

## I! Cleaner 471

Chapter 471: Leon's Fear

This... this is...

Watching the line forming in front of the Gray Mist Giant, with Leon and others taking turns to punch it every two seconds, the Snow Girl couldn't help but express her shock:

"You... you..."

"Stop 'you-ing' and get to work!"

Seeing the King of Nightmares fall down with a thud onto the sand sea in the distance, shivering every two seconds, Leon finally breathed a sigh of relief and hurriedly urged:

"Hurry! Run to the upper level! I can only control it for less than two seconds each! You have just a bit over three minutes! Quick!"

"Ah! Okay!"

Hearing Leon's urging, the Snow Girl came to her senses, puffed up her pale cheeks, and continued to blow fiercely the cold wind from the snowy mountain nightmare, her whole face pouting like a hamster.

With the King of Nightmares no longer blocking the nightmares, these winds used to traverse nightmares accumulated more and more, finally enveloping Leon and the Snow Girl completely.

...

Whew... luckily my mind works fast! Even though the "processing speed" was lowered by the Immortal of Liquor, relying half on instinct and half on experience, I could still barely figure out what I was supposed to do. )

Feeling that familiar, wondrous sensation of being peeled away from the current world, somewhat sobered from the "Drunken Life, Dreamy Death" state, Leon breathed out a long sigh.

The King of Nightmares, no matter how incompetent, is still a True God. It's impossible to fight it head-on, never in this life; only by stalling for time, playing dirty tricks, and finding ways to escape can one maintain their life like this.

No choice, this time there are simply too many nightmares trying to invade reality; the chief simply won't be able to make it here for a while, and killing it might take until dawn, so my goal has always been to find the Scorpio Bureau chief as soon as possible to ensure my safety.

But this Boundless Desert is just too large, and I don't have the capability to search for people over ultra-long distances. Even if the Scorpio Chief is in this layer of nightmare, I won't be able to find him.

Therefore, my purpose is very clear. I must leave as soon as possible, head up to a slightly smaller nightmare, find the Scorpio Chief, or let him find me.

But the problem is, as the "nightmare transport," the Snow Girl most likely cannot pass through nightmares with me under the King of Nightmares' interference. So what I should do is find a way to control the King of Nightmares to buy time for the Snow Girl to lead me through the nightmare.

And the only way that might achieve this goal is the intense pain brought by the [Hand of Screams].

Thinking of this, Leon couldn't help but look through the cold wind surrounding him at the King of Nightmares, who was being punched one after another by him, with gray mist chaotically swirling around its body in pain, and gave it a smile belonging solely to the victor.

Don't think that just because you're the Lord of Nightmares, you can't have nightmares!

Also, sorry, strictly speaking, I'm your colleague too. The augment brought by the overlap of the dream realm and reality is equally effective for me, and the [Dream Intruder] has also been significantly strengthened.

And the core ability of the [Dream Intruder] is to let the target's dream erode reality. With the dual empowerment of the dream realm and the Sagittarius mark, the [Dream Intruder] is already effective against the King of Nightmares,

Moreover, according to the effect rules of the [Dream Intruder], the more "contact" the target and I have, the more easily they are influenced. The King of Nightmares sent hundreds of nightmares at me; the effect of the [Dream Intruder] has long been stacked to the max,

The dream realm, secret technique mark, and the anomaly itself stack, three buffs stacked together, how could you block this strength?

Additionally, during this escape, I wasn't just taking hits passively!

Every time it cast a complex, realistic nightmare trying to wear down my spiritual will, I would seize the opportunity to "return a blow," planting a bizarrely brief yet extremely concealed mini-nightmare, it's so simple that it contains only a fist-punching action, into its soul writhing in pain.

The King of Nightmares already has a body and soul by entering reality, so even the [Dream Intruder] before being enhanced by the Sagittarius secret technique wasn't entirely ineffective against it, only unable to harm it.

And when I activated the Sagittarius secret technique, triggering over a hundred "Leon punching people" nightmares all at once, leveraging the King of Nightmares' own memory as a breeding ground, these "Leon punching people" successfully invaded reality, really capable of landing a punch.

Even if the "Leon punching people" don't have the actual [Hand of Screams], since they are the King of Nightmares' dreams, born from its memory of being beaten, naturally, each punch falls with equally intense pain.

And these identical sensations, with the exact same intensity of "nightmares," will continue to deepen its memory. It's likely that the taste of my punch is something it might never forget in its lifetime.

Hmm... the only pity is, drunken thoughts are slow; I didn't think to put the Ballache Badge on, otherwise, the effect would surely be even more outstanding!

...

Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn you!!!

Feeling that horrific pain every two seconds, watching that infuriating smile on Leon's face, the King of Nightmares, in agony, collapsed onto the ground, feeling like its very soul was trembling.

I am the Lord of Nightmares! How dare you use nightmares against me! And such crude nightmares!

Encountering what could be termed the ultimate humiliation—by the standards of a god of nightmares—the thin, emaciated body of the Gray Mist Giant was instantly covered in a deep flush of blood-red.

Chapter 472: Leon's Fear (Part 2)

Kill him! Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!!!

As the blood color gradually spread throughout his body, dyeing all the mist red, the King of Nightmares, whose mind was filled only with this one thought, strangely regained some calmness.

During the brief respite between two waves of intense pain, he turned his head and glanced in a certain direction, and a fierce glint suddenly flashed in the King of Nightmares' eyes.

Absolutely cannot let him leave!

This damned Cleaner may not know, but I am very aware that the Scorpio Director of the Clean-up Bureau is now in this layer of the nightmare.

To avoid being tracked by the aura, I refrained from moving the scales of the dune worm, causing the Scorpio Director to see the situation here. Now he is forcing his way back, trying desperately to return to the City of Plagues.

As long as I let him escape the Boundless Desert and reach the upper layer, the City of Plagues, he can immediately join up with the Scorpio Director and burst out from the six layers of nightmares together. If I get held back by the Scorpio Director, then everything will be too late!

I must keep him here!

Understanding what he needed to do, the King of Nightmares took a deep, shaky breath, then slowly closed his eyes.

If the human body can be hurt, if the human soul can be shaken... then I will no longer be human!!!

"Leave it to me!!!"

Accompanied by an almost hysterical roar, the gigantic body of the King of Nightmares fell down with a thud, crushing a big part of the line where Leon was fighting.

Immediately after, in the shocked gaze of Leon and the Snow Maiden, the gray mist surrounding the King of Nightmares suddenly began to "flow" and condensed above its fallen body into a new King of Nightmares, two sizes smaller!

No... what the hell is this? A two-stage boss fight?

"You... are you crazy?!"

Before Leon could voice his sarcasm, the frightened Snow Maiden widened her eyes, her face turning pale, and screamed:

"How dare you? In this world, the first rule is that both soul and body must be whole! Doing this is directly opposing the world! You're simply mad... "

"I'm quite awake!"

Shedding the flesh and soul that had just recently condensed, reverting to the form of a Dream Realm Creature, the newly born gray mist giant said expressionlessly:

"Generally, I wouldn't dare do this, but now the Dream Realm and reality overlap, and half of the rules are governed by the Dream Realm.

Moreover, I'm not directly appearing in reality, but in this dream created by six Nightmare Envoys together; with this extra layer, although there's still a considerable impact, it's enough for me to accomplish what I want to do!"

"You... you... what about the others?"

A flush of blood suddenly appeared on the pale cheeks, and the Snow Maiden gritted her teeth and said:

"The ones sustaining the dream are not you! It means they're facing the world's suppression for you! If this continues, the six of them..."

"The six of them will realize the value they ought to have."

Although two sizes smaller, the Nightmare King in the Dream Realm Creature form is clearly more adapted to the nightmare world before it.

Stretching out its withered arm, it gestured towards the sun hanging high above the desert, and a heat wave ten times hotter than before spread out, blowing away the cold wind around Leon and his companion, forcibly pulling them back from their escape from the Boundless Desert.

"You seem to be getting nervous."

Intercepting Leon and his companion, the gray mist giant swept the Snow Maiden aside, then raised its hand and squeezed Leon tightly. Although it failed to kill him, it inadvertently sensed a strange emotion.

