

## I! Cleaner 42

Chapter 42 42: Witch's Broom\_1

Hearing the name of the power company he was about to investigate, Leon's expression slightly darkened. However, he quickly reacted, realizing it must be a coincidence, just like his own "Ryan," where one had collided with a surname and the other with a name.

The familiar company name stirred up memories, and thinking of the hundreds of patients still lying in the hospital corridors and the heart-wrenching cries he heard when visiting Anna, Leon's good mood rapidly dissipated.

He definitely couldn't afford the medical bills for hundreds of people. After the public water pipe incident, the price of anti-diarrheal medicine in the Old Town had skyrocketed more than fifty times, and the specialty supplement that could treat this epidemic was even more expensive, costing more than his entire year's salary could cover.

Even though there were only about four to five hundred severe patients on Red Brick Road, where the pain was unbearable, the epidemic had affected at least tens of thousands of residents in the Old Town. Many couldn't afford treatment and didn't know how many were holding on without money.

The only consolation was that the disease from contaminated water was not highly infectious. As long as one didn't directly touch excretions and vomit or stay in a confined space where these substances were highly volatile, most people remained safe.

However, the troublesome part was that the waterborne disease seemed difficult to heal on its own. At the very least, a dose of alchemical supplement was needed, but with the income levels in the Old Town, few could afford it.

The only solution he could think of to solve this problem was to find evidence of negligence by the Charl Power Company and the Department of Road Administration, and then escalate the issue to higher-ups in the Dynasty Kingdom or provide the information to a bold newspaper to force them to cover the cost of the medicine.

And if it still couldn't be resolved in the end...

"Customer?"

Seeing Leon's contemplative expression upon hearing his name, with emotions flickering on his face, the cunning business owner raised an eyebrow in surprise, then lightly called out,

"Customer, your meal is ready, and it's one and a half Copper Wheels."

"Oh, oh!"

Hearing the merchant's call, Leon snapped back to reality, responded twice, then, while grabbing his money, shook his head with an unpleasant expression,

"Sorry, your name just reminded me of something... And you're even older than my father. It's not right to call you by your name; I'll just call you Uncle!"

"Heh, alright, if you're willing to call a small vendor like me Uncle, how could I refuse?"

After bringing over the coffee and the plate with bread, the coffee vendor, looking at Leon, who seemed thinner and possibly younger than his own daughter, smiled kindly, then pulled over a rickety stool and sat next to him, warmly asking,

"Since you're calling me Uncle, I'll boldly ask a couple of questions: When you mentioned the Charl Company just now, your expression wasn't very good... Have you had any unpleasant dealings with that company?"

"Umm... sort of..."

After a slight hesitation, Leon didn't mention his plans to investigate the Charl Power Company but instead talked about Anna being injured in a "gas pipeline explosion."

Ah, so you are the one who refused compensation.

"Your family has had a tough time then."

Hearing Leon's story, the coffee vendor blinked and then sighed,

"Your sister is already ill, and now you have to deal with this misfortune... How about this, since you called me Uncle, whatever you order from now on, I'll give you half off, would you like that?"

???

Wow... does calling you Uncle work so well?

Seeing the coffee vendor across from him suddenly overwhelmed with sympathy, Leon raised his eyebrows in surprise, a bit flustered by this unexpected kindness.

Yet, before he could figure out how to respond, the cunning merchant smiled softly, returned half a Copper Wheel, and added,

"Of course, since you called me Uncle, remember to stop by often and support my business, alright?"

"..."

Got it, calling you Uncle is like signing up for a membership card with you, isn't it?

Honestly, if I were the kind of person who couldn't refuse, no matter how cheap other vendors were, I'd likely feel obligated to stick with your stall. If I had breakfast at a different stall in front of you, I'd probably feel guilty for at least half a week... You really go to great lengths to retain customers, that's why you're successful.

Realizing this was likely another customer-retention trick, Leon smiled but said nothing more, choosing simply to agree.

After all, even though this coffee vendor was a bit pricey, it was definitely the most comfortable stall on the street, and now, with them offering a discount to turn him into a regular customer, there was no reason to refuse.

Quickly finishing his bread and ham, and bidding farewell to his newly found Uncle, Leon, feeling warm from the inside out, wrapped Anna's handmade scarf around his neck and stepped once again into the chilly autumn morning wind.

After he left, a regular, watching by the stove, came over with a cup of coffee and teased with a wink,

"Old Char!! I've been drinking coffee at your stall for seven or eight years and never seen you, the penny pincher, willingly offer a discount! What got into you today? Unless you're trying to marry off your daughter by getting to know that young man and bringing him into the family?"

"Heh, that's not it~ I just felt a connection with the young man, noticing he might be struggling lately, so I thought I'd help out a bit to encourage him to support my business."

Waving a hand to dismiss the notion, while watching Leon's departing figure, the coffee vendor chuckled,

"But I wouldn't mind. I think the young man seems quite nice, though a bit thin, he's tall enough and has a refined look. And you see, the direction he's heading in, with only the administrative buildings ahead, he must have a proper job. Also, even to a coffee vendor like me, he's always very polite... Yes, quite a good kid."

Recalling other details he'd heard from his daughter, Amy, the coffee vendor slightly arched an eyebrow. After chatting idly with the regular for a bit, he returned to his seat, staring at the black canvas top of the coffee stall, and thoughtfully stroked his graying chin stubble.

People tend to hide themselves around familiar faces and in familiar surroundings. It's only in the presence of tempting prospects and in the company of strangers, whose lives seem detached from theirs, that they reveal their true selves just a bit.

What this boy inadvertently revealed is rather uncommon... Yes... courteous, serious, diligent, and quite sharp—if Amy likes him, I really have no reason to oppose...

But the problem is, we only accept matrilocal marriages, not patrilocal ones. I wonder if he would agree?

...

Unaware of being considered for a matrilocal marriage, by the time Leon arrived at the Purification Bureau braving the cold wind, he opened the door to his office to see the new anomalous object—that the Red-haired Director had mentioned—a black broom floating in midair.

[Name: Lazy Witch's Rental Broom (Corruption, Flight, Protection)]

[Appearance: A hard wood broom entirely painted black, adorned with a few crow feathers at the top, along with a persistent light scent of pine, and occasionally small cat paw prints appear on the broomstick.]

[Ability: Magic Reinforcement, Flight, Airflow Shielding]

[Cost: Every Friday at 3:30 PM, a feline will knock on your door; please be sure to host it well.]

[File: A decommissioned broom from an unknown witch, who needed it rented out every Friday so she could play flying ball games, leaving her beloved cat in need of care. Hence, an agreement was made with the Lion Sub-bureau of the Purification Bureau to trade the broom's rental for the user's weekly care of her cat.]

[Evaluation: A simple and practical anomalous object, that also allows free cat petting; a favorite of Beverly, the Lion Bureau Director.]

[Contamination Value: 0.5]