

## I! Cleaner 291

Chapter 291: The top priority now is...

"So... just lift Prince Joshua up, let the Queen and the Minister of Finance behind him, and have them fight with the Princess?"

After hearing the elderly noble's proposal, the assembly of the Old Nobility couldn't help but weigh the pros and cons, and they all fell into deep thought.

For the majority of the Old Nobility to turn and side with the royal family, which sought to curb their power, this sounded like a ridiculously foolish idea.

After all, Prince Joshua and the Queen were also part of the royal family; siding with them would also bring a lot of control. If he really did defeat the Princess and successfully rose to become the "representative" of the royal family's will, he would equally target the Old Nobility with madness, and the situation would remain unchanged.

But just like what the Duke of Lionheart did, when you no longer had the ability to be the player, you might as well sell yourself to the highest bidder.

For the Princess, who had already grown large, these Old Nobility held little value, but for Joshua, whose inheritance rights were precarious and could be "married off" from the Kingdom at any time to wed a she-monkey across the sea, their support was nothing short of timely assistance.

To obtain power to counter the Princess, Joshua and the Queen behind him were sure to go all out to win over these people, offering unusually generous conditions, which would provide room for maneuver.

As for what Joshua would do after ascending... that was a problem for later!

If they couldn't suppress the growing Princess now, they would be locked in a kennel, or even directly slaughtered, losing even the right to consider the future! Moreover, compared to the crafty Princess, the prideful and arrogant Prince Joshua would be so much easier to deal with!

"This idea isn't bad... I agree!"

The young noble, who previously wanted to throw both Leon siblings away, was the first to step forward and express support for the new proposal.

Immediately, a large group of Old Nobility whose interests were threatened and who vehemently opposed the implementation of the new decree stepped up and expressed their support as well.

"I agree too."

"Seconded!"

"Let's go with this, we've no choice left!"

Once the majority of the Old Nobility had already expressed their stance, even those more conservative individuals, though still harboring some doubts about this proposal, couldn't come up with a better solution at the moment. They chose to tacitly agree, or simply decided to give it a try and followed suit.

"Since the majority favors it, let's decide on this for now."

After looking around the room at the overwhelmingly one-sided situation, the middle-aged man hosting the meeting took over and loudly announced,

"In order to counter the Princess's new decree, we shall collectively turn to the Queen and do our best to support Prince Joshua's succession.

"Additionally, to speak frankly, among the ninety-two noble families present today, even if there are dissenters, please keep in step with everyone. Even if you do not support Prince Joshua, please do not drag us down.

"Otherwise... don't blame others for being unsympathetic."

...

The collective defection of the Old Nobility to the Prince was naturally impossible to conceal. Before the Old Nobility's gathering even dispersed and actions began, the Princess had already obtained the relevant intelligence.

"This is troublesome now..."

After receiving the list of Old Nobility who chose to turn to Joshua, looking at that long and alarming list of names, the Princess's brows couldn't help but furrow deeply.

Not to mention Joshua, she was all too familiar with that ambitious stepmother. Even if this incident hadn't occurred, she wouldn't have given up on Joshua's succession. She would have found an opportunity to cause a big stir, and now, with the support of the Old Nobility, her disruptions would certainly be larger.

The unfortunate part was, if it were just some scheming, it would be fine. For a woman whose mind was in line with Joshua's, she only needed to dig a small pit to make her fall hard enough to behave for a while.

But her brother, her inexpensively inherited uncle, was the current Minister of Finance, and he and his family behind him were the actual controllers of the Ministry of Finance, leaving her no room to interfere.

And her implementation of the new decree relied heavily on financial support. She didn't even need to do much; with a few small tricks during the struggle for the throne, she could make the finances stagnate enough to halt the new decree before it started.

As for breaking this deadlock...

Picking up a quill dipped in ink, she wrote a few words on the paper, and the Princess couldn't help but sigh softly.

The best solution was to actively provoke a small-scale border conflict and create a bloody incident.

With the previous precedent of defending the country six years ago, upon entering a state of war readiness, even the most preliminary one, neither the Queen nor the Ministry of Finance dared to give her any hassle.

Otherwise, not to mention letting Joshua inherit the throne, if the Queen dared to cause trouble at such a time, her father might climb out of his sickbed, eager to personally strangle Joshua.

However, although this method could break the deadlock and didn't even require her to come forward—just a hint to Old Hill, who was the Minister of Defense, to silently solve the matter—it went against her initial intention, which was to avoid the Kingdom descending into war...

Then she had to try other methods.

After scratching out "war" as an option, the Princess moved the quill tip to the side and forcefully circled "push hard."

The most appropriate course now was to take advantage of the moment when the Old Nobility had just aligned with Joshua and hadn't fully negotiated their cooperation. Through the Ryan Family's Upper House seat, she could enact parts of the new decree into law.

As long as the new decree that restricts Old Nobility privileges and facilitates business development was forcibly executed, the commerce controlled by the Lower House would find leverage and assist in pushing some of the new decrees.

Even if the Ministry of Finance intended to block her afterward, touching the merchants' interests would bring significant resistance, as the merchants, being the largest source of tax revenue in the Kingdom, held substantial influence over the Ministry of Finance as well. In this way, she might be able to leverage the Ministry of Finance to acquire the budget necessary for fully implementing the new decree...

Let's go with this!

After ticking off "push hard," the Princess did not stop writing; instead, she tapped the paper with the quill tip, continuing to ponder.

To achieve all this, it was essential to secure the Ryan Family's Upper House seat to push through her new decree. And to secure that seat...

A marriage alliance with the Ryan Family was a must! That meant she had to deal with Leon!

After dipping the quill in ink, writing "Leon" next to "push hard," the Princess, having fully clarified her thoughts, pondered for a while before ringing a bell to summon the maid waiting outside,

"Mili, is Master Wilde's Morning Star Troupe performing currently?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

The maid nodded after a moment of recollection, then considerately inquired,

"If you wish to take a break, the Morning Star Troupe sent their top-level balcony tickets..."

"No need."

After waving away the maid's proposal, the Princess instructed,

"Just get me a couple of better seats in the second-floor box area... and remember to buy a couple's box!"

Chapter 292 Dragon Pool Tiger Den (Part 1)\_1

This is...

Staring at the hand-painted ticket with a watercolor of a misty starry sky and a small rose emblem in the corner, Leon asked, somewhat puzzled,

"Are you saying... the princess invited me to see a play?"

"Yes."

Curious, after glancing at the goat's head on Leon's desk, the maid, sent by the princess to deliver the ticket, bowed slightly and said respectfully,

"Master Wilde's Morning Star Troupe is performing his most classic play at the Central Cross Theater today. It's a rare opportunity. Princess Veronica loves Master Wilde's works, and upon hearing the news, she thought of you immediately. She hopes you can make some time this afternoon to accompany her to enjoy the Morning Star Troupe's performance."

"..."

I don't believe you for a second!

Remembering how confused he was when he tried to break off the engagement before, Leon's expression turned slightly dark and he instinctively became cautious.

\*Would an absolute workaholic, who has nothing but files on the bookshelf in his bedroom-office hybrid, really be a drama enthusiast?\*

Oh, come off it!

Anyone with a bit of sense could see that this invitation wasn't genuinely about the play; she was definitely targeting him!

Relying on his keen vigilance to sense the "simmering hostility" behind the ticket, Leon simply shook his head and returned the ticket.

"Please tell her I'm planning to work overtime today."

When he had abruptly gone to break off the engagement before, definitely catching her off guard, he still almost got persuaded to receive a marriage certificate on the spot.

This time, she clearly came prepared, and if he dared to join her for the play, it would likely then lead to dinner, shopping, clothes buying, a stroll down the street, sightseeing... oh, it's already so late, why not stay over tonight, and so on, trapping him completely!

If he watched this play, he probably wouldn't be coming back!

"Your Grace, please don't be in such a hurry to refuse."