Tasting the urgent feeling of anxiety emanating from Leon's soul, the King of Nightmares finally showed a hint of a smile in its cold and sinister blurred face.

"If I'm not mistaken, this troublesome state of yours is about to expire soon, isn't it?"

"..."

Indeed... although I've drunk a lot on purpose, after moving intensely for so long, most of the intoxication has evaporated with the sweat, and the vigor of the Drunken Life, Dreamy Death has almost dissipated...

Feeling the pending evaporation of the intoxication, no matter how Leon tried to suppress it, the sense of urgency in his heart kept growing.

Only five minutes left at most, if the Scorpio Director can't find me in five minutes, then he will have to find me in the Realm of the Dead.

However, I have a badge called [Survivor of Near Death], whose hidden trait ensures getting bitten by a dog when passing through the Realm of the Dead, and it bites with three heads each taking a bite... Come to think of it, isn't a Canine Deity also a dog? Would a bite from it give me rabies? If a deceased got rabies, what would the symptoms be?

...

Is he... distracted?

Watching the seemingly absent-minded Leon in his hand, the gray mist giant, who had just shown a bit of joy, instantly turned cold again.

For this Cleaner, who dared to humiliate me with a low-grade nightmare, quick and clean death was undoubtedly a sort of mercy, according to my plan, I should drag his soul into the Dream Realm and torment it until the entire Dream Realm is utterly destroyed.

Yet facing such a foreseeable tragic future, while his heart was tense, he... wasn't really that scared? He even had the presence of mind to think about random things?

"You're not afraid of me?"

Seeing Leon's face, still tipsy, his expression slightly absent-minded as if he thought of something amusing, a slight smile forming unwittingly on his lips, the gray mist giant's withered arm tightened slightly, and its eyes turned cold as it said:

"Human, would you like to guess your future fate?" )

Knowing whether I live or die depends on the Scorpio Director's efforts, and it has almost nothing to do with my own efforts. With the alcohol still lingering in his mind, Leon raised his head and glanced at the King of Nightmares, then lazily asked in return:

"Why? Is there a prize for guessing correctly?"

"..."

Having carefully sensed several times, the gray mist giant indeed found no fear in Leon's heart, and even a "strange laziness" in his aura, causing its brows to furrow uncomfortably.

For someone full of hatred, the most distressing thing isn't even being unable to avenge oneself, but rather, when they're about to succeed in their revenge, and see their hated and despised enemy facing a terribly tragic fate, yet the other side appears utterly indifferent, even having the mood to banter with you.

"Stop pretending!"

Convinced that Leon isn't the type of person to "face death calmly," the King of Nightmares glared at him with icy eyes and questioned:



"Is it the effect of an anomaly? Do you have an item on you that can block fear?"

"..."

I do have something like that... but it's not an anomaly, it's a badge.

The [Immortal of Liquor] badge series, from the initial bronze to the current exotic, has always had the effect of resisting fear.

Gold used to resist fear, and although the [Immortal of Liquor] inscription no longer included resisting fear, fear induced by enemies could be considered a "form of attack," and since I haven't yet exited the "Drunken Dreams" state, fears were directly nullified by [Immortal of Liquor], leaving me completely unafraid.

"Yeah, let's just say I have it."

After thinking about the current situation, Leon really couldn't come up with any other ideas, so he directly admitted that he indeed had means to resist fear.

After all, he had tried his best. Truly being unable to overcome wasn't something he could help, and he had already arranged for his younger siblings to leave safely, entrusting them to someone he could trust, at least there's no need to worry about their future suffering.

Besides, although it sounds a bit grim, honestly, having been in this world for over three years now, perhaps this is the most relaxed time for him, with nothing really to worry about.

In fact, if one thinks positively, what if being dragged into the Dream Realm and enslaved and tortured? As long as the Badge System remains, perhaps someday I'll stumble upon some odd badge like "Inborn Rebellion" or "Sworn Parents."

By then, even if he couldn't become the director of the Clean-up Bureau, being a ruler of the Dream Realm would be fine too; blending in somewhere is blending in as well, right?

"..."

Is he... truly fearless?

Misinterpreting someone's situation of unchecked thoughts due to lingering intoxication and lack of pressing combat pressure as genuine indifference.

The King of Nightmares, horribly uncomfortable, remained silent for a moment, then, unable to suppress his unfulfilled anger, raised his hand and held the crown on his head, aiming its mirrored section at Leon's eyes.

"Fine! Today I must see what it is that someone like you truly fears in your heart!"

Chapter 473: Leon's Gift of Gratitude

What am I most afraid of?

After hearing the words of the King of Nightmares and seeing his own face reflected in the mirrored crown on its head, Leon's pupils involuntarily widened.

His memories must never be seen by others! Whether it's the existence of the Badge System or the fact that he is a transmigrator, these are secrets that must not be leaked at any cost!

Especially the latter!

If this secret were to be exposed and linked by those at the headquarters to the warning given by the Watcher's Palace about the 'soul from an unknown world,' even if the Scorpio director could arrive within five minutes, Leon's career as a Cleaner would likely be over!

Faced with the sudden emergency, Leon, who originally intended to wait until [Immortal in Liquor] wore off and then struggle using the Archer's mark and [Lust Dream Invader], could no longer hold back his trump card and directly activated [Lust Dream Invader] for a life-or-death gamble.

Unfortunately, although [Lust Dream Invader] is an anomalous object made from the weapon of the Lord of Lustful Dreams, its intrinsic status is not low, but it still doesn't quite hold up against the personal descent of the King of Nightmares.

Even though Leon, strengthened by the Archer's mark, barely locked onto the consciousness of the King of Nightmares, before he could drag it into the dreamscape, the King of Nightmares' gaunt head suddenly split horizontally in an eerie manner, neatly and cleanly splitting in two.

"Hehe."

Accompanied by a slight derisive chuckle, countless nightmares making up the King of Nightmares' body quickly churned, shedding the old body like a crab molting its shell, and it emerged anew from the split.

"You didn't think the same trick would work on me twice, did you?"

After manipulating the old body captured by [Lust Dream Invader] and seeing the somewhat annoyed expression on Leon's face, the King of Nightmares, who had a hint of pleasure in its gaze, mocked with eyes full of ridicule:

"The secret technique of the Sagittarius Palace is indeed remarkable, even allowing you, a Level Three Cleaner, to nearly perform at a director's level and almost caught me off guard for a moment.

But no matter how good something is, it ultimately depends on who wields it. If it were the Sagittarius Director himself using this, no matter how I struggle, it would be futile, and I would directly be dragged into the dreamscape.

But with the strength of your soul, you can't even lock onto my main consciousness; at best, you can only seize a few hundred insignificant nightmares. There are countless such scattered nightmares in the Nightmare River; what good does it do you to grasp them?"

"..."

...

"Alright, after such a struggle, it's time you give up."

Taking the mirrored crown from the hollow shell, placing it back on its head, the gray mist giant stretched out its ashen, bony fingers, wiping the crown's mirror with its fingertips. Its hoarse and malevolent voice barged unreasonably into Leon's eardrums.

"Come! In the name of the Lord of Nightmares, I command you to open your heart and reveal your deepest fear to me!"

As the King of Nightmares shouted, the scorching sun hanging overhead flickered several times, and then, as if moved from midsummer to late autumn, it changed from a blinding white to the orange of the autumn-winter transition, letting out a feeble, not very warming light.

Subsequently, the endless yellow sands around them quietly faded away, centering on the motionless Leon, the vast desert swiftly dissipated, transforming into a dilapidated ward filled with coughing and the pungent smell of medicine.

On a slightly dirty hospital bed at the edge of the ward, a sickly pale girl, almost devoid of blood, lightly turned her head, speaking softly yet with a hint of stubbornness:

"Brother, why don't you just stop caring about me?"

"..."

So, his greatest fear is merely the death of his family?

Looking at the frail girl on the bed, then at the twisted-face Leon in front of the bed, the King of Nightmares, who had been somewhat enthusiastic just moments earlier, instantly flashed a deep sense of disappointment in its eyes.

Though the fear was intense and the bitterness and anger amusing, this level of fear and nightmare, it had seen countless times and was not interesting at all.

Boring.

