

I! Cleaner 331

Chapter 331: Task completed?_3

"Leader, did the Guards discover the wrong documents and come up the tower to find us?"

"No."

After a slight shake of his head, Leon furrowed his brow and said,

"Joshua is here... It's not that confused Prince; it's the former leader who goes by the alias Nathan."

What? Nathan?

Hearing Leon's words, the Rebels were simultaneously shocked and couldn't help but look at each other in surprise.

As the one who originally organized the Rebels and led them in defiance of the Kingdom, middle-aged Joshua still held some authority in their hearts. Now, while they were using intelligence obtained from him to carry out the attack on the Boarding Tower he had always wanted, they were caught red-handed by him. *This was truly an odd feeling.*

"Let's go, let's just meet him first."

After checking the soul state of the Rebels to ensure no one wavered, Leon glanced at middle-aged Joshua's Soulfire and then decisively said,

"What we're doing now is his dream, so if Joshua is controlling the body, he won't make a move at a time like this, but I'm worried about the person behind him causing trouble. If anything changes on his side and he does make a move against you, I'll hold him off while you retreat back into the Sky Clipper and open the Aquarius in your hands. The contents inside can keep you safe."

"Understood!"

Hearing Leon's instructions, the Rebels nodded and then followed behind Leon, warily exiting the Sky Clipper.

...

"It's really been a Long Time No See."

Clearly aware of the "maximum lethal radius" of the Holy Spirit Pendant, middle-aged Joshua did not approach but instead stared fixedly at Leon standing at the forefront, biting his teeth and mocking from seventy or eighty meters away,

"I thought after you took the position of the Rebels' leader from me, you would achieve something remarkable. And yet you're working on what I wanted to accomplish using the intelligence I provided. How are you any different from me, hmm?"

"The difference is enormous!"

The rotund middle-aged merchant took a step forward, responding with a face full of anger,

"Nath... Joshua, to you, we are all just tools. You only need us to follow your orders and act on your behalf; you wouldn't care how many tools need to die as long as your goals are achieved. If you were leading this operation, it would be fortunate if half of us survived. But Lord Baskin not only can lead us all out safely, but also genuinely shows us a path for the future. He truly values us!"

"Heh, fine, think whatever you want."

Having long since abandoned the idea of reclaiming the position of the Rebels' leader, middle-aged Joshua couldn't be bothered to argue. He sneered disdainfully and asked in a contemptuous tone,

"But are you sure you can accomplish this by following this 'Little Baskin'?"

Hmm? What did he mean by that?

Glancing at Joshua's soul and finding that he wasn't bluffing, Leon couldn't help but frown slightly. Behind him, a burned man, having held back for ages, stepped forward impatiently and said with an annoyed expression,

"Why can't we?! If it weren't for you blocking us, we'd have been done and gone by now! Come on, if you've got any nonsense, spit it out!"

This damned brute...

His face turning dark at being cursed by the burned man, middle-aged Joshua's cheeks twitched slightly. Unable to curse back and knowing he couldn't win in a fight, he gritted his teeth and, with a grim expression, "spat" out,

"Just altering memories isn't enough. If you want to completely hide the information about the volcano, you have to blow up the entire Sky Clipper!"

Chapter 332: Cooperation_1

Did we really have to blow up the Sky Clipper? Did it mean that there might be backups or something on this ship?

After checking the soul state of middle-aged Joshua and finding he wasn't lying, Leon couldn't help but frown slightly, understanding that Joshua must have seen something in the future.

Perhaps there was some oversight, or maybe the ship had some problem that would lead to war breaking out again in the future. The middle-aged Joshua, not wanting this to happen, had to risk being caught by Leon again to sneak into the Boarding Tower and stop him from retreating, insisting that the entire Sky Clipper be completely destroyed.

So... was he a half-ally this time?

...

"You can't trust him! He's definitely not up to any good!"

Just as Leon was pondering whether to heed the advice, the burn-scarred Teague squinted his eyes and said,

"If we really blew up the Sky Clipper, that bastard could open the door and run off, so what do we do then?"

Never mind anything else, there are five, six, seven, or eight patrol groups down there combined with at least two or three thousand foot soldiers. Even if I burned myself out, I might not be able to break through."

"Teague is right."

The portly Oliver sighed, then followed up with a worried analysis,

"I saw on the way over, that this large area beneath the tower is cleared out completely, not even a stone pile for cover. They wouldn't even need to get close. Just two rounds of cover fire, and they'd push us back into the tower.

And worst of all, it's less than five hundred meters out of the patrol zone to where an entire mechanical unit is stationed. The military's powered armor is just too sturdy, with the outer armor, inner armor, and an insulation layer adding up to a total thickness of over ten centimeters. Even small-caliber shells can't penetrate it. In that case, we might truly be waiting to die."

Indeed, this problem was even more critical.

After hearing their words, Leon's brow furrowed even deeper.

The original rebels might have agreed to the raid on the Boarding Tower and even the destruction of the Sky Clipper, as they had the option to escape at any time using middle-aged Joshua's "Beyond the Gate." But now that he had been driven out of the rebels, there was no chance he would help again.

So even if what middle-aged Joshua said was true, the moment they blew up the Sky Clipper and attracted the attention of that mechanical unit, apart from himself, all the other rebels would likely meet their end here...

"Should we cooperate just this once?"

After repeatedly weighing the outcomes in his mind, Leon took a deep breath, chose to trust middle-aged Joshua, and extended an olive branch sincerely,

"We'll take care of blowing up the Sky Clipper; you handle getting everyone on the ship away safely, how about it?"

Despite the fact that there was tension between middle-aged Joshua and himself, and Joshua was also cozy with the Aquarius Director, his obsession with saving the Kingdom was strong enough to birth the anomalous object "Gate of the Other World," so it was unlikely he'd lie about that part.

On one hand, there were the rebels who entrusted their lives to him and were willing to join him on this adventure; on the other hand, there was the potentially drawn-out war of countless deaths and injuries, if he could really have it both ways, cooperating with him this once wouldn't be a bad idea.

Upon realizing Leon had "backed down," middle-aged Joshua smiled contentedly from a hundred meters away, then abruptly withdrew the smile.

"Not a chance!"

???

In the astonished eyes of the rebels, middle-aged Joshua, who had risked coming to warn them, leaned against the Boarding Tower's steel frame, arms crossed, and sneered,

"Back in the valley, didn't you dismiss my decisions and disagree with sacrificing lives for our objectives? Great, it's your turn to make choices now.

Forget about any cooperation. I will never open the door for you. Either sacrifice them to achieve your goal, or retreat with your tail between your legs like a dog and watch the Sky Clipper return to Crolock.

Choose! I want to see how well you do compared to me!"

"..."

...

"Damn it!"

"Nathan! Don't go too far!"

"Bastard, I'll take you down!"

Joshua's taunt completely ignited the rebels' fury. The most impulsive of them, the burn-scarred Teague, burst into flames, ready to charge and attack.

Yet just then, the Holy Spirit pendant on Leon's chest flickered, and Teague, who had charged seven or eight meters, paused, forcibly pinned to the spot.

"You can't fool me."

Pulling the burn-scarred man back, Leon said with a frown,

"Avoiding the information from getting back is one of your top priorities. You wouldn't let things go south with us over such a trivial reason and watch the Sky Clipper return to Crolock?"

"That's true, I indeed wouldn't want that to happen."

Acknowledging Leon's judgment candidly, middle-aged Joshua locked eyes with him maliciously,

"But I also don't want you alive!"

