

I! Cleaner 421

Chapter 421: Daily Life and Eating

The next day, at the Purification Bureau, next to Leon's office.

"Emma! My dear Emma!"

After touching her own empty wallet, the "Red-haired Director," known for her cunning, pulled her best friend's arm and pleaded with a wretched look,

"Can you... can you lend me some more money?"

"Not necessarily."

Glancing at her expressionlessly, Emma lowered her head to keep working on her documents and said coldly,

"Went drinking again yesterday?"

"Uh-huh..."

"Then no."

"..."

"Director Olivia, I haven't finished my purification report. Do you have anything else?"

"No more..."

"Then please go."

Watching her best friend coldly pointing her hand towards the door, the Red-haired Director reluctantly moved toward the door, hoping to hear someone change their mind.

But as fate would have it, even when the Red-haired Director slowly drifted into the hallway, the door with the "Emma Alman" nameplate firmly closed, she still didn't hear the tender call she once longed for.

Heartless woman...

With a sigh, the Red-haired Director quietly knocked on the door next door and called out sweetly,

"Leon~ Dear Leon, are you in?"

"Come on in!"

At that moment, the door that just slammed shut mysteriously reopened, and Emma, filled with disdain, appeared at the entrance and pulled her into her office.

"Last time! Tell me, how much do you need to borrow this time?"

Huh?

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Seeing Emma's sudden change of heart, the Red-haired Director raised an eyebrow slightly, then smirked subtly and said meaningfully,

"Emma~ Why did you suddenly change your mind? Could it be..."

"Do you still want to borrow or not?"

"Yes!"

Seeing the increasingly hostile look in her best friend's eyes, to avoid provoking the 'money god,' the Red-haired Director quickly swallowed her teasing words, then raised her right hand and gestured.

"Not much, just five Gold Wheels this time!"

Only this much? Considering it's you, it's really not much.

Somewhat surprised, Emma looked at the Red-haired Director, opened her wallet, counted out five Gold Wheels, and handed them over, then curiously asked,

"Why are you borrowing so little this time? Usually, when you ask me for money, you start with three or fifty, right?"

"This time... the situation is a bit special..."

With a look full of gloom, the Red-haired Director said,

"Yesterday, after drinking until midnight and paying, when I picked up the leftover drinks to return to the bureau, I suddenly realized I'd forgotten my wallet. When I went back, the waiter told me that someone had already taken my wallet, and he didn't remember the person's face either. So this time, I don't need to borrow much. Just enough to get by these few days until Jerry finishes his task and can get his 'friends' to help find my wallet."

"..."

So you're a Zodiac Bureau's Director of Purification, a powerful figure with a record of slaying True Gods, yet you drank so much you forgot your wallet? Are you serious?

Blinking speechlessly, Emma stuffed the Gold Wheels into the Red-haired Director's hand and reminded her in annoyance,

"In those places you go, the drinks are very expensive, and the patrons generally aren't short on money. They usually wouldn't take others' wallets, and that waiter seems very suspicious as well. Generally speaking, in high-end bars, if a waiter notices a guest has lost a wallet, most would help store it; if they didn't notice, they'd simply say they didn't know. Even if they saw someone else take it, to avoid taking responsibility, they'd likely say they didn't know. But he specifically told you that someone had taken it without remembering the person's face, which is quite strange. Though it may not be him who took it, he probably didn't tell you the truth."

After analyzing the situation, Emma suggested,

"How about this: tell me the name of that place and what the waiter looks like. I'll ask Leon to swing by after work to see what's really going on."

"Well... once Jerry returns to the bureau, he'll be able to directly retrieve my wallet, so it's better not to trouble Leon with it."

Recalling what she said to Leon when inviting him to drink yesterday, the Red-haired Director's face flushed slightly, and an unaccustomed feeling of shame rose in her heart.

"Keep in mind, when someone has a weakness known to all, you'd better be careful."

' Learn from this, Little Lyon~ You're still too green~'

The statements that felt so cool yesterday and left Little Lyon shocked became rather poignant after she had drunk herself into forgetting the wallet.

If Little Lyon finds out, she'd probably be too embarrassed to see him all week...

"..."

Hold on, if we're talking, let's do it right. Why are you blushing?

Seeing the Red-haired Director's slightly shy cheeks, and recalling how she and Leon's lips swelled together in the Realm of the Dead, Emma's heart skipped a beat, then she gritted her teeth and asked,

"Olivia! Did you... say something to Leon again after I left yesterday?"

???

Hearing Emma's question, the Red-haired Director's heart also skipped a beat, then instantly returned to her usual composed expression and calmly asked in return,

"What?"

Damn! You can fool others but not me! Whatever you say with that expression can't be trusted!

Biting her lip, Emma didn't respond but got up and walked towards the door.

As for the Red-haired Director, who was clueless about what went wrong, she instinctively called out to stop her,

"Wait, he's not in there! Leon has already left!"

Hearing the Red-haired Director's words, Emma paused slightly, then turned her head and looked at her suspiciously.

"He really isn't here."

Seeing Emma stop, the Red-haired Director let out a sigh of relief and quickly said,

"It's already noon. Before you came back, Leon went to the police department cafeteria for lunch."

"Really?"

"Really!"

"Then why did you knock on his office door knowing he wasn't there?"

"..."

...

"Steady now!"

After piling five or six pieces of fried cod onto Leon's tray, the cafeteria lady at the Police Department shook her wrist and scooped a full ladle of beef, pouring it all with broth over the rice.

"Alright, off you go! If it's not enough, come back for more!"

"..."

More? If I come back for more, I'll be stuffed to the point of bursting...

Staring at the amount of food enough for two grown men, not sure where he had caught the cafeteria lady's favor, Leon, practically full already, could only smile bitterly and request,

"Uh... could I..."

"Tomorrow is green pea salmon, roast chicken, and mushroom cream soup. Check the menu at the entrance for the rest... Finish up and move along, we've got people waiting!"

"..."

I wasn't asking about tomorrow's menu; I was asking if you could give me a bit less...

With a line of towering police officers hungrily gazing from behind, Leon hunkered down, carrying his tray away from the serving station and settled at his usual spot, staring at the plate full of food with dismay.

That's way too much... This pile of food could probably feed even a pig until it's about seventy percent full, right?

But just as Leon took a deep breath, deciding he'd rather risk overeating than waste food, a pig, oh no... a familiar figure carrying a tray, sat in the empty seat across from him.

"Knew you'd be here!"

Slapping her tray onto the table, the female officer with two big dark circles under her eyes said seriously,

"Leon! I need your help with something!"

"Okay... but first, you need to help me out!"

Seeing his savior arrive, Leon nodded eagerly, and he hastily used the female officer's spoon to scoop half of his stew onto her tray.

"Help me eat a couple pieces... Aunt Diana piled up my plate so much today it's a bit too much..."

Chapter 422: Caught in the Crossfire

"Sure, it's a bit much..."

Leon observed the towering stack of dishes in front of him and nodded silently. The female police officer, still eating from Leon's plate, leaned in and whispered conspiratorially,

"Leon, you know that big scandal from a while back? The Secret Investigation Bureau has finished looking into it. It was probably those radical Rebels!"

A while back?

"You mean the Marquis who drowned himself?"

"Go back further!"

If I think further back...

Leon felt a slight twitch in his heart, then cautiously responded,

"Do you mean..."

"Of course, I'm talking about the Boarding Tower being set on fire! Haven't you read the newspapers?"

"..."

"You really haven't read them!"

The female officer looked at Leon in disbelief and couldn't help but chide,

"Even though that's not exactly our department's business, you're still part of the police force. Surely a subscription to 'The Police Gazette' is a must?"

"..."

It's not about subscribing—it's because I was the one who set the Boarding Tower on fire. The artificial intelligence inside the Sky Clipper is even now collecting dust in my Mirror World.

And besides, you had something to do with it too. After all, the counterfeit documents and uniforms I used to get past the defense lines were obtained from the unlisted stock in your police department.

"Forget it, if you haven't read it, you haven't read it,"

Unaware that she was part of the Boarding Tower attack, the female officer shook her head. She abandoned attempts to explain the importance of newspapers to Leon and decided to bring him a subscription the next time she got one, then gravely added,

"If you don't know about the Boarding Tower incident, just know that it was set on fire, and a very valuable special Sky Clipper was lost too. The Crolock Kingdom heard the news and was extremely angry. They applied direct pressure on the Kingdom through the ambassador, demanding results within two months. Even if they couldn't catch the criminals, they at least had to recover the core components of the missing Sky Clipper."

