

I! Cleaner 451

Chapter 451: Partners

"I did mean that."

Facing the cold questioning of the King of Nightmares, the Aquarius Director laughed softly, openly admitting:

"Although I am now defecting from the Clean-up Bureau, I was once a director there.

Having opposed you for so many years, suddenly letting you in personally this time feels a bit awkward, so I tried to harm you a bit to atone, but you saw through it."

"Not completely."

The blurred face faded away from the small boat and returned to its original position. The gray mist soaked in the black river water clung to the King of Nightmares' body like a drenched cloak, clearly outlining its emaciated form.

After wringing out the gray robe soaked with countless nightmares, the King of Nightmares extended a withered arm, adjusted the mirror-like crown on his head, and then looked down at the two on the small boat, speaking in a haunting tone:

"I am indeed curious now about that third-level cleaner who forced you to cooperate with me, what special trait they possess, but it's absolutely impossible for you to use him to kill me.

I am immortal in the Demonic Soul Abyss. Without you, the Aquarius Director, even if all eleven remaining directors of the Clean-up Bureau came, they couldn't kill me."

"Well, as long as you have confidence."

With an indifferent smile, the Aquarius Director said:

"Enough with the nonsense, aren't we going to start repairing my soul? Where should I sleep? On this boat?"

"As long as you can fall asleep, you can sleep anywhere, but..."

Glancing at the Aquarius Director, the King of Nightmares tore a piece from his own robe, laying it flat over the black river, then smiled mischievously:

"For the best effect, to fall into a deep sleep and wake up completely from reality, it's best to sleep on my robe... would you like to come over?"

"Why not?"

Under the astonished gazes of the female reporter and the King of Nightmares, the Aquarius Director actually stepped off the small boat, heading towards the gray robe on the river.

"No! You can't!"

Seeing that he was serious, the female reporter hurriedly said:

"The King of Nightmares' robe is also a part of its body! If you fall asleep on its robe, once you wake up in reality, the robe will become part of you! Even if you're not completely controlled, you'll be influenced by it!"

"It's alright, we're partners!"

Under the silent gaze of the King of Nightmares, after lying relaxed on the gray robe, the Aquarius Director said with a smile:

"My goal is to repair my soul, so naturally, I want the most complete effects. Since sleeping on its robe works better, I must try it."

"..."

Damn it... truly deserving of being a director of the Clean-up Bureau!

Seeing that the Aquarius Director truly left no precautions and lay relaxed on his robe, the confidence in the eyes of the King of Nightmares, hidden in the gray mist, slightly faded, revealing a deep sense of apprehension.

Since the entire process of exchanging dreams with reality to repair a damaged soul was under my leadership, with the Aquarius Director coming willingly, as the conductor, it was natural for me to use some tricks.

And the Aquarius Director evidently understood this. Knowing that being meddled with was unavoidable, he was blatantly unguarded, allowing his soul to be freely manipulated by me.

If this incident hadn't happened, I would probably have quietly left some contingencies while repairing his soul, leaving a few flaws leading to its quick collapse, thereby forcing him to pledge allegiance to me.

But now, with him willingly opening his soul, allowing me to imprint upon it, these petty means are unnecessary. To ensure the stability and usability of this "tool" belonging to me, I instead made an effort to repair his soul as thoroughly as possible.

But someone like him could never truly submit to me, willingly being a servant.

And the reason why he was willing to let his soul be manipulated by me was likely just one... he was sure I wouldn't survive, that the Clean-up Bureau would certainly eliminate me!

After all, as long as the one with the imprint died, it wouldn't matter whether the imprint remained in his soul, right?

In an instant, grasping the Aquarius Director's intentions with my thoughts whirling, the gray mist giant couldn't help but snort coldly.

Its flesh and skin loosely attached to the bone, its hand clenched the air, causing the gray robe beneath the Aquarius Director to wrap around him completely, sinking him into the black river filled with countless nightmares.

At the spot where the Aquarius Director sank, a dim, blood-colored dream slowly emerged on the pitch-black river surface, dark as the night sky.

Belief, determination, death, regret, wailing, doubt, collapse, madness... emotions so intense that even the King of Nightmares was startled by the purity, boiling a large section of the dark river.

Immediately afterwards, a hand noticeably younger than the Aquarius Director's, with smooth, firm skin free of age spots, reached out from the blood-red dream, gripping the boiling river surface tightly.

"Not bad at all."

In a blue robe stained with blood, a young man with an expression that seemed to be crying yet smiling and a slightly indistinct form climbed out of the blood-red dream. Under the complex gaze of the female reporter, he stepped steadily onto the small boat.

"I haven't felt this light in years."

After moving his significantly younger body and looking at his vaguely translucent hand, the Aquarius Director, who was only in his early forties, nodded in great satisfaction. Then he smiled at the gray mist giant:

"Seeing as how you restored my youth as a bonus, I'll give you an extra tip... based on my understanding of the Clean-up Bureau, the head of the Scorpio Branch is very likely to be sent over."

"What?!"

Upon hearing the Aquarius Director's words, the gray mist on the King of Nightmares' body churned, yelling in anger:

"Why didn't you say this earlier? If two Zodiac Bureau Heads join forces, even I might not be able to break through!"

"Relax, his relationship with the Scarlet Hair Lady is strained. If forced to come assist, he won't exert himself fully, making it quite simple to handle."

Settling into the wooden boat and gently tapping the stern, the Aquarius Director said with a chuckle:

"Those two won't act together; they'll definitely operate separately. At that time, you can send a few servants that look about right, trap him in some troublesome dream temporarily."

With his personality, if you can make him understand that escaping the dream requires a certain price, and might even be dangerous, he'll willingly be trapped by you."

"..."

"One more thing before I go... be sure to bring the Demonic Soul Abyss into reality before taking action against the Clean-up Bureau people."

Waving to the gray mist giant, the Aquarius Director on the boat said earnestly:

"Make sure you don't die too early. If I haven't awoken in reality and get taken down by that Leon first, it will truly be a headache for me."

"..."

Kill him! I'll kill him the moment we meet!

Chapter 452: The Beginning

"Achoo!!!"

After sneezing loudly for the third time, Leon couldn't help but vigorously rub his nose.

Strange, what's going on today? Why is my nose always itchy?

After blowing his nose hard, he still felt uncomfortable. While waiting in the guest area of the dock, Leon frowned and looked at the tall chimneys lining both sides of the river. Just as he was about to find a tissue to blow his nose, someone lightly tapped him on the back.

"We meet again."

A tall, thin middle-aged man, holding a large suitcase in his right hand, quietly appeared behind Leon without even startling the black goat.

After looking at Leon's face to confirm he hadn't approached the wrong person, the tall, thin man lifted his hat slightly with his free left hand, smiled, and greeted:

"Sorry, the ferry was queued on the other side of the river, two hours later than the schedule... Hope I didn't keep you waiting too long?"

"No, Mr. Edward."

Looking at the "Scorpion Pushing a Dung Ball" emblem on the man's suitcase, Leon, who had arrived two hours late as suggested by the red-haired director, nodded politely and honestly replied:

"I just arrived as well, haven't waited long."

"Hehe, that's good."

Not questioning why the red-haired director didn't come to meet him personally, the tall, thin man who came to support them modestly started walking with the crowd towards the guest area's exit. As he walked, he turned to Leon, who quickly caught up, and explained:

"I didn't keep you waiting on purpose. Back when I was a Level 1 Cleaner, I went on a mission with the former director to clean up those past souls who escaped normal timelines. One careless moment, and a small piece of my soul was bitten off.

Since then, my timing's been off, always two hours behind everyone else.

So, if there's any situation and you need me to arrive on time, you must account for a two-hour buffer when informing me of the time. If you want to meet at eight, you have to tell me six, otherwise, you'll have to wait two hours."

"Understood."

Following closely behind, Leon nodded and handed over a pocket watch that had been adjusted in advance, saying:

"Before I came, the director already informed me and asked me to adjust the watch for you according to the capital's time."