Watching Leon's brow furrow tighter, middle-aged Joshua said venomously,

"Before I came, I looked... I know what you want to do! You cannot coexist with the Kingdom! If you really leave the tower, I'll still lose everything in the future! Though working with you temporarily avoids war, it will eventually destroy my Kingdom!"

"..."

"They may not understand, but you should know whether I'm telling the truth or not, right?"

Indeed, it was all true, and he was genuinely ready to let the Sky Clipper leave.

Gazing at middle-aged Joshua, whose temples had turned a patch of white, who was willing to expose a bit of the future just to "convince" him, Leon fell into silence, then asked,

"Apart from seeing the further future, you must have also seen what happens today, right? In the 'today' you saw, how did I choose?"

At Leon's words, Joshua paused for a moment, then turned away and muttered,

"You already know."

Indeed... I already knew what choice I'd make.

Looking at Joshua hidden at a safe distance, and the maintenance door behind him left slightly ajar, Leon couldn't help but sigh, saying calmly,

"Open the door for the others, I'll stay behind to blow up the Sky Clipper."

"Leader?!"

Hearing Leon's words, the rebels all shook with emotion, their eyes welling up with gratitude, while also strongly protesting,

"How about... I stay behind?"

"No! We can't agree to that!"

"Maybe there's another way..."

"There is no other way; this is the best option right now."

Waving to silence the rebels, Leon reluctantly explained,

"The moment he appeared here, we already had no chance of retreating safely. With so many patrol guards below, just one firework could bring everyone here, so whether or not we blow up the Sky Clipper, the final result would be the same."

"Rather than achieving nothing and then being hunted down, it would be better to exchange terms for your safe retreat, and I'll go get it done, right?"

"But you..."

"Enough with the 'buts,' go on."

Pushing a bit more, Leon soothingly reassured them,

"Have you forgotten? I have the Undying Body. This half-baked prophet might not really be able to kill me. Go on, don't worry!"

Chapter 333: Untitled_1

The Undying Body and the prophet...

Although both are rather annoying abilities, Joshua, after all, could see through the future. If he wasn't sure he could kill you, would he really do this?

Sure enough, under the worried gazes of the Rebels, middle-aged Joshua in the distance did not directly agree but spoke up with a demand.

"You can't leave the bottles you've brought; you must take them all away!"

Banning Pioni seemed not to be enough, so with evident preparation, middle-aged Joshua continued his demands,

"As with the choices made countless times, next there's a slightly old broom you can ride away on; that, too, must be handed over for them to take away, along with the pendant on your neck, a yellow-haired pup, and..."

"No."

Having refused middle-aged Joshua, Leon warned coldly,

"Don't think you can deceive me. I'm very clear about what conditions I would agree to. Except for the thermos and that broom, I can't hand over anything else."

"Hmph, a desperate struggle."

Perhaps Joshua had already tried something similar in different futures and knew Leon would immediately clash with him to the death. So middle-aged Joshua did not persist further but pointed towards the gate at the other end of the Secret Port.

"I've already opened the gate in advance. Once they go through it, they'll reach the mountain at the other side of the Capital City. But don't expect them to report back for you. I won't leave such a stupid loophole. An Anomalous Object hangs on this gate that disrupts the mind, suppressing everyone who passes through it. Whether it's them or what's in the thermos, they certainly won't have time to find someone to save you."

"..."

"Besides this..."

Given time to prepare, a foresight ability was indeed quite advantageous.

Following middle-aged Joshua's 'command,' Leon handed over the broom and thermos to the Rebels. After performing various tasks per the arrangements, Leon began to silently pray that the version of himself that Joshua saw in the future was aligned with his current plans.

According to the Intelligence gathered from the [Gate of the Other World], if the future was reached only a day or two ahead, Joshua could enter and exit repeatedly. But reaching a farther future came with significant Costs and Consumption, which made it impossible to open the gate continuously over a short period of time.

Therefore, the only way to fool this half-baked "prophet" was to cause a major stir, fake death for a short while, and bet that, with insufficient Intelligence, Joshua would see him "dead" and leave without reopening the gate to look further into the future.

As for whether it was possible to hide it completely...

One could say the likelihood was low.

Looking at the [Immortal of Liquor] Badge on the panel and feeling the Connection with his heart's Yang Xin and the horn's Yang Jiao, Leon couldn't help but feel a little relieved.

Given the current number of trump cards at his disposal, taking down so many Guard Troops was impossible, but escaping death was more than feasible. The probability of dying here was too low, so in Joshua's envisioned future, his supposedly doomed self was likely just pretending.

After all, the area beneath the Boarding Tower was so open, devoid of even a single tree—let alone a passable door. By choosing a place without doors nearby so he couldn't closely examine the "body," the likelihood of fooling him was remarkably high.

However, while Leon had confidence in saving himself, the Rebels lacked insight into his inner strategy.

Having taken over the broom and thermos from Leon, they watched their newly appointed leader who, by opting to sacrifice himself for their safe retreat, directly chose self-sacrifice. Even the seemingly most seasoned Oliver's eyes turned red, while Lucy and her sister, richer in emotion, bit their lips white, large teardrops rolling down their cheeks.

Regarding this new leader of questionable origin—a leader clearly mismatched with "little Baskin"—they naturally harbored suspicions, but having seen the path to the Future for the first time under Leon's narrative, decided to temporarily follow behind Leon.

Nevertheless, after undergoing this ordeal and witnessing Leon's choice to stay behind, walk into "certain death" with determination, and still be able to smile and comfort them, the Rebels' initial doubts completely evaporated.

What pained them greatly was that this new leader of unflawed courage, wisdom, vision, and character was destined to sacrifice himself, falling prey to the plotting of their old leader, to prevent the outbreak of war.

The two leaders they had experienced, one young, warm, pure, and dazzling as a rising sun, and the other concealed, treacherous, unpresentable, with a soul rotting faster than his body.

Now, the young and passionate soul was about to be killed by that scoundrel whose very soul was decayed, due to his unwavering inner beliefs and integrity—a comparison so stark it tugged sharply at the hearts of the Rebels.

...

"You will always be our leader."

Oliver cast a cold glance toward middle-aged Joshua, saying nothing, just memorized the faces of both leaders before bowing deeply to Leon.

One after another, the remaining Rebels, either flushed with anger or brimming with hatred, gave Joshua a glare, then, one by one, stooped toward Leon, their faces full of genuine, deep sorrow.

"..."

My goodness... Why did they make it resemble a farewell ceremony...

Leon felt ill at ease with the Rebels' overly solemn attitude but could not divulge his intention to fake his death. Therefore, he had to switch to [Master Performer] to politely return their bows.

However, with the Performance Master's amplified emotional impact on his performance, he looked at them with tender yet resolute eyes. Not only did the Rebels' grief deepen, even Joshua, who had pre-lived this scene, couldn't help but glance sideways, his eyes revealing a hint of a complex expression.

It's a pity... but just like you, I too have no other choice.

While Joshua sighed for the similar plight both of them faced, Leon suddenly turned his head toward him, asking calmly,

"Joshua, those inside the Sky Clipper..."

"Alright."

Middle-aged Joshua, having already "rehearsed" a few times and knowing what Leon wanted to say, interrupted before Leon could finish,

"The people inside the Sky Clipper don't necessarily have to die. You can let them out for these guys to take away, but they must be kept captive. They can't be allowed to make Contact with the Crolock Kingdom."

"Okay."

