

I! Cleaner 151

Chapter 151 Question_2

It seemed as if something below had detected the abnormality. The hollow corpse blocking the stairwell was blasted open in a burst of explosions, as if someone was trying to clear a path with explosives.

But before the new scar-faced henchmen could rush in, the last few walls inside the dungeon had already been dismantled, two of the supporting pillars were broken, and the southwest corner where miscellaneous items and tools were piled had even collapsed entirely...

"Ah! Where did the wall go!"

"What's going on?!"

"It's gonna collapse! Run!!!"

At the moment the corner of the dungeon caved in, something finally broke. Souls that had originally existed only in the realm of soul vision reappeared in front of Leon and his companion.

Indeed, I was right from the beginning, dismantling the dungeon was the way out!

Glancing at the scar-faced henchmen who suddenly vanished at the end of the corridor, Leon sighed in relief, then used the Witch's Broom to stir up a gale, sweeping the dust from the dungeon out towards the stairwell, toppling over the panicked secret police and prisoners alike!

"Take them over there to stay!"

Pointing at the few still-standing support pillars he hadn't taken down, Leon instructed the female officer to bring everyone in the dungeon over there, then clutched the Holy Spirit pendant and dashed towards the stairwell.

As expected, with the dungeon mostly dismantled, the originally "endless loop" stairwell returned to normal. Upon ascending the stairs, instead of facing another collapsed dungeon, Leon found the empty first-floor lobby of the Secret Investigation Bureau.

Is it the same as the dungeon before?

Glancing at the empty first-floor lobby, Leon frowned slightly. Just as he was about to test if he could continue upward, he suddenly heard a warning from the Black Goat.

"Watch out!"

Heedful of the warning, Leon's expression sharpened, and he immediately summoned the Holy Spirit pendant, forming an invisible, solid barrier around himself.

In the next moment, more than fifty Nails struck it densely, only to be bounced back by the pendants' power.

In the once-empty lobby, armed scar-faced henchmen materialized out of thin air. These fiercely cold-eyed "duplicates" weren't just firing from a distance; some even abandoned their guns, leaping directly at Leon in a suicidal charge...

Is this all there is to it?

Watching the scar-faced henchmen charging at him but stopped a meter away by the Holy Spirit pendant, Leon shook his head slightly. Choosing not to tangle with them further, he continued to head upstairs.

Besides their stealth—so effective that even soul vision couldn't detect any abnormalities—their abilities offered almost no direct combat prowess. No wonder they'd been sent undercover.

The real nuisance was never these "dummies" and firearms created by him, but rather that bizarre ability connecting the stair landings, keeping Leon from leaving.

But that ability seemingly couldn't exist alone. Once the supportive medium was destroyed, the strange distortion vanished completely.

Even if the area between the first and second floors got "twisted" again, it wouldn't matter. At worst, it would mean dismantling the building once more. After getting a good gauge of the opponent's ability, Leon wouldn't be trapped again.

And Leon wasn't the only one aware of this fact.

As Leon activated his "shield," enduring the fire of dozens of firearms while beginning to ascend, the faces of the scar-faced henchmen showed signs of despair. Consequently, they put down their guns one by one and began to vanish.

Upon reaching the fifth floor, stepping out of the stairwell, everything around him had returned to normal, transformed back into the slightly noisy Secret Investigation Bureau.

To the left in the large conference room, several secret police appeared to be in a meeting, with intense arguing ringing out intermittently. To the right lay a semi-open office area where two employees struggled pushing carts, navigating between desks, distributing stacks of documents, sweating profusely.

Further in was the office the female officer had once accompanied him to visit. The "Director's Office" plaque on the door remained unchanged, and even the person inside was the same as before.

The only difference was that the Soul Flame, once brimming with hostility and murderous intent, now appeared calm and despairing, quietly awaiting his arrival.

...

Have they given up?

Observing the state of the Soul Flame, finding no indication of suicidal madness, only regret, reluctance, and a hint of resignation, Leon furrowed his brow slightly, then proceeded to push open the door.

"Congratulations, you won."

Watching Leon enter through the doorway, the scar-faced man surprisingly smiled, then calmly invited,

"Care to chat with me?"

Before I die, I have quite a few questions to ask you. I imagine you do too. However, please slow down your speech a bit because your ability is truly terrifying. I don't want to betray my comrades.

If you suddenly ask something I'm unwilling to disclose, I'll end my own life immediately, and our conversation will cease. Is that acceptable?"

"..."

Noting the state of the man's soul and realizing he genuinely seemed to have a means to end his life instantly, Leon opted not to immediately restrain him but instead nodded,

"Alright, then one question each, but I ask first."

"Okay."

"The spatial distortion-like ability shouldn't be yours, so you surely have other accomplices. My question is, how much of my related intelligence did he take with him when he escaped with the bandaged woman?"

"..."

Is that really 'one' question?

Upon hearing Leon's first question, the scar-faced man grumbled with extreme frustration,

"Don't think I don't know that you can observe others' soul states and glean answers from their reactions. That single phrase of yours appeared declarative at the outset but was actually a series of questions in disguise!

You first asked if the distortion ability was mine, then confirmed whether I had accomplices, and further questioned whether they escaped together, and if intelligence was taken during the escape, ultimately asking how much intelligence regarding you was taken. You crammed five questions into that single sentence! That's not fair!"

"If you think it's unfair, you can choose not to answer."

"..."

But not answering means I lose out, right?

Watching the expressionless Leon before him, the scar-faced director clicked his tongue in frustration.

If I kill myself now, I get nothing. But by answering his question, I can ask one in return. So it's either exchange one question for five, or concede having lost four questions in value. Clearly, exchanging one for five is better.

"Not much was taken, just some speculations about your abilities and basic information the bureau could find. Beyond that, nothing much; they took mainly other intelligence this time. Information about you was merely collateral."

After answering Leon's question, the scar-faced director took a deep breath and asked,

"My first question is, what exactly is on the upper floors of your Purification Bureau..."

"Don't ask."

Interrupting his question, Leon gripped the Holy Spirit pendant, staring intently at him,

"Sorry, I won't answer any of your questions. If you wish to end yourself, go ahead."

"Huh?"

The scar-faced man's mouth opened in astonishment at Leon's words. His face shifted rapidly from anger to confusion, then bewilderment, finally settling into outright puzzlement.

"Are you playing tricks? Yet given your ability to see through souls, exchanging questions like this clearly benefits you! Besides, I've prepared to end my life already. Even if I know the intelligence, I can't take it back. Why do this?"

"I can tell you that at least."

After a moment's thought, Leon replied,

"A senior who helped me a great deal once told me, no matter how advantageous it may seem, never trade intelligence with an enemy capable of threatening you unless they're truly dead. You're only prepared to end your life, not truly dead yet.

Moreover, I don't know your accomplices' abilities. What if they have a special ability allowing them to extract intelligence from the dead? So until you are truly dead, I won't disclose anything."

"..."

"And consider that me answering one of your questions, right? By our agreement, does this mean I get to ask again?"

"..."

Screw you! I'm about to die!

Chapter 152 Unlucky or ill-fated?_1

Faced with Leon, who was not only cautious but also quite shameless, the scar-faced director, who had been mooched for five questions, angrily made a rather obscene gesture at him.

Then, his soul suddenly split into two, becoming two identical dark flames that collided, entangled, and strangled each other before abruptly extinguishing with a pop. Simultaneously, his body slumped onto the table.

Although the scar-faced burly man's breathing and heartbeat were still normal, Leon knew very well that his soul was no longer there, and all that remained was a soulless shell.

Was his method of suicide actually soul eradication? I really couldn't have stopped that.

Looking at the burly man slumped over the table, Leon shook his head and then carefully activated the Holy Spirit pendant. He cautiously prodded the man's body and, after confirming there wasn't anything that would explode on contact, slowly moved closer and started searching.

