

I! Cleaner 36

Chapter 36 Question

"Director, the investigation task is completed..."

"Hmm?"

After glancing at Leon who had just entered, she noticed not only the dust covering him but also the bandages wrapped around his hands. The red-haired Director, who was sipping plain water, couldn't help but be slightly taken aback and curiously said,

"This task was just to survey the situation, and you have the ability to peek at others' soul states ahead of time. How did it turn out like this? Was that Anomalous Object dangerous?"

"The Anomalous Object wasn't dangerous; it was actually pretty good. The problem was it didn't really get along with me."

After briefly explaining his encounter, Leon looked at the red-haired woman, whose eyes were filled with laughter, and hesitated for a moment before finally speaking,

"Director... can I ask you something?"

Upon hearing this, the red-haired woman's smile suddenly faded. She cautiously pressed her flat wallet.

"Leon, it's not that I'm stingy. As the Director of the Virgo Bureau, although my salary is slightly higher than yours, my daily expenses are quite substantial, so... uh..."

"You misunderstood. I'm not asking to borrow money. I'm genuinely trying to ask you a question."

Blinking somewhat speechlessly, Leon recalled the files he had seen and deeply furrowed his brows as he said,

"Director, before reporting to you, I went to the archive department next door at the Department of Road Administration. I applied to review their records from over ninety years ago and found the Happiness Apartment... uh... which is related to today's Anomalous Object file.

The Charitable Asylum donated by that old couple housed over three hundred orphans and people with disabilities at its peak. Except for getting a bit of discount on water fees from the hydraulic company due to the large number of water users, they received no help from the Kingdom. They basically maintained the Asylum's expenses with their savings.

Later, when the old lady fell seriously ill and found she might not last much longer, she applied to the Department of Road Administration over thirty times to convert the Asylum into a legal municipal facility and continue operating it with her assets, hoping to keep it running at least until the people inside passed away before taking it back and shutting it down, but she never succeeded."

After briefly explaining the situation, Leon took a deep breath and then clenched his fist, saying,

"I've been thinking on the way here, this clearly seemed mutually beneficial, so why couldn't they get approvals?

Those who were unable to work could barely survive on the old couple's assets while the Department of Road Administration wouldn't have to contribute anything extra; they didn't need to allocate additional funds or personnel for management.

But why did the person responsible for approvals back then rather watch those orphans and disabled people be kicked out, dying of starvation and cold at the doorstep of what was once their home under the 'Happiness Apartment' sign, than approve her application?"

"You're wrong, the Department of Road Administration had a lot to lose."

Hearing Leon's question, the red-haired woman slightly closed her eyes and then calmly asked,

"Let's assume you were responsible for that back then. I ask you: why did the Kingdom have its own Charitable Asylum yet yours didn't take these people in, instead, they were sheltered by a citizen-built Asylum? What exactly was your day-to-day work like?

And if you did take over this Asylum, even without needing to assign people for daily management, there must still be a responsible caretaker. In case of fire or other incidents causing casualties, would you be willing to bear the liability? If the fire was caused by the people in the Asylum, could you accept being dismissed due to management negligence?

Lastly, taking over a citizen-donated Asylum wouldn't count as an achievement, and once it becomes a legally recognized municipal facility, if it can't sustain itself due to lack of income and eventually collapses, the caretaker would certainly be held accountable.

This is something without any benefits, instead bearing a lot of trouble, almost certainly leaving blemishes on its record. How could anyone want to take it on?"

"..."

...

How true that is... Sigh...

Watching the young man before her, silently struck by her words, his expression growing grimmer, the red-haired Director inwardly sighed. Staring into his eyes, she sternly reminded him,

"Leon, I understand you can't stand these things, but do not forget, our work at the Purification Bureau is merely to keep 'Abnormals' out of ordinary people's lives. The rest is not ours to meddle with.

According to agreements between the Purification Bureau and the various Kingdoms, unless involving Anomalous Objects, never are we allowed to use 'non-human' powers for interference. This is both the survival rule for the Purification Bureau and the bottom line tolerable by the Kingdoms.

So hear me well: never, ever cross that line, and when you do things, think twice to avoid getting yourself hurt, understand?"

"You're overthinking. I genuinely haven't planned on doing anything."

Hearing her words, Leon couldn't help but clench his fist, lowered his head, and calmly responded,

"That was over ninety years ago. Not only the people who were driven away are dead, even the person responsible for approvals is dead. What more can I do?"

"..."

Yes, you can do nothing concerning this, but what about matters concerning the Department of Road Administration and the hydraulic company? What about the more you'll face later?

Glancing at the slightly trembling shopping bag in Leon's hand, the red-haired Director sighed inwardly again. The gaze she cast upon Leon grew increasingly complex.

Though I can't use soul visions to assess your state after losing the Black Goat, I know that damn Goat too well. From the moment you lowered your head and fell silent, it started trembling with excitement...

"Let's leave it at that... You've worked hard today."

Receiving Leon's finalized report and glancing at it, the red-haired Director suppressed the bizarre déjà vu in her heart and softly comforted,

"I see your hands are injured. I'll grant you half a day off. Go home and rest well."

"Rest assured, I won't force you to turn a blind eye to those matters, and I won't stop you from investigating issues with the hydraulic company. I've even procured a protective Anomalous Object for you, which I'll send over tomorrow, so you can safely retreat should trouble arise.

But above all, remember that when you decide to take action, you must find an appropriate justification to intervene like this time with the hydraulic company. You absolutely cannot casually use 'Abnormal' powers to influence ordinary people; that's both mine and the Purification Bureau's bottom line!"

"Got it. I'll remember..."

Looking at Leon's still not-so-good expression, the red-haired Director couldn't help but rub her temple and continued advising,

"Leon, I know you're someone with strong moral values and a solid sense of justice. I don't dislike your character, in fact, I deeply admire how you've managed to hold onto your principles through hard times.

But you need to understand, even though we have abilities beyond the ordinary, we're still part of the Human community. We cannot exist independently of it and must abide by some basic societal rules.

Even if you were a King of some Kingdom or the Director of the Purification Bureau, you couldn't make everything go your way or control all that you disdain... I know these words might be hard to hear, but I hope you'll think them over."

"I will... Sorry for bothering you today."

After bidding farewell to the red-haired Director who repeatedly admonished him, Leon slowly returned to his own office. Fixing his gaze on another shopping bag left on the table, his mind kept replaying the Director's evaluation of him.

Is my moral compass truly that noble?

Is my sense of justice truly that strong?

Are my values truly that unyielding?

The compensation for dependents of martyrs swallowed up by him, the alchemical factory causing Anna's lung disease but refusing to pay, the hundreds of patients lying in hospital hallways after drinking the contaminated water provided by the hydraulic company,

And those mercilessly expelled from the Charitable Asylum, dying despairingly in the cold winter of ninety-four years ago, too insignificant to even have their names recorded...

While it feels oddly shameful to voice these thoughts, I genuinely wish to know: Is the problem with me or this damned world?

...

"Let's go."

After standing in front of his desk for a moment, Leon picked up the shopping bag filled with gray cigarette boxes, gently touched the Black Goat's horn damaged by scissors, and whispered,

"Let's find a secluded spot... I'll treat you to a smoke."