It seemed the maid, sent to deliver the ticket, was already aware of what might happen and wasn't surprised by Leon's refusal. Instead, she smiled softly, saying,

"Although your sister Miss Anna's body has recovered, having been ill for many years means her health isn't particularly robust and still needs careful nursing. Coincidentally, Princess Veronica managed to find the best pharmacist in all of the Capital City..."

Hearing the maid's words, Leon couldn't help but frown, saying,

"So, is she implying that if I want to help Anna recover, I must accompany her to watch today's play in exchange?"

"No, not at all! Please don't misunderstand!"

The maid hurriedly shook her head in response, saying,

"Princess Veronica mentioned that she has already made a similar mistake once before with you and would never make this mistake again. She promises to treat you sincerely and won't play any petty tricks anymore.

Whether you go to see today's play or not, Miss Anna's health will receive the best care. Anna's situation isn't related to her invitation; Princess Veronica has already sent someone to request the pharmacist this morning."

"..."

"Moreover, aside from helping Miss Anna recover, she is also getting in touch with several experienced teachers to ensure your brother and sister can receive a better education without transferring schools.

Besides that, the Purification Bureau's budget for next year will be maximally adjusted, among other things. Princess Veronica told me these aren't gifts or flattery but her way of apologizing for the past events.

At the time, she was impulsive and played a few not-so-nice tricks on you, for which she feels very guilty and wants to do something to make up for it. She hopes you won't refuse and will give her a chance to compensate you."

"..."

\*Is she compensating me? She's practically welding the ticket right into my hand!\*

Having listened to the maid's "relay," Leon could only let out a long sigh, realizing that he probably couldn't avoid attending the play this afternoon.

Just one night had passed, and the princess had already done so much. Moreover, she refused to acknowledge any "favor done" or "goodwill," insisting that it was to amend her previous mistake, hoping he'd offer her a chance to make up for it...

\*She's gone this far, and even lowered herself so much, can I really bear not to accompany her to a single play?\*

"Alright..."

She targeted his most cherished family, demonstrated her utmost sincerity right from the outset, and lowered her stance to offer favor without requesting anything in return... My own weakness seemed to have been completely exploited by her...

Under the princess's intense offensive, Leon, whose face was yet to become thick-skinned to that extent, could only silently take the ticket from the desk, preparing to brace himself and head into this Dragon's Den and Tiger's Lair.

\*Watching a play isn't so bad... Where should I find her?\*

And seeing him reluctantly putting away the ticket, the maid who brought it couldn't help but smile slightly. She then stood up, saluted, gestured slightly toward the door, and answered in a warm voice,

"Princess Veronica's carriage is now parked on the main road outside the police department. You can go directly, and Her Highness should be waiting for you in the carriage."

"..."

Well then, she practically came right up to the doorstep... So she knew from the beginning that once I'd accepted the benefits, there was no way I'd be able to refuse to accompany her to the play, right?

This woman really is... She might not have the smartest brain, but she truly understands human nature. Having only met me a handful of times, she found a way to completely handle me.

Since resistance was futile, it seemed he had no choice but to enjoy it. Thoroughly arranged by the princess, Leon could only take his "Dragon's Den and Tiger's Lair Pass" and leave the Purification Bureau, finding the carriage parked at the road's end under the maid's guidance.

"Here! Over here!"

Upon seeing Leon, the princess, wearing a plush long dress, poked her head out of the carriage window, waving enthusiastically at him. She then proactively pushed open the carriage door, making room inside, her eyes full of joy saying,

"I thought you'd be mad at me and wouldn't want to accompany me to the theater... Leon, you're the best!"

"..."

\*"I'm the best," huh... quit messing around, will you? This was obviously all part of your plan. Given your usual busy schedule, if you weren't sure I'd definitely come, would you really spend the time waiting out here?\*

Yet, even though he saw through the princess's little tricks at a glance, seeing that playful, charming face blossoming into a radiant smile because of his arrival, Leon's heart, which harbored minor resentment for being "forced" to come, couldn't help but dissipate instantly.

\*How should I put it... For some people, even if you know she's likely pretending, and that even this smile might not be completely genuine, you just can't find it in your heart to stay mad at her.\*

Thinking of all the effort she'd invested, just to win his favor, even though he knew it might be fake, he felt a bit touched. He was willing to act like a fool who understood nothing and just go along with it...

\*Hiss! Leon, oh Leon, you need to wake up! You can't let yourself become such a fool!\*

Steadying his heart with a deep breath of chilly air, Leon quietly boarded the carriage, trying to ask calmly,

"Princess, today..."

"Call me Veronica."

Sniffing her nose, reddened from waiting by the roadside in the cold, Princess Veronica took the initiative to hold Leon's arm, her soft and full body leaning gently against him, her voice pleading slightly as she said,

"It's so cold today, Leon, could you let me lean on you for a while? Just a little while!"

"..."

Chapter 293 Dragon Pool Tiger Den (Part 2)\_1

A short while later.

"Are you still cold, Your Highness? Do you want to add another layer?"

"No... no need..."

Hearing Leon's inquiry, the princess, wrapped in an old coat, wearing cotton gloves, clutching a hot water bottle, and holding a warm little puppy, shook her head slightly. Then, with a complex expression, she said, "Actually, I'm not that cold... Are you afraid of the cold, by any chance? Why do you carry so many things for warmth?"

"It's not just things for warmth, I also have things for staying cool."

Amidst Young Ha's puppy-like whining, the window next to Leon shimmered slightly. A sun hat and two somewhat worn silk fans appeared in his hands, followed by a small iron basin full of milky ice shavings.

"..."

Carrying fans and ice shavings in winter? What are you aiming for?

Seeing the princess's somewhat speechless expression, Leon explained calmly, "You know, our work at the Purification Bureau is very special. We often encounter unexpected situations, like the seniors at the Lyra Branch, who have been frozen at the poles for two years due to an accident.

I worry that one day I'll encounter similar extreme situations during a mission, so I made some preparations in advance. I carry things like food, drinking water, and tools with me, just in case I'm unable to handle it...

By the way, would you like to try some ice shavings? It's mixed with coconut syrup, very sweet."

"No... no, thank you..."

After declining Leon's kind offer, the princess, who had deliberately frozen at the roadside for over half an hour for an excuse to flirt, reluctantly drank a large sip of the hot water Leon had prepared. Then, with a darkened face, she hugged Young Ha tightly and gave it a retaliatory kiss.

\*Well, couldn't hug the dog man, but hugging his dog isn't bad either... Hmm... Speaking of which, this little thing is quite adorably strange~\*

"Princess Veronica."

Amidst the protests of the tormented Young Ha, Leon glanced down at the tickets in his hand and then asked proactively, "The Morning Star Troupe you wanted to see, what plays will they be performing today?"

"Of course, the most classic works of Master Wilde!"

Contrary to Leon's expectations, what the previous "ticket-giving maid" said about the princess liking Master Wilde's works seemed not to be entirely an excuse.

When mentioning the plays they were about to watch, Princess Veronica's eyes lit up instantly. Hugging Young Ha, who was wagging its tail and struggling, she recounted enthusiastically, "Among them, a must-see every time is Master Wilde's masterpiece 'Madam Helena,' which tells the story of a forbidden love between the former great engraver Madam Helena and her most outstanding apprentice.

Especially, after enduring many hardships, the scene where the gentle and composed Madam Helena cannot control the stirring of her heart under the passionate and sincere pursuit of her apprentice has a sense of pure beauty amidst the taboo.

But for the sake of her family and the apprentice's future, she could only choose to reject the young man's affection, cruelly sending him away. Still, as he walks away in melancholy, the moment she accidentally destroys her own work of years in her first moment of trembling loss has unparalleled impact!

Then, when she picks up the engraving knife with tears and continues modifying the ruined statue, she realizes that the face she has carved countless times without thought is increasingly resembling the lover she rejected. Ultimately, she caresses the statue's face and cries silently—Madam Helena is an eternal classic in the history of drama!"

