

## I! Cleaner 401

### Chapter 401: Brotherly Love and Sisterly Respect

Kingdom had no idea that her younger brother and sister were secretly scheming over next year's allowance. After arranging for the coach, Anna returned to the apartment and took out William and Melanie, who were glaring at each other.

"Where's Big Brother?"

After glancing around the doorway and not seeing any sign of Leon, Melanie couldn't help but ask curiously, "Where is Big Brother? Isn't he coming with us?"

"He went to pick up the gift," Anna replied casually as she picked up Melanie by the armpits and placed her on the carriage while reaching out to lift William. "Your sister Ellie isn't in great health and didn't go to school. She rarely goes out, so Big Brother wanted to give her a memorable birthday. He ordered some special gifts for her.

"But because time was tight, even after paying extra, they were only going to be ready this morning. So, Big Brother got up early to pick up the gifts, and he'll meet us at the corner up ahead."

"Oh..." After listening to Anna's explanation, Melanie's bright eyes couldn't help but flash with envy. \*How nice it must be; William and I have never received customized gifts.\*

Refusing Anna's help, William climbed onto the carriage himself. Noticing the envy in her eyes, he patted her like a little adult and comforted her, "Don't worry, you'll get one on your birthday too. Big Brother never skimps on us, he's always given us whatever he can.

"He didn't throw us a big birthday before because the family was tight on money, so we had to save. But now that things are better, with Big Brother's personality, he'll definitely prepare well for our next birthday."

\*Yeah, that's right...\* Remembering how good Leon had been to her in the past, the small jealousy in Melanie's heart vanished instantly.

\*Thinking about that poor little girl who, because of her poor health, had to stay home all the time and had no one to accompany her even for taking eggs out of bird nests, I even felt a little guilty for being jealous of such a pitiable child because of Big Brother's 'favoritism.'\*

Listening to their exchange from the side, Anna felt her heart suddenly soften. She couldn't help but touch William's little head, with a hint of guilt in her eyes. \*Actually, although they're a bit mischievous, both William and Melanie are really good kids. They remember who treats them well, know what to do and what not to do, and never do anything too outrageous...\*

\*Well... that's questionable, but at least they've never gone too far first. Overall, they do okay, and my worries about them bullying before we set out were a bit unfounded.\*

Pinching her rather full purse, Anna, feeling a bit guilty, decided to compensate her "wronged" brother and sister by promising, "Alright then, since you've been relatively behaved lately, I'll buy each of you a gift when we get back tonight. What do you two want?"

?!!!

Hearing Anna's promise, not only did Melanie break into a wide smile, but even William looked surprised. Compared to the always "generous" Big Brother, Sister Anna was the frugal one, or to put it bluntly, she was utterly reluctant to spend money, wanting to break each Copper Wheel into eight pieces.

So, with the usually stingy Sister Anna being unusually generous today, they had to seize this opportunity!

Plus, knowing Anna's frugal nature, they understood the "total budget" for the gifts was likely limited. Even though the family was better off now, seven or eight Copper Wheels would be the max, and this budget was for both of them to share. So...

Whoever asked for cheaper gifts would lose out!

They exchanged a glance, and after spotting the lively glint in each other's eyes, their thoughts synchronized instantly. They both realized that what lay ahead was a budget battle!

"I want a doll! And new shoes!"

Thinking rapidly, with a quicker mind and better math skills, Melanie blurted out two gifts totaling 5 Copper Wheels, taking up most of the budget in an instant.

Calculating the price of these two gifts, Anna showed a moment of hesitation but nodded slightly upon seeing Melanie's slightly small shoes.

\*Big Brother works hard for money; I hadn't intended to buy them expensive things. Seven or eight Copper Wheels is the most.\*

\*Although Melanie's taking most of it, her shoes are indeed a bit small and need replacing. If William wants toys, they can take a smaller portion.\*

\*After all, boys' toys break fast, whether it's a 5-Copper-Wheels clockwork soldier or a 3-Copper-Wheels tin frog, they barely last two months before falling apart. So, it's best to save where possible...\*

After settling whom to allocate the budget, Anna nodded slightly, agreeing to Melanie's request.

"Alright... William, what about you? What do you want?"

"For me..."

Glancing at his sister, whose eyes were full of triumph as she looked at him, William's mouth curved into a slight smile, and he smiled back calmly.

"Get me some books!"

?!!!

With Melanie giving a "big trouble" look, William took a folded piece of rough paper from his pocket and read it unhurriedly, "Sister Anna, the books I'd like include 'A Brief History of the Pan-Continental War,' 'Our Kingdom,' 'How the Parliament Was Established,' 'Overview of the Armaments of Various Kingdoms'..."

After listing a long string of book titles, he handed the paper to Anna, gracefully conceding, "Although I prepared a list, I don't need them all; just some will do."

"Even though these are recommended by my teacher and guaranteed to help my grades, Melanie's toys are important too. As for my grades, they won't be delayed much if improved later. So, Sister Anna, you could buy her toys first."

"..."

...

\*Phew... just in time.\*

Seeing the carriage approaching him and recognizing the passengers, Leon, standing at the entrance of Redwood Avenue, waved, and the carriage pulled over.

"Continue forward and stop at the entrance of Treasure Flower Manor."

After instructing the coachman and handing him the travel token, Leon stepped onto the carriage. He was about to ask if they were ready but noticed the odd state of the two little ones.

Though William maintained his little adult-like, serious face as always, the slightly tilted up chin revealed his inner joy.

As for Melanie beside him, she sat glumly in her seat like a defeated rooster, her little mouth pouting high. As Leon boarded the carriage, she sneakily kicked William when Anna looked away.

"..."

Seeing the six or seven dusty shoe prints on the side of his pants but still a victorious smile on William's face, Leon couldn't help but rub his brow in frustration.

\*Though there's no evidence for this judgment, I can't shake the feeling that agreeing to Senior Emma's request to bring these troublemakers to Ellie's birthday celebration was a terrible decision...\*

#### Chapter 402: The Secret of Treasure Flower (Part 1)\_1

In Leon's indecision, the carriage carrying Leon's family passed Luca, entered Redwood Avenue, and proceeded deep inside.

As the two little ones clung to the edge of the carriage window, marveling at the towering hundred-meter-tall redwoods, Leon also saw Senior Emma's familiar silhouette at the entrance of Treasure Flower Manor.

After taking William and Melanie off the carriage, Leon looked at Senior Emma, who was standing quietly next to the street, wearing a simple woolen skirt with hardly any decoration, holding a little girl's hand. She smiled gently at him, and Leon inexplicably felt much more at ease.

"Sorry, we're a bit late."

"Not at all, Ellie and I just came out not long ago."

Seeing the two little ones on either side of Leon, curiously peering at her daughter, Emma couldn't help but chuckle and gently squeezed the little fist in her palm, which was nervously trying to clench.

"Ellie, say hi to Uncle Leon."

After obediently nodding, the little girl, wearing a wide-brimmed child's soft hat and a matching woolen dress, timidly spoke, "Hello, Uncle Leon, Aunt Anna, and... you too."

The little girl's voice was very pleasant, not only crisp and clear like a summer wind chime but also carried a soft, tender note, making one feel she must be a gentle child just by listening.

However, compared to the soft voice, the little girl's attire was a bit 'hard to approach.' The sleeves and hem of the woolen dress seemed intentionally lengthened, completely covering her wrists and little shoes.

Even the collar, embroidered with small flowers, was turned up, firmly hiding the slightly chubby chin of a baby. Her face, mostly hidden by the wide hat brim, was further obscured by a pair of thick, light-blocking glasses, nearly concealing her fair little face.

