of the Mermaid Prince, ending up...]

[Evaluation: A highly practical ability. Just one lick turns you into a member of the Sea Race for 48 hours. Unfortunately, the taste is quite nauseating, akin to licking a sweaty foot coated in stinky tofu juice.]

[Contamination Value: 1.1]

...

[Name: Monster under the Bed (Corruption, Fright)]

[Appearance: A demon's hand that extends from beneath the bed's shadow at night. Its size and number vary with the size of the bed frame...]

[Ability: Physical harm, spreading fear]

[Cost: Post-use results in a night of nightmares, forcing you to confront your inner fears]

[File: A special anomalous object created by the Bai Ye Sect, it had caused considerable trouble for the Purification Bureau's Little Dog Division until Level Two Crisis Handler Jerry Baker from the Virgo Division was temporarily assigned. He employed three million white ants to devour all the surrounding bed boards, only then...]

[Evaluation: Possesses both physical and mental harm capabilities, making it a rather decent anomalous object. However, forming combat power requires a sufficiently large bed board, making it difficult to carry, and it can only be activated late at night, posing significant limitations.]

[Contamination Value: 8.7]

...

After spending nearly an hour investigating and documenting all the anomalous objects on the table, Leon, whose wrist was sore from writing, put down the pen, flexed his wrist, and sighed.

This Jerry guy's kleptomania seemed quite severe, yet he truly had some skills.

The final sentence in these anomalous object files always read the same, "Stolen after brief contact with Virgo Division Level Two Crisis Handler Jerry Baker." The identities of these previous owners were quite varied.

From ordinary people who lost control after an awakening to the High Priest of an Underground Sect, a royal family member of another kingdom, to key employees of other divisions, and even the director of the Twelve Zodiac Bureaus— there seemed to be nothing he wouldn't dare to steal.

Yet, the overall quality of these items was just moderate.

The anomalous object with the highest contamination value barely exceeded 12 points, only slightly better than one-seventh of the goat mix, and their usage cost was considerable, incomparable to something like the Holy Spirit Pendant...

"Wonderful! Ha ha! This really is... Oh, I must thank you properly!"

Unaware of Leon's thoughts, the short man was leafing through a stack of "appraisal reports" with a look of joy, feeling incredibly lucky.

His level had nearly reached that of a First Level Disaster Handler, although slightly lacking in Leon Value. Additionally, the two strongest anomalous objects were for theft and beast control, lacking in combat effectiveness and methods. This was why he couldn't pass the rating for a First Level Disaster Handler no matter what.

With these anomalous objects appraised, he could choose some suitable ones to fill in his shortcomings, and with a little effort to augment his Leon Value, he could soon meet the requirements for a First Level Disaster Handler!

"This one, this one, and this one, I need to keep. They're really perfect for me."

Selecting three reports from the stack, he carefully tucked them away. The short man, grinning from ear to ear, grabbed Leon's hand and shoved the remaining reports into his hand, waving generously.

"The rest are yours to choose from! Take whatever catches your eye. If one isn't enough, feel free to take another one!"

"Then I won't be polite."

Smiling and nodding, Leon accepted the appraisal reports and began flipping through them, noticing that Jerry had not been stingy. Almost all the high-contamination-value anomalous objects remained, except for one with a contamination value of ten that had been selected.

However, the things Jerry offered for appraisal either had high costs and were troublesome to use or could be replaced by the Holy Spirit Pendant, with some overlap in functionality.

And with my meager 2.6 contamination value, I could only fully activate two anomalous objects with a 1.3 contamination value each, or push one anomalous object to a 2.6 contamination value level.

I couldn't even make full use of the revived Black Goat, feeling that these current anomalous objects alone were enough to keep me busy.

Plus, my physical strength isn't strong enough, I can't even carry the issued box from the division, and the few useful items among this pile of anomalous objects are quite large, so taking them would just leave them collecting dust in the office... hmm... wait!

At this point, Leon glanced at the glass panel on the table, then set down the stack of appraisal reports in his hand, and tentatively asked,

"Jerry, the object inside the glass panel earlier, is that also an anomalous object?"

Hearing Leon's question, the short man paused, then nodded after some thought.

