

## I! Cleaner 221

### Chapter 221 True Inheritance\_2

The difference between military combat techniques and police combat techniques lay in their objectives. Police combat techniques aimed at arresting, controlling, self-defense counterattacks, and restricting movements. Simply put, it was about seizing the opponent first, trying to limit his movements, and then using joint techniques and the like to control the situation.

The challenge of police combat techniques was a high demand for speed and situational judgment. But it suited your situation well. I thought you could learn a few extremely practical and effective moves with just two or three days of practice."

"Then let's learn the police techniques."

Although Leon was a bit tempted by the clean and decisive one-strike kill technique he'd just seen, as someone who knew nothing about fighting, he naturally chose to trust the judgment of the professional, observing the policewoman as she demonstrated police combat techniques obediently.

...

"Kingdom Police Combat Techniques consisted of 22 basic moves. Among them, three were offensive strikes, three were to cooperate with teammates to subdue the target, and the remaining 16 were self-defense counterattacks for various situations."

After rehearsing the stance of the Kingdom Police Combat Techniques, the policewoman, slightly flushed, exhaled a breath of white air and seriously explained to Leon,

"Since you only have three days, I'll pick three typical moves out of these 16 to teach you. If you can master these three moves, with your physical condition, you should be able to subdue most people instantly in a one-on-one situation."

"Uh... can you teach me a few more? I feel like I learn quickly."

Looking at his badge panel, Leon, determined to "level up," suggested,

"For instance, the offensive strikes, can you teach me one or two of those as well? Always being on the defensive isn't quite right, is it?"

"Don't aim too high! In such a short time, learning these three self-defense moves is already challenging!"

The policewoman stopped her movements upon hearing this and sternly admonished,

"Don't think self-defense is just taking hits. Self-defense moves should actually be called defensive counterattack moves, the core of which is to catch the flaw in someone else's attack for a counterattack, whereas offensive strikes will certainly expose a weakness to the opponent!"

More importantly, even if your defensive counterattacks are poorly executed, they can at least help you defend; poorly executed offensive strikes, however, might inadvertently expose your vitals to the opponent's blade!"

"Oh..."

Well then... let's just learn first. If I don't get a badge, she's probably right. If I get a badge, then I'll learn the rest from her later.

Unaware of Leon's thoughts, seeing him no longer persist and instead learning from her honestly, the policewoman couldn't help but nod in satisfaction before she spoke,

"Watch closely! The three moves I'm going to teach you are the most important and fundamental among the self-defense counterattacks, which are responses for when the opponent attacks your upper body, your lower body, and from behind."

The policewoman demonstrated an outside arm block gesture as she spoke.

"Imagine your two arms are like shields... Never mind, that's too abstract, come over here! Punch me directly! Hit faster!"

"Okay!"

Nodding at the policewoman's words, Leon stood opposite her as she requested and threw a punch directly.

Immediately, it was as if the scene of the previous "one-strike" kill replayed itself. The policewoman, who had been standing directly opposite Leon, suddenly lowered herself, half her body slipping out of Leon's sight. Then Leon only felt an ache on the inner side of his arm, and his attack was swiftly deflected.

At the moment his right hand went numb, two soft "black snakes" climbed up and clasped his shoulder sockets. Something then struck his neck, and a nimble leg hooked his left knee's inner side powerfully, causing him to fall back instantly with the tips of someone's toes gently tapping his belly.

"Use your arm bone to hit the opponent's pressure points, and while he's numb, close in and grab his shoulders towards your body, headbutting his neck... If you want to go for the kill, hit the Adam's apple directly!"

Making a move of clasping shoulders and headbutting forcefully, the somewhat fierce-looking policewoman continued her demonstration while explaining,

"I've just covered the upper body part of this move, but your lower body has to move as well. At the moment the collision completes, use your leg to hook the opponent's leg back, then press forward with your body when he loses balance and finish with a kick! If aiming to kill, don't kick the belly; aim lower and stomp between the legs!"

Goodness!

Seeing the policewoman's shoe abruptly kick forward, just a fist away from his manhood, Leon couldn't help but shudder, an ultimate fear for men being awakened.

So the first move was a groin kick! It seemed that the assistant to the Minister of Security was right; competitions indeed restrained Isha's performance...

"Did you remember?"

Ignoring Leon's shock, the policewoman in teaching mode wore a stern look upon her lovely face, pulling Leon up from the ground before commanding seriously,

"If you remember, switch roles; this time I'll attack you, and you block then trip me!"

"Alright..."

Getting up and posing as required, facing the approaching right fist from the policewoman, Leon mimicked the move she taught, dropped his shoulder, and blocked, followed by locking her shoulder sockets with his hands and headbutting.

However, Leon was not yet familiar with the move. He dropped his shoulder too much, plus the policewoman had impressively long legs, standing as tall as an average man, causing the intended headbutt on her neck to slightly miss downward.

Oh no!

Upon colliding with his head, Leon realized he'd made a mistake. To avoid turning this teaching into a real fight, he quickly tightened his grip on the policewoman's shoulders, his leg meant to hook her knee instantaneously retracting for defense, blocking his vulnerable spots to avoid immediate disaster at any cost.

Surprisingly though, despite being hit hard by him, the policewoman's body merely stiffened a bit but didn't retaliate. Instead, she fell backwards, following the force of Leon's headbutt, even reaching out to protect his head during the fall to prevent a direct knock on the ground.

"..."

"Such a poor performance!"

After pushing the off-balance Leon away, the policewoman stood up again, patting the dust off her body, and made a displeased assessment,

"Your form completely collapsed! Except for knocking on my pressure points, your follow-up headbutt missed the target! The footwork didn't follow through!

Moreover, the most crucial part, you forgot to release my shoulders, which led to both of us falling down, making the final kick impossible! Get up and try again!"

Uh...

Didn't get mad? Or even ask for an explanation? Are you such an understanding person? Where did the rash, fierce Isha go, the one who flipped my tray when arguments failed?

"Don't dawdle, continue!"

Seeing Leon examining her repeatedly in disbelief, the policewoman finally lost composure, her ears turning a tad red, as she stomped her foot and gritted her teeth,

"Hurry up! You have a very dangerous mission three days later, right? Learn more now, and you'll be a bit safer then! Stop thinking about those random things! Hurry up and practice!"

"..."

So... she cared about my safety, that's why her temper had subsided?

Seeing the policewoman maintaining a fierce look while stealthily pinching at her sleeves with her fingers, Leon couldn't help but chuckle lightly, then under her slightly mortified glare, he stood up straight, reassuming his blocking pose, and seriously declared,

"Again! I'll surely learn it this time!"

...

[Through Isha Hill's meticulous and repeated sparring, you successfully unlocked the Black Iron Level Badge "Fighting Novice."]

[Fighting Novice: After relatively systematic training, you have mastered some combat techniques. Although your level is not high, you have established a rather solid foundation.]

[Equipped Effect: As a novice fighter, even though your techniques are somewhat immature, with corrected execution method and habits, your power and speed in combat have slightly increased.]

[Advancement Route: Upon completing 20 actual combat incidents or 200 practice sessions, this badge will automatically advance to the Bronze Badge "Fighting Veteran." Current Progress: 0/20, 0/200.]