"Not bad, very considerate~"

Looking satisfied, the Scorpio Branch Director took the pocket watch, replaced the old one hanging on his lapel, and for some reason seemed very pleased, carefully observing Leon's expression before smiling and saying:

"The watch is nice, and so are you.

Even though you are just a Level 3 Cleaner, knowing that facing the King of Nightmares means permanent enslavement upon failure, you still chose to stay and fight alongside Olivia.

Setting aside skills, the courage and boldness a cleaner needs are there, and I admire you... Want to join our Scorpio Branch like your predecessors did?"

"..."

The familiar recruitment offer again...

Looking at the tall, thin man extending another olive branch after only exchanging a few words, Leon couldn't help but twitch his cheeks slightly.

On his last headquarters visit, this Scorpio Branch's Director Edward had already tried to poach him in front of the red-haired director.

According to him, almost all the cleaners who left the Virgo Branch went to him, which was a major source of his conflict with his own director.

"Sorry, I don't plan on switching jobs recently."

Slightly shaking his head, Leon didn't embarrass him this time like last, but instead respectfully reminded:

"Also, when the hands on your watch reach around half past nine, it will be night here in the capital, which will coincide with the time when the Demonic Soul Abyss and reality start to overlap. Please be ready then."

"Hmm, I know."

Hearing Leon mention "business," the Scorpio Director's smile slightly faded, and he adjusted his hat before holding up the pocket watch hanging from his lapel, glancing at the hands.

"A little over half an hour left... Have you heard about the arrangements post-Demonic Soul Abyss arrival? Did Olivia mention them?"

"Yes, she did."

Seeing the clasped finger unlocking the suitcase, understanding that he was indeed prepared, Leon felt slightly relieved and answered:

"The director and the three board members at headquarters have applied for support. When the Demonic Soul Abyss aligns with reality, the board members will relocate the headquarters to an appropriate place and project a quarter of the sun for three seconds, scorching the Dream Realm and Demonic Soul Abyss.

Once the sun burns a gap in the Dream Realm, the director will enter the Dream Realm and fully unleash [Slaughter Blood Hair] to intercept the Dream Realm creatures rushing with nightmares into reality, minimizing the impact of the King of Nightmares' arrival.

You, on the other hand, will primarily defend reality, hunt the Dream Realm creatures she misses, and find the King of Nightmares after arrival, tying it up as much as possible. I'll inform the director to come over and assist you in intercepting the King of Nightmares."

"Ha, simple and straightforward plan... but it's not bad. I wouldn't want to venture into the Dream Realm with her either."

After hearing Leon's explanation, the tall, slim man snorted dismissively and then looked sideways at Leon, asking with interest:

"And from the sound of it, you mainly stay by my side to relay messages to her?"

"Yes."

Slightly tilting his head to show the red hair wrapped around his shoulder, Leon cautiously replied:

"The director gave me a strand of [Slaughter Blood Hair]. If you successfully stop the King of Nightmares' arrival, she will sense the aura here and come over directly to join you in ambushing the King of Nightmares."

"I see, then you better be careful."

After hearing Leon's words, the pupil in the right eye socket of the tall, thin man, similar to Leon's in its deep black, eerily moved twice, then quickly lost color, turning pure white like the eyeball.

Glaringly rolling his eyes at Leon, checking his body and soul, the tall, thin man couldn't suppress a smile, saying:

"According to the bureau's latest classification, a Level 3 Cleaner's 'Leon Value' ranges from 1-10 points, a Level 2 Cleaner's from 11-30 points, and yours is around 7-8 points.

For a Level 3 Cleaner, your skill level is decent, but to go further upward, it's insignificant. In front of the King of Nightmares, who exceeds 63 Leon Value, you're no different from an ant on the roadside. Staying here is pointless."

"..."

"Heed my advice: give me Olivia's hair, and go where you need to go."

Extending his right hand to Leon, the tall, thin man calmly stated:

"Considering you've only been dealing with anomalies for a few months and are in a high-speed transformation phase, at your current absorption rate, you could surpass 30 Leon Value in one to two years, and surpassing 31 is Level 1 Cleaner territory.

If you had no prospects, then death wouldn't matter, but you're still a talent with potential. Dying before fully developing would be a waste... Come on, hand over Olivia's hair!"

Chapter 453: The Director Takes Action

"..."

Didn't you just say my courage was commendable, that you highly appreciated me and hoped I'd join the Scorpio Branch? And now, just a few minutes later, you suddenly change your tune and tell me to get lost before throwing my life away in vain?

"Thank you for your kindness..."

After a slight twitch at the corner of his mouth, Leon clenched the centaur bow insignia in his palm and replied with a strained face:

"But let's forget about it. Since I'm taking a salary from the Clean-up Bureau, I should do its work, and besides, I also want to contribute to the Kingdom..."

"Forget it!"

Upon hearing Leon's words, the tall, skinny man sneered and extended his hand forward again.

"How much salary can a level three Cleaner offer you? Is it worth risking your life to pay it back?

And contributing to the Kingdom? Are you kidding me? Has the Kingdom been good to you? Had you not joined the Clean-up Bureau, you'd probably have lost everything to ruin, and is such a Kingdom worth your effort?"

"The Kingdom might not be worth it, but the people striving to live within it are."

Looking at the hand persistently extended by the tall skinny man, Leon squinted slightly, then asked expressionlessly:

"Additionally... how do you know about my past?"

"Of course, I investigated it."

The director of the Scorpio Branch frowned as he heard this and then said with a bit of impatience:

"I told you, I'm very optimistic about your potential, preparing to pull you into the Scorpio Branch, so naturally, I had to investigate you... hurry up, don't waste my time, the Demonic Soul Abyss is about to overlap with reality!"

"..."

"Alright, here you go..."

After taking a look at the 'director of the Scorpio Branch' in front of him, Leon squinted his eyes slightly, then reached out to suppress the red hair wrapped around his shoulder, however...

"Crack!"

Amid the sound of dislocated and broken bones, a rough-jointed hand reached from behind and clasped onto the neck of the 'director of the Scorpio Branch,' twisting it fiercely like breaking a celery stalk, directly curving the tall, slender man's neck to a 90-degree angle.

Subsequently, the corpse of the tall, slender man trembled slightly, and a hysterical, frenzied scream erupted from his chest and abdomen.

But before the 'director of the Scorpio Branch' could finish screaming, the hand that had broken his neck plunged into his chest again, dragging out a writhing and screaming black little creature, and cruelly crushed it with force, instantly annihilating it on the spot!

"You really are useless!"

With a voice full of mockery, the world in front of Leon twisted slightly, and the familiar scene resurfaced.

A tall, skinny middle-aged man, holding a large suitcase in his right hand, silently appeared before Leon once again.

But this time, the sun, which had been hovering on the horizon, had disappeared without him noticing, and the people waiting in the dock's waiting area were cluttered all over the place, having fallen asleep, leaving only Leon and the other person standing.

And the dust-laden, tall, skinny man in front of Leon had lost the smile and appreciation he showed earlier, his face, with prominent cheekbones, full of contempt and disdain.

"You're a Cleaner, yet you got tangled up with such fragmented nightmares that slipped through? If I had been a bit later, you might have actually handed over your hair... How on earth did you survive before Aquarius?"

"..."

Alright, this feels right now.

Watching the tall, skinny man in front of him arrogantly tilt his head, Leon couldn't help but slowly exhale.

Back at headquarters, although this guy extended an olive branch to him, it was more about pleasing the Director rather than valuing his abilities, and appreciation was absolutely out of the question.

Moreover, he had even retaliated against him, forcing him to admit having interactions with the Aquarius Director in front of the whole Clean-up Bureau, which had embarrassed him, so it would be strange if he spoke kindly to him.

"Mr. Edward."

Leon found the pocket watch he had handed over in the nightmare from his pocket and, with a strained face, said:

"You're late, twenty-eight minutes later than planned, the Demonic Soul Abyss has already begun to descend!"

