

I! Cleaner 261

Chapter 261: Using technology to counter magic~_1

"Let me try again?"

After hearing the words of the Director of the Purification Bureau, the Aquarius Director couldn't help but take a deep breath, feeling as if his brain was boiling.

If one were to list the world's pains by severity, having one's memory read by a God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon would definitely rank high.

The sensation of that long, purplish-red tumorous tongue gently scraping along the grooves of the brain, slowly extracting memories, was not just the agony of 'self' gradually slipping away but also a torturous physical ordeal.

The entire memory-reading process felt like having hundreds of burning feet repeatedly stepping between one's legs, aiming at a crucial spot, kicking continuously for several minutes—something no human could endure!

"Impossible! I—"

"I'm sorry, but since it's related to the Watcher's Palace, I have to ask you to try again."

"What if it fails again?"

"Don't worry, it won't fail this time!"

Seeing the Aquarius Director's temples throbbing, the Director of the Purification Bureau, also aware of how painful the process was, promised with a somewhat apologetic expression,

"Before you woke up, the Taurus Director had already inspected the Dream Memory Furnace and temporarily repaired the corroded parts, ensuring no issues this time."

Taurus? After hearing the assurance from the Director of the Purification Bureau, the Aquarius Director's anger finally subsided a bit.

As an Ascension Palace Person chosen by the Watcher's Palace, the character of the Taurus Director was beyond doubt. Even if she stood in opposition, she wouldn't resort to foul play in such matters.

Moreover, the real reason why the Dream Memory Furnace malfunctioned might not have been the Brain-Eating Demon's gastric acid, but an error on his side. *After all, his brain wasn't the original, and issues were inevitable.*

There was no choice but to undergo the reading again.

Looking at the director, who, despite apologizing, showed an undeniable determination, the Aquarius Director took a deep breath and stood once more before the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon, face darkened.

...

When deciding to act, he had already considered the possibility of memory reading and prepared a solution.

While the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon's memory reading couldn't be resisted, it relied on physical contact and didn't involve soul techniques. By swapping in an identical brain, its probe could be fooled.

To withstand the memory reading at a critical moment, he drank from the Twin Mirrored Lakes, creating an equivalent replica. Using pre-prepared methods, he killed it and extracted another brain.

Next, by putting this replicated brain to sleep and creating a convincing dream for it, he could generate nearly flawless false memories.

If there ever came a day when memory reading was unavoidable, he could temporarily swap in the fake brain through Crolock Kingdom's brain surgery. The similarity wouldn't be perfect, but 95% was achievable.

The only flaw lay in that the replicated brain's memory came from dreams, making extracted memories feel artificial and scattered, likely exposing upon close observation.

Fortunately, the Brain-Eating Demon wouldn't present original memories directly but would replicate them into dreams through the Dream Memory Furnace. This process concealed the last 5% of imperfection.

After all, he really was the Aquarius Director; though his brain wasn't original, it was still his. The memories matched his narrative, albeit slightly blurry—enough to get by.

As for why issues arose now... perhaps it was due to being rushed?

He glanced toward the Gemini Sub-bureau's direction and received confirmation that no tampering occurred, and it was indeed a malfunction of the Dream Memory Furnace. The Aquarius Director sighed inwardly at his bad luck.

When undergoing brain surgery at the Gemini Sub-bureau, the operating doctor mentioned it would take two to three days for the new brain to fully sync with the body.

But due to the sudden appearance and inquiry from the Director of the Purification Bureau, a whole day was lost, resulting in the incomplete awakening of the new brain, so the memory reading failed.

Fortunately, he had considered this possibility, and the doctor from Crolock Kingdom had provided a solution.

Carefully pressing the thin copper plate embedded in the back of his head and slightly increasing the current to activate the brain, the Aquarius Director and his fake brain were once again engulfed by hundreds of tumorous tongues...

...

Little Leon... we might have trouble...

After reading the "Aquarius Director's partial memories" sent to him, the Red-haired Director sighed, watching Leon converse with the director on the main stage. He crushed the memory dream sphere with a hand and silently apologized to Leon in his heart.

Although the Dream Memory Furnace suddenly malfunctioned, resulting in only about 5% of the Aquarius Director's memories being replicated, this 5% was enough to reveal a glimpse.

To thoroughly suppress the Aquarius Director in one go, he, Beverly, and the Gemini Sub-bureau Director, who provided substantial evidence, conducted thorough investigations over this period, mapping 80-90% of his activities.

Yet within this 5% of memories, the Aquarius Director's actual actions greatly differed from their intelligence summaries.

So, if his guess was correct, the Aquarius Director must have other contingencies prepared over these decades, possibly even finding a way to deceive the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon.

Despite buying some time due to the Dream Memory Furnace's malfunction, the next memory reading, after Taurus's inspection, would surely encounter no problem, and Leon wouldn't escape unscathed either.

It was... too hasty to initiate this inquiry. A bit more preparation might have prevented this predicament, at least sparing Leon from being involved...

...

"I just checked it, and it operates completely fine!"

While the Red-haired Director bemoaned his lack of preparation, Leon on the main stage slapped his chest, confidently assuring the Purification Bureau's director,

"After Taurus inspected it, it's more efficient than before; no issues in regular use!"

"That's good. Let's hope it doesn't malfunction again."

Receiving assurance from two "professionals," the director of the Purification Bureau nodded with satisfaction, without suspecting any tampering.

Meanwhile, Leon, observing his expression, switched to "Elite Performer," timely adding,

"Speaking of malfunctioning... Director, the first time I checked it, everything was alright. It should have been functional. Though the Dream Memory Furnace is old, it hasn't reached the point of malfunction.

I suspect Taurus felt the same since she couldn't find another issue. With your tight schedule, she probably concluded temporary malfunction.

Hmm?

Hearing Leon's hint, the Purification Bureau director paused, then glanced at Taurus, who was indeed pondering something, and contemplated:

"You mean... the issue might lie with the Aquarius Director?"

Chapter 262: Top Torture_1

"No, no, no, I didn't say anything. You figured this out yourself!"

After patting the rear of the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon once again, Leon openly deactivated ninety-five percent of the Dream Memory Furnace within it, then shook his head with a serious expression, saying,

"I can't say for sure... but I just touched it several times, and each time my ability told me the state of the Dream Memory Furnace was very normal, not showing signs of any issues."

"Hmm, I understand."

The Director of the Purification Bureau gave a nod, neither approving nor disapproving, after glancing at the young man daring to play tricks with him. Then, he stared at the distant Aquarius Director, who was being licked, and began to ponder inwardly.

Leon's little "schemes" were blatantly obvious. The Director could see right through them, as they were nothing more than an attempt to take the chance to throw dirt on Aquarius, helping Olivia win the inquiry.

But up until now, he had spoken the truth. And judging by the puzzled expression of the Taurus Director, it seemed he genuinely didn't understand why the Dream Memory Furnace would malfunction... This meant that what this young man said had to be taken seriously.

Could it be that Aquarius really had a trump card to evade the probing of the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon?

As for the malfunction of the Dream Memory Furnace, could it have been some handiwork by Leon, who had touched the Brain-Eating Demon...

Impossible, absolutely impossible!

After sensing the pitifully weak level of corrosion on Leon, the Director shook his head immediately, dispelling such an unreliable guess.

The gap between this young man and the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon was likely greater than the gap between an ant and an elephant. If not for his protection, the moment the Brain-Eating Demon "spread out," Leon would probably have been crushed to death.