After passionately introducing her favorite work, perhaps fearing Leon might dislike such tragic romance, the princess eagerly advocated, "Leon, if you'd prefer to see something lighthearted, Master Wilde's works also include romantic comedies like 'Twelve Days' Journey' and 'Lucky House for Rent.'

'Twelve Days' Journey' is an early masterpiece by Master Wilde, about the young Elijah who opposes his family's arranged marriage. He sneaks away to a seaside city before the wedding and, unaware of where to go sightseeing, hires the beautiful barmaid Agatha to be his temporary guide.

During their eleven-day journey, the two get to know each other and fall in love. But just as Elijah is ready to abandon his loveless marriage and pursue happiness, Agatha is mysteriously taken at the seaside. For the safety of his love, Elijah must return home to marry, attempting to leverage his fiancée's family to find Agatha.

However, incredibly, on the day Elijah, harboring the thought of giving up love for his lover's safety, marries his designated bride, the one who appears at the wedding is, in fact, Agatha, who also detested arranged marriage, escaped, but was forcibly brought back home due to her exposed whereabouts...

How about it? Doesn't it sound intriguing? Can't wait, right?"

"..."

Seeing the princess's eyes sparkling with anticipation, clearly craving affirmative feedback, Leon couldn't help but grin.

\*To be honest... it does sound decent, but you just gave me the main highlights of these two plays in a few sentences...\*

Looking at the princess, eager to recommend her favorite plays while unknowingly revealing spoilers, Leon smiled wryly and cooperatively nodded.

"Indeed, I'm quite interested... Are we watching these today?"

"Yes! One performance of 'Twelve Days' Journey,' one of 'Madam Helena,' and after watching both, it will just be getting dark."

With a successful recommendation, the princess beamed radiantly, hugging Young Ha and expressing, "I knew it, no one can resist Master Wilde's works... Leon, believe me, although the Morning Star Troupe has recently had some issues, preventing the lead actor from performing, and is somewhat lacking compared to before, with Master Wilde's scripts, I guarantee you absolutely won't regret it!"

\*Wow, you're usually that busy, yet you can still keep up with an acting troupe's cast changes. It seems what the maid said is true; you're indeed the ultimate fan of whatever Master.\*

Although inundated with spoilers before even seeing the play, seeing a princess who was more "real" than before, Leon paradoxically felt much less resistant to this trip to the Dragon's Den and Tiger's Lair.

"Okay, I'll trust you then."

Smiling at the princess, once the carriage began to slow down and eventually came to a stop by the roadside, Leon first tossed the warming clothes and Young Ha back into the window. He then stepped out of the carriage first, thereafter turning and extending his hand to the princess.

"Let's go, I hope today won't be a wasted trip."

Chapter 294 Dragon Pool Tiger Den (Finale)\_1

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"No! This performance is utterly unacceptable! You're like a bunch of puppets hanging by strings!"

Backstage at the Central Cross Theater, after watching the final rehearsal before the performance, a middle-aged man in a crisply pressed double-breasted white suit, without a single crease on him, couldn't help but toss his top hat aside and angrily berated a group of actors,

"Emotions! Where are the emotions?"

You're living people, not machines reciting the lines I wrote! If you want the audience to be captivated by your performance, then you must first be captivated yourselves!

Stop worrying about those entrance steps, fussing over physical expressions, thinking about lighting and positioning. Drama doesn't fear your mistakes, nor does it require precision. What it truly wants is for the audience to empathize with your performance!"

"Performances with pinpoint footsteps and movements more precise than a machine have no soul at all! A long, smoothly delivered monologue, where even the final notes of the aria have not a hint of variation, might not compare to a heartfelt cry!

You're really... damn it! With Andre banned and unable to take the stage, what kind of crap are you performing? You're ruining my script! A bunch of fools! I wish I could just use strings to direct your performance myself!"

The middle-aged man seemed to hold a very high position in the theater company. Despite being berated for a full ten minutes by him, not a single one among the dozens of renowned senior actors, who had toured half the world, dared to talk back. One timid actress even began to tremble and sob softly.

Upon hearing the actress's sobs, the middle-aged man seemed to realize he had gone too far. After a brief silence, he stopped yelling and instead directed the actors to go through the first act of "Twelve Days' Journey" again.

Unfortunately, even with all the skilled actors giving their all, their years of hard-earned acting skills still couldn't meet the minimum standards of the middle-aged man.

Seeing that this rehearsal was still so appalling, with no one living up to his expectations, the middle-aged man's barely suppressed anger could no longer be contained.

"A bunch of worthless fools! Foolish, useless fools!"

The middle-aged man ranted hysterically while throwing his crumpled hat on the floor and stomping on it, using all his strength to crush it beyond recognition.

After venting most of his disappointment and anger, the middle-aged man found himself wanting to go through it all again. But when he glanced at his watch and realized it was already showtime, he sighed deeply in disappointment and extended his hand to the incompetent actors.

"I guess I can't rely on you... I'll do it myself!"

With his regretful sigh, a row of large lights above the stage suddenly illuminated, completely lighting up the prop- and scene-filled backstage. A series of puppets began to rise slightly as the middle-aged man moved his hands.

The female lead of "Twelve Days' Journey," Agatha, wearing a waitress's uniform, had a face that was shedding tear-shaped droplets formed from wood. They rolled down her cheeks and plopped onto the backstage floor.

...

"Hurry, hurry, hurry!"

After quickly entering the reserved couple's box, Leon found himself being tugged by Princess Veronica, who lifted her skirt with her legs and bent down unceremoniously, adjusting the chairs for Leon and herself to find the best viewing angle.

"Come on!"

She patted the empty seat beside her, urging with excitement,

"Hurry and sit down. When we were coming in, I saw the announcer ready to take the stage. The first scene of the first act of 'Twelve Days' Journey' is about to start, and if you don't sit down soon, you'll miss it!"

"..."

Sitting down wasn't the issue... but are you sure this chair is meant for two?

Seeing how the Princess took up more than half of the double-seat chair, Leon couldn't help but ask,

"Isn't this box's chair a bit narrow?"

Why else would it be called a couple's box?

Hearing Leon's question, Princess Veronica, who was eagerly looking towards the stage, responded with a sly smile at the corner of her mouth.

Central Cross Theater certainly wasn't short on funds, so the chair was deliberately made narrow. With the couple's box seating width, even two slender women sitting together wouldn't have much space to spare. A man and a woman sitting together would definitely be squeezed together by the armrests.

And for a drama averaging over three hours, it's impossible for most people to sit with their legs together and perfectly poised the entire time. They'd definitely try to change positions... like one person sitting on the chair while the other person sits on their lap~

"Not too narrow at all, just perfect for two people!"

Even though she was fully aware of the situation, the Princess, with ulterior motives, naturally wouldn't make it clear to Leon.

After trying her best to scoot over and make room for Leon, Princess Veronica urged with her pursed lips,

"Sit down quickly, the curtain's already drawn, and the opening instruments are playing!"

"Alright then..."

Although he still thought it was somewhat narrow, seeing the curtain on the stage already drawn, Leon didn't say more and sat down in the half-space the Princess made available.

And when he sat down, the Princess, who had been holding herself back, relaxed and her soft curvaceous body pressed against his. Even through the layers of clothing, warmth and astonishing elasticity were conveyed.

"..."

So that's why...

Realizing the reason for the narrow chair, Leon instinctively pulled back a bit, but the Princess took advantage of the situation, leaning in shamelessly.

Her cold fingertips sneakily found Leon's right hand, entwining their fingers with a slightly cool feeling.

I just knew, this is definitely the Dragon's Den and Tiger's Lair!

"It does feel... a bit snug..."

As his arm was continuously pulled to the right, his elbow brushing against something soft, Leon's mouth twitched slightly, and he whispered,

"I could just stand and watch..."

"Shh!"