"Haha, the fact that I came to save you guys already gives the Taurus Pavilion enough face, and it hasn't started yet, right? Also... your watch is terribly set!"

Taking the pocket watch Leon handed over, the skinny man's little finger turned the winding stem forward by a third of a notch in disdain, before hanging it in the buttonhole on his lapel.

"Alright, let's go! The timing is just right..."

By the way, I don't have time to babysit you, you better stay awake at all times, or just get out of my way! I don't want to be stabbed in the back mid-fight!"

Shaking off the viscous black liquid on his hand from breaking the nightmare earlier, the skinny man's right eyeball turned from black to white, swept over Leon again, sneered disdainfully, then tossed the suitcase in his hand to the ground and gave it a hard kick.

"Click!"

Accompanied by the sound of mechanisms and springs releasing, a thorn-wrapped pale puppet crawled out of the opened suitcase, its hollow eyes staring fixedly at Leon.

Meanwhile, a shade deeper than the night quietly slipped into reality from the night's curtain after the sun had left.

Then, the position originally occupied by the Milky Way in the sky was taken over by countless black and red speckled stars, and an expansive river formed from innumerable fragmented nightmares followed the original trajectory of the Milky Way, suddenly pouring toward the capital city that had fallen deeply asleep.

...

It has begun.

Staring at the nightmare river pouring down from the sky, Leon couldn't help but take a deep breath, and then squint his eyes in advance.

"Boom!"

At the moment the two worlds were about to come into full contact, a blaze of sunlight—not entirely full—pierced through the sky, momentarily holding back the descent of another world, torching away the nightmares almost covering the whole sky.

But after sustaining only three seconds of brilliance, the sun—unrightfully appearing at night—dimmed away in the emulsion of the dreamy realm's shroud.

The inky waters of the Nightmare River flowed again, mingling endless dream fragments, merging with the capital city's equally black night sky, and rushing towards the countless sleeping beings below.

The headquarter's support ended; next, it's up to the Director to act...

After the sun that stayed for only three seconds disappeared, Leon—his eyes watering from the glare—stared intently, watching a familiar figure unhesitatingly plunge into the overwhelming dreamy world from the enormous void scorched by the sun overhead.

Soon, a surge of scarlet unfolded within the enveloping dream below.

Tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousand... in less than five seconds, billions of soft and vivid red hairs directly spread a sharp world filled with the scent of blood between the nightmare-ridden night sky and the sleeping reality.

Born from shadows, in gray robes, wielders of rusted scythes—the reapers, the raving phantoms in tattered prison garments, black steeds trampling on flames... millions of Dream Realm Creatures surged along the nightmare-infested black river, attempting to invade reality and feast heartily.

Yet passing through that thin yet razor-sharp scarlet world, like tender tofu caught in iron wires, everything got instantly sliced and diced into countless nail-sized red fragments.

Even terrifying creatures towering as tall as giant mountains had no power to resist under the fully spread [Slaughter Blood Hair], instantly getting shredded, laying a horrifying crimson rain curtain over the slumbering capital city.

Chapter 454: Beetles

"Tsk, fierce woman!"

Looking up at the night sky filled with the fragments of Dream Realm Creatures, the Scorpio Bureau Chief couldn't help but curl his lips, then gestured to the pale doll climbing out of the box.

"It's your turn... Check every Dream Realm Creature she missed."

Upon hearing the tall and thin man's words, the pale doll, who was staring at Leon, nodded, straightened its slender body awkwardly, and imitated the Scorpio Bureau Chief's movement, looking up at the blood-colored night sky.

"Roar!!!"

Just as the pale doll looked up, countless tiny black dots suddenly appeared in the sky filled with sharp red hair.

Even though the efficiency of the Red-Haired Director's slaughter was astonishingly high, almost every second, tens of thousands of Dream Realm Creatures were sliced into pieces as they passed through the red-haired net; yet, the Nightmare River seemed endless, continuously spewing out new nightmares.

Under the relentless and fearless assault of the endless Dream Realm Creatures, the red canopy spread by the Red-Haired Director finally showed some gaps, allowing some more solidly formed and fiercer Elite Nightmares, covered in wounds, to break through the blockade of [Slaughter Blood Hair] and squeeze into reality, drenched in blood.

Covered in a gray mist, the Sneering Ghost, the Headless Knight with a spine whip, the skeleton giant formed by thin bones, the beautiful woman in thin clothes accompanied by wind and snow... each figure from tales and nightmares appeared vividly in the eyes of Leon and the others.

...

These things... seem familiar, as if I've heard of them somewhere...

Observing the Dream Realm Creatures that squeezed into reality and eagerly rushed towards the capital, a thoughtful look appeared in Leon's eyes.

The Sneering Ghost clad in gray mist... seems to be from a Black Forest Duchy folk tale, a creature that likes to wander the wilderness and prey on lost travelers; and the Headless Knight with a long whip, appears to be an emissary that extracts the spines of evildoers and offers them to the god of death;

The skeleton giant also seems to be some kind of legend, probably formed by corpses starved during famine and wars, devouring anything to stave off hunger; while the beautiful woman with pale and translucent skin, arriving with a snowstorm, is an ancient tale that has circulated in the Northern Kingdom for unknown ages.

Compared to the Dream Realm Creatures that didn't pass through [Slaughter Blood Hair], those effortlessly sliced by the Director, these nightmares that successfully squeezed into reality seem to have much greater "fame".

So, for these Dream Realm Creatures, the more people know and even believe in their existence, the easier they appear in nightmares, and the stronger the Dream Realm Creatures derived become?

"Creak."

As Leon pondered over the origins of these Dream Realm Creatures, the thorn-covered pale doll shook its head, its spherical joint awkwardly turning, while the unsettling empty gaze fixed steadily on the Sneering Ghost at the forefront.

"Creak!" "Creak!" "Creak!"

The sound of twisting joints echoed again, but this time it wasn't beside Leon; instead, it appeared in the night sky over the capital.

In Leon's surprised gaze, the ghost enveloped in dim gray mist, which liked to prey on lost travelers, bizarrely solidified and drooped listlessly like a doll.

Next, the Headless Knight on the skeletal horse also fell down, the armors covering the body scattered on the ground, revealing pale arms and legs like the doll's, lifelessly lying among the scattered pieces of armor.

Even the skeleton giant, taller than the city's clock tower, somehow transformed into an immensely tall, pale doll, unable to move at all; any slight movement would cause the thorns covering its body to make it bleed profusely, causing it to roar in pain continuously.

"There are fewer that slipped through than I thought... Let's kill a batch first!"

After taking a glance at the nightmares that had turned into dolls in the sky, the tall and thin man muttered, then pulled out a slender rapier, and stabbed it decisively through the doll standing silently beside him, piercing straight through its heart!

Immediately after, as if triggering some kind of chain reaction, the Elite Nightmares "captured" by the pale doll's gaze all shuddered, a small diamond-shaped wound burst open on their chests, and streams of bright red blood gushed out from it.

Whether it was the gray mist ghost resembling an ordinary human, or the skeleton giant over a hundred meters tall, all let out desperate screams the moment this small sword wound appeared, and died instantly, their bodies crumbling and collapsing to the ground, turning into remnants floating in the night sky.

"Keep watching, and try not to miss any!"

After advising the doll still gazing at the night sky, the Scorpio Bureau Chief pulled out the rapier with a grunt and began rummaging through his box while still holding the bloodied rapier, saying without turning back:

"Your name is Leon, right... That nightmare which found you before I came, what it said was nonsense, but it got one thing right."

Retrieving a head-sized bottle from the bottom of the box, opening it, and pouring out the black gold beetles inside, the tall and lean Scorpio Bureau Chief extended his hand to Leon.

"Give me Olivia's hair, then go where you need to; this is not a place for a Rank-3 Cleaner like you!"

"..."