For someone so weak to tamper with this is as unlikely as an ant impregnating an elephant!

...

Safe and sound, the scapegoat had largely been diverted!

Leon discreetly glanced at the expression of the Director, confirming that his suspicions toward Aquarius had arisen, and couldn't help but secretly give himself a thumbs-up in his heart. Then he subtly increased the power of the Dream Memory Furnace a bit.

It wasn't out of pity for Aquarius, but rather because he only copied five percent of the memory the first time. If it was still five percent the second time, Aquarius would have to endure getting licked twenty times to complete the replication. If Aquarius couldn't handle it, he might overturn the table directly.

However, if he replicated twenty percent of the memory the second time, then about three or four rounds would be enough to prove his innocence. Given Aquarius's character and considering the sunk cost of already being read twice, he would likely choose to endure it one more time.

And when Aquarius accepted the third reading, Leon could adjust the "power" of the Dream Memory Furnace again, directly replicating thirty percent of the memory, though twenty-five percent would be duplicates.

"Heh, after all, memories should be randomly distributed, like the card pools in pay-to-win mobile games. No one's ever said duplicates can't appear. Drawing duplicate cards is pretty common."

And if even after all this, Aquarius still didn't lose his temper and prepared to grit his teeth for a fourth reading... then give him another five percent, letting him truly experience what it means when miracles and pay-to-win can't change fate!

"Be a little mindful."

Just as Leon was plotting how to torment Aquarius and drag out his "draws," the Director seemed to have sensed something, turned to look at him, and advised,

"Having touched it so many times just now, you might have been contaminated by the Brain-Eating Demon. The demon's aura on you has grown stronger. Step back behind me. Be careful not to get assimilated."

"Oh... Thank you, Director. I'll be careful."

Leon nodded seriously with a gesture and withdrew his right hand after adjusting the power of the Dream Memory Furnace, standing behind the Director solemnly as he observed Aquarius's situation.

...

Finally... it's over...

As the sticky tongues retreated once again, the Aquarius Director, whose brain was nearly numbed by electricity, slowly rose, straining to open his murky eyes and looked at the Director on the main stage.

"Um..."

Despite suspecting that Aquarius had used some tricks due to Leon's reminder, at the sight of the slightly pleading look in Aquarius's eyes, the Director's upper lip twitched slightly, finding himself unable to face him for another round, with no choice but to turn away, hinting as much as he could from the side,

"Things are slightly better than last time. It could be around twenty percent... Combined with these two rounds, that's about a quarter of your memory.

"If another thirty percent could be obtained, that would be over half, which should be enough to prove your innocence. So... do you want to..."

So, what about your promise that nothing would go wrong this time?

Hearing that he would have to endure another licking by the Brain-Eating Demon, possibly even twice if luck were bad, even the scheming Aquarius Director lost his composure, staring with bloodshot eyes at the Director and asking darkly,

"Director, instead of urging me to accept another reading, why don't you try it yourself to see where it might be broken?"

"No need for me to do that."

Seeing that the emotionally unstable Aquarius Director had started "grimacing" at him, the Director turned back, narrowing his eyes to gaze at Aquarius, saying,

"Aquarius, if you don't want to continue with memory readings, perhaps you could invite the Director of the Pisces Division to trace back to all the locations you've visited over the years. But due to your hierarchy issues, such an investigation would have to proceed slowly and might take about a year.

"And during this year or so, please stay in the central bureau's basement. Until Taurus His Excellency's ascension and the completion of your investigation, you'll need to remain in a constant state of sleep to ensure that Watcher's Palace and Taurus His Excellency aren't disturbed... What do you think?"

"..."

Should I endure one or two more memory readings, or spend a year asleep in the crypt until Taurus Ascension Palace leaves... Do I even have a choice?

Staring with bloodshot eyes at the Director for a moment, the Aquarius Director turned away without a word, stumbling to stand before the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon again, then pressed down on the thin copper sheet embedded in the back of his head once more.

The first time, without activating the electric shock, only five percent of the memory got replicated. After the second time's shock, it immediately surged to twenty percent. So if I raise it slightly again, could it reach thirty percent or even more?

Although the process of electric shock is somewhat painful, as long as I can lessen my readings by one session, that pain is nothing!

...

Hmm? Is he pressing something?

Most people noticed Aquarius pressing the back of his head, but the "magical side" members of the Purification Bureau didn't pay much attention to it.

Except for Leon, who had some experience with the "science-side" abilities, paid slightly more attention.

Fixing his gaze on the back of Aquarius's head, Leon, after noticing the glint of metal through his sparse hair, couldn't help but frown, then before the Brain-Eating Demon could undergo another reading, loudly asked,

"Aquarius Director, could you please explain why there's a metal piece on the back of your head?"

Chapter 263: End of Aquarius_1

"Is there a problem?"

Seeing that someone had noticed the thin copper chip on the back of his head, the Aquarius Director's heart leapt with shock. He glanced back at Leon and, with an expressionless face, said,

"Are you bringing this up now to forcefully find a reason to blame me for the Dream Memory Furnace malfunction?"

"I wouldn't say forcefully, just as a precaution."

Seeing that the Aquarius Director didn't answer directly and seemed to be trying to muddle through, Leon suddenly understood. The copper chip was undoubtedly very important to the Aquarius Director. Even if it wasn't the cause of bypassing memory reading, it probably wasn't obtained through legitimate means.

As for whether this suddenly exposed metal chip was a flaw deliberately shown by the Aquarius Director... it seemed unlikely.

Besides, after being meticulously licked twice by the Brain-Eating Demon, with his brains nearly boiling, if he could still have the mind to set a trap for others, Leon thought he'd accept falling into it himself!

Having made up his mind, Leon immediately began to hammer the point, raising his voice to question,

"Aquarius Director, you still haven't answered my question. What exactly is that copper chip? Why is it embedded in your head?"

"I know something about this."

Before the Aquarius Director could respond, the Director of the Gemini Sub-bureau stepped forward, answering in a monotone voice,

"That is an information chip from the Crolock Kingdom, with basic identification information engraved, equivalent to an identification document from other kingdoms. You need a chip of the corresponding level to use the facilities of the corresponding level kingdom... I also have one of these."

Lifting the hair at the back of his head slightly to show the copper chip underneath, the Director of the Gemini Sub-bureau continued to explain,

"The population of the Crolock Kingdom is too small, and many facilities and instruments can't have dedicated personnel for management. Thus, there was a consideration in the past to rely on information chips for identity recognition to allocate permissions without manual intervention. If the Aquarius Director really was once the Gemini Sub-bureau Director, he would indeed have this item."

Moreover, although the information chip had been developed long ago, it did not gain widespread acceptance because some citizens of the Crolock Kingdom feared it was a means for the kingdom to control them, thus resisting implanting the copper chip.

This item was marginally abolished decades ago. Young people in the Crolock Kingdom are unaware of it, and those who have never been to the Crolock Kingdom don't know about it either, so questioning it is entirely normal and not a deliberate targeting of the Aquarius Director."

"..."

Well, it's no wonder this kingdom is said to be a hundred years ahead in technological level. They even have something so sci-fi?

Finding that the person explaining was the Director of the Gemini Sub-bureau, and seeing that this "ally" really did have a copper chip, Leon felt immensely disappointed, thinking he had spotted a flaw.