Facing the uninspiring nightmare in front, using Leon's deepest fear to replace part of the Boundless Desert, the King of Nightmares disdainfully clicked its tongue.

It seems that his calm demeanor in enduring eternal torment wasn't out of fearlessness but is likely a result of some anomalous object's effect.

For someone who almost made it stumble, it originally thought his deepest fear might be something intriguing, but it's just this? This really is...

Huh? What is he going to do?

Watching Leon's distorted face as he stormed out of the ward, clutching a picked-up knife, seemingly intent on doing something, the King of Nightmares finally felt a slight spark of interest, voluntarily shrinking its form to a similar height as an ordinary human and following along.

Immediately, everything from two months ago replayed without much variation.

"Is anyone there? I'm here for the interview!"

"What are you looking at? Never seen a demon?"

"Haven't I made it clear to you already? Someone like you, a normal person, isn't suited to join the Clean-up Bureau."

"Please, wait a second!" .

"My observation skills are quite special! I can identify some peculiar things, and if there's direct contact, I can immediately gain some relevant information!"

"Well, that sheep is a 'peculiar thing,' so go ahead and start talking."

After the red-haired director posed the "test question," Leon, facing this last lifeline, took a deep breath and nervously touched the black mountain goat with trembling arms, however...

"?!?!?"

Nothing? Why is there nothing?

Realizing the situation was different from what he anticipated, a deep terror suddenly surfaced on Leon's face. An incomparable fear surged up, as if a cold, bone-chilling hand was gripping his heart tightly.

There should be something! There should be something!

I just need to touch it with my hand, and information about the anomaly should bounce out at me. Why is there nothing now?!

"Huh, turns out he's a lunatic."

Shaking her head somewhat disappointedly, the red-haired woman with a blurred face ordered coldly:

"Get out! This isn't a place you should be!"

"But... but I clearly..."

"Get out! I'm only saying this once! Hmph! What a waste of time!"

"..."

Under the amused gaze of the King of Nightmares, Leon was despondently driven out of the Clean-up Bureau, with his head downcast and looking bewildered, like a walking corpse, he trudged back to the hospital step by step.

After exhausting all his money and struggling for over a week to no avail, unable to gather enough for the medical expenses, Leon had to carry the frail, ill girl home at her insistence, who was coughing all night and couldn't sleep.

Then, as the sickly girl suggested from the start, when the all-night coughing ceased, to continue receiving her pension, Leon had to throw her body into the sewer river at night, pretending she was still alive to claim the pension.

But not even a month later, this small scheme was seen through by officials from the military department who came for inspection, and instead, they imposed further fines, making life for the family even harder, growing pale and thin day by day.

The following year, a heat epidemic broke out in the capital. Malnourished and physically weak, the two children withstood it no longer in the absence of proper medicine and treatment, and finally, the once cramped home became completely desolate...

...

So it is.

Watching Leon sitting hunched by a small bed, reaching out to caress an old photo album with eyes filled with numbness, the King's eyebrows lifted slightly, finally understanding what Leon feared most.

If he did not have the qualifications to be a Cleaner, failing to join the Clean-up Bureau, he would lose everything bit by bit, inevitably, like in this nightmare.

Thus, if I want to torment him, there is no need for physical destruction, just lock away his original memories and let him endlessly relive all of this, that would be enough.

Hah, I never expected it to be so simple.

With a wave, dispersing the dreamscape reflected from the deepest part of Leon's soul using the Crown of Fearful Reflection, and switching everything surrounding back to the Boundless Desert.

Seeing the real Leon starting from his rush out of the hospital in the dream, silent all along, seemingly struck by some huge blow, the King of Nightmares couldn't help but curl his lips, and commented with amusement:

"Your fear is rather mundane, but overall still somewhat interesting... hehe, I've already thought of how to punish you for offending me.

Listen up, I declare, from now on you shall be... what are you doing?"

"I'm giving you a grand gift."

Crushing the vial containing the Dream Eating Anomalous Carapace, stuffing all the remaining beetles into the empty shell body previously left by the King of Nightmares.

In the shocked expression of the King of Nightmares, Leon expressionlessly took out the Unfair Serpent Pact, exchanging it for a bright red hair from the red-haired director.

Immediately, this body filled with feasting Dream Eating Anomalous Carapace vanished from his hands, appearing in the night sky of the capital, filled with countless nightmares.

"From now on, no one's gonna fuckin' dream!!!"

Chapter 474: Nightmare of Nightmares

No one can dream anymore? What does that mean?



Looking at his empty shell body, created from hundreds of nightmares, disappearing in front of him with a cluster of beetles, the Gray Mist Giant couldn't help but tremble all over, his eyes wide with fear as he angrily demanded:

"What did you do?! Where did you send those damn bugs?!"

"I told you, it's a big gift for you!"

Recalling the time after Anna, step by step, lost all his family and could only sit lifelessly on the bed, not even having the courage to open an album, Leon, his eyes red, looked up at the Gray Mist Giant in front of him and said word by word:

"When I say I'm giving you a gift, naturally, I've sent it to your home. Where else would it go?"

"..."

My home... Nightmare River? You sent those bugs, capable of devouring dreams and infinitely multiplying, into my Nightmare River?!

"Are you insane?!!!"

Hearing Leon personally admit what he had done, the King of Nightmares roared furiously:

"You madman! Do you know what you've done?!"

"Change it back! Quickly, change it back for me!!!"

"The Nightmare River is full of countless nightmares! Do you know that if those bugs get into the Nightmare River, in less than half a day, they'll turn into billions! More than half of the Dream World will be eaten!"

"They will even eat all the way from the Dream World to Reality! So many bugs that even your Clean-up Bureau won't be able to stop them! If you don't stop now, humans will never dream again!"

"Ha ha... not my problem!"

Having suffered an immense stimulus at the hands of the King of Nightmares, and with the effects of the "Drunken Life, Dreamy Death" not yet worn off, Leon was far from rational, barely able to control himself.

Facing the mad roars of the King of Nightmares, he let out a cold laugh and immediately retorted without the slightest hesitation:

"No dreams, so be it! Not dreaming at night won't kill anyone!"

"No! No! This can't be!"

"Madman! You damn madman!"

Seeing the determination not to stop in Leon's resolute gaze, the frantic Gray Mist Giant cursed in fury and immediately turned around, trying to rush out of the six-fold nightmare, aiming to eliminate as many bugs as possible before the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] could spread, however...

"Don't bother."

Flashing the back of his right hand, showing the already vanished archer's mark to the King of Nightmares, in the terrifying gaze of the Gray Mist Giant, Leon asked with delight:

"Do you want to guess where I used the last archer's secret technique?"

"?!"

Dream-Eater Mutant Shell?!!!

Understanding the unmistakable answer from Leon's eyes, the Gray Mist Giant felt as if his mind was struck, as if someone had ripped open his skull and hammered a massive ton-heavy blow inside, making his vision spin. NovelBin

You damn... not only did you send [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] into the Nightmare River, but you even reinforced them with the archer's secret technique?!! You... you... I...

"I'll kill you!!!"

Realizing everything was over, the King of Nightmares roared and pounced back, intending to smash Leon into paste, but since the time of [Immortal in Liquor] wasn't up, no matter how he attacked, the result remained unchanged.

After venting with a furious pounding, feeling the Nightmare River rapidly disappearing at a terrifying speed, the Gray Mist Giant dropped to the ground with a thud, despair filling his eyes as he howled:

"It's over... everything is over!"

"Nightmare River... Demonic Soul Abyss... Dream World... all of it is done!!!"

"You madman! You are a total madman! Why did I provoke you?"

"Ahhhhh!!!!!!!!!!!"

Amidst the cries of the regretful Gray Mist Giant, a familiar buzzing sounded once more in Leon's ear.

"Zzz..."

[Your extreme madness has cast an enormous psychological shadow on the King of Nightmares, the Lord of Nightmares, successfully activating the hidden Golden Badge "Nightmare of Nightmares"]

[Nightmare of Nightmares: Extremely mad and completely reckless, willing to destroy a world for momentary satisfaction, you have become the most terrifying nightmare in the King of Nightmares' heart]

[Wear Effect: Deeply feared by the Lord of Nightmares, you are now above all nightmares, with no nightmare qualified to affect you anymore]

[Advanced Route: None]

[Hidden Feature (Unworn): As an ultimate villain intending to destroy the entire Dream World, your infamous reputation will echo throughout the Dream World, and all Dream Realm Creatures below True God level will feel immense fear when facing you]

...