[Hidden Traits: Through proper cultivation and rigorous training, your talent in combat has been fully developed, granting you slightly predictive abilities in enemy attack direction.]

"Sss..."

[Through self-study and reflection, you have mastered low-level combat abilities, activating the Abnormal Badge "Materialist Soul (Crimson)."]

Your understanding of combat is "low," but due to being adept at summarizing experiences and self-adjustment, you successfully learned some notably unique skills from the instructor.



When attacking the enemy's eyes or groin, your hit chance and inflicted damage significantly increase.]

## Chapter 222 Dream-Seeking Wristwatch and Entrustment\_1

In the early morning two days later, in the Old Town of the Capital City, Patriot Avenue.

In the streets of the Old Town, where sanitation was generally substandard, night-time security was in shambles, and garbage trucks visited only once a week on average, Patriot Avenue was absolutely an exception.

It had a garbage truck passing through every day, patrol guards specially assigned by the police department, and walls that were repainted three times a year.

Yes, unlike other streets that nobody cared about even if the paint on the walls completely peeled off—sometimes for twenty or thirty years—Patriot Avenue not only had dedicated sanitation measures, but the walls were even extravagantly repainted frequently, so clean and tidy that it barely resembled a street located in the Old Town.

As for the reason...

Patriot Avenue, rebuilt with special funding from the Treasury Department to commemorate the soldiers who bravely fought in the war to defend the homeland, was not only a face for the King and the Parliament but also a residence for a large number of soldiers wounded in the war six years ago. It was only natural that it should receive some preferential treatment, and no one would question this.

Unfortunately, such preferences in public expenditure seemed unable to solve the prevalent poverty among the demobilized soldiers. The glorious experience of fighting for the country did not spare them from violent beatings by the patrol guards when they urinated against the walls after drinking.

...

"Stop! Damn it! Pull up your pants!"

After hurriedly kicking the drunkard standing by the wall to the ground and watching the fresh urine trickle down the fiery red wall, two patrolling guards were filled with an indescribable sense of frustration.

Damn, how did it happen again in the area they patrolled? Their pay was surely going to be docked!

Seeing the drunkard on the ground, having soiled his pants after being kicked mid-stream, the two guards glanced around the deserted street and couldn't help but gather around, gritting their teeth as they beat the drunkard.

"You bastard! This wall was painted to commemorate the war to defend the homeland!"

"It's already the third time this week! Damn it! Can't you guys go somewhere else to piss?"

"Beat him!"

After a while of kicking and beating, the drunkard, curled up and silent, still didn't appease the two guards, who were sure to have their pay docked. They dragged him to the urine-stained wall, tossed him a dirty rag, and angrily ordered him to clean up the urine stains.

But as the drunkard shakily stood up, he didn't pick up the urine-scented rag on the ground. Instead, he reached into his pant pocket and grabbed something, swallowed hard, and spat out a thick phlegm, yellow with a tinge of green, toward the freshly painted bright wall.

Accompanying a light "ding," an iron combat commemorative medal, imprinted with the feathers of a Robin and only awarded to those who participated in the war to defend the homeland, was "spat" onto the commemorative wall alongside the phlegm.

"Patriot Avenue? Ha!"

...

Unfortunately, it still fell short.

Watching the hands on the watch continue to flicker but ultimately stop in the "Human" zone, failing to reach the "Abnormal" zone, the elderly man with drooping corners of his mouth across the street shook his head, then spoke to the middle-aged man across the table:

"This person isn't bad. He has a painful past and intense emotions, nearly meeting the standards for becoming abnormal in every aspect, possessing the potential to let the seed 'germinate.'

But his soul isn't pure enough; there are too many chaotic thoughts. To truly transform into abnormal, he would need to experience a more heart-wrenching pain, completely plunging him into the abyss of despair...

Does he have family?"

"Yes."

The middle-aged man, whose temples showed a few strands of gray hair, looked at the drunkard being beaten by the two guards, paused for a moment, and then replied:

"Old Baskin's wife died of illness, but he has a twenty-year-old son who joined us three years ago and is now responsible for procuring living supplies."

"Oh?"

Upon hearing the middle-aged man's words, the old man with a naturally sorrowful face raised his eyelids with interest and asked:

"How's their father-son relationship?"

"Very bad."

The middle-aged man, or rather, the Rebel leader, hesitated before shaking his head and saying:

"Old Baskin sustained numerous injuries in the war to defend the homeland six years ago. His right leg was pierced by a Nail gun, and his stomach was wounded by a whale oil bomb dropped from an airship, causing him unbearable numbness and itchiness during rainy or snowy days, so he has been drinking heavily for years to ease his pain.

"The compensation from the Kingdom was not much, most of which he drank away. So when his wife got liver disease, there was no money for treatment, and she died within two years. After that, he drank even more heavily and often beat young Baskin when drunk, whom in turn extremely hated his father."

"That is truly pitiful indeed."

The Aquarius Director glanced at the drunkard across the street with a hint of mercy and sighed:

"It's a pity, if he had a son who was unwilling to give up on him at all costs, continuing to care for him, it would be better.

"In that case, as long as the last person unwilling to abandon him expressed complete disappointment or a slight incident was designed for his son, extinguishing the last bit of light in his heart, the pain that erupted could completely cleanse his soul.

"Under the refinement of despair swelling to its peak, his soul would be stripped of all impurities, at a certain moment existing only in the purest obsession, thus truly stepping out of the ordinary frame, successfully crossing into the threshold of being abnormal, but now..."

Chapter 223 Dream-Seeking Wristwatch and Entrustment\_2

Looking at the "soul" hand stuck below the abnormal line on the watch, Aquarius Director shook his head and said,

"It was impossible now.

If it was right after his wife had died, perhaps I could have given him a push. But after all these years, his soul had become thoroughly numb, covered with a thick layer of dust, and no longer met the conditions to become an abnormal person."

"So that's how it is..."

After sighing together, the middle-aged man got up and said,

"Then let's go see the next person. Over the years, I've met quite a few people who might become abnormal. Since you came to find me, we might as well meet them together!"

"Sorry, I'm afraid there's no time."

Looking at the watch on the other hand, Aquarius Director shook his head and said,

"There will soon be an internal inquiry targeting me. If I don't pass the inquiry, I will have to undergo a memory reading by the bureau, so I must return early to prepare. There's no time to look at each one."

An internal inquiry by the Purification Bureau?

The middle-aged man was stunned for a moment, then frowned and asked,

"What's going on? Aren't you one of the twelve directors with the most power? Why are you being subjected to an internal review? Who can review you?"

"Of course, it's the other directors."

Aquarius Director said with an indifferent expression,

"I have done so many things outside over the years, though I have always been very cautious and never even used my real face, but there are inevitably some traces left. With so much talent in the Purification Bureau, someone was bound to notice something wrong."

Or rather, that I made it until now before being questioned was beyond my expectations. From the Serpent Bearer... um... from a major past event, the world had become more chaotic in recent years, with many Outer Gods growing restless, causing the bureau to lose quite a few excellent talents. Otherwise, I think I would have been exposed much earlier."

"..."

"I don't understand these things."