Leon, *brave and selfless, noble in character and willing to sacrifice, compassionate and loving*, nodded and even gave Joshua a smile before re-entering the Sky Clipper.

Once his figure vanished into the cabin, Joshua, under the hostile gazes of the Rebels, drew a small signal gun and fired a flare into the sky with a bang.

"Hurry up."

Under the flare's crimson glare, Joshua urged coldly,

"For his sake, I won't act against you traitors this time. But if the Guards arrive and you're still here, don't blame me if you get killed!"

Chapter 334: Atifie_1

As expected, Joshua indeed hid something like fireworks or signal flares. Upon hearing the commotion and turning back, Leon caught a glimpse of the signal flare shot out by the middle-aged Joshua through the skylight of the Sky Clipper and couldn't help but let out a deep sigh.

It turned out that the notion of everything going smoothly was just an illusion.

With the kind of terrible luck that leads to witnessing the descent of the Holy Spirit while shopping, or encountering an out-of-control anomaly when watching a play, there was no possibility of everything going smoothly. Stability was just an accident; misfortune was the norm.

Moreover, this kind of bad luck wasn't the Purification Bureau's kind, where "the higher the personal Contamination Value, the more likely to encounter anomalies." It was the simplest kind of misfortune, where nothing went smoothly, and little mishaps always happened...

Shaking his head helplessly, Leon reached out to grasp the Holy Spirit pendant around his chest and began lifting one unconscious person after another, handing them over to the rebels waiting outside the Sky Clipper.

After a while, when the last unconscious operator was also taken away and had entered the open "Beyond the Gate" with the rebels, confirming that Joshua hadn't played any tricks, Leon first waved goodbye to the tearful rebels and then turned back into the Sky Clipper, leaving only a "resigned to fate" silhouette for everyone.

...

It was almost time.

Leon pried open the fuel storage chamber of the Sky Clipper, took out a dozen barrels of whale oil used as fuel, and poured them along the length of the Sky Clipper, checking repeatedly to ensure nothing was

missed. He then retreated to the entrance near the central cabin, taking out a box of matches meant for lighting the Black Goat's cigarettes.

The gasbags of the Sky Clipper were filled with highly flammable and explosive hydrogen, estimated to be over 300,000 cubic meters. Moreover, there were many unstable Thunderstrike minerals stored in the stern.

Next, he just needed to ignite the whale oil, let the flames spread throughout the Sky Clipper, and the entire vessel would be completely destroyed, perhaps even instantly ignited by the electrical arcs of the Thunderstrike minerals, becoming a massive fireball suspended 700 meters in the air...

"Could you not start the fire, please?"

Just as Leon was about to act, a somewhat crisp voice of a young girl suddenly came from the metal pipe beside him.

Was there someone else in the Sky Clipper?!

Hearing the sound, Leon's expression tightened, his right-hand pinky immediately brushed over his cufflink, resting on the protruding Yang Jiao. However, no matter how he checked, the soul vision of the Sky Clipper remained completely silent, with no sign of any Soul Flame.

No soul?

Was it an Anomalous Object, remote communication technology, or something like a recording device?

"Where are you?"

Reaching out to feel the inside of the fastened outer wall, the pipe used for transmitting sound from the control room to other cabins, after confirming no danger from anomalies, Leon cautiously found the nearest pipe opening, opened the lid, and shouted inside:

"Whatever you are, if you're on this ship, you'd better come out quickly because I'm about to start the fire!"

"I can't come out."

As soon as Leon's voice had settled, the communication brass pipe in front of him immediately transmitted the clear voice of the "young girl."

"I am the Atifei No. 128 Sky Clipper itself; you are currently standing in my central cabin."

?!!!

Hearing the "young girl," Leon's eyes couldn't help but widen instantly.

No wonder... No wonder Joshua insisted on blowing up this ship along with it. It turned out to be a living ship! If it were really allowed to return to the Crolock Kingdom, even altering everyone's memories wouldn't matter!

Astonished, Leon composed himself and then furrowed his brow to inquire:

"What exactly are you? An Anomalous Object, or..."

"I am the 128th sub-body of Atifie."

The girl's voice from the communication brass pipe sounded again.

"To explain in a way that might be easier for you to grasp, I am a lower-level sub-body with low computational capacity, replicated from the core Atifei-01 differential engine of the Crolock Kingdom, via replicating a part of its computational logic. You can call me Atifei-128."

"..."

So, neither human nor Anomalous Object, but something like an intelligent supercomputer? Had the technological level of the Crolock Kingdom reached such a terrifying extent?

After silently contemplating for a while, Leon, rendered speechless by shock, couldn't help but ask:

"Do you possess intelligence, capable of a genuine conversation with me? How are you hearing my voice?"

"I should possess intelligence. As for how I hear you, it's through a special receiving device that converts sounds near the communication brass pipe into 'mechanical codes' like these, sending them to the core differential engine that processes my information, then outputted back in reverse."

As Atifei-128 explained, her voice line gradually slowed and elongated. The originally clear and unified young girl's voice slowly "dispersed," transforming into countless small, dense tapping sounds.

These countless complex tapping sounds synchronized cleverly and precisely, converging just right to form her girl-like timbre, spreading through the specialized communication brass pipes all over the Sky Clipper.

So... she wasn't "speaking" but was using some kind of mechanical device with countless tiny hammers to "tap" simultaneously on the specialized communication brass pipes, simulating a little girl's voice?

Having managed to understand how this entity, self-named Atifei-128, was communicating with him, Leon was still shocked but realized he had a ton of questions to ask. However, the thought of the signal flare fired by the middle-aged Joshua made him shake his head helplessly, subsequently opening the matchbox.

"Sorry, I don't have much time left."

"Please wait a moment."

The mechanical child's voice, devoid of emotion, sounded once again. Faced with the "crisis of life and death," Atifei-128 seemed somewhat anxious, speaking much faster and revealing slightly discordant tapping sounds.

"Please do not destroy me. I've already analyzed what you are doing; there are numerous guards below the Boarding Tower who will attack you, leading to your death due to bodily damage. If you're willing to forgo starting the fire, I can teach you how to operate this dirigible to get you safely out of here.

Moreover, to the Crolock Kingdom, I am an irreplaceable critical asset. If you are willing to give up destroying me and take me back to the Crolock Kingdom, Atifei-01 is sure to reward you extraordinarily well..."

"You recorded the volcanic data from Laine County, right?"

Interrupting Atifei-128, Leon asked in return:

"Since you've claimed to possess intelligence, even knowing how to dangle carrots, can you tell me if you bring back those scenting records to the Crolock Kingdom, what would be the reaction afterward?"

"..."

"A war of invasion, with no regard for casualties, right?"

"Yes... but if you destroy me, it will equally draw the attention of Atifei-01."

"But if you aren't destroyed, war will definitely break out, and destroying you may delay the onset of war, right?"

"..."

Leon struck a match and said calmly:

"I have looked at those scenting records. It took them a full 31 years to drill more than seventy deep holes in the Hesperito Volcano Cluster, before they recently determined the location and intensity of the heat source.

Even if they have to re-survey, it would be much faster, but as long as those deep holes are filled and the terrain slightly altered, even if new surveyors are dispatched casually, it would at least buy another ten or eight years. If a few more hurdles are thrown in, who knows how much longer it could be delayed.

And, as crazy as your Crolock Kingdom might be, it wouldn't gamble on a reckless war without knowing the precise situation while the Kingdom here is still compliant, would they?"

Chapter 335: Declaration of War_1

"Wait! Please don't do this!"

Seeing Leon seemingly determined to ignite the fire and take them both down, Atifei-128, facing a life-and-death crisis, had no choice but to retreat and plead in a panic-laden voice, "If you must blow up the Sky Clipper, can you take me with you? Don't blow me up too?"

Take this "artificial intelligence" away?

Hearing Atifei-128's suggestion, a hint of temptation appeared on Leon's face.

Although the Kingdom did not have anything like a "network," and with the severe lack of infrastructure, taking her would achieve little more than having a chat machine.

But this was, after all, an intelligent machine, and even for the Crolock Kingdom, it was a unique and invaluable asset. Taking it away was naturally better than destroying it.

Not to mention that he also had the Badge System with him, and if he took her away, who knew what kind of badges like "Father of AI" or "Master of Intelligent Machines" he might receive...

"Show me the way!"

Extinguishing the burning match in his hand, Leon warned, "You'd better not play any tricks, and don't think you can buy time for the Guards to come and rescue you. The whale oil in the Sky Clipper has started to vaporize. Just one spark and it'll explode. Once the Guards arrive and fire a shot, you'll blow up immediately!"

"I understand."

Atifei-128 said somewhat aggrievedly, "I just don't want to be completely destroyed, so I won't attempt any high-risk moves... Please head to the control room as soon as possible. My most important core components and data are in a black Fifteen-Defense Box behind the main console in the control room."

Hearing this, Leon frowned and then asked as he made his way to the control room, "What is this Fifteen-Defense Box thing?"

"It's the black Fifteen-Defense Box. It's a large box designed to withstand high temperature, water, shock, ionization, impact... dust, and cold. It was custom-made by Atifei-01 to prevent damage to us sub-bodies."

"But it can't withstand an explosion of this scale or a direct fall from seven hundred meters in the air, right?"

"Correct... When the Fifteen-Defense Box was designed, such extreme situations were not considered."

"No wonder."

Leon snickered upon hearing this.

"I wondered why you didn't speak up earlier, waiting until I finished pouring out the whale oil. So you calculated that blowing up and then falling would definitely kill you, and that's why you're anxious now, right?"

"Mr. Lyon, your expression isn't accurate. We sub-bodies are merely difficult-to-replicate computational logic and do not have the concept of life and death. It should be called destruction and maintenance."

"From now on, follow my terms. If destroyed, it's death; if not destroyed, it's life."

"Understood, I'll adjust some corresponding terms when communicating with you."

"Good... I'm in the conference room. What's next?"

"There are three safety locks behind the console," Atifei-128 said rapidly, "Next, please follow the manual to take the keys, then unlock the locks, and completely disassemble the panel..."

"Crack!"

Using the power of the Holy Spirit pendant, Leon scraped a circle around the console, tearing apart all the locks. Then, with great force, he lifted the entire front panel, revealing a black box about fifty centimeters long and just over thirty centimeters wide, connected to a bunch of strange equipment underneath.

"The panel is off, and then? Should I just pull this box out?"

"According to the manual, you should handle..."

"Get to the point, do I pull it or not?"

"Partially pull it..."

Reluctantly guiding Leon, after he removed the sound collection device connected to the copper pipe, the hammer group used for sound projection, and the multi-faced crystal that looked somewhat like a camera on the console, Atifei-128, with a final small section of copper pipe connected to the sound hammer, said, "Mr. Lyon, I will now enter a brief hibernation. You only need to insert a Powered Armor energy block into the circular interface behind the Fifteen-Defense Box to wake me up again."

"Got it, go to sleep."

"Okay, then I..."

"Hold on a minute."

After holding the box containing Atifei-128 for a while, without triggering any badges like "Father of Artificial Intelligence," Leon hesitated slightly before making a request, "Can you call me dad?"

"???"

...

"Boom!"

With a deafening explosive sound, the massive airship over 300 meters long at the top of the 7-shaped Boarding Tower erupted into a fierce blaze instantly.

In just over ten seconds, all 300,000 cubic meters of hydrogen had been ignited, with pale blue flames exceeding two thousand degrees in temperature shooting up nearly a hundred meters high. While scorching a large portion of the sky, the blaze also painted the terrified faces of the soldiers below the tower in blue.

"It caught fire! The ship caught fire!"

"God..."

"Retreat! Don't go forward, retreat!"

Even though the officers were already shouting hoarsely to stop them, faced with the terrifying scene overhead that resembled a natural disaster, some soldiers with less mental fortitude could not resist opening their mouths wide, their eyes dazedly watching the distant top of the tower.

Under the surge of flame that resembled a tidal wave, the thick envelope of the Sky Clipper, which would not leak even when stabbed with a knife, persisted for only a few breaths before half of it was burned away, revealing the support frame made of lightweight alloy inside.

Subsequently, even the metal support frame couldn't hold out, rapidly deforming and breaking under the terrifying heat. Some metals with lower melting points were even directly melted to liquid, splattering down like rain.

With the internal support frame destroyed, the Sky Clipper, towering nearly half the height of the Boarding Tower when upright, could no longer maintain its horizontal suspension and began to tilt. It appeared slow but was astonishingly fast as it tilted toward the Boarding Tower, finally entangling with it and transforming the upper half of the tower into a blue torch pointing at the sky.

It's over... utterly over.

Watching the "torch" top, the nearly hundred-meter-tall blue flame, the faces of the Guards responsible for defending the Boarding Tower turned deathly pale.

Not only was the Sky Clipper docked at the Secret Port destroyed, but even the most important Boarding Tower, though not completely destroyed due to its special material that was resistant to burning, was creaking under the flames. Clearing it up alone would probably take several months.

Worse yet, with such a large-scale accident, they were utterly unaware—the blame could not be simply categorized as negligence.

...

"Go! Follow me over!!!"

Once the hydrogen in the envelope had mostly burned away and the fire died down, the officers, whose future seemed bleak, immediately gathered their soldiers, eyes bloodshot, and rushed to the Boarding Tower to find out what was happening.

And at this critical moment, an unusually loud voice called down from above them all.

"My name is Nathan, and I'm the leader of the radical Rebels you've been talking about!"

A figure, unclear in appearance, stood in the middle of the Boarding Tower, shouting loudly to the below, "I declare, I'm Nathan and I take responsibility for this attack!"

"Furthermore, from now on, I'm declaring war on the entire Kingdom!"

Chapter 336: Home_1

"What the hell is he talking about?"

After hearing "Nathan's" declaration, Nathan—who had already left before the Sky Clipper ignited—couldn't help but click his tongue in annoyance, slightly regretting not having followed the "future" more strictly.

In the future he had seen, such a situation had never occurred.

[Gate of the Other World] was not about forcibly replicating a specific future, but merely providing a brief opportunity to observe it. Just like a person singing the same song twice, you couldn't expect every note to remain unchanged. It could only guarantee that the information obtained from the future was the same, but could not ensure the future would unfold exactly as seen. Even a slight deviation in action could lead to different outcomes.

Oh well, if there are differences, then let there be differences.

He first glanced at the Guards encircling the Boarding Tower tightly, then looked at the approaching Powered Armor squad in the distance. Middle-aged Joshua couldn't help but nod with satisfaction.

Since his true identity had long been revealed, the name "Nathan" was no longer intended for use. As long as the final outcome matched what he had seen in the future, it would be fine.

"Doo!!!"

An extremely sharp, long whistle sounded, announcing the complete start of the attack.

"Unknown enemy numbers, unknown weapon types, ambush group, move first! Advance slowly!"