\*Is this child afraid of sunlight?\*

Leon, noticing that the little girl's hand held by Senior Emma was also adorned with a pair of delicate gloves, raised an eyebrow thoughtfully, then released his hands to squat down and smiled, saying, "Hello to you too, Ellie, happy birthday."

"Thank you, Uncle Leon..."

When Leon voluntarily squatted down to meet her gaze, the little girl, seemingly unaccustomed to interacting with others, instinctively retreated a step, hiding half her body behind Emma's skirt.

\*However, hearing Leon's powerful but gentle voice, and seeing his eyes filled with kindness laced with a hint of affection, little Ellie's fear diminished considerably, and she unconsciously stepped forward again.\*

\*What's this?\*

\*Sensing the little hand in her palm relax, even moving slightly outward as if inviting her to get closer to Leon, a hint of surprise flickered in Emma's eyes.\*

\*Ellie did not seem to reject interacting with Leon?\*

...

\*[Trustworthy Brother (Bronze): Due to the early passing of your parents, you took on responsibilities early and are cherished deeply by your younger siblings.]\*

\*[Effect when worn: During conversations with minors lower in age than you, they will easily develop trust in you, and in moments of emotional agitation, they may trigger a special state, "Reveal Their Heart," sharing their burdens and secrets with you.]\*

\*Indeed, Senior Emma's daughter, seldom in contact with others, was naturally apprehensive of strangers, so preparing the badge in advance was the right choice.\*

Looking into little Ellie's eyes through the lenses, and confirming most of her fear and unfamiliarity had dissipated, Leon couldn't help but smile slightly, gesturing for William and Melanie to come over and greet "Little Sister Ellie."

And with the foundation of being the \*[Trustworthy Brother]\*, and the tension and fear of meeting social photons reduced, they soon found themselves animatedly socializing with Leon's two Demon Lords of Mayhem, and she even generously took off her glasses, letting the curious Melanie try them on.

\*My guess was correct. Senior Emma's daughter had "issues."\*

Although the two children didn't notice, when little Ellie removed her glasses, Leon, who had been attentively observing, acutely detected that as more sunlight fell on her skin, her \*body grew slightly transparent.\*

Even though the degree of change was minor, merely shifting from entirely opaque to 99.9% opaque, the ethereal and elusive sense wasn't falsifiable; she was certainly not a "normal" child.

\*Before Ellie took off her glasses, Emma, engaged in conversation with Anna, bit her lip slightly, seeming like she wanted to intervene, but ultimately remained silent, allowing her daughter's abnormality to be exposed to Leon. Only when Ellie's soft hat tilted during their frolic, about to be directly illuminated by the sun, did she gently adjust it.\*

"Miss Anna, could I ask you to do me a favor?"

Watching her daughter, who had never been so "alive," laugh and dance joyfully under the sun, Emma's gaze, half tender and half guilty, couldn't pull away even for a moment, but at last, she tried turning her head and turned to Anna, saying, "Could you please look after them for me? I have something to discuss with Leon. Sorry for the inconvenience."

"Sister Emma, you don't have to be so polite."

In front of her lifesaver, Anna certainly wouldn't refuse, and she immediately led the three playing children around the execution platform next to the redwood tree and down the main path into the Treasure Flower Manor.

Emma, with something to say, lagged a step behind, walking beside Leon, who also had questions, and said softly with her head down, "I'm sorry... Leon, I haven't told you about Ellie's situation before."

"It's alright."

Shaking his head slightly, Leon answered gently, "Senior Emma, besides ordering a gift for little Ellie yesterday, I also reached out to a friend at the police department, asking her to help me inquire about the Bauhinia Family's residency records and some case files from back then.

"Therefore, I can somewhat understand your feelings. It's not that you don't want to tell me, but every time you try to bring up past events, too much resurfaces from deep within your heart, making you unable to speak."

Seeing Emma with tightly pressed lips and a deeply complicated expression, Leon contemplated and firmly held her slightly cold hand, then sincerely explained, "Senior Emma, I conducted this investigation not because I suspect you would harm me, but because it seemed like you and the director were keeping something from me, something distressing for you.

"But, unlike the director, I'm willing to respect your wishes. If you're not ready, you don't have to disclose the reason, and I will halt my investigation.



But in return, I hope you can promise me that before being compelled to do something, you'll think about Ellie and be sure not to regret it, okay?"

"Thank you..."

Feeling the warmth from Leon's hand, Emma bit her lip, gently withdrew her hand, then pulled out a sharp little knife, forcefully cutting her own palm before grabbing Leon's left hand.

\*[Name: Sin of the Precious Flower (Blood, Flesh, Life, and Death)]\*

Chapter 403: The Secret of Treasure Flower (Part 2)\_1

[Name: Sin of the Precious Flower (Flesh, Life and Death)]

[Appearance: No physical form, exists only on the female human named Emma Alman]

[Ability: Flesh Sustainment (limited), Resurrection (limited)]

[Cost: None]

[File: After the execution against the Bauhinia Family concluded, Emma Alman, who became one of the dead, saw her daughter Ellie Alman, whom she had entrusted to her husband Leonard before the execution started, as she walked the "No Return Path."

Discovering that the daughter she viewed as hope had been killed even before her own death, the intensely enraged Emma Alman turned on the No Return Path, holding on to the bewildered soul of her daughter as they fell into the Realm of the Dead amidst the curses and disdain of nearly a thousand deceased Bauhinia Family members.

As the rules of the Realm of the Dead were briefly disrupted, a massive amount of unwillingness and resentment from the souls of the Bauhinia Family, whom Emma Alman shared a bloodline with and who died together, were absorbed in large quantities by Emma Alman's rampaging soul.

Once the soul holding her daughter escaped the Realm of the Dead and awakened from her own corpse, Emma Alman, with a body stained by the blood of the Bauhinia, and a soul burdened by the curses of her kin, became one of the two sole inheritors of nearly a thousand lives...]

[Evaluation: An extremely powerful Anomalous Object, with virtually no usage cost for additional life, and when exhausted, will slowly replenish, meaning that unless her body is consecutively killed six hundred sixty-six times, she is immortal.

Additionally, when holding "Jewel Flower's Woe" Ellie Alman, the effect of "Sin of the Precious Flower" will be enhanced, providing an additional capability of direct reunification after three hundred thirty-three soul destructions.]

[Contamination Value: 0.1]

...

[Sin of the Precious Flower]and[Jewel Flower's Woe]...

After reading the astonishing length of the file on [Sin of the Precious Flower] and cross-referencing it with the documents he had Yisha retrieve, Leon fell into deep silence while looking at the little girl not far away who was eagerly pulling William and Melanie along, wanting to show them a bird's nest.

He couldn't find any record of a six-year-old girl named Ellie Alman in the Kingdom's registry, her name only existed in the records of the Bauhinia Family rebellion, with the cause of death listed as accidental drowning.

This timid and shy child, although seemingly no different from a living person, had actually been dead for six years.

Besides the fraudulently recorded accidental death, little Ellie had no medical records, no school records, and no records of travel or sightings.

Aside from some children's clothing occasionally purchased by Senior Emma, she was essentially a "nonexistent" person, even becoming transparent in sunlight due to the lack of an original body.

So, if he had guessed correctly, little Ellie's true nature, combined with the soul of the original "Ellie Alman" and the unwillingness born from Senior Emma, was an Anomalous Object. If he were to actually reach out and touch her, the description of an Anomalous Object called [Jewel Flower's Woe] would probably pop up.

"Although Ellie could grow up slowly like a normal child over time, I actually knew in my heart that she wasn't the real Ellie."

Watching her daughter fearfully yet excitedly attempt to climb a tree under William and Melanie's encouragement, Emma whispered tearfully,

"She didn't have a real physical body, could grow without eating, could rest without sleeping, and didn't even need to learn, gradually acquiring things children her age should know as she grew.

