

I! Cleaner 431

Chapter 431: Came Prepared

Originally, I intended to have dinner first, but after seeing you, I just wanted to go back and work overtime...

"Princess Veronica!"

Interrupting the princess's teasing inquiry, Leon's expression dropped, full of speechlessness.

"Stop fooling around, okay? How did you suddenly end up in my house? Where's Anna and the others?"

"Anna and the kids are asleep... Besides, I'm your fiancée, isn't it odd for me to be in your house?"

Seeing the respectful distance in Leon's eyes, Princess Veronica blinked and pretended to be hurt, saying,

"Darling, why are you being so cold to me? Could it be... you have someone else outside?"

"..."

I don't know if that counts, but we're definitely innocent. Why did you suddenly come to my house and ambush me, and dressed so... casually?

Trying hard to control himself from raising his line of sight to avoid looking at some impolite spots, Leon spoke with a bit of a headache,

"Princess Veronica, between us..."

"Even though we are apart more often than together, our relationship is still strong."

Proactively linking arms with Leon, she pulled his speechless self into the house and pressed him to sit by the table, pointing to the dishes with plates covering them on the table,

"Hurry, eat. These are personally... watched by Anna as she prepared them for you, and I tried a good mouthful of each. They taste really good!"

"..."

I thought you prepared them yourself—so just watching counts as contributing, right? Besides, why do I feel like you seem a bit strange today? Looking...

...oddly happy?

Watching the oddly exuberant princess feel inexplicably buoyant despite his "cold shoulder," and smiling regardless, Leon hesitated for a moment before settling honestly by the table.

"Your Highness, why did you come to see me today? What's the matter?"

"Look at you, why can't I visit without a reason?"

Princess Veronica adjusted her loose nightdress, sitting elegantly opposite Leon, resting her chin on her hand with a gentle smile,

"By the way, I indeed have a few happy things to tell you... go ahead and eat, and I'll tell you while you do, alright?"

As she moved, the loose silk sleeve of her nightdress slipped slightly, dropping to her elbow, revealing a small section of her dazzlingly white arm.

Paired with the princess's flower-like smiling face and the subtly exposed softness at the neckline, it made Leon's heart skip a beat. He quickly averted his gaze, focusing intently on the food on the table.

His reaction wasn't bad~ It wasn't in vain that I specially ordered this half-size larger nightdress.

Playfully using her finger to tug the deliberately loosened sleeve, exposing even more of her arm, she then inwardly drew back her arm, making the already ample curve more pronounced. With a smile, Princess Veronica said,

"There have been many delightful things recently, but the thing that pleases me most is that our wedding is set. We will be wed the day after tomorrow at noon, and I came to fetch you today."

What?!!!

Hearing Princess Veronica's words, Leon abruptly trembled all over while drinking his soup, nearly swallowing half a bowl of warm fish soup down into his lungs.

"Cough! Cough cough! You! What did you say... cough cough cough!"

"Oh dear, there's plenty of soup, why are you drinking so hastily?"

Walking around the table to the choking Leon's side, she lightly patted his back, a glimmer of cunning flashing in the princess's eyes, then she looked regretful,

"Seeing you so excited makes me truly happy, but... if only this were true."

"..."

Revenge! This is definitely revenge! Revenge for how I was cold to you earlier!

After catching his breath, realizing he had been toyed with, Leon frowned, preparing to demand an explanation, only to see a small shiny fork with a piece of fish being held up to him.

The princess, who had just been sitting opposite, had already slipped onto the chair beside him under the pretext of patting his back, smiling as she tried to feed him.

"Ah~"

"..."

Ah, you!

Feeling the warmth emanating from the mature, abundant body beside him, Leon, overwhelmed, quickly shifted away, creating distance from this tempting source of heat. He then grabbed the fork.

"Don't cough... no need, I can do it myself."

"Mm, mm, whatever you say~"

Seeing Leon's embarrassed expression, the princess understood she had teased him to the brink, and any further might get her pushed away. So, she gave in, letting Leon take the fork, and with a teasing smile, she said,

"By the way, do you still want to know why I'm so happy?"

"..."

Not getting a response from Leon after two seconds, Princess Veronica straightened up, sighing with a bit of disappointment,

"Aye, if you don't want to hear it, then sitting here is meaningless for me, how about..."

Hearing this, a flicker of emotion crossed Leon's face.

How about you leave?

"How about I continue feeding you!"

"..."

"Ah~"

"Please don't 'ah'... I, um, I do still want to hear what you have to say..."

Hmph, captivating!

With an unrestrained sly smile after accomplishing her goal of teasing, the princess sat up straight, smiling with gleaming eyes,

"Then I'll tell you... have you heard about the Marquis of Gold Droplet?"

The Marquis of Gold Droplet?

Recognizing the familiar name, Leon's expression slightly shifted and then nodded,

"I heard something... he recently drowned accidentally, right?"

"Yes, that's him."

Although the weather had warmed significantly recently, the nights were still a bit chilly. And while the silk nightdress adorned her figure beautifully, it left much to be desired in terms of warmth.

Unintentionally curling up her body and tucking her limbs in tightly for warmth, her nose slightly red from the cold, the princess joyfully recounted,

"He was the tax secretary in the Ministry of Finance, second only to the Minister of Finance, always involved in the Ka Army Department's budget, and exploiting craft guilds, using the Kingdom's budget to fill those... mm... let me put it this way, he was a terrible man, very bad indeed!"

He was indeed a wretched person, in every sense.

Nodding emphatically, Leon curiously asked,

"So, you're happy because he died?"

"Not entirely."

Blowing on her palms to warm them, Princess Veronica shook her head,

"Rather than his inexplicable drowning, I would have preferred to personally see him imprisoned, punished for his past deeds.

But, this works too; even if I had managed to topple him, having him truly confess would have been difficult. Plus, his vacant position opened a breach in the Ministry of Finance.

Without his obstruction, many previously stagnant reforms have begun to show the prospect of progress. If part of the taxation rights can be diverted, those harsh, complex taxes can be tidied up to avoid... mm...

Leon, are you interested in this? Would you prefer we talk about something else?"

Looking at the princess, curled on her chair from the cold but with bright eyes, Leon hesitated slightly, then removed his coat and draped it over her, shaking his head,

"No need, I am actually quite interested in this... continue, but keep it down a bit, don't wake Anna and the others."

"Mm~"

Seeing Leon finally remember to drape a coat over her after her hints, Princess Veronica gave him a teasing glance and then leaned against him with a "greatly moved" look.

"You're so sweet~ Let me continue... oh, have you heard about the Boarding Tower being attacked?"

Chapter 432: Kidnapping Skills MAX

The boarding tower was attacked... How could I not know about that?

"I have a bit of understanding about it," Leon said tentatively, glancing at the enthusiastic princess in his arms,

"My friends at the Department of Police told me they've been working themselves crazy with overtime lately. Many clerical staff have been drawn into daily patrols, searching for the boarding tower attacker, and the lost items from the Kingdom of Crolock... Has this affected you too?"

"Greatly!"

The princess nodded slightly, frowning.

"The suspects attacking the boarding tower have been mostly identified; they're likely the rebels who attempted to assassinate me multiple times and set fire to Louther Arcade. All their previous activities combined weren't as troublesome as this incident.

This time they've made such a big deal that the Kingdom of Crolock keeps putting pressure on us. If we can't produce results that satisfy them in a month or two, it will surely affect normal trade.

However... the burning of the boarding tower is not entirely a bad thing."

At this point, the princess sighed with a slightly complex expression,

"Since early last year, I have been collaborating with the Minister of Defense to reform the military, cutting excess troops and reducing miscellaneous expenses, and replacing outdated military equipment.

Even with the support of your Ryan Family, progress has been slow, facing resistance beyond my imagination. However, the boarding tower incident has somehow reignited many of my previously blocked reform proposals.

I guess the burning of the heavily guarded boarding tower finally made some people feel the crisis and they had to relinquish some of their swallowed interests to ensure their stability...