"So... this task was dumped on your shoulders?"

"What did you think?"

She dug into a large spoonful of rice pudding, taking a few vengeful bites before the tired-looking female officer said helplessly,

"Who else would they turn to for finding criminals and retrieving things other than us in the police department? The leeches in the finance ministry?"

"Leon, did you know? After the Crolock Ambassador sent an official note saying that economic relations would be severed if no results were seen within a month and the Sky Clipper transportation routes would be temporarily shut down, the top brass in the Capital City panicked! The Princess, the Prime

Minister, the Minister of Defense, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Finance... For the past few days, the upper echelons have been taking turns exerting pressure. Except for the Princess, who offered some help, everyone's tone has grown more severe. In just a few days, the Minister of Public Safety's hair has turned grey with worry... You should hurry up and eat while listening to this. If you don't, your food will get cold!"

"Oh, oh!"

Sticking a piece of fried cod into his mouth, Leon chewed thoughtfully as he frowned,

"No wonder there are so few officers coming to eat recently, and they all look like they haven't had a good night's sleep in days, just like you. Have they all been dispatched?"

"Yes, exactly!"

Taking a piece of apple pie from Leon's plate, the female officer said dispiritedly,

"Especially our Secret Investigation Bureau, since we've always been the ones dealing with the Rebels, we've been scolded the most. The new bureau chief is being yelled at every day by the Minister of Public Safety, and he comes back covered in spit to yell at us... Look over there!"

As she spoke, she pointed with her fork to their side. Following her motion, Leon saw a police officer with even darker circles under their eyes than Yisha, hunched over at the dining table, lifelessly poking at mashed potatoes with a spoon, nodding off now and then.

Honestly, watching that chicken-pecking rice way of eating made Leon seriously doubt if he knew where his spoon was. He seemed ready to shove it up his nose at any moment.

"He was on duty with the external affairs team yesterday, and just returned this morning after finishing a patrol. Once he's done eating, he still has to go back for a meeting..."

Looking sympathetically at the weary colleague who seemed on the verge of death, the female officer said with a full look of dread,

"He is on the third round of patrol duties, which is already much easier. Those of us who went on the first round of patrols haven't slept for over 70 hours. We ran through most of the Capital City, and when we finally came back, we felt like we were going to die... I really can't believe it! Those Rebels must be out of their minds! With all that free time, why not take out the Minister of Finance? Even attacking the Royal Palace would be better! Why did they have to attack the Boarding Tower? Honestly, I'd rather they went back to trying to assassinate my dad as they did before than going through this kind of overtime... Over 70 hours, I don't even know how I managed to survive!"

"..."

Oh, well... Sorry, when I planned the attack on the Boarding Tower, I really didn't know it would lead to this...

"Hey... Yisha..."

Seeing the female officer gnawing on a fish bone in a mix of anger, ready to curse the "Rebels" at any moment, Leon—mastermind of the Boarding Tower incident and cause of the whole police department's overtime—sheepishly said,

"What was that help you needed from me?"

"Oh right, almost forgot..."

Unladylike, she spat out the fish bone and raised her head, looking at Leon with hopeful eyes,

"Does your Purification Bureau have anything that can find people, or... anyone who's really good at finding things? Although there's more than a month before the Crolock Kingdom's maximum deadline, I'm going for the fourth round of patrols tomorrow. If we don't find anything, we might have to do eight or nine more rounds... boo-hoo..."

After swallowing a huge mouthful of stewed beef, it was hard to say if she was more scalded or tortured by the foreseeable hellish overtime of the next two months, as her eyes filled with rare tears and she pleaded,

"Please Leon, could you give me a hand? Even if you can't find the criminals who attacked the Boarding Tower, retrieving what the Crolock Kingdom lost would be enough! At this rate, I'm worried I really won't hold up..."

"..."

I'd like to help you, but the problem is that the culprit who attacked the Boarding Tower is the very person sitting across from you, eating, and the thing the Crolock Kingdom wants is right in my cufflink... I can't exactly arrest myself and hand me over, can I?

"Sorry, I don't think I can help with that..."

Apologizing silently to Yisha, who was unwittingly caught up in the fallout, Leon—knowing she'd never find the answers no matter how hard she'd try—cautiously suggested,

"How about this, I'll get our director to write a note saying there's a special situation requiring cooperation. Then you could use the note to take a break, sneak into my office, and rest for a few hours, just to take a breather?"

Chapter 423: Overjoyed

Was he making an excuse to be a bit lazy?

After hearing Leon's suggestion, the policewoman couldn't help but feel a slight stir in her heart. She instinctively wanted to agree, because even an extra hour of sleep seemed like a luxury, given how busy they'd been.

However, just then, she heard a loud bang next to her. Not far away, a male police officer, who was nodding off like a chicken pecking at grain, knocked his head into his own plate. If it weren't for a colleague nearby pulling him away, he might have fallen to the ground.

"Never mind..."

Glancing at the unlucky colleague, the policewoman couldn't help but sigh with a hint of melancholy, saying helplessly,

"Everyone is working so hard, if I slack off by myself, *I'd really feel guilty... Besides, I've been promoted quickly enough in the past two years. Many at the bureau already think I got my position through connections, and I don't want to give them more to gossip about.*"

"Alright then."

Casting a slightly admiring glance at the policewoman, Leon, feeling helpless, continued eating in silence. As the policewoman scooped some mashed potatoes, she suddenly remembered something and asked with concern,

"By the way, last time you asked for an order from me, saying you needed it to take some people on a dangerous mission and wanted to borrow some items from the Secret Investigation Bureau's spare parts depot. Have you returned those things yet?"

Those things... Although Senior Pioni returned to the bureau yesterday, those documents and uniforms should still be with the Rebels...

"Not yet..."

Knowing what he had used those items for, Leon replied with a slightly evasive look,

"Why? Does your bureau check the spare parts depot?"

"They generally don't check."

The policewoman shook her head,

"The management of the spare parts depot is lax; they might not check it for years. Yesterday, when I was helping with inventory, I even discovered that the depot's keepers had been embezzling. They've secretly been selling some items that aren't too sensitive for three years now."

Having withstood various kinds of scrutiny, Leon's voice was utterly calm. The policewoman, while eating, didn't notice anything unusual, and casually complained to Leon as though chatting at home,

"You know? A lot of people in our bureau basically don't keep track of stuff. If no one had attacked the Boarding Tower, those two rats could have easily gotten away with it, and the guys who just focus on catching people wouldn't have noticed the depot's issues.

But now everyone's working in overdrive, and the consumption of supplies has been too severe. They've ended up using everything in the depot, and when the numbers didn't add up, they did an inventory. I was even asked to help.

Soon after I submitted the report this morning, those two keepers embezzling materials were caught. So if you're done with them, you'd better return the items, explain the reason for borrowing, and make a proper record.

Though those keepers embezzled a lot of stuff and fake accounting over the past three years, it's not like they'd miss just a little of what you took, but better to confirm inventory so it doesn't look like I'm colluding to steal Bureau supplies."

"Oh..."

There was still no possibility of returning them, never in this life. When passing through checkpoints, the serial numbers of those passes had been noted down. Returning them would cause havoc.

Quickly finishing what was on his plate, Leon picked up the soup bowl from the policewoman's plate and gulped a mouthful, forcing the food down. He hurriedly stood up to take his leave,

"Well, I've got tasks to do today, so I'm off now!"

"That's my soup! And you... ah never mind, go, go!"

Eating in such a hurry, it seems Leon's tasks at the Purification Bureau aren't easy as well...

Watching Leon rush off, and seeing other colleagues not far away slumped in their chairs snoring, the policewoman couldn't help but empathize, letting out a sigh, and quickly finished the pudding on her plate. She then collected her and Leon's plates to the wash area, leaving the canteen and heading swiftly back to the Secret Investigation Bureau.

...

"Yisha! Come with me quickly!"

As she entered the Secret Investigation Bureau's first-floor hall, a familiar middle-aged female police officer came jogging over with excitement written all over her face,

"To the small meeting room on the third floor! There's a major discovery just now!"

A major discovery?!

That would mean a possibility of catching the culprits, retrieving the lost items of the Crolock Kingdom, and finally escaping this hellish overtime.

Hearing the words of her colleague, the policewoman couldn't hide a joyful gleam in her eyes, darting like a mother leopard into the stairwell, taking the stairs two at a time, heading straight to the small meeting room at the corner labelled "Temporary Command Center."