Although Ellie could eat and sleep normally per my request, from the moment she suddenly learned to draw without ever really leaving the house, I understood completely.

Although she had Ellie's soul, everything she demonstrated was actually a projection of my expectations for my daughter, the real Ellie was no longer here, and the current her is merely an Anomalous Object born from my wishes."

After uncovering the fact she least wanted to admit, Emma, whose palm was bleeding, muttered with a trembling voice as if her heart bled too,

"Leon, I once wanted you to do me a favor but eventually gave up, do you remember it?"

"I remember..."

Upon hearing this, Leon nodded, a somewhat complicated expression on his face as he said,

"You wanted me to use the Black Goat's soul vision to find the location of someone for you... was it Leonard?"

"Yes!"

Upon hearing the name that tormented her for a whole six years, Emma's palms clenched suddenly, teeth grinding as she said,

"Leon, let me ask you, what does the records say about the Alman family rebellion?"

"The records..."

Recalling the content, Leon answered softly,

"The Bauhinia Family was in close contact with the Frost Plains Country Ashito, attempting to use warfare to overthrow the royal family, exploiting their control over the main trading routes to the Northern Border by betraying border intelligence of Laine County, Merino County, and Welsh County, causing the outbreak of the National War six years ago.

The Marquis of Gold Finch, Leonard, then an Earl supported by the Bauhinia Family, realized the gravity of... um... noticed the Bauhinia Family's movements and voluntarily reported to the royal family, forcing the Bauhinia Family to hastily launch a coup, ultimately... um..."

"It's fake!"

After Anna and the three children entered the garden, a flush of blood suddenly appeared on Emma's pale face, her gentle eyes seemingly ablaze as she spoke with indescribable hatred and anger,

"It's all fake! We indeed were dissatisfied with the royal family's actions, but it hadn't escalated to the point of needing a coup! Even though we were in close contact with the Kingdom of Ashito, it mostly stopped at business interactions.

Plus, Leonard was the one responsible for the main trade route to the Northern Border! Upon discovering the potential for the Kingdom of Ashito to invade, he directly concealed it and reported to the royal family, hiding it from the family!

Yet, even if that was the case, he had the gall to recommend the royal family deploy troops to guard against the Alman family, and preferably take control in advance, using the frequent interactions between the Alman family and the Kingdom of Ashito as a reason!"

At this point, Emma took a slightly labored breath, and then through gritted teeth continued,

"Due to the conflict over the prohibition of sales to the Kingdom of Heisen, our Alman family had been on poor terms with the royal family, even to the point of exchanging insults with the King in court. Upon noticing the abnormal movement of the Guard Army, it was impossible not to react.

My father speculated that the royal family wasn't likely to act too aggressively over those conflicts and wanted to have someone investigate the royal family's actions, and given that my maternal aunt was from the royal family and my husband was Leonard, he naturally became the first choice!"

"..."

"What happened afterward more or less aligns with what the records state."

Emma, whose blood color reached her brows, clenched her fists and spoke with hatred,

"After hearing the so-called 'news' Leonard brought back, my father could no longer suppress the anxiety stirred by the Guard Army amongst the clan members, and could only be coerced into acting hastily.

Leonard, meanwhile, informed the royal family just before the coup began, leading others to detain my father and other key members of the family, and then... then..."

With her eyes seemingly reflecting the crimson of that fateful day, Emma, too distraught to continue, bit her lip with force and, looking at the silent Leon, tearfully asked,

"Leon, tell me, if I were you, in this situation, what would you do?"

Chapter 404: This Isn't Fair

"Now, if I were in your place..."

Hearing Emma's question, Leon couldn't help but let out a deep sigh.

If it were me in your place, then between him and me, one of us definitely wouldn't have survived until now. Our deep-seated hatred left no room for reconciliation.

Moreover, I finally understood why even the all-powerful Director couldn't do anything about your situation.

"Senior Emma."

Looking at the half-abandoned garden, where three children were being chased away by a returning mother bird while trying to take its eggs, Leon gently asked,

"Have you not taken revenge in the past because of some related rules in the bureau?"

"Hmm..."

Emma, also watching the three children, slightly pursed her lips and said,

"Unlike you, who joined the Purification Bureau voluntarily, we, who joined through the 'Amnesty Ordinance,' have to undergo special Word Spirit restrictions. We promise not to use the anomalous objects we gain to seek revenge on our former 'enemies.'"

If it weren't for the unique situation of the Virgin Branch and Olivia vouching for me, someone like me with a high potential for revenge would have been forcibly transferred and never allowed to return to my original country for life.

This is one of the conditions under which various Kingdoms are willing to cooperate with the Purification Bureau, providing full financial and intelligence support, and even granting temporary military authority; even becoming a Level One Cleaner doesn't exempt you from this."

"I see..."

After hearing Emma's explanation, Leon unconsciously furrowed his brows slightly.

The reason the Purification Bureau, despite its formidable power, had set such "humiliating" rules wasn't hard to guess.

Considering that the creation of anomalous objects was indeed mostly accompanied by extremism and pain, and that the cleaners, who were constantly exposed to the corrosion, weren't mentally stable to begin with, once they gained strong enough abilities, the possibility of them seeking revenge was nearly a hundred percent.

Take Senior Emma as an example: without this rule, neither the royal family nor the Marquis of Golden Oriole would allow her to grow stronger in the Purification Bureau and eventually launch a counterattack. They would definitely act as soon as they discovered Emma had an anomalous object, killing her immediately.

And the Undying Body was a rare special anomalous object. Most cleaners' bodies were only slightly more resilient than ordinary people. Without a special protective anomalous object, getting shot in the vital organs would still result in immediate death.

Without this seemingly absurd rule, many potentially powerful anomalous objects and cleaners might be eliminated prematurely, leading to a drastic reduction in the Purification Bureau's available manpower.

What's more, in the past, when the rules were not yet mature, there might have been numerous instances of early "elimination," causing serious consequences, prompting the Purification Bureau to establish such rules to ensure its normal continuation.

But conversely, while this binding rule protected many cleaners, it might also have sheltered quite a few scoundrels.

Recalling the file on [Sin of the Precious Flower] and the record of little Ellie's "accidental drowning," Leon's eyes couldn't help but narrow slightly, as if something was burning faintly in his heart.

"Senior Emma."

Touching the cuff storing his sniper rifle, Leon couldn't help but ask,

"The reason you've been practicing with a sniper rifle even though you have long-range anomalous objects, is it because you want to..."

"Yes, just as you thought."

Looking at her daughter, who had dirt all over her dress and grass all over her body, turning from a delicate porcelain doll into a dirty little mud monkey, but was smiling happily, Emma acknowledged with a loving look at the garden entrance,

"Because of the Word Spirit constraint, I couldn't use anomalous objects on that person, so I specially practiced using firearms. The reason I wanted to ask for your help was to use soul vision to lock onto that person from a distance and end this once and for all, but Olivia managed to temporarily talk me out of it.

I'm sorry, Leon, I shouldn't have involved you.

If I had really gone through with it then, even if you were completely unaware, you would have probably been caught up in the investigation as well. Olivia was right; at that time, I was already blinded by hatred."



"It's okay, after all, none of that happened..."

Shaking his head slightly, Leon looked at the three children in the garden and said softly, with a somewhat complicated expression,

"Senior Emma, if you completed your revenge, what would the cost be?"

"I would probably be stripped of all anomalous objects and forcibly sent into the Realm of the Dead."

Emma said calmly,

"According to the related regulations, if someone at the Division Chief Level violates this ordinance, they can still perform three consecutive high-mortality cleanup tasks. For those below the Division Chief Level, it's just execution."

Division Chief?

Upon hearing this, Leon's expression shifted slightly, and he asked,

"Have you ever thought about..."

"Taking revenge after becoming a Division Chief to avoid immediate execution, right?"