Ha, some people are just like that; unless they're freezing or starving, they'll continue to lay in the car with their eyes closed. Only when the cold air drafts through the car window, chilling their lips blue will they reluctantly get out and give a push!"

After venting her grievances about the short-sightedness of the Kingdom's upper echelons, which had bottled up inside her these past days, the princess felt somewhat relieved.

"Dear, you're so sweet~"

She snuggled back into the warm embrace behind her, warming her body, and Veronica, the princess, took Leon's hand and looked up, blinking,

"I've kept these words in my heart for so long, but it's not appropriate to tell anyone else. Luckily, there's you who can listen... When do you plan to marry me?"

"..."

Wait, how did the topic turn back to this?

Feeling a sudden prickle at the back of his head from the abrupt talk of marriage, Leon pushed back with a headache,

"Well, Princess Veronica, I've thought it over these past few days, and I realized that we might not actually be suitable, so about the engagement before, can we..."

"Okay."

???

What did you say? You agreed? So easily?

Hearing the princess's straightforward answer, Leon was slightly taken aback, feeling a slight relief accompanied by an inevitable twinge of disappointment.

"As I said before, regarding the relationship between us, the final decision is yours; I won't insist."

With a slight withdrawal of her smile, the princess, who just leaned against Leon, sat up straight, her gaze lowered, speaking in a calm tone,

"Moreover, even with my special status, I'm a normal woman; I also have my self-respect. While I am indeed fond of you and willing to approach you actively time and again, I still have my boundaries.

Leon, I have never liked forcing others. Since you've made your decision, then I too... should let go. If at this point, I still cling on, it would be shameful, and I cannot bring myself to do such a thing."

"..."

Sorry...

Feeling the slightly cool hand of the princess in his palm, Leon couldn't help but feel a surge of deep guilt.

The root of this issue stemmed from him. Though Princess Veronica did have other motives, she had always been very proactive, whereas he, daunted by her status as a princess and the troubles this status brought, continually pushed her away.

Whatever the calculation, he owed her, not the other way around.

"I apologize..."

After sincerely apologizing, Leon tried to make amends,

"If in the future..."

"There won't be any future, you probably won't see me again."

Princess Veronica slightly turned her head, avoiding Leon's gaze, then reached to wipe her eyes, saying softly with tears in her eyes,

"Without the marriage contract between us, I'll likely be married off. It could be to the Kingdom of Morna, the Kingdom of Heisen, or the Kingdom of Orleson... In any case, I won't be staying in the Capital City.

In the future, I'll most likely be marrying someone I've never met, and then, due to the interests between the Kingdoms, I will be neglected by my future husband, living a lonely life in a castle colder than your heart.

If one day, the country I marry to wars with the Kingdom, I might also be humiliated, even handed over to the gallows by my husband, cursing my miserable fate, dying despairingly and painfully..."

"..."

"Don't worry about it, this has nothing to do with you. My tragic life is not your doing, so you don't have to feel guilty. I... I just..."

After offering Leon two weak reassurances, large teardrops rolled from Princess Veronica's eyes. She hurriedly wiped them away, but they only seemed to increase.

"I just... just feel a bit regretful..."

Realizing she couldn't stop the tears, Veronica gave up, turning her head away and biting her lip, speaking with a trembling voice,

"It seemed... it seemed like everything was just starting to get better, military reform had begun to proceed, I was addressing the issues with the Department of Road Administration, and the long-stuck fiscal problems had started to untangle recently.

If only things could proceed step-by-step in this direction, I'd have a chance to completely transform the Kingdom, so ordinary people wouldn't live so hard and the Kingdom could regain its strength, with nobody dying from warfare.

After I leave, it will be difficult to find someone to take these matters over. Joshua is inadequate, and if the Kingdom fell into his hands, the Minister of Finance and the Queen would dominate, continuing to exploit ordinary people as tools for nobles and big merchants...

Boo... It was... it was just about there!"

"..."

"It's okay, you don't have to worry."

After wiping her eyes again, the tearful princess clenched her fists, her eyes red, gently said,

"No one will blame you, you have your own life. No need to marry a particularly beautiful but unloved woman for anyone's happiness.

Leon, you don't have to feel guilty; whether it's me, soon to live a lonely life, or those losing a chance to change their fate because of my departure, none of us will blame you, you...

Why are you holding my hand? Have you regretted it? Do you want to hold my hand and walk through life together again?"

"..."

I admit defeat... How can you say so much nonsense with a straight face?

With a dark expression, Leon pried open the princess's fingers and took out the wrinkled onion slice she was holding, then remarked with a headache,

"Your Highness, can't you be a bit more sincere..."

Chapter 433: At Your Own Risk

"I was already very sincere."

After wiping the onion juice from the corner of her eye with the back of her hand, Princess Veronica blinked her reddened eyes and looked Leon directly in the eye, speaking honestly,

"If I truly wanted to use those words to force you into agreeing to marry me, I wouldn't have said them to your face. Instead, I would have arranged some 'coincidences' for you to discover on your own. Whether it's letting you hear about my father's arrangements for me from others or having you encounter Joshua several times while interacting with the Minister of Finance and the Queen, you would have figured it all out yourself without even knowing my involvement. The reason I didn't do so and chose to speak to you about these matters as openly as possible is out of respect for you and to demonstrate my sincerity."

"..."

It seems like... there might be some truth to that?

As Leon frowned in contemplation, Princess Veronica placed the onion slice she was holding onto the table and said, with a somber expression,

"Leon, what I said just now was entirely true. Without you, it's highly likely that after Joshua comes of age, I would be married off to a man I don't love, spending my life far away. Once I'm gone, these difficult reforms we've pushed through will mostly be halted except for those that maintain the royal family's rule. The entire kingdom will revert to a stagnant state. The reason I make this judgment isn't out of arrogance, thinking I'm the only one who can change everything. It's because I know my father and brother too well, and I understand what kind of people they are. For my father, the rule of the royal family surpasses everything. The true importance lies not in the kingdom as a whole but in whose hands the kingdom is controlled. Joshua has been deeply influenced by him and pampered by the Queen. I don't think he can become a qualified king."

"..."

Indeed... Joshua's mind and character really aren't suited for being king...

"So, I hope you'll reconsider."

Looking at the silent Leon, Princess Veronica, while guessing his thoughts, squeezed his hand with earnestness in her eyes and pleaded,

"I know it's unfair to you, but a marriage with you is truly the last opportunity for me, and even for this country. While it may seem alarmist, I truly believe that without you, whether it's my life or the country's future, everything will inevitably slide into the Abyss. I... I'm really out of options. Leon... I'm begging you, don't just push me away, okay?"

"..."

"I won't force you. If you want to refuse but can't say it, we can approach this differently."

After adjusting her coat, her face slightly flushed, the princess straddled Leon, wrapped her arms around his back, then buried her face in his shoulder and whispered into his ear,

"No matter what, the final decision is yours. Leon, if you still want to refuse, steel your heart and push me away. If you can't bear for me to marry someone else or haven't decided yet, then stay as we are. Don't push me away."

"If you stay silent, I'll take it as agreement to this approach. I'll start counting down... 5!"

"..."

So... should I push her away or not?

"4!"

"..."

"3!"

"..."

"2!"

"..."

As the countdown closed in, Leon instinctively raised his hand, grasped Princess Veronica's shoulder, and subconsciously pushed slightly. But at that moment, her hands, locked behind his back, tightened sharply, intertwining with full strength, her slender fingers turning white.

Feeling this intensity, Leon hesitated in pushing her away, concerned he might hurt her, and the princess's final countdown, filled with delight, echoed in Leon's ears.

"1!"

"Not pushing away means agreeing. Once you've agreed, you're not allowed to go back on it!"

"..."

Even though... why does it feel like I've been cornered?

"Let's go, time to rest."

After climbing off the somewhat hesitant Leon, the princess shyly glanced at him, then gently pulled him up from the chair. Her soft and slightly cool finger traced a teasing circle in his palm.

"Do you want to come in?"

Hiss...

No! Definitely can't go in! With this current situation, if I go inside today, I'm afraid I'll be devoured with no room for regret. Who knows, we might end up with our firstborn next year!