"Everyone! I have three exciting pieces of good news in my hand!"

The middle-aged man at the podium, whose speech was interrupted by the cheerful arrival of the policewoman, nodded kindly at her before continuing with his spirited speech,

"Over the past few days, my team has completed the investigation of all seven groups of checkpoints at the Boarding Tower, totaling 2,300 Guard Troops, and obtained the complete list of individuals who passed through the checkpoints on that day.

The first piece of good news is, after enduring sleepless nights and dedicated efforts for three days by the investigation team members, *we've ruled out 37 groups of people with normal travels, and narrowed our target down to five suspicious groups!*"

Only five groups left? *That truly was huge news!*

Hearing the newly appointed director of the Secret Investigation Bureau's announcement, the policewoman felt revitalized, the dark circles under her eyes fading a bit.

Given the current efficiency at the bureau, they could investigate these five groups thoroughly within a week, let alone fifty groups! It meant the case of the Rebels attacking the Boarding Tower was close to being solved!

Observing the delighted expressions on the officers below the podium, the man on stage nodded in satisfaction. Unable to restrain the upturn of his lips, he smiled widely and added,

"Regarding the second piece of good news... following the inventory of the spare parts depot this morning, four of these five groups can largely be ruled out!"

"What?!!!"

"Doesn't that mean we've already identified the target?"

"Praise the heavens! Finally no more overtime!"

"Director, you're amazing!"

Witnessing the commotion below, followed by admiring gazes directed at him, the middle-aged man on the podium couldn't help but press his lips tightly, trying to maintain the composure befitting a director.

However, when considering the significant merit awaiting him once the case was resolved, and his likely rise in career standing, he ultimately couldn't hold back, joy spread across his face as he announced,

"Indeed! We've preliminarily identified the target. Once we locate this group of individuals, there's a high probability of closing the case directly!"

"Fantastic!!!"

"The director never disappoints!"

"Get them! Get them!"

"Silence!"

Raising his hand to quiet the exhilarating atmosphere, the middle-aged man looked at Yisha, whose excitement mirrored those of her other colleagues, and thinking of her linkage to the Minister of Defense, he waved warmly at her.

"Lastly, besides the efforts made by myself and the investigation unit members, for this good news to be discovered, we owe thanks to one person..."

As the perplexed policewoman stepped onto the podium, the middle-aged man smiled and said,

"While everyone was overwhelmed with work and didn't want to focus on other matters, only Yisha diligently verified inventories, identifying most missing items from the spare parts depot!

To my embarrassment, when she submitted the inventory results this morning, I initially thought it was a fuss over nothing to divert attention from such critical times and check on objects nobody cared about.

However, with a spirit of responsibility, I glanced at her report. To my utter shock, I discovered that the serial numbers of the missing police credentials coincidentally matched the ones used by one of those five groups!"

Having deliberately emphasized his own conscientiousness, as well as a keen eye for suspicious numbers, the middle-aged man shared gleefully,

"While we'd run checks on these numbers before, proving them to be false leads involving already discarded police numbers, we focused on suspect individuals with access to the seal and didn't delve deeper.

Thanks to Yisha's diligence, we've now obtained pivotal new leads! Applause for her!"

"Oh!!"

"Yisha! Yisha!"

"Another overtime and I'd have been dead... Yisha, you saved my life!"

"Well... I honestly just stumbled upon the clue, no need to overstate it..."

Receiving overly grateful looks from her colleagues and feeling a bit embarrassed, the policewoman, despite her cheeks being slightly flushed with joy, waved her hands repeatedly and quickly changed the topic,

"Director, you mentioned three pieces of good news earlier. What's the last piece of news?"

"The final piece of news is, we've now identified partial features of the key suspect!"

The middle-aged man smiled and elaborated,

"According to the accounts from the two depot keepers, despite not having documented it, they vaguely recalled someone picking up the credentials and clothing before the Boarding Tower attack occurred, using a slip from a Secret Investigation Bureau member.

Though the lights in the depot were dim, making it seem like there was a haze over the person's face, they didn't remember the details too well, that slip also suddenly disappeared, but it seemed to be a slender young man wearing a black old coat!

As long as we find this person next, and ask about the whereabouts of those items, there's a strong chance we'll catch the entire group in one go! We are really just one step away from closing this case now!"

"Fantastic!"

"The case is closing! Finally closing!"

"Yisha! Yisha! You're my lifesaver, my Goddess!"

Amid the enthusiastic cheers of the secret police below, the middle-aged man laughed heartily, patting the policewoman's shoulder in full admiration and praise,

"We have you to thank for all this!

If it weren't for your meticulous efforts, we, going off in wrong investigative directions, would still have had to spend at least a month reaching this point, by which time the criminals might have fled!

Haha, remarkable! Next time I meet your father, I'll definitely... huh? What's wrong? Aren't you happy?"

"Happy... Very happy!"

Hearing the middle-aged man's query, amidst the director's previous words were a number of familiar descriptions. The policewoman bit firmly on her small white teeth, then smiled with subdued fury, with her eyes full of killing intent,

"I'm so thrilled!!!"

Chapter 424: The Pink Enigma

"Director!"

When all the officers of the Secret Investigation Bureau were out searching for a suspicious suspect, Leon hurried back to the Purification Bureau and knocked on the director's office door.

"I'd like to request half a day off!"

After making his request, Leon knitted his brows and said,

"The police department is investigating the attack on the Boarding Tower. Due to the urgency at the time, many things weren't done discreetly enough. I'm worried they might find something.

Director, please grant me a half-day leave this afternoon. I want to make contact with the Rebels I was with during the Boarding Tower attack and erase some rather obvious traces we left."

"Alright."

After listening seriously to Leon's request, the Red-haired Director, who was pouring tea into a liquor bottle, paused before taking a sheet of paper out of the drawer and handing it to him.

"You don't need to take leave; I'll count it as fieldwork for you. But, after you finish your business, there's another task you need to complete."

Is there a new mission?

Hearing the Red-haired Director's words, Leon's expression slightly tensed, and he picked up the note on the table to read.

After six o'clock in the evening, go to the VIP section of the Pink Mystery Bar on Canal Street and look for a waiter named Jacob. Ask him if he picked up a wallet left by a customer at the bar yesterday.

"Okay."

Firmly committing the contents of the note to memory, Leon asked seriously,

"Director, what's with this Jacob? Is he a naturally awakened Anomalous Object holder? A servant of some Evil God? Or perhaps a remnant of the Scales Gold Sect?"

"..."

He's none of those, just an ordinary waiter. He probably just secretly took the wallet I left on the counter...but how could I say that to you?

"He... it's a bit complicated to explain, and you have things to do later, so I won't say much..."

After mumbling a few incoherent words, the Red-haired Director nodded slightly and said with a serious face,

"In any case, you must handle this matter cautiously. Keep contact with him to a minimum, and don't ask anything unrelated to the task, especially regarding the owner of the wallet. Otherwise, it'll easily alert him!"

Not even asking for the name or characteristics? It seems the owner of that wallet has quite the background...

"I understand."

Taking the director's earnest advice to heart, Leon tentatively asked,

"What if that waiter named Jacob didn't take the wallet? Do you need me to figure out a way to get it back?"

"Hmm?"

The Red-haired Director seemed surprised and said,

"Aren't you only good at finding people? Since when did you have the ability to find things?"

"It's not that I can find things, but I can use the method of infiltrating dreams to indirectly explore someone's memories."

Pointing to the "Lust Dream Invader" hanging inside his shirt, Leon said,

"I recently discovered this usage. After enough interactions with the target, I can temporarily drag him into a dream and replay some events that happened before.

"If the target has a deep enough memory of something, I can follow and watch that part of his memory in his dream, gaining some relevant intelligence."

So, if that waiter didn't take my wallet but saw who did, you could replay the situation from that night in the dream and see the thief's face and build?

This ability is really something, perfectly tailored for a Cleaner!

After listening to Leon's explanation, the Red-haired Director was slightly moved. But remembering the times he acted bravely in front of Leon, a strong sense of shame rushed over him, and he quickly shook his head in refusal,

"No need, no need! You just need to confirm whether he took the wallet, and don't do anything else."

"Oh..."

Hearing this, Leon couldn't help but slightly wrinkle his brows.

*It seems the opponent this time isn't to be underestimated, and might even be very dangerous, which is why the Director doesn't want me to have much contact with the person.