If it were someone else who stood up, it would have been fine, but the Gemini Director had offered most of the evidence, proving the copper chip was an issue. It seemed it was normal, and perhaps he was just overthinking.

The Director of the Purification Bureau, standing by, after hearing the explanation from the Gemini Sub-bureau Director, also glanced at Leon with disappointment and then turned his head to prompt,

"Let's continue then. Let's not waste any more time."

"The one wasting time isn't me."

Responding dismissively with a cold gaze, the Aquarius Director took a deep look at Leon and then once again stood in front of the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon...

"Wait a minute!"

This time, the one who spoke up was the Red-haired Director.

With his eyes narrowed like a fox, focusing on the Director of the Gemini Sub-bureau, the Red-haired Director stood under everyone's gaze and made a request,

"Aquarius Director, if this is truly a discontinued information chip and serves no function, could you please repeat the action you just did and press it a few more times?"

"Olivia!"

Hearing the Red-haired Director's words, the Aquarius Director seemed to have finally had enough. Driven by unbearable brain pain, he furiously reprimanded with raised brows,

"You're going too far!"

It was fake! His anger was fake! The so-called information chip indeed had issues!

Leon, whose right hand was tightly pressed against the Yang Jiao by a strand of bright red hair, looked at the Aquarius Director's soul which was beginning to waver, obviously not out of anger but anxiety, and felt a surge of joy!

He had almost been fooled! Truly worthy of the non-drinking Director, this was unbelievably reliable!

"Aquarius Director, can I ask how exactly my request is excessive?"

After exchanging a glance with Leon and receiving a "confirmation," the corners of the Red-haired Director's mouth curled up again as he smiled and continued questioning,

"You've already pressed it yourself several times before I made my request, so it should be harmless to you, right? In that case, what harm would there be in pressing it a few more times?"

Of course, there was harm!

Every time this thing was pressed, the current would double. If pressed a few more times, my brain might be damaged before the memory reading even began...

Although he had an answer, there was no way he could express it.

Seeing the Director of the Purification Bureau gradually squinting his eyes, the Aquarius Director, who knew his time was up, sighed softly without making any unnecessary arguments.

It was no longer useful to deny. Since it had been noticed, whether he pressed the copper chip or not, the item would undoubtedly be thoroughly examined inside and out.

Even though the people in the Purification Bureau might not understand the technology of the Crolock Kingdom, they would certainly notice something was wrong as soon as they peeled back the copper chip and saw the metal wires embedded in his brain. Missing this by just one day had entirely ruined his plans.

If the Director hadn't returned, and if the inquiry hadn't started one day early, his newly replaced brain would have fully synchronized with his body. He could have bypassed the God-Tier Brain-Eating Demon's reading without relying on electric shocks to forcibly activate it, and the issue of the copper chip wouldn't have been noticed...

One day! Damn it! Just one day!

...

"It seems you're no longer prepared to explain."

After waiting a short while without hearing a defense from the Aquarius Director, the Director of the Purification Bureau raised his hand silently,

"As the Director of the Purification Bureau, I now propose to remove Aquarius Director from his position and temporarily close the Aquarius Astropalace... let's vote."

With the words of the Director of the Purification Bureau, the previously bright and transparent conference hall suddenly darkened, and the kilometer-thick rock wall seemed to become transparent, transforming instantly into an endless dark night sky.

Immediately, eighty-seven patterns composed of numerous star points lit up around the center of the venue and began slowly rotating according to some pattern. The place without surrounding star points gradually revealed a terrifyingly large cut, and like an eye it split open from top to bottom, revealing the real starry sky.

The sun, which had been countless miles away, was forcibly pulled closer by some unknown force, turning into a brilliantly golden pupil within the "eye," staring directly at the Aquarius Director. Surrounding this solar eye, among the twelve seats exclusively for directors, four were gradually illuminated.

"Four votes, passed."

Having announced the voting result, the Director of the Purification Bureau raised his hand, waved it toward the seat that once belonged to the Aquarius Director, dispelling the Aquarius Astropalace composed of 90 star points, completely cutting off the possibility for the Aquarius Director to escape headquarters. Then, with an emotionless expression, he pronounced,

"Privately creating abnormalities, harming the innocent en masse, attempting to corrupt the Watcher's Palace... Guilty on multiple counts!"

"As the Director of the Purification Bureau, I sentence the former Aquarius Director... to death!"

Chapter 264:

With the declaration made by the Director of the Purification Bureau, the "Sun's Eye" in the sky suddenly brightened, the blistering sunlight flowing like a waterfall, pouring directly onto the Aquarius Director.

"Damn it! It's all your fault!"

In the midst of the crowd's shocked expressions, the Aquarius Director, despite being directly drenched in sunlight, was not immediately reduced to ashes. Instead, under the encirclement of some strange, smoke-like substance, he stood up against the blazing light and roared at the platform, his eyes red with fury:

"Why did you come back? If only you hadn't shown up today! We just needed one more day!"

I was startled, thinking my tampering had been discovered...

Realizing that the Aquarius Director's roar was not aimed at him but was directed at the Director of the Purification Bureau, Leon, also standing on the platform, breathed a sigh of relief. Immediately, he

hurriedly moved aside, trying to hide behind the Director of the Purification Bureau, afraid that the Aquarius Director's dying struggles might affect him.

As for the illusory figure of the Director of the Purification Bureau, his attention was entirely on the Aquarius Director at this moment and did not notice Leon's small movements. He directly gestured towards the sun with a cold face.

"Boom!"

Accompanied by a sound akin to the roar of a waterfall, the sunlight that covered the scene immediately became several times more intense, the resplendent golden torrent crashing down, thoroughly piercing through the smoky barrier around the Aquarius Director.

And with the destruction of this life-saving anomalous object, the Aquarius Director's body was completely obliterated in an instant, even the scattered ashes were incinerated to nothing by the nearly liquefied sunlight, leaving only a soul wailing resentfully in place.

After glancing at the Aquarius Director's soul and ensuring there were no issues, the Director of the Purification Bureau turned his head to look towards the position of the Gemini Sub-bureau Director, as if he wanted to give some instructions, but after hesitating, he looked towards the Pisces Division Director.

"Medea, the execution of Aquarius is complete, and your Pisces Division is more adept at handling souls, so you should take Aquarius's soul away.

Apart from his actions over the years and his schemes against the Watcher's Palace, try to extract the locations of the anomalous objects he created as well as any knowledge regarding the Aquarius secret technique."

"Alright."

The veil-wearing Pisces Director nodded slightly, accepting the task, and after finishing the arrangements, the Director of the Purification Bureau surprisingly turned to look at Leon behind him and asked,

"You...that...ability...could...it..."

Hmm?

Seeing the Director of the Purification Bureau in front of him suddenly going into "slow motion," his figure even distorting uncontrollably, Leon couldn't help but be slightly stunned. He then couldn't resist asking,

"Director? What's happening to you?"

"It's probably due to the Old Soil, where the flow of time has begun to slow down again."

Leaving the seat of the Pisces Director and coming over to retrieve the Aquarius soul, the veil-wearing woman explained:

"The Director's true form is not here but...in...the...Old...Soil..."

???

No way? Why are you also in slow motion now?

Staring in surprise at the veil-wearing woman, Leon turned his head intending to ask his Director, but was utterly shocked to find that, including his own Director, the entire headquarters of the Purification Bureau had actually slowed down.