Is this... Scorpio Branch's [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell]?

Watching the countless Black Gold Beetles with flapping wings, feasting in the Nightmare River, the red-haired chief was momentarily stunned, a flash of irritation in his eyes.

This thing can infinitely split after devouring dreams! It's one thing to let it loose in the capital, but throwing it directly into the Nightmare River makes it impossible to recover. What the hell is that Edward doing?!

Unaware that these [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] were the result of Leon flipping the table in rage after being broken mentally by the King of Nightmares.

Seeing tens of thousands multiply in the blink of an eye, following the Nightmare River into the Dream World, leaving no trace of dreams wherever they passed, the red-haired chief cursed Scorpio Bureau's recklessness while collecting the spread [Slaughter Blood Hair].

When [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] entered the Nightmare River, the nightmares appointed by the King of Nightmares, intending to invade reality with it, could no longer do so.

These extremely troublesome beetles may not devour Dream Realm Creatures or directly kill nightmares trying to invade reality, but they devour the dreams accompanying those nightmares.

Without an accompanying dream, the nightmares are like a tiger without fangs and claws, rendered harmless, and even average strong humans could overcome them unless they were those born with a massively huge body type.

If unable to return to the Dream World in time, when the daylight comes and the sun shines, these nightmares will completely dissipate in the sunlight, leaving them no time to escape, and surely they won't think of charging into reality anymore.

However, while this resolves the massive nightmare invasion issue, the Dream World will eventually suffer significant damage, potentially impacting reality.

The Dream World, composed of memories and fantasies, is also a source of art and inspiration. After this disastrous "bug catastrophe," aside from the massive disappearance of dreams, the world's artistic creation is likely to plunge into a long period of low tide...

Considering the potential consequences caused by these beetles, the red-haired chief couldn't help but rub his forehead.

The headache... It's barely the start of the year, and such a big thing has happened. This year's probably going to be another bottom line.

The only consolation is that Leon shouldn't be in any danger; the hair I gave him shows no sign of death around it, proving he is still safe... Huh? How come it seems there's one more than before?

Chapter 475: Last Place and Second to Last

The King of Nightmares departed very peacefully.

After the red-haired chief, who had just freed her hands, followed her own trail into the sixth level of nightmare, she was sensed by the chief of the Scorpio Bureau who traced the scent and came over.

Faced with the two righteous Zodiac Bureau Chiefs teaming up against him, the King of Nightmares, completely shattered by Leon, didn't even think of struggling and directly offered himself up, getting sliced into nightmare bits by the furious red-haired chief on the spot.

"Edward!!!"

After dealing with the King of Nightmares, the culprit, and carefully cutting him into bits and burning them to prevent short-term revival, the red-haired chief unhappily said to the Scorpio Bureau Chief:

"You helped settle the nightmares brought by the King of Nightmares, I owe you for that, and I'll repay you in the future for sure, but what about the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell]? The trouble those bugs caused, whose account are they on?"

"Oh, please, you don't owe me anything."

After raising his hand to make a stop gesture, the tall, thin Scorpio Bureau Chief smirked coldly:

"Remember, we don't even have a friendship worth a single Copper Wheel. This time it's a straightforward transaction!

I came to help you this time, and at the end of the year, you owe me a bow! This deal is guaranteed by three directors, you crazy woman, don't even think of welching!"

Tsk... figured it wouldn't be that easy to fool him...

Seeing the tall, thin man easily deciphering her undertones and leaving no room for ambiguity, the red-haired chief clicked her tongue, her eyes darting quickly as she tried to justify:

"There's no need for emphasis there! My credit is reliable... But what about those bugs?"

"..."

Upon hearing the red-haired chief's question, the corners of the tall, thin man's mouth twitched fiercely.

What about those bugs... I'd like to ask you!

With ordinary dream fragmentation alone, [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] can breed over a billion within thirty hours, and now directly thrown into the River of Dreams by your people, it can spawn billions in half a day! In less than three days, the number will exceed the total humans combined!

Even if they can only live for a week, they'll die after a week, but tens of billions of [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] is enough to ravage half of the dream realm, further gnawing into reality, making it impossible for anyone worldwide to dream for a week!

Dammit! No wonder they're summoned by you, acting just as crazy!

Hmm? Looking at his expression... maybe there's a way? Could I perhaps dodge the bowing part?

Noticing the stiff expression of the tall, thin man, the red-haired chief narrowed her fox-like eyes slightly, then said seriously:

"I just took a closer look; those [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] have unusually high quality! The initial batch clearly split after consuming a part of the King of Nightmares, with an alarmingly high status.

Subsequent new bugs are relatively fragile and still manageable on the dream realm side, but the few hundred bugs that consumed the King of Nightmares, besides the True God, likely can't be dealt with by anyone in the entire dream realm, and are already unstoppable.

Edward, while I appreciate your assistance, this time your measures were a bit too excessive. The impact of what we hold is too great; when deploying it, one must consider the consequences, rather than recklessly..."

"Ha? Me, not considering consequences?"

Pointing his finger at his own nose, the tall, thin man laughed angrily at the red-haired chief's words.

"Olivia, you didn't think it was me who threw those [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] up there, did you?"

"???"

It wasn't you?

Upon hearing the tall, thin man's rebuttal, the red-haired chief was slightly stunned.

[Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] is a numbered-level anomaly managed by your Scorpio Branch, personally brought by you. If you didn't throw it up there, was it me...? Oh my, Leon?!!!

Suddenly encountering another possibility, the red-haired chief swiftly turned her head, gazing at the silently standing Leon nearby, who seemed unusually "well-behaved," and her heart sank.

I thought it was Edward causing trouble, turns out our side was the mastermind?

Even if the harm of [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] is relatively low, causing no fatalities and being quite subtle, it's still a 'world-level' anomaly out-of-control event, and we're surely going to be roasted by the bureau!

I had thought, with Edward being the one throwing the bugs, the Scorpio Branch would definitely rank last at the end of the year, and our Virgo Branch would be second to last at most, but now, having just started the new year, we can lock in the last place again?



I... I...

...

I suddenly feel... this kid's talent might be extraordinarily strong, but it may not be as promising as it looks...

Glancing at her old rival whose expression seemed to be crumbling, the Scorpio Bureau Chief glanced at the uprightly standing Leon with a sense of empathy.

Though the incident wasn't his doing, as the one who brought the anomaly, he certainly cannot shirk responsibility either.

When the main bureau conducts performance evaluations at year-end, Olivia's Virgo Branch will undoubtedly rank last, but my Scorpio Bureau might rank only slightly higher than her, definitely bottoming out this year, which is truly...

Not to be enjoyed.

For such talents, although highly capable, who bring chaos just as grandiose, they're better left to Olivia!

"Farewell!"

A bit taken aback by Leon's level of troublemaking, deeply shocked, the Scorpio Bureau Chief didn't even mention "spoils". Packing away his dolls, tokens, rapiers, and other anomalous items, he picked up the suitcase and left.

"By the way, remember to bow to me at the end of the year! Last place! Haha"

"..."

"Uh, I can actually explain..."

Seeing the increasingly dangerous expression of her own chief, the now sobered Leon coughed, bravely explaining:

"You remember my ability to be immune to harm by drinking enough alcohol, right? The cost of using that ability is greatly slowed brain function, and it becomes hard to control one's behavior.

The King of Nightmares caught me at that time and used the mirrored crown on its head to excavate the scenario I least wanted to appear from my mind and played it directly, claiming it would eternally loop this nightmare on me, and then I couldn't hold back... so..."

Couldn't hold back, ended up bringing our bureau to last place, huh?

Seeing the weary-looking Leon, his eyes slightly red as if having been stimulated in some way, the red-haired chief sighed softly.

Forget it... Leon has really done his best this time.

Although he expanded the disaster thirtyfold, making the impact world level instead of national, having the world unable to dream for a long period is better than allowing the King of Nightmares to harvest fear on a grand scale after descending.