Also, seeing the Director's cautious demeanor, could that wallet be an Anomalous Object with space-related features, containing many dangerous items inside?*

"You go take care of your tasks first!"

Seeing Leon's thoughtful frown, worried he might ask something that would give it away, the Red-haired Director quickly urged him out,

"Remember, safety first this time. You just need to handle what's on the note, and don't do anything else. Leave the rest to me!"

"Okay!"

Seeing the Red-haired Director emphasize safety repeatedly in these critical times, Leon's heart warmed slightly. He nodded earnestly and left the director's office.

After Leon left, the Red-haired Director, who had been sitting upright with a serious face, couldn't help but let out a sigh of relief and took a swig from the tea-filled whiskey bottle.

Now I really hope that the wallet was indeed taken by that waiter.

I accidentally let it slip earlier, and in her anger, Emma took back the money she lent me, and who knows when Jerry will return and find the wallet.

If Leon doesn't succeed in finding my wallet, there won't be anything to drink for the next few days... Maybe I should submit a report to the Safety Department Minister suggesting the cafeteria supply some alcoholic beverages?

...

Unaware that the "important task" he accepted was actually just private business of an irresponsible director, Leon arrived punctually on Joyful Street, where the target bar was located, just as the sun was setting.

As one of the busiest streets near the port in the Canal area, every ship passing through the Capital City brings a large flow of customers to Joyful Street upon entering the canal district port, along with a crowd of visitors seeking relaxation.

Thus, this place housed more bars and nightlife spots than anywhere else in the Capital City, a lively world that sleeps quietly during the day and comes alive only at night. The Pink Mystery Bar, where Leon's target was, was the most dazzling night pearl in this street that only awakened at six in the evening.

"Sir, we're approaching the Pink Mystery's water gate."

Pointing to the arched structure resembling a bridge ahead, the boatman in a vibrant pink uniform expertly maneuvered the similarly pink-painted oar to guide the small boat rightward along the artificial waterway, then said with a beaming smile,

"Is this your first time here? Pink Mystery is divided into nine different sections, with no roads or bridges connecting them, only water channels. Where would you like to go? You should decide now."

"..."

This place called Pink Mystery seems a bit too high-end...

Looking at the nine different directions the waterways flowed under the brightly lit "bridge," Leon identified them, then pointed to the channel with a bottle symbol on a nearby sign and asked,

"Is that the channel to the bar? If it is, then let's go there!"

"The beverage area? Okay, please hold on."

The muscular pink-clad boatman nodded with a smile, steering the pinkish boat to the far-left channel. Upon glancing at the goat's head Leon was carrying, he kindly reminded in a low voice,

"Sir, as per the rules, you can't bring your own foodstuff into the Pink Mystery's beverage and catering areas. Would you like to..."

"Nonsense!"

At this moment, a furious voice erupted from inside the shopping bag.

"Who are you calling food? You're the food, your whole family is food!"

Chapter 425: Huh?

Ah?

After hearing the angry shout from the shopping bag, the boatman's perpetually smiling face suddenly froze. His eyes widened in shock as he pointed at the shopping bag in Leon's hand, stammering,

"It! It's it! You... you you!"

"What's wrong with you?"

After warning the Black Goat to shut its mouth, Leon looked over, somewhat puzzled.

"Hurry up and row the boat. There are other passengers waiting, and blocking their way wouldn't be good."

"No... it... it talked!!!"

"Talked? Who talked?"

"The goat head! The goat head you're carrying!"

"Did you mishear?"

The small red fork hidden in his chest pocket subtly vibrated twice. Leon slightly opened the shopping bag in his hand, letting the boatman peek inside at the "wooden Black Goat sculpture," and then calmly fibbed,

"This is just a sculpture. How could it talk?"

Wood... wooden sculpture?

The muscular boatman in a pink uniform carefully leaned over to take a couple of peeks. Once he saw it was indeed a wooden sculpture, his eyes filled with bewilderment,

"But I clearly heard just now..."

"You must be tired."

After switching to the Master Performer's badge, Leon looked at him with some sympathy, then gently comforted him,

"Is this job causing you a lot of stress? If you're not feeling well, just drop me off at the drink area and you can head back home to rest, no need to refund the remaining fare."

"No... there's no need, I feel alright..."

Could it be... that I'm really too tired?

Under the dual influence of the Lust Dream Invader and the Master Performer, the muscular boatman hesitated for a moment, even though the angry shout seemed to still echo in his ears. He accepted Leon's explanation and resumed rowing the small passenger boat.

...

Whew... managed to get through that.

Seeing the boatman didn't say anything more, Leon breathed a small sigh of relief. He then quietly reached into the shopping bag and gave the Black Goat's head a sharp pinch.

' You almost blew our cover just now, you know? If anything like that happens again, I'll keep you stashed away in the Mirror World!'

' It's just... that old guy called us ingredients! We're a Great Demon! Back then, we...'

' Alright, alright, I know you're a Great Demon, one step away from ascending to Godhood! Being mistaken for ingredients would, of course, make you angry, but this situation is special, so you better behave no matter what!'

Considering the upcoming mission required the Black Goat's soul vision, Leon refrained from berating it but instead sternly advised,

' Before I came, the Director specifically told me that safety is the priority for this mission. Our task is just to gather information, and we can't attract unnecessary attention, as that might be dangerous! Even though I have an Undying Body, the Director still reminded me to be cautious about exposure, which means this enemy is quite formidable, so we have to be extra careful!'

' Tsk... got it!'

Hearing that even the "red-haired woman" thought this mission was dangerous, the Black Goat shrank its neck a bit and added a note of caution in its heart, but it still spoke dismissively,

' If you ask me, she probably just came here for a drink, got so wasted she forgot her wallet, and was too embarrassed to tell you the truth, so she concocted some spooky mission to trick you into running an errand. Maybe there's really nothing going on.'

Haha, with the level of your guts when you were a Great Demon, if only you had half as much mouth, you wouldn't have been torn into seven pieces.

After listening to the Black Goat, Leon gave it a disdainful side-eye.

Even if the Director did lose her wallet, with Senior Jerry back in a few days, wouldn't it be easy to find it again? Besides, if she really needed money, she could borrow it from Senior Emma. Does she need to go through all this trouble to fool me?

' Alright, enough nonsense, time to get to work!'

Too lazy to argue with the still-defiant Black Goat, Leon took a deep breath as he looked at the three-story building sitting on the water in the distance. His expression serious, he pressed his finger to the goat's forehead and quietly activated the soul vision.

Boom!

It was like countless erratic neon lights lit up simultaneously, or like a dozen buckets of colorful paint were dumped onto a vast, dark canvas. Leon felt his brain throb slightly as a large mass of vibrant yet ill-defined soul flames flooded his vision.

Wild, chaotic, intoxicating, frenzied...

Just the one-ninth section of the "Pink Mystery" in front of him had nearly two thousand souls burning in a vivid, perhaps even descending, splendor.

' This place isn't bad; I like it!'

After taking a deep breath full of chaotic flavor, the Black Goat, disembarked with Leon, couldn't help but grin, chuckling,

' Maybe I misjudged that red-haired woman. With so many intense souls gathered, something extraordinary might be brewing.'

' Indeed, the Director is quite reliable when sober.'

Leon nodded in agreement, then tied up the shopping bag, picked up the goat head, and entered the predominantly pink three-story building. Hearing his footsteps, a smartly dressed attendant immediately stepped out from the waiting area behind the door, smiling,

"Good day, guest. Which floor would you like to visit?"

"Which floor... is there a difference between them? The higher, the better?"

"Not entirely."

The attendant smiled,

"Our Pink Mystery drink area aims to give every guest the best service possible. The floors are categorized mainly to let everyone have more fun.

"For instance, the first floor is an open drinking area, though slightly noisy, the atmosphere is great for those who want to drink heartily. The second floor is split into smaller sections, suitable for those who prefer quieter settings to gather with a few friends and sip leisurely. As for the top third floor, it's for guests who place great importance on the quality and taste, even the ambiance, of their drinks."

Got it, the first floor is cheap, the second is pricey, and the third is exorbitantly expensive!

Subtly clutching his wallet, Leon, who was already pained by the boat fare, nodded, carefully asking,

"Then the VIP area, which floor is it on?"

"Haha, just coming here makes you a VIP at our Pink Mystery. Our service is as attentive and detailed as possible, ensuring you have a wonderful and pleasant experience."