Moreover, this slowing down was accelerating, with the veil-wearing woman originally able to say a word every three seconds now unable to utter another word even after more than half a minute.

...

"Unexpectedly, I had prepared so thoroughly, yet you all still messed it up."

Accompanied by a voice devoid of any fluctuation, the Gemini Sub-bureau Director walked over slowly, bypassing the veil-wearing woman blocking the way, and grabbed the soul of the Aquarius Director in his hand, amidst Leon's shocked gaze.

"And you are?"

"I am the Gemini Sub-bureau Director and also the Aquarius Director...or rather the container holding his original brain."

Tapping his forehead, the Gemini Sub-bureau Director took out a small scale and placed it in his hand, then stared lightly at Leon, saying,

"The one just executed was my true body, a replicated brain, and emotions and part of a soul detached. Being licked by a Brain-Eating Demon is far too painful; I really didn't want to experience it firsthand, so I came up with this method.

Moreover, thinking it over recently, though the timing is off by a day and there may be some errors in the surgery's effectiveness, since the brain placed in this body hasn't been affected, the brain of the other me shouldn't be too affected either.

The reason my memory couldn't be fully copied by the Dream Memory Furnace probably doesn't lie with the surgery of the Crolock Kingdom; the issue is likely with the God Tier Brain-Eating Demon, and the only one who directly touched that creature is you...I'm very curious, how did you control it?"

"..."

"..."

"..."

Stop it! Another twist?

Looking at the Gemini Director—or rather, the true Aquarius Director—standing expressionlessly in front of him, awaiting answers, Leon was truly stunned.

To say nothing of the others, what the hell were the people from the Purification Bureau doing?

You all acted so badass, not only capturing so many True Gods and Evil Gods, even hollowing out an asteroid as a headquarters, and could even pull the sun over to use; now how come you've all been slowed down? If Aquarius were a bit more ruthless today, wouldn't the Purification Bureau have been wiped out?

"Don't worry, I can't harm them, or even make contact with them."

Seemingly reading Leon's thoughts, the Gemini Sub-bureau Director—or rather, the real Aquarius Director—explained,

"My ability isn't to slow them down, but to speed up you and me. We both are now in a state like two gears detached from the world's 'machine,' allowing us to operate at a rate far exceeding normal time flow.

But if we were to make contact with anyone else, the gears which are only temporarily detached from the machine would begin to engage again, immediately reverting to the original speed. So even though our current state is peculiar, it actually doesn't permit us to accomplish much.

[Through personal observation and the user's explanation, you've gained significant intelligence regarding the "Temporal Rift," activating the Heterochromatic Badge "Materialist Soul (Crimson)."

Having understood part of the rules of the "Temporal Rift," your resistance to this anomalous object has increased, allowing you to deflect lower levels of influence.]

Only lower levels...that's not much help!

Gazing at the true Aquarius Director across from him, who didn't seem opposed to conversing, and holding the belief of struggling a bit even if caught, Leon mustered the courage to inquire,

"If you wanted to retrieve the soul, why only speed yourself up and include me?"

"Naturally, to gain intelligence."

Shaking the scale in his hand, the Aquarius Director replied leisurely,

"This thing is called the 'Scale of Truth.' As long as one party presents secrets of sufficient value, then when they start asking questions, the other party, however unwilling, must honestly answer an equivalent secret.

As for why it's you, firstly because I'm curious about what you did to the Brain-Eating Demon, secondly to know about the situation on the Kingdom's side, thirdly to probe for information on the Virgo Sub-bureau, and the most critical reason being you're weak.

If someone like Olivia or Beverly of the Lion Bureau were accelerated with me, not only would the expenditure be enormous, I might not even be able to defeat them.

But you cost little to accelerate, know a lot of things, have secrets I'm interested in, and are easiest to deal with once I've gathered the intelligence, so of course, I chose you."

"..."

"Hmm...the reasons for there being two of me, the secrets of time acceleration, the ability of the Scale of Truth, why I selected you...these combined should add up to enough."

Counting four different-sized weights and placing them on the left side of the small scale, the sight of the right side balancing high above caused the Aquarius Director to nod in satisfaction, and he then looked towards Leon, asking with calm composure,

"Your turn, the first question, what exactly did you do to that Brain-Eating Demon?"

Chapter 265: Knowledge Critical Hit_1

[Through... materialism... due to the initial understanding of the "Scale of Truth" operating rules, your resistance to this anomalous object increased, and you were already able to block the general level of influence.]

Accompanied by the badge system's prompt in his ear, Leon felt a shiver run through his body, as if he had suddenly lost control of himself, producing an unimaginable urge to confess.

"I touched... that True God tier Brain-Eating Demon's... rear..."

As Leon's words landed, the right side of the [Scale of Truth] tray, that had been raised high, finally received its first weight, a weight no larger than a grain of rice, yet it pressed the tray down slightly.

Strange, such a trivial matter, not even a secret, could create a weight, and its value was acknowledged by the Scale of Truth?

Looking at this weight which shouldn't have appeared, the Aquarius Director's brow furrowed slightly, once again sensing the unsettling crisis of plans veering off course and events gradually slipping out of his control.

There were too many peculiarities about this Leon, shouldn't... swap questioning to someone else?

But just as the Aquarius Director considered whether to eliminate Leon, a date-sized weight suddenly crashed down, instantly leveling the crooked Scale of Truth.

"Through the Devil's Badge... I directly... seized control of the True God-level Brain-Eating Demon."

Badge? What sort of item is that?

Seeing just a vague name with weight comparable to four of his own secrets' weights, the Aquarius Director, who had hesitated to switch people, suddenly felt his eyes light up.

"What is the Devil's Badge as an anomalous object? What is its effect?"

"The Devil's Badge... is not an anomalous object... its effect is... direct control over all demons with corrupt attributes as anomalous objects..."

Not an anomalous object itself, yet can directly control all demon anomalous items? Such an unreasonable thing exists!

After hearing the specifics of the Devil's Badge's effects, the Aquarius Director couldn't help but gasp, about to speak further when he noticed the Scale of Truth had completely shifted positions, the tray on his end raised high by an egg-sized weight.

"..."

Trouble... If I keep asking, I might have to divulge some unimaginable secrets myself; is it worth it?

However, the Aquarius Director hesitated for only a moment.

Facing something capable of forcibly controlling a True God-level anomalous object via a Third-Class Cleanser was worth a bit of risk, and it was nothing to leak a bit for the moment; as long as Leon was eliminated right after the deal, a dead man wouldn't betray secrets!

"I'll speak next, revealing a way for anyone meeting certain conditions to directly ascend the Watcher's Palace... To completely replace the Taurus Director, I crafted six high-hierarchy, inter-cooperative anomalous objects."

As the Aquarius Director spoke without expression, the left side of the Scale of Truth continuously accumulated weight.

"The effects of those six anomalous items are occupying the body, simulating the soul, replicating personality, fabricating emotions, replacing the past, and simulating the future.

These aspects—body, soul, personality, emotions, past, and future—are enough to cover everything about a person.

If I possess the Taurus Director's body; have the same soul, emotions, and personality as hers; even with identical past and future, then even the mighty Watcher's Palace must acknowledge me as the Taurus Director."

"Plop."