Emma said with a calm expression,

"I did think about that, or rather, except for the time when I found out that Ellie wasn't my daughter, just a reflection of my wish, I've always planned on it."

Although Ellie isn't truly alive, she still has my daughter's soul. \*I really don't want to lose her again,\* and I'm willing to keep enduring because of her, it's just..."

#### Chapter 405: This Isn't Fair (Part 2)

After glancing back in the direction of the manor's main building, Emma couldn't help but laugh self-deprecatingly.

"I guess I'm not as good at enduring as I thought I was."

...

Was that... the crest of the Golden Hibiscus Family?!

Following Emma's gaze, Leon spotted the emerald green crest of a golden cuckoo on the second-floor curtain wall, along with workers dismantling the wall with the Bauhinia Family motifs, and was immediately taken aback.

In theory, the Golden Hibiscus Family and the Bauhinia Family had a closely-knit relationship, with intermarriages being very frequent over nearly two hundred years. The Golden Hibiscus Marquis himself had gained the right to control the Northern Border trade routes through such family ties.

Therefore, in the current situation where nobles close to the Bauhinia were either killed or exiled, he did indeed have the right by bloodline to inherit the Treasure Flower Manor, with an inheritance rank nearly equal to Senior Emma's.

But if it was true as Senior Emma said, that the Golden Hibiscus Family was the primary culprit for the Bauhinia Family's downfall, then how could they have the audacity to move in?

Moreover... isn't this practically begging to be killed?

Noticing Emma's hand turning slightly cold, and the look of chilling intent filling her usually gentle eyes, Leon couldn't help but close his eyes, his scalp tingling at the audacious move by the Golden Hibiscus Family.

If the Golden Hibiscus Family hadn't intruded, Senior Emma might have continued enduring, relying on little Ellie's presence, waiting until she became a Branch Director.

But now, the Golden Hibiscus Family seemed ready to take over completely, moving their entire family into the Bauhinia Family's manor, and this truly was... the enemy who destroyed one's home not only blatantly appeared before them but also unashamedly moved into their house; anyone would find this unbearable!

If Senior Emma weren't bound by the Word Spirit and unable to use the Anomalous Object, even the cockroaches in their cupboard would have to face judgment!

"I can drive them out!"

Golden Hibiscus Family occupying the manor = Senior Emma unable to hold back from taking revenge = violating the regulations of the Purification Bureau = Senior Emma facing execution!

The moment this equation formed in his mind, Leon immediately suggested,

"Senior Emma, just endure a little longer, and I'll go find the king..."

"No need."

Before Leon could finish, Emma refused his suggestion, her expression calm as she remarked,

"Leon, for Ellie, I've endured for six whole years, but now I truly don't want to endure anymore."

"But you're already a Level One Cleaner. Just one vacancy in a Branch Director position..."

"The main bureau is currently sealed off; without a Director appointment, even if there was a vacancy, I couldn't be promoted, and even if there was a vacancy, it might not even be my turn."

Looking affectionately at her daughter, who was pulling Melanie's hand to show her the flowers she'd planted, Emma softly said,

"Moreover, to me, this manor truly holds no value; those once beautiful past memories, when thought of the final outcome, only become painful recollections.

I stayed here because Ellie couldn't leave; she could only exist in this manor full of my memories. Otherwise, I would've moved away long ago."

Hearing this, Leon couldn't help but take a deep breath and, feeling slightly frustrated, emphasized,

"I said, I can drive them out! You and Ellie can still live here. Just wait until the headquarters unseals in half a year..."

"Leon, that's not the key issue."

Squeezing Leon's clenched hands, Emma said warmly,

"When I first realized the Golden Hibiscus Family wanted to move in, I also considered driving them out and then pretending nothing happened, continuing to wait as before. But after a day of thinking, I've come to realize,

There are many Level One Cleaners with strength similar to mine but more seniority. Even if there is a vacancy, it's most likely not going to be my turn for promotion. So, while it seems just a step away, to truly wait for an opportunity for revenge, it might take another twenty or thirty years, or even longer."

"Leon, I truly can't wait any longer."

Gazing at the golden cuckoo crest on the main building's curtain wall, as if making a certain resolve, Emma's eyes, shimmering like waves, settled down completely,

"Do you remember the only Crow of Death Report that approached me?

It was my sister's. At that time, she was a bit older than Ellie is now, but was born weak, growing very small, seemingly almost the same age as Ellie now."

Turning to look at the three children playfully frolicking in the semi-abandoned garden, recalling the once joyous little girl running toward her from the stone path in the garden, Emma spoke with a gentle voice,

"My mother was often bedridden due to poor health since I was young, and my father was a very rigid and distant person, so she clung to me from a young age.

Before that incident occurred, I often stayed here in this garden with her. The small greenhouse just dismantled in front of the garden was built for her at my request, it's where she loved the most.

She was much more lively than Ellie usually is, very much similar to Ellie today, and also liked small birds and flowers. She enjoyed using crayons to draw colorful, though messy, pictures. Perhaps Ellie's fondness for these things comes from my longing for her..."

At this point, Emma fell into a brief silence, then resumed,

"But she's already dead, strangled before me, her corpse lying next to my mother, and in less than two weeks, it would have been her tenth birthday on her execution day."

"..."

"She was just a nine-year-old child, who never committed any wrongs, but her life halted that day, and she'll never have any future anymore.

Yet the real wrongdoers can live on without remorse, parading into her home, demolishing her house, and completely erasing her existence.

Even the one who truly deserves to die can continue living for another twenty or thirty years, until he grows old and senile, forgetting what he once did, only then awaiting the judgment he should've gotten."

Withdrawing her gaze from the verdant crest of the golden cuckoo on the curtain wall, Emma turned to Leon beside her, her voice calm yet resolute,

"This is unjust!"

"..."

In Leon's speechless silence, Emma withdrew her gaze, her expression serene as she said,

"Perhaps I vaguely knew from the beginning that the current Ellie isn't truly Ellie, but because of clinging to this last warmth, I've used endurance as an excuse to deceive myself for six years and cowardly for six years.

Now, I must do what I should have done six years ago.

As a daughter, I must kill him for my parents! As a mother, I must kill him for drowned Ellie! As the last of the Bao Hua, I must kill him for those kinsfolk who could've avoided death!"

"..."

...

How could she be persuaded?

Looking at Emma beside him, no longer filled with indignation and instead returning to calmness, Leon's heart couldn't help but feel a chill.

If Senior Emma had merely been provoked by the actions of the Golden Hibiscus Family, impulsively acting out of anger, he could have found a way to persuade her to hold on a little longer for Ellie's sake.

But viewing Senior Emma now, after her initial anger and a day's contemplation, she had calmed and truly understood what she intended to do; it was now impossible to stop her.

"What about Ellie?"

Holding onto his last hope, Leon tried to remind her,

"You said it yourself, Ellie will grow up. So why not wait, at least until she's a bit older, like..."

"Leon, you promised to respect my wishes."

"..."

"Actually, I know you're right, and if there was a better option, I might indeed not need to do this. But I've waited six whole years and truly don't want to wait any longer."

Giving a gentle smile to Leon, Emma reached out to smooth his furrowed brows, softly requesting,

"Let's end this topic here. Let's temporarily forget those annoying matters and help Ellie have a birthday without regrets, shall we?"

Chapter 406: Treasure and Handkerchief\_1

"Mother!"

While Emma and Leon were talking, little Ellie was very considerate and didn't disturb them, only occasionally casting a longing glance in their direction.

Once Emma finished her conversation and entered the garden, Ellie, unable to hold back any longer, ran over, gently tugged at Emma's skirt, and handed over something in her hand, as if presenting a treasure.

"Look, look!"

Were those... winter holly berries?

