

I! Cleaner 29

Chapter 29 Coffee and Dessert

"Hiss... It's getting a bit cold..."

When dawn just began to break, the diligent worker Leon got up, yawning as he walked on his way to work.

After being hit by a gust of the chilly autumn wind, his mind cleared a bit. Leon instinctively shrank his neck, wrapped Anna's knitted scarf around once more, and involuntarily thought of last night's events...

Melanie had asked a question he ultimately didn't answer directly, choosing instead to muddle through with something vague like, "You'll understand when you're older," just barely managing to get by.

Even if he had explained it to Melanie, who was only a few years old, she might not have understood. However, the less ordinary people knew about the Purification Bureau and Anomalous Objects, those "otherworldly" matters, the less likely they were to encounter them. So, it was naturally best to keep it hidden.

Though Melanie's question ended there, it didn't seem entirely meaningless. At least it answered a small question Leon had — what exactly had the director lost.

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According to the intelligence provided by the Materialist Soul, someone possessing the Anomalous Object known as Love Without Memory would inevitably lose one of "parental love, filial love, or spousal love."

Now it seemed that she had lost the love from her children, yet from her behavior yesterday, she appeared to be very fond of kids.

After all, his own place in Veteran Lane, though not a slum, wasn't in a great location, either. Surrounding it were noisy, messy companies and a prison housing many felons. The population was already low, and children were even fewer, naturally resulting in no candy shops.

So the kind of milk candy, wrapped in colorful paper, that she bought for Melanie had to be purchased from a department store four or five streets away. If she was willing to walk that far to buy candy for two kids she'd just met, she naturally wouldn't be someone who disliked children.

Hmm... For someone who especially loved kids, it was one thing to not have her own; if she did have a child and that child constantly forgot her, *that might truly be rather cruel.*

After shaking his head somewhat sympathetically, Leon was just about to quicken his pace toward the Purification Bureau, then take the Black Goat to visit the nurse suspected of having "anomalous" powers, but he was stopped in his tracks by a sweet, syrupy aroma.

A pushcart loaded with stools and a table, a massive tin hot-water boiler with a copper faucet, a charcoal stove red with firelight, a few sets of sawn-wood tables and stools...

Amidst the coffee aroma filling his nostrils appeared a small space warmly cocooned by old canvas, free from the autumn wind's intrusions, radiating a cozy warmth that caught his eye.

Coffee stall, huh...

Looking at the warm little stall appearing particularly alluring on this gray, cold morning, Leon couldn't help but pause in his tracks. After hesitating repeatedly, he finally succumbed to that tempting sweetness, hunched down, walked into the tented area, and picked a table towards the back to sit down.

"Boss, a cup of coffee, two slices of thin bread."

"Got it!"

The owner took out a handleless cup, deftly shook in some coffee powder, wrapped his hand in a cloth, turned on the steaming copper faucet to pour hot water, and with three fingers, gave the stir stick a few swirls. A steaming black liquid was quickly placed in front of Leon.

"Sir, would you like butter with your 'two thin slices'? I also have ham slices if you're interested; just fried them before setting up the stall this morning, still hot."

"Uh... How much extra for the ham slices? Is it expensive?"

"Not expensive, not expensive, very affordable!"

After wiping his hands on a dark apron, the boss, who looked to be in his fifties, gave a hearty smile and held up a single dark finger.

"Without ham, it's one Copper Wheel, with it altogether two Copper Wheels!"

Two Copper Wheels... Charging an extra Copper Wheel for just one slice of ham? Why not rob instead? At the department store, a whole one isn't even up to a Silver Wheel!

Rolling his eyes at the seemingly honest, yet actually shrewd coffee stall owner, Leon couldn't help but mutter,

"Forget the ham, just butter the bread... remember to spread it thickly!"

"Got it!"

Despite failing to upsell, the owner didn't show any disappointment. Instead, he kindly took out a loaf of long bread, sliced off two paper-thin pieces, and dabbed a brush smaller than one used for polishing shoes to slather some butter before tossing them onto the stone slab above the charcoal stove to toast.

This business you're running is just too damn stingy.

Looking at the bread slices, thinner than those tossed into LAN X's beef noodle soup, Leon felt utterly duped, realizing he must have encountered a master at price-gouging.

But since he was already there, and unwilling to part with the stall's robust warmth, he ultimately voiced no objections, instead cradling the steaming coffee before gingerly sipping a small taste.

Mmm... This is great... Felt like I came back to life...

As his hands warmed up from the cup and his empty stomach was heated by the coffee, Leon couldn't help but squint his eyes in contentment, while the sly businessman presented the "LAN X bread slices" just in time.

"Sir, your meal is served, one Copper Wheel please."

Looking at the nearly "transparent" bread slices on the small plate, Leon, although obediently paid up in the end, couldn't help but feel somewhat unsatisfied and sarcastically quipped: