

I! Cleaner 311

Chapter 311 Rising Every Day_1

"Mm? Just like you!"

After reading the "Central Cross Theater Anomalous Cleaning Incident Report" on the table, the Red-haired Director couldn't help but smile with satisfaction. He looked at Leon with full approval and said,

"I've been away for just over two days, and not only did you catch Aquarius Director's leftover tricks in the Capital City, but you also resolved an out-of-control anomalous object while watching a show... Well done!

Haha, the year has just started, and you've already solved so many problems. This is definitely a good omen. It looks like our bureau's performance this year will be soaring!"

Soaring...

"I hope so..."

Hearing this less-than-perfectly-positive phrase, Leon's mouth twitched slightly. He then took the initiative to change the subject, asking,

"By the way, Director, how did your meeting go these past two days? Has the Central Bureau decided how to deal with the Aquarius Director?"

"I suppose they have decided..."

Hearing this, the Red-haired Director couldn't help but pout slightly, then said with some frustration,

"After a discussion among the three Directors, they decided to use two numbered anomalous objects against him, namely, number 017 [Directive List] and number 049 [Netherworld Streetlight].

The first one is a paper list, and once someone's name is written on it, the list will be sent to him. The person instructed must then act according to the behavior written on the list at a specified time and location.

The latter is a street lamp that connects to the Realm of the Dead. As long as someone stands under its light and is illuminated all night, when the sun rises and the streetlight goes out, no matter how long they still have to live, their soul will be forcibly stripped away and sent to the Realm of the Dead."

"..."

Man, that sure is a sneaky tactic...

After hearing the Red-haired Director's words, Leon pondered briefly and quickly understood the Directors' plan.

Given the effects of these two anomalous objects, they likely planned to write Aquarius Director's name on the [Directive List] first, and then require him to go at a specified time to be illuminated by the [Netherworld Streetlight], directly sending him off in one swift move to that so-called Realm of the Dead.

"Isn't that a good thing?"

Seeing the Red-haired Director's obvious displeasure, Leon couldn't help but ask,

"If the three Directors have decided to do this, surely they believe these two anomalous objects can thoroughly get rid of Aquarius Director. Wouldn't it be great to just eliminate him this way?"

"If we could really just eliminate Aquarius Director like that, then I wouldn't be so troubled... Sit down."

He gestured towards the sofa in the office, indicating for Leon to sit, then took a swig from a bottle on the table. Rubbing his temples, he said with some helplessness,

"Combining 017 and 049 is truly terrifying. Especially with the [Directive List] being activated by the combined force of all three Directors, it could normally compel a dozen True Gods to collectively surrender. Even the bureau's strongest, Aries Director, couldn't withstand it and would have to obediently wait for death under the [Netherworld Streetlight].

But when it comes to dealing with Aquarius Director, I just don't feel assured. His power isn't particularly strong, not even as strong as some Directors of Zodiac. But over the decades, who knows how many

anomalous objects he's created. He has too many random and bizarre methods, always leaving one feeling unsettled."

At this point, the Red-haired Director took another swig of his drink, furrowing his brows as he spoke to Leon,

"The combination of 017 and 049 is a frequently used set of anomalous objects, so Aquarius Director surely knows about them. Moreover, the [Directive List] being an instruction-type anomalous object has to be delivered to his hands and complete the 'issuance' process before it can take effect.

So, if he prepares in advance, like during the inquiry, creating some targeted anomalous objects, such as something like 'absolutely can't receive mail,' 'can't see the contents of the mail,' or 'doesn't recognize words,' and whatnot, even if the [Directive List] manages to act on him forcibly, its effectiveness would be greatly diminished. It may not completely eliminate him."

"..."

Could it really go down like this?

After hearing the Red-haired Director's concerns, Leon pondered for a moment and then nodded in agreement.

"Indeed, Aquarius Director has too many tricks, and he's prepared for many years to ascend to the Watcher's Palace. No one knows what trump cards he's still holding..."

Uh, by the way, Director, if you don't mind... could you..."

"I understand what you're trying to say, but that's not a viable option."

Seeing Leon's hesitant expression, the Red-haired Director's eyes darkened slightly, and he shook his head, saying,

"You want me to go upstairs, open the [Twelve Ant Nests], then find the ant corresponding to Aquarius Director among those that correspond to all humans, and directly squish it to kill him, right?"

Frankly, I've considered that too. However, although I'm the holder of [Twelve Ant Nests], I don't have the authority to use it alone. Only with the approval of the Directors can I open [Twelve Ant Nests].

And even with permission, to directly kill Aquarius Director with this item requires twice his strength to suppress the resistance of the ant representing him for a stable kill. I can't do that alone."

So... we can only gamble that Aquarius doesn't have a backup plan and will obediently walk into the trap under the power of the [Directive List]?

...

"Alright, though the Central Bureau's plan might not be foolproof, you shouldn't dwell too much on this matter."

Seeing Leon's furrowed brow, the Red-haired Director comforted him, saying,

"The most dangerous time for the Aquarius Director was when the Central Bureau didn't know he planned to take the Watcher's Palace. Now that the Central Bureau is aware of his goal, there's no way he can succeed.

At present, the Central Bureau's vigilance has been raised to the highest level. In the six months before the Ascension, Taurus His Excellency definitely won't leave the Central Bureau. The other two Directors will also stay, fully employing the Central Bureau's anomalous shielding capabilities.

In such conditions, even if Aquarius Director were ten times stronger, he still couldn't ascend to the Central Bureau. And as long as he doesn't meet Taurus His Excellency, he naturally can't replace Taurus as the Ascending One."

At this point, the Red-haired Director sighed, saying,

"To be honest, reflecting on it now, the Directors' choice is actually correct. For the Central Bureau and all of humanity, what's truly important is not dealing with Aquarius Director but ensuring the safe operation of the [Watcher's Palace].

So rather than taking the risk of being ambushed or entrapped, trying to capture Aquarius Director globally, it's much more prudent for the three to secure the Central Bureau, then deal with him after Taurus His Excellency safely ascends.

It's only half a year, after all. As long as you don't give Aquarius Director the chance to act in these six months, let Taurus His Excellency steadily ascend to the Watcher's Palace, there will be plenty of time to deal with him afterward."

"..."

That's how it goes, but for some reason, this cautious decision by the bureau feels just as unreliable as when you said our division's performance would be soaring this year.

Chapter 312: Surprise (Part 1)_1

"Don't fret, you've already done everything you could in the best possible way."

After noticing Leon's furrowed brow, the red-haired director couldn't help but offer comfort,

"If you look on the bright side, even if Aquarius has some targeted anomalous object, if its hierarchy isn't high enough, it might not withstand the dual assault of the [Directive List] and [Netherworld Streetlight]. It might even get destroyed.

Moreover, each sub-bureau director has the backing of their corresponding Star Palace within their jurisdiction, which enhances their ability to a higher level. If it comes to a real confrontation, Aquarius, who had already been stripped of his Star Palace privileges and severely wounded, is not even a match for many ordinary sub-bureau directors and can't make much of a splash.

As long as the three directors are free in half a year, or if another director or even a superintendent returns early, no matter how many tricks he has hidden, he'll have no way out then!"

Sigh... That's all we can do for now...

Although he still felt uneasy at heart, hoping the Purification Bureau could take action immediately and catch both the Gemini Sub-bureau and the Aquarius Director in one fell swoop, since the three directors had made a conservative decision, Leon, as just a minor level-three incident handler, could only express compliance, adding an extra layer of caution in his mind.

...

"By the way."

Sensing that the atmosphere was a bit heavy, the red-haired director pondered briefly, placed four small boxes on the table, and then said with a smile,

"Since you surprised me, I'll return the favor with a surprise... Guess what's inside?"

Looking at the appearance of these small boxes, Leon excitedly asked,

"Director, have you got the sheep stomach back for me?"

"Tsk..."

Seeing Leon immediately deduce the correct answer without even guessing, the red-haired director, who was planning to keep it a mystery, couldn't help but frown, then pushed the four small boxes over with a gesture, nodding with fake annoyance,

"Yes, I've got the sheep stomach back for you, trading it along with a couple of little things using your 'Ghost Hand Under the Bed.' I also had Taurus His Excellency adjust this item to its best condition.

Now, this thing doesn't need maintenance and is instantly at the level of 8 Leon Value in your hands. Moreover, I've notified others in the bureau, and if anybody finds other parts later, they'll try to reserve them for you first..."

Ah, right... I remember the [Connected Party] badge flashed for a moment a few days ago—so that's where the supplied resources ended up!