After identifying the small orange-red fruit in front of her, Emma smiled softly, bent down, and picked a leaf off Ellie's soft cap, saying,

"That's great, I thought all the holly berries in the garden had been eaten by the little animals... Where did you find them?"

"Over there!"

Pointing to a partially cleared bush, Ellie, with a bit of sweat on her forehead and a few specks of dirt on her nose, exclaimed with bright eyes,

"Sister Melanie took me in to see, and there were these red little berries, and lots of little dog footprints!"

Little dog footprints?

Emma was slightly taken aback and said in confusion,

"Are there dogs in the garden?"

"I don't know... but there really are lots of little footprints!"

Little Ellie shook her head excitedly and said,



"I've looked at every place in the garden so many times, but it's the first time I've known there are little dogs! William and the others are amazing! They just glanced and found footprints behind the bushes and discovered a secret path!"

A secret path? Is there really a secret path in the garden?

"Really! There's really a secret path!"

Seeing Emma's somewhat disbelieving look, little Ellie anxiously said,

"I'm not lying to you, after discovering the secret path, Melanie wanted to crawl in and take a look, Aunt Anna wouldn't let her, so William climbed a tree from the other side to trick Anna Aunt... ah!

Not! That... it wasn't cheating! It's just... just..."

"..."

\*Understood, it was a diversionary tactic to lure Anna away!\*

\*These two little rascals were even coordinating!\*

Watching little Ellie panic and cover her mouth after accidentally spilling the beans, Leon sighed inwardly and quickly walked into the garden, circling to the front of the bushes.

Sure enough, a small backside was wiggling halfway caught in a bush, with Melanie having squeezed into the so-called secret path, squirming and shouting muffledly,

"It stinks! It stinks! Pull me out!"

"Waaah! It stinks to death! Ellie! Ellie help!"

"..."

\*I just knew you two would cook up some nonsense!\*

After pulling apart the bushes and extracting Melanie, now looking like a mud monkey, Leon couldn't help but say with a stern face,

"What did you promise me yesterday? Forgot?"

"Ah? Big Brother?"

Seeing Leon's stern face, mischievous Melanie was startled, snapping out of her delight in discovering the secret path, and awkwardly pointed behind her saying,

"Um... there's a secret path! And there seemed to be something in there. I even grabbed a handful! It might be treasure!"

Treasure?

Looking at Melanie's little hand offering treasure, Leon suspiciously extended his palm but seeing her eager expression, he let her place the so-called treasure in his hand.

Hmm... dark brown, quite hard, slightly flat cylindrical shape, about a centimeter in diameter, and... it smelled a bit pungent...

"This seems like badger tracks."

Having followed holding her daughter, Emma pointed at the footprints on the ground with some amusement,

"The prints on the ground don't look like dog paws; they have five toes, and the front paws seem larger than the back ones, similar to a badger's footprint characteristics, so what they found should be a badger's den, not a secret path.

As for the treasure in your hand... uh... do you want to wipe your hand?"

"..."

\*A treasure dug out from a badger's den... isn't that just dried poop?!\*

Hearing Emma's judgment, Leon's hand shook and he quickly flung away the dried poop pellets, his face darkening several shades.

Little Ellie, upon finding the berries, eagerly brought them to Emma, while Melanie, after crawling out of the dog hole, gifted her big brother a handful of badger poop.

\*This contrast was truly stark...\*

As Leon glared at Melanie, who got him into trouble, while scrubbing his hand with a handkerchief, Anna, who had been "diverted," arrived from the opposite side with William, slightly out of breath.

"I knew it, you two are definitely up to something!"

Seeing Melanie covered in dirt, Anna, accustomed to mentally sparring with her siblings, instantly realized she had been tricked. She grabbed William by the ear, gritting her teeth and said to the embarrassed Melanie,

"The gifts I promised you two are canceled! Next week's allowance is also going to be deducted!"

"Wow! No!"

Although Melanie had guessed the gifts might be canceled, she hadn't expected the allowance would be deducted too, so she quickly looked towards her caring big brother, batting her big doe eyes, hoping someone would come to her aid, but alas...

"There's no use looking at me!"

Recalling the feel of those dry poop pellets, Leon resolutely said,

"The allowance must be deducted, and not just that, you have to wash the dirty clothes yourself today! You can't ask Anna for help!"

"Waaah!"

...

After the small storm stirred up by the "secret path treasure," Leon's family was invited by Emma into the small wooden cottage on the side of the garden.

Once the dust was patted off the three children's clothes, Emma pulled out two slightly damp towels, handing one to Anna, then gently held little Ellie in her arms and began to wipe her face tenderly.

Meanwhile, Anna pinched her mischievous sister's cheek with her left hand and vigorously scrubbed with the wet towel in her right, as if giving a bath.

"Gent... gently! It hurts!"

"Bear with it if it hurts! I can't be gentle!"

"But if it... uh, if it's like how little Ellie is being wiped, that'd be fine!"

"No way!"

With the towel, Anna scrubbed Melanie's forehead hard, making her little head red all over, saying angrily,

"Ellie just has a bit of loose dirt on her face, but your sweat and dirt have turned into mud; how can I wipe it off without some effort?"

"But... it hurts!"

Blocking the assault on her face, Melanie half pleaded with hope,

"How about you wipe William's face first? I can wait until Aunt Emma is done..."

"Endure it!"

"Oh..."

\*Humph, my foolish sister!\*

Seeing Melanie even at such a moment trying to drag him into the mess, William, whose face was equally filthy, glared at her with disdain, then crossed his arms and smirked, feeling a sense of superior intelligence.

Although it felt uncomfortable with mud smeared on the face, since Anna was fuming, the first to have their face wiped would surely suffer. So, he purposely stepped back slightly, letting her be the first, waiting until Anna's anger was spent before...

"William, come!"

Watching his sister and Emma tend to the kids while his hands were idle, Leon felt slightly awkward, so he pulled out a handkerchief from the Mirror World, gestured for William, and said,

"Don't wait for Anna, I'll help you wipe your face!"

Big Brother?

Hearing Leon's call, William thought for a moment; having Big Brother do it might not be so bad, so he nodded and walked over with a cool demeanor, tilting his little face up towards Leon.

"Ugh!"

"Big Brother, your handkerchief smells a little... stinky..."

Chapter 407: Gift and Return Gift

The handkerchief smells a bit?

Hearing his younger brother's muffled voice under the cloth covering his face, Leon suddenly remembered that the handkerchief, which he had just used to wipe the "treasure" Melanie discovered, might not smell so great. Hastily, he pulled it away and used his sleeve to vigorously rub William's face, chuckling awkwardly and deflecting,

"Maybe it wasn't wet enough, I'll go wash it first. Senior Emma, where's the water?"

"I'll do it."

After shooting Leon a slightly reproachful look, Emma, who had finished wiping her daughter's face, did not reveal the secret of Leon's handkerchief. Instead, she beckoned to William, used the clean part of the cloth, and gently began to wipe his face again.

With the strong bodily control of the Cleaner, Emma's movements, although tender and gentle, seemed to effortlessly remove the dirt from William's face with the naked eye. Witnessing this, Melanie, who was enduring the "torture" in agony, couldn't help but protest again,

"Sister Anna, see, you don't have to be so rough. How about I..."

"How about you either sit quietly or I deduct your pocket money for the week after next as well? Your choice!"

"Oh..."

As Anna brutally quashed Melanie's rebellion, the newly restored porcelain doll-like Ellie curiously approached Leon, examining this mysteriously endearing uncle.

"What's the matter?"

Although he knew that little Ellie wasn't truly a child but an anomalous object born from Senior Emma's longing for her daughter, Leon couldn't help but feel a surge of affection as he looked at the timid little girl trying to move closer to him.