Since he didn't know what the "vessel" of the man's anomalous object was, Leon had to rely on his hands to meticulously inspect the burly man's belongings, checking not only the pockets of his clothes and pants but also any place that might have had pockets sewn hiddenly.

However, although he did find some small items, they were all things like ink pens, notebooks, and handkerchiefs, with no items that belonged to the "anomalous range" in sight.

So... was his ability somewhat like the director's [Love Without Memory], carried "within himself" rather than attached to an object?

After frowning and pondering for a while, Leon began to directly touch the burly man's body, and unsurprisingly, once he touched the man's skin, the [Materialist Soul] finally started to flicker.

[Encounter... Materialism... Information]

[Name: Counterfeit Workshop (Replicate, Replace, ?)]

[Appearance: ?]

[Ability: After setting a small area as a workshop, it can replicate all non-anomalous objects within range, forcibly replacing the original items. The replaced items will temporarily be transferred to another world.

Due to the previous user's soul being shattered, the third ability is currently undetectable and requires repair or reconstruction for further use.]

[Cost: ?]

[File: One of the numerous functional anomalous objects created by the Aquarius Director in the Purification Bureau to fulfill a wish, temporarily numbered 0116.

Due to the previous user suffering from shameless deception before dying, a large number of resentful soul fragments have been retained. Therefore, it has poor affinity with those untrustworthy or individuals named Leon Laine.]

[Evaluation: A quite excellent ability. Although the upper limit is not high, its concealment is extremely strong, allowing it to perform remarkably well in certain special situations.

After submission to the Purification Bureau and proper handling, an impressive anomalous object can be extracted. Although it has a poor affinity with you, someone might be interested in it.]

[Contamination Value: ?]

"..."

Alright... it seems similar to the [Golden Toad for Wealth Exchange], where both suffered damage due to soul fragmentation, but the extent is not too bad—at least the ability can still be discerned.

After reading the intelligence provided by the [Materialist Soul], Leon slightly shook his head and then reached into a shopping bag to pet Young Ha's forehead.

"Do me a favor, and put him into the mirror first."

"Woof woo~"

Young Ha, having received the order, wobbly stood on the Black Goat's head, leaned over the edge of the shopping bag to glance at the burly man, then barked at the office window.

The next moment, the real-world burly man instantly vanished, but his reflection leaning over the table in the window became significantly more profound.

Following Young Ha's somewhat chaotic instructions, Leon took out a small mirror and waved it at the window, transferring the burly man into the portable mirror. Afterward, he patted the exhausted Young Ha, stood up, and left the Secret Investigation Bureau director's office without alerting anyone, heading back toward the stairwell.

...

After the ability of the burly man was lifted, the Secret Investigation Bureau, which had been isolated on another "layer," returned to normal, and the situation in the collapsed dungeon finally drew the attention of the people in the hall.

"Quick! There are still two injured down there! Get them out, fast!"

"Call for a vehicle, someone got hurt by the collapse!"

"That's too slow, just use the Bureau's official car!"

Seeing six or seven dusty injured people, Leon, having just descended to the first floor, instinctively took out the [Plague-Infected Blood Bandage], intending to heal them. However, after glancing at the chaos in the hall, he ultimately gave up on the idea, instead wrapping the bandage back around his hand.

It's not that I'm lacking the energy to treat them, it's just that there are too many people right now, making it unsuitable to use an anomalous object. It might be better to apply to the Bureau later, see if the medical expenses can be covered, and try to get some compensation. If the Bureau won't cover it, it's fine to deduct it from my own salary, given that the dungeon collapse was my doing...

As Leon thought about this while using soul vision to check the condition of the injured again, confirming all were lightly injured, he was slightly relieved and then walked over to a policewoman in the corner of the hall.

"How is it?"

The policewoman, who had been keeping an eye on the stairwell and had already spotted Leon, limped towards him with a complex expression and asked,

"Someone noticed the situation in the dungeon. The Bureau seems to have suddenly returned to normal, so I brought them up. The director... that person, did you take care of him?"

Chapter 153 Unlucky or ill-fated?_2

"Um."

Leon nodded and said,

"In order to avoid me asking more questions, he committed suicide directly. I couldn't stop him."

Committed suicide...

The female police officer heard this, bit her lip, and her eyes showed a tinge of sadness. But ultimately, she said hatefully,

"He got off easy! Aunt Marsha was such a great person, never got into an argument with anyone for so many years in the bureau, and this bastard actually had the heart to kill her, and those other people too... Where did that bastard die?"

"In the office upstairs, but I took the body away, so there's nothing up there now... Right!"

After answering the female officer's question, Leon thought for a moment and then suggested,

"How about not saying he was a Rebel? If anyone asks, just say the Rebels attacked your Secret Investigation Bureau's dungeon, not only rescuing the prisoners but also kidnapping the director and taking away a lot of confidential intelligence."

The female officer was slightly taken aback when she heard this.

"Why say that? No matter how thorough he was, if I really put my mind to it, I could definitely find out, and by then... Hmm... I get it."

After glancing up at Leon, the female officer thoughtfully nodded and said,

"Anyway, that bastard is dead, so Aunt Marsha and the others have been avenged. And saying the director was kidnapped sounds better than saying the director was a Rebel who infiltrated the Secret Investigation Bureau.

After all, if it truly turned out he was a spy, the entire Secret Investigation Bureau would likely be subject to investigation or even temporarily disbanded and reorganized.

And during that chaotic gap, the Rebels would certainly take the opportunity to cause havoc, resulting in a lot of casualties... Is that what you're thinking?"

"..."

Actually, it wasn't... I just wanted to make things a bit difficult for the Rebels. The focus of this story isn't on the scar-faced man's identity but on the Rebels taking the chance to steal lots of confidential intelligence.

As for the dirt, preferably it's all about the various noble families, officials, and big merchants. Now that the high-level insiders of the Secret Investigation Bureau are gone, and they're suddenly being hit from all sides, they should calm down for a while and not bother me right away.

"Something like that, something like that."

Following the female officer's lead, Leon responded ambiguously and then, noticing her slightly awkward stance, suggested,

"Did you also get your leg hit? How about going to the hospital to get it treated? I see there's an empty seat in their car..."

"No need! I'll go back and put some medicine on it myself, but your hand... Huh? Where's the wound on your hand?"

Grabbing Leon's left palm, she examined the newly-grown skin, and the female officer exclaimed in surprise,

"This... It was clearly quite serious just now, how did it heal just by wrapping it with some bandages?"

"Uh..."

"By the way, how did you do it before?"

Now that things had settled, the female officer, who had been holding back a belly full of questions, finally got her chance to ask. She quickly tugged on Leon's sleeve, leaned in, and whispered,

"Why was he able to come back to life even after dying, and why could he transform into over a dozen? And how did you do it? Why could you withstand so many Nails? Why did the dungeon collapse as soon as you pulled me into the corner? And..."

"Uh... I still have unfinished work..."

Hearing the female officer's string of "whys," Leon couldn't help but feel a headache coming on. He then made an excuse,

"I see you're quite busy here too, so how about we each focus on our own tasks first? I'll explain everything tomorrow after I'm done, okay?"

"Alright..."

Unaware that by tomorrow, the Brain of the Evil God at the Purification Bureau would wipe clean all memories related to Abnormals, the female officer received Leon's promise and, after only a brief hesitation, let him go, then seriously reminded him,

"I'll be waiting for you tomorrow in my office. Make sure to come find me after you're done! No lying!"

"I promise, I promise!"

After making a promise as unreliable as "next time, for sure," Leon quickly gathered his things and left the chaotic Secret Investigation Bureau. But instead of heading straight back to the Purification Bureau to report, he walked toward the main road outside the municipal area, intending to catch a public carriage.

The simple reason is that the scar-faced man was not exactly a formidable opponent. From the time I left the Purification Bureau to now, not even an hour had passed, and I had already taken care of him.

If I came back after a field assignment in just over half an hour and only six or seven hundred meters away, even the director might be embarrassed to approve my subsidy. I might as well go to Rose Manor to rescue someone first.