"Um... I'll stay out here for now."

Hastily withdrawing his hand, Leon averted his gaze and coughed awkwardly,

"I still have... um... some things to think about. I'll sleep on the sofa tonight!"

"That's not okay, is it?"

Secretly letting out a breath herself, Princess Veronica nodded lightly, then with a twinkling smile, said,

"If Anna wakes up in the middle of the night and finds you on the sofa, she'd certainly have a poor opinion of me as her sister-in-law. Why don't you just come in—"

"Enough already!"

Seeing the princess, who clearly wasn't prepared herself, continue to tease him, Leon took a deep breath, squinting slightly as he warned,

"If you keep going on, bear the consequences!"

Hmm?

Did the little man who I easily kept in check dare to challenge me?

Hearing Leon's warning, the princess raised her finely trimmed brows, then provocatively pushed out her full chest, smiling as she replied,

"Really? What exactly do you mean by bearing the consequences? Could you show me?"

You're the one saying this!

Hearing the challenge, Leon squinted his eyes, then, amidst the princess's surprised yelp, hefted her onto his shoulder and carried her inside. Before long, a series of panicked pleas echoed in the room.

"Wait, are you serious?"

"No no no! Aren't we... aren't we going too fast?"

"Ouch! Let's just stop here! Let me... let me prepare a bit more!"

"Alright Leon, I was wrong. I really was wrong! No no no! Don't! Mmm..."

From then onward, everything fell into place as it should, and ten months later, with a baby on the way, they were harmoniously married, their relationship loving—two kids in three years, three kids in five, by seven years...

"No no no, that's plenty! Truly enough! We really can't have more!"

Glancing out the window where two teams of boys and girls were playing soccer on the Royal Palace lawn, she looked at her husband, who appeared as handsome as that night, only now with a mustache, showing maturity.

Having been crowned Queen for several years, Veronica quickly tightened her nightgown, closed the gaping neckline, and placed a hand against the chest of the adult Leon, begging,

"I've been queen for so many years, but nine out of ten were spent pregnant. You have to let me rest for a few months! No no no! I really can't do it anymore! You... hmm? Why is your chest soft?"

"Ah!"

As Queen Veronica pondered, pinching her husband's soft chest muscles, the adult Leon suddenly blushed and, like a maiden, let out a squeal.

"Sister Veronica! You... you shouldn't touch like that! Hurry and wake up!"

Sister Veronica? Wake up?

Realizing the situation, the princess blinked hard, and the soft-chested husband before her wavered, transforming into Anna, who was covering her chest shyly.

Underneath her lay the large custom-made bed ordered by Leon, now a small sofa in Leon's apartment, with her wrapped in a blanket, sleepily lying on the sofa...

So it was a dream!

"Sorry..."

Shaking her head to clear away the lingering mature-rated dream, the princess, her hair in disarray, sat up calmly. She then cast aside the blanket and gave Anna a gentle smile, asking with composure,

"I just had a rather strange dream... Anna, what time is it?"

"It's already nine o'clock. Breakfast is on the table, and... um... are you really..."

Covering her chest and taking a small step back, Anna's eyes flickered slightly, yet she couldn't suppress her curiosity as she inquired,

"Are you really planning... planning to have two soccer teams worth?"

"..."

Chapter 434: Trouble Has Broken Out!

"Leon! You're in trouble!"

The female officer, who had developed even darker circles under her eyes, slammed the tray on the table with a loud clang, then sat down heavily across from Leon, whispering with annoyance in her eyes,

"I already know, you were the one who attacked the Boarding Tower!"

"..."

"Oh."

After a few seconds of silence, Leon speared half a piece of meat pudding with a fork and placed it on the female officer's plate, then poured half of his soup into her bowl.

"Sorry for causing you trouble."

"..."

And then what? That's it?

After waiting for a while without hearing more, the female officer, gritting her teeth in anger, couldn't help but snap,

"Is that all? You have nothing else to say to me?"

"..."

"Um... today's pudding is made with eye fillet, it has an excellent texture, and it's topped with Aunt Diana's special sauce. I was worried you wouldn't have time to eat because of overworking, so I got two extra pieces..."

"Don't play dumb! That's not what I'm asking about!"

Stabbing the meat pudding fiercely with a fork, the female officer leaned forward and said with a malicious tone,

"Spit it out! What's really going on? Or I'm going to arrest you right now!"

"Also... damn it! Why are you still wearing that old coat? Just because you wear the same clothes as the suspect, I've received several reports! Can't you get a new one?"

Huh?

Leon was taken aback, somewhat puzzled, and asked in return,

"These clothes are fine, they're durable, dirt-resistant, and warm. To buy a new coat like it would cost more than a Silver Wheel. Plus, I saw on my way to work that out of ten people on the street, three or four were dressed like me. Why would anyone report me because of that?"

"There may be many wearing it on the street, but there aren't many in the police department, which makes it stand out... In any case, find the time to change your clothes. If someone reports you again, I'm not covering for you!"

After fiercely mashing the pudding into the rice, the female officer took a spoonful and ate it. As the savory meat juices spread in her mouth, her tense expression finally relaxed, and she nodded slightly,

"The taste is indeed quite good... What's really going on with the Boarding Tower? Spill it!"

Even eating can't shut you up... hmm... Such a big deal, it would be odd if it did.

Shaking his head slightly, Leon organized his words briefly, and with a serious face, he explained,

"Simply put, there was something very dangerous over there. If it wasn't dealt with, it would have caused big trouble, so I had to go."

"..."

"..."

"That's all?"

"That's all."

"..."

"To be honest, it's not that I don't want to tell you, but the fewer people who know about this, the better."

After taking a sip of soup, Leon spread his hands helplessly and said,

"You know, although both of us are with the Police Department and work in 'maintaining public order,' our work content is completely different from ordinary police work. I can tell you this much only because of our relationship.

"Think about it, if you secret police received an assignment and discovered the Minister of Finance was colluding with enemy forces, betraying the Kingdom by selling intelligence, and got arrested under the cover of night... if it were you, would you go around blabbing about it?"

"..."

Well, fie on that!

Nodding in agreement, the female officer, once she realized, complained with some frustration,

"Okay, maybe you can't talk about the mission, but you got to just leave after doing your job, while I'm stuck here overworking like crazy!

"Except for the day when the city patrol returned, and I got to sleep soundly, this past week, I've only been getting four to five hours of sleep each day! Do you know how exhausting that is?"

"Yes, yes, you worked hard, really hard."

Forking a piece of salmon from the female officer's tray and popping it into his mouth, Leon looked at her heavily shadowed eyes with genuine remorse and couldn't help but suggest again,

"Seriously, if you're that tired, just take a nap in my office... After all, as you know by now, this is a case destined to have no resolution; there's no need to keep going at it."

"No way!"

The female officer snapped irritably after fiercely chewing a piece of fried chicken,

"Our Secret Investigation Bureau isn't as easygoing as yours. We have plenty of cases to handle! We may not be able to continue investigating the Boarding Tower incident, but there are other cases.

"Once I'm done eating, I'm going to apply to transfer to another task force... By the way, do you know about the recent drowning of the Marquis? If I transfer, I should take over that case."

???

What the... Why do you always take on this kind of work?

"What's wrong?"

After waiting for a while without Leon responding, the female officer looked up from her soup, instinctively flicking her pink Tongue tip to wipe away the grease from her lips, and then said with surprise in her eyes,

"Why are you silent again?"

"..."

Because I figured you'd end up overworking again, and certainly wouldn't find anything. As your friend who caused your overworking madness, I felt a bit guilty...

"Nothing..."

Giving the female officer a sympathetic look, Leon sighed and said,

"Good luck with that."

"I'm definitely going to succeed!"

After wrinkling her nose, the female officer huffed and replied,

"I'm an elite field officer in the Secret Investigation Bureau! If it weren't for concerns about being accused of advancing too fast, with my achievements over the years, I could have already become a field inspector, perhaps even vying for the next director of the Bureau."