The middle-aged man shook his head and said,

"I just want to know when you'll probably be back?"

"If things go fast, one or two weeks."

Aquarius Director added with an indifferent expression,

"You should be able to guess that for such a large and loose organization like the Purification Bureau, to complete an inquiry on a senior member within one or two weeks is surprisingly quick."

"And if it goes slow?"



"If it goes slow, then I might never come back!"

As if recalling something amusing, Aquarius Director chuckled and said,

"This time, those initiating the inquiry on me include not only the top three-ranking directors in the bureau but also several directors from the Zodiac Branch Office. If I can't get through it, I probably won't even have the qualification to run; I will be taken down on the spot.

Hmm... putting it like that, let's set a two-week limit. If I'm not back in two weeks, you should assume I've been dealt with, and then run or hide as you see fit. After all, with your ability to conceal yourself, there aren't many in the bureau who could actually find your location."

"..."

\*You really are... quite straightforward.\*

The middle-aged man clicked his tongue speechlessly, then said expressionlessly,

"Then let's wait for you to successfully come back from the inquiry! I'll look after those people first."

"Well... if you want to check the qualifications of those people, you don't necessarily have to wait for me to come back."

Hearing what the middle-aged man said, Aquarius Director thought for a moment, then surprisingly removed the strange watch with six hands from his left wrist and tossed it to the Rebel leader.

"This thing is called the [Dream-Seeking Wristwatch]. Its original ability was to realize dreams, but after my modification, it can also check whether a person has the potential to become abnormal. It only requires a drop of blood or hair or something like that as a marker."

While speaking, Aquarius Director extended a finger to point at the watch's cover, indicating the hands below as he explained,

"These six hands are divided into three groups, representing past and future, body and soul, character and emotion. Among these three groups of hands, if each group has one that reaches the abnormal range, it proves that the person has the quality to accept a 'seed.'"

For example, that gentleman across the table, Mr. Old Baskin, has his 'past' hand and 'emotion' hand both reaching the abnormal range, but the 'soul' hand did not reach the mark. So, he lacks the conditions for the seed to sprout and is unlikely to become abnormal."

Past, future, soul, body, character, emotion?

After carefully remembering the meaning of these six hands, looking at the three groups of strangely patterned hands, the middle-aged man couldn't help but ask in confusion,

"Why is it enough for just one in a group to move for someone to become abnormal?"

"Well... it's a bit hard to explain... How about this, you can understand the world as a piece of canvas, and each person as a brush."

Aquarius Director thought for a moment, dipped his finger in coffee, and drew a coffee-colored line on the tablecloth, then continued to explain,

"A person's past experiences, and future development are the traces they have drawn and will draw on the world; whether they have a unique soul or a miraculous body determines the technique used by this brush when drawing, whether it's realistic or abstract.

As for character and emotion, the former determines how a person treats the world, while the latter is the feedback they give the world after experiencing it, equivalent to the color of the marks this brush leaves on the canvas."

Seeing the middle-aged man who looked somewhat confused, Aquarius Director sighed and said,

"To put it more simply, these three groups of hands are probing what kind of picture a person is drawing on the world, what technique they use to draw it, and what kind of paint they use.

So within these three groups of hands, if each has a type of 'abnormality,' it ensures the picture drawn by this brush is also 'abnormal.' Then, I need only provide a little help for this abnormal brush to draw a picture called 'abnormal'...

Did you understand?"

"I kind of got it..."

With not much confidence, the middle-aged man nodded and asked curiously,

"Then if all six hands start moving, what kind of anomalous object could such a person produce?"

"If someone indeed makes all six hands move..."

Aquarius Director frowned and said,

"That would be a painful past, a great future, a strong body, a pure soul, an obsessive character, and frenetic emotions... To be honest, if you meet such a person, I suggest you run as quickly as possible."

"Huh?"

"If such a person existed, whether they were good or evil, they would be destined to completely change the world and stir up incredibly terrifying waves.

The anomalous object derived from such a person would be like a magnificent painting drawn with the most brilliant and chaotic colors, using the most free and unrestrained brushwork... Of course, it could also be a scroll of total destruction."

"..."

"In short, change is terrifying, especially for people like you and me who are not very good. Trying to follow him and add fuel to the fire might be a path of nine deaths and one life; standing against him trying to hold back the tide would be certain death.

So, if you encounter such a person, don't think about anything unnecessary, don't do anything extra, just run and hide as far as you can."

"Alright..."

"Also, this watch isn't left with you for free."

Looking at the middle-aged man who seemed a bit dazed, Aquarius Director raised his hand and gestured towards the police department, saying seriously,

"Apart from investigating the potential for others to become abnormal, this thing can also help you find the anomalous objects I've created... Don't forget what you promised me!"

"Are you talking about... the thing in the redheaded director's drawer?"

"Yes."

Aquarius Director nodded, earnestly instructing,

"There's something very important to me kept in that woman's drawer, it roughly looks like a photograph.

Normally, you wouldn't have an opportunity, but one of the people initiating the inquiry on me is her, so when the inquiry starts, you can take advantage of her absence to sneak into the Purification Bureau using the [Gate of the Other World].

After that, the [Dream-Seeking Wristwatch]'s hands will automatically lead you to the photo I want. If you can successfully bring it back to me, I will certainly give you a reward that satisfies you."

Chapter 224 Exposure and the Director's Doubt\_1

"So, you mainly want me to help you steal something, right? No wonder you'd give me such a precious watch."

Faced with the terms offered by the Aquarius Director, the middle-aged man thought for a moment before nodding, then asked,

"What if I steal the item, but you fail the inquiry?"

"If the inquiry fails, I'll have my memory read, and considering the number of violations I've made, I'd either be executed or possibly turned into an anomalous object."

The Aquarius Director spoke with a nonchalant smile, not bothering to hide his potential fate,

"If I'm really finished, this watch will be your payment, and you can do whatever you want with that item. Is that enough?"

"In that case... it's enough!"

"Then goodbye."

After the middle-aged man put on the watch, the Aquarius Director slightly nodded, then stood up and left his seat, walking steadily toward the door.

As he rose, the stars belonging to the Aquarius Palace in the sky lit up one after another, breaking through the sunlight's cover for a very brief moment, projecting towards the Capital City, instantly reflecting off the Aquarius Director, but also caught the attention of certain observant eyes.

...

"Get ready."

After taking a sip of the deep brown tea from the bottle, the Red-haired Director, who was gazing out the window at the sky, turned around and said to Leon, who was waiting in the office,

"Aquarius Palace just lit up. Judging from the direction, Aquarius used his director's privilege to shift back to the main office. You don't have to worry about bumping into him when you go undercover with the Rebels.

"Moreover, this time is different from before. You must remember, you only have a maximum of two weeks for your investigation. Do not exceed this time limit."

Emphasizing the maximum time limit for the task once again, the Red-haired Director, rare in his seriousness, advised,

"Leon, if the inquiry fails, Aquarius, who can use the Star Palace Shift, might return before I do, and the identity you're substituting with a photo may not necessarily fool him.

"Though I'll try to delay him for a while, to be safe, if I'm not back in two weeks whether the mission is completed or not, you have to evacuate immediately.