Thus, his handling can't be called wrong, even credited with some merit, but alas, at the end of the year, my name will again be carved on the pillar of shame...

"Alright... Just make sure to write all of this in the report."

Imagining the end-of-year evaluation when not only taking last place but also publicly bowing to the arch-enemy, the red-haired chief couldn't help but feel heartache, then weakly instructed:

"However, don't write about your ability, don't state that it was intentional; change it to an extremely urgent situation at that time, where the King of Nightmares might break free from control at any moment, and you took drastic measures to protect the citizens of the capital from being affected.

Additionally, remember to mention you couldn't figure out the effects of [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell], Edward didn't make it clear, leading to misjudgment under pressure, hmm... try to implicate him as much as possible...

Oh right, what about this Snow Woman? Are we not dealing with her together?"

Chapter 476: The Secret of the Kingdom

Snow Woman...

Upon hearing the red-haired director's inquiry, Leon followed her gaze and looked at the Snow Woman lying in the desert.

According to the realm rules of this world, nightmares entering reality will all possess physical bodies, and earlier, the Snow Woman had already been knocked unconscious when the King of Nightmares entered the "second phase," and she still hasn't woken up yet.

"It's better to send her back to the Dreamland."

After hesitating slightly, Leon spoke:

"I used the soul vision of the Black Goat to look at her, and her soul is actually purer than many humans, mainly being controlled by the King of Nightmares; she's not really bad on her own, and has actually helped me quite a bit this time.

Moreover, her accompanying nightmare was polluted, and the nightmare core was destroyed by the King of Nightmares, causing her power to drop significantly. Besides being able to traverse nightmares, she essentially has no abilities anymore, so letting her go back doesn't really matter."

"Okay."

Nodding in agreement with Leon's handling plan, the red-haired director pondered slightly, then spoke:

"Forget it, let the remaining few nightmare envoys go back too. After you made a mess in the Dreamland, it's been considerably wounded, and before the King of Nightmares is revived, the ratio between nightmares and sweet dreams will be severely imbalanced.

Letting a few high-level nightmares return might slightly restore the balance, avoiding any bad impact on the reality world. Also, after the overlap ends, they don't have the means to invade the present world, so there's no worry about any harm in letting them return."

Before the King of Nightmares revives...

Hearing the red-haired director's words, Leon's expression involuntarily darkened slightly.

Although he knew these "True Gods" are almost unkillable, and that the King of Nightmares, after being taken down this time, would be born again from a new Nightmare River someday in the future.

But recalling the painful scenes the King of Nightmares had shown him using the mirror crown, scenes that caused his heart to ache just by slightly recalling them, a dense sense of resentment appeared in Leon's eyes.

"Director."

Calling out, Leon said with tightly furrowed brows:

"Is there really no way to completely eliminate the King of Nightmares?"

To actually ask such a question... Seems like the King of Nightmares really offended you deeply...

Curiously looking at Leon, the red-haired director pondered what exactly the King of Nightmares did to make the usually steady Leon lose control, and shook her head as she replied:

"It's impossible... Sweet dreams and nightmares are one of the cornerstones of the Dreamland, and completely eliminating the King of Nightmares would be like eliminating the Overlords of the Dead Realm, which would lead to an imbalance in the subsidiary world."

"Subsidiary world?"

"Simply put, worlds are not completely isolated but are interconnected by functions and rules."

The red-haired director explained, drawing a large circle in the sand with her toe, followed by a series of smaller circles around it:

"If the world we live in is this big circle in the middle, then the Realm of the Dead, the Dreamland, and these small circles can be considered as 'subsidiary worlds' derived from our world, serving our world's purposes.

Among them, the Realm of the Dead is responsible for accommodating deceased souls, returning them to their origin and granting rebirth, while the Dreamland is responsible for bearing human memory and fantasy, including art, inspiration, and such; all of these have a certain connection to the Dreamland."

After explaining the significance of the Dreamland's existence, the red-haired director opened her mouth somewhat helplessly:

"Whether these subsidiary worlds can operate stably holds great significance for us, and if they encounter problems, we might even have to lend a hand in resolving them. However, this task usually doesn't fall on us."

"Even you're not assigned... Director?"

"Yes, the Director. Most of the Directors are not in the bureau for years; they are basically doing this."

The red-haired director spoke:

"If the task of the directors of the 87 branches of the Clean-up Bureau is to guard the human settlements, preventing opponents from sneaking in to steal and rob, then the duty of the twelve Directors is to ensure that those subsidiary worlds operate smoothly, without any major incidents that could affect reality.

The strength of the Zodiac Bureau directors may not be inferior to the Directors, but the hierarchy of the Star Palace in their control is one level lower than that of the twelve Directors. They cannot freely enter and exit these subsidiary worlds, so these trans-world matters can generally only be handled by Directors who can use the [Star Dome Compass]."

I see...

Understanding why they can't set loose the bugs to completely devour the Dreamland and why the directors of the Clean-up Bureau are often not home, Leon hesitated slightly before tentatively speaking:

"Then... what if we try to replace the Lord of Nightmares? Didn't the Overlord of the Dead Realm change a person too?"

"It's possible... but not only is it extremely troublesome, it's also exceptionally dangerous."

The red-haired director sighed and said:

"The ancestors of the royal family of the Kingdom were the ones who pushed back the King of Nightmares, causing their own bloodline to be cursed.

He tried something similar to what you think—wanting to lift the curse left in his bloodline by the King of Nightmares. He also got support from the bureau, but in the end, he didn't succeed, and it caused extremely severe consequences."

Extremely severe consequences?

Leon couldn't help but clench his fists upon hearing this, then curiously opened his mouth to ask:

"What happened in the end?"

"..."

"Leon, let me ask you."

Without answering Leon's question, the red-haired director sighed and asked:

"The Kingdom we live in, what exactly is this Kingdom?"

What Kingdom?

Leon was slightly taken aback.

"A kingdom is just a kingdom, what do you mean by what kingdom?"

"I mean, don't you think the Kingdom should have a prefix in front?"

The red-haired director spoke:

"For example, like the Ice Plains Nation, Crolock Kingdom, Thousand Sails Maritime Country, and Kingdom of Thunderstorm, other countries should have a specific name, so what is the prefix of the Kingdom, or rather its full name?"

The name of the Kingdom?

Leon was momentarily stunned by these words, then opened the emblem panel, found the prince emblem that made people bow and looked at it.

His emblem is called [Migratory Thrush Prince], so the full name of the Kingdom should be the Kingdom of Lutung, what's the... wait! Why do I need to look at the emblem to remember the name of the Kingdom?

Seeming to discover something monumental, Leon's pupils dilated sharply, and the red-haired director, observing his expression, sighed at the right moment:

"You found that you can't remember it, right?"

"..."

"The ancestor of the royal family, in the process of trying to replace the King of Nightmares, accidentally disrupted the stability of the Dreamland, causing a worldwide memory loss that led everyone to forget the name of the Kingdom.

And to solve this problem, the bureau had to open the [Can of Fantasy], modifying the Brain of the Evil God soaked within, ordering it to constantly erase this doubt and make everyone subconsciously ignore this issue.

So every day you and everyone in the Kingdom speak of the Kingdom, but completely feel that there's nothing wrong with calling it the Kingdom without a name."

"..."

After giving a glance at Leon, whose face was full of shock, the red-haired director patted him on the shoulder:

"Leon, now you understand how troublesome it really is to want to replace those 'gods' that occupy critical realm rules?"

Chapter 477: Lend Me That for a Bit~



Indeed... these True Gods are not easy to deal with...

After learning from the red-haired director the reason why the Kingdom has no name, Leon couldn't help but frown.

It seems that the role of these True Gods is somewhat like "wedges" that stabilize the world. If they were to be recklessly replaced or completely removed, it would cause instability in the originally stable world.

Therefore, no matter how strong the Clean-up Bureau is, they can only temporarily eliminate the troublesome True God and let it stay quiet for a while before its resurrection. They can't directly destroy its roots...

"Stop thinking about it."

After seeing Leon's furrowed brows, the red-haired director advised:

"This time, we not only directly killed the King of Nightmares, but also let the insects devour its Nightmare River, and took down more than half of the nightmares it commanded. It won't recover in ten or twenty years."