"As long as it's not one of your 'messed up' cases, anything that comes my way can be solved. Regarding the Marquis's case, although I haven't seen the files yet, I noticed several suspicious points from newspapers and am confident of cracking it!"

"Yes, yes, I believe in you, you'll do just fine... um... I've finished my meal, so I'll head off then!"

After awkwardly clearing his throat twice, Leon quickly finished the remaining food on his tray, then, driven by inner guilt, hurriedly left the Police Department canteen and returned to the Purification Bureau, intending to talk to the director about the female journalist issue.

However, when Leon pushed open the door to the Purification Bureau, crossing the somewhat dim hallway, and was about to knock on the director's door, the door opened on its own first, and two somewhat familiar figures appeared before Leon.

"Mr. Lyon, it's been a while."

Extending a friendly hand to Leon, the naturally smiling senior investigator smiled gently and said,

"You've probably heard about the Marquis, right? He was under the protection of the central bureau's Word Spirit, so as usual, we need to find related personnel and ask some basic questions. We hope we haven't disturbed your work."

Chapter 435: The Investigation Begins

Was it still those same two investigators from before?

Squinting slightly against the light, Leon recognized their faces and narrowed his eyes a bit, refraining from shaking the old investigator's outstretched hand.

After the Ryan Blood Night incident, it was they who investigated him and ultimately issued a report stating "extremely high level of danger, close monitoring suggested."

The old man in front of him, who smiled with hidden daggers, even suggested in his review that Leon disregarded regulations, was deeply dissatisfied with the current rules, and would attempt to break free from the headquarters' control once he had the ability to do so.

And that report, devoid of a single positive comment, was even seen by the Aquarius Director, who brought it up in front of everyone at headquarters, nearly getting Leon into trouble with the Brain-Eating Demon. It caused him a lot of hassle.

...

"Heh, it seems Mr. Lyon isn't very welcoming of us."

Having waited for a moment without getting a handshake from Leon, the old investigator wasn't embarrassed but smiled slightly and naturally withdrew his hand, then slightly apologetically stated,

"Sorry, it's our duty to investigate potential violations. Even if it's not welcome, just like our work of clearing abnormalities, we must follow the rules to complete the investigation.

"After all, without us investigating and constraining those reckless Cleaners, the world would inevitably turn into a chaotic playground for the Evil God and demons.

"So, sorry, even though you might feel wronged, and even though our questions may be annoying, please try to cooperate."

So many words... Was he preparing for a graduate exam?

After shooting a glance at the old man who had said some unpleasant things about him, Leon frowned but said nothing, essentially agreeing to answer the questions and cooperate with the headquarters investigation. Meanwhile, the Red-haired Director, watching coldly from behind the desk, impatiently waved them away,

"Take your questions outside, I'm busy here. Don't disturb my work!"

"Alright."

After nodding towards the Red-haired Director, the old investigator raised his arm and gestured towards the door.

"Mr. Lyon, let's go straight to Miss Emma's office to talk, she's been waiting for us there for a while."

So they went to Senior Emma first before looking for me?

Watching this courteous and earnest old man, yet no matter what unable to be liked, Leon squinted his eyes and then turned away, heading to Senior Emma's office.

And the somewhat annoyed female investigator, along with the older investigator who maintained a smiling face, followed him into Senior Emma's room filled with an array of instruments of torture.

"Then let me begin the questioning!"

Forcefully pushing aside the skull-crushing hammer and canine tooth pillory on the sofa, the young female investigator sat across from Leon and Emma, her face cold as she spoke,

"First question: Did either of you know about Marquis Leonard's death?"

"Spare us this nonsense."

Interrupting the female investigator's questioning, Leon took out the Black Goat and placed it on the table with an expressionless face,

"Given your prejudice against our Virgo Branch, if you insist on wasting time with such questions, I will question the significance of this inquiry and request headquarters to send two new investigators."

"You!"

"Alright, Eisha!"

Stopping the slightly flushed female investigator, the old investigator smiled and said,

"Mr. Lyon and Miss Emma are indeed very busy. We can indeed be more flexible when asking questions, focusing primarily on the ones I've marked."

"...Fine."

Biting her lip in frustration, the female investigator turned a page in her notebook and then, with an unpleasant look, stated,

"First question! Did either of you plan to kill Marquis Leonard?"

"We did."

"Then the second question... huh?"

Looking at the freshly circled "deny" on her notebook, the female investigator blinked in confusion, then, full of bewilderment, raised her head and asked,

"What did you say?"

"I said we both had plans to kill Marquis Leonard, and they were very strong!"

Confirming she hadn't misheard, the somewhat stunned female investigator instinctively turned to Emma for a denial, but was met with an entirely agreeing gaze from Emma.

Huh... How could they just admit it like that? Can't they deny it a little?

Bewildered by Leon's honesty, after being silent for several seconds, the female investigator, full of doubt, couldn't help but ask,

"Why?"

"Because he deserved it."

After briefly explaining what Leonard had done, Leon, full of disdain, said,

"If he hadn't jumped into the lake, whether Senior Emma had become the director of a small branch or I had found the evidence to put him in jail, it would have been his death day! Drowning in the lake was even too good for him!"

Hearing Leon's words, Emma, recalling her deceased family and daughter, couldn't help but have a slight sheen of tears in her eyes, then nodded in agreement.

"..."

Well, he did deserve to die... but that's not what I wanted to ask, right? I'm here to investigate you. Although our job is to make you tell the truth, isn't being this forthright a bit too much?

Looking at her notebook full of questions designed to make Leon admit to wanting to kill Marquis Leonard, the female investigator reluctantly picked up her pen and crossed all of them out, then hesitantly said,

"Then... where were you both on the night of his death? Do you have anyone to verify your alibis?"

"No."

Leon shook his head and replied,

"I was working overtime at the bureau, and Senior Emma was taking care of her daughter at home. We were both alone and have no one to vouch for us."

"..."

So no alibis either? Aren't you going to put up a little struggle?

Seeing another ten or so questions rendered useless, the female investigator, whose "heavy blows" had missed the mark twice already, felt somewhat powerless, opening her mouth before aimlessly crossing out a long list of questions.

"Then... third question, are you the ones who killed Marquis Leonard?"

"No."

Senior Emma shook her head slightly.

"Unfortunately, no."

Leon's expression even held a hint of regret.

About how Leonard died... it was of course suicide.

Although I made him jump into the river a few hundred times in dreams and had him executed a thousand times over, I never so much as touched a finger of his nor seen his face with my own eyes. What does his jumping into the lake have to do with me?

Seeing the "honest duo" in front of her finally not continuing to admit things, the female investigator, for some reason, let out a sigh of relief. She then straightened up, holding the pile of prepared questions, and somewhat excitedly asked,

"Then how do you explain his sudden death?"

"After all, both of you had motives to kill him, the ability to do so, and lacked alibis for that night, so please explain how..."

"Dear daughter~"

At that moment, the Black Goat on the table, whose head was growing tired of listening, rolled its eyes and grinned broadly,

"Come over here, let Daddy give you a hug!"

???

Bewildered by this remark, the female investigator pointed at her own nose, uncertainly asking,

"Were you talking to me just now?"

"Who else? Come on now... a little closer... hehe, ptui!"

A potent smoker's spit flew out, smearing the back of the investigation form, as the Black Goat smirked coldly at the horrified female investigator,

"According to your logic, I have the motive to do something with your mom, the capacity to, and on the day your mom conceived you, I lacked an alibi... by your reasoning, wouldn't I be your wild dad?!"

Chapter 436: Persuasive Eloquence

6.

Looking at the female investigator whose face turned red with anger, almost breathless, Leon couldn't help but give a mental thumbs-up to the Black Goat, deciding to buy it a few more packs of Gotth after work.

Although the Black Goat's "attack power" was somewhat lacking, its verbal aggression was maxed out. He remembered a previous investigation where a similar scene occurred, leaving the investigator rolling their eyes, using it as a specialized tool against investigators.

"All right, Eisha."