...

Damn, I missed the carriage, so now I have to wait for over half an hour... If I had known, I might as well have headed back to the bureau first.

After jogging to the nearby station, watching the public carriage just disappear from view, Leon couldn't help but rub his brows in frustration, feeling his luck had indeed been poor lately.

His sister was hospitalized, encountering an out-of-control Infector; investigating a middle-aged nurse almost got him cut in half by an old man; during a visit to the shopping mall, he unexpectedly came across the Holy Spirit of the Scales Gold Sect; just wanting a bandage, he ended up being targeted by the Rebels and trapped in the dungeon.

Even though everything ended without any major incidents and he pulled through successfully, it truly felt like he was cursed, bringing trouble wherever he went...

"What's up?"

Perhaps sensing Leon's hesitation and confusion through his soul vision, the Black Goat shook its head curiously and asked,

"Weren't those Rebels all dealt with? What nonsense are you pondering now?"

"It's not really a big deal..."

After a brief hesitation, Leon expressed his suspicion,

"I'm wondering if the frequency at which I encounter Abnormals is a bit too high? Why does something happen everywhere I go, like I'm possessed by Conan..."

"Which Demon God is Conan?"

"Uh... He's not a Demon God, he's a... Forget it, not worth mentioning.

What I mean is, ever since I joined the Purification Bureau, every time I try to do something proactive, it seems like some unexpected situation occurs. Am I under some curse of bad luck from an Anomalous Object?"

"Nonsense!"

After hearing Leon's suspicion, the Black Goat snorted and said,

"Though you have potential, you're only a Third-Class Cleanser at the Purification Bureau right now. The bureau has tons like you; who would specifically target you with a malefic Anomalous Object? Instead of using an Anomalous Object to ruin your luck, wouldn't it be easier to just get rid of you?"

"But it really feels like I'm particularly unlucky..."

"It's not that you're unlucky, but because you work for the Purification Bureau now, you're forced to seek out Anomalous Objects, so naturally, the frequency of encountering them has increased, and almost being cut down by that old man is exactly due to that."

After casting a disdainful glance at the "superstitious" Leon, the Great Demon confidently stated,

"The incident at Red Brick Road Hospital, whether you joined the Purification Bureau or not, would have definitely erupted that day. And as for the Holy Spirit of the Scales Gold Sect, as soon as Charl Department Store started selling a lot of goods, those random nobles would definitely stir up trouble. You just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

Hmm... That is true...

A bit convinced by the Black Goat, Leon thought for a moment, but then shook his head and said,

"Even if those events were bound to happen sooner or later, what difference does it make whether I'm there or not, why do I always end up being in just the right place?"

"Heh, what do you mean by 'just in the right place'? It's because the things you encountered in the past are impacting what's happening now, so it seems like things keep going wrong for you.

For example, that scar-faced guy today, he probably had his eye on you for some time. If you hadn't gone to the Secret Investigation Bureau, he probably wouldn't have dared to act rashly, but seeing you walk right into his trap, he couldn't help himself! Can that be called 'just in time'?"

...

Indeed, if I hadn't gone to the Secret Investigation Bureau, that scar-faced director probably wouldn't have dared to cause trouble, likely continuing to stay undercover...

After listening to the Black Goat, Leon realized it probably was the case. Still, for some reason, he couldn't shake the feeling that something wasn't quite right.

And seeing his Soulfire still flickering uncertainly, the Black Goat impatiently said,

"How about this: you're planning to go to Rose Manor to rescue someone, right? Let's see if you can smoothly bring her out!

If everything goes well, then you were just overthinking it. But if something goes wrong again, we can find a way to check things out for you, how about that?"

Chapter 154 FLAG has been established_1

If things go wrong again this time, should I check if my luck is off?

After hearing the Black Goat's suggestion, Leon thought it over and nodded in agreement.

The bureau had received the anomalous object sent by old Charl, so they had Jerry keep an eye on the person involved. This mission to rescue someone from Rose Manor should be as easy as going downstairs to pick up a package.

Sneak in, grab the person, return, and hand in the task—that's the entire procedure.

If everything went smoothly with the mission, there would be nothing more to say. But if even something this simple ended up having issues, then it would prove he had an "Easy Mission Body," and he should seriously consider checking it out.

"Makes sense, let's go!"

Agreeing to the suggestion made by the Black Goat, Leon decided not to wait for the public carriage anymore. After counting the money in his wallet, he gritted his teeth and waved down a taxi carriage waiting by the roadside.

"Passenger, where are you headed?"

"Redwood Avenue, are you going there?"

"Sure, definitely going!"

When the coachman saw Leon's dust-covered old coat, he hesitated a bit, worried Leon would dirty the cushions in the carriage. But when he heard Leon was planning to cross half the Capital City from the Old Town directly to Redwood Avenue, his face broke into a grin.

Why worry about dirtying the cushions? It can always be cleaned. After finishing this ride for such a "big client," he could relax for the rest of the day and have plenty of time to clean the carriage later!

"Neigh~"

After Leon bent down with his shopping bag and climbed into the carriage, accompanied by the neighing of the horse and the creaking of the boiler valves, the small carriage that could hold at most two people set off eagerly.

The coachman, who had just received a big order, was evidently in a good mood, half-leaning against the small window at the front of the carriage, and initiated a friendly conversation:

"Passenger, a lot of people on Redwood Avenue!"

"..."

Hearing the somewhat familiar opening from the coachman, Leon in the carriage shivered involuntarily, and the Black Goat seemed to remember something as well, shivering almost simultaneously.

Oh my God, if I remember correctly, when this kid ran into the toad from the Scales Gold Sect, wasn't the coachman on the road saying the exact same thing? Could it be...

"My cousin is a public carriage ticket inspector. After completing her first run this morning, she told me that some important personage had gone missing. Over there on Redwood Street, it's packed with people right now!"

After sharing this piece of fresh gossip he just heard, the coachman glanced in the rearview mirror, noticing Leon's expression was a bit stiff, and suddenly paused.

This big client seems like someone who doesn't enjoy chatting? Perhaps I should stop talking, lest he changes car in the middle of the ride.

Just as the coachman was about to cease the conversation, Leon, having realized something, asked with a slightly odd expression:

"The important person you mentioned who went missing...is it from the Ryan Family?"

"Yes, yes, from the Ryan Family!"

Seeing the "big client" finally engage, the coachman relaxed and, with a broad smile, said:

"Have you seen the newspapers these days? The Ryan Family, those... ahem... those gentlemen, lost over two hundred people overnight, and they're all that kind of... um..."

"Scumbags who do nothing good."

"Exactly! All the dead ones were scumbags who did no good! Haha, you're right on point."

Seeing that Leon seemed to associate himself with ordinary folk and given his worn-out clothes and the dust from when the dungeon collapsed, not at all resembling someone who could be related to high nobility, the coachman felt completely at ease, launching into a tirade against the Ryan Family:

"Anyway, that damn family lost a lot of people overnight, even the first heir was killed. Although the old Duke of Lionheart is still alive, he probably got frightened and will not last many days.

According to The Sun News, that old rascal picked another little rascal to succeed the Ryan Family just before he died. But that little rascal vanished before sunrise today, only leaving a note saying he'd be back in a few days.

The Ryan Family and their in-law nobles are going crazy looking for that little rascal. If anyone can provide information, once confirmed, they'll give five Gold Wheels directly!"

"..."

After hearing the coachman's words, Leon, the "little rascal," couldn't help but scowl and decided to change cars after this street to avoid more insults and maybe save some fare when the meter resets.

However, though he'd been insulted for no reason, realizing the trouble was with the Ryan Family and not his target, the Marzini Family, Leon felt quite relieved.

For now, everything still seems stable. As long as I sneak into Rose Manor, grab the target, and leave, nothing should go wrong...right?

...

"The Ryan Family wants to connect with me to reach the Scales Gold Sect? To buy the whereabouts of the new Duke with money?"