After some courteous yet confident expressions, the attendant elaborated,

"However, there are certain guests who refer to the top third floor as the VIP area... Do you have an appointment with a guest on the third floor? If so, I can take you up right away."

So... the VIP area is like a membership, and without a referral or sufficient status, access is restricted?

Detecting the subtle undertones in the attendant's words, Leon frowned slightly. He instinctively wanted to activate the Lust Dream Invader to have the attendant let him up to the third floor via a dream.

However, recalling the Director's repeated warnings, fearing the Anomalous Object's disturbance might be detected, Leon instead tapped his cuff link to retrieve the identity badge from the Ryan Family.

"Can this get me to the third floor?"

Is that... the Lion emblem? A five-feathered gold crown? Then that would make him... the Duke of Lionheart?!

Astonished, the attendant, trained in such matters, immediately recognized the badge's significance, and his eyes began to shimmer with fervor.

"Of course, it will!"

In a hurry to step aside, the attendant graciously stated,

"Your Grace, the Duke, since it's your first visit, we kindly ask you to register briefly, and leave a signature.

' Then, we'll attach any resulting bills to your signature and settle them with the Ryan Family while minimizing any disturbance to you... How does that sound?"

Hm? Does that mean if I spend here, you'll bill the Ryan Family?

Hearing today's expenses would be covered, Leon couldn't help but feel overjoyed. Trying to remain calm, he agreed, then followed the attendant to the main desk. He accepted a feather pen and, using his left hand, pressed it to the exquisite signature book...

"Sizzle..."

[Name: Aberrant Names Register (Corruption, Name, Location)]

[Appearance: ...]

Ah?

Chapter 426: No Second Chances

[Name: Aberrant Names Register (Corruption, Name, Location)]

[Appearance: A leather register book exceptionally beautiful in craftsmanship, smooth and warm to the touch. After the signatory writes their name, the exact number of "sins" they have committed appears on the back.]

[Ability: Sin Recording, Names of Demons, Target Positioning]

[Cost: For the signer, once you write your name, your essence will be permanently recorded until death. For the user, each use of the positioning ability consumes one record of their own "sin."]

[File: An ancient anomalous object crafted from the facial skin of a Divine-level Curse Rune Demon, capable of covertly recording the signatory's information using the innate power of curse rules, and instantly locating their current position upon activation (limited to the same plane).

This special anomalous object was created by The Lord of Betrayal, the ninth-ranked among the Hell Monarchs, to guard against betrayal by his subordinates. It was sewn directly into the flesh of his left hand.

However, during an invasion 375 years ago, the head of the Gemini Sub-bureau ambushed The Lord of Betrayal, using the anomalous object [Dividing Frame] to sever his left hand. The "Aberrant Names Register" sewn onto his hand became the spoils of war and was stored in the Gemini Sub-bureau's warehouse...]

[Evaluation: Flip over the third signature book starting with the letter "A," and you'll see an unexpected surprise.]

[Contamination Value: 0 (signer)/Half of the current Contamination Value of the target being queried (user)]

[Through your observation and summarization, you have obtained a wealth of intelligence on the "Aberrant Names Register," Abnormal... Your resistance to this anomalous object has significantly increased, allowing you to shield yourself from deeper influence.]

...

Gemini Sub-bureau...

So this mission is related to the Aquarius Director? But wasn't he severely injured in the Realm of the Dead by the head? He couldn't possibly return in such a short time, could he? Is this a contingency plan he left behind?

After reading the file on the [Aberrant Names Register] and seeing familiar information within, Leon's brows unconsciously furrowed slightly. Following the suggestion in the evaluation section, he found the third signature book marked with the letter "A" and turned it over casually.

A blank page... The back of the signature book was covered with paper.

Not only the back but apart from the page where he hadn't signed, all the front and back pages of the signature books were meticulously covered, revealing only the codes for each guest and the total amount of unsettled bills under their names.

After furrowing his brows again, just as Leon was about to peel off the paper covering the back of the signature book, someone grabbed his arm.

"Duke, your Grace! Please don't do that!"

Stopping Leon's rather rash action in time, the alarmed waiter visibly relaxed, then awkwardly reminded him,

"According to the rules, all records for every guest, including you, are completely confidential, known only to those specially responsible.

And the reason we do this is to better protect the privacy of our distinguished guests, so please..."

"It's just a place to drink. Why all the secrecy?"

Remembering the head's instructions to "avoid alerting the enemy," Leon squinted slightly, temporarily abandoning the idea of looking at the signature book. He then pretended to be displeased and tossed the pen onto the register with a look of irritation, saying:

"Fine, I won't look, and I won't sign either!"

"I'm truly sorry, please, this way!"

Seeing Leon give up looking at the signature book, the waiter breathed a sigh of relief and dared not mention the signature again. He signaled to the person behind the main counter to quickly put away the signature book, while swiftly guiding Leon toward the stairs.

"This is the VIP section!"

After ascending three flights, the nearly disastrous waiter led Leon to a seat at the bar on the third floor, enthusiastically introducing,

"The selection of drinks on the third floor changes weekly, and the bartenders rotate at irregular intervals, each with their own style. If you're interested in a particular style, you can request it, and I can call them over for you.

If you're not interested in mixed drinks and prefer pure spirits, you can lift the tapestry on your right. Behind it is a private room better suited for savoring a quiet drink alone..."

"Got it."

Interrupting the waiter's chatter, to make it easier to find the waiter named Jacob and trace the wallet's whereabouts, Duke Leon, with a less than pleasant temperament, impatiently shooed him away:

"Leave. I can look around myself; there's no need for you here!"

"Alright..."

Seeing Leon's rather displeased expression, seemingly due to the earlier signing issue, the waiter, feeling a bit helpless, nodded and respectfully said:

"Then I'll refrain from bothering you further, but by the rules, I can't go too far. I'll wait for you in the waiting room between the second and third floors.

If you need my service later, just signal the server on the third floor to yell 'Jacob' at the waiting room door, and I'll come back to assist you."

"Hmm... Hmm?"

Wait? Your name is Jacob?

So you're the waiter the head told me to find? But weren't you supposed to be in the third-floor VIP section? How did you end up greeting guests at the door?

"Hold on a second!"

Calling out to stop the departing waiter, Leon cleared his throat and said:

"Perhaps... you should just stay."

Jacob: "?"

"I just thought, as it's my first time here, it might be nice to have someone around for some introductions."

"..."

You change your mind so quickly? This Duke is really something...

Despite inwardly complaining a bit, as a waiter, Jacob maintained a polite and respectful smile, with no flaw in his manners.

No other reason, the person in front of him was someone he couldn't possibly offend. That earlier reflexive action of grabbing the other's arm left his back soaked with sweat as he realized what he'd done.

Considering the vast disparity in their status and position, it's best to comply with the other's requests directly. If the earlier incident happened again, he wasn't sure he'd have the courage to grab the Duke's arm a second time.

"Then... shall I continue serving you?"

"Yeah, no trouble... Besides, I'm not interested in mixed drinks; take me to the room behind the tapestry."

"Sure, right this way."

Following behind Jacob, after entering a private room obviously well-insulated for sound, Leon tapped the Black Goat on the forehead with his left index finger, then pretended to pat himself down, exclaiming in a surprised tone:

"Huh? Where's my wallet? My wallet's missing?"

?!?!

Chapter 427: The Wallet Mystery

"Why is there another lost wallet?"

Looking at the Duke of Lionheart anxiously searching his own body, Jacob's heart, which had just calmed down, suddenly jumped again.

The incident of the guest losing their wallet yesterday had already caused him to lose his job as a waiter in the VIP area, forcing him to greet guests at the entrance. If the same mistake occurred just a day apart, he might not even have this job left. And if this ill-tempered duke insisted on pursuing the matter, getting fired wouldn't be out of the question!

Damn it! Why is it so hard for these damn guests to keep track of their wallets?

"Sir... don't worry, let me help you recall."

Taking two deep breaths, suppressing the heart that almost leapt out of his chest, Jacob, who thought things were not going well, forced a smile and said,

"You're sure that before entering our drinks area, your wallet was still on you, correct?"

"You're stating the obvious!"

After switching out the Master Performer, Leon, who lost his wallet, stomped his foot and shouted in anger, his face full of anxiety,

"Didn't I show you my identity badge before? If I didn't have my wallet, where did I take the identity badge from? Was it from a dog on the street, carrying it in its mouth to me?"