After glancing at the steady hand before him like a statue, Leon couldn't help but look up at the sky.

The bodies of the Headless Knight and the skeleton giant were still floating in the capital's night sky, and this time, the Scorpio Bureau Chief asking for hair should not be a nightmare in disguise, it's just...

"Sorry, my mission is to follow you, and notify the Bureau Chief once we find the King of Nightmares."

"Tsk... Then you might as well give me the hair directly? What use is a burden like you?"

"These matters are beyond me, but I trust the Bureau Chief's judgment; there must be a reason she left me behind."

"Heh, suit yourself."

After casting a glance at the red hair coiled on Leon's shoulder, the Director of the Scorpio Branch distastefully curled his lips, then sped up, emptying all the thumbnail-sized beetles from the bottle, taking out a palm-sized mother beetle from the bottom, and adhering it to his chest.

"Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!"

After completing this set of actions, the scattered black gold beetles on the ground let out sharp screeches. After crying for a while, he reached out and tweaked the antennae of the mother beetle on his chest, causing the palm-sized solid gold mother beetle to start chirping.

Immediately afterward, the scattered black gold beetles, as if receiving some order, quickly dispersed like a tide at the dock, each finding a slumbering human, even one crawling on Leon.

Chapter 455: Exposed

What is this thing?

Looking at the Black Gold Beetles that climbed onto human foreheads and then settled down, and then looking at the beetle climbing his pant leg, Leon, with goosebumps on his back, couldn't help but ask:

"These bugs..."

"These bugs are my insurance for this operation."

Seeing Leon's face full of resistance, the lanky man's face couldn't help but reveal a malicious smile. He then answered with a laugh for the first time since meeting Leon:

"Their name is 'brain-eating insects,' and they directly devour the target's brain, completely preventing them from dreaming, and after eating the target's brain, they reproduce infinitely."

"???"

"Think about it, the most troublesome thing about the Nightmare King is that it can move infinitely within human dreams, right?"

The Scorpio Branch Director looked at Leon, whose eyes had suddenly widened, and slowly said:

"But dreams are something that still require people to have brains to make. As soon as it enters someone's dream, I let the 'brain-eating insects' gnaw on their brain, causing the Nightmare King to fall out of the dream.

Or even simply, just gnaw all the brains of those having nightmares, so we don't have to worry about it making the entire Kingdom have nightmares after its arrival."

"..."

Because brainless people can't dream, so in order not to have nightmares forever, we just gnaw all brains in advance, right?

You are truly a little genius!

After his cheeks twitched a bit, Leon decisively stretched out his finger and poked the Black Gold Beetle crawling toward his head.

[Name: Dream-Eater Mutant Shell (Dream-Eating, Fission)]

[Appearance: A strange beetle belonging to the Scarabaeidae family of the Coleoptera order, with a black shell like lacquer and brilliant golden wings, abdomen patterns resembling the face of a screaming person, similar in size to an adult male human's thumb nail]

[Abilities: Dream devouring, Fission reproduction]

[Price: An anomalous item that can only be used once in a lifetime. After giving orders to the mother bug upon using the item, it equates to signing an irreversible contract. The user's dreams for life will be used as food to feed the Dream-Eater Mutant Shell's mother bug]

[Record: The Purification Bureau Scorpio Sub-bureau's second-generation director, after killing the Dream Realm God "Fallen Dreamer," used its corpse to nurture special beetles with the ability to devour living dreams. As long as people continue to dream, they can reproduce nearly endlessly.

Over four hundred years ago, two Dream-Eater Mutant Shell larvae were stolen from the Scorpio Branch's warehouse. Within 32 hours, they multiplied by nearly a billion, devouring fifteen percent of the world's dreams that day, and continued to rapidly divide.

To resolve this anomalous item runaway event, the bureau had to take extensive measures... causing damage... restricting... receiving calls for assistance... forcibly opening... carrying...]

[Evaluation: The nemesis of Dream Realm creatures, an anomalous item the Nightmare King dreams of destroying. If you can collect all the mother and larvae bugs and deliver them to the Dream Realm to the Nightmare King, it is willing to kowtow to you for a hundred years]

[Contamination Value: 60.1]

"..."

Hell, turns out it's a bluff! Gave me quite a scare!

After reading the "Dream-Eater Mutant Shell" record, Leon sighed deeply and let go of the Lust Dream Invader. Noticing his action, the lanky man sneered, eyes gleaming with humor:

"What, afraid of having your brain gnawed? If you're scared, just say the word, and I'll retrieve the brain-eating insects, spare your brain."

"..."

This guy is really annoying...

Seeing the lanky man's eyes full of sneakiness, obviously deriving great pleasure from mocking him, Leon's cheeks couldn't help but twitch once, then simply shut his mouth.

Oh well... getting mocked is fine. Though he has a foul mouth, he indeed brought out an anomalous item specifically for the Dream Realm. Just with this thing, he qualifies as MVP for this operation, as long as no incident happens to the Kingdom's people, getting teased twice doesn't matter.

...

Phew... this kid's ability isn't simple...

Watching him poke a beetle on his shoulder then relax, pretending not to hear and ignore him, the Scorio Branch Director couldn't help but squint.

According to the anomalous item records reported by that vile woman, Leon Laine's Level 3 Cleaner core anomalous item is named "Compulsory Information Acquisition," capable of forcibly acquiring a portion of an anomalous item's information through touch.

When touching weaker anomalous items, the information acquired is very complete, but the stronger the touched anomalous item, the less information can be acquired, sometimes completely unable to gain intelligence, just a fairly good auxiliary ability.

However, the "Dream-Eater Mutant Shell" I brought out, although non-lethal, only extremely effective against Dream Realm creatures, and with only one potential use in a lifetime, its registry number is very far back, only getting number 057.

Nonetheless, the item's status is not low at all. Without crossing the true god-level threshold, it's impossible to drive the mother bug, a genuine true god-level anomalous item.

Faced with something of this level, this kid just poked it once, and his tense body unexpectedly relaxed afterwards. If my guess is right, he should have seen through my "brain-eating insects" lie by acquiring intelligence from the "Dream-Eater Mutant Shell."

Even for true god-level anomalous items, just a light touch yields intelligence. That's so-called "Compulsory Information Acquisition" ability, likely far superior in rank than what that vile woman reported!

"What's wrong?"

Noticing the lanky man turning his head, starting to examine him up and down, Leon blinked warily but still inquired politely:

"Mr. Edward, do you have any questions for me?"

"..."

Of course there are questions, and quite a few.

Staring into Leon's eyes for a moment, he noticed Leon's gaze had become slightly more amicable compared to the start. The lanky man pondered a bit, suspecting that Leon might have indeed realized the cost of using the "Dream-Eater Mutant Shell," hence slightly changed his attitude toward him.

This kid carries an anomalous item inherently of high status, though currently still a bit young and lacking caution, unable to conceal emotions, but seemingly promising for the future...

Re-evaluating Leon's "value," the Scorpio Branch Director pondered for a moment. He then gently rubbed his stiff face, calmly patted Leon's shoulder, slightly kindly stating:

"It's nothing... I just thought for a moment there, realizing what the nightmare said actually made sense. For a Cleaner, the most important attribute is not your current strength but the courage and guts to face formidable enemies.

You know there's a possibility of being permanently enslaved by the Nightmare King and yet dare to stay and stand alongside me fighting. That's truly remarkable. What I previously said about you being a liability was slightly excessive."

"..."

?????????

Chapter 456: There Are No Weak Abnormal Objects, Only...

What are you... doing?

Looking at the Scorpio Bureau Chief, who suddenly went from arrogance to politeness and showed kindness, Leon felt a slight jolt in his heart, feeling uneasy all over.

Could it be that I've been visited by a nightmare again?

But I just touched the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell], this thing is real. Even if the King of Nightmares personally came, it's impossible to simulate the information of the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell], right?

"Don't overthink it."