Under the expectant gaze of middle-aged Joshua, the Guard Troops who first arrived at the base of the Boarding Tower, under the command of the leading officer, efficiently and swiftly divided into four groups according to the new soldier's manual promoted by the Minister of Defense.

The initially acting ambush group split into three; two squads ambushed on the main road flanks leading to the tower, and one started building temporary fortifications further away to ensure that even if the enemies inside the Boarding Tower broke the encirclement, they couldn't withdraw quickly.

Next was the firepower group, with four squads equipped with heavy weaponry quickly spreading out under their respective sergeants and starting to set up nail guns in appropriate positions, preparing to suppress any possible fire support from inside the Boarding Tower.

Finally came the breakthrough group and reserve team, about fifty elite soldiers divided into two batches. Three assault squads with pneumatic shields entered the Boarding Tower under cross-cover from two support squads, beginning to breach and clear rooms, advancing slowly step by step.

As for the commander's reserve team, they followed the firepower group to relocate, covering the firepower group's weapon setup while temporarily taking on the firepower group's role, beginning to conduct pre-emptive suppressive fire at potential ambush locations.

...

Good grief, those senior military commanders who got their asses kicked six years ago can actually be this sharp?

Glancing down from seventy to eighty meters away, seeing that it took less than two minutes for a complete lockdown on the area to be achieved and the layered advance to begin, Leon couldn't help but click his tongue in secret.

Previously, when learning combat from the policewoman, Yisha, she had talked about her father, saying that the Minister of Defense and the Princess, six years ago, had started reforming the military with the King and royal family's support.

After six years of effort, although deficits hadn't been fully covered, the soldiers' combat capability was utterly different from before. She also mentioned to a "rebel" like him always plotting, that when undercover, he should be sharp and never to charge head-on against the regular troops of the military.

Moreover, when he got the Holy Spirit pendant earlier, the director commented that with this offensive-defensive anomalous object, he could barely defeat a fifty-man elite squad in a complex urban combat situation.

If not surrounded and position located, as long as he didn't rush and maneuvered slowly, he could perhaps drag down a two or three hundred-man company with his two-kilometer soul vision.

At that time, he felt that, relying on the Black Goat's map-like soul vision and the killing force within fifty meters, the director's evaluation seemed overly conservative. But seeing these elite Guards in action now, the director's assessment was spot on.

With the cards he had at that time and the overly short stamina "duration," if he got detected and got swept layer by layer, even cunning methods plus terrain advantage wouldn't hold up for long.

As for now...

"Wa-hahaha! Finally! Finally, it's my time to shine!"

With an unrestrained, hearty laugh, two black shadows with spiral patterns began to emerge from Leon's head, floating like smoke or mist and occasionally emitting a few dark red sparks.

Next, an extremely pungent sulfur smell spread rapidly, centering around the two "Demon Horns" of smoke. Leon simply took a light sniff, and a burning sensation like flames scorched his lungs, while inexplicable hell-like brutal killing sounds echoed in his ears.

[Name: War Cornerstone (Corruption, Rage, War)]

[Appearance: ...]

[Ability: Demon Horns, Evil Intent Amplification, Endless Blood Battle]

[Cost: ...]

[File: ...]

[Evaluation: Thanks to your careful nurturing, after restoring the broken scepter, this anomalous object again becomes a formidable battlefield weapon. If you join a large-scale war with it, you will gain a temporary undying body and inexhaustible stamina until the complete collapse of one side, leading to a full end of the war.]

[Contamination Value: 8 (5.2)]

"Kid, don't worry!"

While Leon furrowed his brow, looking at the [War Cornerstone] panel, the Black Goat, who finally had an opportunity to "show its skill," spoke with a smug face,

"As soon as the war starts, we're invincible! Just kill to your heart's content!"

We promise you, before taking everyone down, not a single hair will fall off. It doesn't matter if they are three hundred, three thousand, or thirty thousand; as long as you follow us... Ow!"

"Keep it together!"

Raising his hand, Leon smacked the forehead of the Black Goat, who was attempting to seduce him. After inhaling a large amount of low-quality "Gotth" smoke, the burns in his lungs made him furrow his brow and scold,

"No wonder you like Gotth so much; this smell is exactly the same... Hurry! Get rid of all this smoke for me! It's too choking!"

"No way... this really can't be taken back..."

Upon hearing Leon's "unreasonable" request, the Black Goat, who had just started to enjoy itself, lost its spirit. Crying with a mourning face, it tried hard to explain,

"This smell is triggered by [Endless Blood Battle] and stops only when the war ends. Even if you get blown to pieces on the battlefield, as long as this smell lingers, you can be pieced back together.

Plus, this is good for restoring stamina. No matter if you've run a hundred kilometers and are dead tired, just one whiff of this smell can energize you to run another hundred kilometers. If we disperse this smell, it'll lose its effect."

"Alright then..."

Enduring the unpleasant smell, Leon sniffed the sulfur scent and found his depleted stamina indeed restored. Helpless against the Black Goat's "goaty stench," he gave up and, raising his hand, clutched the Holy Spirit pendant on his chest, crushing tightly the flame closest within his soul vision.

Chapter 337: Remote electrotherapy_1

"Bang!"

With the dull thud of a heavy object hitting the ground, a breakthrough soldier holding a pneumatic shield in the assault team neatly advancing at the base of the Boarding Tower staggered suddenly, rolling his eyes white and collapsing to the ground.

"Enemy attack!"

The sergeant, who noticed the scene, was visibly surprised, immediately commanding the soldiers to disperse and calling for backup support from the rear, hoping for suppressive fire.

However, even though the support team followed quickly, sweeping every possible hiding spot, and even dismantling part of the floorboards, they still could not find the attacker's trace.

What was even more critical was that starting from the first breakthrough soldier falling, it seemed some unknown epidemic was spreading rapidly, as one soldier after another rolled their eyes and fell down.

Regardless of hiding behind the pneumatic shield, the steel beams of the Boarding Tower, or simply retreating into the cleared compartments, they could not stop the mysterious assailant's attack. The soldiers of the breakthrough team not only couldn't locate the attacker, but they also couldn't understand how their comrades were being taken down.

Everyone, clearly hiding obediently behind cover, without any parts exposed, seemed to be named by the Grim Reaper one by one, with one rolling their eyes and collapsing every few seconds, and the reduction rate was continuously accelerating!

"Retreat! Front team becomes rear, breakthrough shield bearers cover the retreat, quick retreat!"

When the thirtieth soldier also lay down, inexplicably losing consciousness, the sergeant, who was gritting his teeth to hold under pressure, could no longer sustain it, directly giving the order to stop the sweep and withdraw immediately, letting everyone involuntarily breathe a sigh of relief.

However, the soldiers didn't relax for long.

Although the number of soldiers suddenly fainting sharply reduced after the assault team started to retreat, in less than ten seconds, the "Grim Reaper," who never showed up, followed in pursuit.

In the soldiers' expressions of terror, people continued to roll their eyes and collapse unaccountably while retreating. Even the supporting team in front began to have people suddenly fall, blocking the way of retreat.

He wants to annihilate us all!

Realizing the "Grim Reaper's" intent, the assault group's soldiers became increasingly panicked upon seeing their comrades, whose life and death were unknown, on the ground.

At first, there were still sergeants working hard to maintain order. When the sergeant also rolled his eyes and fell, the originally somewhat orderly retreat turned into a complete mess.