"If the inquiry succeeds, you can reconnect with the Rebels afterward, but if it fails and Aquarius catches you in the act, then I really can't guarantee your safety."

"I understand."

Faced with the director's repeated instructions, Leon nodded and carefully noted, then couldn't help but ask,

"Director, is there a high chance of success for this inquiry?"

"It's decent."

After thinking for a moment, the Red-haired Director responded,

"The three directors hosting the year-end review, plus Taurus His Excellency, make four directors capable of participating in the inquiry against Aquarius.

"In addition, there's me, the Lion, and Gemini, three directors from the Zodiac Branch Office, along with other branch directors who also noticed Aquarius Director's activities in their jurisdictions after receiving information.

"We exchanged some intelligence and evidence we had. We feel there's a thirty percent chance his actions could be exposed on the spot!"

"Ah? Only thirty percent?"

"Aquarius Director isn't a fool. He's always very cautious. A thirty percent chance is already quite a lot."

The Red-haired Director stated seriously,

"Besides, this is an internal inquiry, not a court trial. There's no need to form a complete chain of evidence. As long as we can reveal his suspicious behavior and force him to expose his motives, the goal is achieved.

"As long as he can't prove his innocence or provide reasonable explanations for those suspicious and dangerous actions, that's enough to take him down and force him to undergo memory reading."

"I see..."

Hearing this, Leon pondered for a moment, then casually asked,

"Director, what kind of mistake would warrant being dragged for memory reading?"

"Don't worry, it's a very troublesome process."

Giving Leon a sidelong glance, the Red-haired Director snorted coldly,

"It requires causing significant harm and holding a high position to enjoy such treatment. What you've done at the Ryan Family isn't enough to warrant such a level of examination."

"Uh..."

"So now you're worried, hearing that the bureau has memory-reading abilities?"

Seeing Leon a bit awkward, the Red-haired Director couldn't help but glare at him, then grumbled,

"What kind of person are you? Investigators from the bureau may not know, but surely I do. So many nobles died during the Ryan Blood Night, and they were all major criminals. How could it be completely unrelated to you?"

"The main thing is that the Heart of Ambition insisted that Bobby Laien was responsible for the Ryan Blood Night. Considering it wasn't your anomalous object and it was against you, with no motive to cover for you, I didn't think further."

"But after you took the heart from me the other day, facing the enemy who killed its previous master, the thing was so overjoyed it almost went crazy! It pounded inside the box as if it wanted to jump straight out and cling to you. Even if I were foolish, I should know whose side it's on!"

"..."

"Anyway, be careful with your task this time. Don't cause too much commotion, sigh..."

"Uh... I'll try to be more careful..."

"You better be... Also, one last reminder, you can actually be slightly more conservative when executing your task."

Looking at Leon, who nodded sheepishly, the Red-haired Director sighed and said,

"When I 'bowed' to you earlier, I activated a part of [Slaughter Blood Hair], slightly exceeding the human hierarchy, so I recovered some memories concerning the Princess... Leon, I think it was me who suggested you propose to her."

"What?"

"Don't give me that. I didn't really want you to marry her; it was to help you shed the Duke of Lionheart identity by proposing to the Princess. Who knew you'd actually succeed?"

Rubbing his temples, the Red-haired Director summarized with exasperation,

"I sent you to the Ryan Family to investigate Yang Xin, and you directly turned Ryan Blood Night into an event; I suggested you recognize kinship at the Ryan Family, and you turned into the Duke of Lionheart; I suggested you propose to the Princess, and now you're practically a Prince..."

"Leon, tell me honestly, what are you planning for this mission? By the time I return in two weeks, will you already be the chief of the Rebels?"

"No way! Absolutely no way!"

Listening to the imaginative thoughts of his director, Leon shook his head repeatedly,

"Director, you're being prejudiced. I've always made very conservative choices!"

"Although I don't fully understand the Princess situation yet, during Ryan Blood Night, it was Bobby Laien who barricaded the estate, preventing me from leaving. Otherwise, I would have definitely run away, and it wouldn't have ended up in a death struggle!"

"True, but what if you're cornered again and forced to rise?"

"How could that happen?"

Faced with the Red-haired Director's baseless assumption, Leon couldn't help but protest,

"This undercover mission is only for two weeks. Just how chaotic would the Rebels need to be for me to become their leader in that time?"

Chapter 225 Aroma\_1

"I think it's time we had someone else take the lead."

After glancing at the empty seat at the head of the table, a slightly stout middle-aged man looked around at the people seated and then, with a smile, said,

"Although this organization was initially created by His Excellency Nathan, he did gather us all together, everything changes over time.

In my personal opinion, His Excellency Nathan is no longer suited to lead us. What do you all think?"

"What do I think? I think nothing!"

After the stout middle-aged man finished speaking, a bald woman who was playing with a slingshot snorted, her eyes showing discontent as she said,

"The leader is always the leader. He saved my life and helped me gain my ability. I don't care what others think. I only acknowledge him!"

"That's normal, very normal."

Not surprised by the bald woman's attitude, the stout middle-aged man nodded at her, then explained with a smile,

"Don't misunderstand, I'm not here to deny His Excellency Nathan's contributions. Many of us have benefited from his actions, even I, who hope for a new leader.

But whether or not you want to admit it, His Excellency Nathan has grown old. These past two years, he hasn't been the infallible, ever-correct leader he once was; instead, he's been making blunders."

At this point, the smile on the stout middle-aged man's face faded slightly, replaced by a sorrowful expression, and he said in a low tone,

"A few years ago, we were all doing well, but since the failed assassination of the Prince at the beginning of the year, first Samantha was captured, and the bandage anomalous object was taken by the Purification Bureau.

Then Barton, who was undercover in the Secret Investigation Bureau to cover for Samantha's group's evacuation, was trapped there by the cleaner named Leon Laine and never returned.

Later, His Excellency Nathan led a team for revenge, sending David to infiltrate the ennobling ceremony to use the Heartbeat Moment to ambush that Leon Layne, but he also got caught in the Purification Bureau's hands, and likely won't be coming back either.

Compared to the past few years, after losing three companions consecutively, one corner of this once-crowded long table is now empty."

"..."

Unlike before, when the stout middle-aged man finished speaking, he looked at the three vacant chairs around the table, and the rebels fell silent. Even the bald woman, known as part of the 'leader's faction,' did not speak out in opposition at this moment.

"Everyone, I admit, His Excellency Nathan has undoubtedly contributed a lot in the past but have we not also made sacrifices?"

After waiting a while, feeling that everyone's attitudes seemed to be softening, the stout middle-aged man's expression changed again, pointing angrily at the elderly woman and the little girl opposite, slamming the table,

"Not to mention others, but how much have the sisters Lucy and Phoebe sacrificed for us over these years?



When they first joined us, they were both youthful and beautiful, but because of the frequent use of their abilities, one's age regressed to the point where her intelligence is that of a five or six-year-old, unable even to speak coherently.

Even though Lucy fared a bit better, she's now an old woman, not even thirty, yet her physical condition resembles that of someone in their seventies or eighties. In terms of sacrifice, have they given less than Nathan?"

"Enough, stop beating around the bush!"