Raising his head to look at the night sky of the capital, and glancing at the Dream Realm Creatures "fixed" by the pale puppet, the tall, thin man picked up the blood-dripping fine sword, neatly and swiftly beheaded the puppet, killed hundreds of Elite Nightmares that broke through, then put his hand behind his back, and said with magnificent bearing:

"Olivia and I have a personal vendetta, it doesn't involve you Cleaners. Personally, I admire your courage... If I'm not mistaken, the King of Nightmares should appear soon, try to stay closer to me so I won't be too late to save you."

"..."

If you had insulted me a bit less before, I might have believed you now...

Although the sudden change in the other felt very awkward, my own bureau chief did say that staying close to this guy is safe before the King of Nightmares appears, so Leon didn't say much, only nodded cautiously and moved closer.

"Come, stand by me."

Motioning to Leon, who was half a position behind and looking up at the sky, to stand beside him, the tall, thin man patched up the puppet's head while kindly advising:

"Remember, the Demonic Soul Abyss coincides with reality, which will strengthen Dream Realm Creatures' power, but when Dream Realm Creatures descend into reality, they also gain a physical body. They're not just in consciousness as before, actually making them easier to kill than in the Dream Realm.

But conversely, the way the Dream Realm exists is different from reality, so we also need to be cautious not to be dragged into it.

After all, the Dream Realm is the opponent's home ground, being too attached to one's body and soul would make you no match for Dream Realm Creatures. But if you let go of your understanding of yourself and align with the rules of the Dream Realm, it can easily confuse your existence... Hmm?"

At this point, seemingly noticing something off, the tall, thin man slightly raised an eyebrow, and pinched the tendrils of the queen insect on his chest.

"Squeak! Squeak! Squeak!"

A sharp insect cry was heard again, and as the queen insect called, the spreading sub-insects across the capital also began to cry in response, echoing three rounds of clear insect cries.

But the strange thing was, although their numbers kept growing, the cries of the Dream-Eater Mutant Shell sub-insects quickly decreased. If the first wave of cries was as loud as a tidal wave on the ocean, the second wave was only as loud as the surf on the shore.

As for the third wave of cries...

"Squeak..."

Watching the Dream-Eater Mutant Shell perched on Leon's shoulder, responding weakly to the queen insect with the last lingering sound, the Scorpio Bureau Chief's expression became visibly serious.

"Don't move."

Addressing the confused Leon briefly, the Scorpio Branch Chief picked up the beetle on Leon's shoulder, turned it over as it feebly kicked its three pairs of legs, revealing a fine wooden thorn embedded in its abdomen, piercing straight from the forehead spot of the human face pattern.

They're all wiped out...

Gazing at the beetle in his hand, making smaller movements, its abdomen leaking black fluid, and obviously nearing death, the tall, thin man took a deep breath, looking rather displeased, he said:

"Aberrant creation... So Aquarius is indeed alive!"

Aquarius?

Upon hearing the tall, thin man's words, Leon's expression subtly changed, then he reached out to lightly tap on the wooden thorn stuck in the insect's abdomen.

[Name: Pest Control Thorn Sub-body (Wish, Pest Control, Chain)]

[Appearance: A fine wooden thorn slightly red at the tip, too slender to discern its wood type, likely some kind of cheap, fast-grown wood]

[Ability: Kill beetles, eradicate pests, chain pest control]

[Cost: Too minimal to consider]

[Archive: Former Aquarius Director of the Clean-up Bureau, to deal with the rapidly proliferating "Dream-Eater Mutant Shell," using the King of Nightmares' intense desire to erase the "Dream-Eater Mutant Shell" as material, tainted with a True God's heart's blood, temporarily created this killing-type aberrant object, unassigned number.

When this aberrant object is used to kill one insect, tracing through the connection of identical fonts, it allows simultaneous killing of all the same sub-bodies within a large range, this effect is only effective on "Dream-Eater Mutant Shell"]

[Evaluation: Highly targeted aberrant object, has miraculous effects on crustacean targets, is also very good for toothpicking due to its slender and resilient wood]

[Contamination Value: 0.1]

"..."

With a personal Contamination Value of 60 points, the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] that once proliferated nearly a billion and caused the Clean-up Bureau headaches was killed off by a toothpick-sized thorn?

After reading the intelligence on the [Pest Control Thorn Font], Leon unconsciously reached for his cuff links, wanting to use the [Unfair Snake Pact] to exchange it and make the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] function normally.

But thinking of the yet-to-be-exposed [Unfair Snake Pact] and the overly "cheap" material of the [Pest Control Thorn], Leon released his grip and instead addressed the Scorpio Bureau Chief:

"Mr. Edward, can you save this last sub-body?"

"I can save it."

After glancing at the beetle that was more out of breath than in, the tall, thin man frowned and said:

"But saving it doesn't serve much purpose. The [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] needs a certain time to proliferate to a sufficient number, and Aquarius has already prepared targeted aberrant items ahead of time.

No matter how much these [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] proliferate, as long as he finds any one of the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] sub-body, all other sub-bodies will be killed simultaneously. This thing is no longer useful."

"Save it anyway."

Leon insisted:

"You've already given one order to the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] mother body and can't issue a second one in this lifetime. To trigger the mother insect to produce controllable sub-insects requires 60 Leon Points, so we might as well keep a few just in case."

"That's true..."

The Scorpio Bureau Chief nodded, took back dozens of still somewhat alive beetles from the surrounding slumbering passersby, pricked his finger to squeeze a drop of blood into each, and then put the revived beetles in a jar and handed it to Leon.

"Here you go! If you ever get hypnotized by a nightmare again, you can let them devour your dream to forcibly expel the nightmare."

However, to prevent them from going out of control, I specially set a very short lifespan for this batch of grown insects. They only live about a week, after which they will die naturally. Don't forget this."

"Thank you, I'll remember."

Carefully storing the jar containing the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] and putting away the [Pest Control Thorn (Sub-body)], Leon looked at the increasingly bloody sky above, then slightly worriedly asked:

"Mr. Edward, how much longer until the King of Nightmares appears?"

Chapter 457: An Unexpected Expected Event

"Soon."

If Leon had asked this question ten minutes ago, the tall, thin man probably wouldn't have bothered to respond. If he was particularly annoyed, he might even have thrown in a sarcastic quip or two to relieve some stress.

But now he raised his hand to point above, gazing at the Nightmare River pouring into the night, patiently explaining:

"Within the range of the Demonic Soul Abyss, the King of Nightmares cannot truly be killed. It is quite a cautious type among the Evil Gods, generally not leaving the Demonic Soul Abyss to avoid being eradicated by the Bureau.

And the black river of the Nightmare River is, in a sense, an extension of the Demonic Soul Abyss. As long as it doesn't leave the range of the Nightmare River, it can infinitely resurrect even if killed.

According to past records of the Bureau, once the waters of the Nightmare River completely spread out, providing a sufficiently safe foothold, that's when he will truly descend."

Waiting for the river to spread out?

After hearing the explanation from the Scorpio Bureau Chief, Leon looked up at the surging waves of the night sky, still not grasping what extent "completely spread out" referred to. Just as he was about to inquire further, he suddenly noticed a slight chill in his hands and feet.

Immediately, large snowflakes began to fall from the pitch-black, starless night sky of the capital, and the river channel not far away inexplicably started to freeze over.

"Watch out, true elites are coming down, and it's more than one."

Glancing at the dried-up river channel nearby, for some unknown reason, the tall, thin man with dry, cracked lips frowned, then kicked open the box at his feet again, took out a token, and grabbed it in his

hand. After pondering with a furrowed brow, he also took out a crown carved with a dog head and carefully placed it on his own head.

"Woof!"

The joyful barking of a dog sounded. As the Scorpio Bureau Chief adjusted the dog-headed crown properly, a large dog with a thistle crown atop its head silently appeared beside Leon.

"This nightmare is different from the previous batch. I might not be able to take care of you all the time later."

After stabbing the throat of a pale doll again and executing hundreds of Dream Realm Creatures, the tall, thin man holding the token advised:

"This dog is an abnormal object called the Thistle-crowned Canine. It can carry part of my will. Remember to stay close to this dog. If I get entangled by the nightmares coming down... Woof... Woof woof!"

Before the Scorpio Bureau Chief's words could finish, a burst of dry, scorching yellow sand, carried by a hot breeze, sprinkled over him, turning his subsequent words into indistinct barking.

But just two steps away from him, Leon suddenly felt a chill throughout his body, as a wave of biting cold air flowed through his nostrils and straight into his lungs, outlining the positions of his internal organs clearly.

Immediately, the world before his eyes abruptly shifted from the guest area beside the capital's canal dock to a snow-filled mountain path. Except for glacial valleys all around, only tree branches, battered and broken by wind and snow, remained.

"Woof... If I get entangled, this dog can temporarily protect you. Once I've resolved the issue over there, I'll come to find you."

Finishing the latter half of the Scorpio Bureau Chief's words, the large dog with a thistle crown on its head looked around before continuing in human speech:

"Be careful. The nightmare targeting you should be based on folklore from the Ice Plains Nation. Those foolish people believe the winter spirits will, during the coldest part of the season, transform into beautiful women with pale skin, enticing travelers into the snowstorm, thus freezing them to death in the deep mountains.

And their deeply held beliefs appear in countless dreams, eventually manifesting as this nightmare... In terms of strength, it's around 30 Leon Value points, stepping into the threshold of a first-level Cleaner. Stay close to me and don't wander off, or it might be dangerous."

"Got it."

Rubbing his arms which were breaking out in goosebumps from the cold wind, Leon couldn't help but lean towards the warm-emitting large dog, then asked:

"Mr. Edward, what's the situation on your side? What about these nightmares?"

"Woof... My side also has nightmares of roughly the same level, but there are six of them: Green Tide Sea Monster, Forest Face Spirit, Plague Maiden, Blood Cattle Blue, Swamp King Serpent, and Dune Giant Worm.

These six monsters seem to have been strengthened by the King of Nightmares, designed specifically to keep me occupied. They avoid direct confrontation with me, instead spreading their respective nightmares across deserts, oceans, swamps, and forests, constantly running."

After recounting his encounter, the large dog scratched its chin with a hind leg, then continued sniffing Leon's scent while advising:

"The six nightmares on my side are a bit troublesome. I'm not sure how the King of Nightmares handled it—maybe fed them a lot of True God flesh, rendering them somewhat divine and a bit hard to kill.

Hold on a little longer. Once I find them all and take them down, I'll break open the dream they are maintaining and come to get you... Damn it! Why does this worm run so fast?"

"..."

If I guessed correctly, I shouldn't count on him getting it done...

But it doesn't matter. With my luck, thinking I could easily get through without a scratch by following him was never plausible. I didn't initially count on him being reliable anyway.

After watching it suddenly leave mid-speech to scratch against a dead tree and lift its leg to start urinating, Leon couldn't help but sigh helplessly, then waited by its side for it to finish peeing while observing the valley before him.

According to known information, this snow-filled valley is the nightmare realm supported by the Snow Woman's own power, in other words, he has been forcibly dragged into her dream.

However, although the Snow Woman is the master of this dream, she is still a nightmare born of folklore, so she cannot act as she pleases like turning into an Ultraman or a Saiyan, but must adhere to certain rules, closely aligning with her own legendary tale.

According to folklore from the Ice Plains Nation, she does not directly attack travelers but conjures fierce snowstorms, using the cold to oppress the traveler's will, later employing deceptive tactics to coax them into stepping into the storm and freezing them completely.

As long as I can remember this and quietly stay in a hollow or someplace, avoiding stupidly walking directly into the snowstorm, it's unlikely I'll encounter lethal danger, especially with the Scorpio Bureau Chief's dog around...

Um... speaking of the dog, where did it go? Is it still not done peeing?

And why am I bringing a dog into the mountains in a snowstorm? Isn't staying warm and cozy at home better? Could it be... am I a hunter? Oh right, what's my name again?

Chapter 458: Holy Shit

In the bone-chilling mountain valley, the snowflakes swirling in the air were growing larger by the minute. If Leon was even slightly careless, they would completely cover his footprints and bury his memories deep within the snowstorm.

Almost there.

Watching the young man frowning and pondering in the snowstorm, the woman dressed lightly, hidden within the snowfall, couldn't help but curl her lips upwards, revealing a captivating and stunning smile.

After being dragged into the snowstorm valley, the Cleaner named Leon didn't show any signs of panic. He must have heard the legends about her.

He knew she couldn't directly lay a hand on him, only lure him into the snowstorm to kill him. Hence, he appeared quite relaxed, believing that as long as he remained cautious and endured the snowstorm, he would be safe.

But what he didn't know was that her truly formidable ability wasn't just stirring up a snowstorm in dreams but quietly erasing the dreamer's memory, just like how the snow covers a traveler's footprints.

And memory is the essence of a dream, it's the foundation of blurred cognition.

In a state of forgetfulness, no matter how powerful he originally was or how many terrifying anomalies he possessed, if he didn't know he had them, then in the dream, these anomalies simply didn't exist.

Once he lost his original memories, his defense against the "snow maiden" would drop to the lowest. If he really followed her deep into the valley, he would naturally collapse and die amidst the overwhelming snowstorm, succumbing to the cold and fierce wind.

She might not even need to appear, as long as he forgot his identity as a Cleaner and lost his beyond-average physical strength, in this frigid white world...

Huh? Why did he start a fire? And why did his clothes change?

...

Mountaineering boots, a shell jacket, a mountaineering hat, a headlamp, goggles, a trekking pole, gloves... After checking his full set of equipment, Leon nodded in satisfaction.

This seems much more normal.

After all, who in their right mind would venture into a snowstorm with just an old autumn coat? That would be idiotic, wouldn't it?

Am I an idiot? I'm not.

So I definitely brought all my gear, because going into the mountain with just an old coat is impossible, it simply can't be done, I'd have to be out of my mind to try that. I must have been groggy with sleep just now.

As for hunting or something, that's even more absurd. I don't even know what a wild pig's footprints look like, nor do I know how to use a hunting rifle, how could I hunt anything? Clearly, I'm just a hiking enthusiast here for some mountaineering!

Hiding in a sheltered spot, after finishing off a can of warm butter, Leon the Hiker filled a handful of snow to extinguish the campfire beside him.

Subsequently, he rolled up his sleeping bag and stuffed it into his backpack, packed away the personal trash generated from camping to avoid polluting the environment, then stuck the heat packs onto his body. Finally, he put on his scarf and goggles, grabbed his trekking pole, and headed down the snow-covered mountain.

Not bad, the snow mountain camping experience was pretty decent, but it feels like the snow is coming down a bit heavily, better get down the mountain quickly, or it could be troublesome if I get stuck.

???

No way... How can you just leave?

Seeing Leon walking down the mountain, wearing a set of oddly styled but clearly warm clothing and humming a tune, the snow maiden was completely stunned.

It wasn't that no one had ever adapted to the dreamscape she created before; some even held on for over half a month in a sheltered mountain corner. But someone as... leisurely as the person before her was something she had never seen.

No! I can't let him go down the mountain!

Watching Leon following a path down the mountain that shouldn't even exist, laying a trail of footprints, the snow maiden furrowed her brows, took a deep breath, and then dispersed into the wind and snow, becoming part of the raging snowstorm.

"Hoo!!!"

The fierce wind howled past, the snowflakes falling from the sky growing larger. Sensing that it might be dangerous to stay any longer, self-proclaimed knowledgeable seasoned mountaineer Leon quickly quickened his pace, eager to reach the campsite down the mountain.

As for why there would be a campsite down the mountain...

If there wasn't a mountaineer's campsite below, where did I rent this gear from? Where did the canned food and alcohol blocks come from? Did I really carry them all the way from afar myself?

