

# I! CLEANER!

## Chapter 2 2: 0002 Home and Family\_1

""""

\*To find a companion... If I can't find a job soon, I fear even acquiring a piece of bread will become difficult for me!\*

Leaving the Sixth Purification Bureau with a darkened face, Leon joined the long queue in front of the Purification Bureau. As he looked at the new badge shining on the virtual panel, the unemployed young man couldn't help but let out a sigh.

Good news, not only was he still a man with vital assets, but he also had some attachments.

Bad news, these attachments seemed temporarily useless and even occasionally brought about strange debuffs...

Staring at the pitch-black [Unemployed Youth] badge and the entry with a -80% chance of success in matchmaking, Leon slowly "crept" forward with the line in front of the Purification Bureau, shifting his gaze to the other two badges in the "equipped" state.

On the virtual panel that had come with him to this world, there were three badge slots in total. In the slot in the middle, one badge shimmered in dull deep teal, exuding a warm and gentle sentiment.

[Trustworthy Brother (Bronze): Due to the early death of your parents, you shouldered the responsibility of taking care of your younger siblings at an early age. You are a responsible and reliable brother, thus highly respected and loved by your siblings.]

[Equipped Effect: When conversing with minors younger than you, the other party easily gains a sense of trust, and during emotional excitement, a special state "Spilling the Beans" may be triggered, where they confide in you about their troubles and secrets.]

[Advancement Route: None]

[Hidden Traits: Not Activated]

Next to this "Good Brother" badge, there was another badge with brilliance fierce as fire, appearing even more dazzling than the sun itself; its color was a fiery red.

[Materialist Soul (Abnormal·Fiery Red·Unable to Upgrade): As a staunch materialist, you firmly believe that substance is the basis of objective existence. Spirit and consciousness are products of matter. All incomprehensible things stem from one's inaccurate and shallow understanding of the world.]

[Equipped Effect: For things and knowledge you can comprehend, through your analysis and contemplation, you can become familiar with and master them quickly, gaining an additional effect boost based on your level of understanding;

For incomprehensible things and knowledge, by expanding your cognitive boundaries, you can instantly acquire some related information and reduce the influence of the adversary when encountered based on your level of understanding.]

[Advancement Route: Already reached the highest level, unable to advance further]

[Hidden Traits: Not Activated]

"..."

Just reading the description, this heterochromatic badge seemed quite impressive, but in reality, it was nothing like that.

This badge only triggered at the beginning, helping him master this world's language within three days to the point of normal communication, and since then, it acted as if it didn't exist, without any further movements.

\*Though the activation difficulty was high, his badge plug-in was absolutely not something within the "normal" range.\* He wondered if this situation fell under the

controllable "abnormality" that red-haired woman mentioned? If so, then maybe he was quite suitable for that Purification Bureau?

Unable to resist, he glanced back toward the Purification Bureau, then quickly shook his head, dismissing the absurd idea.

Don't be foolish, that place had a ten percent annual death rate!

Moreover, judging from their attitude, the Purification Bureau was definitely not a department one could leave so easily; if things went wrong, you might have to work there your entire life just by joining.

\*Being only seventeen, if he worked until sixty, then he'd have to work over forty years, with a death rate potentially reaching over ninety percent, almost a certain death!\*

If he was alone, it might not matter. After all, this life was essentially a gift; rather than toiling in mines and smelting kilns, falling ill and draining his savings only to end up in a hospital corridor like his neighbors in Veteran Lane, lying on sickbeds filled with vomit awaiting death, he might as well gamble it all now and use this worthless life in one last-ditch effort!

But... currently, his family consisted of four people. The two younger ones weren't even waist-high, and his sister, though only a year younger, was born with ailments and weak since childhood. Besides, due to a potion leak accident, she'd inhaled a lot of alchemical exhaust, leading to a lung disease that had persisted on and off.

\*He might risk everything, but should he die at that Purification Bureau, the family would likely have the elder work to death first, then gradually starve the two young ones, ending with none surviving from all four of them!\*

"Damn!"

Reaching this point in thought, Leon couldn't help but lift his head, glaring at the still seemingly endless line ahead. Then he clenched his molars hard and spat viciously on the intricately patterned bluestone pavement underfoot.

"This goddamned world!"

...

As the sunset descended, its dim light pierced the alchemy-fueled clouds, cast onto the filthy streets of the Capital City. Under the weight of someone's unusually heavy footsteps, those remnants of light were crushed step by step, until they ultimately vanished into darkness.

After standing in line for over two hours and undergoing several rounds of inspection and questioning, certain unemployed youth was unsurprisingly eliminated.

Even if Leon had already discarded every last ounce of dignity, clutching the interviewer's sleeve, fervently assuring them he could handle the job, he nearly knelt on the spot, desperately begging.