Hearing the red-haired director's words, Leon couldn't help but feel a surge of joy.

Adding the sheep stomach before him, he had already gathered the horn, heart, and stomach of the Black Goat's "Seven Sheep Tavern." The sheep tail was on the female reporter, and he should be able to acquire it, bringing the tally to four parts.

The Black Goat once boasted that the anomalous object formed by assembling all its parts could rank within the top 20 or 30 in the Purification Bureau—somewhere between numbers 020 and 030.

Though the Black Goat's brag was later debunked by the director and Taurus His Excellency, according to their estimates, even with his "High Affinity (Devil's Badge)" boost, the Black Goat's strength was averaged between ranks 100 and 70, far from being in the 20 to 30 range.

However, after gathering all the sheep remnants, his Devil's Badge was also expected to level up. The complete original sin Seven Sheep Tavern, paired with the upgraded heterochromatic level Devil's Badge, might indeed contend with those top-tier anomalous objects!

"Thank you, Director!"

Soaked with joy about his imminent power surge, Leon sincerely thanked the red-haired director, took the four small boxes from the table, and touched them one by one.

[Name: Insatiable Stomach (Corruption, Greed, Desire)]

[Appearance: Four locked metal boxes, each containing a compartmented reticulum, omasum, abomasum, and rumen of a ruminant. Even though not connected to any other digestive systems, the four stomachs perpetually undulated, whispering demonic murmurs if approached recklessly, greedily beseeching for all valuable things.]

[Ability: Demon's Stomach, Digestive Anomaly, Desire Guidance]

[Cost: Propose a desire it cannot fulfill, or satisfy its desires before each use. However, be warned that once its desire is satisfied, the next burst of desire will escalate in intensity.]

[File: Parts of the stomach of a near-god-level Great Demon, unintentionally stumbling into a slaughterhouse while instinctively seeking flesh and soul after being badly wounded and losing consciousness, eventually bought by a man with the surname Charl, who became its possessor.

Having acquired some minor fortune through Insatiable Stomach's Desire Prayer ability at the cost of much more, this owner quickly realized Insatiable Stomach's danger, locked it in custom-made metal boxes, and hid it away, unwilling to trade with it unless faced with unsolvable problems.

Thanks to his outstanding caution and wisdom, this owner managed to ensure his safety but left Insatiable Stomach perpetually starving in an extremely weakened state until, to save his daughter, he delivered it to the Purification Bureau...]

[Evaluation: An extremely peculiar functional anomalous object. Apart from guiding the user to satisfy desires, it can digest anomalous objects swallowed by the user, temporarily raising the user's Corrosion Value. It can raise Corrosion Value up to 59 points.

Unfortunately, the immensely potent effect cannot be used separately; it requires synergy with 'Desolate Violent Tongue' capable of consuming anomalous objects, forcibly swallowed anomalous objects cannot truly reach the 'Insatiable Stomach.']

[Corrosion Value: 8 (5.2)]

[Your Corrosion Value increased]

[Current Corrosion Value: 5.2]

Goodness, besides guiding the user to fulfill desires, this thing could swallow anomalous objects to temporarily increase its Corrosion Value? Maxing out at 59 points? Capable of reaching near-god-level power in a single bound?!!!

Discovering the true effect of [Insatiable Stomach], Leon sucked in a breath.

For figures like the red-haired director and Taurus Director, this thing's effect was utterly meaningless, considering their inherent Corrosion Value had already surpassed 60 points; they didn't need to stockpile Corrosion Value with a sheep stomach.

But for "Trash with 5.2" like himself, the effect seemed astonishingly powerful!

Essentially, the effectiveness and quantity of simultaneously usable anomalous objects were closely intertwined with the user's Corrosion Value, and with his current 5-point Corrosion Value, not only couldn't he satisfy the 48-point Corrosion Value of the [Holy Spirit Pendant], he couldn't fully utilize even the 8-point Corrosion Value of the Black Goat; attempting to use multiple objects at once must diminish their overall "output" limit.

Moreover, the beauty was, he had learned incomplete Taurus Secret Arts from the Taurus Director, which potentially could yield an abundance of anomalous objects with wasted abilities like [Egg of Sharpness], perfectly suited for feeding to [Insatiable Stomach], exchanging the least expenses for temporary near-god-level might!

Once he found that [Desolate Violent Tongue], to gain the ability to consume anomalous objects, and stockpiled enough useless anomalous objects relying on Taurus Secret Arts and Aquarius Secret Technique, he might truly soar to new heights!

Really... Could not be more perfect!

...

Holding the anticipation of gaining temporary near-god-level power and teaming up with the director to beat the Aquarius Director, Leon squeezed the small box in his hand, injecting his will into it.

"Huh?"

Sensing Leon's "intrusion," the consciousness dormant in the small box immediately awoke.

After feeling Leon's intent to contact and loosely evaluating his soul's strength, [Insatiable Stomach]'s consciousness "tsk'ed," unabashedly voicing its disappointment.

'So weak... Just a regular level-three Cleanser's caliber, does the Purification Bureau's anomaly distributor have no sense? Even in decline, I was once a significant Great Demon.'

Having grudgingly grumbled, [Insatiable Stomach]'s consciousness, through following Leon's intent, traced its way back, murmuring with little enthusiasm,

'Well, weak though he may be, having somebody use me is somewhat better than being constantly locked away. Let's take a peek at his desires... Huh?'

'Ahh?!!!'

Chapter 313: Surprise (Part 2)_1

"What the hell... What exactly do you want to do?"

Following Leon's will all the way back, after breaking into his soul and seeing that crimson storm, which even when firmly pressed down at the deepest level, was still rolling in madness, [Endless Stomach] couldn't help but be completely dumbfounded.

How... how could such a weak soul bear such a massive desire? Back when I aspired to gather all seven of the highest sins to become a top Demon God like the Supreme Four Pillar Gods, the desires in my heart weren't as big as yours!

So what exactly is this human planning? Is he preparing to overthrow the insanely powerful Purification Bureau and directly rule the world?

"Scared, aren't you?"

Just as [Endless Stomach] clung to Leon's soul, dumbfounded while watching the boundless greed hidden below, a somewhat familiar presence suddenly approached.

Also clinging to Leon's soul, taking a deep breath of the slight pride unconsciously emanating from his soul's depths, [Heart of Ambition] said, with a face full of intoxication, "It's truly wonderful... even though I can look but not touch, every time I'm allowed to link to his soul, I have to come and lie down for a while. Really... hmm... there should be no one more extremely arrogant than him."

"Heh, just look at the two of you being so ignorant."

As the two sheep creatures were clinging to Leon's soul, greedily inhaling the isolated storm at the deepest level, another familiar will approached, first clinging to the edge of Leon's soul as well, eyeing the furious flames below the storm with envy, then turned slightly sideways and said arrogantly, "I was the one who discovered this person and led him to take you two back. You two have what you have today thanks to my exceptional judgment.

"Moreover, I'm not like you two; you two who came later can only cling here and inhale whatever unconsciously spills out, whereas I had truly tasted his fury when he was still weak and powerless."

After boasting about its 'merits' and 'seniority,' the Black Goat, also known as the representative of fury, [War Cornerstone], said pompously to the other two creatures, "So now you should understand, when we wake up in the future, who should be the boss? Listen carefully, from now on, I am the head of us few! If anyone dares not listen to me, then I'll tell this kid to throw you out! This kid follows me loyally, extremely submissive... Hey! Are you listening to me?"

Holding onto Leon's soul and greedily inhaling the scant aura spilling out, the two sheep creatures glanced at the Black Goat upon hearing this, then both showed expressions full of disdain.

"Heh, just by relying on this storm of greed in his heart, I don't believe you can control him; it's more likely you'd be his dog."

"Screw you! Beat it!"

"You... you all..."

Originally seeing a newcomer... a new sheep creature, the Black Goat was thinking about strutting its stuff as the big brother, but never expected to face cold mockery from the Stomach and direct insults from the Heart, instantly burning with rage, gritting its teeth and firmly saying, "You just wait! I'll... hmph! Considering you two are still useful, I'll let you off this time. If there's a next time, I'll make sure you pay!"

"Heh, I'm not afraid; do as you please."

"Pay you! Beat it!"

"You all... Aaargh! So angry I could die!"

...

Unaware of the small theater happening within his soul among the sheep creatures and after sensing the status of [Endless Stomach], Leon was about to switch to the [I Am the Demon] badge to forcibly gain control over this thing, when he heard a flattering voice from within his soul.