Just as Leon was braving the snowstorm and advancing towards his hazy mental image of a "mountaineer's campsite," a graceful female silhouette suddenly emerged from the overwhelming snowfall ahead.

"Finally... Finally, I've met someone!"

Seeing Leon walking against the wind and into the storm, the lady in light clothing immediately rushed over, her delicate face filled with joy as she said:

"Good-hearted person! I'm lost in the mountains, please help me, can you take me back..."

"Holy crap! There really is a fool out here!"

"???"

Seeing the beautiful woman in a thin dress appearing in the snowstorm, Leon couldn't hold back an expletive, then quickly hoisted the bewildered snow maiden and took her to a sheltered spot by the roadside. He pulled out a sleeping bag and stuffed her into it, and then said with a look of shock:

"What the hell are you wearing? Where's your shell jacket? Where's your luggage? Where's your mountaineering guide?"

"???"

Not having a clue about what Leon was talking about, the snow maiden clutched the hot water bottle he handed her, clearly baffled, and said:

"I... I live in the mountains, I have no guide, you just need to take me back..."

"Live in the mountains?"

Hearing that, Leon furrowed his brows, turned to rummage through his backpack, pulled out a map, looked at it, and then said with a puzzled expression:

"There's a village in the mountains? It's not even marked on the map!"

"That's not..."

Seeing the slightly strange but genuinely a map held by Leon, the snow maiden clutching the hot water bottle couldn't hold back any longer.

"This is clearly my... How do you have a map of this place?"

"Aren't you stating the obvious?"

Faced with the silly girl dressed inappropriately for mountaineering, Leon sighed heavily, retorting:

"Climbing without a map? Isn't that crazy?"

...

"Alright, alright, we'll talk about the map later. You just rest in the sleeping bag!"

"And are you lost or what? What about your cold-weather gear? How do I contact your guide? I'll ask him about the situation and find a way to get you down."

"I... I just live in the mountains, no guide, just take me back..."

(Take you where?)

After hearing the snow maiden's absurd and over-the-top request, Leon couldn't help but roll his eyes and simply ignored her, then started fiddling with his satellite phone, sending out a distress signal.

(Take you back...) In this snow, taking you back to your village? We'll probably freeze to death halfway! And you don't even have a map, how am I supposed to know the way? Should I let a big-fool guide me?

Besides, this girl is likely already hallucinating from the cold, whether that village even exists is questionable!

Remember, people often feel hot just before freezing to death, so they start removing their own clothes. Chances are she took hers off herself, and if it weren't for her running into me by chance, she'd probably be dead in minutes.

Seriously... Climbing without any experience is a real headache!

After glaring at the crazy woman who still wanted to say something, shooting down her plea with his eyes, the self-proclaimed knowledgeable mountaineer Leon sighed helplessly, barely holding back the urge to curse.

Though a troublesome and absurd case spouting nonsense, she is still a life, I can't just watch her freeze to death, no harm in trying to save her, and... what? Why is there a dog on the other side?

Chapter 459: Good Guy Leon

Finally, I found you!

Watching Leon on the other side stuffing the snow woman into a strange sleeping bag and fiddling with something, the consciousness of the Scorpio Bureau Chief within the dog's body almost crushed its own teeth in frustration.

Damn it! This kid has decent talent, but he's way too disobedient!

I warned a thousand times not to leave this dog's side, otherwise he might encounter the snow woman and get tricked into the blizzard to freeze to death. And while I was digging underground in the desert looking for a bug, this kid vanished!

If I hadn't taken precautions in advance, remembering his scent and following it all the way here, he might've frozen to death in the snow mountain without me being able to find him!

"Woof!"

Controlling the dog's body, after letting out an angry growl, the Scorpio Bureau Chief leapt towards the snow woman in the sleeping bag, but a gigantic backpack suddenly appeared in front of him.

"Bang!"

Whoa, there's a dog!

After whipping the backpack out and knocking the vicious dog trying to pounce to the ground, Leon, relying on his thick clothes, directly pressed down, pinning the dog while gripping its mouth tightly to prevent it from biting.

Whoa, you actually hit me?!!!

Knocked to the ground by the backpack, with stars in its eyes, the Scorpio Bureau Chief was about to curse but couldn't, as its mouth was held shut, with most of its tongue hanging out unable to retract, only able to whine from its throat.

And in the struggle with the mountaineer Leon, the thorny crown on the dog's head was knocked off, and the dog's angry eyes instantly turned clear.

"Whimper... Whimper..."

It seems... it's been subdued?

Seeing the dog under him no longer struggling desperately but cowering its tail and whining, Leon hesitated a bit and loosened the grip a little.

The result was the subdued dog actually didn't attack again, instead, it exposed its belly ingratiatingly, its face even carried a hint of sycophantic expression.

"Quick! Strangle it!"

Seeing Leon loosening his grip on the dangerous-looking dog, the snow woman who finally relaxed tensed up again, struggling to sit up:

"It's dangerous! You can't be deceived by it! I..."

"I've got an idea!"

Interrupting the snow woman, Leon suddenly hammered his palm, spiritedly said:

"You don't have climbing gear, can't hike down the mountain with me, but I have a sleeping bag!

We can cut some branches, tie them into a sled with climbing ropes. You lie on the sleeping bag, and I'll drag you down with the dog!"

Drag me down?

Hearing Leon's words, the snow woman shivered.

The dream she wove wasn't endless like a real dream realm, it was confined to this snow mountain. If he dragged her down, they'd reach the edge of the nightmare.

Under normal circumstances, being dragged to the edge of a nightmare only meant awakening, but now the Demonic Soul Abyss coincided with reality. If dragged out from the edge of the nightmare, it'd mean entering reality!

Unlike the nightmare of sea monsters, her physical quality was similar to a normal human female, vulnerable to freezing, her strength was tied to this snow mountain.

If dragged forcibly out of the dream, she'd really be at the mercy of others, and without the dream's protection might even melt into reality!

...

"No, no, no!"

Understanding Leon's intentions, the snow woman quickly shook her head in refusal:

"I... I remember, I have a guide! You can leave me here with a blanket, and he will bring people to rescue me!"

"Oh? Your head's finally cleared!"

Seeing this silly woman not telling tall tales anymore, Leon nodded happily, then took out his satellite phone, adjusted the service provider, and queried:

"I searched for a while without any response... what's your guide's communication number? Let me see if I can establish a connection!"

Communication number? What kind of nonsense is that?

Completely unable to comprehend what's in Leon's hand, but considering this is a dream, as long as it wasn't too irrational, the other party could fill in the details themselves. The snow woman paused briefly, then gambled, tentatively saying:

"6?"

my foot! A global star number is supposed to be 12 digits long!

Looks like this silly woman hasn't come around yet.

Disappointed, Leon put away the satellite phone, tied the docile dog to a nearby tree with climbing rope, pulled it to ensure it couldn't escape, and went to chop trees with his axe.

Seeing Leon finally leave, the ferocious dog bared its teeth at her again. The snow woman dared not linger, took a deep breath to escape through the storm, however...

"Woof!"

With a soul-shaking bark, as her body partially merged into the storm, the snow woman trembled, forced out by the bark.

With the loud bark, the blizzard within a 500-meter radius centered around the two people and the dog was blown apart, reducing to moderate snowfall.

It's a killer...

Looking at the dog tied to the tree, growling fiercely but trembling from the bark, the snow woman felt like crying.

Surprisingly, it's a suppressive anomaly... had she known this would happen, she'd have swapped places with the sea monster to deal with the Clean-up Bureau Scorpio Sub-bureau's chief.

Although she lacked combat abilities, she wouldn't need to fight there, just run fast, with her ability to turn into a snowstorm, survival would be simple.

And taking on the task of targeting this third-level Cleaner, she accidentally got herself caught by this person and a dog. If this goes on...

"Ugly is one thing, but it should work!"