After hearing the butler's report, the elder with a rose emblem embroidered on his chest set down the financial report and frowned:

"Ignore them. The Scales Gold Sect doesn't take this kind of job, and there's no one left in the Ryan Family who can make decisions! Especially after Thomas, who signed the contract on behalf of Bobby Layne, died, our three-family alliance is essentially dissolved. Refuse any such matters in the future, and don't bother me with them!"

"Yes, I've noted it."

Hearing the elder's instructions, the butler, holding a bunch of letters in his left hand, nodded quickly in agreement, tossing a letter with a lion emblem into the nearby wastepaper basket, then opened the next letter and briefly glanced over it before reporting:

"The next one is from Lord Simon. After you kidnapped old Charl's only daughter, Charl Department Store has been quiet for a few days. But recently, they've started dumping their stocks at a low price again, and it appears they've shifted their inventory, focusing on discounting products that Rose Department Store mainly sells.

Lord Simon wants to know how much longer it will take to deal with old Charl. If this continues, even if we swallow the Ryan Family's shares, Rose Department Store will suffer severe losses; he's about to give up and withdraw his investment."

"Hold on, you must!"

Slightly annoyed, the elder replied upon hearing the butler's words:

"When we discovered the benefits, everyone fought tooth and nail to gain a share. Now, realizing there could be losses, they all want to back out. How can there be such an easy out? Tell him to stick it out for me!"

"..."

"What's wrong? Speak!"

"Lord Simon...he might really be at his limit..."

Extracting the report sandwiched in the letter and handing it cautiously to the elder, the butler carefully said:

"I've just briefly reviewed it. If no one continues to invest, based on Rose Department Store's financial condition, it can sustain itself for at most 15 days.

If it goes any longer, I'm afraid not just Lord Simon, but even some within our family, including some of your in-laws, might not be able to resist pulling their investments."

"..."

15 days...

Looking at the stark deficit in the report, the elder's eyebrows twitched rapidly, his expression shifting uncertainly. It seemed as if he wanted to get angry, but ultimately, he slumped back into his chair helplessly.

"Fetch the Ryan Family's letter from the trash and see how much they are willing to offer..."

Chapter 155 Looking for Someone_1

"No wonder you were once the Kingdom's twin pillars, you really know how to name a price."

After reviewing the "offer sheet" handed to her, the middle-aged woman in a brown robe chuckled and said to the old man with a rose emblem on his chest,

"Earl Sam, if you don't mind, could you tell me how much the Ryan Family paid you to help deliver this letter?"

"Well..."

"Haha, never mind if you don't want to say, I was just asking casually."

Looking at the embarrassed old man, the woman in the brown robe smiled and said,

"Being able to draw money from the Ryan Family is your own skill. Our Scales Gold Sect's doctrine doesn't oppose such matters; it even encourages them."

But without my help, you wouldn't have earned this money, so as the crucial link, I request to share a portion of your earnings. Do you agree?"

"I agree, of course, I agree!"

Cursing inwardly about her greed, and realizing he didn't hold the upper hand, the old man named Sam nodded repeatedly while gritting his teeth, handing over a new offer.

Seeing the satisfied expression finally appearing in the eyes of the woman in the brown robe, the old man, despite feeling pained, secretly breathed a sigh of relief, then bowed slightly, saying respectfully,

"Your Excellency Bishop, the people from the Ryan Family are right outside. If now is convenient for you..."

"Convenient, of course, convenient!"

Mimicking the old man's tone, the woman in the brown robe, who looked to be around forty, laughed heartily and said,

"It's just helping to find someone, and I can earn such a generous income, how could it not be convenient? Let's go, take me to meet the guests of the Ryan Family."

"Sure, this way, please."

Leading the woman in the brown robe through the corridors of the estate, they arrived at a rather secluded reception room, and facing those who hurriedly stood up to greet her, the old man from the Rose family took the initiative to introduce both parties,

"Your Excellency Bishop, these are the last remaining elders of the Ryan Family, the new head of the Ryan Family, and the most trusted butler of the late Duke.

Everyone, this is a bishop from the wealth-attracting branch of the Scales Gold Sect, you can call her..."

"No need for names, just call me 'Brown'."

Interrupting the old man's introduction, the middle-aged woman in the brown robe stepped forward quickly, shook hands with the few people, and then said with a pleasant smile,

"I heard from Earl Sam that you contacted our Scales Gold Sect because the designated heir of the Ryan Family has gone missing, and you want me to find his whereabouts, correct?"

"Yes, yes!"

Hearing the inquiry of the woman in the brown robe, the youngest among the three, the new head of the family, nodded eagerly with his head full of golden hair and said with slight excitement,

"Brown... Your Excellency Bishop! To be honest, we have no choice now.

In just over two days, the rite of succession will take place, and the invitations have already been sent out, but the heir designated by the late Duke ran off from the hospital this morning!

Truth be told, if you can find him for us within two days, we're willing to add fifty percent more to what we've already offered you!"

?!!!

Are you crazy? How can you reveal everything at the first meeting?

Hearing the young man's words, the other two members of the Ryan Family were shocked, then looked at him with surprise and anger, their eyes filled with indignation and blame.

The young man seemed to realize it too, hastily covering his mouth and saying with a panicked expression, "I... I didn't mean to say that! I didn't!"

"Haha, don't blame him, please. The head of the family didn't mean to say these things. I personally don't like deception, so I used some little tricks earlier, hoping to make our communication more honest."

After briefly explaining what she had done, seeing the growing apprehension in the eyes of the three from the Ryan Family, the woman in the brown robe smiled nonchalantly and suggested,

"As for the extra fifty percent, let's forget about that. The gifts you offered earlier are already quite generous. Although our Scales Gold Sect loves wealth, we are not insatiable, and taking only what we deserve is enough."

Seeing the noticeable relief on their faces at not needing to add more, the woman in the brown robe slightly curled her lips and added,

"However... even though I'm quite confident in finding the new Duke, our method might be somewhat unconventional. I'm wondering if you all can accept it?"

Somewhat unconventional?

Hearing the woman's words, the three from the Ryan Family exchanged glances before the eldest elder asked,

"Brown, may I ask what you mean by unconventional?"

"Joining our Scales Gold Sect is required, but not for you, instead for the new Duke of the Ryan Family."

With a slight smirk, the woman in the brown robe displayed a rather peculiar grin, like a large brown cat that had spotted a plump rat.

"I serve the Cat Spirit, one of the three Holy Spirits; anyone who has used money or even slightly engaged with it, cannot escape its detection and summoning.

Thus, finding the new Duke's location is very simple. If the Cat Spirit is willing, it can even bring him directly to you, even if he has already left the Capital City. The rite of succession in two days won't be delayed.

However, as the cost, after being locked on by the Cat Spirit's power, the new Duke will be influenced by it, carrying the scent of our Scales Gold Sect, making it almost impossible to affiliate with another sect.

Are you willing to accept this cost?"

To be forced into the Scales Gold Sect? Never able to join another sect?

After hearing the woman's words, the three from the Ryan Family once again exchanged meaningful glances.

Let him join then. It's just a puppet Duke anyway' as long as he can appear at the rite of succession two days from now and stabilize' the situation for the Ryan Family; it doesn't matter what sect he joins, even if he comes back missing an arm or a leg.

However... what if the Scales Gold Sect has ulterior motives?

The family was eager for the rite of succession to at least retain some of the Ryan Family's assets, and if not, they hoped to capitalize on the Duke of Lionheart's reputation for their kin.

If the new Duke joined the Scales Gold Sect, there would be another contender for the title. What if the Scales Gold Sect secretly joined the fray, vying for the Ryan Family's inheritance?

...

"Your Excellency Bishop, please first locate his position."

After some intense eye exchanges, the Ryan Family finally reached a consensus. The old Duke's butler bowed slightly and said,

"If the new Duke hasn't gone far and is just hiding temporarily, we can find him ourselves. But if he has left the Capital City, we'll trouble you to bring him back."