The old investigator glanced at the arrogant goat head in surprise before speaking up to mediate, gently advising,

"Let's stop with the routine questions for now. After all, we haven't obtained any substantial evidence, and jumping right in like this is indeed somewhat presumptuous... Why don't you step out for some fresh air? I'll handle the rest."

"Okay..."

Hearing the elder investigator's advice, the female investigator clenched her fist and then nodded slightly with pursed lips, leaving the office with a look of unwillingness.

After she stormed out, the mild-mannered old investigator sat up straight, looking Leon in the eye, and said peacefully,

"Lord Leon, if I'm not mistaken, the death of the Goldcrest Marquis has a direct connection with you, doesn't it?"

Of course not!

Leon, who had prepared mentally, instinctively wanted to shake his head in denial but found his tongue slightly rigid, unable to move at all despite his effort.

"Looks like you're about to lie again."

The old investigator, slightly parting his lips to show Leon his tongue glowing with a faint white light, smiled and said,

"After returning from you last time, I felt my skills were lacking, so I applied to the main bureau for an anomalous object capable of discerning lies and used it to replace my original tongue.

During conversations with me, if your responses are lies, your tongue will be affected, preventing you from providing false answers, so please try to speak more honestly in our subsequent exchanges."

An anomalous object for lie detection?

After hearing the elder investigator's words, Leon involuntarily squinted and looked at his tongue.

Though not clearly visible due to the angle, there seemed to be something resembling a "suture" in the middle of his tongue.

The latter half of the elder investigator's tongue was completely normal, with no abnormalities. Yet the white, glowing front half appeared sun-dried, looking shriveled and shrunk, the tongue's surface barely intact while its underside was significantly shriveled, with dark green tongue veins bulging out, appearing quite ghastly.

'Be careful; that's the "Tongue of Truth!"'

A slightly damp hand grasped his, and Senior Emma's gentle voice, through the contact of their hands, slipped into Leon's soul.

'This thing is an anomalous object crafted by the fourth-generation Taurus Director. He infiltrated the cemetery of the Church of True Word and exhumed the grave of their first Grand Speaker to remove this tongue from the body.

The first Grand Speaker never told a single lie from birth to death, so using his tongue as an anomalous object forces others to answer truthfully as he did.

Moreover, this thing requires very little consumption; as long as one has a bit of Leon Value, they can use it. The only cost is needing to replace their own tongue, and its usage is limited.'

"Zzz..."

[Through Emma Alman's detailed explanation, you've gained substantial intelligence about the "Tongue of Truth," activating the heterochromatic badge "Materialist Soul (Crimson).

Having understood the activation rules of the "Tongue of Truth," your resistance to this anomalous object has significantly increased, allowing you to shield its deeper effects already.]

Tongue of Truth, huh?

Scanning the popped-up prompt, Leon gripped Emma's hand back, and through their soul connection, asked,

'What else? Is there more intelligence?'

There is, indeed... but what are you asking this for?

Emma blinked in slight confusion at Leon's question but, trusting Leon, quickly explained through their soul connection,

'There's indeed more...

According to the calculations of the fourth-generation Taurus Director, when the total cumulative usage reaches the number of truths the Grand Speaker spoke in life, it will wither on its own.

So, roughly three hundred years ago, it was sealed by the Director at the time, only taken out during very crucial moments. I don't know how he got it.

Anyway, Leon, don't deal with him anymore; my Leon Value is much higher than his, making this thing less effective on me, so let me handle the questions next!'

"Zzz..."

[Through Emma Alman's detailed explanation... you've already managed to shield its deeply profound effects.]

'It's okay; let me answer.'

Reassuringly patting Senior Emma's hand, Leon stretched his still somewhat stiff tongue, his accent slightly off but still fairly fluent, and said,

"All right, I'll try to be more honest from now on... Besides, I didn't kill the Goldcrest Marquis, nor was I involved in any way; you really have the wrong person."

?!!

The old investigator's eyebrows twitched at Leon's response, then immediately tensed the muscles in his jaw, trying hard to suppress the obviously nonsensical statement.

However, no matter how hard he tried, even a visible small bulge appeared on his chin, Leon's words flowed more smoothly, even turning the tables, saying with a slightly disdainful expression,

"Additionally, I don't know what's going on with you; without any evidence, you boldly confronted me, accusing me with offensive questions, and even prepared a corresponding anomalous object.

Yet no matter how meticulous you are, innocent people will always be innocent. Concerning the Goldcrest Marquis's drowning suicide, I feel no guilt whatsoever; feel free to investigate all you want. Neither I nor Senior Emma laid a finger on him.

But trying to pin things on us without any evidence, I suspect you're connected to Aquarius. After this conversation, I'll immediately file a complaint with the main bureau to thoroughly investigate your background and movements!"

No way... Aren't you aware of what you did? How dare you investigate me?

The old investigator, his tongue nearly twisted off but unable to suppress Leon's righteous speech, tightened his jaw muscles, beginning to question whether the "Tongue of Truth" was broken.

Before coming, he had already investigated the Verdant Feather Estate and secretly used the "Chronometer Pocket Watch" to trace the events of that day.

The righteous-looking scoundrel in front of him, on that night, knocked out the guards and sneaked into the estate, stood at the Goldcrest Marquis's door for over ten minutes, and the Goldcrest Marquis had nightmares the entire night, drowning himself the next day!

Damn it! If this matter is disconnected from him, I'd pull out the "Chronometer Pocket Watch" and chew it up on the spot!

Chapter 437: A Flying Kick!

"What's wrong? Cat got your tongue?"

Leon tested the range of the effect of the Tongue of Truth, finding most of its influence was blocked. Noticing that the less falsehood in his speech, the less the impact on his tongue, Leon switched to the Performance Master and scolded with a feigned outrage,

"I know you investigators hold a grudge against us at the Virgin Branch, so you love to exaggerate things in your reports. But this time, you've gone too far!

Are you actually trying to frame us for something this big? Do you have any idea what would happen if your framing succeeded? What a massive impact this would have on me and Senior Emma? Where is your conscience? Did a dog eat it?"

"..."

Heh, maybe my conscience did get eaten by a dog, but a dog's stomach could never handle your thick skin!

After desperately trying for a while and confirming that the Tongue of Truth had indeed lost its effect, the old investigator took a deep breath and started to quietly jot down notes truthfully in his notebook.

What he had retrieved using the Chronometer Pocket Watch was definitely the truth behind the Marigold Marquis's death; compared to the easily influenced Tongue of Truth, what he saw firsthand in the past couldn't be fake. The Marigold Marquis had to have been killed by him!

However, the Chronometer Pocket Watch had a very high Leon Value, far beyond what an ordinary investigator could wield, and it was also recorded in the bureau, created by the Aquarius Director using the remnants of the King of Time as part of the "Time Trinity." It should have been taken back by the "Aquarius Director."

So if he dared to bring it out, it would be like announcing to everyone that he had a connection with the Aquarius Director. A simple check would immediately expose his identity. Compared to the heavy news of him still being alive, killing a Marquis in violation was nothing.

To escape the effects of the Directives List and the Death Realm Street Lamp, and to keep it hidden from the Purification Bureau, he had already shed all of his Soul of Evil. If the remaining part of the Soul of Goodness were also discovered, he'd truly have nothing left.

Although the youngster in front of him had his own secrets and might obstruct his plans, it wasn't worth risking his life for him...

Not worth it! Not worth it!

...

Weighing the pros and cons in less than a second, the old investigator, or rather half of the Aquarius Director, suppressed his inner frustration. He then asked the pre-designed questions one by one with an emotionless face.

Leon, maintaining his character, answered one question after another, mixing in some personal opinions and using plenty of vague, half-true statements to thoroughly diminish what little effect the Tongue of Truth retained.

In the "cooperative performance" of both sides, this furious "interrogation" oddly ended in complete peace. The old investigator's notebook only held a heap of ambiguous replies and Leon's fervent declarations of loyalty to the Purification Bureau.

"That concludes the questioning for now. We will surely continue our investigation and come back to you once we have sufficient evidence... There's also another matter."