With her index finger in front of her lips, showing a gesture for silence, the victorious Princess warned in a stern voice that carried a smug tone,

"You need to stay quiet while watching a drama, but if you insist on talking, you can wrap your arm around my back and whisper it into my shoulder~"

"..."

Guess I'll just sit...

Having no way to counter her antics, Leon abandoned the idea of watching from a standing position and sat stiffly in the chair.

Meanwhile, the coastal tune full of harbor ambiance on the stage was wrapping up. An actor playing a 'narrator,' holding shell-like bells, boomed in a voice against the backdrop of ocean organ and surf drum sounds,

"Ankara, in this serene harbor town, has no shortage of tides and sea breezes, nor of young souls yearning to find solace amidst its beautiful and expansive waves..."

As the "narrator" delivered the introduction with clear diction, a male puppet in a white outfit sauntered out from behind a wooden stage prop, sighing sorrowfully,

"Only twelve more days... In twelve days, I will no longer be a free soul, but a caged bird soaring within strange confines..."

Wait, something doesn't seem right?

Watching the male lead "Elijah" lament on stage, Leon raised his hand to rub his eyes in disbelief.

\*What am I watching? A drama or a puppet show? Why is the male lead on stage a talking marionette?\*

Chapter 295 Don't worry, nothing will happen\_1

In the somewhat bewildered expression of Leon, the puppet male lead on stage, who was suspended by strings, had already finished reciting his opening lines with great emotion.

Then, he stepped forward with gracefully measured stage movements, seemingly fast yet slow, toward the next "plot point." Meanwhile, Leon, taking advantage of the scene transition while the tavern backdrop was being set up, leaned over to the princess's ear, full of doubt, and asked,

"Veronica, do you see that male lead on stage, is he a human or a puppet?"

Hmm? What kind of question is that?

Princess Veronica was slightly taken aback by the question, not understanding why Leon would ask that. But remembering Leon's "job," her expression immediately turned serious, and she similarly tilted her head to whisper,

"Human! He appears human to me! Do you see Elijah as a puppet?"

"Uh..."

Watching the tavern gradually light up under the stage lights and the leading lady in the tavern gracefully dancing with a prop tray in hand and her skirt fluttering, Leon frowned tightly and said,

"Not just the male lead; in my view, all the actors currently on stage are talking puppets dressed in clothes. We must be encountering an abnormal event. Veronica, you are a loyal fan of Master Wilde, so you should always be paying attention to the activities of the Morning Star Troupe, right? Has there been any news worth noting about this troupe lately?"

News worth noting?

Understanding that Leon was gathering intelligence to complete the task of purification, Princess Veronica took one last regretful look at the stage and, without rushing to ask questions, cooperated by trying hard to remember.

"Come to think of it, there are some odd things."

After searching her mind, the princess slightly furrowed her elegant brows and began to recount,

"The leading actor of the Morning Star Troupe, Andre, who worked the longest with Master Wilde, was boycotted due to a scandal and a suitable replacement has yet to be found. In several subsequent performances, due to coordination issues with the new actors, critiques among theater enthusiasts have been quite low. Master Wilde seemed very irritated by this and reduced the number of troupe performances, starting closed training sessions. However, reporters discovered that the food sent into Central Cross Theater during the training was not touched at all and was directly thrown into the surrounding trash bins, leading to suspicions that the closed training was just a pretense. It caused quite a stir..."

The food sent to the theater wasn't consumed?

Upon hearing this, Leon frowned slightly, feeling that the news sounded somewhat familiar. After carefully flipping through his notebook he carried, he finally recalled abruptly.

After the Ryan Blood Night and having basically recovered, he ran back to the Purification Bureau from the hospital, and before being trapped in the police department's dungeon, the bureau chief had given him some investigative tasks.

These included the missing shepherds searching for goats in Pav County, the arsonist roaming around Louthier Arcade, and the food problem of the Morning Star Troupe, among others.

At the time, after investigating several rounds, he felt that these tasks did not seem like abnormalities, ultimately choosing the task to rescue Amy at Rose Manor.

Later, when infiltrating the Rebels, he discovered that the arsonist was actually the holder of an Anomalous Object of the Rebels, a man named Teague, who liked to smell people's burns with his nose. Now, the Morning Star Troupe indeed had a problem.

Including the Scales Gold Sect bishop he met at Rose Manor, three out of the four tasks he received were confirmed to be related to abnormalities, indicating the bureau chief's level in "assigning tasks" was notably high.

...

"Leon?"

After waiting a while without hearing Leon's response, the princess could not help but gently ask,

"What do you think? Will these theatergoers be in danger?"

"I have made a discovery, and it's somewhat good news."

Returning to his senses, Leon nodded and said,

"If what I perceive is true, then the theater's food being thrown away is because all the actors in the entire troupe have become puppets that do not need to eat. And from that time until now, quite a while has passed, but no large-scale disappearance or injury among the theatergoers has occurred, indicating that this is a relatively stable abnormal event and is unlikely to affect the audience."

"That's good then..."

Upon hearing Leon's words, Princess Veronica couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief, then leaned over to softly ask,

"What can I do to help? Secretly organize an evacuation, or..."

"No, don't do anything!"

After vetoing the princess's proposal, Leon tilted his head and softly said,

"Since in so many past performances, the audience was able to leave safely and no large-scale incidents enough to alert us at the sub-district occurred, simply watching the play should be safe. According to Emma's remain... according to the experience taught by a senior colleague, when the specific ability of an Anomalous Object is uncertain and it is unlikely to cause large-scale harm, never rush to break the current balance. So what we should do now is wait in the box for six hours until the performance is complete. Once most of the audience, including you, has safely withdrawn, I'll find a way to come back with senior colleagues from the bureau and complete the purification as safely as possible."

"Okay, I'll take your word for it!"

Princess Veronica nodded, her cold little hand clutching Leon's palm. Resting her lips close to Leon's earlobe, she warmly and somewhat worriedly advised,

"Remember to stay safe, and if there's anything I can do to help, let me know, and I'll do my utmost to assist."

"Uh..."

The breath exhaled by the princess tickled Leon's neck, and after completing the intelligence inquiry, he shifted slightly to alleviate the discomfort and tried to resume a proper sitting posture.

But at this moment, he noticed that the princess's soft palm was slightly damp, her upper body leaning against him trembled uncontrollably, and her legs beneath the long dress were pressed together, seemingly very tense.

After a moment's hesitation, Leon freed his right hand from her grasp, looped his arm around her back, leaned over to her ear, and reassured her gently,

"Don't worry, this abnormal event isn't highly dangerous, and with me here, you'll undoubtedly be fine."

"..."

Suddenly embraced, the princess was somewhat surprised. In the dimly lit box, she raised her head to glance at Leon, and upon noticing his concerned expression, she lowered her head and softly murmured in agreement and submissively leaned into his embrace.

\*Actually, I'm not scared; it's just that I drank a little too much hot water on the carriage and feel slightly urgent... but this is quite nice.\*

Cooperating with Leon's movement, as she leaned into his embrace, she felt his firm, warm young body, and the princess couldn't help but lightly bite her lower lip. In a position where Leon couldn't see, she revealed a satisfied, faint smile.

\*He knows how to take care of my emotions, not bad, not bad, my treatment of him wasn't in vain after all.\*

Chapter 296 is very unlucky.....\_1

\*It seemed that Leon really fell for this trick. Just by acting slightly weaker, I could earn some extra "favors" from him.\*

Sensing the atmosphere was just right, the Princess, finally getting some return on her numerous efforts despite her ongoing worries about the anomalous events, decided to temporarily set aside her concerns. With a slightly tense demeanor, she asked in a faint, helpless voice, "Leon, are you sure nothing will happen?"

"Don't worry."

Leon tapped twice on the box's mirror, calling out the temporarily enclosed Black Goat. While instructing it to find the location of the anomalous object's holder, he kept his eyes fixed on the puppets onstage, and without turning his head, he softly reassured, "I just had... a friend take a look. The audience members' souls are all normal, with no signs of being controlled or anything of the sort. Simply watching the show should be safe.