"Alright then, please give me something he has used."

Unconcerned with the Ryan Family's little schemes, she accepted two bandages still sticky with ointment from the old butler, sniffed them, her dark brown lips moving slightly, silently chanting two lines.

Suddenly, a lazy cat's meow resounded in the reception room. The pupils in the woman's eyes quickly contracted and seemed to slice sideways as if slashed, her eyeballs swelling rapidly, transforming into bizarre cat's eyes.

"I see him."

After blinking uncomfortably, seeing the "trail" extending from the bandages, the woman whose eyes had expanded threefold, laughed and said,

"The trail is strong. It seems the Duke didn't run far. Let me check his surroundings... Hmm... He carried something, climbed over a wall, and jumped into a large patch of red roses; not far away is a six-story magenta building..."

Wait! Isn't that building a bit familiar?

Chapter 156 Who would seriously play a game of sneaking in_1

"Not bad, so far, everything is smooth."

Struggling slightly as he emerged from the rose bushes, Leon looked at the magenta six-story building not far away. Having successfully infiltrated Rose Manor, he couldn't help but nod in satisfaction.

Although Redwood Avenue was chaotic, with people searching for his whereabouts everywhere, with the soul vision from the Black Goat, he merely took a slightly roundabout route and successfully avoided them.

The sentries at Rose Manor were the same. Although the guards of the Marseille family were fairly diligent, he opened the "full map cheat." Once the patrols left, he simply walked through the woods for a bit, climbed over two walls, and entered the heart of Rose Manor.

According to Lady Lisa's directions, all he needed to do next was to bypass the magenta main building in the courtyard and enter the four-story low-rise on the east wing of the manor to successfully rescue those inside... huh?

Seeing the soul vision filled with a disorderly crowd of souls, Leon frowned slightly. But before he could react, the alarm bells in the manor were rung by someone. Two glaring xenon lamps were lit up, shining like giant spotlights in a dance floor, beginning to sweep wildly towards the southwest corner of the rose garden.

It was daytime...

Looking at the two bright lights obviously aimed at him, Leon's expression darkened a bit. If the Marseille family didn't customarily hold parties during the day, then it meant his infiltration had been discovered. Moreover, it seemed he was utterly exposed, with the opposition even pinpointing his approximate location.

"This way!"

"Follow the lights!"

"Spread out! Keep formation!"

"Don't let him escape!"

Hearing the increasing clamor and seeing the souls swiftly approaching in his soul vision, Leon, whose infiltration had failed, immediately began plotting his next move.

If he retreated... his current position was in the heart of Rose Manor, and the guards were all advancing towards the point of light. If he turned back to retreat, not only would he have to run a significant distance, but he'd also likely crash into the thickest circle of envelopment.

And the straight-line distance between him and the target was only three or four hundred meters. At his maximum speed, that distance could be covered in just slightly over half a minute.

So he could completely choose to continue moving forward, passing through the main building, rescuing the hostage by breaking the wall, and then leaving from the other side of the manor. This way, he could both complete the mission and avoid the swarming guards... no time to waste, charge!

Taking a second to assess the current situation, Leon made a split-second decision to continue forward, sprinting out of the rose garden towards the main building. After just a few breaths, he reached the bottom of the main building.

"Bang!"

Blasting the window open with the help of the Holy Spirit pendant, Leon smoothly flipped through the window thanks to the parkour badge's enhancement. He entered what was probably the kitchen, and, under the shocked gazes of several chefs, he barreled out of the kitchen door, dashed through a hallway, and stormed into the first-floor foyer.

"What's happening?"

"What the heck?"

"What are you doing... ow!"

Ignoring the disturbed individuals, Leon maintained his high speed as he sprinted through the foyer, kicking over a tall old man with a purple-black soul. Without stopping, he charged into the opposite hallway, burst into what was likely a servant's lounge, and amidst the screams of several young maids, broke out through another window.

In about ten seconds flat, Leon barreled through the main building, continuing on to the low-rise in the east wing. Simultaneously, he gripped the Holy Spirit pendant tightly.

"Boom!"

With an intense blast, the wall on the second floor of the east wing low-rise exploded. The woman inside, who had been attempting to pick a lock, let out a terrified scream as Leon swooped in and slung her over his shoulder. He then charged out of the room.

"Ah!"

"Boom!"

"Don't!"

"Boom!"

"I'm going to die!"

"Boom!"

Amidst the woman's screams on his shoulder, Leon tore through four walls, leaping off the other side of the low-rise into the surrounding woods of the manor. He only needed to run another seven or eight hundred meters to reach the outer fence of Rose Manor.

Perfect!

Carrying the woman forward a bit longer, completely ditching all pursuers, Leon finally allowed a faint smile as he eyed the nearby fence of the manor.

He had done it; despite some hiccups along the way, he had managed to escape unscathed. Next, he only needed to return Charl Department Store's young lady, and his mission would be complete.

"Wait... wait a minute... um..."

Just as Leon took a deep breath and opened the iron fence ahead, the woman on his shoulder finally recovered from the harrowing escape and chase.

Though she didn't know Leon's identity, or even what he looked like, since he had rescued her from Rose Manor, he definitely wasn't one of Marseille's men, and was likely someone her father had sent to save her.

After catching her breath, suppressing the nausea from being jostled about, the young heiress kidnapped mid-move held her mouth and gently patted Leon's back.

"Who... who are you?"

"..."

Right, because of the unexpected events during the operation, the infiltration and rescue had turned into a forced breakout, and there was no time to explain his identity or tell her he was sent by her father.

After glancing back toward Rose Manor and confirming that no one would catch up soon, Leon set the thoroughly jostled woman on the ground, helping her balance before answering:

"I am sent by yo—huh?"

Before Leon could finish, the woman in front of him suddenly vanished, replaced by an intimidating woman with large eyes and several incredulous old men.

Witnessing Leon's wild dash from upstairs, and finally deciding to ask the brown-robed woman to step in, the few were also caught off guard by his unorthodox "introduction," leading both sides into a brief silence due to the unforeseen developments.

Shortly after, it was the experienced brown-robed woman who first reacted, smiling towards the promising new Duke of Lionheart in front of her, offering her goodwill.

"I am the Bishop of the Scales Gold Sect's Fortune branch. You may address me as—"

"Bang!"

While touching the forehead of the Black Goat to see if these people were good or bad, Leon didn't hesitate for even a second upon hearing the words Scales Gold Sect. Directly activating the Holy Spirit pendant, he blasted her head into pulp like a smashed watermelon.

Dying so suddenly, the brown-robed woman's soul hadn't even reacted, still hovering cluelessly in place. A massive question mark floated up from her purple-black soul.

It was indeed not that simple, seemingly an ambush!

Although unsure of the situation, Leon, having killed the Holy Spirit of the Scales Gold Sect, and long having formed a blood feud with them, swiftly turned his gaze to the remaining members of the Scales Gold Sect, clutching the Holy Spirit pendant tightly again.

Chapter 157 Do you think it counts or not_1

Was that... it was all over?

Seeing Leon glare at the Bishop of the Scales Gold Sect and kill him in an instant, then turning his fierce gaze towards them, the remaining people in the room all shuddered in unison.

The old man from the Marcen family was the first to react, immediately dropping to his knees, narrowly avoiding an invisible hand that seemed to reach for his head.

"Mercy! I barely know her!"

With his exemplary response, the three from the Ryan Family quickly followed suit, falling to their knees one after another, begging for mercy in a chorus.

"I don't know her either!"

"We had no idea what she was doing!"

"Your Grace! I'm with the old Duke!"

It had to be said, anyone who climbed to a high position within the sprawling Ryan Family wasn't slow to react. Of the three old men from the Ryan Family, each kneeled faster than the last. Once they lowered themselves, their distinctive small golden curls finally caught Leon's eye.

Calling me 'Your Grace,' and with that head of golden hair...

Observing the sparse heads in front of him, and recognizing one as the old Duke's steward, Leon was momentarily taken aback, then instinctively furrowed his brow.