As the people around the long table remained silent, a man covered in burn scars snorted, impatiently saying,

"Oliver, why don't you just be straightforward and say you want to replace Nathan and become the leader yourself!"

"I do have that thought."

Hearing the burned man's words, the anger on the stout middle-aged man's face vanished, revealing an unconcealed glee, and he said excitedly,

"Do you remember? When we first joined, our aim was revenge against everything that forced us down a dead end! To destroy this kingdom riddled with sores! To prevent our tragedies from ever repeating!

It wasn't to engage in inexplicable chaos, clashing repeatedly with the military department, the parliament, the nobility, or commerce guilds, nor was it to provoke that extremely troublesome Purification Bureau!

So everyone, the time has come when change is necessary,"

After finishing his speech, the stout middle-aged man went through a rotation of emotions "joy-sorrow-anger-delight," and returned to his initial cheerful demeanor, standing up and suggesting with a smile,

"I think His Excellency Nathan over the past two years is no longer the person he once was, and is even less fit to be our leader.

We must change immediately while there is still time! If we let His Excellency Nathan continue to act recklessly, it will be too late for everything!"

"I agree!"

As soon as the stout middle-aged man fell silent, the burned man who had just confronted him impatiently, surprisingly raised his hand without hesitation, being the first to express support.

"I don't support Oliver as a leader, but I do support replacing this position."

Facing the surprised gazes from the rebels, the burned man licked his lips and squinted his eyes, saying,

"I don't care about change or timing. I just think Nathan is not suitable for leadership now because, compared to when I first met him, he no longer has that scent."

"What nonsense are you talking about now?"

Rolling her eyes at the burned man, who seemed even more clueless, the bald woman stood up, scolding impatiently,

"What scent on the leader? What nonsense are you spouting?"

"Of course there is!"

Casting a disdainful glance at the bald woman, the burned man snorted,

"It's normal for you not to smell it. It's a fragrance only strong individuals possess! Naturally, only those as strong as us can detect it!

This scent belongs to the strong, the kind who believe that as long as they're alive, even if all their bones are broken, they can still stand up again and bite their opponents to death with their teeth!

I joined back then because I was drawn to the scent on Nathan, thinking he could achieve what he spoke of, so I was willing to listen to him!"

"But these past two years, every time we conducted a major operation, he would spend some time alone, and when he returned, that scent would be slightly weaker, growing increasingly hesitant and depressed.

After the ennobling ceremony, the scent changed again. Now, he smells like a helpless fawn abandoned before being weaned! Weak! Foul!"

"..."

After listening to the burned man's somewhat chaotic speech and barely understanding his meaning, the rebels couldn't help glancing at each other. Even the bald woman put away her anger, sitting back in her chair, biting her lip.

What the burned man described as the "scent of the strong," translated into a less "beast-like" description, would likely be referred to as confidence.

Compared to the leader who previously brimmed with confidence, His Excellency Nathan now seemed to exude a strange air of decay.

Like the mythical figure who pushes a boulder towards the mountaintop only to watch it roll back into the valley again and again, today's leader, compared to before, seems to have truly lost the confidence to change everything...

\*Could it really be time to choose a new leader?\*

...

"Inhale..."

Just as the rebels fell into silence, a loud inhaling sound suddenly echoed inside the room.

Taking a deep whiff of the unchanged air through nostrils resembling black cavities, the burned man suddenly kicked back his chair, stood up, and squinted as he looked outside.

"Tiger! There's a hunting tiger that's come in! The scent is so intense!"

Chapter 226 Lurking and Meeting\_1

Was this the secret gathering place of the Rebels?

Carrying a heavy oil canister filled with orange-red palm oil, Leon blended in with other Rebel procurement members and entered an old warehouse on Patriot Street in groups.

What appeared before Leon was not a dusty, dim warehouse packed with miscellaneous goods, but a lush, green valley dotted with numerous low buildings. Many people were bustling back and forth on the dirt paths they had dug by hand, busily preparing something.

Realizing something was off, he quickly took a deep breath, then pretended as if carrying the oil canister had exhausted him. Taking advantage of the moment he switched the canister to his other shoulder, he glanced around the surroundings.

Every other direction looked normal, with nothing to help ascertain his location, but in the northwest of the valley, a towering "7"-shaped giant tower could be vaguely seen in the clouds.

That steel-framed giant tower, constructed by the people sent from the Crolock Kingdom, was indeed the Boarding Tower used for embarking on rigid Sky Clippers. The short stroke at the top of the "7" served as the "platform" for passengers to board and disembark the Sky Clipper, making it one of the landmark structures of the Capital City.

...

If the Boarding Tower was to the northwest... then this must be a valley southeast of the Capital City?

With his exceptional eyesight, Leon found the Boarding Tower and confirmed his current position, causing him to involuntarily draw in a sharp breath.

Judging by the size of the Boarding Tower, this valley was roughly fifteen to sixteen kilometers away from the Capital City. He had just passed through a door and ended up directly more than ten kilometers away?

No wonder, no wonder the Secret Investigation Bureau almost turned the Capital City upside down yet couldn't find the Rebels' gathering place. As it turned out, this place wasn't even in the Capital City; it would be strange if they could find it!

\*Truly...\* \*this spatial manipulation type of anomalous object was indeed a bit too outrageous!\*

After committing his discovery to memory, Leon switched the oil canister from his left shoulder to his right. He suddenly felt a bit dizzy, stumbling back a half-step with weak legs. He then *\*instinctively\** reached out to grab the door frame of the warehouse and had to "unavoidably" brace himself on the door handle to barely steady himself.

"Materialism" had no reaction.

Too bad, it seemed that although this door had the ability to traverse space, the warehouse door itself was not the anomalous object. Most likely, it was just some kind of vessel, or perhaps the "abnormal" didn't reside in the door frame and handle but adhered to something else...

"Hey, Baskin Junior?"

Unaware of Leon's ulterior motives and seeing him first gasping and switching shoulders, then suddenly stumbling and grabbing the door frame, the chubby uncle behind him quickly reached out to steady the oil canister, expressing concern as he advised,

"If you're not feeling well, just put the oil canister down and go home to rest. I can take another trip later."

"No need."

Upon hearing the chubby uncle's words, Leon, who didn't know where his "home" was, quickly shook his head, declining the offer. He then steadied himself again, forehead veins bulging and sweat pouring down as he carried the oil canister, following the others toward the Warehouse.

\*This kid...\* \*ah! He's just like his dad, a stubborn mule who won't be swayed even by nine bulls...\*

Watching "Baskin Junior"'s sweat-soaked clothes and laboriously arched back, the chubby uncle, who was also carrying a large bundle, couldn't help but sigh. He then quickened his pace to catch up, prepared to lend a hand when the boy could no longer hold on, preventing the oil canister from cracking open and also saving Baskin Junior from hurting himself.

However, strangely enough, despite Baskin Junior appearing drained of strength, his body even swaying, he persisted for a long time, practically wobbling the entire way. Though he seemed about to fall at any moment, he managed to carry the oil canister all the way to the Warehouse successfully.

"Whoa?!"



After taking the oil canister from Baskin Junior, the person responsible for tallying almost got pulled to the ground by its weight, narrowly avoiding being pancaked by the canister.