"I suppose it counts. Three years ago, there was a Mirror World invasion at the junction of the Libra Division and our division's jurisdiction. Lisa was a Mirror World creature I took in during that mission... Are you interested in her?"

"I'm kind of interested..."

Leon nodded, somewhat awkwardly.

I've only recently joined the bureau, with a Contamination Value of just over two, and activating anomalous objects still often consumed physical strength. The issued box from the bureau wasn't suitable for me, and I happened to be lacking a helper like her to carry things...

Remembering that the other party might be an "Archdruid," Leon quickly added,

"Of course, I don't necessarily have to have her, just that her ability seems suitable. If it's inconvenient, something else would work too."

"Well... it is a bit inconvenient..."

Hearing Leon's response, the short man breathed a sigh of relief and then explained,

"Lisa is more of a friend than an anomalous object of mine, so I can't use her for trading... but other Mirror Dogs are possible."

After saying this, he knocked on the glass panel again, summoning the Golden Retriever named Lisa, then rubbed his throat and barked back and forth with her.

Following a series of seemingly incomprehensible exchanges, the Golden Retriever in the glass panel extended her head beyond the "screen" range, making a "fetching" motion. Then, a dazed little puppy was tossed out from the glass panel.

Chapter 140 Secondary Level Strength_1

"Holy crap! Is this 'Lady Lisa' a bit too rough on kids?"

Just before the puppy hit the table, Leon caught it in his arms and checked it over, a string of question marks popping into his mind.

No wonder, Lady Lisa was a Golden Retriever, but the puppy he held, with its blue eyes, was a typical black-and-white, with two triangular ears stubbornly erect, and three white dots on its brow forming a chubby "fire" character...

This was obviously a husky!

Hmm... wait a minute.

As he was about to make a judgment, Leon noticed some sparse golden fur on the puppy's head, likely belonging to a human's scalp, towards the back of the dog's skull, and its color matched Lady Lisa's perfectly.

After exchanging a glance with the Young Ha staring at him stubbornly from his arms, Leon looked at the big Golden Retriever in the glass panel with confusion, then turned his head towards Senior Jerry beside him.

"Is Lady Lisa's... uh... partner possibly a husky?"

"No, Lisa's husband is the same breed as her, also golden."

Looking at the Young Ha in Leon's hands, the short man sighed helplessly,

"This is the child of Lisa's husband and his mistress."

"..."

Damn mistress! So the male Golden Retriever cheated with a female husky and brought the kid back home for the female Golden to raise?

"Ah, you wouldn't know, the situation at their place is quite complicated."

The short man shook his head as he glanced at Leon's dumbfounded face,

"Lisa's husband... well... isn't a good guy. When the Mirror World invaded three years ago and he sensed something was amiss, he took off early with his mistress, leaving a whole litter of kids behind. Lisa, having no kids of her own and hearing the little guys crying pitifully, adopted her husband's mistress's child.

Though she could reluctantly raise the other kids as her own for the sake of her husband, this little guy, apart from that tuft of golden hair on his head, looked just like his biological mother, and every time Lisa saw him she would remember her husband's mistress.

Ah... Although Lisa had a soft heart and continued to raise this little guy, she couldn't help feeling blocked inside, secretly crying whenever she saw him for the first two years, so it's actually a good thing for you to take him away."

"..."

"I see now..."

With a somewhat stiff expression after hearing this "dog blood drama," Leon looked at the golden retriever with its back turned in the glass panel, its back twitching, and didn't know what else to say but to stroke the small golden tuft on Young Ha's head.

[Name: Mirror Dog (Passage)]

[Appearance: A juvenile husky with sparse golden fur on its head]

[Ability: Enter and exit the Mirror World]

[Cost: 3-4 small bowls of dog food per day, approximately 80-120 grams each time, while ensuring certain exercise, but its food intake will increase with age]

[File: A Mirror World creature, 3 years and 6 months old, presented to Level Three Incident Handler Leon Laine by Level Two Crisis Handler Jerry Baker at the Virgin Branch of the Purification Bureau]

[Evaluation: A rare and fascinating creature able to travel freely between two worlds, with intelligence slightly higher than ordinary dogs and an incredibly long lifespan of its own.