Squatting slightly to level his eyes with little Ellie, Leon smiled and asked,

"Did you want to tell me something?"

"Uh..."

Still unaccustomed to conversing with people older than herself, Ellie timidly blinked and glanced back at Emma. Encouraged by Emma's look, she mustered the courage to say,

"I... I drew a picture a few days ago, it's... of you, and I wanted to give it to you..."

She drew a picture of me?

Hearing little Ellie's words, Leon couldn't help but be slightly taken aback, then felt a warm sensation in his heart as he nodded appreciatively, smiling and responding,

"Thank you... Where is the drawing?"

"It's in my room..."

Seeing that Leon didn't refuse, little Ellie breathed a sigh of relief, then nervously fiddled with the hem of her skirt with her small hands, hesitantly asking,

"If it doesn't look very good, would you still accept it?"

"Of course, I would."

Observing Ellie, who seemed so different from his own two mischief-makers at home and was so well-behaved it made his heart ache, Leon couldn't resist gently patting her head through the wide-brimmed soft hat. Then, getting up, he took her gloved little hand and made a courteous gesture.

"Miss Ellie, would you be willing to take me to see your artwork?"

"I am!"

Upon receiving Leon's positive response, little Ellie immediately broke into a big smile. Under Emma's gentle gaze, she led Leon inside and handed him a slightly crumpled piece of drawing paper.

The drawing, done in a naïve style, featured a large rectangular frame that slightly resembled a toppled-over coffin with a large dark hole at the top. In front of the frame, a mishmash of colors, reminiscent of paint factory waste, was spread out.



Three stick-like figures connected by lines floated above these dizzyingly colorful blocks, seemingly engaged in an evil ritual around a round, fiery object.

So... where am I?

Not daring to admit he didn't quite understand the piece, Leon bravely pointed to the only element he could identify, and complimented,

"Not bad, very bold color usage and an avant-garde style... um, are those flames?"

"They're candles!"

Candles, really!

Upon getting the hint, Leon secretly breathed a sigh of relief and continued guessing with the information.

Could this large round object, resembling a barrel of fuel with a horizontal stripe in the middle, be a birthday cake? Are those stick figures people holding hands?

And those colorful blocks beneath their feet, are they the garden? Is the toppled-over coffin a small wooden house? So, the true meaning of this painting is that people celebrating her birthday are dancing hand in hand around a birthday cake in the garden?

"It looks... It looks a little off... I'll fix it!"

Glancing up at Leon and then down at the stick figures in the drawing, little Ellie's face turned slightly red. She quickly took back the drawing, put a black coat on one figure, and placed two dots where the face would be, drawing a short downward-curved line for a mouth.

After modifying Leon's image, she decided to go all out. Gripping a crayon, she drew a tree in the garden, added a small stick figure on the tree reaching for a bird's nest, and placed a larger stick figure under the tree with hands on its hips, angrily looking up.

On the other side of the tree, in what appeared to be a bush, she drew a small stick figure with half its body diving into the bush, wiggling its backside furiously, capturing the entire stick figure family... capturing Leon's whole family in the drawing.

"This looks... it looks a little better now..."

After drawing some small black dots next to Melanie to imply the precious treasure she found in the secret passage, little Ellie finally sighed in relief after completing her second creation. With a flushed face, she handed the very abstract-looking drawing to Leon.

"For you, thank you for coming to celebrate my birthday."

"You're... you're welcome..."

With the corners of his mouth twitching slightly, Leon earnestly accepted the stylized piece of avant-garde art titled \*"Tentacle Monster Ravages the Waste River,"\* putting it away. He then crouched down and smiled as he said,

"I really like your gift, and I happen to have a birthday present for you too."

"Really?"

Hearing Leon's words, little Ellie asked with eyes full of surprise,

"What kind of gift?"

"It's not time yet~"

Feigning a mysterious smile, Leon didn't bring out the overnight custom-made fireworks but instead asked,

"Ellie, before I give the gift, could you take off your gloves and shake hands with me?"

Shake hands?

Hearing Leon's words, little Ellie hesitated slightly, then timidly nodded, taking off the gloves meant to block out the sun and placing her small hand into Leon's palm.

[Name: Jewel Flower's Woe (Soul, Life and Death, Reflection)]

[Appearance: A well-behaved girl who, although can grow normally, can only appear near the Treasure Flower Manor, temporarily turns transparent with excessive sun exposure]

[Ability: Soul Stabilization (limited), Resurrection (limited), Wish Reflection (region restricted)]

[Cost: None]

[File: After realizing the execution of the Bauhinia Family was inevitable, to save her daughter, Emma Alman used the location of the Bauhinia Family's Secret Vault as a price to demand protection from Leonard Kuko for her daughter.

To obtain the Bauhinia Family's amassed wealth, Leonard Kuko agreed to the deal. However, after confirming the vault location was accurate, and fearing the King's disfavor for sheltering the Bauhinia remnants, he directly broke the promise, personally drowning the less than one-year-old Ellie Alman in the lake...

...

When the naive soul returned to the world with her mother, the bodyless Ellie Alman could not revive and was on the verge of dissipating under the sunlight.

To keep her last family member, Emma Alman's strong wishes actively partitioned part of the "Sin of the Precious Flower's" power, combining the souls dispersed after the deaths of a large number of blood-related kin, creating this special anomalous object only "usable" within the Treasure Flower Manor...]

[Evaluation: When together with "Sin of the Precious Flower" Emma Alman, it should have gained the ability to regrow and repair from physical deaths six hundred and sixty-six times; however, due to its missing original body, this trait has never been able to activate]

[Contamination Value: 0.1]

\*As I suspected, but even better than I thought.\*

After reading little Ellie's "description," Leon couldn't help but smile. The shiny button on his cuff glimmered slightly, and a small children's firework appeared in Ellie's palm.

Next, the Desire Dream Invader, handcrafted by the Third Generation Director, activated, and a dreamlike flame quietly appeared, igniting the petal-like small colored paper at the firework's end, causing a small burst of splendid fireworks to spray from the gaps.

"Wow!!!"

"The real gift might not arrive today, so I'll give you this for now."

Holding Ellie's tiny hand, teaching her to use the end spark of the firework to trace circles in the air, Leon looked at the delighted little Ellie before him and extended his right pinky finger to her, smiling warmly as he said,

"If Ellie can do me a favor, and when you blow the cake candles tonight, wish for Senior Emma to stay home with you all day tomorrow, then I'll give you an even better gift. How does that sound?"

Chapter 408: The Plan Comes Together!

"Thank you, Leon."

Emma lovingly held her daughter Ellie, whose little head was nodding off after following William and Melanie around all day. She gently rubbed her cheek against the top of Ellie's head.

"Ellie really liked the fireworks you gave her. This isn't just the happiest birthday she's ever had, but it's also the happiest day I've had in years. To have such a joyful ending, I guess there are no regrets."

"It's nothing. Ellie is a very adorable child; I really like her too."

Facing Senior Emma's goodbye-like words, Leon, who had also made up his mind, didn't try to persuade her. Instead, he asked quietly with a calm expression,

"Senior Emma, are you ready? Even if it means being exiled to the Realm of the Dead by headquarters, will you go down with him?"

"Yes..."

Emma glanced at Leon with guilt, then nodded slightly and said seriously,

"All my kin are in the Realm of the Dead. My father, mother, grandfather... they're all still in the City of Regret. I should have gone with them six years ago; now I'm just going to the place I should have gone all along."

"I see... Since you've decided, I won't stop you."

Looking at William, who was still stubbornly eating cake yet poking his nose with the fork, and Melanie, who was already curled up in Anna's arms snoring with a wrinkled nose, Leon switched out the Performance Master. In a full-on act, he sighed and said goodbye with a mysterious demeanor,

"Senior Emma, then... goodbye."