The always elusive King of Nightmares has rarely suffered such a major loss. The last time it was this embarrassed, it probably traces back to the ancestors of the royal family. You've done very well."

"..."

It won't recover in ten or twenty years... does that mean in twenty or thirty years, it will recover?

Upon hearing the underlying meaning in the red-haired director's comfort, Leon couldn't help but recall the image of himself, blankly touching a photo album in the mirror crown, as displayed by the King of Nightmares. His heart ached fiercely.

Not enough! Twenty years is not enough!

Leon, who had his defenses brutally breached by the King of Nightmares, unconsciously gritted his teeth. Although he didn't say anything more, he remembered this grudge in his heart.

When the King of Nightmares resurrects in the future, if I am still alive, I might reach a "Zodiac Bureau Director level" by then. At that time, I must visit the dream world again... no! Every ten or twenty years, I will visit the dream world and make it die again immediately!

Once I reach the level where I can enter the dream world alone, as long as I live a day, it must obediently die a day!

...

After fiercely marking a note against the King of Nightmares in his mental notebook, a disgruntled Leon found the unconscious Snow Maiden and pinched her philtrum hard.

"Ah!!!"

The Snow Maiden cried out after being pinched awake, then asked in confusion:

"You... what is this...?"

"You're still alive, the King of Nightmares has been eliminated."

"Huh?"

The Snow Maiden passed out right at the peak of the King of Nightmares' arrogance, only to find it gone when she opened her eyes again, which astonished her greatly!

"What happened? Wasn't it..."

"It's dead, and considering that after the King of Nightmares' death, the dream world will temporarily lose balance, we'll be sending you back."

Feeling incomplete revenge, Leon did not answer Snow Maiden's question, but sternly announced her outcome and then reminded:

"Also, in the next week, more than half of the dream world will be devoured by the [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell]. Be careful when you go back."

"Huh???"

The Snow Maiden, completely confused by three consecutive pieces of news, gasped in astonishment and then joy before being baffled again, as her ice-blue eyes went slightly vacant.

No... weren't we still being chased by the King of Nightmares? How did everything flip in an instant? What's going on with the dream world? How long was I unconscious? A week?

"You... I..."

"Judging by your look, you seem to have no questions... if not, get going quickly!"

Looking up at the sky, which faintly turned pale, Leon, who hadn't slept in more than thirty hours, couldn't help but yawn and urged:

"In at most an hour, the sun will rise, and by then, you won't be able to leave even if you want to."

"Oh! Right!"

Upon hearing Leon's words, the Snow Maiden shivered slightly, then hurriedly puffed her cheeks like before to traverse dreams, exhaling... air.

???

Unbelieving, the Snow Maiden puffed her fair cheeks again and tried several more times, but she couldn't produce the icy wind that allowed her to traverse dreams, even as her face flushed red.

Seeing her blow air but not leave, Leon couldn't help but frown.

"What are you doing?"

"I... I don't know!"

"I think I know what's happening."

The red-haired director said knowingly, watching the panicked Snow Maiden:

"Hasn't your nightmare core been destroyed?"

Trembling at the sight of the red-haired director with hair dark red like blood, as though able to hear screams of numerous nightmares from up close, the Snow Maiden instinctively hid behind Leon, then cautiously nodded.

"Yes...my nightmare core was crushed by the King of Nightmares..."

"No wonder," the red-haired director said knowingly.

"The Demonic Soul Abyss hasn't fully left, and reality and the dream world still overlap. With your nightmare core gone, by the rules of the current world, you're almost like a pure human. Typically, humans find it difficult to enter the dream world while awake."

The Snow Maiden hesitated and said: "But... but earlier I could take him through the nightmare!"

"But earlier, the King of Nightmares wasn't dead either," the red-haired director shrugged.

"Earlier, you could take Leon in and out of nightmares mainly because of your status as a nightmare emissary. The King of Nightmares took your nightmare core but granted you a small portion of authority to utilize nightmare powers.

But now, the King of Nightmares, representing nightmares, has been eliminated by us. The nightmare powers themselves have weakened to the limit, and the remainder mostly returned to the depths of the Nightmare River, busy resurrecting the King of Nightmares, leaving no effort to respond to your call."

"..."

Understanding her current predicament, the Snow Maiden pitifully requested: "Can... can you send me back..."

"No," the red-haired director replied, smiling.

"Don't overdo it. You invaded my jurisdiction following the King of Nightmares. Already not killing you outright is pretty lenient. On what grounds can you make demands of me?"

"But... the dawn is almost here..."

"Yes, dawn is almost here, but what does that have to do with us?"

"I... I..."

...

What's the director scheming now?

Looking at the red-haired director who neither eliminated the Snow Maiden nor agreed to send her back to the dream world, but just kept pressuring her, Leon instinctively knew she must be plotting something.

Sure enough, as dawn approached, the Snow Maiden was completely flustered.

Her mind, already not very sharp, was bewildered by the director's coaxing, first signing something, and then an old collar was placed around her fair neck.

Leon, taking one look, knew that those items were anomalous objects for controlling people. The unfortunate Snow Maiden probably sold herself completely, most likely not even leaving undergarments behind.

Yet, after sweet-talking and tricking the Snow Maiden, the red-haired director still didn't send her back immediately. Instead, she pointed to the [Lust Dream Invader] on Leon's neck, smiling as she asked:

"Leon, could I borrow your pendant for a while?"

Chapter 478: Nightfall's End

"Alright."

Upon hearing the words of the red-haired director, Leon nodded and directly handed over the .

Even though the director is somewhat of a boozehound, whose brain doesn't function particularly well when inebriated, he's quite dependable when it doesn't involve alcohol, making him someone you can somewhat trust.

"Leon, there's something I must say first."

The red-haired director did not immediately take the and said seriously:

"This might very well be borrowed without return. If you're genuinely unwilling to lend it, you don't have to, I can still..."

"No need, just take it."

Before the red-haired director could finish, Leon shook his head and said:

"If you're asking me for something, it must be for a good reason. There's no need to explain, even if it doesn't come back, that's fine."

"Alright..."

Seeing Leon hand over this rather precious anomaly without even asking its purpose, showing a degree of trust that could be considered unconditional, the eyes of the red-haired director warmed slightly.

After accepting the from Leon, the red-haired director took a lock of his own hair, replacing the string of the , and then surprisingly tied it around the neck of the Snow Maiden.

"This item was crafted from the weapon of the [Master of Desire Dream], and even if you've lost the nightmare core, it should still ensure your safety in the dream realm.

However, giving this item to you isn't without cost."

The red-haired director, squinting his fox-like eyes and speaking solemnly, instructed:

"Remember, once those [Dream-Eater Mutant Shell] perish naturally, you must take action immediately, go find the item I instructed you to find, but after finding it, you must not act on your own, you need to come back and tell me immediately. If you can't find me, go to Leon, understand?"

"Understood..."

Feeling the slightly warm red pendant on her chest, the Snow Maiden nodded relaxedly, then reached out and drew a slash in the void with the .

"Slash!"

With a sound like shattering glass, the area in the air where the small red fork passed cracked open, revealing a small breach that was clear to see but somehow seemed non-existent.

...

Finally, I can go home...

Seeing the familiar atmosphere of the dream realm through the tiny crack, the Snow Maiden almost burst into tears.

Tonight had been absolutely terrible!

First, she was forcibly dragged out of her companion dream, then her nightmare core was crushed and she was banished, after which she was bought through a strange contract, forced to carry someone like a mount throughout the nightmare.

And even more ridiculously, she thought these were the limits of her bad luck, only to find there was even more to come!

After being knocked unconscious by the descended King of Nightmares and waking up, the King of Nightmares and most of the dream realm were just gone! She was then forced by a smirking wicked woman to sign a whole bunch of messy contracts and got assigned an incredibly dangerous task.

Ugh... I'm never coming back to this wretched place!!!

With eagerness, she stepped through the breach between the dream realm and the real world, and once back in the comforting home, the comically unlucky Snow Maiden let out a long sigh of relief.



The dream realm is better after all... though it's currently plagued by bugs, at least I won't be... huh?

In the empty Nightmare River, upon seeing a few familiar faces, the Snow Maiden paused for a moment and then a hint of joy appeared in her eyes.