"After I was ambushed and severely injured back then, I've wandered around this world seeking a suitable master for many years, but to no avail. Today, I finally met you! Honorable Mr. Leon, if you don't mind, please let me stay by your side from now on! I'll do my utmost to offer all the assistance I can provide, and whatever you ask of me in the future, I'll do it! Please let me remain by your side!"

"..."

Ah, this... Half a liter of purines, not finding a wise master, if you do not mind, I pledge to serve as my adoptive father, to be directed at will?

After hearing [Endless Stomach]'s excessively flattering words, Leon, although he gained a huge advantage, couldn't help but have his lips twitch twice.

What the hell, a fantasy world Lü Bu... Forget it, cooperation is better than no cooperation after all. If the three sheep creatures can all cooperate, maybe during missions, I could swap [I Am the Demon] out and free up a slot for another badge.

And as [Endless Stomach] bowed its head, submitting to Leon's 'kingly aura' without any coercion, Leon, after obtaining the eighth anomalous object, heard a familiar notification sound in his ear.

"[Acquired usable Anomalous Object 'Endless Stomach,' activating the Hidden Trait of the Heterochromatic Badge 'Materialist Soul (Crimson)']"

"[Materialist Soul (Heterochromatic·Crimson·Unable to upgrade): ...]"

"[Wearing Effect: ...]"

"[Advancement Route: ...]"

"[Hidden Traits: Badge slots +4, current slot number: 7, total number of Anomalous Objects required to unlock the next slot: 16]"

The number of anomalous objects required to unlock the next slot seemed to have doubled again...

Looking at the new slot that appeared on the badge panel, a slight sense of joyous trouble surged in Leon's heart.

With four iron, three copper, six silver, four gold, one heterochromatic—the total of eighteen badges he had—even with the temporary swap capability, seven slots were not very sufficient, it seemed he still needed one or two more slots.

Aside from the three sheep creatures, the anomalous objects he had included the [Lazy Witch's Rental Broom], [Holy Spirit Pendant], Anna's photo [If], the [Plague-Infected Blood Band] obtained from female rebels, and the [Mirror Dog], making a total of eight.

Hence, the anomalous object he created using the Taurus and Aquarius Two Palace Secret Techniques, which enhances left egg sensitivity, [Egg of Sharpness], most likely wasn't counted, so it seemed relying on self-made anomalous objects to increase slots wasn't an option.

As for the reason...

Because [Materialism]'s core is the analysis and understanding of the world, and the anomalous objects he created couldn't aid in analyzing and understanding the world, hence couldn't be used to unlock more slots?

...

"Knock knock."

Just as Leon was pondering the principle of increasing badge slots with [Materialism], trying to see if he could exploit a loophole, he heard a knocking on the Director's office door, followed by Senior Emma's voice coming through from outside.

"Director? Are you available now?"

"Sure, come in."

Upon receiving the red-haired Director's permission, Senior Emma pushed the door open and entered. She nodded at Leon first and then started to report, "The General Bureau just sent someone over to deliver one thousand one hundred and eleven bottles of good wine here, claiming it's from Taurus His Excellency for Leon, should we accept it?"

One thousand one hundred and eleven bottles of good wine?!

Hearing Emma's words, the red-haired Director felt a shiver run through her body, then she looked at Leon with eyes filled with delight, her foxy eyes becoming sticky and sweet, so beautiful that they almost oozed nectar.

I said earlier at the headquarters, what were you discussing with Taurus His Excellency, turns out you were asking for wine! Ah-haha!

You did well! No wonder you're the drinking buddy I value most; my past support wasn't in vain at all! All my efforts to help you gather the sheep creatures, building connections, and thick-skinned requests haven't been for naught. You actually prepared such a big surprise for me!

Ah-haha! With our relationship, these one thousand one hundred and eleven bottles of good wine, surely I can get three to five hundred bottles, right?

Chapter 314: Taurus letter to..._1

'Dear Little Leon,

Once again, thank you for everything you've done for the Purification Bureau and humanity. I'd like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest regards and convey a few things to you.

First, I sincerely apologize. I won't be able to fulfill my previous promise of giving you the Bead of the God of Brewing as expected.

Originally, I had promised to lend you the bead, intending to deliver it myself, but currently, I cannot leave headquarters. Knowing Olivia, if someone else were to deliver the bead, with her temperament, she would surely seize it by force.

To avoid such a scenario, I had no choice but to ask the Pisces Director to use the Pisces secret technique to predict how many times you would use the God of Wine Bead. We pre-prepared the corresponding liquors and sent them over, hoping this arrangement pleases you.

Secondly, although incomplete, you have indeed mastered the secret techniques of both the Taurus and Aquarius Palaces, which certainly require a substantial amount of materials for practice.

Therefore, besides the 1,111 bottles of liquor, I also sent along some anomalous materials for you to practice with, as well as a few of my notes from when I studied the Taurus Secret Arts, which should aid in your training.

Finally, I'm not going to say words like how I eagerly anticipate seeing you again in the near future. You should have already learned from Olivia about the decision made by myself and the other two directors, so the palace elevation ceremony six months from now has been canceled. Our last encounter at the headquarters two days ago should be our final meeting.

On a certain day six months from now, I will ascend directly from headquarters to the Watcher's Palace, where my soul will ignite a torch in the endless night, lighting the way forward for you.

Best wishes,

Taurus Director

P.S.: After I finished this letter, the Pisces Director also reviewed your file and showed great interest in you. He believes your ability to forcibly acquire intelligence on anomalous objects closely resembles the Pisces family's "Abnormal Observation" secret technique and thus thinks you might gain the recognition of the Pisces Star Palace, qualifying you for complete training in the Pisces Secret Technique. Once I ascend to the palace, you can visit him.'

...

So that's how it is...

After reading the letter that came with the wine, Leon suddenly understood.

No wonder the promised bead turned into over a thousand bottles of prepared wine; it turned out the Taurus Director feared the Red-haired Director would take drastic measures and seize it by force.

Well... it seems his understanding of the Director is quite spot-on. Given what I know of her morals, the likelihood of her doing such a thing is not small. It can only be said that the Taurus Director understands her well, and he's such a nice person—not only sending materials and notes but even helping me obtain the opportunity to study the Pisces Secret Technique...

Just when Leon was marveling at the Taurus His Excellency's reliability and generosity, an inexplicable chill ran through his heart, and when he turned his head in horror, he discovered the Red-haired Director glaring at him with clenched teeth, grasping a letter.

"Uh... Director, you really don't have to look at me like that."

Intimidated by the Red-haired Director's predatory gaze and swallowing hard, Leon forced a smile and said,

"I'm just tasting the wine, only taking a small sip from each bottle. You... you really don't have to glare at me like that. I truly will only take a sip, the rest is yours, isn't it?"

"All mine... If only I could actually drink it!"

Hearing Leon's words, the Red-haired Director bit her lip, her eyes suddenly reddening. She pointed to the mountainous pile of wine bottles beside her and said with indignation,

"These wines have been pre-imbued with the Word Spirit Secret Technique; only in your mouth do they taste like wine, in anyone else's, they're just plain water. Drinking them is pointless for me!"

"..."

After listening to the Red-haired Director's words, Leon clicked his tongue silently, then gave a mental thumbs-up to Taurus His Excellency.

Just as the Aquarius family has a secret technique specifically for suppressing the True God's body to extract materials for "Aberration Generation," called "God-Suppressing Forked Fingers," the Taurus family also has auxiliary secret techniques to complement the main secret technique "Anomaly Forge."

The Red-haired Director probably fell victim to the Taurus family's "Recognize Master Word Spirit," which places a "security lock" on an anomalous object, preventing those who do not meet the conditions from using it normally. The [Twelve Ant Nests] above the Virgin Branch's building are locked by this very technique.

A technique capable of locking even Numbered anomalous objects was used to secure some ordinary liquor. Taurus His Excellency certainly used a sledgehammer to crack a nut—making much ado about very little.

"Well... then I really can't do anything about it now..."

Leon never expected the Taurus Director to go so far. Unable to help, he could only shrug his shoulders helplessly, looking sympathetically at the Red-haired Director, who seemed about to cry, and quickly moved the boxes of liquor into the storage room on the first floor.

The Red-haired Director stood nearby, dejected, staring at the good wines she could only see but not drink, as an intense envy and acidity rose within her.

Should she make things difficult for him? Or find an excuse to dock his pay?

Watching Leon, like an industrious little squirrel, continuously move boxes of fine wine indoors, the Red-haired Director's gaze grew increasingly resentful and dangerous.

Even though it wasn't Leon's fault that she couldn't drink these fine wines, I had bought him drinks countless times, with long bills from the tavern, and whenever I had something good, I always thought of this bastard. But now he enjoys it alone. He drinks, I watch; he gets drunk, I crave...