An egg-sized weight fell, the right side of the Scale of Truth finally tilted high up, but the Aquarius Director, still feeling unsure, spoke to add more weight:

"The entire Rebel group arose to accomplish this goal, with anomalous body-seizing items held by Luke of the Rebels; soul-copying items with Barton whom you killed; the future-simulating item, Nathan's Gate of the Other World;

The emotion-fabricating item lies with Oliver, whose face shows ever-changing emotions, and the personality's birth comes from one's past memories and experiences. By having Phoebe completely erase my memory and Lucy implant Taurus's memories, I can more or less simulate the Taurus Director's personality.

Among the six anomalous items, only replacing the past and forcibly altering reality was troublesome; I tried over a dozen times unsuccessfully, but recently found it, that is your sister's photograph..."

...

Rapidly recounting this plethora of secrets, the Aquarius Director looked at the now-maxed-out left tray, nodding in satisfaction, then looked over at Leon across, his eyes full of fervor as he said:

"It's your turn now, how exactly is your Devil's Badge..."

"Besides the badge, I have other valuable secrets!"

Not waiting for the Aquarius Director to finish, having just understood the [Scale of Truth]'s rules, Leon directly mimicked the Aquarius Director's earlier statement, speaking first with a twinkle in his eye:

"I'll now speak of a revolutionary social theory, one that can establish new governmental structures outside Kingdoms, federations, and other outdated regimes, and a comprehensive theoretical system corresponding to it, enough to change the world with the anomalous objects' influence extracted.

Starting with historical materialism, social development is determined by the economic base. Changes in the economic form inevitably lead to social transformation, and progress and reform are realized through class struggle..."

Chapter 266: Knowledge Critical Hit_2

"???"

What exactly are you talking about????

Even though every word was somewhat understandable on its own, when put together, it turned into a bizarre knowledge that made no sense at all, leaving the Aquarius Director dumbfounded.

However, what left him even more bewildered was that as Leon continued to speak, a massive crimson weight, larger than a watermelon, appeared on the right side of the Scale of Truth. This not only tipped the balance back but also began to uncontrollably creak and groan!

So... could it be that everything he said was true?! Could just a few sentences really possess world-changing ability?!!!

At this moment, one side of the Scale of Truth held the method and path to ascend the Watcher's Palace, while the other side was weighed down by knowledge said to change the world. Under the heavy pressure of two "world-class" secrets, the Scale of Truth started to tremble frantically back and forth as if it might explode at any moment.

Completely unprepared for the revelation that Leon harbored secrets of such magnitude within him, the Aquarius Director, always poised and in control, finally showed an expression of shock for the first time, his lips trembling as he roared,

"Damn it! You... you shut up! This isn't what I wanted! Shut up!"

Not shutting up! Not even unto death!

Seeing the Aquarius Director across from him, so drained that he could barely stand, Leon, who finally found a chance to turn the tables, couldn't help but be overjoyed. He continued to enthusiastically recite from memory.

In addition to bearing the terrifying consumption from the [Scale of Truth] balancing the value of two world-class secrets, the Aquarius Director, no matter how unwilling, had to pour out his most valuable secrets, one after another, to achieve value equilibrium.

"The list of Numbered Anomalous Objects of the Purification Bureau..."

"The whereabouts of the Serpent Bearer Sub-bureau Chief after the Ophiuchus Eroded Nation incident..."

"The introductory method to Aquarius's Abnormal Genesis Sorcery..."

"The location and means of controlling the God of Enlightenment..."

"The principles and practice process of the God-Suppressing Forked Fingers..."

As one of the Twelve Directors of the Purification Bureau, the Aquarius Director likely served for nearly a hundred years, naturally grasping countless secrets. Although slightly lacking in quality, the quantity was truly substantial enough to be filling.

And as his lips moved rapidly, one heavyweight weight after another appeared on the left side of the plate. Leon, who was only half-familiar with the Mage, suddenly felt that compelling desire to speak again, and had no choice but to continue ramping up his efforts.

"The theory of surplus value suggests that exploitation in a capitalist society stems from the surplus value created by workers..."

"The royal family of the Crolock Kingdom has been under house arrest by Intelligent Machines, and now the governance of Crolock Kingdom is only by..."

"The development of society is continuous progress, social political reform aims to resolve inherent contradictions and inequalities within society..."

"Members of the Gemini Sub-bureau have been completely controlled; only one managed to escape, and now..."

With both sides continuously biting their teeth and raising their stakes against each other, Leon and the Aquarius Director had long lost track of what the other was saying. They could only follow the ever-changing compulsion to confide, their almost-worn-thin lips opening and closing incessantly, veins bulging on their foreheads as they frantically spewed out words.

And as both sides continued to increase their stakes, compared to Leon, who only needed to divulge secrets, the Aquarius Director, who also had to bear the consumption of the [Scale of Truth], was clearly paying a much larger price. Even if there were still many secrets left untold, the person had already been drained to the point where he couldn't even stand, sitting directly down on the ground.

But just as Leon was overjoyed and ready to seize the moment to continue and completely topple Aquarius Director, an incredibly dire situation suddenly arose... He had run out of things to say.

Damn it! The syllabus only covered up to the fifth chapter, I haven't memorized the rest yet!!!

"The Demonic Soul Abyss summoned by the Bai Ye Sect is about to briefly overlap with the Kingdom, at which time everyone will..."

"..."

"In addition to Nathan, I've arranged other follow-up attacks on the Virgin Branch..."

"..."

"?"

After speaking of two secrets without hearing any response, the nearly numb Aquarius Director finally noticed Leon's faltering. Seeing that he seemed to be out of words, the Aquarius Director, drawn thin by the Scale of Truth, was instantly invigorated, hurriedly stumbling to his feet, looking at Leon with a face full of ferocity.

That damn dog!

Choosing him to ask questions was originally intended to save on consumption, but who knew a Third-Class Cleanser harbored such level secrets, nearly draining him to death!

And the worst part was, he couldn't even understand the things he was saying! Had he known this would be the outcome, he might as well have forcibly accelerated Ollie and fought a battle while questioning her!

With eyes full of regret and rage, the Aquarius Director, his face twisted with anger, didn't produce any Anomalous Object but instead reached out two withered hands, lunging at Leon as if intending to strangle him!

And at this critical moment, a spark of inspiration flashed in Leon's mind, and he ducked under the Aquarius Director's staggering lunge. Then, with the loudest voice of his life, he began again, "Next, I will talk about the basic elements that constitute the material world, arranged according to atomic number, chemical properties, and periodic law!

Hydrogen, helium, lithium, beryllium, boron; carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, fluorine, neon; sodium, magnesium, aluminum, silicon, phosphorus, sulfur, chlorine, argon, potassium, calcium..."

Chapter 267: Knowledge Critical Hit_3

"???"

"What the hell is this now?!!!"

Under the critical blow of the elemental periodic table, after feeling the soaring suction force again, the Aquarius Director couldn't help but turn around abruptly. He was horrified to discover that another weight of impossible size had appeared on the right tray of the Scale of Truth.

Even though this weight seemed slightly unstable, with varying degrees of defects, and some parts didn't quite fit, when he saw the size, which was a circle larger than a rice cooker, it still counted as a "world-class" secret!

Aside from the previous one, there's another secret of the same level? What the hell is this kid up to?!!!

Staring at this second world-class weight, the Aquarius Director was utterly dumbfounded. He turned back and, looking at Leon who was still reciting, shouted in disbelief, "How the hell did you..."

His terrified questioning wasn't finished when the Scale of Truth behind, crushed by the equivalent of four "world-class" secrets, emitted a cracking sound under the unbearable weight. Then, with a boom, it exploded, scattering countless valuable secret weights across the sky!