Stumbling a couple of steps before steadying himself, the clerk finally managed to hoist the canister up by pressing it firmly against his belly. Looking at "Baskin Junior," he remarked in surprise,

"What's going on? Why is this oil canister so full? Aren't they usually just half full?"

"..."

\*Ah?\* \*Were the large palm oil canisters supposed to be filled only halfway?\*

Upon hearing the clerk's question, Leon, who had knocked out the real Baskin Junior during the oil filling to take over his identity, felt a slight embarrassment. He then realized why the expression of the oil shop owner seemed so hesitant and on the verge of speaking at the time.

His family being small, they had always used small jars for oil, never having bought such a large canister. After knocking out the real Baskin Junior, he had naturally filled the canister to the brim before carrying it out.

The oil shop owner, having witnessed his "assault" on the real Baskin Junior and been instructed by Amy to cooperate, didn't dare to mention anything and just let him carry the huge oil canister away...

"I'm not sure either."

Wiping the sweat forcibly squeezed from his forehead, with a rather handsome face but a somewhat cold expression, "Baskin Junior," while working his shoulder, expressionlessly said,

"That's just how much the oil shop owner gave me. I also asked him, but he said there was no mistake, so I just carried it back."

"Is that it?"

Not surprised by "Baskin Junior"'s cold demeanor, the clerk pondered for a moment, then confidently stated,

"That might be because this batch of oil was nearly sold out, and with the transport trucks leaving soon, he was in a hurry to clear out the canisters to catch a ride to the station for new supplies. He might have just poured all the remaining oil into your canister."

Chapter 227 Lurking and Meeting\_2

"Pretty good, haha, little Baskin, you had some good luck today and snagged a nice little bargain for us."

"Maybe."

After responding in an indifferent tone, the inherently aloof "little Baskin" turned and left the warehouse, heading back in the direction he came from. The person doing the accounts wasn't upset by his impolite behavior but cheerfully greeted the next person.

\*He was right... Thankfully, he chose this aloof, expressionless face...\*

Glancing back at the expression of the person doing the accounts and confirming there was nothing unusual, Leon felt a sigh of relief in his heart, grateful for his choice.

Amy's list of suspected rebel procurement agents had about twenty people. He chose this little Baskin because his personality was aloof and taciturn, and he seemed not very sociable.

Although such a person wasn't very hidden, due to his lack of communication and expression, it was least likely to reveal anything when information was scarce. If he were a more cheerful, talkative person, it would be much harder to appear "normal."

Good luck!

After surveying the surroundings, Leon set his sights on the building at the center of the valley.

Since he had successfully infiltrated, the next step was to complete the task: prioritize finding the grandparents suspected of having memory manipulation abilities and try to get the Princess's erased...

"Little Baskin!"

Just as Leon was about to start his investigation, the chubby uncle who had helped him from behind earlier quickly chased after him from the warehouse.

After calling out to the "stubborn" little Baskin, the unshaven chubby uncle couldn't help but complain,

"Why didn't you call me to lend a hand with that full barrel of oil? What if you hurt your back? It's no small matter."

"..."

\*I knew it; thinking I had good luck was definitely an illusion!\*

Seeing the familiar person initiating a conversation with limited information, Leon felt a headache coming on. He then tried to maintain little Baskin's aloof persona, responding coolly,

"I tried lifting it and felt it was fine, so I just carried it back myself."

"Nonsense!"

Seeing him still playing strong, the chubby uncle became a bit angry, and with puffed cheeks, he scolded,

"I tried lifting it earlier, and I nearly hurt my back. How can your body handle carrying such a big barrel of oil for so long?"

"Besides, when you passed the door earlier, you almost tripped, and I saw it all from behind! What's the point of showing off?"

"..."

\*Really... Knowing this would happen, I should have held back a bit and not touched the door frame and handle directly.\*

"Why are you so stubborn, kid?"

Seeing little Baskin stubbornly keep silent with his head down, the chubby uncle sighed and said,

"I know you're bitter inside, trying to find things to do to numb yourself, but also pay attention to your body; don't exhaust it too much. You may not notice when you're young, but when you're older..."

"Mind your own business!"

Worried about investigating the situation and fearing that talking too long would give him away, Leon was eager to shake off this kindhearted but chatty uncle. He raised his head, glared at him, and unceremoniously said,

"I know my body well enough! I don't need you to nag me."

"..."

"You... What's up with you?"

Startled by the suddenly irate "little Baskin," the chubby uncle was taken aback and then said with a hint of suspicion,

"Little Baskin? Why are you acting a bit strange today? You never talked to me like this..."

"..."

\*Ah, looks like even if you look exactly the same, the familiar people can still tell the difference. Did he already notice something wrong?\*

As Leon's eyes darted around, thinking about how to cover up, the chubby uncle made his own conclusions, saying with a bit of annoyance on his kind face,

"Is it old Baskin? Did he hit you again these past couple of days? Did he steal your money to buy booze?"

"..."

Taking Leon's silence as acquiescence, the chubby uncle's round face quickly turned red. He grabbed Leon's wrist and rolled up his sleeve, finding several long bruises on his elbow.

"Damn it! That bastard! He'll die from those damn drinks one day!"

After swearing angrily, the chubby uncle grabbed the "domestic abuse victim" Leon, heading back in the direction they came, saying angrily,

"We can't let this go on! You come back with me to confront him! I'll help you get your money back!"

"..."

\*Oh no... I worked so hard to get in here, and now I'm getting taken back out without having done anything?\*

Having only just strayed a little from his script and been found out, Leon dared not improvise any further, allowing the chubby uncle to drag him away, looking back every few steps, getting further from the suspicious building at the center of the valley...

"Bang!"

Just as Leon was reluctantly dragged back to the door, about to cross the strange portal door and leave the valley where the rebels gathered, the old iron warehouse door twisted twice and then made a loud bang, turning into a redwood door carved with floral and bird patterns.

As the hinge softly creaked, the redwood door was pushed open from the outside, and a middle-aged man who still looked quite young, but with some gray hair at his temples, walked in.

"Were you guys heading out?"

Chapter 228 Lurking and Meeting\_3

The middle-aged man entered from outside, seeing Leon and the big uncle "inside" the door, then smiled kindly and said,

"I'll change the destination back right away."

"Ah, we're not in a hurry!"



Seeing the middle-aged man, the big uncle instinctively stood up straight, then lowered his head with reverence and said,

"Sir Leader, you've been looking quite worn out lately. Please take care of your health."

"Hehe, I will."

The Leader?!

Leon, following behind, felt his pupils narrow. He then mimicked the big uncle, lowering his head respectfully, while repeatedly memorizing the middle-aged man's appearance in his mind.

The Rebels' leader, whom the Secret Investigation Bureau had spent years trying to find, was standing right before him, just two meters away. \*He had to remember this face clearly... Hmm... Why did his features seem somewhat familiar?\*

"Done!"

Unaware that one of the two people before him was a Cleaner from the Purification Bureau, the middle-aged man closed the door again, touched the nameplate on the edge of the redwood door frame, and the luxurious redwood door twisted back into the old iron warehouse door.

"Go out now, I've changed the destination back."

"Thank you, Sir Leader!"

"Hehe, you're welcome."