If I don't do something, I won't sleep well this month!

...

"Hiss... that red-haired woman seems to have really stewed over this."

After Leon finished moving all the wine and firmly closed the stockroom door, the Black Goat emerged from the storage room's light bulb glass, cautioning nervously,

"Kid, let me tell you, although she treats people in the bureau well, she's no ordinary grudge-holder. You must tread carefully these next few days!"

"..."

Indeed, with so much fine wine at hand, yet unable to drink a single drop, the Director's bitterness was thick enough to solidify...

Listening to the Black Goat's advice, Leon nodded reluctantly, acknowledging its judgment. Then he twisted open a bottle of wine, taking a refined small sip.

There's nothing for it; although it feels a bit unfair to the Director, once I finish these thousand sips, my [Martyr of the Wine Country] will upgrade to the second heterochromatic badge [Immortal of Liquor]. Moreover, I wasn't the one who set the Word Spirit, so it truly isn't my fault... hmm... truly worthy of a Bead of the God of Wine, this wine is remarkable.

With great restraint, Leon resisted the urge to gulp it down, silently recapped the bottle, then opened another, all while trying to keep his expression less joyful, feeling the guilt of "eating alone" behind the Director's back. He gulped down a big swig.

Hmm, delicious.

Chapter 315: Immortal of Liquor_1

"How come you drank only half of it?"

Seeing Leon staggering out from storage, his face flushed red from drinking, the Red-haired Director, who had been crouching and waiting for him for quite some time, couldn't help but tease sarcastically,

"Does our dear Prince feel it's no fun drinking alone and wants to find some pretty girls to drink with to cheer up?"

"That's... fine..."

To the Red-haired Director's surprise, Leon didn't shyly smile in embarrassment but nodded vigorously instead, and then, stumbling over, he grinned, his eyes somewhat hazy, "Drinking alone... is really boring. It's better with someone else... I think... you're perfect..."

"..."

Oh my?

Hearing Leon's words, the Red-haired Director glanced at the hand resting on her shoulder, raising her eyebrows slightly, her beautiful fox-like eyes narrowing.

You jerk, having good liquor and not sharing with me. Now that you're drunk, you even dare flirt with me? How is this any different from another woman having a child with my husband and then expecting me to raise it?

"Alright~ Whatever His Highness says goes~"

With a sly grin, she grabbed Leon's hand, looping it around her shoulder, and supported the drunken Leon as they headed toward his office. With each step, she proposed, "Though, I don't drink much, but I know someone who does. Do you want her to join you?"

"No... it's okay..."

As they passed by his office, and reached Senior Emma's office door, Leon half-drunkenly chuckled and then appealed, "Both of you... it would be more... lively!"

"..."

Want it lively? Fine! I'll make sure it's lively for you!

Rolling her eyes at the thoroughly drunken Leon, the Red-haired Director let out a sneer, then opened the door to Emma's office and led the staggering Leon inside.

"Leon? How much did you drink?"

Seeing Leon's state, Emma, who was in the midst of writing a report behind her desk, couldn't help but look slightly surprised. She then glanced at the Red-haired Director, casting a mildly reproachful gaze.

This is all your fault, the previously steady and reliable Leon is almost turned into a boozehound by you!

What does it have to do with me? I wasn't the one forcing liquor down his throat... Um... I almost didn't force the bottle on him, most of the time he wanted to drink himself, okay? I am maybe responsible for fifty percent, at most.

Returning Emma's exasperated glance, the Red-haired Director blinked knowingly, mischievously signaling with her eyes, *Remember that time I was drunk and insisted on cuddling with you, and you scared me sober? Do that trick on him and help him sober up!*

Isn't that a bit harsh? Leon might end up with psychological scars.

It's fine, a good deterrent to help him quit. This rascal just tried to have both of us drink with him, might as well give him a memorable lesson.

Really? Did Leon actually say such things? You're not pulling my leg, are you?

...

"I didn't... drink too much... just a thousand bottles, only a sip from each... by the way, Senior Emma!"

While the Red-haired Director and Emma were silently exchanging intense opinions, Leon seemed to sober up a bit, then let go of the arm around the Red-haired Director's shoulder, stepped forward, and held Emma's hand.

"I've always... wanted to thank you."

With an unexpectedly sincere opening, Leon held Emma's soft and delicate hand, and with an emotional face, he said, "Since joining the Purification Bureau, you've helped me a lot, from giving me handy weapons to teaching me how to complete tasks, tirelessly advising me on staying safe during missions... oh, and also the Director!"

In the Red-haired Director's slightly dazed expression, Leon released his grip, turned back to look at her, and with gratitude in his blurry, drunken eyes, he said, "If it hadn't been for the Director letting me join the Purification Bureau, I might have already... um... Also, I have always remembered how the Director cared for me, always keeping it close to my heart, never forgetting.

Although my current skills are still lacking, and my ability to help is somewhat limited yet, I... certainly... will continue to work hard, becoming someone you can trust and rely on in the future... a more dependable person!"

"..."

Why... suddenly say such heartfelt things? Listening to it is... really... really quite embarrassing...

Receiving Emma's coy eye roll implying "You were indeed bluffing, Leon would never say that," the Red-haired Director, feeling a slight warmth in her heart, couldn't help but sigh, giving up the thought of pranking Leon mercilessly, but unfortunately...

"What a shame, Director, you also have quite a few flaws."

After consuming over a thousand types of liquor, Leon, barely managing to stand, bluntly commented, "The Director is very reliable when not drinking, but once drunk, your mind is as simple as a monkey's, all about drinking and nothing else. When you're in high spirits, even my dog passing by has to be caught and given a couple of drinks;

And if you restrain yourself from drinking for too long, you'll seek other mischiefs, uttering sinister things to prank people, also you're vengeful, exceptionally petty, always offering me terrible advice..."

"..."

Looks like I really need to help you sober up, if I let you continue listing, Olivia could definitely hold a grudge against you.

Listening to Leon rant on like bamboo shoots pouring out of a water tube, observing the Red-haired Director's increasingly dark expression, Emma couldn't help but let out a chuckle. She then reached for Leon's hand, using her nail to lightly scrape the pad of his thumb.

"Huh?"

Something astonishing happened to Emma; although she could still touch Leon's hand normally, the intense soul-pain-inducing scrape miraculously turned into a phantom in a strange twist, as if the anomalous object had never activated.

What's going on?!

Beside her, the Red-haired Director noticed this peculiar scenario as well. With a frown, she lifted her hand and snapped her fingers, several vibrant red strands of hair quietly falling and swiftly coiling around Leon's hand.

Yet, the previous scene repeated; in a bizarre twist, those strands of [Slaughter Blood Hair] turned into illusionary bubbles and vanished, leaving Leon's wrist entirely unoccupied...

?!!! Not even the Numbered Anomalous Object works?!

"Leon! Wake up!"

Discovering such an astounding anomaly, the Red-haired Director immediately grasped Leon's shoulders, shaking the somewhat drowsy him awake, her gaze full of seriousness, she inquired, "What on earth is happening to you?"

"Huh? What... what do you mean?"

"Certainly your condition! Why were both Emma's and my anomalous objects forcibly restored upon contact with you?"

"Oh, you mean that..."

Hearing the Red-haired Director's query, Leon chuckled sluggishly.

"I became the Immortal of Liquor, floating."

...

[Immortal of Liquor (Abnormal · Amber · No Upgrade Available): Fond of savoring fine wine on the lips, fearless of tempestuous obstacles, dispelling gloomy clouds and dejection with a cup of gleeful spirits]

[Worn Effect: Consuming a total weight of alcohol exceeding your body weight will put you into a special state "Drunken Life, Dreamy Death"]

[Drunken Life, Dreamy Death: During intoxication, all attacks capable of causing harm to your body will turn into mere illusions; all attacks capable of harming your soul will be fully dispelled by the state of drunkenness.

As the cost of immunity to all harm, during "Drunken Life, Dreamy Death," you'll be unable to use any form of attack apart from your physical body, and due to your soul being clouded by intoxication, your cognitive processing speed will be forcibly decreased by 90%, making it difficult to restrain your actions and words through reason]

[Advancement Route: Achieved the highest level, cannot progress further]

[Hidden Trait (no need to wear): Besides "Drunken Life, Dreamy Death," you will never get drunk again]

Chapter 316: Spicy Chicken Badge_1

"Was I... sent back home?"

After rubbing his somewhat groggy eyes, Leon looked at the familiar ceiling overhead, barely determining his location... Of course, the main reason wasn't the ceiling, but the burly old man outside the window holding a big gardening shear and staring at him with ill intent.

"..."

This was the sixth floor, and he was that persistent...

Leon glanced speechlessly at the burly old man hanging outside the window, shook his slightly drowsy head, and struggled to get out of bed, trying hard to recall what had happened yesterday.

He remembered that Taurus His Excellency had sent over some brewed liquor, and he had opened them all, taking a sip from each. But as he drank, his consciousness began to blur, and he couldn't control himself, gulping bigger sips. Many bottles at the end were even drained completely...

No more drinking! Since I've reached the badge limit, I don't need to drink anymore. From now on, I'll stay away from alcohol unless absolutely necessary!

Rubbing his swollen temples, Leon tried to recall what happened next, but no matter how hard he tried, all he could remember was stumbling out of the warehouse, drunkenly, after obtaining the [Immortal in Liquor] badge, and then knowing nothing more.

Seeing the "difficult to control one's behavior and language" words in the [Immortal in Liquor] description, Leon couldn't help but feel guilty, hissing as he prayed he hadn't done anything too outrageous. While thinking this, he wobbled out of bed, slipped on his slippers, and walked out of the room.

...

"You finally woke up!"

Seeing Leon stumble out, with everything looking normal except for a slightly pale complexion, Anna, who was cooking red bean soup in the kitchen, immediately breathed a sigh of relief. She then turned off the heat, wiped her hands, took off her apron, and brought over the hangover soup, complaining with slight annoyance,

"Bro! What did you do yesterday? Why did you drink so much? You slept so deeply that even Melanie couldn't wake you by tickling your feet!"

No wonder, I wondered why I was wearing only one sock...

Looking down at his bare right foot in his slipper, Leon chuckled awkwardly a few times, making up a couple of excuses to get by. Then, while drinking the soup Anna had handed him, he cautiously probed,

"Uh... yesterday..."

"You said a lot of drunken nonsense yesterday."

Anna didn't even have to look at Leon's expression to know what he wanted to ask. She snorted, then brought out the boiled eggs and toast, describing with an expressionless face,

"After Sister Emma brought you back, reeking of alcohol, you held onto her hand, not letting go. You not only kept thanking her but also sighed and wished you had met her earlier.

"I felt something was wrong and secretly pinched you several times, but you didn't seem to feel it. You held onto Sister Emma, confessing that compared to a drunkard female monkey, her gentle nature was your favorite type.

"Then you said the age difference wasn't a problem, and if she weren't already married, you would pursue her desperately. Lastly, you pulled out all my celery and herbs from the windowsill, made them into a bouquet to give to her, insisting on one knee that she should..."

"Please... stop..."

Listening to the ridiculous things he did in a "Drunken Life, Dreamy Death" state, Leon's face turned as red as a monkey's butt. He quickly drank the perfectly warm red bean soup in a gulp and then, with a flushed face, explained,

"Yesterday... that was a special situation. I definitely won't get drunk in the future! Well... in normal circumstances, I shouldn't..."

"You better not!"

Thinking of her brother's drunken antics yesterday, babbling nonsense while holding onto someone, Anna's toes began to uncontrollably scratch her slippers, feeling awkward all over.

After glaring at Leon for making her share in his embarrassment, the usually good-tempered Anna couldn't help but say irritably,

"Sister Emma said, after hearing your evaluation, that your director laughed happily and told you to be careful not to fall into her hands recently. She didn't know when you would wake up, so she took two days off for you to sober up before going back... Oh, right..."

At this point, Anna paused slightly, then scrutinized Leon with a face full of suspicion,

"Bro, I heard that when people get drunk, their self-control decreases, and they do things they usually think of but don't dare to do. So... you don't really have feelings for Sister Emma, do you?"

"..."

Feelings... if I'm not lying, I did think about it.

After all, Senior Emma was gentle, beautiful, and particularly attentive to him, and... *ahem*, but it was just a thought. Who doesn't have some fancy, romantic, even naughty little thoughts in their hearts?

But those thoughts were just thoughts. People aren't beasts entirely driven by instinct, so they can't indulge without restraint. Therefore, these little thoughts would, after a brief consideration, be immediately suppressed by reason.

However, after entering the "Drunken Life, Dreamy Death" state, his logic and thinking speed were weakened by more than 90%, and the thoughts kept firmly restrained were slightly uncontrollable, so...

It wasn't my fault! Blame it on [Immortal in Liquor]!

After convincing himself for a while, shifting most of the blame to the [Immortal in Liquor], Leon felt a little better, then earnestly said to Anna,

"Don't say such things. Drunken words can't be taken seriously. Senior Emma has always cared for me, and I really respect her."

"..."

Indeed, I remember yesterday when Sister Emma refused your love, blushed, and wanted to leave, you held onto her, insistently asking several times if you really didn't have a chance, being quite respectful, indeed.

Holding back the urge to laugh, after contemplating Leon's antics yesterday, Anna took a deep breath and proactively changed the subject,

"What about Sister Veronica, then? When will you and she get married?"

"Well... that's a bit complicated..."

Recalling the cunning and charming Princess who was hard to resist in every way, Leon couldn't help but hesitate.

Honestly, facing Princess Veronica's persistent pursuit, he found it hard to withstand, but... he wasn't ready to give in just yet. After all, as good as the Princess was, what she truly wanted was probably the Ryan Family resources, not him personally.

Although it sounded a bit pretentious, he still wanted someone who genuinely came after him as a partner. Additionally, he wasn't ready for early marriage at this prime age... *It felt like something was missing.*

"I'll stall for now..."

After saying a classic scumbag line, having struggled with Princess Veronica several times but failing to call off the engagement, Leon explained with helpless eyes,

"There are many aspects involved in our relationship, it's not as simple as it looks, and it really can't be sorted out for the time being."

"Fine! You take your time!"

After glaring at Leon again, Anna took a deep breath and continued coldly,

"Let me ask you, Yisha, Olivia, Amy, Nicole... what's the deal with these?"

"Huh? How do you—"

"I heard these names last night when I was wiping your face with a warm towel, you were mumbling them."

Glaring at Leon again, Anna gritted her teeth and said,

"If you hadn't been drunk, I would've never known you were so... hurry up and tell me! What's the story with these people? Who do you actually like?"

"..."

Damn badge! Screwed me over!!

Chapter 317: Which statement is true?_1

The Scales Gold Sect had been a bit too active recently...

After reviewing the results from Jerry's "friends" on the table, the Red-haired Director's fox-like eyes narrowed slightly. She then curled her knuckles and tapped the table thoughtfully.

That toad previously smuggled itself in, causing havoc at Charl Department Store's shopping plaza, and nearly triggered a mass casualty event. Later, it allied with several major aristocrats, led by the Rose Massini family, and gathered many followers among the Kingdom's nobles. The Scales Gold Sect's activities over the past two months had already crossed a line.

She should have driven these rats out from the sewers immediately, but was held up by the Aquarius Director's issue, busy investigating with Beverly, and had no time to take action.

Her "weak" stance seemed to send the Scales Gold Sect the wrong signals, making them misjudge her tolerance and even daring to hold a meeting right in the Capital City...

It seemed she needed to take some severe action to give the Scales Gold Sect a lesson they wouldn't forget!

Having decided on the approach to take against the Scales Gold Sect, the Red-haired Director stopped her habitual movement of thinking, and looked up at Emma in front of her.

"Emma, what do you think about the news Leon uncovered?"

"..."

"Emma?"

"I'm sorry, I just got a little distracted."

Hearing the Red-haired Director call her name in confusion, Emma snapped back to reality and smiled apologetically, then asked as if nothing had happened, "Director, what did you just say about Leon?"

"..."

Why did it feel like since you sent Leon back yesterday, you've been acting a bit strange?

"What I meant wasn't what's going on with Leon; what I asked is, what's your opinion on this meeting information Leon obtained?"

The Red-haired Director looked at Emma suspiciously but didn't find anything particularly notable, so she temporarily set aside her doubt and continued explaining:

"Previously, Leon took on a mission to rescue people at Rose Manor, where he encountered the Bishop of the Scales Gold Sect's Wealth-Consuming Lineage. He learned about their plan to hold a meeting and threatened the Massini family to notify him immediately once they received news of the Scales Gold Sect's gathering.

"And this morning, someone from the Massini family came, saying the Scales Gold Sect plans to meet three days from now. The location is set on Redwood Avenue in the Capital City, specifically underground at the Massini family's Rose Manor."

After briefly explaining the context, the Red-haired Director shared her thoughts.

"Compared to other secret cults, the Scales Gold Sect poses the least threat, but they've been quite unruly recently—not only choosing the Capital City for their gathering but also bringing along three bishops. So, I want you to go over there and ensure they behave for a while."

"Okay."

Taking on the task without hesitation, Emma glanced at the report on the table and then asked, "To what extent should this be done? Complete eradication? Or just capturing those three bishops?"

"As for the extent..."

Hearing Emma's question, the Red-haired Director thought for a moment and then said firmly,

"Why don't you take the Coffin of Condemnation with you this time and see what the Scales Gold Sect people are up to?"

"If it's the less harmful kind, you can go easy on them. After all, the Scales Gold Sect's doctrine isn't particularly extreme. Many join just to restore limbs or regain sight, so there's no need to be too harsh.

"But for those cat believers of the Wealth-Attracting Lineage and snake believers of the Wealth-Consuming Lineage, as long as their crimes are not severe, just scare them and expel them, preventing them from gathering and causing trouble.

"However, if it involves the Wealth-Spitting Lineage, those toad believers responsible for acquiring limbs, health, happiness, and other 'exchange items,' and the Coffin of Condemnation reacts, then eliminate them all, leaving none behind."

"Understood."

After carefully listening to the Red-haired Director's instructions and noting the mission objectives, Emma nodded slightly, prepared to leave, but was called back by the Red-haired Director.

"Emma, did something happen yesterday?"

"Hmm? Why do you ask?"

"Because you seem a bit off today."

Seeing her best friend turn back with a puzzled look, the Red-haired Director narrowed her eyes slightly and said with certainty,

"Emma, tell me the truth: after you took Leon back yesterday, something else must have happened. Otherwise, you wouldn't suddenly seem distracted... He didn't try anything on you, did he?"

"How could that be?"

Emma couldn't help but laugh at this and said,

"What are you talking about? Leon isn't that kind of person. I was distracted thinking about something else, unrelated to him."

"Alright then..."

Although still feeling something was amiss, Emma's expression was completely normal, showing no signs of anything off. The Red-haired Director had to temporarily shelve this thought and ask with genuine concern,

"Emma, how have you been lately?"

"I'm doing okay."

"The wound from the Blood-Oath Swordfish during the mission at Ryan Harbor—has it healed?"

"It's all healed long ago."

"With the Coffin of Condemnation consuming so much, can your body still handle it?"

"No problem."

"Leon really didn't harass you yesterday?"

"He really didn't..."

Seeing the Red-haired Director sneakily ask once again amid some not-so-sincere concern, Emma couldn't help but respond with a face full of helplessness,

"Ollie, if you keep this up, I'm really going to get angry."

"Alright, alright, I won't ask anymore, is that fine?"

Annoyed, the Red-haired Director clicked her tongue and said,

"Anyway, you be careful. When people get drunk, their self-control slips, often revealing suppressed thoughts... Anyway, Leon doesn't seem as honest as he looks, I think he has some intentions towards you, so don't let yourself get..."

"Ollie!"

"Okay, okay, I won't say anymore, I really won't!"

Surrendering under Emma's slightly exasperated gaze and honestly watching her leave, the Red-haired Director stared at Emma's retreating figure, noticing three black marks and one red mark on her back, and couldn't help but frown and ponder.

She asked Emma four questions, and Emma's replies were one falsehood and three truths... so did Leon harass her yesterday?

...

"Achoo!"

"I told you to wear more, and now you're catching a cold!"

Anna glared at Leon, who was wearing autumn clothes in winter and looked rather "thin." She pulled out a scarf she had prepared and handed it to Leon, who was sneezing repeatedly, and also produced a pair of gloves from her bag.

"Put these on quickly. Stop trying to be tough!"

"I'm not trying to be tough, I really am not cold... Fine, I'll put it on."

"Yeah, sure, you're not cold... wear the gloves too!"

"Okay..."

Rubbing his nose, which suddenly itched frequently due to his "attempt to be flirtatious" being noticed and his family status plummeting, Leon could only take the scarf and gloves and honestly start putting them on under his sister's glare.

But frankly, even though the Level One Corrosion Value had already provided some reinforcement, making him somewhat cold and heat resistant, after putting on the scarf and gloves and blocking the cold wind from entering his collar and cuffs, it felt noticeably more comfortable.

"Stand still, don't move."

Anna rose on tiptoe to adjust Leon's scarf, sealing off any remaining drafts, then nodded in satisfaction, reaching out to hold Leon's arm.

"Let's go, since you're free today, we'll go to Beverly's parents' meeting!"

Chapter 318: Outrageous_1

Parent-teacher meeting...

Hearing this familiar yet foreign term from Anna's mouth, Leon couldn't help but feel a little dazed.

Over the past period, he had been involved in a series of bizarre events, not only outsmarting and battling various enemies with all kinds of abilities but even landing on an asteroid over seventy thousand kilometers from the ground, solo facing off with the Aquarius Director in front of dozens of branch directors with hierarchies equivalent to the True God.

Not to be too modest, but although his own strength wasn't very strong, he could no longer be considered an ordinary person altogether. Adding in the title of the empty-shell Duke, he now faintly had the ability to influence the world... well, a tiny part of the world.

And now, being this important figure who just a few days ago thwarted the Aquarius Director's scheme and indirectly safeguarded the world, he was about to head to his younger brother and sister's school to attend a community school-organized parent-teacher meeting, and incidentally, as a decision-making parent, discuss the schooling progression of those two little brats at home...

It was quite a peculiar feeling.

"What's the matter?"

After waiting for a while without hearing Leon's response, noticing a somewhat dazed look on his face, Anna couldn't help but gaze at him with concern. She then leaned in and softly asked,

"Is your headache still lingering? If you're not feeling well, you should take a good rest at home for the day. I can go to the parent-teacher meeting myself."

"Hmm... no, my drink has already worn off."

Sensing the worry in his sister's eyes, Leon felt a warmth fill his heart, then shook his head with a smile and said,

"I was just reminiscing about some interesting things, so I got a bit distracted, plus my work has been hectic, it's rare to get a chance to spend time with you guys... The carriage has arrived, let's get on board first!"

...

Once the public carriage pulled over and came to a steady stop by the roadside, Leon reached out to protect Anna's head, watching her bend down to climb into the carriage. He then followed her in, sitting with her by the window.

"Oh, right."

As if recalling something, Leon curiously asked,

"I remember Bridge Public School's elementary division lasts six years, right? William and Melanie enrolled more than half a year late, and there are still two months before they reach the second grade. Isn't it kind of early to start discussing future schooling?"

"It's not early at all."

Hearing this, Anna shook her head, expressing her mixed feelings of happiness and worry,

"It's not like the school I attended back then. Bridge Public School ranks among the top schools, with plans for students' future paths laid out early.

Typically, the first year focuses on teaching some basic knowledge while observing which areas show potential. Then, in the second and third years, they try to nurture in corresponding directions and conduct trial-and-error in direction.

If the identified direction shows limited talent, they switch to another. Once a schooling target is more or less decided, the fourth, fifth, and sixth years focus on intensive learning.

Apart from specialized subjects in these three years, they need to frequently communicate with associated high schools, participate in the activities of corresponding schools, build good relations with teachers, aiming to secure exemption from entrance exams or recommendation letters from teachers of the concerned schools..."

Goodness, is it that competitive?

Not having much knowledge in this area, after listening to Anna, Leon couldn't help but click his tongue and exclaim,

"William isn't even seven yet, isn't it a bit early to ponder over these things?"

"It really isn't early anymore."

Anna couldn't help but roll her eyes at Leon, then explained,

"They started school at a little over six, nearing thirteen at graduation time, which is when they should choose their future high school. Over ninety percent of students can only go to ordinary high schools to learn a trade to make a living, graduating at sixteen when they come of age, then immediately go out to work. Even positions like newspaper typesetters or factory materials technicians count as rare good jobs.

Only less than 10% of the students can get into those exceptionally good high schools, striving for three years before trying to get a recommendation letter or exam eligibility to further pursue notable universities. If you don't start early, how can you be competitive?"

"..."

Oh right, by the Kingdom's law, sixteen is considered adult, and university is far from universally accessible. Only a small fraction of students with both outstanding family background and talent can consider it, while most people directly enter the workforce post-high school graduation.

So although it feels like "children" to the perception, the significance of the last three years in a community school strikes a strong resemblance to the "three years of high school" in one's understanding, making the early, rigorous competition quite the norm.

As Leon pondered over Anna's words combined with his thoughts, he roughly understood the foundational logic of the school's approach.

Taking into account the Kingdom's advancement method, which does not follow a relatively fair uniform examination system, but instead allows each school to recruit on its own initiative, organizing their own interviews and written tests, there are more paths to "run around."

After all, although the entrance exam for interviews supposedly has no threshold, merely requiring a community school's graduation certificate and passing scores for each basic subject, in theory, as long as you passed both tests, you could enter.

However, against second-grade initiatives like Bridge Public School's "pathway survey", and later years of intensive study aimed at target schools, coupled with occasional participation in corresponding high school activities, developing familiarity with teachers responsible for interviews, and potentially even getting insight into exam scope—coming from a regular family and school background, without explosively strong talent, would almost certainly not get a foot in the door.

So while opportunities appear equally accessible, with everyone seemingly running the same routes and aiming for the same endpoints, practically when you're vigorously training in running, others are already installing cyber limbs and even building teleportation gates towards the endpoint.

Truly absurd...

Gently shaking his head, Leon looked at Anna beside him, seeing her somewhat anxious expression, and couldn't help but pat her hand, softly reassuring her,

"Don't worry, William and Melanie are just mischievous; they're definitely not unintelligent. They're quite bright, and as long as they keep learning systematically, they will more or less have a promising future. Furthermore, my salary isn't low, and besides... um...

Even if, in the future, they can't attend the best schools, finding a good job for them shouldn't be too hard. If worst comes to worst, supporting them for a few more years also wouldn't be a problem."

"That's exactly what I'm most worried about!"

Hearing Leon's words, Anna couldn't help but express her frustration,

"A few days ago, the school's teacher gave out a survey for the students to fill out their expectations for their future. Do you know what Melanie wrote?"

"Oh, uh... what did she write?"

"She wants to find a handsome and wealthy husband to support and spoil her! To then spend her life casually drinking and eating happily!"

"..."

Mentioning Melanie's "daydream" aspiration, Anna clenched her fists continually, then gritted her teeth with anger as she lamented,

"After the teacher saw the survey, they talked to her for half a day, explaining that she shouldn't pin her future hopes on such things, that a husband can't support her for life, asking her to reconsider her plans.

This little brat thought for a long time, eventually removing the bit about finding a husband, changing it to having you support her in her earlier years, and William in her later years, while she plays with dolls, eats snacks, and drinks milk tea happily all her life!"

"..."

Coincidentally... the survey entry truly matched my perception of Melanie...

"Well... that's why I say it's a bit too early!"

After being taken aback, Leon, staying silent for a while, tried to placate,

"Asking a child what they want to do in the future, of course, they can't be clear, giving such childish answers is quite normal, so there's no need to get too worked up... Right, how about William? What did he write?"

"His responses... were quite mature."

Drawing a deep breath, Anna looked filled with despair,

"He wants to launch a rebellion, overthrow the royal family and become the King himself, then lead his army west to east, sweeping across The Twelve Kingdoms, and rule over the world."

Chapter 319: I'm serious about dreams_1

"Teacher, I think my expectations for my own future are actually very realistic."

Meanwhile, when the other pair of siblings were hastily heading to the battlefield in a carriage, this pair had already taken the forms they filled out and approached their homeroom teacher, who was in charge of the parent-teacher meeting.

After placing the "Pan-Continent Unification War Draft" on the table, William stood beside the desk with his hands behind his back and said to the smiling homeroom teacher,

"Unlike my sister's ridiculous dream of being a freeloader, my dream has a much greater chance of becoming a reality.

Of course, if you call my brother and sister over, I might be forced to deny the feasibility of this plan to avoid unnecessary beatings. However, since the concept itself is correct, I will not genuinely give in.

And by using force to suppress me, you, teacher, will not only lose my heartfelt respect but also the position of Homework Minister in the new kingdom I envision. So I hope you consider carefully before you decide to report me."

"..."

Well, this is... too much...

Looking at William, who stood like a little adult in front of him, seriously "persuading" him, the homeroom teacher of Class 1, Year 1 at Bridge Public School involuntarily twitched his lips twice, unsure of what to say.

This child, let's say he's not smart, but at the age of six or seven, he's already negotiating terms with me, even trying to bribe me with the position of "Homework Minister." He's a little "genius."

But to say he's smart, his dreams are absurdly outrageous, plotting not only to overthrow the royal family but also to conquer the Twelve Kingdoms... *Honestly, I'm really curious to meet his parents and see what kind of family can raise such a uniquely dumb yet smart kid...*

"Teacher, I know you don't believe in me, and you even think I'm naive."

After waiting for a moment without hearing a response from the homeroom teacher, William thought for a while and then proactively said,

"I admit that the plan I filled out earlier was a bit rushed, so it may not seem very feasible to you. But I've sorted out my thoughts these past few days and wrote a new version of the 'Pan-Continent Unification Plan.' I guarantee it'll satisfy you!"

In the homeroom teacher's somewhat devastated expression, William opened his notebook... his proposal for the "Pan-Continent Unification Plan," pointing at a world map cut out from a geography book, and said with a serious face,

"After I overthrow the royal family and unify the kingdom, I plan to ally with the coal-rich nobles of the Kingdom of Heisen, cut off their winter coal supply to the Northern Kingdom, causing them to lack the ability to heat, forcing them to recklessly move south in an unprepared state for a planned ambush."

Taking out a piece of charcoal picked up from Leon's bedside, William drew a big, heavy cross at the location of Laine County on the map. Using a voice full of persuasion, he continued,

"Teacher, imagine the situation then! If we could defeat the Northern Kingdom in one fell swoop and avenge the war six years ago, I could secure the throne completely, with subsequent military actions receiving strong support!

Afterward, we could use the war reparations paid by the Northern Kingdom to massively purchase seafood from the Kingdom of Saio, befriend the Kingdom of Saio known as the Thousand Sails Maritime Country. Then, adhering to the core strategy of making distant alliances and attacking nearby, and sea-land synergy, swiftly launch a surprise attack to seize the mines in the Kingdom of Thunderstorm's Vardaston, exchanging abundant energy resources for technology and weapons from Croak, the City of Machinery."

"After ten to fifteen years of effort, once sufficient military accumulation is achieved, we can control ports and important land transport routes, making the Kingdom of Morna, which heavily relies on commerce, submit and join our cause.

Next, by encircling them on two sides, we could annihilate the Kingdom of Orleson caught in between our two forces, taking over its most important grain-producing area to solve the southwest kingdom's longstanding food shortage problem, thus overcoming the last shortcoming and fully embarking on the path to conquest!"

"..."

Looking at the string of plans written in sloppy handwriting, William's homeroom teacher couldn't hold it anymore. With quivering lips, he asked,

"Do you... especially love my geography class because... you're thinking about these things?"

"Not just your geography class, but also Logan's history class."

William replied earnestly,

"To accomplish my plan, both subjects are essential to master. So, even though I scored only 5 in math, I've already self-taught geography and history to the level of fourth grade and read all the relevant books for under 10s in the library, accumulating the knowledge necessary to begin implementing my plan."

"..."

So you really have been working hard to study for that dream of world unification, huh!!!

Looking at the not-so-direct but thoroughly crafted "Unification Plan" with a childish but carefully annotated handwriting, William's homeroom teacher swallowed hard and, steeling himself, advised,

"This... the hardest part of any task is the beginning. You see, your plan assumes right from the start that you've already overthrown... uh... become the king. The starting point is too high.

As the saying goes, 'For a merchant, earning the first Copper Wheel is much harder than earning the first ten thousand Gold Wheels.' So instead of aiming to unify the world, why not make more achievable plans for the nearer future, like... uh... like scoring 20 in math on the next test?"

"Hmm..."

After seriously listening to his homeroom teacher's advice, William frowned and thought for a while, then nodded with full approval,

"As expected of a teacher I respect, while others aim as far as possible, you focused on the immediate path and reminded me not to stumble over the royal family's small rock before I even start. It seems the position of Homework Minister might be a waste of your talent."

"..."

"Anyway, thank you for the reminder, teacher. I'll go find Mr. Logan now to ask for some past coup information to see how I can overthrow the royal family and become the new king!"

?!!!

Hold on! That's not what I meant! Come back here! Come back!

Watching William excitedly leave with his notebook and head to the history department's office across the hall, the homeroom teacher quickly stood up to chase after him. But whether it was sitting for too long or the shock she just received being too much, she swayed as the room spun around her and fell back into her chair.

"Teacher? Are you okay?"

"No... nothing... Thank you."

After catching her breath in the chair, seeing Melanie approaching with concern, the slightly chubby homeroom teacher couldn't help but advise,

"Melanie, after you go back, can you please persuade your brother for me to give up on that dream? Even if you can't convince him, at least don't let him talk about rebellion anymore, okay?"

"Uh... okay?"

After hearing the homeroom teacher's words, Melanie's big eyes spun around, then she cheerfully said,

"But if I help you out, shouldn't you also help me out? Like... maybe accept my form as it is and stop making me revise it over and over, can you?"

"Well... that's really not possible..."

Looking at Melanie before her, who wasn't as outrageous as William but equally troublesome, the slightly chubby homeroom teacher took a deep breath and then sighed helplessly,

"Melanie, it's not that I want you to change it, but just think about it. If you do nothing and let your brother and sister support you, what will others think of you?"

"They'd probably be really envious of me."

"..."

"Haha, teacher, I'm just joking with you!"

Seeing the homeroom teacher's lips trembling again, Melanie shook the little pigtails on her head that Anna had tied, and said with a giggle,

"I'm not a fool like William. Of course, I know being a freeloader would get me laughed at."

"Then why do you still..."

"Because my life is my own, not to please others."

Melanie raised her little face and said seriously,

"Teacher, people who care too much about what others think will live very tiring lives. As long as you know what you truly want and strive to get it, that's enough. Are other people's idle remarks really that important?"

"..."

"If it really doesn't work... Teacher, I revised the form again today. Take a look and see if it's okay this time."

With the slightly chubby teacher's bewildered expression, Melanie handed over the form, speaking earnestly,

"Like William, I've been thinking about how to achieve my dream in the past few days too.

First, William can't be relied upon. Although he will provide me with the best life, if I rely on him, he will definitely bully me. Sister Anna won't work either, as she will likely disapprove of me and forcibly drive me to work. So the best choice is the big brother.

Big brother doesn't like to force people, and he never even hits or scolds William or me, so all I need to do is find a super-rich woman that big brother likes, try to marry him off to her, and my life will be worry-free for the rest of my days!"

"By the way, teacher, when you said during form filling that this form was for information collection only and wouldn't be shown to parents... you weren't lying to us, were you?"

Chapter 320: Breaking the Situation Method_1

"It seems we were too naive."

Looking through the windows of the Great Hall at the cards with the parents' names and the folded survey forms on the tables, William couldn't help but sigh with a sense of wistfulness, then said to Melanie, who was beside him with a face full of panic,

"Just as I predicted the worst outcome, the adult world doesn't value trust. The promises they make might not even be worth as much as your religious studies homework... You're not going to escape this beating."

"?!"

Hearing William's words, Melanie, who was already panicking, stomped her foot in agitation and glared at him angrily.

"What do you mean I can't escape this beating? What you wrote was much worse than mine. If Sister Anna sees it, she'll definitely hit you harder than me!"

"Not necessarily."

William looked at his silly sister with pity, then placed his hands behind his back and said calmly,

"A six or seven-year-old kid saying he wants to conquer the world is just amusing to adults, but a six or seven-year-old kid saying she wants to be a lazybones will surely be scolded severely. *I'm not as stupid as you; if I weren't certain that I wouldn't get beaten, why would I write about my future plans knowing I might be betrayed?*"

"!!!"

After hearing William's response, Melanie was dumbstruck, her eyes widened in disbelief like a little frog struck by lightning,

"You... you knew you would be betrayed, so why didn't you warn me?"

"Why should I warn you?"

William responded with curiosity,

"Your dream is to be a lazybones. If you manage to succeed, I'd have to take care of you for the rest of your life. In theory, to prevent you from clinging to me and causing me trouble for life, I should have reported you to Sister Anna. I haven't told on you to Sister Anna, which is already an extra favor to you out of sibling love. How could I also remind you?"

"You! I... I'm going to fight with you!"

"Are you sure?"

William raised his eyebrows a little, surprised, after dodging Melanie's lunge.

"Your contents are almost blasphemous. I still have that homework that can make the religious studies teacher die of anger, not handed in yet... Melanie, you don't want to rewrite your assignment, do you?"

"I... you..."

"Give up your dream of being a lazybones and help me instead!"

William patted Melanie's shoulder seriously,

"I've thought it through. If I want to unify the world, I must first overthrow the Kingdom. To overthrow the Kingdom, I must first acquire enough power, and I've already got a plan on how to gain power.

Charlotte from Level Two is the Prime Minister's youngest daughter. As soon as the parent-teacher meeting is over, I'll buy some hair clips and sugar figurines to confess to her. If she agrees to marry me, maybe I can get a seat in Congress through her father..."

"You're planning this?"

Melanie was shocked,

"Despicable! You always go to play with Charlotte because of this?"

"Not really."

William shook his head and said,

"I like playing with Charlotte because she's the prettiest girl in school, and she always brings me snacks from home. It being a pleasant surprise that she's the Prime Minister's youngest daughter is just a bonus."

"Huh? Didn't you just tell Melly from third grade yesterday that she was the most..."

"That's not important, Melanie. The most important thing now is that I need your help!"

"???"

Seeing William's serious look, Melanie hesitated and asked,

"What help?"

"Lend me your pocket money."

"Huh?"

William grabbed Melanie's shoulders and looked directly into her eyes with a serious face,

"If I keep eating the snacks Charlotte brings to school and never give her any gifts in return, my status in the family will drop once we're married... Melanie, you don't want your twin brother to be looked down upon by your future sister-in-law, do you?"

"Of course I don't... Wait a minute! She hasn't even agreed to marry you yet!"

"She will agree."

William said confidently,

"The story my big brother told me said that proposing isn't the call to charge, but the declaration of victory after the war. Since I dare to do this, I'm sure I'll succeed!"

"But..."

"After Charlotte agrees to marry me, I'll do your homework for next week!"

"Well... You'd better keep your word, don't write something nonsensical to fool me..."

"Don't worry!"

...

"Melanie! William!"

Just as Melanie was reaching into her pocket, hesitantly preparing to take out money, their homeroom teacher came rushing over in a flustered state. Seeing the two tiny figures squatting outside the Great Hall, she breathed a sigh of relief but also spoke in a slightly exasperated tone,

"Didn't I tell you to meet at the classroom door, and then we'd come to the Great Hall together? Why did you..."

"Teacher, why did you just arrive!"

Being the designated scapegoat of the twins, Melanie's cute little face wrinkled slightly, then she pinched her skirt and sniffed her chilled red nose, ready to throw the blame,

"You just said to discuss future matters later and let us come to the parents' meeting first, right? So, we came here and found no one, and we were scared you wouldn't find us, so we didn't dare run around and waited here... Boo-hoo... It's so cold outside the hall, and the wind is strong..."

"..."

Did I really say that? But I meant for you to gather in the classroom, not come directly here... Hmm... It seems I wasn't clear enough, leading to their misunderstanding.

"Sorry, the teacher didn't make it clear."

After catching her breath, relaxing a bit, the homeroom teacher patted Melanie's little head, opened the door to the Great Hall, and let them in. Then she gently reminded,

"The seats by the windows on the east side are for our Level One. The side door next to the stage leads to the backstage of the hall. If anything happens, knock on the door and find an adult in the hall or backstage to help..."

Melanie, William, the teacher will go back once more to bring other students over. Can you wait here first?"

"Okay! We'll stay right here, waiting for you to return."

"Oh, we got it."

After the homeroom teacher hurried away, Melanie, who had just been sitting obediently like a good child, immediately jumped up full of excitement,

"Quick, quick, quick! Where's your charcoal pencil? Hurry, take it out and change our forms!"

"Are you an idiot?"

William sighed, glancing at his silly sister,

"The teacher has already seen them, and we can't imitate the teacher's handwriting. Are you trying to get Sister Anna to spank you even harder?"

Can't change them? Then what to do?

Remembering Sister Anna's angry look, worried she'd be spanked in public, Melanie racked her brain trying to find a way to break the situation.

However, a solution wasn't easy to come by. Even after thinking for a long time, she couldn't come up with a good idea, and footsteps started to scatter outside the hall as the parents called for the meeting were about to arrive.

The parents were almost here, it was too late! Sister Anna would... Wait! Parents!

Just as Melanie was anxiously spinning in circles, she suddenly spotted the name tag from Level Two next door. A sudden inspiration struck her, and she rushed over, swapping Charlotte Mondial's name tag with the one next to it that said William Ryan.

"?"

"You have to share the blame with me!"

Under William's puzzled gaze, Melanie took out her bulging purse, waved it in front of him, and then bossily ordered,

"If I'm the only one in trouble, Sister Anna will definitely double punish me. We must distract her attention... William! If you still want me to lend you pocket money, you have to directly ask Charlotte if she'll marry you in front of her parents later!"