Soldier after soldier, full of terror, threw off their heavy equipment and started to rush down desperately, continuously being tripped by collapsing comrades, and soon themselves collapsing under the "Grim Reaper's" naming.

In just under two minutes, nearly a hundred people were lying on the short five hundred plus steps of the staircase.

Whether it was the assault team that entered first or the supporting team that came after, everyone lost consciousness, uniformly lying on the ground. The large Boarding Tower fell into complete silence, apart from the breathing of the fainted ones, no other noise could be heard.

...

I got a bit arrogant...

After confirming that everyone in the Boarding Tower had been knocked out, Leon, who had activated the Holy Spirit Pendant hundreds of times consecutively, couldn't help but exhale deeply, rubbing his throbbing temples.

In not wanting to cause large-scale death, the spiritual shock ability of the Holy Spirit Pendant was stable and efficient, capable of disabling targets without showing up, and the physical expenditure when activated could be paid by [War Opposition]. Theoretically, it was the fastest and safest combat method.

Unfortunately, while [War Opposition] could infinitely replenish physical strength, it couldn't compensate for mental fatigue.

Each time he activated a spiritual shock using the Holy Spirit Pendant, it was leveraging his will to shake the opponent's will, roughly equivalent to someone who trained their iron head skillily opening watermelons with their head one after another, but doing it too much could also cause a concussion.

If it weren't for the unknown nature of the method faced by the assault soldiers causing them to fear quickly and crumble in war intent, just this hundred times of will contests would have been enough to tire him out.

I must change the approach!

Estimating his condition, and realizing he couldn't handle so many soldiers only relying on spiritual shocks, Leon immediately shifted his strategy, began to walk back up, and then set up his dust-covered sniper rifle at the midsection of the Boarding Tower.

Indeed, using the Black Goat's ability to provoke the guards into a mutual slaughter would surely ensure his safe retreat. But unlike the Ryan Blood Night incident, the soldiers outside this tower were merely fulfilling their duties and did not commit any unforgivable sins.

He, bearing the [Endless Blood Battle] of Yang Jiao, the [Domination Substitute Death] of Yang Xin, and the [Immortal in Liquor] as the final trump card, certainly had no need for a massacre.

Thus, the current most suitable plan was to temporarily dismantle these soldiers' command systems and then forcibly break out during their command confusion, fake being killed, closing the loop concerning the "Future," and once Joshua's Soul Flame had left, get up to completely break out of the encirclement!

Sound plan! Let's do it!

...

Five fully-equipped elite squads, from the first sound of gunfire to the end, had completely been wiped out in just over two minutes?

Looking at the utterly quieted Boarding Tower, the palm of the waiting officer outside began to tremble slightly.

What exactly is happening inside?

Those entering the Boarding Tower just now, aside from pneumatic shields and conventional light arms, even had a medium-sized rapid-fire weapon, the kind of configuration for clearing local strongholds in large-scale wars.

Keeping the assault and support teams from falling out of step, maintaining a slow upward advance, even if hundreds of rebels with firearms were ambushed inside, they shouldn't pose any threat.

Even if it were not rebels with guns, but a similarly equipped military unit, with the elite level of breakthrough team soldiers, they should at least hold out for a bit, right? How, within the time to catch a breath, had everything gone silent?

And just when the Guard Troops' commanding officer, looking at the seemingly man-eating Boarding Tower, hesitated on whether to send more men in to investigate, several other troops setting up checkpoints outside urgently rushed over.

"Matthew! What's happening inside?!"

A tall commanding officer, flanked by guards, found his way to the leading officer of the Guard Troops, yanking him and lowly yelling with an anxious expression:

"How did someone slip through when we've set up so many checkpoints?"

And also, where are your men? I just saw you send the breakthrough team in, so why is there no activity inside now? What precisely is going on in the tower?"

"In the tower... watch out!"

"Bang!"

With the explosive sound of air being torn apart, a nail suddenly shot out from the middle of the Boarding Tower, piercing between the slits of two pneumatic shields, embedding into the ground nearby with a thud.

There's actually a sniper?

Staring at the crater just a step away from them, the two commanding officers, who narrowly escaped death, turned pale, their backs drenched with cold sweat soaking through their uniforms, relieved that the sniper had missed, or else they might very well have had to account for themselves right there.

However, before they could signal the guards after their near-death experience, from the nail-cased crater extended a small dog paw, pushing out a deep purple strange crystal.

Is this... Thunderstrike Mine?!

Recognizing the suddenly emerged strange crystal as a Thunderstrike Mine stored in the Sky Clipper's cargo hold, the two commanders couldn't help but contract their pupils, then turned and ran.

Unfortunately, before they could complete their turn, the tiny dog paw struck down hard, shattering the deep purple Thunderstrike Mine, as numerous electric arcs erupted instantly, thoroughly engulfing their figures!

Chapter 338: Assault and Sneak Attack_1

"There's a sniper!"

"Sergeant! Protect the sergeant, quick!"

"They're targeting the command!"

When a vast purple lightning engulfed the location of the third officer, the guards outside the boarding tower guessed what those inside were attempting. The soldiers carrying shields immediately began moving towards the sergeant.

Although they couldn't figure out how the people inside were managing to shoot the Thunderstrike Mines, which shatter upon impact, over a distance of three hundred meters, deploying pneumatic shields was deemed the safest form of protection in such a situation.

These tactical shields, which required a continuous airflow from the base to reduce weight for single-person mobility, had a three-layer 50mm thick composite shield face with protection on par with the shell of powered armor.

While handheld mobility might decrease effectiveness, when set side by side, they were strong enough to withstand medium firepower for a short time, serving as a temporary stronghold in battle. So, as long as the shields were set up to block the trajectory of the flying Thunderstrike Mines...

"Bang!" "Zzz~"

Once the shields were in place, the targets became more apparent.

...

After firing a nail as a beacon, which electrocuted the sergeant and five or six soldiers around him, Leon, though trapped and unable to escape, nearly laughed out loud while watching the temporarily constructed positions quickly set up below.

Originally, he had to focus on finding targets, aim for a while before firing, and even move after two shots to prevent counterattacks damaging the sniper rifle, leading to low efficiency.

But now, with the enemy's self-"marking," it saved him the trouble of locating the targets, and he didn't even have to aim anymore. By firing roughly at the marked spots, it allowed Young Ha in the Mirror World to find their position easily and then simply throw the Thunderstrike Mines right into the center of their formation.

"No! We can't cluster together!"

"Spread out! Hurry, spread out!"

"This won't stop them, we need to retreat!"

As the frequency of purple electric arcs suddenly increased, some of the more quick-thinking sergeants instantly realized the danger and urgently commanded nearby soldiers to disperse. However, it was a step too late, and Leon had already taken note of the general positions of a dozen sergeants.

"Bang!" "Zzz~"

"Bang!" "Zzz~"

The muffled gunshots from the sniper rifle alternated harmoniously with the sharp high-pitched sound of electrical arcs exploding. The soldiers who rushed into the tower managed to hold out for over two minutes, while the sergeants outside barely lasted 30 seconds before they were electrocuted one by one.

With the soldiers losing their command system and clear instructions, confusion soon spread, causing the previously tight encirclement to loosen...

It was time to go!

Observing the now-loosened encirclement outside, Leon, who had already descended to the ground floor, took a deep breath. He fired several nails towards the ambush groups and fire points, instructing Young Ha to disrupt the most problematic fire suppression. He then packed up the sniper rifle and bolted out the main door, sprinting towards the area with the thinnest Soul Flame concentration!