Leon, who was watching the middle-aged man's operations throughout, was deep in thought as he stared at the nameplate on the door frame. Meanwhile, the middle-aged man, unintentionally revealing his identity, smiled and asked,

"By the way, Owen, you and little Baskin are drenched in sweat. Have you just returned from shopping? Why don't you rest before heading back?"

"We both..."

The big uncle named Owen hesitated for a moment, then sighed and confessed,

"Lord Nathan, little Baskin got beaten up again yesterday, and his money was stolen. I'm worried that old Baskin will squander the money, so I wanted to take him to get it back as soon as possible."

"I see..."

Hearing Owen's words, the middle-aged man couldn't help but remember the scene from the morning, then looked at the bruises on "little Baskin's" elbow, and the smile on his face faded.

"You probably won't have time to find him."

Shaking his head slightly, the middle-aged man looked at "little Baskin" with a hint of guilt and said,

"When I was meeting a friend on Patriot Street this morning, I actually saw your father on the opposite side of the street. He was stumbling out of a tavern, likely having spent the entire night drinking on your money.

But before I could go over, he started urinating on the National War Memorial Wall in the street. When patrolling guards saw him, they kicked him a few times and took him away. Your money is likely gone for good."

"It doesn't matter. I've gotten used to being beaten up and robbed."

Suppressing the excitement in his heart, Leon adjusted his facial expression to appear like a dead-inside youth, all the while gazing with a hint of longing as he asked,

"Sir Leader, what... what should I do to gain such miraculous powers like yours?"

"..."

Unable to fight back against his alcoholic father, he longed for power? \*Such a naive and superficial wish could never give rise to a true Abnormal.\*

Looking at the "little Baskin" in front of him, the middle-aged man couldn't help but shake his head internally.

He had long assessed this somewhat solitary youth and concluded that he didn't possess the conditions to become an "Abnormal," not even including him in the observation list for the Aquarius Director.

But...

Seeing Leon's frail arms layered with old and new bruises, and recalling that morning's scene with the iron combat medal spat with anger and phlegm by old Baskin onto the wall, the middle-aged man fell silent momentarily. Then he let out a deep sigh and extended his hand toward "little Baskin."

"Give me a strand of your hair, and I'll take a look for you."

Chapter 229 Test\_1

"Did you want a strand of my hair?"

Upon hearing the request from the rebel leader across from him, Leon immediately became alert.

Although the opponent's ability seemed related to the "Gate," there was a connection between the rebels and the Aquarius Director, and Aquarius had created so many Anomalous Objects, it was very likely they left him with one or a few casually.

So, if this Anomalous Object could use hair to test someone's state, would the identity he "borrowed" through the photo risk exposure?

...

"Little Baskin?"

Seeing that Leon didn't immediately pull out a strand of hair but instead stood silently in place without any action, the chubby uncle beside him couldn't help but get anxious, quickly reaching out to nudge him.

"Hurry up! What are you waiting for?"

"Sorry, I... I'm a bit too excited!"

Using the momentum from the chubby uncle's push to stagger slightly, Leon quietly slipped his hand into his chest, tapped the small mirror, beckoned to Young Ha inside with his finger, then said with a grateful expression, "Thank you, leader, for the opportunity! I'll pull out some hair right away!"

With a curious crowd watching, having played his part as a boy "frozen" with surprise, Leon quickly pulled his hand out from his chest and then reached behind his head to pull hard.

"Leader, is this enough?"

"It's enough, it's enough... Actually, you didn't need to pull out so much, just one would do..."

Seeing the small bunch of black short hair in "Little Baskin's" slightly trembling hand, the middle-aged man couldn't help but give a wry smile, then took one from it, and gently rubbed it on the inside of the watch, following the method taught by the Aquarius Director.

"Squeak~"

Accompanied by a faint sound similar to metal gears grinding together, a small gap suddenly opened on the side of the watch worn by the middle-aged man, revealing the internal mechanical structure.

Under the "shocked" gaze of Leon and his companion, the six-needle watch, with its bizarre design, seemed to come alive, and the brass gears, flywheels, and eccentric pillars, resembling sharp twisted teeth exposed in the gap, directly swallowed the black hair.

"This is something a friend of mine gave me. It can use hair to test whether someone can possess 'special' powers. The more and larger the needles move, the better your talent is."

After briefly explaining the function of the watch, the middle-aged man held the switch on the other side of the watch and gently turned it.

"Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!"

With an extremely faint sound, five of the needles almost instantly began to jump, quickly moving towards the anomalous range.

Past, body, soul, personality, emotion... Even someone with Old Baskin's experiences only triggered three needles, and this kid had so many aspects deviating from normal people?

After giving "Little Baskin" a glance of surprise, the middle-aged man lowered his head, somewhat expectantly watching the watch. When all the needles stopped, he couldn't help but reveal a look of regret.

Although three needles passed, they weren't in three different groups; it was the past, body, and soul that passed. The final emotion and personality group only moved slightly and was far from becoming anomalous.

\*Little Baskin had a painful past, but not a great future. His body and soul were both abnormal, but his emotions and character weren't up to standard, the movement barely a ripple.\*

\*It seemed, just as I suspected, that while this kid had a painful past, with Old Owen's family taking care of him, he hadn't truly sunk into darkness, just had a slightly radical character and emotion due to family upheaval.\*

\*What a pity, like his father, Old Baskin, while not impossible, ultimately fell short at the final hurdle.\*

"Sorry."

Facing the intensely hopeful eyes of Old Owen and Leon, the middle-aged man shook his head slightly, directly giving a negative answer.

"Little Baskin might not be completely without talent, but compared to the minimum standard, he's a bit lacking. As it stands, he doesn't have that kind of talent."

"..."

"Is that so..."

Hearing the middle-aged man's response, "Little Baskin," personally deemed talentless by the leader, couldn't help but have his gaze dim as he lowered his head, crestfallen.



Meanwhile, the chubby uncle let out a deep sigh, patting him on the back as a comfort, then forced a smile at the middle-aged man and said, "Thank you for your trouble, leader, but even without those magical abilities, we believe that as long as we work hard, we can still accomplish something!"

After hearing the chubby uncle's words, the middle-aged man couldn't help but fall silent for a moment.

\*Just by working hard? Then why, despite trying so many times, did everything still slide toward the abyss both before and after I crossed the Gate of the Other World?\*

\*In this world, some things just can't be accomplished through effort alone. No talent means no talent, no qualification means no qualification!\*

"Yes... just work hard... it should be possible."

Feeling a dull ache in his chest, the middle-aged man smiled and told a lie he didn't believe himself, then stepped aside to clear the path to the Capital City, and instructed Leon, "Hurry back. Although much of your money was likely drunk away by Old Baskin, and the remaining might have to pay fines for defacing the memorial wall, he probably didn't carry all the money with him. There might still be some left at home."

"So you can go check if there's any money left at his place, and if you find yourself short on funds, go to finance for an advance, just say I sent you."

"Thank you, leader..."

Facing the middle-aged man's concern, the dream-shattered "Little Baskin" nodded weakly to express gratitude, then followed behind the chubby uncle who was softly comforting him, looking despondent as he walked through the warehouse doors and left the valley that served as the gathering point.