Green Wave Sea Monster, Plague Maiden, Swamp King Snake... and even the Sand Dune Giant Worm!  
Not a single one missing!

"Great! You're all still alive!"

Discovering that all her longtime colleagues had survived, the Snow Maiden excitedly rushed over.

As Nightmare Envoys under the King of Nightmares, the seven Elite Nightmares shared a kinship, after all, there's no better way to bond than having a common enemy.

And since all of them were nightmares captured by the King of Nightmares and had their nightmare cores taken, forced to become nightmare envoys, they harbored deep resentment toward the King of Nightmares, so naturally, their colleague relationships were quite good.

So you also managed to return alive, huh!

Upon seeing the Snow Maiden, the other six Nightmare Envoys, all wounded, eagerly gathered around.

After some brief exchanges, since the Black Gold Beetle was rapidly multiplying, the seven surviving colleagues dared not venture too deep into the dream realm, and instead, sat together in the rift between the dream realm and reality, speaking with lingering fear:

"The people from the Clean-up Bureau are terrifying!"

"Yeah! Especially the Scarlet Hair Lady, she killed more nightmares today than I've seen in my entire life!  
The Nightmare River was dyed red!"

"No, no, no, she is terrifying, but the bug-thrower is even scarier!"

"I agree, the bug-thrower is crazier, the way things are, it seems like he's going to devour most of the dream realm!"

"Yes, indeed, he's completely reckless, intent on letting us die! I wonder what the King of Nightmares did to provoke him."

After chattering for a while, the Swamp King Snake flicked its black tongue, its snake face relaxed, and said:

"But thank the heavens the King of Nightmares is dead, we should have a few relaxing decades now."

"Yes, yes."

"Hiss... speaking of the King of Nightmares... why do I feel a bit scared?"

"What are you scared of? It still needs decades... hiss... why am I shivering too?"

"I... I... I also... feel... a bit shivers..."

Like it was contagious, all six Nightmare Envoys except for the Snow Maiden started shaking one by one, and it seemed the closer they were to her, the more they trembled, with the Epidemic Maiden sitting right beside her already uncontrollably chattering her teeth.

"What's wrong with you guys? Why are you all trembling?"

No, no, no, it's not what's wrong with us, it's what's wrong with you!

After shivering away from the Snow Maiden, feeling slightly better, the Epidemic Maiden with a hint of terror in her eyes said:

"You... you have... a terrifying... scent!"

A terrifying scent?

Hearing this, the Snow Maiden paused, checked herself, and then said puzzledly:

"I don't detect any scent?"

"There is... there is..."

Moving further away, feeling the oppressive aura that instinctively made one tremble, the Epidemic Maiden said with chattering teeth:

"The pendant! The scent on your pendant, it's more... it's scarier than the King of Nightmares!"

...

"I knew it would be as I thought."

Feeling the mark that originally belonged to the King of Nightmares rapidly dissipating in his soul, that bound soul regaining freedom, the young man in a light blue robe couldn't help but smile, then raised his glass lantern, blowing out the light that had shone throughout the night.

"Nicole, take the Dream Wandering Lantern and make a trip to the dream realm."

Handing the lantern to the female reporter behind him, the Aquarius Director, standing on the clock tower, squinted at the sunrise creeping over the horizon, and with a nonchalant expression, instructed:

"Make sure to be quick, if my guess is correct, Olivia should already be figuring out how to locate that sleeping me in the dream realm.

If she finds the me sleeping in the Nightmare River first, all my effort would be in vain!"

Chapter 479: Good People and Bad People

"Alright."

After hearing the Aquarius Director's instructions, the female journalist nodded and took the glass lantern from his hand. However, she didn't set out for the Dream Realm immediately. Instead, she bit her lip, hesitated, and said:

"Director, can I ask you a question?"

"Of course you can."

Upon hearing the female journalist's words, the Aquarius Director, who seemed very young in appearance yet with eyes burdened by the marks of time, turned back, smiled gently, and said kindly:

"Nicole, ask whatever you want to ask. I will tell you anything I can... Also, don't be so restrained in front of me. You are one of the few people I can trust, and I hope you can trust me a bit more too."

"Alright..."

The female journalist's demeanor relaxed slightly after hearing the Aquarius Director's words, and she quietly asked:

"Director, the people from the Virgo branch have repeatedly sabotaged your plans, even causing damage to your soul so you had to curry favor with the King of Nightmares... Don't you harbor any resentment?"

"What you're really trying to ask might not be whether I have resentment, but why I didn't seize the opportunity to deal with the Scarlet Hair Lady or Leon, correct?"

"Hmm..."

After exposing what the female journalist truly wanted to ask, the Aquarius Director did not directly answer her question but instead smiled and asked in return:

"Nicole, can you tell me, how do you perceive me?"

Upon hearing the Aquarius Director's words, the female journalist was stunned for a moment, then she lowered her head slightly and replied softly:

"You are my benefactor. If it weren't for you, I would have died at the age of seven. You rescued me from the privateer ship of the Kingdom of Saio and gave me the ability and chance to seek revenge..."

"Nicole, you know that the question I asked wasn't about the relationship between you and me, but rather about how you truly see me."

Interrupting the female journalist's evasive answer, the Aquarius Director couldn't help but chuckle and said:

"Alright... Although you chose to dodge the topic, you somewhat answered my question indirectly.

In your eyes, I should be someone obsessed with Abnormal Genesis Sorcery, willing to do anything without scruples to fulfill a long-held wish, sacrificing anything to achieve my goals, a villain deserving death, an evil lunatic... right?"

"No!"

The female journalist couldn't help but exclaim:

"Director, you... although your methods are somewhat extreme, you've also done many kind deeds and saved many people. You actually..."

"I am indeed a bad person."

Defining himself, the Aquarius Director's smile slightly faded, and he said calmly:

"To you, I am a benefactor, but to many others, I am indeed deserving of death."

"..."

"Although the number of people who died because of me is far less than those I have sheltered over the past hundred years, probably not even a fraction.

But in the process of researching Abnormal Genesis Sorcery, I have committed many evil deeds. To create abnormal items or acquire mystique materials, I have neglected people trapped in desperation, subtly pushed them further, even personally orchestrated tragedies that ruined their lives.

Even rescuing you from the privateer ship of the Kingdom of Saio when you were young wasn't out of kindness but rather due to detecting your outstanding talent, thinking you could cultivate the top abnormal item.

Nicole, though you never want to admit it, I am indeed a bad person."

"..."

Watching the silent female journalist, the Aquarius Director smiled and said:

"Let me ask you, when the intelligence machinery of the Crolock Kingdom confined the royal family, sealed off the Gemini branch, and quietly controlled all Cleaners a few years ago, do you know why I only rescued you?"

The female journalist hesitated before replying:

"Because... I am a level one Cleaner? Also, the strongest in the bureau?"

"No."

The Aquarius Director shook his head and said:

"Because you are a good person."

"???"

"Haha, you are different from others willing to follow me in the bureau. Although they adhere to my orders and can even stand by me, concealing my various infractions, they don't truly acknowledge me.

Those people either are accustomed to obedience, or fear my power, or wish to obtain stronger abnormal items. Only you are different, your reason for following me is pure gratitude, gratitude that I saved your life, and gratitude that I gave you the ability to seek revenge."

"..."

"Once my affairs become public, those accustomed to obey me will still follow the Clean-up Bureau without hesitation; those who fear my power will naturally fear the formidable Clean-up Bureau even more, and those who seek benefits from me will be swayed by benefits I cannot provide.

Nicole, you alone, your reason for following me is simpler than anyone else, you merely want to repay a debt."

Watching the silent female journalist, the Aquarius Director smiled, then calculated on his fingers:

"Although you detest my actions, secretly sabotage my experiments frequently, destroyed many potential abnormal items, and even privately reported me to the bureau several times, hoping someone would stop me.

Including this time, when you stole the Scarlet Hair Lady's wallet, you could have completely remained unseen but chose to appear, without altering your appearance, essentially reminding them to be cautious of me aside from the King of Nightmares, correct?"

"..."

At this point, the Aquarius Director paused slightly then smiled and continued:

"Yet, at such times, you trying to remind the Scarlet Hair Lady to be cautious of me is actually more reliable than those in the Gemini branch who never opposed me.

Whenever you recall that I saved your life, raised you, and helped you seek revenge in the past, and feel that you haven't fully repaid me, you will never truly betray me."

"..."

"Hmm... People tend to ramble meaninglessly as they age, I seem to have gone off-topic."

Watching the female journalist unconsciously purse her lips, the Aquarius Director smiled and said:

"All in all, although I am a bad person, my actions are purposeful, not one who enjoys killing and destruction aimlessly, cooperating with the King of Nightmares is merely out of helplessness.

I hold no grudge against the Kingdom's people, so there's naturally no need to harm them, and if I truly allowed the King of Nightmares to invade reality, it would not benefit me but make me subject to its control, thus I certainly won't aid it.



As for why I didn't sneak attack the Scarlet Hair Lady and Leon when they were distracted to get rid of these two persistent troublemakers... hmm... There are many reasons, but the primary one is simply not being able to beat them."

"Ah?"

"Truly unable to beat them."

Pointing at the Nightmare River quickly retreating under the morning sun, the Aquarius Director said with a toothache:

"In just half a night, nearly a million nightmares were eliminated by the Scarlet Hair Lady, and that's when she's mainly preventing nightmares from entering reality, without proactively attacking.

The over one hundred million Slaughter Blood Hair in the Scarlet Hair Lady's possession is the top physical damage type abnormal item in the Clean-up Bureau, and if used without regard for consumption, it could pierce the moon in just fifty hours.

Any entity that relies on flesh to exist is innately at a disadvantage against her, and one of the basic rules of reality happens to be needing to rely on flesh to persist, making her virtually invincible here."

Chapter 480: The Rising Sun...

Invincible in the present world...

Hearing the Aquarius Director's evaluation of the red-haired director, a trace of doubt appeared in the female reporter's eyes.

Though the Scarlet Hair Lady's battle record is terrifying, it is ultimately just pure physical damage. Many anomaly items have disturbingly strange abilities, sometimes not even requiring a direct appearance to control or even kill their target.

Of what I know, there's the [Netherworld Streetlight] and [Steward's List], which killed half of the director's soul, the [Whisper Blade] from the Sagittarius Sub-bureau that can disable anomalies, the

[King's Parade] from the Lion Sub-bureau that suppresses the soul, and the [Brilliant Tail Robe] from the Peacock Sub-bureau that destroys vision.

Even the three-piece time set created from the Time King's remains held by the director, the [Reflecting Lake Evil Moon] from the Pisces Sub-bureau that forcibly alters consciousness, and the [Hunting Death Hunting Sparrow] from the Crow Sub-bureau, and many more.

Even if the Scarlet Hair Lady can pierce through the moon in three days, how could she possibly deal with things that can harm her without even appearing before her?

"What? You don't believe it?"

Sneering at the female reporter's skeptical expression, the Aquarius Director smiled and said:

"Haha, I know what you're thinking. You think you can avoid a direct confrontation with her and use some covert methods against her.

But don't forget, the [Twelve Ant Nests], numbered 004, is stored in the Virgo Sub-bureau. It can kill all humans in one breath and is nearly as important as the [Watcher's Palace] and the [Star Dome Compass]. It's almost the most dangerous thing in the bureau.

So have you ever thought, why such a deadly thing isn't stored at the headquarters but rather in the Virgo Sub-bureau?"

"?!"

In the female reporter's startled expression, the Aquarius Director dropped his smile and said seriously:

"That's because all the directors, including myself, who made this decision back then, agreed that it's even safer in Olivia's hands than it would be at the headquarters!"

"..."

"Nicole, even though her nickname is the Scarlet Hair Lady, she's not limited to just one anomaly like the [Slaughter Blood Hair]."

The Aquarius Director sat cross-legged, gazing nostalgically at the sun rising from the horizon, and said:

"The Director of Taurus got along very well with her, treating her like his own daughter and prepared many things for her.

Additionally, to protect the [Twelve Ant Nests], the Director of Taurus went all out, even asking me to lend a hand in forging a complete set of protective anomaly items for her.

Flesh Sustainment, Soul Revival, Cognition Enhancement, Memory Purge, Mental Reset, Danger Forewarning... all the means you can think of are almost included. At the very least, I can't think of a way to bypass these defenses and take her down.

And once she senses danger or sustains any kind of harm, these anomaly items will immediately activate, eliminating all 'abnormal' states...

Hmm... I guess in hindsight, this was like shooting myself in the foot. Had I known this day would come, I would've secretly kept a backup plan."

"..."

With a slight look of frustration, the Aquarius Director summed up in front of the female reporter, unsure of how to react:

"In summary, while Olivia may not be the strongest Cleaner, she is definitely the one with the fewest weaknesses.

Even if twenty True Gods descended upon her at once, they would have to endure the fatal [Slaughter Blood Hair], daring the risk of being ripped apart, to exhaust her completely.

Yet, the trouble is that during such a prolonged battle of attrition, if any rotating director detects something amiss and judges the [Twelve Ant Nests] to be at risk, in no more than half an hour, a quarter of a sun would fall directly on your head. I wouldn't attack her even if I was bored out of my mind.

After all, someone like her, encased in such a tough shell, is the kind of opponent I am least adept at dealing with. Otherwise, I wouldn't send you to steal her wallet."

"..."

So... why exactly am I supposed to steal her wallet? Does making such an impeccable person short of money somehow cause her to expose a flaw?

"Haha, don't ask me about the wallet; I'm not going to tell you."

Stopping her question before it could be asked, the Aquarius Director chuckled:

"Though I trust you wouldn't sell me out to the Clean-up Bureau, you're indeed a good-natured person, so I need to take some precaution. If you know my plan and it leaks to the Scarlet Hair Lady, giving her preparation time, I'll end up in a tough spot."

"..."

"By the way, since our conversation has reached this point, there's one last thing I'll say."

Seeing the female reporter's slightly depressed yet subtly relieved expression, the Aquarius Director, with a youthful face and a kind demeanor, said:

"Nicole, regarding this plan, I'm not entirely confident of success."

So remember, if I ultimately fail and am unable to replace the Director of Taurus and ascend to the throne, and end up being killed by the Scarlet Hair Lady or Leon, don't think of avenging me. Just live your life well."

"..."

Hearing what sounded like final words, the female reporter couldn't help but look up and meet the Aquarius Director's eyes. Seeing the kindness in his gaze, her heart was touched with a tinge of sadness.

The Director may not be a good person, but without him, she would have rotted in a lightless pirate ship, never having the chance to personally avenge her murdered parents.

And since the age of seven, he brought her by his side, even teaching her to read and write. As she grew older, she accompanied him on countless missions, saving many just as he had once saved her.

Over these many years, though she still called him Director, in her heart, he had long replaced the parents whose faces were fading from memory, becoming her family without blood relation, which is why she couldn't bear to be harsh even though she knew he was wrong...

"Understood."

Mumbling a reluctant response, the female reporter turned her head slightly with a strained expression and said:

"Director, your face may look young, but you're still as old and long-winded as ever... Is there anything else? If not, I'm heading to the Dream Realm."

"No, go ahead!"

Waving his hand to urge her to leave, the Aquarius Director, who had sat beside the clock tower all night, stood up in the sunlight, stretched his stiff body, and said with a smile:

"My evil soul was eradicated in the Realm of the Dead and has returned to the world's origin. Now, my soul, rebuilt with the remaining good soul, barely makes me half a good person. Nothing unusual happens, it's hard for malice to arise in me."

Indeed...

Watching the Aquarius Director bathed in the dawn light, his aura less ominous and severe, now radiant and kind, the female reporter nodded in relaxation, took the Dream Wandering Lantern, and entered the Dream Realm.

After she completely left, standing by the clock tower and overlooking the capital, the Aquarius Director smiled, then took out a somewhat worn-out wooden box.

"Thud, thud, thud"

Politely knocking three times on the lid of the small wooden box, and watching as a blue little figure pushed the lid open to stand up, the Aquarius Director smiled and said:

"Do me a favor! Please find the Elite Nightmare controlled by the Scarlet Hair Lady, and inform her of Nicole's destination and objective, thank you!"