Closing the notebook filled with Leon's nauseating loyalty to the Purification Bureau, the old investigator took out a document, handing it over without changing his expression.

"What is this?"

"This is the dangerous situation discovered by the main bureau using hints from the Watcher's Palace, employing two temporal Anomalous Objects."

Sickened by Leon's grandiose strings of lies, the old investigator spoke with a darkened face,

"Originally it was supposed to be confirmed that you and Olivia weren't in collusion before showing it to her directly. But since our investigation wasn't detailed enough and wronged you, I have no face to meet her. Please, the two of you, hand it over directly!"

Watcher's Palace hint?!

Upon hearing the old investigator's words, Leon and Emma instinctively became serious, solemnly accepting the sealed document.

"Is the information in here for Olivia's eyes only, or can we look at it too?"

Looking at the tightly sealed document, Emma frowned and asked,

"Also, tips from the Watcher's Palace are usually very important. Why not use the Celestial Sphere Mirror to contact Olivia directly, instead of delivering a paper document?"

"I don't know about that, I'm just running an errand,"

the old investigator shook his head after Emma's inquiry,

"As for whether you can see it... The main bureau didn't specify, only tasked me to deliver this information to the Virgin Branch, so members of the Virgin Branch should be able to see it."

Members of the Virgin Branch can see it? So... it might be a major task requiring the entire branch's participation!

Understanding the significance of this document, Emma didn't dare to delay. After a couple of low-key instructions, she grabbed the document and hurried off, while Leon, who had just put on a pompous show, stood up comfortably to see the guest off, saying,

"In that case, I won't walk you out any further. Please feel free to go!"

"..."

Watching Leon say he "won't walk you out any further," yet only shifted slightly in his seat without bothering to escort him to the door, the old investigator couldn't help but laugh in anger, nodding slightly,

"Great! Just great!"

After taking one last long look at Leon, who had almost caused his death, the old investigator, who had kept a relatively kind demeanor despite provocation, finally indulged in a strange smile, saying with veiled meaning,

"Mr. Lyon, I believe it won't be long before we meet again."

"..."

???

Why did that sound like something a big bad villain would say?

"Wait a minute."

Though finding nothing wrong, Leon, exposed to similar phrases like "XXX, we have a long future ahead" in his past life, instinctively felt something amiss and immediately attempted to stop him,

"Hold on... Is your name Camus?"

"Why?"

Hearing Leon's words, the old investigator turned around and asked in surprise,

"Has Mr. Lyon heard of my name somewhere before?"

"It does sound a bit familiar... Let me think..."

Spouting some nonsensical chatter, Leon eagerly leaned over, placing both hands on the old investigator's shoulders to prevent any movement, and then exclaimed with eyes full of delight,

"Oh, so it's you! Aren't you the one who..."

Just as he was midway through speaking, Leon's right leg suddenly kicked up. Using a secret combat move he learned from a policewoman, he swung his foot fiercely towards the old investigator's crotch!

Remembering when the Chief lost his wallet, he predicted that something might happen within a week, and soon after, this old man conveniently showed up, making him extremely suspicious.

Moreover, that sentence of his just now reeked strongly of a villainous mastermind. No matter how he thought it over, something felt off, so he decided it was best to test it with a kick, regardless of any issue.

Considering he had an Undying Body, and the Chief's office wasn't far off, even if he somehow kicked the boss out, he probably wouldn't get killed, so the benefits outweighed the risks—this kick was absolutely the right move!

...

Why is he kicking me? Did I get exposed?

When he noticed the leg hurtling toward his groin, the old investigator's eyes widened in shock, as chaotic thoughts flooded his mind like a tide.

Impossible!

My Soul of Goodness had been separated nearly seventy years, never once connecting with the Aquarius Director. My clean, verifiable records over the last fifty years, never hinting at corruption, surely meant I couldn't have been exposed!

But if I weren't exposed, why would he suddenly attack?

Could it be... just because I wrote bad things about him in the past, and couldn't help but throw a hard word his way just now while leaving? Did he hold a grudge and ambush an old man like me? Kick me right in the nuts?

No way... Is this kid actually that much of a brute?!

Unbelievably casting a glance at Leon, the old investigator felt the urge to lash out and blow this mangy mutt's brains out, just to see what was really inside his head.

Yet, recalling his own objectives, thinking about the hassle of Leon's Undying Body and the watchful Scarlet Hair Lady just twenty steps away ready to pounce at the first sign of unusual activity, the old investigator could only bear the agony, biting his lip and trembling as he gingerly spread his legs...

"Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!"

Chapter 438: A Major Operation

"You guys... you're too much!"

Looking at the old Investigator curled up on the carpet like a shrimp, clutching his legs desperately, the female Investigator who burst in upon hearing the scream had her pretty face instantly turn livid with rage.

"Senior Camus is such a nice person. He's been offended by you several times and never held a grudge, even advising me not to bring personal emotions into work, and yet... yet you treat him like this?!"

"..."

Could it be... that I felt it wrong just now?

Seeing the old Investigator twitching on the ground after being hit hard in the crotch, Leon hesitated slightly but still reached out to help him up, speaking with a guilty expression,

"Sorry... I might have misunderstood. Are you okay?"

Am I okay? Don't you already know if I'm okay or not?

Hearing Leon's heartfelt inquiry, the old Investigator, face covered in sweat, struggled to roll his eyes, his lips trembling as he said nothing, while the female Investigator rushed over, supporting him and saying indignantly to Leon,

"Get out of the way! What happened today, I will definitely report it to the headquarters!"

"..."

It seems it really was my mistake...

Glancing at the old Investigator who was still shaking in pain and couldn't even stand, Leon opened his mouth slightly, then bowed deeply towards him, full of apology.

Sorry, I might have been a bit heavy-handed. Mainly because that parting line of yours just now reeked of a mastermind vibe; I wouldn't have been able to sleep tonight without testing you a bit.

And, though I misjudged this time, you too, if you're not some villain big boss, why do you act so shady?

"What's going on? What happened to him?"

The commotion from the earlier scream and subsequent ruckus was quite large, not only alerting the Cleaners who were not on field duties but even the red-haired Director who came out of his office, curiously asking a question.

"You're just in time!"

Seeing the red-haired Director come out of the office, the female Investigator couldn't help but exclaim angrily,

"You at the Virgo Sub-station have gone too far this time! You actually kicked Senior Camus in... there! Just you wait! Once we go back, I will definitely seek justice for Senior Camus!"

Hmm? Threatening me?

After hearing what the female Investigator said, the red-haired Director, who initially wanted to ask more, raised his brow slightly, then nodded indifferently and said,

"Alright then, don't let the door hit you on the way out."

"You?!"

"If you want to leave then hurry up, we have other things to do and no time to waste with you."

Shifting his gaze away from the two Investigators directly, the red-haired Director clapped his hands forcefully, drawing everyone's attention and then solemnly announcing,

"Those who are not on a mission, follow me to the meeting room on the second floor. We've got a big job coming up!"

...

"The headquarters just sent a message; the position of the Dream Realm has shifted, and the location of the Demonic Soul Abyss is about to overlap with the Kingdom."

After taking out more than a dozen marked maps from the folder brought by the old Investigator and pinning them one by one on the intelligence board in the meeting room, the red-haired Director, standing beside the intelligence board, spoke with a serious face,

"In the real world that overlaps with the Demonic Soul Abyss, the connection between the body and the soul will be infinitely weakened, and Dream Realm creatures and related abilities will be greatly enhanced.

According to the guidance from the Watcher's Palace, the Bai Ye Sect will hold a descent ritual, attempting to assist the King of Nightmares in invading reality and spreading nightmares across the entire Kingdom. Our mission this time is to stop its descent!"

King of Nightmares?

Hearing this somewhat familiar name, Leon was slightly taken aback, first glancing around at the solemn expression of his senior Cleaners, then putting his hand on Emma's slightly tensed hand.

'Emma, this King of Nightmares trying to descend, isn't it the same Evil God that was driven away by the royal ancestors and thus cursed the royal bloodline?'

'Yes.'