And after their figures disappeared, unsure if disappointed by not acquiring a new Anomalous Object or lamenting a shared, powerless fate with him, the middle-aged man sighed as well, turning to walk toward the center of the valley, prepared to arrange the upcoming actions for some time.

But he had barely taken a few steps when he saw a robust figure rushing over, that person sniffing excitedly as he ran, and upon seeing the middle-aged man, his face lit up with joy as he dashed over.

"Nathan... Leader! Is this your aroma? How have you gotten even more fragrant?"

"???"

\*What aroma? What does it mean that I've gotten more fragrant?\*

Faintly startled, the middle-aged man sniffed his sleeve without finding any special scent, furrowing his brows as he asked back: "Teague? What on earth are you talking about? What fragrance do I have on me?"

"..."

\*Indeed no fragrance... or rather, it's not his scent, and it's getting fainter...\*

Leaning in close to the middle-aged man and taking a couple of deep sniffs, the strange man, covered in burn scars, shook his head in disappointment, then questioned with a face full of disdain, "Lea... Nathan, have you come across a true powerhouse? Where is he?"

Chapter 230 Glory and Pain\_1

"The true strong ones?"

After hearing the burned man's words, the middle-aged man naturally thought of the Aquarius Director from the morning, then nodded to acknowledge, "There was indeed someone, but he's gone now. It's unlikely he'll return anytime soon, and he won't join us."

"Tsk..."

Hearing such an uninteresting answer, the burned man couldn't help but click his tongue in disappointment, then turned to leave, but was stopped by the middle-aged man.

"Teague, how's the situation at Louther Arcade?"

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Of course, how's the arson going?"

Seeing the burned man showing a somewhat dismissive attitude and not paying much attention to him, the middle-aged man couldn't help but frown, and asked sternly, "Didn't I instruct you to start a fire at Louther Arcade to pressure the wealthy district to force the Secret Investigation Bureau to patrol there? How did that go?"

"Oh, that, it's done, it's done!"

The burned man replied somewhat impatiently, "I went out at night and burned some trash bins and traffic posts, watched over some big merchants and nobles' houses, burned down their gardens and carriage houses, and sneaked into a few small noble homes without guards to set some fires. That should be enough."

"Not just enough, it must be certain!"

Seeing that this subordinate was becoming increasingly difficult to control recently, the middle-aged man frowned, "After Barton's death, we no longer have anyone at the top of the Secret Investigation Bureau. Now we are in the dark about the secret police's actions, so we must be extra careful. We need to draw the secret police away as much as possible before we act! You're like this..."

"Got it, got it, then I'll go set more fires!"

Responding impatiently, the burned man, who had failed to find the "tiger," couldn't be bothered with the middle-aged man, who reeked of weakness, and turned away disappointed.

The middle-aged man sighed, then looked up towards the northwest of the valley, gazing at the towering, cloud-piercing "7"-shaped steel tower. He shook his head slightly, suppressing the anger in his eyes.

Forget it, it wasn't necessary.

After losing three people in succession, manpower was urgently needed, and it wasn't the time to argue with such a fool. After all, if this operation failed again, there wouldn't be much time left for him and Kingdom...

...

"Woof! Woof woof!"

(It hurts! It really hurts!)

"Woof woof woof!"

(@#¥% profanity in dog language)

"Woof woo? Woof woof woo? Woof woof woof!"

(What are you doing? Suddenly pulling out so much hair from my butt? It really hurts!)

Seeing Young Ha's pitiful eyes barking at him reflected off the lamppost lamps, puddles on the ground, and shop windows along the road, Leon could only give it a genuinely apologetic glance.

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

Mainly, I didn't know what was up with that watch of his, worried that giving him my hair could expose me, or there could be some ability like tracking or control.

And since the Mirror World was an illusionary reflection and could avoid these things, and in a rush, I couldn't get anyone else's hair, I could only pull out dog hair of the same color from your butt.

I'm really, truly sorry, I just had no choice, I won't do it next time, and once we get through this period, I will definitely make it up to you!

"Woof woo..."

(You better keep your word...)

I will! I definitely will!

"Little Baskin..."

Waiting for a while without hearing Leon speak, not knowing that he was, in reality, apologizing to the dog over some butt hair, the plump uncle sighed softly and comforted, "Don't be too disappointed. Not having such mystical abilities isn't that big of a deal.

Back then, old Baskin didn't have any abilities either, yet he braved more than three hundred nail gun shots to carry me out of a trench full of corpses.

So rest assured! Even without such magical powers, as long as we are brave enough and lucky enough, we can still achieve many things!"

So... the reason you take care of "me" so much is because old Baskin once saved your life?

Hearing the plump uncle's words, Leon, walking behind him, had an epiphany flash in his eyes.

Glancing at the two rather haunting scars below his collar, Leon calculated for a moment, wanting to gather more intelligence, then said softly, "Uncle Owen... tell me about the past."

?!

You used to hate listening to this, so why now...

Hearing a request he had never received before, the plump uncle was startled, turning back to glance at Leon with some surprise, sensing that something seemed different about the child.

But looking at the somewhat despondent "Little Baskin," recalling the scene from hope crashing to deep disappointment, he couldn't help but sigh, dispelling the strange feeling in his heart.

Yes, possessing such Talent yet missing another life path by a hair's breadth, it would be strange if this child showed no change...

"Alright, I'll tell you!"

With a kind smile at Leon, recalling the years he and old Baskin fought for their country, the plump uncle couldn't help but stir with emotion, wanting to recount those days in full.

Not only could it comfort the disappointed little Baskin, but it might also help this child, who always hated old Baskin, understand that his father wasn't entirely hopeless; before drowning in alcohol, that old drunk was indeed a brave man!

But...



Looking at Little Baskin's thin body and the bruises left by the cane on his arms, the plump uncle suddenly fell into silence, his gentle round eyes showing a deep sense of bewilderment.

What did his and old Baskin's honorable past mean to this child?

With the household losing its pillar, the military pension perpetually in arrears, this child's mother had to pinch and scrape, working long and hard hours, only for her body to collapse entirely, spending her final year tormented day and night by liver disease.

And old Baskin, due to severe injuries sustained during the war, was left with such severe ailments that without alcohol to numb the pain, it became unbearable; after exhausting their money, he could only watch his wife die of illness, which led to his complete collapse, turning into the man who now abused his son and even robbed Little Baskin of his money to buy alcohol.

He remembered before the war began, how happy old Baskin's family was, with Little Baskin having a reliable father and a gentle mother. His and old Baskin's proud past was the beginning of his fall from Heaven to Hell...

"..."

Understanding why Little Baskin was incredibly averse to hearing about the past, the plump uncle's back hunched unconsciously, his expression quickly lowering.

"In reality... it's just some... some past stories, and the past has passed, hmm...

It's not that I'm unwilling to tell you, but there's nothing wrong with not hearing them too. Let's go get your money back quickly, lest old Baskin gets released early. That would be troublesome."

"Uncle Owen, do tell."

"If you really want to hear..."

After a couple of vague responses, the plump uncle with a slightly suppressed tone quickened his pace, saying warmly while walking forward, "Come over to my house for dinner tonight, and then I'll tell you, okay?"