"Someone came out! Someone's coming out!"

"It's not one of ours! Quick! Open fire!"

"Shoot! What are the ambush team doing?"

Confronted with the sudden intrusion of an enemy, some experienced soldiers immediately opened fire. However, due to the collapse of the command system and Young Ha's occasional interference, the various fire points were in chaos and couldn't quickly mount an effective strike.

With the protective shield of the Holy Spirit pendant, Leon charged through the most dangerous open zone after withstanding around eighty or ninety shots. He then dove into a temporary stronghold built from pneumatic shields.

It was secure!

Feeling the shooting becoming sparse upon entering the stronghold, Leon was slightly relieved.

Unlike the "civilian" weapons from the police department, military firearms had much larger calibers and greater power. Even being subjected to a barrage for just six or seven seconds consumed about eighty percent of his strength.

Charging out recklessly without relying on the Undying Body was the right choice. With his measly combat ability coupled with a Level One Contamination Value, his Holy Spirit pendant's shield would be completely breached after resisting around one hundred and thirty-four shots.

In such a scenario, even if he didn't die, he'd become a sieve from the dense nail shots, unable to move until his body repaired itself, merely serving as a living target that couldn't be killed.

But now that he successfully broke into the enemy's stronghold and avoided subsequent dense firing, he had the opportunity to rely on the unlimited endurance provided by the [War Opposition], advancing while holding the shield.

Time to speed up!

Taking a deep breath of the sulfurous gray smoke, Leon's lungs felt as if they were ablaze with severe pain, yet his nearly depleted energy was instantly restored.

After reorienting himself, Leon, whose body condition returned to its peak, continued to charge forward with the protective shield of the Holy Spirit pendant, braving the sparse gunfire. Amidst chaotic shouts and gunfire, he pierced through the temporary stronghold and broke out from the encirclement formed by over four hundred guards.

"God... did he just break out?!"

"How is he not dead? Is he wearing some new kind of armor?"

"Don't pursue! There might be others in the tower!"

Faced with Leon breaking free, the soldiers, having lost their command, couldn't immediately organize an effective pursuit. They fired a few pointless rounds as he fled, then, following the orders issued before the sergeants fainted, continued besieging the boarding tower to prevent more people from emerging from it.

However, just as Leon, who successfully broke through the encirclement, was about to celebrate, an inexplicable chill ran down his spine; he felt like he was being stalked by a highly dangerous predator.

...

"Hiss~"

A low, menacing hissing sound resonated.

Amidst the strange sound resembling vast airflow passing through a throat, a giant snake illusion, with a deep black base color and densely packed bright white spots, inexplicably appeared in Leon's vision, lunging at his raised shield with open jaws.

At the same time, a much smaller snake, reduced by a thousand times compared to the giant, silently appeared before Leon's chest, quietly coiling around the Holy Spirit pendant. It smiled at the toad full of dread on the pendant, its snake mouth growing wider and wider...

"Pop!"

A sound like a bubble bursting echoed in Leon's mind.

Leon felt a slight dizziness in his head, and the mind shield that had been protecting his entire body suddenly broke apart like melting ice, completely exposing him. The bright Holy Spirit pendant on his chest also dimmed under the entanglement of the black snake.

"Damn! Scales Gold Sect's Snake Spirit?!"

Amidst the Black Goat's exclamation, Leon, sweating from dizziness, reached out, trying to pull off the little black snake gnawing at the pendant.

However, his hand grasped nothing, passing right through the incorporeal black snake, yet the little black snake slithered further up his arm, its sharp snake fangs like two pitch-black nails deeply embedded into the artery of Leon's wrist.

Chapter 339: Blessing and... touching briefly_1

It had ended.

Squinting into the distance at the quickly approaching powered armor squad, and again at Leon, who had suddenly collapsed far away and hadn't been able to get up for a long time, middle-aged Joshua took a deep breath, then turned with a somewhat desolate look and left without reluctance.

He had seen what was going to happen countless times.

This guy, who had snatched the Rebels, was bitten by the Snake Spirit of the Scales Gold Sect right after breaking through the encirclement when his mental guard was at its weakest. Not only was his mental shield broken, but his Undying Body was temporarily sealed, leaving him with no life-saving aces.

Facing the approaching powered armor squad, he got up to struggle and resist, managing to bring down two sets of powered armor before being strafed by machine gun fire, which turned him into an unrecognizable pile of minced meat, and then his remains were crushed into the mud by the fallen powered armor, leaving nothing behind.

Goodbye, you almost ruined my plans, or actually... never again!

"These damned black worms!"

Watching the little black snake injecting the pale golden "venom," and Leon's arm lighting up with veins, the Black Goat cursed angrily,

"If it wanted to poison you, we could rescue you in an instant, but this black worm played dirty! That son of a bitch not only didn't attack you, but even blessed you, injecting a small portion of the Holy Spirit's essence directly into your veins!

Damn it! Our powers are clashing, and until this essence settles down, both your heart and ours are suppressed to the bottom; your life-saving pendant got chewed!

Kid, you'd better be careful later!

Our heart's power is suppressed, and we can't capture those criminals dozens of kilometers away, Domination Substitute Death won't work properly, though our Endless Blood Battle can still be used, but its effectiveness is diminished. If you lose an arm or leg, it might take four or five minutes to grow back...

Damn it! This damned black worm! Back when we were still a Great Demon, it wouldn't even dare to fart in our presence, and now it dares to play dirty right in front of us! If we had known, we would've taken it out first..."

So that's what's going on...

Amidst the Black Goat's furious curses, Leon, whose whole body felt the burning pain of his veins, so intense that he couldn't stand, revealed a knowing look in his eyes.

Joshua's coming this time likely wasn't just his own will; there surely was a part orchestrated by the Aquarius Director.

The [Holy Spirit Pendant] and [Heart of Ambition] in his possession were both anomalous objects filed at the Purification Bureau; the Aquarius Director surely reviewed his file and devised a targeted plan.

Presumably, he paid some price to request part of the power of the Scales Gold Sect's Snake Spirit, first breaking the protection of the Holy Spirit Pendant, then blessing him to bypass and shut down the substitute death effect of the Heart of Ambition, thus breaking his Undying Body.

And the news about the repair of the [War Opposition] wasn't reported to the Bureau, as the Black Goat had been directly incapacitated by the Director back then, so its true ability wasn't recorded by the Bureau, and there was no corresponding preparation made...

"Stop cursing and get to work!"

After sitting up from the ground, Leon grabbed the Black Goat's forehead and, gritting his teeth against the pain, panted,

"Where's Joshua? Is he still around?"

"Huh? What do you need him for?"

"Because I cannot determine if this is the actual 'present' or the 'future' he saw! If I am in the 'future' rather than 'now,' seeing me alive might alter his plans, so the future must be ensured to come full circle!"

What now? What future? What plans? What circles?

The Black Goat, feeling a bit dizzy trying to follow Leon's reasoning and too embarrassed to admit he didn't understand, reluctantly mumbled,

"I see, let me check... That dog has left; we didn't see him anyway."

Did he leave before seeing me killed? This doesn't seem like the action one would take when briefly reaching the future, trying to gather as much information as possible. It appears then that the "timeline" he's currently in should be the real "now."

Confirming that the loop had completely closed, Leon couldn't help but let out a breath of relief, then struggled to stand, intending to evacuate quickly.

However, he had only taken a few steps when the burning pain that spread rapidly along his veins enveloped his entire body, causing him to collapse from dizziness.