"Wow!"

At the instant when the Scale of Truth was crushed, the Aquarius Director seemed to suffer unimaginable damage. He spewed out a mouthful of black blood, even coughing up bits of internal organs.

As he, the user, was injured, the Temporal Rift used to accelerate time for the two of them finally couldn't be maintained. Accompanied by a strange feeling like gears meshing, the world around them, which had slowed to a crawl, began to speed up gradually.

Not good!

Noticing the change around him and the gazes of the Purification Bureau members beginning to focus on him, the Aquarius Director shook with terror. Covered in his own blood, he sprang towards the nearest "world-class" weight.

Even if he couldn't understand it, since it could crush the Scale of Truth, whatever the hell this guy spouted had to be valuable!

Reacting quickly, Leon got up to chase him, attempting to stop him before the Temporal Rift ceased. However, with a body full of anomalous objects being suppressed tightly by a small asteroid, he couldn't activate anything. His physical abilities were far too inferior.

Thus, after only a few seconds of struggle, Leon was kicked away by the blood-spitting Aquarius Director, landing on several other weights.

"Abnormal Genesis Sorcery is derived from..."

"Society's development is a continuous..."

"The foundation of God-Suppressing Forked Fingers is..."

At the moment Leon touched them, the three weights instantly vanished, transforming into a torrent of knowledge pouring into his mind.

Meanwhile, on the other side, although the Aquarius Director managed to touch the weight with the elemental periodic table, he simply couldn't comprehend it no matter what. He clutched this incomparably precious world-class secret, staggering towards the Bureau Chief of the Purification Bureau... or rather the unconscious Nathan behind him.

"Open the door!!!"

Accompanied by a shout full of blood, the unconscious middle-aged Joshua inexplicably raised his hand, and an invisible portal opened wide in front of him!

Finally... finally...

Seeing the secret hideout that belonged to him outside the portal, the Aquarius Director, who had prepared thoroughly but suffered a series of setbacks, was almost brought to tears.

However, just as he threw the middle-aged Joshua inside and turned to utter some harsh words, he saw Leon swing a watermelon-sized crimson weight, striking the back of his head with a bang.

This is the power of the fifth chapter of Mage!

A direct hit from this ideology knocked the severely injured Aquarius Director down. Afraid that he would be dragged into the portal by the Aquarius Director, Leon didn't dare linger and immediately turned to run without any hesitation.

Similarly reacting, the Aquarius Director narrowly missed grabbing him, managing only to tear off Leon's coat tail.

Tch... slippery little brat!

Seeing the Temporal Rift about to dissipate, the Aquarius Director dared not chase further. He cast a venomous glance at Leon, then turned and retreated into the Gate of the Other World, hurriedly withdrawing from the Purification Bureau headquarters.

What the Aquarius Director hadn't noticed was that Leon's parting blow to his head wasn't just venting anger. A striking red strand of hair had been slyly tossed into his collar...

Chapter 268: Reaction_1

"Stop!"

Just as the Aquarius Director was hastily retreating and the Temporal Rift was completely closed, a barrage of dazzling attacks instantly arrived.

The first thing to emerge was an inexplicable sweet fragrance near where middle-aged Joshua had "opened the door," as though welcoming a sticky sweet rain. Various desserts sprouted like mushrooms after the rain and began to swell rapidly.

However, before these suddenly appearing sweets could expand, hundreds of sea-blue tendrils, as thick as an adult's waist, emerged first. With a momentum to crush everything, they wildly thrashed, turning the sweets into multicolored sugar mush, only to be sliced and diced by countless invisible blades, dissolving into sprays of water by pale pink dreams.

Next came the crimson blood domain, whispering laments, golden rivers, nameless sigils, pale dolls covered in barbs, knee-crawling demons with ten bleeding eyes, the masked, voiceless martyrs' corpses, and a hideous evil moon reflected in a jade lake...

It was as if an abnormal exhibition had opened, with a multitude of clearly suspicious things appearing like a revolving lantern at the Aquarius Director's escape point. These things violently destroyed the anomalous abilities that arrived first, only to be torn apart by even more vicious attacks that came later.

Finally, the eye of the sun in the sky suddenly dimmed, and a Sun Shadow darker than the deepest night descended, obliterating everything on the main stage. Only then did the varied attacks of the Purification Bureau finally cease...

Holy shit...

Watching the main stage, washed over an unknown number of times in one second, Leon, who had been pulled away in advance by his branch director, couldn't help but shiver. The clothes on his back were soaked with cold sweat.

When the Gate of the Other World began to close, Leon was originally about to pick up two more weights. Suddenly, the shoe on his right foot turned into a wafer cookie, with hundreds of suction cup-covered tendrils quietly appearing around, and a familiar clump of vibrant red hair quietly coiling around his waist.

The director's trying to save me... so staying here would have been dangerous?

Although the Temporal Rift hadn't fully closed and Leon had enough speed to dodge the red hair's entanglement and continue picking up the weights on the ground, he trusted his director and didn't move, letting the director's hair coil up and then...

Just a little more, and that would have been the end!

Pulled out by the director's red hair along with Prince Freckles and Senior Jerry, Leon witnessed attack after attack fall in succession and felt immensely grateful he had restrained his greed.

The fierce individuals of the Purification Bureau, although unable to catch the sped-up Aquarius Director, could easily have taken him out. Considering the plowing-like overwhelming saturation attacks, if he had stayed to pick up weights, even a thousand lives wouldn't have been enough to survive!

While Leon was still trembling with fear, the red-haired director, who saved all three of them, couldn't help but exhale in relief. He then slightly nodded toward the Lion Sub-bureau's director and said,

"Beverly, thank you for stepping in to help."

"Don't mention it, I almost made things worse."

Raising a hand to point at Leon's right foot, which had been transformed into a cookie, and changing it back, Lion Sub-bureau's director Beverly, with a slight tinge of apology, explained,

"I initially wanted to turn you three into sweets. That way, even if the subsequent attacks shredded you, I could still resurrect you by just adding some sugar and dough."

"But more people stepped in than I expected. The director even used the Sun Shadow for a downward attack. If you had been turned into sweets, you would have really suffered."

"You deserve thanks."

The red-haired director insisted,

"My reaction time isn't that fast. Without your help, blocking some of the summoned Sea-Tendrils, I might not have been able to get them out in one piece. Consider this a debt I owe you... Also, don't think these people came on too strong."

At this point, the red-haired director turned to the three startled individuals, Leon included, and explained with a rather helpless expression,

"The first ones to attack, even if they genuinely wanted to help retain people, exerted themselves a bit, but they held back on your positions. I barely managed to drag you out under such a barrage of attacks."

"Those who attacked later intentionally avoided hitting you, so rather than retaining people, they were showing loyalty, proving they hadn't colluded with the Aquarius Director. Everyone was just putting on a show."

"..."

After hearing the red-haired director's words, Leon pondered for a moment and instantly understood what was going on.

This incident involved the Watcher's Palace and touched Purification Bureau's nerve, coupled with the sudden "betrayal" by the Gemini Sub-bureau's director. So whatever happens with the Aquarius Director afterwards, those within the Purification Bureau with "Aquarius connections" were going to face extraordinarily strict scrutiny and repercussions.

Therefore, these sub-bureau directors had to join the fray, even knowing they couldn't hit anything, especially those who might have benefited from Aquarius. They were showing a break from him and aligning with the headquarters to avoid being targeted later...