Hearing Leon's inquiry through the soul, Emma nodded slightly, knowing he was somewhat lacking in these "common knowledge" areas, quickly holding Leon's hand to explain,

'The King of Nightmares is also called the Lord of Nightmares, one of the three gods of the dream worshiped by the Bai Ye Sect, and doesn't have a real entity. In recent years, it has mostly resided in the Dream Realm, with the Demonic Soul Abyss as its abode in the Dream Realm.

And compared to the stable material reality, the spiritual level of the Dream Realm is relatively elusive, so its position is not fixed, meaning the location of the Demonic Soul Abyss also shifts from time to time.

To put it simply, it's like the moon being too close to the ocean might affect the tides; the Demonic Soul Abyss being too close to reality also causes some effects. At such times, the Bai Ye Sect and the King of Nightmares will begin to act, attempting to invade reality and spread nightmares.'

Spread nightmares?

Upon hearing this, Leon contemplated for a moment, then continued to ask, 'If one were to have a nightmare during such a time, would the consequences be serious?'

'Extremely serious!' Emma nodded, her expression somewhat grave, 'Having a nightmare at such a time is equivalent to entering the King of Nightmares' domain, and for the rest of your life, every time you sleep, you'll be plunged into endless nightmares, providing it with power until death.

Particularly compatible souls with the Dream Realm may even be directly captured by the King of Nightmares, brought into the Dream Realm by its own hand. Once the remaining body dies, they will entirely become Dream Realm creatures, serving it as an eternal servant.

Moreover, the soul quality of us Cleaners is generally higher than that of regular humans, making it extremely likely to catch its attention in a nightmare and have our souls forcibly taken!

Having our souls taken away would leave just an empty shell, wouldn't it?

Upon hearing this, Leon couldn't help but continue asking, 'So how powerful is the King of Nightmares? Compared to the Goddess of Wealth?'

'It's not a matter of strength but a matter of existential form.'

Emma shook her head and said, 'The King of Nightmares won't descend physically like the Goddess of Wealth. It only exists within the dreams of sentient beings. Often, when you see its true form, it indicates you've already entered its domain.'

And facing the outcome of entering a True God's domain, someone like you who has faced the Goddess of Wealth should understand. Without a power of equal or higher rank to resist, there's absolutely no ability to fight back, so regardless of its strength, it's much more difficult to deal with than the Goddess of Wealth.

For a physical god like the Goddess of Wealth, Olivia could handle three or five at once without issue. But once the King of Nightmares descends, it can weave through countless human nightmares continuously, and even if Olivia risks entering the dream, she wouldn't catch up to it.'

Not even the Director can handle it?

After hearing the senior's explanation, Leon couldn't help but frown slightly, understanding why the Cleaners at the Virgo Sub-station looked like they were facing a formidable enemy.

Although not always reliable, the red-haired Director's exceptionally strong ability has always been the biggest backbone of the Virgo Sub-station, even if a mission truly fails, resulting in an unexpected True God descending, the Director could still clean up the mess.

But this time their opponent is of the type the Director is not good at handling. If any mishap really allows the King of Nightmares to successfully descend, everyone will likely have to fend for themselves in the end.

Chapter 439: Mission Assignment

"Have you understood the situation?"

Glancing at Ryan and Emma holding hands, and waiting until he let go, the red-haired director curled his knuckles and knocked twice on the intelligence board beside him.

"According to the information from the Watcher's Palace, the Bai Ye Sect will deploy over 700 followers. Starting tomorrow, they will set up a total of 35 strongholds one after another.

Five days later, when the 'overlap point' between the Demonic Soul Abyss and the Kingdom aligns, these 35 strongholds will hold rituals simultaneously, providing coordinates for the King of Nightmares, allowing it to squeeze into reality with the Demonic Soul Abyss.

And our task is to clear all these 35 strongholds before then, or at least clear 33 of them. As long as we leave fewer than two strongholds, the King of Nightmares won't be able to fully enter reality."

After stating the mission objectives, the red-haired director lifted the intelligence board again, pointed to the dozen or so maps pinned on it, and said seriously:

"The locations marked with red crosses on these maps are where the headquarters, in accordance with the Watcher's Palace's information, has pre-marked as stronghold locations. These include 12 counties in the Kingdom, two across-county mountain ranges, and the sea to the east.

I've just requested support, and the nine strongholds in Merino County, Welsh County, and Pav County will be dealt with by the Lion Sub-bureau;

The six strongholds in the eastern sea area and the Hesperito Volcano Cluster will be taken over by the Aquarius Sub-bureau. We only need to handle the remaining 20 strongholds, so let's assign the tasks."

Twenty strongholds, huh...

Looking around the meeting room, apart from himself, Leon quickly calculated.

Three times seven is twenty-one, so if the director stays at the capital as expected, each of us, including myself, will likely need to address three strongholds.

Considering that among the cleaners present, only I am a Level 3 Cleaner while others are Level 2 or even Level 1, I might be assigned one less, or perhaps only one stronghold."

"Emma, the seven strongholds in Ryan County and Coast County are yours. If time is tight, you can be more ruthless."

"Okay."

Huh? Just like that, seven tasks are gone?

In Leon's slightly surprised gaze, the map with the most red crosses was removed by a strand of red hair and placed on Emma's table. Emma nodded unsurprisingly, frowning as she examined the times and locations marked on the map.

"Next is Tom... You're responsible for the four strongholds in the Schedern Mountain Range. Be mindful of your actions when you work; the snow hasn't melted there yet, so don't cause an avalanche!"

"Uh-huh, I'll try!"

"Not just try, you must!"

Giving Tom a stern warning glance, the red-haired director continued assigning tasks:

"Next is Pioni, you're headed to Pav County and Belleray County..."

"Ameen, this one for Belleray County is yours... Be mindful, no unauthorized drug use this time..."

"Harry, these are yours..."

"Spike, and you... if you're overwhelmed, you can summon the stationed army, but remember to report afterward..."

Wait... aren't all the tasks assigned already?

When the last two maps were bound together and handed to the burly colleague opposite, Leon stood up in disbelief and asked:

"Director, what about me? What do I do?"

"You stay behind to guard the house."

"..."

Seeing Leon's somewhat speechless expression, the red-haired director pointed towards the palace, calmly explaining:

"The King of Nightmares has a grudge with the royal ancestors, and there's a possibility it might seize this opportunity to attack royal members, so we must be on guard."

Your unique identity makes you ideal for moving in and out of the palace without issue, and you are familiar with the princess and prince, making you perfect for this role. If I'm caught up by any

unforeseen events, you'll be responsible for protecting the royal family. If there's any trouble, remember to seek help from headquarters."

Unforeseen events?

Though the red-haired director didn't say it outright, after exchanging glances, Leon immediately understood her implication, realizing she was concerned about that female reporter from the Gemini Sub-bureau.

After pocketing the director's wallet, the reporter named Nicole hadn't been seen since, but she was indeed a genuine Level 1 Cleaner with a tail capable of camouflaging her presence, making her a potential threat.

So the talk about protecting the royal family was probably an excuse. The real reason the director wanted me in the palace was likely to keep me close to the royal family's [Syllabic Stele]. If any trouble occurs on her end, I can immediately contact the headquarters for assistance through royal channels.

"Got it."

Nodding knowingly, Leon sat back, feeling reassured about his assigned task, while the red-haired director, having completed the task assignments, clapped her hands firmly and concluded crisply:

"If there's nothing else to add, let's set off now!"

Additionally, considering the involvement of two other sub-bureaus this time, and the uncertainty of how far they'll go or if they'll make mistakes, it's best for us to take down all 20 strongholds for which we're responsible with no room for error!"

...

The next night, the palace.

Having had a busy day, hosting six or seven batches of guests with patience, Prince Joshua had just fallen asleep when a knock sounded from outside the bedroom door.

"Knock, knock, knock"

"..."

After a long, exhausting day, Prince Freckles was in a deep sleep, but after a while without any response, the knocking against the wooden panel suddenly intensified, becoming more rapid, forcibly dragging him from his dreams.