Using an axe to chop strips and spare climbing rope, he tied a crooked sled, Leon nodded in satisfaction, then tied a section of climbing rope around the wagging dog's chest and back, made several knots, and the makeshift dog-drawn sled was done.

Hoisting the limp snow woman, tying her to the sled, Leon looked up at the diminished snow, couldn't help smiling.

"Great, the snow's smaller too, you're saved now."

Saved my foot! If dragged down by you, I'm dead!!!

Looking up at Leon, who wore large goggles and continued smiling warmly like he did a good deed, the unfortunate snow woman took a deep breath, eyes sternly shouting:

"Let go of me! Human!"

"???"

"I am the spirit of winter, the snow woman residing in this snow mountain! I can summon blizzards at will! Let go of me, I can... what's with that expression of yours?"

"Nothing..."

Giving this silly woman a pitying look, Leon slightly shook his head, didn't argue with her supposedly frozen brain, but along with the wagging dog each pulled half of the sled.

"I'm not lying! I'm truly the snow woman!"

"Yep, yep, I believe you, I believe you."

"If you believe me, then stop!"

"Stop, we'll stop when we get to the foot of the mountain."

"Damned, you still don't believe me!"

"Believe, of course, I do."

Gazing at the faintly visible mountain camp below, Leon sighed, resignedly placed the sled rope on his shoulder, leaving one leg deep the other shallow as he descended.

"Don't just say snow woman, say snow king and I'll believe... by the way, do you know that song?"

"Wh... what song?"

"You love me~ I love you~ Mimi Snow City's sweet honey~"

"..."

Man, bringing a crazy woman down the mountain, singing to her along the way, I'm really a good guy!

"Help! I won't go down the mountain! Help! It can kill! Help!!!"

Chapter 460: Hatred Maxed Out

"Hmm?"

Vaguely sensing something, the gray fog giant entirely soaked in the Nightmare River, slowly opened his eyes as he gradually pushed into reality.

Rising from the pitch-black river reflecting countless nightmares, the gaunt hand of the King of Nightmares slightly opened, extending sharp, hooked, and twisted fingertips, slicing through the gray

fog at his chest and abdomen as if cutting away flesh, firmly grasping a piece of pale nightmare in his palm.

Is it the Snow Woman? Has she been dealt with so soon?

The vertical crack in his palm opened, revealing hollow gray eyes, intimately sticking to the pale nightmare. After observing the situation inside, the King of Nightmares' gaunt face slightly frowned.

In the pale-hued nightmare, the wild winds and swirling snow remained as before, yet the thinly dressed lady resembling a winter sprite did not drift elegantly through the storm as she used to.

This snowstorm spirit, once appearing in countless northern human dreams, devouring lost souls, was now tightly bound by a strange demon with two horns on his head, being dragged down the snow mountain tied to a bundle of branches.

And the Ram-Horned Demon was humming a rather joyful and strange tune, wrecking the originally cold and murderous atmosphere of the pale nightmare, with the catchy weird rhythm inexplicably ear-catching and memorable.

Even the Thorn-Crowned Evil Hound by the demon's side, composed of countless broken flesh, learned almost perfectly after hearing it several times, its barking faintly matching the tune.

Just hearing the duo of demon and dog sing two or three times, the joyful melody bizarrely drilled into the King of Nightmares' memory, even beginning to uncontrollably spread into other somewhat related nightmares.

"Woof woof woof~ I love you~ Woof woof woof, sweet me~"

Whether it was the avalanche-destroyed mountain village, or the traveler frozen in the snowstorm, no matter the loss of loved ones in the snow or tragic ruins in the snow night...

With the King of Nightmares' memory as a link, in a heap of nightmares slightly involving snow, regardless of circumstances, that joyful yet peculiar tune rang throughout, with the vague figure of the Ram-Horned Demon happily humming the tune even appearing in some.

What is this ghostly thing?

Looking at the suddenly contaminated large patch of nightmares on himself, strangely cheerful, the King of Nightmares' gaunt cheeks twitched twice, quickly lying back into the Nightmare River.

Under the repeated washing of the dark river water and countless nightmares, the eerie tune finally quieted down slightly, no longer wandering throughout the nightmares covering the King of Nightmares.

However, what made the King of Nightmares particularly uncomfortable was that the half-human, half-dog eerie tune seemed deeply engraved in his memory, with no way to completely wash it away, lying in wait deep in memory, feeling like it might come out to hum at any time.

I think I understand what the damned Aquarius Director meant...

Looking at the Snow Woman in the pale nightmare, screaming and struggling ceaselessly but still being forcibly dragged down the mountain, the vertical eye cracked in the King of Nightmares' palm squinted slightly, recalling the prior advice from the Aquarius Director.

'Strike directly with your fastest speed, drown him with the purest force, never giving him the chance to speak or use any tactics!'

Indeed...I must do exactly that!

Recalling that lingering demonic melody, a fierce look appeared in the King of Nightmares' eyes.

This cleaner's mind contains many strange things, a lot simply meaningless junk, yet inexplicably unforgettable.

Like that bizarre tune earlier, just two earfuls directly drilled into his memory without rejection, impossible to clean completely.

And memory is the foundation and flesh of dreams, for dream realm creatures like himself, his mind full of strange memories is directly a contamination, a deadly poison unfit for direct sight.

Memory is as vital to dream realm creatures as souls to humans, something fundamentally uncastable away, this level of contamination is extremely dangerous and extremely lethal.

He made of nightmares himself cannot be killed; even if erased by the Clean-up Bureau, even existence erased, it doesn't matter, as long as the Demonic Soul Abyss continues spewing nightmares, he will eventually have a day of resurgence.

But if he contacts this peculiar cleaner too much, causing the nightmares composing him to be heavily contaminated, his power will not only decrease due to nightmare damage but also face complete collapse.

He must be killed!

Deeply realizing Leon's "danger," the King of Nightmares' claw-like hand gently exerted force, crushing the Snow Woman's nightmare, then closed all eyes on his body, lying back into the dark Nightmare River.

No matter the cost, even if killed once by the Clean-up Bureau, Leon must die!

...

"Oh..."

Unaware that he was already identified as the target of hatred by the enemy BOSS, with his kill priority even higher than the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell], rubbing his head and getting up from the ground, Leon finally gradually regained his memory buried in the snow.

The wild snowy mountain, the idiot climber not wearing cold-resistant clothing, the Scorpio Director pulling a sled...truly unbelievable!

Recalling the nightmare he experienced, Leon couldn't help but shiver in fear.

Though the Snow Woman had no other destructive means than summoning snow, she had the ability to obscure memory, just a moment of distraction as the Scorpio Director lifted his hind leg to pee, and he completely forgot who he was, utterly unprepared.

According to the Scorpio Director, she seemed to possess strength similar to a level-one cleaner, indicating that anyone with a Contamination Value below thirty, dragged into a nightmare by her, would probably, like him, have their memory silently stripped.

At that time, those trapped in dreams would not only lose all means of resistance, but even their cognition would be confused, seeing a skirted woman walking on a snow mountain didn't seem odd at all, rather he actively conjured countless plausible scenarios for her, even wanting to help find her a mountain climbing guide.

If not for his special memory, besides Leon Laine's, possessing past life's memories, losing one while retaining another, he might really have been taken deep into the snow mountain blinded by kindness, frozen to death amid the swirling snow.

Oh...right, there was that dog!

Recalling the scenes in the dream from a "third-person perspective," a flash of understanding appeared in Leon's eyes.

Didn't feel it within the dream, but now upon reflection, it was definitely not something simple.

Even guest appearing in the Snow Woman's dream could roar the pervasive snow apart, holding the Snow Woman helpless, likely a level-one cleaner-level anomaly; had it not been for it, he wouldn't have likely been able to drag the Snow Woman down the mountain, struggling out of the nightmare...wait!

Glancing at the cold-weather gear on himself, Leon jolted fully awake, then suddenly looked back.

"Damn! I actually pulled it out!"