Indeed, choosing a side is an eternal issue for humanity, and even an organization like the Purification Bureau isn't exempt.

"Enough!"

It was clear that the red-haired director wasn't the only one who understood this. After waving away the surrounding dark Sun Shadows, the Purification Bureau's director glared in frustration at the sub-bureau directors, who, despite being utterly useless when trouble arose, were competing to align with sides, and barked,

"Stop this nonsense. Right now, the most important thing is how to handle Aquar—hmm..."

Looking down in resignation at one small head biting his trouser leg and another yapping at him, the head of a two-headed... puppy, the Purification Bureau's director darkened his face and said,

"Whose Anomalous Object is this? Take it back immediately!"

"Ah! It's mine!"

Frantically shaking a dog bell in hand and calling back the fierce yet cute puppy chewing on the director's shoe, the acting director of the Harp Bureau stood up, blushing and repeatedly apologized before awkwardly explaining,

"I'm sorry, our Harp Bureau's director and those Level One and Level Two seniors are all freezing in the polar region. I'm the most senior in the bureau, so the Star Palace dragged me here to attend the meeting..."

"Though I'm senior, my actual strength is average. I only advanced to Level Two last month and really couldn't withstand the headquarters' suppression of Anomalous Objects, so I could only summon a puppy to put on a show. I'm sorry to embarrass you, Director..."

"..."

Ah, it's the second-to-last performing Harp Bureau; no wonder the level's so low...

Waving his hand to indicate it was okay and allowing the stand-in director to sit down, the Purification Bureau's director turned, looking toward a certain bureau ranking first (from last) and frowned, asking,

"Olivia, have your people explain what just happened, and why did the Gemini Sub-bureau's director suddenly betray us?"

Chapter 269: Traditional Face Jumping_1

"Not a betrayal, the body of the director of the Gemini Sub-bureau housed the brain of the Aquarius Director."

Rather than letting Leon answer the question directly, the Red-haired Director, who had already inquired and learned the general story, answered,

"To prevent the God Tier Brain-Eating Demon from reading his memories, Aquarius duplicated his brain, along with the original body, emotions, and a small fraction of his soul, creating an incredibly convincing fake body. The fake body's brain was usually semi-closed, while the real brain hidden within the body of the Gemini Director controlled both bodies using soul fragments, temporarily unlocking the brain in the fake body before and after memory reading. As for just now, he utilized the [Temporal Rift] to accelerate his own time, reclaim the soul fragments, and then used an Anomalous Object called the [Gate of the Other World]..."

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

After listening to the explanation from the Red-haired Director, and understanding why the Aquarius Director was confident in hiding from memory reading, the director of the Purification Bureau frowned,

"They can even replace brains... Has medical advancement in the Crolock Kingdom developed to such an extent?"

"I'm not sure about that."

The Red-haired Director shook his head,

"The Crolock Kingdom is quite closed off, engaging minimally with the outside world except for purchasing minerals and energy. Only people from the Gemini Sub-bureau would know the situation there."

The Gemini Sub-bureau... The director was the Aquarius Director; even if it wasn't, the Aquarius Director likely had control over it, making the entire Gemini Sub-bureau now untrustworthy.

After shaking his head slightly, the director of the Purification Bureau wanted to ask more, but saw a tall, thin man stand up and pointedly ask,

"Olivia, you weren't the one accelerated by the [Temporal Rift], were you? Why relay the situation through you rather than letting that Level Three Cleanser speak for himself?"

"Is there a problem?"

With her fox-like eyes slightly narrowed, after glancing at the man who asked, the Red-haired Director replied with a displeased expression,

"Edward! If you have something to say, just say it and don't beat around the bush!"

"I mean nothing by it; I'm merely curious."

The tall, thin man raised an eyebrow,

"Everyone saw just now that not only Aquarius was accelerated by the [Temporal Rift] but also this Third-Class Cleanser from your bureau, and they seemed to be alone together for quite some time. So could you please explain how this new accident handler in the Purification Bureau managed to persist for so long under Aquarius Director without being dealt with?"

"The survival techniques given to Leon were from me. There's no need for you to be concerned about the specifics."

Having foreseen such a situation occurring, the Red-haired Director unhesitatingly retorted.

"Additionally, it was Leon who first suspected an issue with Aquarius and brought critical evidence during the stalemate in questioning, forcing Aquarius to undergo memory reading. If you suggest he conspired with Aquarius, I suggest you crack open your own brain first to see if it's already rotted beyond redemption!"

After the Red-haired Director finished speaking, Beverly from the Lion Bureau also stood up, glaring as she said,

"Edward! Just focus on your own affairs! Don't cause trouble at a time like this!"

"I'm only bringing up reasonable doubts; there's no need to react so aggressively, is there?"

The man named Edward, although disgraced, didn't get angry. He waved his hand to show he meant no harm, then cheerfully snapped his fingers.

When the snap resounded, Leon felt a slight swell in his palm, and a resin card painted with a dung-rolling scorpion was strangely placed into his palm.

"This is the Scorpio Branch identification, which you can use to join our Scorpio Bureau directly once I stamp it."

After explaining the significance of the item, the tall, thin man smiled at Leon, who was inspecting the card,

"Young man, I see potential in you. If, like your predecessors from the Virgo Branch, you can't stand Olivia, you can bring this to us and transfer over; Scorpio Bureau welcomes you. I can't guarantee anything, but at least in Scorpio Bureau, with plenty of staff, newcomers aren't subjected to such hazardous duties or used as bait to capture the Aquarius Director..."

"What nonsense are you talking?!"

Beverly exclaimed angrily,

"We didn't use Leon as bait! The director of the Gemini Sub-bureau is Aquarius Director; no one knew Leon would face him alone—it was an accident!"

"Oh? So you didn't know he'd be targeted by Aquarius soon after," Edward from the Scorpio Branch raised an eyebrow, curiously saying,

"That's odd. If this was unknown, why did Olivia provide him with survival techniques? Could powerful methods to survive under the hand of an Aquarius Director be so widespread that they're given out casually?"

"You!"

"Why are you always so impatient?"

The thin man cheerfully said,

"This case involves the Watcher's Palace. I'm just raising reasonable doubts; if proven wrong, I can apologize to you."

This guy... Daring to stand out at this time and cause trouble means he must be our boss's nemesis.
And judging by his words, it seems many people who left the Virgo Branch have gone to Scorpio, indicating a deep grudge between the two sides?

Watching those two sarcastic comments that left the Lion Bureau Director glaring, Leon decided to break open the resin card in his hand. *Seeing the name on the imprint, he said thoughtfully, "Edward Carson... This name sounds a bit familiar..."*

"Oh? You've heard of me already?"

The tall, thin man raised an eyebrow and, with a smile, replied,

"Your director really dislikes me, likely never mentioning my name, so... did you hear it from those predecessors who left the Virgo Branch?"

"No."

Leon shook his head,

"During the activation of the Temporal Rift, the Aquarius Director mentioned a list of collaborators from the Purification Bureau. I might have heard it then."

"..."

Caught off guard by Leon's words, the grin on the thin man's face froze, and he sourly retorted,

"You should think clearly before speaking! How could the Aquarius Director divulge such crucial information to a mere Level Three Cleanser? And even if he did, as a traitor, his words hold no weight!"

"Normally, it wouldn't be likely."