[The Scales Gold Sect Holy Spirit "Fate-swapping Black Snake" consumed part of its essence and personally bestowed upon you a blessing from the Holy Spirit. You have obtained the silver-level identity badge "Scales Gold Chosen (Wealth-Consuming)"]

[Scales Gold Chosen (Wealth-Consuming): A favored human of the Scales Gold Sect Snake Spirit, a chosen one of the Scales Gold Sect's Wealth-Consuming Lineage]

[Effect when worn: Status equivalent to a candidate for the Scales Gold Sect Bishop, qualified to run for Scales Gold Sect Bishop. When the Bishop position of the Wealth-Consuming Lineage is vacant, you may be directly promoted to it.]

[Advancement route: None]

[Hidden trait (no need to wear): As a human favored by the Snake Spirit, you will receive certain discounts when buying life, health, talent, and other items from the Snake Spirit at the cost of your own money]

Though he knew that the snake probably wouldn't bestow any useful blessing, the extent of its uselessness somewhat exceeded his expectations.

Struggling out of the pain that almost burned through his veins, Leon looked at the new badge's traits and effects and couldn't help but click his tongue in dismay.

Becoming a bishop of a certain lineage requires recognition from the corresponding Holy Spirit, and he's the enemy of the Scales Gold Sect; it would be a miracle if it acknowledged him as a bishop. Even if he took out a bishop and directly filled the position, the snake could easily replace him with a single thought.

As for getting discounts from the Snake Spirit for buying things, that's even more ridiculous.

Not to mention how absurdly priced this damned snake's items might be if it ever decided to sell to an enemy like him, the prices asked by the Scales Gold Sect are something a low-ranking civil servant like him couldn't afford, unless he was willing to blackmail the old butler back at the Ryan Family or cling onto the Princess... Hmm, what's that?

Just as Leon recovered his ability to move and prepared to leave, something shiny caught the corner of his eye.

When he looked toward the source of the glimmer somewhat puzzled, he discovered that the object reflecting the sunlight was actually two shiny silver buttocks, and not far from them was the thermos bottle the Director acquired from next door to store Senior Pioni.

"..."

Ah, this... should I try touching it?

Looking at the metallic glisten of the buttocks on the grass, Leon hesitated slightly at first, then cautiously extended his right index finger to gently poke the side, far from the buttocks and genitalia.

"Zzzz..."

[Name: Möbius Cursed Silver (Curse, Flesh, Metal)]

[Appearance: A special bright silver metal that possesses high toughness and hardness while able to flow freely under the will's control. Once fully integrated with flesh, it enables the body to share the Cursed Silver's special characteristics.]

[Ability: Curse Amplification, Flesh Assimilation, Metal Body]

Chapter 340: Senior, your... is really handy!_1

[Name: Möbius Cursed Silver (Curse, Flesh, Metal)]

[Appearance: Bright silver special metal...]

[Ability: Curse Amplification, Flesh Assimilation, Metal Body]

[Cost: The user's five senses will be permanently halved, and the soul will suffer irreversible damage (with the holder's permission, no cost required)]

[File: The city of Mebis, known for its vast silver mines, was once one of the Kingdom's most important mining cities. Since its initial construction over 300 years ago, it paid a substantial amount of taxes and minerals to the Kingdom annually.

Until eleven years ago, the secret society "Earth Essence Society" attacked the city of Mebis, resulting in 3,615 residents in the city center being eroded by the silver rain from the sky, turning them into immobile metal statues. Only a young man named Pioni Alphah managed to escape and joined the Virgin Branch of the Purification Bureau the following year...

Later, during a surprise mission at the Boarding Tower, it was discovered that Level Three incident handler Leon Laine from the Virgin Branch encountered a life-or-death crisis. Unable to take action, Pioni Alphah voluntarily gave up part of the cursed silver ownership, temporarily transferring it to Leon Laine, hoping to help him retreat safely...]

[Evaluation: A very powerful anomalous object, but this mass of cursed silver does not completely belong to you. The most crucial part still belongs to its previous holder. Please don't forget to take this part back to him.]

[Contamination Value: 19.9 (5.4)]

[Your Contamination Value has increased]

...

"Swish!"

It seemed to sense Leon's presence. The shiny silver backside wobbled slightly and then transformed from solid to liquid, collapsing instantly with a splash, leaving behind only...

ㇿ

Understood, thank you for your help, senior. I will take the most crucial part back to you.

Witnessing this scene, Leon couldn't help but twitch the corner of his mouth slightly, then instructed Young Ha to put away what remained of Senior Pioni. He then cautiously directed his will toward the puddle of mercury-like liquid metal on the ground.

"Buzz!"

With a blade's quivering hum, under Leon's mental command, the mercury-like liquid metal on the ground twisted and transformed, instantly forming a thin, elongated silver sword, which slashed fiercely at the cracked water heater beside it.

"Clang!"

A sharp, crisp sound of metal clashing arose, as the iron-cast water heater borrowed from the Red-haired Director was sliced open like soft tofu, splitting in half with a snap.

Not just the water heater, even the ground beneath it couldn't withstand this slash, being cut open by a narrow, half-meter-deep groove.

So sharp?!

Seeing the destruction caused by the cursed silver sword, Leon's eyebrows involuntarily raised slightly.

No wonder it's an anomalous object with nearly 20 points of contamination value. Such widespread damage with just a casual strike. If I exert a little more "effort," I could probably cut through even a small, twenty-centimeter-thick pneumatic shield.

As for Senior Pioni's backside, although it wasn't as versatile as his Holy Spirit pendant in terms of speed and concealment, with a "range" of only two or three meters, any effort beyond that resulted in losing control.

But in terms of destructive power, compared to the Holy Spirit pendant that could only pierce a few centimeters of steel plate, the slashes emitted by weapons formed from cursed silver were a class above in terms of potency.

Concerning defense capabilities...

After attempting a "self-contradictory" experiment by splitting the cursed silver mass into two and watching the hardened cursed silver shield easily block stabs, Leon had gained a sense of the cursed silver's defense capabilities, letting out a long breath.

It's similarly strong!

It seems Senior Pioni probably bet on me seeking out his backside, therefore temporarily transferring control of this part of the cursed silver to me, hoping to lend a hand.

Yet, with several of my anomalous objects being sealed together, although [War Cornerstone] isn't completely disabled, I could rely on Young Ha's electric therapy to handle enemies. This help came just in time when both protective and offensive means were scarce!

After sincerely thanking Senior Pioni for his assistance internally, Leon, overjoyed, hastily manipulated the cursed silver sword to float up, wanting to see if he could "fly with a sword," planning to leave before other guards arrived.

Unfortunately, Senior Pioni's backside didn't support such operations.

The moment Leon's feet left the ground, the cursed silver mass, capable of moving freely in the air and even transforming into a large hand to grasp objects, lost all vitality, turning liquid and falling back down.

Is this because the cursed silver, as a mineral, draws its power from the earth? Or does Senior Pioni have acrophobia?

After failing twice to succeed, Leon had to abandon the idea of flying away. Instead, akin to his usual manipulation of the Holy Spirit pendant, he controlled the cursed silver using his thoughts to lay down a barrier around himself, then bolted off toward the direction away from the Boarding Tower.

I must speed up.

After breaking through the enclosure at the base of the tower, he initially fell prey to the Scales Gold Sect's Snake Spirit, and later, testing the effect of Senior Pioni's backside also took up some time. If he didn't hurry and retreat, being boxed in by the following Guard Troops would be a huge predicament!