Moreover, the Morning Star Troupe has performed this over a dozen times since the news broke out. If there were going to be problems, they would have already emerged, not waited until now to..."

"Tap, tap, tap-tap-tap..."

Before Leon could finish speaking, strange sounds emanated from the direction of the stage. A torrent of wood beads, the size of teardrops, uncontrollably fell from the female lead puppet's face, clattering onto the stage floor.

From all the audience's perspective, the heroine, who was supposed to smile and accept Elijah's invitation to begin a wonderful Twelve Days' Journey, suddenly started to cry eerily.

On Agatha's beautiful face, though adorned with a playful yet charming smile, big, despairing, and painful tears uncontrollably flowed down from her bright eyes...

\*Seriously? Does trouble only follow when I arrive?\*

Watching the sudden halt of the performance as the puppets started trembling on stage, Leon found himself unable to maintain his composure. Audience members, noticing the anomaly, began to react with a tumult due to the female lead's abrupt crying.

"Why is she crying? Did something happen to the actress's family?"

"Oh, come on, I rarely attend a play, and it turns out like this."

"Is this the level of the Morning Star Troupe's lead? Tsk, tsk, tsk, ever since Andre got blacklisted, you can't watch Morning Star's plays."

"Damn it, I traveled so far specifically for this... Is this how they repay us? Damn it! Refund!"

"Everyone! Everyone, please listen to me!"

Amidst the mixed noises of curiosity, regret, and anger from the audience, the Central Cross Theatre Troupe's manager hurriedly ran out from backstage, pushed aside the actors in his way, and rushed to the microphone. He continuously bowed to the audience, profusely apologizing with a sweaty face, "The actress playing Agatha today had a family matter, so her emotions may not be very stable. This affected your theater experience, and we are deeply sorry.

Rest assured, our theater will take full responsibility. After the show, we will refund the ticket price for this performance in full, and visitors from afar will also receive small gifts... Come quickly! Apologize to everyone!"

Hearing the manager's words, the audience's anger slightly abated.

However, for some reason, even after repeated hints from the theater manager, the actress playing Agatha had no reaction whatsoever. She maintained her original posture, with large tears streaming down her face as she continued to smile at the audience.

"What's her deal?"

"Messing up the performance and still has the nerve to smile? Is this the quality of Morning Star's actors?"

"It's not just Morning Star, is it? In recent years, Master Wilde hasn't produced any new works with integrity either."

"Indeed... The new works from Master Wilde these past two years haven't been impressive. Even when there's something slightly good, judging by these actors, they probably wouldn't be able to perform it properly anyway."

"..."

"Well... sorry, she might be too self-reproachful, so for the moment... a bit bewildered..."

After attempting to explain the actress's side with a forced smile, the theater manager, whose body was slightly chubby, wiped his sweat with a handkerchief and tried to placate the dissatisfied audience, "Everyone, the stage needs to be reset, and the actors have to prepare again. In the meantime, why don't we invite Master Wilde to come out and chat a little with everyone?"

...

\*The possessor of this anomalous object should definitely be him.\*

Watching the middle-aged man who was brought forward to interact with the audience, Leon looked at the glass in the couple's box and received a confirmation response from the Black Goat.

\*Then this possessor of an anomalous object is identified as Master Wilde, with abilities related to puppets, theater, manipulation, and currently, no record of causing harm...\*

Having gathered relatively complete intelligence, Leon didn't linger further. He opened the couple's box door and hurriedly led the Princess towards the exit passage.

Although things seemed safe for the moment, faced with completely unknown abnormal circumstances, it was prudent to send the Princess out first, and then have her bring people over to organize an audience evacuation quickly.

As for himself, he should distance himself a bit, setting up the sniper rifle in a location where he could monitor the scene yet not be impacted immediately, in case the master suddenly lost control...

"Nonsense, there's nothing wrong with my script!"

Just as Leon and the Princess were about to enter the exit passage, Master Wilde, over at the stage, was seemingly angered by some part of the audience's remarks and shouted angrily towards them, "It's the actors who are lacking! I wrote the best scripts! But with their level, they simply can't bring out the essence of the characters or portray such complex and profound emotions! If Andre were still here..."

"Really?"

As soon as Master Wilde's angry shout ended, a man, likely a drama critic or something similar, sitting in the front row facing the main stage, coldly retorted, "Drama is inherently an art of trade-offs, meant to convey stories spanning days, years, or even decades within a mere two or three hours.

Therefore, learning to balance structure and emotional allocation, adjusting the script's difficulty according to the actors' abilities, is something a playwright should inherently master.

Pardon my frankness, but if your plays are worthless without excellent actors, could it be that... the outdated content you write is inherently worthless?"

"..."

\*Damn it!\*

Hearing the "friendly exchange" coming from the stage, even without the Black Goat at hand to see Master Wilde's soul state, Leon could deduce—from the middle-aged man's sharp critique—that \*something big was about to happen!\*

Sure enough, after hearing the middle-aged man's words, Master Wilde, who still seemed in a relatively stable mental state, was essentially "ignited" on the spot. His bloodshot eyes widened fiercely, and he raised his hand towards the audience, gritting his teeth.

"Worthless? I'll soon show you just how foolish your previous remarks are!!!"

With Master Wilde's angry shout, all three thousand-plus audience members in the Central Cross Theater, including Leon and the Princess, who had already rushed into the exit passage, shuddered in unison.

Subsequently, to the terror of the audience, they not only lost control of their bodies, but their skin and flesh began to lose their human appearance, rapidly petrifying into wood-like forms.

And a multitude of completely invisible lines quietly descended from the azure sky above the harbor city, precisely tying to each joint of these three thousand-plus puppet-like bodies...

"This should do it."

Taking a deep breath of the fresh yet slightly salty sea breeze, gazing at the serene and beautiful harbor town before him, and the three thousand-odd "residents" living tranquilly within, Master Wilde finally

revealed a satisfied smile on his weary face, and his right hand, just raised towards the audience, came down heavily.

"'Twelve Days' Journey,' Act One, Scene One, begin!"

Chapter 297 Drama King\_1

[Name: Drama King (Doll, Fictional, Domain)]

[Appearance: Currently appears as a middle-aged male human who dresses meticulously, likes wearing a top hat, and has a slightly weary face. This human claims to be the great playwright Wilde and often appears near the backstage of the Morning Star Troupe.]

[Ability: Soul Doll, Fictional Will, Drama Domain]

[Cost: The user of this Anomalous Object must have an unparalleled passion for theater. When the user's passion begins to wane, their soul will be replaced by the Drama King, and the appearance of the Drama King will undergo corresponding changes.]

[File: As the twelfth user of the Drama King, and the greatest of them all, Master Wilde's love for theater never faded and even grew daily as he witnessed the real world during his tours.

Regrettably, although his soul remained fervent, his tired and fragile body cooled down three years ago, inadvertently triggering the replacement effect of the Drama King.

After Master Wilde's true soul departed, the replacement "Drama King" neither matched his artistic level nor found a new user who loved theater more deeply than Master Wilde.

Hence, the "Drama King" could only strive to finish the scripts Wilde hadn't completed and continued the Morning Star Troupe's world tour as per Wilde's last wishes.

However, with the declining reputation of the new plays and the constant change of Morning Star Troupe members, the self-proclaimed "Drama King" of Master Wilde found it increasingly difficult to accept these changes, ultimately reaching the brink of complete loss of control...]

[Evaluation: Great criminals and great artists share a common trait, which is that neither likes the world as it is. To create art capable of changing the world, the creator is the only ruler of it.]

[Contamination Value: 16]

[Through your own observation and induction, you've gained a considerable amount of intelligence about the "Drama King," activating the Heterochromatic Badge "Materialist Soul (Crimson)."