Leon nodded in agreement and then blinked as he said,

"But he revealed secrets through an object called the Scale of Truth, compelled to reveal several secrets himself, and by its power, I had to share corresponding secrets. Under its effect, neither of us could lie."

"You mean..."

"I really had no choice but disclosed many critical secrets, leaking several pieces of crucial intelligence for the Virgo Branch. I feel particularly guilty toward my director... but obtaining the traitor list was worth it."

After apologizing with a nod to the Red-haired Director, whose mouth couldn't help but curve upwards, Leon turned back to look at the slightly uneasy expression on the thin man's face, sincerely suggesting,

"Honestly, while I can't guarantee you're a traitor, hearing that name rings a bell; besides, since this involves the Watcher's Palace... perhaps you should visit the Brain-Eating Demon over there and let it have a taste to confirm? If you're innocent, I'd be happy to apologize too."

Chapter 270: Reward (Part 1)_1

Damn, if everyone actually believed your nonsense, I'd have to let the Brain-Eating Demon lick my brain grooves! And you're just planning to offer a casual apology?

With his scalp tingling from Leon's use of "turnabout is fair play," the tall, thin man hastily turned to the main stage, desperately trying to defend himself, "Director, what he said is entirely one-sided! Whether it really happened or not, we still need to see... uh... where's the director?"

"The director has timed out."

A director stepped forward, answering helplessly, "Just as you started arguing, the Old Soil moved to the back of the solar disc, and the director's projection was obscured. He might return in... maybe seven or eight years!"

"..."

No way... we haven't even figured out how to deal with Aquarius yet, and the Purification Bureau's director is gone? And for seven or eight years? This is more unreliable than the United Nations!

Watching the director's projection vanish from the main stage, Leon truly couldn't hold back anymore.

Our Purification Bureau is just teeming with talent!

A director who appears once every eight years, a traitor director plotting to dismantle his own space station, branch directors who keep scheming against each other during critical moments, and a director who's as sharp as a monkey when sober and just a monkey after drinking...

Damn! This world has managed to hold its own for so many years without being taken over by Outer Gods, who knows what kind of luck we've had!

...

"Alright, enough of this bickering among yourselves."

Several directors exchanged silent glances, and finally, the Taurus Director stepped forward and asked with a serious face, "Leon, is what you just said true? Did Aquarius really mention who in the bureau was in cahoots with him?"

"He did, and he listed every name in detail."

With the Scorpio Director's expression filled with shock and anger, Leon nodded, then said somewhat helplessly, "But he was speaking so fast at the time. After the first few sentences, he was rattling off hundreds of words a second, and I genuinely couldn't catch what he was saying, but..."

Glancing at the somewhat relieved Scorpio Director, Leon raised an eyebrow and said, "But the Scale of Truth he held condensed his words into weights, and just by touching a weight, you'd know its content."

At Leon's words, the Scorpio Director's expression immediately tensed!

"But then the Scale of Truth suddenly exploded, and most of the weights scattered on the main stage and were crushed by a subsequent attack."

The Scorpio Director's face relaxed slightly...

"But before those attacks fell, I managed to grab a few weights."

The Scorpio Director tensed again!

"But none of the weights I grabbed contained the list of traitors."

The Scorpio Director's expression relaxed again...

"Though I didn't get the list of those colluding with Aquarius, I did manage to..."

"Alright, there's no need to continue!"

Realizing Leon was deliberately toying with him, the tall, thin man decided to throw caution to the wind, admitting through gritted teeth, "I admit it! Before the questioning began, Aquarius did visit me privately and promised some benefits, but he absolutely didn't mention anything about the Watcher's Palace!

"Aquarius only told me there would be questioning after the year-end review regarding his privately manufactured Anomalous Objects and hoped I could support him at that time. There was nothing more! I am willing to be accountable for my words!"

"Aquarius also visited me, and my situation is similar to Edward's..."

"Sigh... same here."

"Me too, but he only mentioned some minor troubles..."

"And me, but I didn't agree to help him."

Too afraid to gamble on whether Leon really had the so-called list of traitors, a total of over a dozen branch directors stepped forward, acknowledging their contact with Aquarius Director.

But all these individuals swore that they only heard it was a minor trouble and knew nothing about Aquarius Director's plot against the Watcher's Palace.

Having succeeded in his goal, Leon wisely let it be, memorizing these individuals without ever mentioning the non-existent list of traitors. After their confessions ended, he continued, "I didn't get the list, but I was lucky enough to obtain two secret technique practices: one for the Abnormal Genesis Sorcery of the Aquarius line, and another one called God-Suppressing Forked Fingers, specifically for targeting True Gods deprived of Authority... Do these need to be handed over?"

"No need."

The Taurus Director sighed upon hearing this, shaking his head in slight disappointment, "Both of these secret techniques are already archived in the bureau, and there's no need for you to submit them. Besides, the talent requirements are unimaginably high; having the practice alone doesn't mean one can master it.

"The Aquarius' Abnormal Genesis Sorcery is a given—unless chosen by the Aquarius Astropalace, one cannot become a practitioner. All the Twelve Secret Techniques are like this: one must first be chosen before qualifying to practice them.

"As for God-Suppressing Forked Fingers, besides the initial Aquarius and the current one, no third person has ever been able to master it... What a pity, you acquired the two most valuable things from Aquarius, but also the two most useless."

That might not be the case.

Remembering the two secret techniques stored in his mind, Leon nodded without comment, even using the Performer's Badge to feign a regrettable look, yet he had already started pondering over it in his heart.

If there's ever a chance, I must see if I can reach that Star Palace. With the Materialism Badge that can "enhance resistance," who knows, I might really qualify to forcibly learn the Abnormal Genesis Sorcery without being chosen.

...

"Olivia."

Unaware of someone's scheming intentions, the Taurus Director turned to her after questioning Leon, asking kindly, "We really owe you this time. If not for your and Beverly's insistence, Aquarius might have actually deceived us, and even the Watcher's Palace could be threatened... So, tell me, what reward do you want?"

"No reward for me, please."

Having always held a curious respect for the Taurus Director, a Palace Occupant, the Red-haired Director promptly refused with serious righteousness upon hearing her question, "Compared to your dedication to all of humanity, my contribution is insignificant and doesn't count for much; It's my duty to do these things.

"Besides, the fact that Aquarius Director created twelve Anomalous Object holders and allowed them to roam near the Capital City for years without capturing them is seriously negligent on my part, and I truly would feel unworthy of being rewarded.

"It was Leon who first sensed something amiss, providing crucial evidence at the key moment, forcing Aquarius into a corner, so he's undoubtedly deserving of the greatest credit! Beverly and several branch directors also worked hard gathering evidence, running around for a long time; rewarding them would suffice."

"Don't be so modest."

Hearing this, the Taurus Director shook her head and said, "They'll all receive rewards, but you initiated this inquiry. Without your tireless efforts and persistence, I might not have agreed to this questioning; directing Leon in capturing the Rebels was also down to you. So, it's only right you receive something for your efforts."

"In that case..."

Hearing her words, the Red-haired Director hesitated, anticipation filling her eyes, "I remember the God of Brewing's Bead..."

"Except for that."

"..."

"Stop thinking about it. That really won't do..."

Seeing the disappointed look on the Red-haired Director's face, the Taurus Director couldn't help but sigh helplessly, "Don't you know your own situation? That Bead can brew any wine in the world. If we gave it to you, your Virgin Branch would probably have to close down the next day!"