But recognizing Leon's clearly malnourished, significantly skinnier frame than typical peers, the portly official responsible for selection didn't even bother responding, merely slapped him aside, then turned to the next applicant, disdainfully pinching the other's arms and legs before stamping a red "Passed" mark on the emaciated chest...

Damn it!

Recalling that scene, where they treated people not as people, but almost like choosing livestock, Leon habitually clenched his molars, exhaling a heavy breath of lingering frustration.

\*Even after nearly three years here, he still hadn't grown accustomed to all the damn things.\*

\*In his previous life, though he achieved little, he had a harmonious family with both parents around, leading a peaceful life for half his journey. The greatest hardship was merely being scolded by a superior. Then, in the blink of an eye, he was thrown into this cursed world, having to fight with all his might for even the simplest survival, truly...\*

\*Forget it.\* Rather than dwelling on such thoughts, he should consider where to find some work tomorrow to support his family a bit.

Seeing that his home at Veteran Lane was just around the corner, Leon couldn't help but stop in his tracks, rubbing his stiff face hard, finally managing to squeeze a smile.

Maintaining the faint smile on his face, Leon skillfully stepped into the poorly lit alley, quickly navigating through the cluttered, filthy old street, heading toward the low house at the southeast corner.

Just as he stopped at his gate, raising his hand to knock, the old iron door, covered in rusty spots and much older than him, suddenly opened, revealing a fairly pretty, delicate yet noticeably sickly pale face.

"Bro."

After calling out to Leon, the slender and frail girl hadn't had time to inquire about his situation when seeing the frowning brother harshly admonish with a stern face,

"Haven't I told you many times not to open the door at random?"

"I wasn't opening it randomly."

Unfazed by the reprimand, the girl gently took Leon's coat, dusting it off as she smiled and said,

"I recognized your footsteps. I only open the door early when I hear you coming back."

"That still won't do!"

Hearing the thin girl's words, Leon couldn't help but feel a warm sensation in his angry heart, but he still maintained a stiff face, lecturing,

"Although it's not as chaotic here as the outer city slums, there're still bad guys. What if you misheard?"

\*How could I possibly mishear...\*

Hearing Leon's words, the slender girl sighed inwardly.

Even in the generally struggling Veteran Lane, not many had footsteps as heavy as her brother. Especially after recovering from that great illness three years ago, her brother's steps grew heavier. She could recognize his footsteps as carrying a burden of thousands of pounds, even in her dreams.



However, confident she would never mishear, the slender girl chose not to argue with Leon. Instead, she took his coat to hang up and then entered the kitchen, bringing out the still steaming dinner.

Seeing Leon sit at the table with exhaustion, bow his head, and start devouring the simple stew, she followed suit, sitting at the beaten old table on one leg, propping her pale and thin face on her white and skinny arms, gazing softly at Leon who was gulping down the makeshift stew.

\*It's really late, why don't you rest up, why watch me eat?\*

Eating hastily due to a whole day of hunger, Leon felt uncomfortable being stared at by his sister and cleared his throat, lightly speaking, "Where're the younger ones? Asleep?"

"Mm."

Hearing this, the slender girl gently nodded, her smile soft as she nudged her chin forward.

"When the sun went down, they were fussing to wait for you to come home before sleeping, but they soon started rubbing their eyes. Eventually, they both fell asleep by the table, snuggling together in sleep. I just carried them to bed."

"Next time, just leave them."

Glancing at his sister's bloodless, fair face, Leon couldn't help but shake his head.

"Your health isn't good, and the little ones have grown a lot over the past two years. Next time this happens, have them sleep alone first, and I'll carry them back when I return. Just cover them so they don't catch a cold."

"Mm-hmm."

The slender girl answered softly twice, not disputing with Leon, simply nodding with a smile, accepting her brother's care with a light push of her chin forward.

\*Clearly, she didn't listen...\*

Seeing her demeanor, Leon couldn't help but helplessly shake his head.

Towards this gentle yet determined sister, he always felt at a loss; seeing persuasion didn't work, he stopped talking further. After finishing the dinner in silence, he hesitated slightly before saying,

"Today..."

"Today is already late."

Cutting off Leon, the slender girl interrupted to say,

"The Department of Road Administration is so far away, you won't spend on a ticket, so you must have walked there. If you're going out tomorrow too, you should rest now."

"..."

"Mm..."

Realizing his sister had figured out his failed job search once again, Leon couldn't help but sigh, furrowing his brows tightly as he said,

"It's my ineptitude, if I could..."

"Brother!"

"Alright, alright, I won't say it."

Firmly fisting his hands, determining to try doubly hard tomorrow and find a job no matter what, Leon put away the tableware, heading to his small room. After tossing and turning for a while, he finally drifted into a troubled sleep.

However, before dawn, the slumbering Leon was awakened by a violent, harsh coughing sound, akin to bellows, accompanied by his siblings' frantic cries.

"Brother! Get up! Please, get up!"

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