Having understood the rules and effects of the "Drama King," your resistance to this Anomalous Object increased significantly. You can now shield against deeper levels of influence.]

...

\*So, it's an out-of-control Anomalous Object that went berserk after losing its user... Speaking of which, its Contamination Value is really high, easily equivalent to two parts of the Black Goat, it seems I'm in quite a bit of trouble this time.\*

With the resistance provided by [Materialism], Leon tore off the transparent fine threads tied to his forehead, regaining his will. He moved his limbs slightly, then looked at the incredibly realistic seaside town before him.

"Ankara..."

Upon seeing the words "City of Passion and the Waves, Ankara" on a signpost at the dock, Leon couldn't help but furrow his brows slightly.

If he remembered correctly, this should be where the plot of "Twelve Days' Journey" took place. The protagonist Elijah, who came here to relax, would meet the voluptuous and beautiful waitress Agatha at a tavern, then begin a romantically mistaken love affair.

\*So... have I been thrown into Master Wilde's script? To become one of the "actors" in it?\*

Thinking of this, Leon hesitated slightly and didn't use the resistance from [Materialism] to remove all the threads on him, leaving part of them intact.

\*Senior Emma once told me that for this type of "domain" Anomalous Object, it was nearly impossible to break by pure brute force unless the Leon Value exceeded the user's by more than twice his value alone wasn't enough to break through that.\*

According to Senior Emma, the only "solution" to this type of Anomalous Object was to eliminate the user before they took action. Otherwise, one must obediently follow the "rules" of their domain.

From the intelligence on [Drama King], the core rule of this domain was undoubtedly "drama," so for someone like himself who was unfamiliar with the play "Twelve Days' Journey," there might be a use for these threads. It was best not to hastily remove them all.

Additionally, after being turned into a doll, his capabilities were greatly weakened. He had lost contact with Young Ha, unable to retrieve his sniper rifle or other Anomalous Objects from the Mirror World. Although his Holy Spirit pendant was still with him, its effect was severely limited...

Thinking of this, Leon controlled the power of the Holy Spirit pendant, lightly scratching his arm. Seeing the slowed, yet still healing body afterward, he let out a slight sigh of relief.

The good news was that the Yang Xin was still usable.

Although [Drama King]'s ability could affect the soul and bypass the protection of Yang Xin, since the effect was of the "manipulation" type rather than the "damage" type, it wasn't likely to cause trauma to the soul, providing some measure of safety.

\*Next, what I needed to do was find the Princess who was also dragged inside while avoiding touching the "drama rules" and attracting the oppression of the drama domain.\*

\*Once her safety, and that of others affected, was ensured, I could figure out how to deal with the out-of-control [Drama King] and resolve this sudden Anomalous event... Huh?\*

Feeling a clear pulling force from the threads on his body, Leon quickly relaxed and moved along the direction of this pulling force, walking down the road ahead.

\*Was it the start of the "plot?" Did it require my involvement?\*

Having an inkling of what was happening, Leon couldn't help but lower his head slightly, looking at the clothes he was wearing.

\*Shiny shoes with fake soles, tight pants adorned with small metal pieces, a weird suit made of some printed fabric of an eye-popping color, awkward little accessories on the cuffs and collar, and a slicked-back bright yellow hair with wax...\*

\*Honestly, this bizarre outfit made him look more like a schizophrenic peacock than a person...\*

\*So, in the theater world's script, my "role" is the clown?\*

With an uncontrollable "subway, old man, cellphone" expression appearing on his face, Leon gave a slightly disgruntled click of the tongue, then let the threads control him, swaggering toward the dock tavern where the protagonists met.

\*Oh well, a clown it is!\*

\*Compared to what role I played, the most important thing now was to reach the place where the "plot" unfolded and quickly find the Princess to confirm her safety.\*

...

\*Soon, Leon's character strolled into the tavern where the scene began with a signature "swagger," casually sitting at a window-side table.\*

\*Shortly after, a voluptuously beautiful waitress, with a name tag hanging on her chest, walked over with butterfly-like steps, smiling brilliantly as she asked,\*

"Mr. Joseph, what would you like to drink today?"

"..."

\*Whoa!\*

Glancing at her chest—figure rather, despite both her appearance and demeanor having changed significantly, Leon recognized at a glance that this waitress was undoubtedly the Princess he was looking for.

\*And what's even more troublesome...\*

"Agatha..."

After reciting the name on her name tag, Leon couldn't help but blink with extreme disbelief.

\*Well, it's only been five minutes, and I turned into a neurotic yellow-haired punk while you've become the lead female character of the whole play?\*

Chapter 298 Everyone's roles are very fitting\_1

"Woof!!!"

When Leon touched the tuft of yellow hair on his forehead and was about to say something, he heard an unusually excited puppy bark.

Feeling that the sound was quite familiar, Leon couldn't help but look toward it, only to find a little husky with a tuft of yellow hair on its head. It had leapt up from a distant counter, wagging its tail at him with a face full of surprise.

\*Young Ha... Do you have a role as well?\*

Thanks to that unique tuft of yellow hair, Leon recognized Young Ha's identity. Looking at Young Ha, who had some kind of balm on its face and two little braids tied with pink ribbons on its head, Leon was about to call out to it. However, a will transmitted through the threads on his body changed the words that came out of his mouth.

"What I want, Agatha, do you not know it yet?"

Drawing his gaze away from Young Ha and smoothing the yellow gunked-up hair on his head, Leon—or "Mr. Joseph," as he was currently known—lifted his hand to his mouth and produced a lush red rose.

With the rose, which was a bit prickly, clenched between his teeth, "Mr. Joseph" performed a series of flamboyant gestures before grabbing Agatha's arm and raising an eyebrow, eyes sparkling as he proclaimed,

"Compared to the watered-down beer in this tavern, what I truly desire is to pluck you, the blossoming rose~"

"..."

\*Vorzhe... What kind of dogshit line is this?\*

Beyond just Leon, the overwhelming actions disgusted others as well. After experiencing the overwhelming scent of "Mr. Joseph's" cologne, the radiant smile of the waitress "Agatha" became forced.

"Mr. Joseph."

Pushing Leon gently away with her hand, vibrant and fiery Agatha took a glance at the rose in Leon's mouth, smiled, and declined,

"It's not proper. If you truly love a rose, then please let it flourish in the garden!

After all, the rose you want doesn't love those exquisite and expensive vases. What it truly yearns for is the vast expanse of freedom and the brilliant sunlight unblocked by glass!"

"Yes, yes, yes! You're right!"

Perhaps not the first time he'd been refused, "Mr. Joseph" wasn't mad after taking that soft blow. He spat out the prickly rose with a grin, licking the wound on his lip while gleefully saying,

"When it comes to property, my family has the most land in town! The land my father left me is indeed vast and is on especially sunlit slopes. It's exactly what your charming rose desires! Dear Agatha, if you fancy wild roses, I can even plant you a whole field! Haha! Indeed, we are a perfect match!"

"..."

\*Got it. My role is the dumb son of a landlord, huh?\*

...

"Mr. Joseph, that wasn't what I meant..."

Despite being so obvious, the landlord's dumb son still didn't get it. "Agatha" couldn't help but shake her head in resignation. Considering that she only planned to stay in this city for another two weeks, leaving as soon as the engagement was broken off, she didn't get entangled further and said with a smile,

"Let's put this aside for now, you still have to place an order!"

"Alright, alright!"

Upon hearing the words of his passionately pursued goddess, "Mr. Joseph" nodded repeatedly, as if oblivious to his yellow hair, and casually scribbled something on the menu before handing it back, winking suggestively,

"Just this, and as usual, send it to the table nearest to the counter, the perfect spot to admire my rose."

"Alright..."

After the princess left amused yet exasperated, Leon, back in his seat, pulled the barely visible strings on him slightly apart, then squinted his eyes contemplatively.

While he acted to the intent of the "strings," Leon wasn't idle. As he supported the princess acting as "Agatha," he secretly tugged on the strings on the princess's arm, hoping to free her as well.