Seeing the four parts melancholy, three parts solitude, and three parts indescribable regret in Leon's eyes, as if he were bidding a permanent farewell to something extremely precious, Emma felt a sharp pang in her heart. Words of persuasion nearly slipped out.

But the nearly two thousand days and nights of pain and regret over the past six years, coupled with the hatred sharpened by remorse, successfully held her rationality in place, transforming almost spoken promises into a similarly dry and low farewell.

"Goodbye."

After hearing her response, the last trace of hope faded from Leon's eyes. He gently nodded, then smiled bitterly and stood up from the table, taking Melanie from Anna's embrace.

"Anna, let's go."

"Okay, I'll go get the carriage."

After spending the whole day together, even though Leon and Anna had avoided talking to each other, sharp-minded Anna had already sensed the strange atmosphere between her brother and Sister Emma. To accommodate their emotions, she voluntarily led William out of the small log cabin early.

After Emma returned her daughter to bed, gently tucked her in, and silently walked Leon out of the cabin, she wrapped her arms around Leon's waist and gave him a soft hug. Her gentle eyes filled with apology as she whispered,

"I won't see you off... Leon, I... if only I had met you sooner."

"..."

\*It's not too late, at least not now!\*

Leon looked at her deeply, but he didn't reply; instead, he waved his hand, then slowly walked down the gravel path in the garden with the snoring Melanie in his arms.

"Since you're awake, get down and walk on your own."

"..."

"Stop pretending."

After walking for a while, Leon couldn't help but pause, patting Melanie's tense little bottom with annoyance,

"Who sleeps with their legs all tense? And snores faster than they breathe? If you're going to fake it, at least do it right!"

"Oh..."

After Leon exposed her act, Melanie, who was struggling to hold back her expression, relaxed her whole body. She opened her swirling eyes, glanced cautiously at Leon, then hugged his neck coquettishly and whispered shrewdly,

"Big brother, Aunt Emma... I mean... can we not visit Ellie anymore in the future?"

\*You're such a clever little thing!\*

Seeing that she clearly comprehended something, perhaps even guessing that Emma was saying a "permanent goodbye," Leon couldn't help but pinch her little nose, replying with irritation,

"What are you guessing at! Your Aunt Emma will be fine, and you can still visit Ellie when you and William aren't in school!"

"Oh..."

Melanie blinked her big, watery eyes, responding skeptically, then asked curiously,

"Then... just now, you..."

"Your Aunt Emma thanked me for helping Ellie have her birthday, so she hugged me in excitement, that's all... Oh, right!"

At this point, Leon narrowed his eyes "boss-like," then unkindly threatened,

"When we get back, if Anna asks, what you just heard and saw..."

"Heard what?"

Melanie blinked her big eyes.

"I was dreaming the whole time, dreaming that big brother bought me a new doll, and when I woke up, I was already in the carriage!"

\*Goodness, she's even taking this opportunity to blackmail me!\*

Rolling his eyes at the opportunistic Melanie, Leon replied with mock annoyance,

"Fine, I'll buy you one! But absolutely no next time! You really are..."

"Big brother's the best~"

Melanie giggled and gave Leon a peck on the cheek. After playing all day, she couldn't help but yawn, then closed her big eyes, curling up in Leon's arms like a kitten, murmuring softly in her sleep,



## Chapter 409: The Perfect Scheme! (2)

"" "Aunt Emma is a good person, Ellie is too, but big brother, you also need to take care of yourself, okay? You still have to buy me... a-choo... buy me a doll... whew... and always take care of me in the future... No excuses allowed..."

"..."

As expected, even though the [Performance Master's] ability was powerful, its effect wasn't great on those too familiar with oneself; it was easy for them to notice the differences from the usual.

Looking at his sister, who was snoring again in his arms while clutching tightly to his clothing with her little hands, Leon couldn't help but shake his head, and then he slightly curled up his lips.

"Yes, big brother guarantees it."

...

"Tap tap tap"

"Toot..."

Amidst the tapping of hooves and the long, sharp whistle, a carriage with its boiler puffing white steam slowly pulled over to the roadside.

"Number 35, Bridge Street, Happiness Apartment."

After handing over the fare he had prepared to the coachman, Leon stepped onto the carriage step and laid the sleeping Melanie on the seat, then lifted William, who was leaning against his leg, onto the coach, turning around with a hint of apology,

"Anna, today I'll first..."

"I know."

Pulling herself onto the coach and placing the sleeping Melanie on her lap, Anna interrupted Leon, biting her lip slightly,

"Sister Emma is a good person, but you're my only brother. You... I won't stop you from doing what you want, but remember to stay safe."

"..."

So you noticed too...

Seeing the mixed encouragement and worry in Anna's eyes, and Melanie who was frowning in her sleep in her arms, Leon felt warmth blooming in his heart and let out a thoughtful "Mm."

It seemed that although the [Performance Master] might fool an unfamiliar True God, it was always a poorly executed act easily discerned by his family, who knew him well and spent every day with him.

"Huh?"

At this moment, William, who was leaning against the seat back, tried hard to open his sleepy eyes, his little face full of confusion, and asked,

"What's going on? What's big brother going to do?"

"..."

Mm... but that's assuming the family isn't really dazed from sleep, or their emotional intelligence isn't lacking.

"Nothing."

Ruffling his younger brother's tousled little head, Leon replied with a smile,

"Big brother isn't going home today, I'm going to do something that if I don't do now, I'll definitely regret later."

"Oh, I see."

Nodding his head with understanding, William tried hard to open his eyes, his little face full of serious encouragement for Leon,

"Go for it, big brother! I read in 'The Great Emperor's Biography' that a real man doesn't fear before doing things, and doesn't regret afterward!"

What a load of nonsense...

"Just go back to sleep!"

Facing the words of advice from William, who was almost too sleepy to keep track of the conversation and went off-topic, Leon couldn't help but laugh and scold, then raised his hand to close the carriage door, bidding farewell to his brother and sister.

After checking the time, Leon suppressed the smile on his face, walked out of Redwood Avenue, and waved at another carriage waiting by the roadside.

"To the Municipal District, to the Police Department!"

"Sure!"

...

The carriage, also waiting at the Redwood Avenue junction, had earlier seen Leon's family preparing to catch a ride. It was just a step behind, losing out to a closer carriage.

Originally thinking that this fare was hopeless, it turned out the family didn't all board together, leaving one behind who intended to head to the distant Municipal District at night, quite a pleasant surprise indeed.

"One Silver Wheel for the trip... Please hop on!"

Accepting the Silver Wheel pre-paid by Leon, the coachman, who got an unexpected big fare before getting off work, cheerfully started a conversation,

"Are you a civil servant at the Police Department?"

Leon, whose steps felt a bit light, boarded the carriage and nodded,

"Yes, I am."

"Heading there so late... is it overtime?"

"Yes, exactly."

"Oh dear, having a case this late, your work at the Police Department is really tough!"

The quite chatty coachman slightly turned his head, glancing at the calm-faced passenger whose silhouette was a bit blurred in the night, and deliberately brightened the small lamp inside the carriage, enthusiastically continuing,

"Speaking of cases, The Sun News recently added a special column on unsolved cases, with a female reporter named Nicole digging up all the mysterious cases over the years in the Kingdom, bringing each to light and causing quite a stir. Are you heading back because of her?"

"Yes, that's exactly it."

"Ahaha, she has certainly troubled you a lot. From what I've heard from other Police Department passengers I've driven..."

"Toot..."

The sharp and long whistle sounded again, temporarily covering up the slightly noisy chatter from the coachman. The steam carriage carrying Leon pulled away from the roadside, heading towards the Municipal District.

Meanwhile, another Leon left by the roadside watched the "him" sitting upright in the carriage returning for overtime and nodded in satisfaction.