Was it like this?

Trying hard to recall the situation when entering, Jacob seemed to remember that it was indeed the case and bit his lip when he started sweating on his forehead, his voice slightly trembling,

"Then where have you been since you entered?"

"You brought me everywhere on the way here, and you still ask me?"

Leon, who had lost his wallet, shouted twice and anxiously said,

"The entrance, main stage, stairs, bar, and this private room! Just these few places! Damn it! How could my wallet be gone?"

"Don't worry, don't worry! Maybe it just dropped somewhere along the way, let me help you look for it!"

Even though he kept saying not to worry, Jacob's mind was already in a panic. He quickly turned around, wanting to retrace their steps to search the area, without doubting whether Leon had really lost his wallet.

After all, the other party was a genuine nobleman. Even if he was mocked by nobles for living off the princess's soft rice, he wouldn't pretend to lose a wallet to mock a little waiter like him, right?

So it seemed the most likely place for the wallet would be after taking out the badge, or he might have put it on the main stage when signing something. If he searched quickly enough, maybe no one else would have picked it up yet...

...

"Wait!"

Just as Jacob was about to leave, he felt a sudden pain in his wrist, as if someone had forcefully grabbed him.

Looking back in surprise, Jacob was horrified to find that the Duke, who had lost his wallet, was squinting his eyes and examining him suspiciously.

"Why are you running?"

"Huh? I was going to help you find your wallet!"

"Finding the wallet is fine, but I asked why you are running?"

In the slightly dim room, Leon's sharp black eyes looked like two dark misty lamps, devouring the surrounding brightness while also swallowing the little courage Jacob had left.

"If you want to find the wallet, why didn't you wait for me to go together? Why are you so eager to leave my side?"

"I... I was worried that someone else might pick up your wallet..."

"Worried my wallet would be picked up by someone else, or worried you wouldn't have time to hide what you stole?"

"You think... No! It wasn't me! It really wasn't me!"

Seeing Leon was starting to suspect him of taking the wallet, Jacob shook all over and then shook his head, eyes full of fear,

"I really didn't take it! I have never stolen anything from anyone! I swear!"

He was telling the truth; he really hadn't...

Leon nodded slightly after observing Jacob's soulfire, which, although panicked and fearful, showed no "contradiction" or "conflict," and continued probing while squinting his eyes,

"I suppose I'll trust you didn't take it... but do you really not know anything?"

"Wh... what do you mean?"

"I mean, people working as waiters usually don't want to offend others.

For instance, if my wallet was left on the bar, and you saw someone else take it but realized that person was someone special, afraid of causing trouble, you might purposely say you knew nothing or didn't see that person's face... Would you do that?"

"No, no! I wouldn't! I... I shouldn't!"

"Hmm? Why did you hesitate when you said that?"

Seeing Jacob's soulfire showing minor instability and conflict, yet not to the extent of lying, Leon couldn't help but frown. Then he switched from the "suspicious duke" to the "outraged duke," saying coldly,

"Tell me quick! What are you hesitating about?"

"I... I..."

"I've been patient enough!"

Leon, the Impatient Duke, raised a finger, his expression unfriendly,

"This is your last chance. Tell the truth about what you're hesitating, or don't blame me for calling in people to arrest you! I hope when you fall into the hands of the Secret Investigation Bureau's secret police, you can still be this stubborn!"

"No! I'll tell you! I'll tell now!"

Seeing the Duke in front of him was truly angry, Jacob panicked and quickly spilled the beans,

"The reason I hesitated was because yesterday there was also a guest who lost a wallet. She lost her wallet just like you, and I clearly remember that someone took it, and I specifically looked at that person, trying to remember their appearance.

But... but when the guest who lost the wallet came back looking for it, I just couldn't remember the face of the person who took the wallet, only remembered someone did pick it up, and I can't even remember whether it was a man or a woman..."

Unable to remember a face...

So was it a memory-erasing anomalous object? Or an anomalous object that made presence lower?

After storing the gathered information in his mind, Leon's expression changed slightly, and he remembered the Aberrant Names Register from the Gemini Sub-bureau, along with someone from there—a female reporter named Nicole.

If he remembered correctly, she had something that could eliminate traces. Was making witnesses forget her face also part of Yangwei's effect?

Without the Aberrant Names Register, it might not have been obvious, but with the presence of an anomalous object from the Gemini Sub-bureau and signs of Gemini Sub-bureau member activities, it all seemed very suspicious...

"I see..."

Murmuring to himself, Leon slightly softened his tense expression, looked at the very frightened waiter in front of him with a peaceful face, and said,

"Then I'll tentatively believe that you didn't take my wallet... Eh... I originally planned to have a good drink today, but I couldn't even register, and my wallet was lost too!"

After waving off his disinterest, Leon stood up with a disappointed look and said,

"Forget it, no more drinking!"

"Oh, sorry, really sorry!"

Seeing Leon seemed to give up on investigating the wallet, Jacob couldn't help but let out a sigh of relief and quickly followed behind, escorting him down the stairs step by step, then asked for paper and pen at the main stage, eagerly saying,

"If you don't mind, could you tell me the design of your wallet? And anything inside that you can reveal?"

"Hmm."

Considering to put on a full show, losing the wallet and not being hurried to find it while wanting to leave only raised suspicions, Leon casually made up,

"My wallet... is naturally embroidered with the Ryan Family's lion crest, then stitched with my name using expensive gold thread, containing my picture, and there's quite a lot of money inside..."

I forgot exactly how much because for someone like me, remembering to bring money is good enough, who has the energy to count how much was brought? Anyway, there's always enough to spend, don't you think?"

"Right, right! You are absolutely right!"

Cursing under his breath that damn nobles deserved to get crushed by an 18-wheel steam carriage back and forth, Jacob wore a smile as he escorted Leon to the waiting area. Then he hurried back to the main stage with the recorded features.

Meanwhile, sitting on the waiting area sofa, Leon squinted and pondered what exactly that female reporter from the Gemini Sub-bureau wanted to do, and whether she knew about the news that the Aquarius Director was sent to the Realm of the Dead...

"Your Grace!"

Just as Leon was frowning in deep thought, an excited calling voice suddenly reached his ear.

Leon raised his head in surprise and saw Jacob coming over with an exquisite golden thread wallet, full of joy as he reported cheerfully,

"Your Grace, your wallet has been found!"

"..."

(#`°Δ°)?!

Huh??????

Chapter 428: Fateful Entanglement

"No way, I was just making things up earlier! How did they actually bring it to me?"

Staring at the golden-threaded wallet handed in front of him, Leon's mind went blank for a moment, then he suspiciously examined the "something from nothing" waiter.

Could it be... he thought I was asking for a bribe?

But that doesn't make sense either. To him, I'm a wealthy Duke, why would I need to solicit a bribe from a waiter? What would be my motive?

Leon, unable to make sense of it, didn't take the wallet from the waiter. Instead, he waved his hand with a frown, saying,

"You might have made a mistake. This shouldn't be my wallet."

"Huh?"

Hearing Leon's words, Jacob's face briefly froze, then he persisted,

"Why don't you open it and take a look? I found it based on the characteristics you mentioned, so it shouldn't be wrong."

"I did mention my wallet is a golden-threaded wallet with a lion motif, but that doesn't mean every wallet with a lion motif is mine."

Taking the wallet from the waiter's hand, flipping to the side embroidered with the lion motif, Leon pointed to the stitched name above the lion's head,

"Look, for example, this name clearly says... um?"

What's going on? That's actually my name?

"Your Grace, it seems you might have made a mistake."

Seeing Leon in a daze, Jacob breathed a sigh of relief and said with a smile,

"The lighting here is relatively dim, so the wallet might look a bit different than it does outside. At first glance, it might not seem quite like yours."

And being a grand aristocrat like yourself, you usually have attendants to carry things for you when you go out, so it's not unusual for you to be unfamiliar with your own wallet's appearance."

"..."

No, this isn't a matter of whether I recognized it wrong. My wallet is still lying in the Mirror World, it wasn't lost at all!

"Well... it could be that someone shares my name?"

Feeling a bit flustered by the wallet bearing his name, Leon quickly opened it, flipping to where his identification should be, then argued,

"If this is my wallet, there should be my portrait here... What the hell, there actually is!"

Seeing the photo of himself looking haughtily down at the camera clipped in the document holder, Leon's mind went slightly numb, and recalling the bureau chief's instructions before he came, he became instinctively alert.