"Knock, knock, knock!"

???

Who? Who dares knock on my door like this? Are they seeking death?!

Awakened forcefully by the persistent knocking, Prince Freckles got up angrily, rushed off his soft bed, and yanked open the bedroom door.

"Damn it! Today, I swear... it's you?"

Seeing the visitor's face, Joshua, who was about to start cursing, went pale, promptly shut his mouth, instinctively stepping back, but feeling he seemed cowardly, he braced up and stepped forward, sternly reprimanding:

"Who let you in here! Get out of my... go! You, get out!"

"Move aside, thank you."

Glancing sideways at the intimidated Joshua, Leon, hugging a pillow and a thin blanket, directly pushed past the obstructing Prince Freckles and entered the room, placing the pillow against an armrest.

"Don't you understand human language?"

Feeling ignored, Joshua gave a fierce glare and rushed over to try and kick the sofa and the man on it over, but after being stared down narrowly by Leon, he ultimately lowered his foot, his cheeks twitching as he angrily retorted:

"Get out! This is my room! Don't push your luck! Or else I'll..."

"I'm here to protect you."

Cutting him off, the weary Leon yawned, lay down on the sofa, and unenthusiastically informed him:

"There've been incidents recently, and you might be in danger, so the bureau assigned me to protect royal family members.

But I'm only one person and can't protect everyone, so I thought I'd guard your father, mother, and sister during the day when I'm awake, and come here at night when I'm tired to protect you. This way, I'm being responsible...

Well... If you have no objections, let's stick with this plan. I'm going to sleep first."

Chapter 440: Night and Lights

During the day you're protecting my dad, my mom, and my sister, and at night when you're sleepy, you come to protect me?

Sounds like no big deal, but if you're so sleepy that you fall asleep, then who's really protecting whom here?

After hearing Leon's words, Prince Freckles was stunned for a full ten seconds before he barely managed to straighten out the logic and couldn't help but shout angrily:

"Damn bastard! I'm going to the Clean-up Bureau to complain about you!"

"Mmhmm."

Having spent the entire day running around with the princess, Leon was too exhausted to bother with him. He closed his eyes drowsily and responded quite perfunctorily:

"Go ahead, complain, but the main office over there is quite busy lately, so it might take a while to process it, or they might just send the complaint back for our branch to handle on our own.

Conveniently, our director is also busy lately, so I'll probably still be the one to solve your problem. If you can accept that, then feel free to complain; I'll take it all."

"..."

If I complain about you, and my complaint ends up being handled by you? Then what's the point of complaining at all!

Angered to the point of turning pale by Leon's response, Prince Freckles instinctively wanted to make a move, but realized that the bastard in front of him was unlike anyone he'd dealt with in the past; provoke him too much, and he was truly bold enough to slap him hard.

"This isn't fair!"

Recalling those few instances of getting beaten up in the past, Joshua barely suppressed his internal anger, stomped his feet twice furiously, and said:

"I'm the prince! Why is it that you protect Veronica when you're awake and only come to protect me when you're too tired to stand? What if there's danger at night? What if something happens to me?"

Hmm? Suddenly trying to be reasonable?

Leon opened his eyes in surprise, looked at the "reasoning" Prince Freckles before him, and pondered for a moment before speaking with a somewhat peculiar expression:

"Sure, if you want to switch, that's fine, but I'm offering personal protection.

Aren't you and your uncle, the Treasury Minister, trying actively to contact the Old Nobility and having repeated dealings with the Lower House, trying to get them to cooperate with you in overthrowing the princess? Aren't you worried I'll spill the beans if I follow you during the day?"

"..."

Thinking about it like that, it doesn't seem quite right... Wait a minute!

"How do you know who I'm dealing with?"

"Saw it on your sister's desk... Besides, you didn't seriously consider this a secret, did you?"

Looking at the astonished Prince Freckles before him, Leon sneered and said:

"The Old Nobility were never on the same page, and the Lower House is a place where rumors fly like a sieve; it's impossible to keep anything secret there. Your attempts to court their support were already in the papers last Wednesday!"

"..."

...

To be honest, you're really green...

Leon couldn't help but shake his head slightly at the speechless Joshua in front of him, whom he had just ridiculed.

Although aligning with the Old Nobility and currying favor with the Lower House is a transparent plot, as long as the princess tries to cut into the profits of the Old Nobility and the big merchants, there's nothing to stop you from aligning, and it's not afraid of being known.

But something that was supposed to be kept as low-key as possible, you guys manage to make it a big buzz; it's truly astounding, and even when making house calls, you don't even bother to change to a different carriage. Who can't see through that?

With your level of skill, you would need a miracle to defeat the princess!

"Any other questions?"

Too tired to deal with Joshua, whose face was alternating between blue and red, Leon, having worked as a personal guard for the whole day and almost being kept by the princess to "stay overnight," yawned widely again.

"If not, let's sleep; your sister is getting up around five tomorrow to compete with the Treasury Minister over the new tax secretary candidate, and I plan to take a look..."

"Wait!"

Seeing Leon pulling up the thin blanket, seemingly ready to end the conversation, Prince Freckles couldn't help but stomp his foot again, angrily stopping him:

"Get out of here! I don't need your protection! What gives you the right to sleep here? Get up! Go to the servant's room outside! Or else I'll..."

"Have I been too polite to you?"

Seeing that after all this explanation, Joshua still wanted to pick a fight, Leon, who was feeling the pressure of work lately, sat up and rolled up his right sleeve, squinting as he said:

"I'll give you two options: the first one, you go back to sleep now and sleep until tomorrow morning; the second one, I put some effort into beating you up, and you'll remain unconscious until tomorrow morning... pick your choice!"

Here we go again!

Realizing that Leon seemed ready to use force, Prince Freckles quickly stepped back half a step, then stiffened his neck to argue:

"You're... you're violent! You're barbaric! Resorting to force is the worst choice! The true ruler should..."

"The true ruler is the one with the bigger fist."

Raising his right hand clenched into a palm, which frightened Joshua into retreating another half a step, Leon lay back down,

"Moreover, the effective choice is the right choice, so why care if you think I'm barbaric? Just hurry up and go to sleep!"

"..."

Just you wait!

Prince Freckles stood in front of the couch panting, and considering the vast difference in strength between the two, in the end, he didn't dare to lay a hand on him.

And when Leon had already closed his eyes, his breathing gradually lengthening as he was about to fall asleep, Prince Freckles could only snort angrily, then stomp heavily on the carpet, walking step by step back to his bed.

Let you sleep! I'll shake you awake!

Besides! You can only be so arrogant for a few more days!

Once I overthrow Veronica and replace my father as the new King, I'm definitely going to put up a sign at the palace gates that says "Leon and dogs are not allowed" and then issue a decree that anyone who assaults the King without just cause will be hanged!

In a fit of frustration over failing to kick someone out, Joshua leaped onto his bed with a thud, then started shaking the covers vigorously, creating a series of rustling noises.

After fussing for a while and hearing the sound of Leon tossing and turning in dissatisfaction from the other side, ensuring that he managed to get back at him, Joshua, compelled by drowsiness, finally drifted into sleep with a touch of satisfaction.

...

"That's about enough."

Shortly after Prince Freckles closed his eyes, a somewhat aged voice rang out from a bell tower located roughly three streets west of the palace.

Looking at the capital city shrouded in tranquil darkness, the old Investigator sitting meditatively on the roof of the tower spoke serenely:

"Apart from the Scarlet Hair Lady and that Leon, everyone from the Virgo branch has left the capital, and those two have also fallen asleep... Nicole, it's time for you to act."

"Alright..."

With a slightly hesitant reply, a gentle light shone behind the old Investigator. The female reporter who had disappeared after stealing a wallet emerged, holding a small lantern that emitted a warm glow.

After casting a hesitant glance at the old Investigator, the female reporter tightened her lips and gently shook the lantern in her hand.

Immediately, the capital, largely hidden in darkness, flickered slightly with the lantern's flame, then blazed with light as a radiant sun replaced the moon, suspended high in the sky at its center.