"Are you really with the Scales Gold Sect?"

"No, no!"

Afraid the three from the Ryan Family would sell him out, the old man from the Rose Family quickly interjected,

"We're not with the Scales Gold Sect! We just asked her for help to find someone. I'm the Earl of the Rose Family! Your Grace, we're related by marriage!"

"Yes, yes, we have nothing to do with the Scales Gold Sect."

"Indeed, we are from the Ryan Family."

"I'm the newly appointed head of the Ryan Family, and he is the last patriarch. We are yours, Your Grace!"

"..."

Damn, I shouldn't have asked.

Looking at these little... old golden-haired ones, Leon couldn't help but click his tongue in slight annoyance.

These three from the Ryan Family, since they managed to escape the Ryan Blood Night without being killed by him using the Heart of Ambition, were clearly not heinous criminals. However, according to the Ryan Family's excellent average moral standards, while they weren't outright villains, they certainly weren't good people either—at best, they were bastards with a hint of humanity.

...

Although he wanted to pretend he hadn't asked and let them shuffle off, the suspicion of causing the Ryan Blood Night loomed over him. Plus, the director's repeated warnings before departure made Leon set aside the tempting idea, asking with a grim expression,

"So... we're still in Rose Manor? Was it that Bishop from the Scales Gold Sect who brought me back?"

"Yes, yes, it was all her doing!"

Seeing that Leon seemed to give up on getting physical, the few old men in the room let out a sigh of relief, then scrambled to pin the blame on the headless corpse on the ground.

"You left a note and vanished. We just wanted to bring you back. It was all her idea!"

"Right, right. She wanted to lure you into the Scales Gold Sect and brought you over with that cat spirit!"

"She surely coveted... coveted the Ryan Family's assets under your name!"

"..."

From the somewhat confused descriptions of the old men, Leon pieced together the gist of the situation, bewildered,

"So, after she forcibly brought me over, I have a mark from the Scales Gold Sect on me, making me one of them?"

"Well... we don't know, but she certainly said so..."

"..."

Absurd... Even though I'd killed the Holy Spirit of the Scales Gold Sect and just took out a high-ranking bishop, I've now directly earned a position as a member of the Scales Gold Sect...

Shaking his head in disbelief, Leon opened the badge panel and looked at the constantly blinking Holy Spirit Badge.

[Practitioner (Silver): Having personally slain a large number of evil heretics and spread the fame of the Scales Gold Sect around the world, your efforts are deeply recognized by the followers and Holy Spirits of the Sect]

[Wearing Effect: Greatly increases affinity with Anomalous Objects marked as "Sacred," simultaneously lowering the Cost while significantly enhancing the effect]

[Advancement Route: Become a Bishop of a certain branch of the Scales Gold Sect, or preach your understanding of the teachings to three thousand members and earn their recognition, after which this badge will automatically advance to the Golden Badge "Deputy," progress in preaching the teachings to the congregation 0/3000]

[Hidden Trait (doesn't require wearing): Due to actively practicing the Scales Gold Sect's teachings, your soul becomes increasingly firm and pure, making it easier to gain favor from certain entities of order]

"..."

Well, this is a blessing in disguise, saving me quite a bit of trouble.

After examining the advancement route of the Practitioner badge, Leon frowned again, then squinted at the old man with the rose embroidered on his chest, confidently saying,

"You lied just now, didn't you?"

"I...I didn't..."

"You'd best not rush to deny it."

Looking at the rose emblem on the old man's chest, Leon spoke,

"Your Marcení Family's collusion with the Scales Gold Sect is no secret. That's why, when I vanished, they came to you for help. Am I right?"

"Actually, it wasn't to help..."

Just then, the old steward cautiously reminded,

"Your Grace, with regard to finding your whereabouts, Lord Sam demanded a hefty price and said it wasn't his desire. It was the Bishop's insistence..."

"I haven't been paid! The money hasn't been paid yet! I don't want anything now! And, not only this time, the money invested in the Rose Department Store can also be returned to you!"

Realizing Leon was likely at odds with the Scales Gold Sect, after promising to return all the money, the old man from the Rose Family wailed,

"Your Grace! Our family truly doesn't collude with the Scales Gold Sect. We just have minor collaborations. Please, don't..."

"I want to become a Bishop of the Scales Gold Sect."

"Huh?"

Seeing the old man gape in confusion, eyes full of bewilderment, Leon patiently repeated,

"Tell me, how can I become a Bishop of the Scales Gold Sect?"

???

But... you just killed their Bishop two minutes ago, then the moment you heard you were part of the Scales Gold Sect, you immediately switched sides, not only accepting your new identity but also aspiring to become a Bishop?

Is your adaptability outrageously strong?

Watching Leon's earnest expression and realizing this newly appointed Duke of Lionheart wasn't joking but genuinely serious, the old man's dry lips moved twice, finally flustered,

"Well... The Scales Gold Sect has three branches. Each branch can have at most three Bishops simultaneously. To become a Bishop, you must first get the joint recommendation of at least two Bishops from different branches, then participate in three congregations to gain the congregation's approval..."

"Too troublesome, is there a quicker way?"

"Uh... Then it's True God's personal designation, or receiving the approval of two of the three... Holy Spirits and being imbued with their aura to be directly acknowledged by the Scales Gold Sect followers."

I see...

After hearing the old man's words, Leon slightly frowned.

True God's personal designation is impossible. I directly killed His Holy Spirit; the likelihood of Him personally condemning me is higher than appointing me as a Bishop. As for Holy Spirit recognition...

"In that case, let me ask you."

After touching the Holy Spirit pendant on his chest, Leon seriously pursued,

"If I took out a Holy Spirit and crafted it into... um... an accessory, wearing it consistently, would it count as being imbued with its aura? Would it be acknowledged?"

Chapter 158 Who has the final say?_1

After taking down the Holy Spirit of the Scales Gold Sect and wearing it around, would having absorbed enough of its aura be considered gaining the Holy Spirit's approval to become a Bishop of the Scales Gold Sect?

After listening to Leon's question, not only did the old man from the Rose family freeze in place, but even the Ryan Family trio felt their brains buzzing with confusion.

They understood each word the Duke said, but why did it not make any sense altogether?

"Say something, will you?"

After waiting a while without hearing an answer, Leon frowned slightly, looking a bit annoyed as he pressed on,

"Is this feasible or not? Quickly give me an answer!"

"Ah? This... this..."

Seeing that this ominous figure was a bit displeased, the old man from the Rose Family shuddered violently. But since no one had tried this before, and no one had even thought about it, he really didn't know how to answer. With a mournful face, he said,

"There's no precedent for this, I truly have no idea... perhaps... perhaps you can try it yourself?"

Try it myself... is it possible?

After contemplating for a moment, Leon nodded slightly and then asked,

"When is your Scales Gold Sect's next gathering?"

You're really going to try it!

Looking at Leon seriously asking about the gathering time, the old man from the Rose Family was nearly in tears.

At this moment, he wished he could travel back five seconds in time and strangle himself alive for suggesting such nonsense.

Not to mention anything else, just bringing this person who took out the Brown Bishop to the gathering was akin to apostasy, and it would definitely invite relentless pursuit.

And if this ominous figure succeeded in the end and truly became a Bishop of some branch, when the people of the Scales Gold Sect reacted, they might even directly invite a Holy Spirit to take him out!

But...

Glancing at the body of the "serenely" lying woman in the brown robe on the ground, and then looking at the bloodstains on his pants that hadn't dried yet, the old man from the Rose family had to swallow his tears back and obediently revealed the Scales Gold Sect's next gathering time.

"Three weeks! The Scales Gold Sect holds gatherings every two months, and the next one is in three weeks!"

Choose the lesser of two evils, right? Although apostasy is likely to lead to death, given this person's tendency to explode people's heads upon meeting, refusing him might just have him lying next to the Brown Bishop in the next second!

Three weeks, huh?