Even though it's a photo and not a portrait like I mentioned, it's still pretty outrageous. Could it be... this building is actually some kind of Anomalous Object? One that can satisfy one's wishes? Or create something out of nothing?

"It seems you indeed remembered incorrectly, this is indeed your wallet."

After glancing at the photo, the waiter Jacob breathed a sigh of relief and returned to his previous genial demeanor, politely asking,

"Congratulations on recovering your lost belongings. So, Your Grace, now that you've found your wallet, would you like to go up to the third floor for a drink?"

"No... not necessary..."

Seeing the curious gazes directed at him, Leon opened and closed his lips slightly, then pressed them together again. Considering that dragging this out might draw further attention, he was forced to accept this dubious wallet, with a stiff expression on his face, he said,

"I plan to check out other places, please escort me out."

"Certainly, please this way."

Seeing this troublesome guest finally leave, Jacob breathed a sigh of relief, then respectfully led the way and escorted Leon out.

Not long after they left, a small golden-haired man who had been snoozing at the first-floor bar twitched slightly and fell from his chair with a thud.

When the arriving waiter helped him up and asked about his condition, the bleary-eyed little golden-haired man muttered that he wasn't drunk and instinctively reached for his waist, then...

"Huh? Where's my wallet?"

Finding the spot where his wallet should have hung empty, the little golden-haired man's intoxication subsided a bit. Then, supported by the waiter, he staggeringly approached the main counter near the entrance and hammered it firmly with his fist.

"Someone! My wallet is gone! I need to report it lost!"

"Alright... Steven Laine, correct?"

Looking over the completely intoxicated little golden-haired man before him, the receptionist behind the main counter opened a notebook and asked gently,

"Can you describe your wallet?"

"I'm surnamed Laine, so what kind of design could my wallet have? Of course it's golden like my hair, with our Ryan family's lion motif on the bottom!"

Standing steadily with his hand on the counter and dressed in a military training uniform, the bleary-eyed little golden-haired man slurred,

"And underneath the wallet... there's the name of the Duke I once idolized, with a photo of him inside... Boo hoo... I'm so damn miserable!"

As he spoke, it seemed like some strange switch had been flipped, as the flushed little golden-haired man suddenly hugged the counter and wept bitterly,

"I idolized the Duke so much, but he kidnapped me, forcing me to drive Powered Armor for him! You know! He attacked... uh... I can't speak of it, but he forced me to drive Powered Armor for him!"

Boo hoo... I just said I'd rather die than help him escape, yet I had to drive Powered Armor for him to flee. Now everyone calls me 'Steely Steven,' I'm famous throughout the Armored Army, everyone laughs at me when they see me!"

The little golden-haired man became more agitated as he spoke, and while he banged his head against the counter and cried with snot running down his face,

"You know, after that day, everyone laughs when they see me. I can't even face staying in the Armored Army's barracks. The secret police from the Secret Investigation Bureau know I had contact with... well, anyway, they constantly block the barracks trying to question me.

They blocked me in so I couldn't leave, and when I finally managed to sneak out over the wall to drink away my sorrow, I lost my wallet... I'm so damn miserable!"

"Sir, please calm down. Your wallet might not be lost yet; I'll have someone help look for it!"

Glancing sympathetically at his recently cleaned counter, now smeared with slimy streaks, the receptionist hurriedly called a colleague to handle the lost property case...

"What? Someone else claimed my wallet?"

Hearing someone had taken his wallet, the little golden-haired man wiped his nose with his hand and roared angrily with red-rimmed eyes,

"Who! Who dared to take my stuff? Tell me the name! I'm going to beat him up today!"

"Um... the claim log states the name was Leon Laine..."

"Who? Who took it?"

"Leon Laine."

After repeating Leon's name, the receptionist accompanied with a cheerful expression said,

"We verified it; the badge they had was genuine, and he is indeed the current Duke of Lionheart. He also reported losing a wallet, and the features matched yours, so we..."

Uh... Mr. Steven, perhaps you should think back carefully and see whether you might have mistaken the design and confused His Grace's wallet with your own?"

"..."

"Boo hoo! I'm so damn miserable!"

Chapter 429: Debts Pouch

"Director!"

Holding a wallet whose origin was unknown, Leon returned to the Purification Bureau and immediately knocked on the director's office door, speaking with a solemn expression,

"There is indeed something wrong with the Pink Mystery! The Aquarius Director must have arranged some kind of backup there! And if I'm not mistaken, the wallet you asked me to investigate was probably taken by that Gemini Sub-bureau Level One Cleaner named Nicole!"

What? What did you say?

After hearing Leon's words, the Red-haired Director, who was fiddling with an empty wallet, paused slightly, then with a look of surprise said,

"You actually found something out? No... What I mean is, are you really sure?"

"Nine times out of ten."

Recalling the intelligence from the Aberrant Names Register, Leon recounted his observations and experiences, then concluded gravely,

"We can't be completely sure yet, but when Jerry returns, if even he can't find that wallet, then we can basically be certain."

After all, the Secret Tail in that female reporter's hand could conveniently erase the aura of items. I think she is very suspicious... By the way, Director, what exactly is in that wallet?"

"..."

That wallet contained my newly received salary... But now it no longer matters!

After listening to Leon's account of his experiences, the Red-haired Director's foxlike eyes subconsciously squinted, detecting some inconsistencies.

Although she certainly had drunk too much, forgetting the wallet shouldn't have happened and might be influenced by some Special Anomalous Object. Additionally, because she had boasted in front of Leon earlier that day, she hadn't planned to drink much that night.

However, a new batch of wine that suited her taste too well had just arrived at the Pink Mystery, leading to her losing control and drinking too much, resulting in the loss of the wallet. Meanwhile, the only one capable of retrieving the wallet immediately, Jerry, was out on a task due to an unexpected incident in Merino County and currently not in the bureau...

The smell of conspiracy was strong...

After twisting her hair around her finger a couple of times, the Red-haired Director made a few vague remarks, frowning as she pondered the real goal of the "enemy."

The direct target seemed to be stealing her wallet?

But the wallet really only had money; it's not worth their effort, so their real goal was likely the ensuing impact of "her not having money."

Considering that on Aquarius's side, there was a Gate of the Other World that could briefly peek into the future, they must have seen that after she ran out of money, she did something they found exploitable!

So, what would she definitely do after running out of money? Borrow money from Emma like yesterday? Use the Debts Pouch like today? Or go to the usual taverns to charge it on her account?

It's strange, these things are quite normal, which one would make her vulnerable? Perhaps... try doing all of them once?

...

The Red-haired Director, thinking to the point of a headache, unconsciously fidgeted with the empty wallet in her hand, continuously pressing the clasp.

Noticing her actions, Leon raised an eyebrow slightly, recalling the wallet that had suddenly appeared in his possession, then reached to tap the cuff and took out the bulging wallet.

"By the way, apart from the Aberrant Names Register, I encountered another matter that might be related to an Anomalous Object."

Putting the wallet on the table, Leon shared its magical origin simply and then said worriedly,

"You know how unlucky I am, this kind of good fortune doesn't happen to me, so I think... hmm? What's this?"

"Touch it and you'll know."

After tossing the empty wallet in her hand to Leon, the Red-haired Director calmly opened the little golden-haired wallet, took out five Gold Wheels, pocketed them, and then handed the wallet back.

"When the next month's salary is issued, I will give you an extra ten Gold Wheels, so remember to help me return the money then, okay!"

???

Wait... what's this all about? Why didn't I understand a thing?

With a puzzled frown, Leon touched the empty wallet in his hand as the Red-haired Director had instructed.

"Zzz..."

[Name: Debts Pouch (Wealth)]

[Appearance: An unusually old-fashioned men's leather wallet, with formerly sturdy leatherwork that's been completely worn through, allowing one to stick a finger through the hole at the bottom and into the wallet]

[Ability: Unexpected Fortune]

[Cost: After acquiring an unexpected fortune through this Anomalous Object, one must return double the amount to the original owner]

[File: This is a genuine ancient Anomalous Object from the primordial country of Anpula, with a long history of over five hundred years. It has been kept in the warehouse of the Virgin Branch since it was acquired by the fourth director of the Virgin Branch of the Purification Bureau.

Four years ago, having spent her salary and unable to buy wine, Olivia, then-director of the Virgin Branch, found this Anomalous Object that no one had touched for a long time in the warehouse and subsequently used it repeatedly for small loans.