To outperform the Taurus Director, the third generation Director had indeed gone all out in creating the Anomalous Object for himself. With the materials upgraded from Holy Spirit fragments to a True God's weapon, the new main battle Anomalous Object's effects were fully upgraded.

Compared to the [Holy Spirit Pendant] that truly altered matter with spirit, the [Nightmare Invader] used the Dreamrealm's power to erode reality. Although it needed a "dreaming person" as a bridge to exert its erosive powers on reality, the consumption was far less.

Back when it was still the [Holy Spirit Pendant], merely briefly transforming hard stone bricks into a quagmire nearly drained Leon's strength, and could only be maintained for a very short few seconds before reverting.

Now, after merely chatting with the coachman for a couple of sentences, and expending roughly 1.5 Contamination Value worth of power, he successfully used the coachman's soul as a bridge to pull a dream named "Leon going back for overtime" into reality.

Only the coachman could clearly see the existence of "Dream Leon", appearing to others as merely a hazy shadow, but it still genuinely existed, even getting off at the Police Department to work a whole night shift at the Purification Bureau until it disappeared the next day when the coachman woke up.

And being the [Nightmare Invader] that created "Dream Leon" with just a few words, not only was the activation subtle, the power consumption low, and the effect duration long, but its functionality far exceeded the [Holy Spirit Pendant] produced by Taurus Director, notwithstanding the slight decrease in maximum destructive power.

The second-best Forge Master of Anomalous Objects, the third generation Director truly lived up to his reputation!

Quietly giving a thumbs-up to the square-headed old man in his heart, Leon turned on his heel with a somewhat drifting gait, walking opposite the direction of the steam carriage, concentrating on how to proceed shortly.

After all, while one might act out of anger, one must think thoroughly before acting, at the very least considering the consequences, or else it would be genuinely foolish!

Not to mention, if the Marquis Golden Lark suddenly dropped dead, the first reaction from headquarters would definitely be to question Senior Emma, likely turning their attention to himself as well.

Facing the [Nightmare Invader], reformed from a True God's weapon with high Hierarchy, the investigators from headquarters surely couldn't detect it. After all, if they could handle such matters, they wouldn't be mere investigators.

With those internal investigators' average level, they might at most find slight shock effects on the coachman's soul, providing no concrete evidence.

And these insufficient suspicions would offer wiggle room to wriggle out during any internal disputes, plus the "me" who left in the carriage and genuinely worked an entire shift at the bureau could help circumvent more basic lie detection methods.

After overcoming those points, all he would need to do is hold his ground.

With the trust of the Director and the Taurus Director, as well as the major accomplishment of exposing the Aquarius's plot and securing the Watcher's Palace, he practically was protected by a "halo" now. If there was no solid evidence, just a few suspicions, it was highly unlikely someone would persistently pursue him.

And if anyone tried to pursue him relentlessly, he planned to find a reason to retaliate, pushing them to go lick brains with the God Tier Brain-Eating Demon!

As for what reason to fabricate... wasn't it ready-made?

Whoever dared to suspect him, they would clearly be an agent who had received benefits from the Aquarius Director, scheming to persecute the heroes!

Mission accomplished!

#### Chapter 410: Night Raid (Part 1)

Late night, western Louther Arcade.

Unlike Redwood Avenue, which was dubbed the "noble district" by the residents of the Capital City and is home to many old noble estates, the western region of Louther Arcade, known as the "wealthy district," was also populated by many nobles, but rarely featured large estates.

As Louther Arcade was completed nearly a hundred years after Redwood Avenue, the Capital City no longer allowed land to be allocated for large estates. Additionally, most residents here were new nobility who rose through commerce, with much less political clout compared to the old nobility, resulting in a continual reduction in housing standards.

Owning several luxurious and exquisitely decorated townhouses here was considered "top-tier" within the "wealthy district." If such a residence had a moderately sized garden, its owner was often an influential figure in the political scene of the Capital City.

However, this rule was not absolute.

Even though the comprehensive construction of Louther Arcade occurred late, it was originally not barren land. Several older noble estates were incorporated into Louther Arcade, and the Verdant Feather Estate of the Cuckoo family was one such inclusion.

...

Strange, what exactly did the Marquis of Cuckoo aim to gain?

As Leon stepped onto the originally white but now deep yellow paving stones, eroded by centuries of rain, arriving near the entrance of the Verdant Feather Estate, he stared distantly at the opulent structure hidden amidst the forest foliage and couldn't help but furrow his brows slightly.

Frankly, although Bao Hua Manor had a larger area, the estate before him wasn't much smaller.

Moreover, the detailed engravings on the facades of the main building, the scattered marble statues in the garden, and the ornate patterns on the outer porch crafted by a master, all made the Verdant Feather Estate far more resplendent than the simple style of Bao Hua Manor.

\*So, have they gone mad? Abandoning their few-hundred-year-old house to seize Senior Emma's estate that's been abandoned for six years?\*

Filled with confusion, Leon emerged from the pitch-black night into the light outside the estate's gate, stepping into the range of the night sentry's vision, and gently opened his mouth.

"Meow~"

"Who is it?!"



Upon seeing a somewhat blurred silhouette approach, the guard on duty immediately became alert, instinctively wanting to call out his resting companion in the duty room to question the person's identity and why they would approach the Verdant Feather Estate alone at night.

However, at that moment, perhaps due to an excessive drop of oil within the lamp, the streetlight above suddenly flared up, turning the formerly soft night light glaringly bright, causing the sentry to squint involuntarily.

As he tried blinking his eyes and continued to look towards the figure, he found it was not a person but a cat with something hanging around its neck.

\*Strange... How could I have mistaken a cat for a human? The size difference is enormous.\*

Staring at the small cat, puzzled, he scrutinized it over and over, but no matter how he looked, it was only a short-legged cat with fluffy long hair, showing no sign of transforming into a catwoman. The sentry of the Cuckoo family had no choice but to hush at it and then retreated back to his original position, puzzled. However...

"MEOW!!!"

With a cat's furious cry, the gray and white cat turned into a blur of motion and dashed right in front of the sentry, quite savagely crashing him to the ground.

\*Did I... just get knocked down by a cat?\*

Before the stunned sentry could come to terms with this absurd situation, the small, short-legged cat used his chest as a stepping stone, leaping through the open window into the duty room.

Inside the duty room, the doorman responsible for the register only managed a shriek before falling silent, and the other two night shift guards, after a muffled grunt, fell silent as well.

???

Shocked by the unusual quiet from the duty room, the struggling sentry rushed over to take a look, finding himself utterly stunned at the sight; the three inside were already lying around in disarray.

The entire duty room was dotted with tiny cat prints, the strange little cat had vanished without a trace, yet there was a barely perceptible breathing sound coming from the back of his neck...

"MEOW!!!"

...

"Well done."

Leon whispered, catching the blurry small cat, scratching its chin with a finger, then gently flicked the small red fork hanging from his chest.

Accompanied by a dreamlike melody of pleasant chiming, the blurred gray and white cat vanished, leaving behind a key etched with a cuckoo pattern in Leon's palm.

\*Sorry, I'm not too familiar with this thing\* \*yet\*, \*so I might have been a bit heavy-handed\* \*but\*  
\*now you guys can enjoy an early clock-off.\*

Apologizing silently to the terrified and unconscious sentry, Leon dragged him through the window into the duty room, then used the key found by the dream cat to unlock the already locked door in front of him, and boldly entered the Cuckoo family's estate.

The "Nightmare Invader," crafted by his third generation grandfather using the weapon of the Lord of Lustful Dreams as the core material, had an extremely covert activation method.

As long as any form of "interaction" occurred with him, the target's soul would be agitated, and the Dreamrealm's power would briefly intervene in reality using his soul as a stepping stone.