Noting the time in his mind, Leon looked at the old man in front of him with a bitter expression and continued to ask,

"Where is the location, and how do I get there?"

"Well... the Scales Gold Sect is a secretive sect, so every gathering is notified temporarily..."

"That's fine, I'll come to find you in three weeks. At that time, you can take me there."

"..."

"Is there a problem?"

"No... no problem..."

With the "three-week agreement" made with the old man from the Rose family, Leon turned to look at the three old golden retrievers of the Ryan Family behind him, frowning,

"You all..."

"We won't say a single word!"

After witnessing Leon's series of actions, the three old golden retrievers had completely lost their temper regarding their new Duke who possessed some kind of special power, and whose thoughts were clearly different from those of normal people.

To avoid the fate of being blown to bits with a single glance, the three retrievers pounded their chests to swear that they would say nothing after leaving, each one of their old faces wearing a more "affable" expression than the last, as if they might grow a wagging tail from behind any second.

Alright then...

After glancing at the obedient "Ryan Three Elders" and then at the pale-faced old man from the Rose Family, Leon, who was still investigating, shook his head and suppressed the last bit of his intention to act.

After wantonly "releasing" during the Ryan Blood Night, although a large part of his anger had been vented, it seemed as if a new switch had been flipped, and when faced with matters, he began prioritizing striking directly.

It seemed the director was right: the more power one possessed, the more they needed to restrain their actions.

Especially the Cleaners with Abnormal abilities, as they were constantly subjected to the Corrosion of Anomalous Objects, making them prone to radicalization. If they were to indulge their desires at such a time, they would gradually drift further from being "Human."

And if these extraordinary beings were completely uncontrolled, the world itself would be thrown into chaos even before the Evil Gods descended.

But not indulging doesn't mean doing nothing!

With the help of the Black Goat's soul vision, after carefully observing the situation at the Rose Manor and seeing an equally unredeemable number of "Ink Spots," Leon squinted slightly.

"Let's leave it at that for today."

Looking at those dark souls that, although not as numerous as those in the Ryan Family, were no less "quality," Leon couldn't help but grip the Black Goat's horn tightly and then gave the old man from the Rose Family a meaningful glance.

"We'll meet in three weeks."

"Ah? Alright! I'll see you out now!"

Seeing this ominous figure finally prepare to leave, the four people in the room were greatly relieved. The old man from the Rose Family even eagerly followed behind, ready to personally escort Leon out of the manor.

"No need to see me out, I can find my own way."

Rejecting the old man from the Rose Family's offer, Leon checked the task target's location, found it still wandering inside the outer walls of the manor, and simply found a window to climb out of, intending to send the person back home first.

And as they swarmed to the window, watching his silhouette disappear into the woodland with their own eyes, the hearts of the four old men, which had been held high, finally settled completely back in their chests. The old man from the Rose Family, completely relieved, slumped onto the carpet.

"Arrogant!"

Grabbing the window frame firmly and steadying his trembling legs, the only remaining elder of the Ryan Family was the first to speak, his hair and beard bristling with anger,

"Even though he's the new Duke of Lionheart, I'm the only elder left in the family! Even when the old Duke was still around, he never dared to treat me so lightly!"

"You're absolutely right."

After hearing the words of the old family elder, the old butler beside him, his heart pounding like a drum and his face deathly pale, pressed his heart hard and nodded in agreement,

"The Duke's character... is indeed a bit too extreme."

"Yes! The way he dares to treat us now, I don't even dare to imagine what will happen once he officially becomes the Duke!"

After pounding the windowsill fiercely, the head of the Ryan Family gritted his teeth and said,

"We can't let today's incident slide; during the Duke's succession ceremony, we must join forces to teach him a lesson, to let this damn guy know exactly who calls the shots in the Ryan Family!"

Chapter 159 Hero or Elite_1

Unaware of what had happened after he left, Leon maintained the good habit of seeing tasks through to completion. He once again found the target as shown in his soul vision.

Hmm... When rescuing her earlier, he had run too quickly to take a closer look, but now he realized the daughter of the Charl Department Store owner looked somewhat familiar from the back?

Seeing the woman perched atop the iron railing, struggling yet failing to climb over after several attempts, Leon hesitated briefly before tentatively speaking up,

"Miss Amy?"

"Oh my gosh!"

Hearing a voice from behind, alarmed, the woman on the railing quickly lost her footing with her left foot and fell backwards with a scream.

"Watch out!"

Seeing her head-first descent, Leon quickly sprinted forward, worried she might hurt herself, and caught her in his arms. After helping the pale-faced, doll-like young woman steady herself, seeing her still shocked demeanor, Leon reassured her,

"Don't worry, Miss Amy, the Messini family's issue has been resolved. You're safe now."

"I... Mr. Leon?"

Seeing Leon's face clearly for the first time, Amy was taken aback, and then seemed to realize something. She exclaimed in surprise,

"Just now... was that you? Did you rescue me?"

"Yes, it was me."

Looking at her familiar doll-like face, Leon was equally surprised,

"So you're the daughter of the Charl Department Store owner?"

"I... I am. I'm sorry, I never mentioned it to you before..."

After timidly answering Leon's question, the doll-like young woman, full of questions herself, couldn't help but ask in confusion,

"Just now... how did you suddenly disappear like that? And, did you plant bombs on the wall? Why did the wall explode wherever you went? And also..."

"Well... how about waiting until tomorrow? I'm guessing your family is anxious by now. Let me take you home first, and I'll explain tomorrow."

Once again offering "tomorrow for sure" as a response, and unwilling to answer her questions, Leon also had several questions he didn't want to ask. He grabbed the railing, pretending to exert force, then secretly used the power of the Holy Spirit pendant to bend the railing, opening a gap large enough for a person to pass through. He led the doll-faced young woman out by ducking through.

...

Phew... we're finally out!

Although it was just another fence, for Amy, who had been confined for several days, it marked a complete escape from the Messini family's domain.

After unconsciously letting out a breath, she patted her flat chest and then stealthily glanced at the back of the man, feeling her own heartbeat quicken slightly.

First, because of the department store incident, she found a man who seemed just the right fit for a husband. Just as she was about to move next door to him to get better acquainted, she was kidnapped on the way.

Then, she was confined in a dim little room for several anxious days, eventually being rescued, and the one who saved her turned out to be the man she had her eye on!

Oh dear, this really is...

While his rescuing method wasn't carrying me out like a princess, but rather slinging me over his shoulder like a sack, nearly making me throw up, it still counts as a hero saving the damsel, right?

Secretly holding his hand a little tighter, feeling the warm, inexplicable sense of security, Amy couldn't help but blush slightly and murmured,

"Mr. Leon, thank you for rescuing me! I'll be sure to repay you!"

"That won't be necessary."

Hearing her words, Leon, who was waiting for a carriage by the roadside, shook his head and replied quite honestly,

"The reason I came to save you was mainly because your father contacted our department, asking for assistance. Then the chief assigned the task of rescuing you to me. As for the reward, your father has already paid in advance."

"I see..."

The narrative of the hero saving the damsel suddenly shifted to that of a business professional, causing the doll-faced young woman to look crestfallen. The pink bubbles in her mind burst almost completely. However, when Leon mentioned old Charl, her expression immediately turned worried again. She bit her lip and asked with concern,

"By the way, during the days I was kidnapped, my parents must have been worried sick. Are they okay now?"

"I haven't seen them, but I assume there aren't any major issues."

Leon thought for a moment before responding,

"After your father approached us, our chief had someone investigate his situation. Your father looked somewhat haggard but was in good spirits. Your mother, on the other hand, worried herself into a mild illness, but nothing too serious. You'll probably find she's fine once you return."

As long as they're okay...

After inquiring about her parents, the doll-faced young woman felt slightly more at ease. Then she bit her lip again and tentatively invited,

"Mr. Leon, you've done such a great favor for our family, so... if it's convenient for you, could you come to our home in a couple of days as a guest? I'd really like to express my gratitude."