But unfortunately, for Leon, whose current Contamination Value was barely 5, relying on the resistance provided by [Materialism] to break free and gain freedom was already the limit. Saving someone from the Drama King's Contamination Value of 16 was utterly unrealistic.

So he could only continue acting for now...

Despite performing some flamboyant movements in his seat, receiving no obstruction from the Drama King hinted to Leon at the functional range of these strings.

Reasonable, character-fitting, and slightly dramatic actions wouldn't incur heavy resistance.

However, like earlier, even when having the chance, not immediately professing love, but rather interacting with the goddess's dog was not character-fitting and would be stopped.

With this understanding, there was more leeway.

Surveying the other side of the restaurant, where the handsome youth chatted merrily with "Agatha," Leon's eyes narrowed slightly.

Based on their conversation, his character was clearly a comic foil to highlight the protagonist, even currently "jealously" staring at the protagonist. He might even have a conflict with the protagonist later on due to jealousy.

As said by the princess, the main antagonist in "Twelve Days' Journey" was the female lead Agatha's family, so he probably only appeared in the first act, being put in his place by the protagonist before exiting. The second, third, fourth acts might not even include him.

\*That won't do!\*

Glancing towards the protagonists, yellow-haired Leon began contemplating a way to "steal the show," while pondering the core logic of the Master of Drama's Ability.

If guessed correctly, the original actress playing Agatha was mentally breaking down under the Master of Drama's endless control, so the princess, lauded as the most beautiful in the Capital City, was chosen as the lead actress.

After all, choosing someone else as the lead and letting Princess Veronica play a supporting role would see her completely overshadowed by the princess in appearance, poise, and figure, which would ruin the play. The Master of Drama had no other option.

As for why he became the landlord's dumb son...

Recalling his past experiences, Leon's face darkened instantly.

Truly, he was very suitable. Not to mention, merely the identity of the Duke of Lionheart made him the biggest "landlord" in the entire theater, aligning well with "Mr. Joseph" inheriting his father's estate to become the town's richest man and his backstory.

Coincidentally, to everyone, he was a notorious wastrel, leaving the entire Ryan Family to the royal family for the princess's beauty. Even the persona of a desperate simp aligned, making him the ideal pick for the landlord's dumb son.

...

"Mr. Joseph."

Just as Leon prepared to stir things up, aiming to intervene in the subsequent plot of "Twelve Days' Journey," Agatha, having helped the protagonist Elijah complete his order, took a quick run to the kitchen and then returned with a steaming tray.

"Your wine and dishes are ready."

Pressing her rose-juice-dyed nails on the menu, leaving two slight marks, "Agatha" said with a smile,

"There are other guests to attend to, so I won't linger. Please enjoy your lunch~"

"..."

\*Enjoy... my lunch???\*

Staring at the tray's familiar sheep head, barbecued red and coated with pepper sauce full of tiny meat bits, holding a large red apple in its mouth, Leon couldn't hold his expression anymore.

No, seriously... Even Young Ha got a role, but how the hell do you have one too?!?!

Chapter 299 Never give up, never give in\_1

\*\*'I'm so enraged!!!'\*\*

After the apple was taken out of her mouth, the Black Goat spat out the juice from her mouth in fury and roared in Leon's soul, \*'I am a Demon, a Great Demon! That Wilde, how dare he treat me like this? Don't stop me! Once we get out of here, I'm definitely going to tear it apart!'

Ah, right, right, you're an 8-point little chicken, tearing apart a 16-point opponent seems too easy.

Leon couldn't be bothered with the Black Goat's impotent rage. He grabbed its braided sheep horns and tossed the sauce-covered thing onto an empty plate meant for collecting trash. While munching on

other side dishes on the plate, he read the lips of the male and female protagonists conversing in the distance, trying to make out their dialogue.

According to the plot summary given by the Princess, the male protagonist Elijah was originally just resisting a loveless marriage, coming to this small town to relax.

But in the tavern, he was attracted to Agatha's enthusiastic and lively personality and endless energy. He invited her to tour the small town with him. Over eleven days of exploration, their hearts grew closer, and with Agatha being kidnapped and their reunion at the wedding, they eventually became partners.

After running the story through his mind, Leon's eyes reflected a thoughtful expression.

So, here's the question: Even if Agatha isn't really a waitress and is just working here, without other waitstaff seen in this little tavern, can the boss really let her take ten days off at once?

Moreover, from the content of their conversation, although both the male and female leads seemed a bit love-obsessed, valuing love and freedom above all else, neither were of frivolous nor casual character.

With the male lead under an engagement, unsure whether to escape marriage, it was unlikely for him to invite a beautiful stranger on a city tour. Similarly, the female lead Agatha was of a more "reserved" nature, typically unlikely to accept such an intimate eleven-day invitation from a stranger male.

So in the first scene at this tavern, something must have happened to quickly bring them closer, not enough to make them recognize each other, but at least to form an initial trust and affection.

After deducing the likely attitude changes in the first scene, Leon glanced around at the tavern's guests and their states, making some predictions about what might happen next.

The most probable scenario was that some trouble arose in the tavern. The male protagonist tried to help Agatha but ended up causing her to lose her job, so he invited her to be a guide, hoping to offer some economic compensation.

And Agatha, due to the male lead's righteous defense or some other act, developed a trust and closeness to him. Since she planned to leave in two weeks, she accepted the guide job, making everything reasonable.

As for the source of the trouble...

"You're talking nonsense! My drinking capacity is great!"

In Leon's contemplative gaze, near the male and female protagonists who were discussing poetry, a table of red-faced, drunken patrons finally started making a ruckus.

A red-faced sailor rolled up his sleeves, slammed his fist on the tavern's old wooden table, and argued with a puffed chest and glaring eyes, "I can at least drink five more! If you two pass out, I'll still be standing!"

"Cut the bullshit!"

Two sailors sitting across from him laughed and cursed, "Five more? With your wobbly stance, you'd be lying down after two more!"

"Haha, not wrong, if you drink five more, you'd indeed be straight, but flat on the ground!"

"Bullshit!"

Faced with his companions' relentless ridicule, the already swaying sailor lost his temper and stood up abruptly, shouting loudly, "If I go down, I'm your grandson! Today's alcohol is not even a fraction of what I usually drink!"

"Alright, alright, I believe you. You could say you can drink a whole barrel, and I'd believe!"

"Haha, right, right, you usually drink a lot, today you're just wobbly from the sea breeze, nothing to do with alcohol at all!"

"I... I'm telling the truth! If I'm lying to you, I'm a dog!"

After suffering a second round of teasing, the drunk, slightly embarrassed man looked around and promptly grabbed Agatha's arm, pulling her over by force, drunkenly shouting, "Agn... Agatha, or whatever! You're the server here, you tell them how much I usually drink!"

Startled as she was suddenly yanked over, Agatha looked taken aback.

But whether it was her nature or the Princess's influence, as the female protagonist, she quickly calmed down, responding gently, "Sir, you seem to be a bit drunk, how about..."

"Haha, did you hear that? She said you're drunk!"

"Looking for someone to vouch? Anyone can see you're down for the count, why keep pushing?"

Agatha's response might have been fine at another time, but for a brawny man embroiled in a drinking dispute, it was akin to pouring oil on the fire.

Listening to the loud laughter of his two companions, the booze-fueled brute's eyes reddened instantly. He gripped Agatha's shoulders with both hands, glaring with bloodshot eyes and roaring angrily, "I'm not drunk! You little woman..."

"Let go!"

At that moment, Leon felt the string on him pull sharply, standing him up directly, and bellowed with righteous anger, "Take your hands off her! Stop harassing my Agatha!"

Hmm? Is this my job? Shouldn't the male protagonist be stepping in to help right now?

As Leon was pondering it, the drunken brute in the distance, getting mad, grabbed an empty bottle on the table and threw it over, smashing it into pieces against the table near Leon.