Its growth and aging rate is one-fifth that of normal humans, reaching twenty-five times that of regular dogs. If well kept, it could outlive your eighteenth generation of descendants]

[Corrosion Value: 0.1]

"..."

It was... quite easy to raise...

Stroking the excellent-feeling golden tuft on Young Ha's head, Leon looked up at Senior Jerry with some reluctance and couldn't help but speak,

"I need a place to store a box, isn't it a bit too small? Can it hold things?"

"Don't worry, they store things by 'passage,' not 'movement,' so there's no need to physically move things in."

As the short man spoke, he took out a small mirror from his pocket and gave a slight wave over the pile of anomalous objects on the table.

"Woof!"

With the familiar bark, anything on the table within the little mirror's sight disappeared as if erased with a rubber, and the reflection in the mirror showed another table, now filled with those items.

"See, that's how it works."

After demonstrating the basic usage of the [Mirror Dog], the short man returned to his desk, rummaged through a drawer underneath, and handed over an identical small mirror, then seriously cautioned,

"Also, they are not just storage tools, but very exceptional assistants and companions!

Because the definition of the Mirror World is not just 'mirrors' themselves, anything that reflects an image is essentially an entrance to the Mirror World.

So don't be fooled by this little one, with the lowest Leon Value almost, but if used well, its ability can be life-saving in critical moments... like this!"

The short man spoke while kicking away the office carpet, revealing the cement floor below, then took a glass of water from the table and splashed most of it on the ground.

After a few seconds, as the water on the ground stabilized into a relatively calm "mirror," Lady Lisa's figure appeared in the puddle, subsequently fetching a knife and tossing it over.

"I was once ambushed by the Bai Ye Sect, all my possessions taken, tied up and locked in a pitch-black dungeon, and they thought they'd hold me, but they didn't know I had Lisa."

Pointing to the puddle on the ground, the short man said with lingering fear,

"Those lunatics were actually very cautious, but during interrogation, I kept babbling nonsense and managed to ask for several glasses of water, then held in my urine for half a day to form a puddle on the ground, and with a pre-prepared emergency anomalous object to heal my injuries, I narrowly escaped."

"And besides saving your life in critical moments, it can also do this."

Reaching into his pocket and retrieving a palm-sized metal object, the short man placed this heavy metal ball in Leon's palm, then snapped his fingers lightly.

"Woof!"

With a bark so close as if right next to him, Leon's vision blurred, and the metal ball vanished directly from his hand!

"Human eyes, in fact, also have reflections, and as long as the object you see isn't blocked, Lisa can take it away directly, and not only can she take things, but she can put them back again."

"Woof!"

Pointing to the small metal ball that reappeared with the bark, the short man warned solemnly,

"This thing in your hand is a whale oil bomb that I got from the military, with a blast effect extra-enhanced by an anomalous object. Once activated, it could destroy an entire building, releasing a burning agent over 1000 degrees Celsius, and after training that little guy can place it right in your enemy's face."

"..."

Holy crap?!

No wonder you're a "half-first-level" expert, Senior Emma's using a large sniper rifle already seems outrageous enough, but you throwing explosives like this is ten times as unprincipled!!!

From Leon's eyes, seeing the intense shock and admiration, the short man, eager to make friends with this "appraisal master," let out a chuckle.

"Of course, forcibly taking or releasing larger items from such a small reflection is not ordinarily possible; before you break through a Leon Value of 10 points, it's probably not feasible, and that little guy will need to grow a bit more for you to do it currently.

My purpose for telling you this is to encourage you to pay attention to that little guy, don't just view him as a luggage box that doesn't need carrying; his ability is indeed quite remarkable and it's a shame not to make good use of it.

Oh, and in the future, when you're able to use the whale oil bomb, feel free to come here and find me; I'll gladly give you a couple for free, but for now... Uh..."

Hearing the puppy's whimpering beside him and realizing that the whale oil bomb had suddenly disappeared from Leon's palm, the short man was utterly shocked.

"How did you do that?! Do you have an anomalous object that can communicate with animals too?"