In a couple of days... isn't that Ryan Family's inheritance ceremony? Plus, the investigators from the General Bureau will probably arrive tomorrow morning, so definitely not.

"It doesn't seem convenient."

Leon thought for a moment and shook his head,

"I have something on that day, and probably won't have the time. Besides, you really don't need to thank me... Oh, right, do you have any money on you?"

"Huh? Yes, yes, I do!"

Hearing Leon's question, the doll-faced young woman quickly rummaged through her things and pulled out a delicate leather wallet from her dress pocket. She then took out a stack of 10 Gold Wheel bearer checks and handed them over, slightly embarrassed,

"I was kidnapped rather suddenly, so I don't have much money on me. Will this be enough?"

"..."

Never mind... I'll just pretend I didn't ask.

Seeing the checks equivalent to half a year's salary for himself, Leon remained silent for a while, then speechlessly pushed them back. He fumbled through his own pocket and found his number of Copper Wheels insufficient, reluctantly pulled out a Silver Wheel and handed it to her, then pointed at an approaching steam carriage and instructed,

"We don't share the same route. When the carriage arrives, just take it home. Remember to stash those checks securely on your way, so you don't get kidnapped right after being rescued.

Also, the ride from Redwood Avenue to the Charl Department Store headquarters is just over nine kilometers. The first five kilometers cost two Copper Wheels and the remaining four, one Copper Wheel per kilometer, meaning if you get off half a block early, it'll only cost six Copper Wheels, so... never mind, just give me the money back!"

In the previous encounters, even though he thought she wasn't a naïve heiress, Leon was still significantly shocked by her pulling out a year's worth of his salary. He worried she might actually try to pay for the ride with checks.

After handing the Silver Wheel to the coachman and getting back three Copper Wheels in change, Leon meticulously noted the number on the steam carriage's rear, then felt reassured in seeing the doll-faced young woman off. He then flagged down another coach, got in, and handed the coachman a handful of Copper Wheels.

"Number 35, Bridge Street, Happiness Apartment."

Chapter 160 Anchor Point_1

"Snap! Snap! Snap!"

Seeing the stout old man in the lobby of Happiness Apartment on the first floor, clutching large scissors and glaring at him, Leon couldn't help but rub his temples in frustration.

Damn, after the Devil's Badge advanced to the Gold level, it seemed the 'demonic aura' in my soul became too strong. Before the Holy Spirit Badge caught up to the Gold Level, I might really have to sleep at the office.

Or maybe...

Looking at the apologetic face of the matronly manager in the lobby, Leon tentatively asked,

"Uh... Aunt Mary, would you mind if I used some techniques to bind your husband for a little while? Mainly because it's been over a week since I last went home, and I really want to check back..."

"Tie him, tie him!"

Despite twisting the stout old man's waist several times without him budging, the matronly manager had to shake her snowy curls helplessly and said,

"I know you're a good person. Problems with your soul are probably due to the Purification Bureau, and there's no reason to stop you from going home. But my old man's words, he just doesn't listen... Well, as long as you don't hurt him, you can tie him up all night."

"No, no, it won't take that long, just a short while."

Leon had great respect for these elderlies who had always done good both in life and in death. Hearing this, he promptly refused her suggestion, then slowly invoked the power of the Holy Spirit pendant, forcing the stout old man to stay in place before dashing up the stairs without looking back.

"Snap!"

Seeing the "damnable Little Demon" actually head upstairs, the stout old man's eyes bulged, and his broad, sturdy back muscles suddenly swelled, forcing the restraint of the Holy Spirit pendant open just a bit, waving his large scissors, trying to chase after.

However, after only a couple of steps, he was tightly entangled by bundles of threads, forcing him to be tied beside the staircase. His waist, in particular, was fiercely pinched.

"You stubborn old man! You were stubborn while alive, and even more stubborn now that you're dead... Stick your neck out a bit, let me measure the length!"

Twisting the stout old man's waist hard a couple of times, and seeing her husband still holding the large scissors and trying to rush upward, the matronly manager couldn't help but shake her head helplessly before pulling up a small stool to sit in the hallway, measuring the stout old man's neck to knit a wool scarf.

Waiting on the third floor for a while without seeing the stout old man pursuing him, Leon heaved a sigh of relief and immediately dashed up to the sixth floor.

"Brother?"

The familiar preemptive door opening still applied. At the moment Leon set foot on the sixth floor, the door to the adjacent room swung open suddenly, casting a comforting orange glow, illuminating the dim corridor and Leon.

Even though she'd already recognized his footsteps, seeing Leon hurriedly back home with dust still clinging to him, Anna, looking slightly weary, couldn't help but feel a surge of energy. Her eyes showed a sense of relief.

But before Leon could say a word, the relief in her eyes transformed into deep worry and grievance.

Biting her lower lip hard, the frail girl slightly turned her head, her voice tinged with a teasing reprimand, "Finished with your work?"

"Uh... not yet..."

Catching the slight reproach in his sister's eyes, Leon couldn't help but halt his steps, looking at her apologetically and said,

"Sorry, Anna, there's been a lot going on in the bureau lately. I just took some time to come back and see you guys, but I have to leave soon..."

"Okay..."

After hearing Leon's words, although she still felt a bit upset about his disappearance for seven or eight days without a word, seeing him come home so weary and dusty, the frail girl couldn't help but bite her lip again. Feeling a bit worried, she gently advised,

"Remember to take care of yourself, don't shoulder everything alone. If it's really exhausting, you should take more breaks. Earning a bit less is fine too.

Now that our home life is much better, and my health has improved a lot compared to before, if both of us can work, earning a bit less can still support Melanie and the others. You don't have to push yourself so much..."

"Don't worry, I'm alright."

Looking at his sister in front of him, who was full of concern, Leon instinctively turned up the corners of his mouth, feeling a subtle relief and ease that he hadn't experienced for a long time.

Whether it was the ruthless ferocity of just having killed the Bishop or the lingering scent of blood from Ryan Blood Night's aftermath, all washed away when I returned to this warm little home, bathed in that warm glow.

In this moment, I was no longer the ruthless Cleaner of the Purification Bureau, nor was I the outsider constantly suppressing anger and discontent, out of step with this world. I was just an ordinary person who, after a busy day, longed for quiet rest at home.

"Anna, I'm lucky to have you here..."

A heartfelt sigh escaped him, and having found some slivers of "humanity" again, Leon couldn't help but step forward, embracing his sister in a big hug, burying his head in Anna's still thin shoulder, and almost greedily taking a deep breath.

Even though it had only been a month since joining the Purification Bureau, looking back, I realized how much I'd changed from the person I was. At least the me from a month ago would never have crushed someone's head at the mere mention of the 'Scales Gold Sect.'

Though I could console myself it was all part of the job, I was undeniably stepping further away from normalcy, moving at an increasing pace toward a "non-human" world.

Anna, her slim shoulders seemed frail, yet just as I supported this family from collapsing, the existence of her and the two little ones anchored my perception of being "human."

If not for them serving as "anchor points," while I might not turn into something truly evil, I would, under the constant corrosion from anomalous objects, become like those other Cleaners that only had a human exterior, remaining and being unrelated to a human in essence or actions, as the Black Goat had stated...

"Ah! You... don't..."

Suddenly enveloped in Leon's forceful embrace, with his face nuzzling her neck, Anna was startled, instinctively trying to push him away with a flushed face.

But after being hugged for a few seconds and seemingly sensing something from the depth of this embrace, she hesitated briefly, then abandoned her struggle. Ignoring the dust on Leon, she wrapped her arms around his waist in return, making their embrace tighter.

Resting her chin on Leon's shoulder, the frail girl slightly tilted her head, somewhat embarrassedly nuzzling her cheek against his jaw before enduring the warm, tickling breaths on her neck. As her hands gently stroked Leon's back, her gaze softened, murmuring softly in his ear,

"Brother... no matter when you feel tired, just come home. I'll always be waiting for you."