Over four years, she used this Anomalous Object a total of forty-nine times, borrowed a thousand and twenty-three Gold Wheels, picked up twenty-five wallets, excavated four secret cellars containing private property, and redeemed fifteen winning tickets...]

[Evaluation: A severely underestimated Anomalous Object, instead of paying back double each time, its real use should be to "borrow" a large sum at a critical moment and never return it.]

[Corrosion Value: 2.3]

"..."

So... the wallet I just "handed over" was something you "borrowed" using this thing? No wonder the process was so absurd!

After reading the description of the Debts Pouch, Leon couldn't help but smack his lips, then muttered in bewilderment,

"What a bizarre Anomalous Object... and using it requires returning double! Compared to borrowing from it, wouldn't it be better to take a proper loan from the bank? My annual salary is just over six

hundred Gold Wheels; the interest paid after using this thing to borrow money is already equivalent to my two years' salary!"

"In theory, borrowing from a bank is indeed better."

The Red-haired Director shrugged and said,

"But I'm terribly slow at repaying, and the major banks in the Capital City have blacklisted me. The remaining ones willing to lend me money don't want repayment, they want me to owe them a favor. So, it's better to use this to borrow money, wouldn't you agree?"

"..."

Agree, my foot! Your salary is so high; if you could just drink a bit less, wouldn't you have more than enough money?

"Oh well, everyone faces tight times once in a while, just handling emergencies~"

Glancing at Leon, who was pulling a face, the Red-haired Director sat upright, having successfully "borrowed" five Gold Wheels, and gravely shifted the topic,

"Besides, if I'm not mistaken, within a week, something unpleasant will surely happen, so you must be extra careful recently."

"Hmm? Why?"

"Because of Jerry's return time."

The Red-haired Director squinted her eyes and tapped the table with her fingers,

"If it weren't for your unexpected disclosure, when Jerry comes back in a week, he would start helping me find the missing wallet. Subsequently, being unable to detect the wallet's aura would alert me to the issue.

So, reasoning backward, if they want to do something without alerting me, they must complete it within this week. Therefore, I suspect something will definitely happen in the week before Jerry returns!"

Chapter 430: Ambushed

"Would something happen within a week?"

After hearing the judgment from the Red-haired Director, Leon instinctively nodded but, upon further thought, realized something wasn't quite right.

"Wait! Your wallet? Are you the one who lost your wallet yesterday?"

"..."

Damn it... I was so focused on pondering the Aquarius Director's motives that I forgot about this...

"I can explain."

Seeing Leon's eyes shift from surprise to suspicion, then to recollection, and finally settling on an expression of sudden realization, the Red-haired Director awkwardly cleared her throat and tried to explain,

"Actually..."

"Actually, you really did get drunk and lost your wallet, and, feeling embarrassed to tell me directly, you tried to convince me to help you find it, but actually found nothing, and it was all just a coincidence?"

"..."

No... How did you figure it out so quickly? Did someone tell you something?

"It wasn't entirely a coincidence."

Looking at Leon's unfriendly expression, the Red-haired Director, for once, blushed slightly, feeling a bit guilty, and explained with hand gestures,

"I vaguely sensed that something was off, yeah... Not much, but a little bit."

"..."

So it really was just as the Black Goat guessed!!!

Seeing the Red-haired Director's tiny gesture, Leon couldn't help but darken his expression. However, recalling her past kindness towards him, he held back and didn't start ranting, instead saying in a deep voice,

"Director, in the future... shouldn't you drink a little less?"

"I... I'll try..."

Try my ass!

Seeing the Red-haired Director's slightly dodgy gaze, Leon understood that her promise would likely only last a week. He sighed but didn't say anything further.

After all, the Red-haired Director's situation was rather special; she needed to use alcohol occasionally to numb herself temporarily from the guilt caused by [Slaughter Blood Hair]. Forcing her to quit drinking completely would be a form of torture.

"Alright, drink if you want."

Leon shook his head helplessly and stopped pursuing the matter of her tricking him into finding the wallet, instead gently advising,

"But don't ever get so drunk again that you don't notice your wallet being taken. Keep some alertness, or else if you get caught off guard, it might be dangerous."

"???"

Watching Leon, who seemed a bit angry but didn't hold on to it, and instead let it go, the Red-haired Director found her heart skip a beat and couldn't help but hiss,

"Hiss... Leon... are you okay?"

???

What kind of question is that? How could anything be wrong with me?

"I mean, aren't you angry?"

The Red-haired Director blinked and said,

"If it were Emma, knowing I screwed things up because of drinking and tricked her into running errands for me, she'd probably be mad for a long time and demand I pay her back or something... Aren't you mad?"

"Of course I'm mad, but not that mad."

Looking at her bright red hair, Leon slightly shook his head and said,

"Senior Emma and I are different. She might know about the existence of [Slaughter Blood Hair], but probably doesn't understand the extent of the pain it brings to the user. I've touched your hair and know what this Anomalous Object represents.

"Although you have various flaws, you already do well enough. Forcing you to stay sober and endure the pain while protecting humans, always shielding me from harm, would be too selfish of me.

"No one is born with the obligation to bear these burdens, so drink if you want. But in potentially dangerous situations, be mindful of the degree, and don't give people the chance to hurt you. After all, the whole Virgo Branch still needs you to hold it up. Be sure to stay safe."

"..."

After hearing Leon's response, the Red-haired Director paused for a short moment, then sniffled hard, holding her heart with both hands as she looked deeply moved,

"Oh, you've moved me to tears! No one's ever been so understanding of me like this before, always considering my well-being, not blaming me for tricking you, even trying to find reasons from within yourself... I'm so touched I almost wanted to offer myself to you.

"Oh right, Little Leon, since you're supportive, I just thought about it carefully and realized five Gold Wheels might not be enough, so... Can you bring out that wallet and let me borrow five more Gold Wheels?"

"..."

"No!"

Hearing the first half, Leon felt a bit embarrassed, but when he heard the latter part, his face darkened as he said,

"I just changed my mind. You keep drinking like this, and you'll crash sooner or later! Also, if you don't mind, I'll take that [Debts Pouch] too. Leaving it with you is a waste... I'm leaving work!"

"Go, go! Stingy man!"

With a smile, the Red-haired Director watched Leon leave, then sat alone at her desk for a while before getting up to open the office window. She leaned against the windowsill, looking outside.

And at the point where her gaze fell, a stubborn tightwad whom she wouldn't lend money to had just walked out of the police department's bounds, flagging down a coach waiting by the roadside.

Watching Leon negotiate with the coachman, agreeing on a price before getting on the coach, then leaving in the direction of Bridge Street, the Red-haired Director, her eyes bright, wrinkled her nose before turning back and taking a large swig from the bottle on her desk.

"A kid who just started growing hair trying to act macho in front of me? Hmph!"

...

"Alright! Drop me off here!"

Calculating the exact distance from the police department to his home, ensuring it came just before the meter ticked over, Leon tapped on the coach window and shouted in the boiler's rumbling sound,

"Time to stop! I'll walk the rest of the way home! If you keep driving, the extra distance is a freebie, and I won't pay for it!"

Tsk... Aren't people working in the municipal district supposed to not bargain? How come there's someone as stingy as you?

Hearing Leon's words, the coachman, who had wanted to drive a bit further, clicked his tongue and pulled the steam coach over to the curb with a sullen face.

"Here you go, just the right amount."

Handing the pre-calculated money to the coachman, Leon, who successfully saved a Copper Wheel, got off the coach with a smile and walked in the moonlight towards Happiness Apartment.

"Still at it, old man?"

He greeted the sturdy, big old man holding large shears and staring intently at him in the garden, and after the curly-haired old lady came and bound the man with yarn, Leon, in good spirits, had a brief chat with the superintendent and proceeded upstairs with a smile.

Home sweet home.

Having spent the morning handling task reports, the afternoon gathering and eliminating evidence of the Rebels attacking the Boarding Tower, and even working overtime to search for a wallet in the evening, Leon, after a busy day, stretched his tired body and walked towards the place he called home, his face relaxed.

And just as he reached the sixth floor, the previously closed door opened, revealing, as usual, a lovely face smiling warmly at him under the familiar warm light.

"Anna, I'm back... Why is it you?"

"Why shouldn't it be me?"

Pulling the collar of her silk robe up a bit to cover the overly prominent scenery, Princess Veronica smiled sweetly and said,

"Darling~ you're back from work. Do you want to shower first? Or eat first? Or do you want to..."