"Ouch!"

Accompanied by the shriek of "Mr. Joseph" who narrowly missed being hit by the bottle, the drunken sailor twisted his thick neck, glaring as he cursed, "Piss off, pretty boy! I'm talking to this woman, what's it got to do with you? Just make sure to hold on to your balls! Speak up again, and I'll beat you!"

Under the string's control, the "Hero of Justice" "Mr. Joseph," actually complied with the demand, pressing his legs together with a pale face, trembling and sitting back down.

\*Got it... Adding this part suddenly is meant to highlight the male protagonist's courage through my faltering, is it?\*

In Leon's somewhat displeased gaze, the drunken brute turned back to continue but noticed another table of patrons standing up, crossing his arms with a face full of dislike questioning out loud, "Are you guys sailors from the 'Seagull' merchant ship?"

"So what if we are?"

Realizing that yet another person had stood up, the drunken brute pointed at him impatiently, "Did I say you? Mind your own business, heard me? Or watch out for my... hey!"

Seeing his hand slapped away, the drunken brute was enraged. Just as he was about to lash out, the handsome man across furrowed his brows, saying, "I am close with the Seagull's first mate. If you cause trouble here, I will definitely tell him about what happened today, word for word!"

"Haha, are you using him to threaten me?"

The drunken brute seemed infuriated, staggering over while saying with menace, "What about the first mate? The first mate can control me drinki—ah!!!"

Amid the bewildered eyes of everyone, a shiny patent leather shoe with a heel peeked out from between the drunken brute's legs... Or put it another way, the flamboyantly dressed fellow who was scared earlier somehow slipped over and kicked the drunkard right in the manhood.

"Run!"

Taking advantage of the moment's bewilderment, Leon, having torn off the strings, ran over, executing a secretly learned female officer's crotch kick perfectly, and immediately swept Agatha into a horizontal carry, sprinting towards the door amidst her screams.

Incredibly, before making his escape, he didn't forget to kick over the table, spilling its leftovers over the drunken man's comrades. Before the three, momentarily stunned by the unexpected hit, could react, Leon had zigzagged and vanished out of sight.

"..."

Watching the beauty who left his side, the male protagonist was befuddled.

"..."

Seeing the plot spin out of control, the [Master of Drama] grasped the string with an utterly baffled face.

"There's still one here who didn't run!"

"Beat him up!"

In the expressionless silence, the three sailors who had been wronged first came to their senses. Knowing they themselves were drunk and definitely couldn't catch the two outside, they gritted their teeth and surrounded Elijah, intending to vent their anger on him.

"W-wait! You can't hit me!"

Aware things were gravely amiss, the male protagonist could no longer hide his identity, turning pale as he blurted out, "I am a guest on the Seagull, and also..."

"Bang!"

Just as Elijah was about to reveal his identity, hoping to avoid the beating, there came a bang from behind. The pretty boy who had just bolted with Agatha barged back through the door by kicking it open!

In the dumbfounded faces of several people, the flamboyant, multicolor-clad Leon rushed to the counter, grabbing the dog lying on it, then darted to his former seat, sweeping up the unfinished "dishes" with the plates, and promptly leaping out through the window, vanishing once more around the street corner.

"..."

The three brawny men were utterly stupefied.

"..."

The [Master of Drama], clutching the string, began to grind his teeth.

"..."

As for Elijah, surrounded by three drunks, his face turned into one of utter despair, worse than crying.

What the heck, you came back not only for the dog but even took away the half-eaten dishes... And me? This living person, how about you save me at least a bit!

Chapter 300 Negotiation Failure and Breakthrough Methods\_1

"Are we really leaving like this?"

The princess, dressed in a server's outfit, couldn't help but ask as she glanced back at the small tavern clattering with noise,

"Mr. Elijah hasn't run yet. If he stays there, he might..."

"Don't worry; he won't be in trouble."

After tossing Young Ha onto his shoulder and letting it settle, Leon replied while wiping soot sauce off the Black Goat's face with a rag taken from the restaurant,

"He's got someone looking out for him; he's much safer than us. Not to mention that those three sailors are just punching him, even if Master Wilde wanted, he'd come back lively even after being run over by a cruise ship."

???

What is all that about?

Without the resistance to the Anomalous Object provided by [Materialism], the princess was still the tavern waitress "Agatha" and naturally couldn't understand what Leon was talking about. However, when she thought of "Mr. Joseph's" usual nonsense and ramblings, she didn't probe further. Instead, she worriedly suggested,

"Mr. Joseph, there's a police station just around the corner on the next street. Could you please go and report to them? I'm worried about the tavern..."

"Nothing's going to happen to the tavern!"

After cleaning the sauce off the Black Goat, Leon tied it to his belt, then grabbed the princess's shoulders with both hands, speaking earnestly,

"Vi... Agatha, listen to me!"

Watching the princess's startled expression, Leon, who intended to help her escape, explained sincerely,

"What I'm about to tell you might sound unbelievable, but I can assure you, every word is true. You're not actually a tavern waitress, you're actually... huh?"

Suddenly sensing an inexplicable danger, Leon's hair stood on end, and he jerked his head up, spotting a transparent thread, several times thicker than before, silently descending from the sky and coming straight for the back of his head!

[The Drama King] had found him!

Seeing the situation take a turn for the worse, Leon didn't use the Holy Spirit pendant to attack the transparent threads. Instead, he controlled his tangible spirit power to form a large hand, swiftly pushing himself horizontally away, narrowly avoiding the descending thread.

But for someone possessing the power of the "Level Two Goat," evading the abilities of [The Drama King] wasn't so simple. The line, thicker than a grown man's thigh, burst instantly, transforming into nearly a hundred invisible threads that enveloped Leon, tightly binding every movable part of his body.

"Damn it! You dare ruin my play!"

Accompanied by an irate shout, as if a pause button had been pressed, the birds in the sky ceased flapping, the fresh and salty sea breeze halted, and the sound of waves lapping against the pier stopped abruptly, plunging the entire world into stillness.

Shortly after, "Master Wilde," wearing a sharp double-breasted white suit and topped with a matching hat, hobbled over with a cane and stood angrily in front of Leon.

This should be the embodiment of [The Drama King's] will, right?

With his entire body tightly bound by threads, only Leon's eyes could move. He rolled them to fixate on the enraged [Master of Drama].

According to his analysis, the body of this "Level Two Goat" Anomalous Object was this small seaside town itself... or rather, the theatrical world it constructed.

That's why the moment he entered, he grasped the intelligence related to [The Drama King]. To escape from the theatrical world it created, apart from relying on sheer strength, he could find the embodiment of [The Drama King's] will and try to shatter it, causing the world governed by its will to collapse prematurely.

Initially, he planned to lure out [The Drama King's] will and use the mental impact ability of the Holy Spirit pendant to heavily damage it. After all, creating such a vast world must consume a lot, and [The Drama King] might not have enough strength left to withstand the pendant's impact.

But now...

After gauging the intensity of [The Drama King's] will, Leon shook his head and clucked his tongue, wisely abandoning the idea of ramming it once.

This entity's will was overwhelmingly strong, as solid as a concrete wall. He really couldn't break through it, so he'd have to find another way.

...

"You... How can you still move?!"

Seeing Leon adorned with hundreds of threads yet able to shake his head and sigh, "Master Wilde" was slightly surprised. Just as he was about to add more threads, he noticed Leon merely twisting a few times, breaking all the lines with which he exerted full control, leaving none intact.

"I can move because I can be exempt from your control... Also, although it seems unlikely, I'd like to try negotiating with you."

Assessing his current methods and realizing he really had no means against [The Drama King], Leon, freed from the threads, pointed to the princess and sincerely proposed,

"If you let her and me leave and guarantee to release everyone trapped here after this play ends, I can help you..."

"No!"

Before Leon could finish his proposal, [The Drama King] abruptly refused. He raised his cane, pointing at the princess, and sternly declared: