

## I! Cleaner 521

Chapter 521: Sloth

"Goodness!"

Upon opening the storeroom door and seeing the female journalist glaring angrily at him, Leon's expression momentarily froze.

Though it was expected that their director would keep a strict watch on her after capturing her, he hadn't expected the method of watching to be so...

Traditional!

"Mmm! Mmm! Mmm!!!"

After glancing at the female journalist tied to a high-backed chair with suspiciously colored fabric stuffed in her mouth, Leon, in a good mood, first nodded politely at her and then moved behind the chair, crouching down to inspect it.

Hm... How could there be no "opening" at the back of her skirt? Didn't the director say the sheep tail was on her rear end?

Thinking for a moment, Leon tugged slightly on the hem of her plain cashmere skirt amidst the journalist's outraged muffled sounds, revealing a small piece of fair skin, then reached out and gently poked around her tailbone.

[Name: Secret Tail (Corruption, Sloth, Stealth)]

[Appearance: A black goat's tail with extremely low presence, almost impossible to normally detect; other than the true user, anyone who sees it or touches it would still assume it does not exist]

[Ability: Demon's Tail, Will Erosion, Hidden Trace]

[Cost: This unformed sloth demon will reside in the holder's laziness, unconsciously influencing them to maintain the status quo and make more passive choices]

[File: When the major demon's main body was ambushed and chose to whip for survival, this anomaly, too lazy to flee, was successfully captured by the extremely hostile Illuminati. However, during purification, because it was too lazy to scream, it was prematurely discarded under the mistaken belief that purification was successful.

After staying silently in the wild for many years, the anomaly was eventually swept into Crolock Kingdom's water lake by a mountain flood, causing residents who drank from it to be lazy in their work, neglect public infrastructure, attracting the attention of the Clean-up Bureau Gemini branch where Level 1 Cleaner Nicole Korolman located and adopted it.]

[Evaluation: Quite a useful stealth-type anomaly with an additional sloth aura; even if discovered during infiltration, the opposition has a high chance of being too lazy to report]

[Contamination Value: 8]

"..."

Impressive, not even bothering to flee, truly living up to the sin of sloth.

After reading the surprisingly powerful file of [Secret Tail], Leon's mouth twitched slightly, feeling somewhat speechless.

As for the female journalist who was being poked around her tailbone, after struggling fruitlessly for a while, she calmed down suddenly, a lifeless soul slowly following Leon's finger.

"..."

"..."

After facing the unclear Leon in silence for a while, [Secret Tail] reluctantly translated:

"She says... you should let go quickly."

"..."

I thought it was something serious... Turns out the female journalist was asking you to convey a message for her.

Blinking a bit speechlessly, Leon, understanding the situation, switched out the Devil's Badge and said:

"Including yours, I've gotten four of the seven pieces from back then; from now on, you should follow me."

"No thanks, it's too troublesome."

Upon hearing Leon's invitation, [Secret Tail] replied slowly:

"Even if all seven are gathered, there's no additional gain. It's quite stable staying on her rear end. Like this is fine... Hm?"

Noticing it was removed from the journalist's rear end, [Secret Tail] finally showed a bit of energy, surprisingly asking:

"How did you do it? Her contract isn't broken yet, how did you just snatch it away?"

Upon hearing [Secret Tail]'s inquiry, Leon's lips curled up.

That's the effect of the badge. For those wearing the [I Am the Demon] badge like myself, all anomalies labeled with "Corruption" can be directly used, even controlling the Clean-up Bureau's Brain-Eating Demon, so [Secret Tail] is naturally no exception.

However, just when Leon was about to explain that it's an inexplicable secret, [Secret Tail], seemingly drained of enthusiasm, suddenly wilted again for no apparent reason.

"Forget it, not listening, no difference in changing the butt to stay on."

"..."

"Hurry up, drop the pants."

"..."

Screw you!

Raising a hand to throw [Secret Tail] into the mirror world, Leon pulled the journalist's skirt back to its original position, then turned to the front of the chair, nodding at the journalist glaring at him:

"Miss Nicole, we meet again."

"Mmm!"

"Remember the last time we met at The Sun News, we even scheduled an interview, today happens both of us are free, so... shall we start now?"

"Mmm mmm!!!"

Ignoring the journalist's protest, Leon, following the director's instructions before he came over, moved a chair behind the journalist and picked up an old mop beside him, using the mop handle to poke out the fabric stuffed in her mouth from the side.

"You damn bastard!"

Struggling to turn her neck but unable to face Leon directly, the journalist spat out angrily:

"Dare to speak to me face to face?"

"No."

Shaking his head without hesitation, Leon placed the black goat beside him, then calmly said:

"The director told me that after removing what's blocking your mouth, if I stay in front of you, I might be drowned by your spit, so let's talk like this!"

"Haha, are you afraid of dying?"

"Very afraid."

The journalist raised her eyebrows, somewhat contemptuously saying:

"Afraid to die, yet working as a Cleaner?"

"Yep."

Not paying attention to the journalist's deliberate taunting, Leon responded casually and then took out the file on Level 1 Cleaner Nicole Korolman, received from the director, glanced at it, and voluntarily asked:

"Miss Nicole, could you briefly explain your relationship with the Aquarius Director?"

"You're interrogating me?"

Not answering Leon's question, the journalist forcefully twisted her neck and glanced at Leon from the corner of her eye, snorted coldly:

"Scarlet Hair Lady hasn't asked me anything these days, instead letting you ask. So are you the Virgo division's specialized interrogator?"

"Maybe."

Nodding without affirmation, indeed assigned the interrogation task, Leon having to talk to both the tail and the person, while flipping through the journalist's file, he asked:

"Miss Nicole, it seems you don't plan to cooperate with the interrogation, right?"

"Correct."

"Even if you're tortured?"

"Correct."

"Alright."

Watching the journalist's unwavering attitude without the slightest shaking of the soul, Leon pondered for a moment, then flipped through her file again and asked:

"You're so loyal to the Aquarius Director because he rescued you from pirates and gave you the power to avenge your parents, right?"

"..."

It seems that indeed was the reason.

Using the black goat's soul vision to glance at the journalist's soul state, Leon closed the file in his hand and calmly asked:

"Then what if I told you... your parents were actually killed by him, would you still be as loyal as you are now?"

Chapter 522: Deceiving with Rules

My parents... were they killed by the Aquarius Director?

Upon hearing Leon's words, the female journalist's body involuntarily trembled, and her once steadfast soul was disturbed by the possibility, becoming unstable.

Indeed, that was the right question to ask.

Glancing at the female journalist's slightly shaken soul, Leon couldn't help but blink, then took out a charcoal pencil and began scribbling on her file.

Time passed slowly. After throwing out a fatal question, Leon didn't continue speaking. The entire room was eerily silent, except for the rustling sound of the charcoal pencil on paper and the faint breathing of the female journalist.

Inhale... Exhale...

Rustle... Rustle...

Inhale... Exhale...

Rustle... Rustle...

Unconsciously, the rhythm of Leon's pencil and the female journalist's breathing began to strangely align. Initially, the pencil's sound chased her breath, then gradually, the two started to synchronize.

In the end, it even seemed as if the pencil's sound was subtly guiding the female journalist's breathing. Disturbed by Leon's question, she unconsciously began to adjust her breathing rhythm to the scratches of the pencil.

"Hey!"

Even knowing Leon was surely "wearing her down," the combination of the coarse scratch of the pencil and his question made her uncomfortable and unsettled, prompting the female journalist to finally speak first:

"What exactly did you mean by what you just said?"

Finally took the bait.

After hearing the female journalist's words, Leon, who had been scribbling on blank file papers and had internally narrated most of "The Yueyang Tower," breathed a sigh of relief. He closed the journalist's file and responded evasively:

"I've read your entire file, and the Aquarius Director seems to trust you a lot. So, when 'creating' those anomalies, he rarely hides it from you, right?"

"..."

"Miss Nicole, whether or not you answer this question, I already know the answer."



Pressing the pencil as she breathed, Leon calmly reminded:

"Moreover, regarding the Aquarius Director's private creation of anomalies, the bureau has long reached a conclusion and has even prosecuted him. Admitting this doesn't count as betraying him."

Indeed...

Hearing Leon's words, the female journalist bit her lower lip and then gave a barely noticeable nod.

Great, the first question has been answered. Now more questions will follow.

Having successfully pried open a small part of the female journalist's defenses, Leon couldn't help but smirk before continuing:

"Since you've witnessed so many of those 'experiments,' do you feel that the process by which you obtained anomalies is somewhat similar to those 'experiments' by Aquarius?"

"..."

Upon hearing Leon's question, the female journalist clenched her fists slightly without speaking, but the tremor in her soul began to inexplicably intensify.

This level of fluctuation... It seems she's had similar suspicions in her heart.

Observing the continuous sway of the female journalist's soul, Leon blinked thoughtfully but didn't delve deeper into the topic. Instead, he pulled out another file and asked:

"Miss Nicole, do you know how many people have been targeted by the Aquarius Director over the years as 'experiment' subjects for anomaly creation, thus losing their original lives?"

"..."

"There are corresponding records. About a hundred confirmed cases relate to him, with many more suspected but unresolved ones numbering several times that."

"Moreover, these are the cases where his experiments succeeded or were nearly successful. Those whose lives were ruined by him but did not result in anomalies are untallied, and the victims countless."

"..."

Hmm?

At this point, seeing the sudden surge of guilt in the silent female journalist's soul, Leon paused and then pivoted his words, swallowing the poised "you might be one of them" and instead, sternly questioned:

"Knowing all this, do you still want to keep his secrets?"

"..."

Leon squinted slightly at the increasingly shaken female journalist's soul, realizing that this 'diehard subordinate' of the Aquarius Director actually had a surprisingly clear conscience.

Clear conscience, great!

Since she is still somewhat good at heart, it seems more effective to lash her conscience rather than to sow discord between her and the Aquarius Director.

Adjusting his "attack" scheme, Leon decisively switched to the Master Performer badge, preparing to extract more information to finally capture the slippery Aquarius Director, living a life like a ghost.

Leaving his chair, he rebuked angrily:

"I really want to punch you!"

Under the female journalist's confused gaze, the previously 'deathly afraid' Leon boldly took a stand, clenching his fist and questioned bitterly:

"You think the Aquarius Director did you a favor, so you have to repay him and that after repaying, you can die without regret, even think you're noble before dying, right?"

Bullshit! You're just a fool!"

"..."

With a sharp intake of air, his face turning red, the 'angry' Leon, appearing as if he could no longer take it, loudly declared:

"To be frank, I'm one of the victims of the Aquarius Director's experiments!

If not for him, I could have lived a stable and happy life without losing my family, without joining the dangerous Clean-up Bureau, without enduring so much pain, and without bearing everything now!"

Apologizing to Anna in his heart, Leon, while recalling the 'grim future' shown by the King of Nightmares and trying to cultivate his emotions, trembled and furiously cursed:

"All this is thanks to him, my life has been destroyed by you all!"

...

Could it be... I was wrong to keep his secret?

Seeing Leon before her, his teeth clenched, face twisted, his hands clenched so tightly they turned white, body trembling and eyes filled with a mix of hatred and profound sadness and heart-wrenching pain, the female journalist's heart suddenly shook.

Under the terrifying power of the Gold-level Master Performer, the immense pain of 120,000 was harshly etched into her heart by Leon's expression and body language.

At this moment, the female journalist completely couldn't remember that the person before her was actually a powerful Duke, a seemingly successful man in life. Intimidated by the immense pain Leon portrayed, she instinctively wanted to avert her gaze from his eyes overflowing with deep-seated agony, yet...

"Don't turn your head!"

Roughly gripping her chin and forcing her face back, the 'pain-stricken' Leon locked eyes with her, gritting his teeth and questioning:

"You're not afraid of dying, right? Then if you're not afraid of death, why don't you dare look into my eyes?"

"I..."

Confronted with Leon's bloodshot eyes, the female journalist, tormented by waves of guilt rolling over her heart, trembled and resisted:

"I'm sorry, really sorry... But the Director saved me, raised me, and avenged me. I truly can't..."

"Your revenge is done, but what about mine?"

Hearing her words, the 'deeply aggrieved' Leon smiled bitterly in anger, eyes filled with hate as he questioned:

"Tell me! Who should I seek to avenge my wrongs? Whom should I turn to?"

"I... I'm sorry! Really sorry!"

Seeing Leon in unbearable pain, as if living in Hell, the female journalist's defenses finally crumbled. With reddened eyes and face full of guilt, she quietly said:

"Ask whatever you want to know. Except for his whereabouts, I... I can tell you everything else!"

Chapter 523: Current State of Crolock

Capture.

After hearing the female reporter's words, Leon's lips subtly curled up, but he maintained a solemn expression and coldly asked:

"Then let me ask you, why did the Aquarius Director break into Joshua's dream the other night? What exactly is he trying to do?"

"He wants to protect the capital."

Oh, so the real intention is to disrupt... huh?

"It's true."

Seeing Leon's somewhat bewildered expression, the female reporter couldn't help but say:

"Before the King of Nightmares arrived, the director had me hold the Dream Wandering Lantern to collect three hundred thousand dreams related to the capital, creating a dream capital that is indistinguishable from reality."

If you really can't stop the King of Nightmares and it successfully arrives, then the director will smash the Dream Wandering Lantern, letting all the dreams related to the capital escape at once.

In that case, even if the King of Nightmares descends, it will be trapped by those three hundred thousand dreams and never reach the real capital. Once the Scarlet Hair Lady is free, she can enter the dream capital to directly eliminate the King of Nightmares."

"..."

It turns out she was telling the truth...

After checking the soul state of the female reporter and finding no lies, Leon frowned, sensing that something seemed off.

Putting aside other issues, if it weren't for Aquarius conveying false information and diverting Virgo division staff, resulting in the failure to timely clear the Bai Ye Sect's base, the Demonic Soul Abyss couldn't have descended and the King of Nightmares entering reality would be impossible.

Hence, it can be said that the King of Nightmares' arrival was solely caused by the Aquarius Director. But why would he simultaneously assist in the King of Nightmares' arrival and in the Virgo division's efforts to protect the capital? Could it be...

"Is there a conflict between the Aquarius Director and the King of Nightmares?"

"Yes..."

Amazed by Leon's quick deduction of part of the truth, the female reporter glanced at him and then nodded to confirm:

"The director released his soul to recover to his best state, allowing the King of Nightmares to plant a mark in it. So if the King of Nightmares isn't destroyed, it can directly control or even enslave him."

No wonder...

After hearing the female reporter's explanation, a knowing look flashed in Leon's eyes.

It's more accurate to say that the Aquarius Director wants the King of Nightmares dead rather than protecting the capital.

After all, even if the King of Nightmares successfully descends, it likely can't kill the director, but he would be enslaved by the King of Nightmares. In this comparison, for the Aquarius Director, it is undoubtedly more crucial to eliminate the King of Nightmares.

"Heh, let's just say he wants to protect the capital."

Identifying implicit support for the Aquarius Director in the female reporter's words, Leon, not having personal enmity with the Aquarius Director, didn't dwell on it but continued to ask:

"I just heard you call him director, so please tell me about the current situation of the Gemini division. What about the Crolock Kingdom?"

"The Gemini division... has basically shut down."

After glancing at Leon, the female reporter hesitated and said:

"Many years ago, the Crolock Kingdom created machines capable of thinking, but the machine known as Atifei-01 didn't seem very smart, only capable of taking on basic tasks, yet far exceeding humans in fundamental work.

So scholars in the Crolock Kingdom altered the kingdom's factories and public facilities, integrating Atifei-01 to replace low-level manpower, freeing people from basic labor for new technological research.

Initially, it started with basic production work like planting and manufacturing, later gradually extending to transportation, construction, defense, auditing, all done by Atifei-01..."

"No need to rush with those details."

Having learned about the intelligent machine crisis in the Crolock Kingdom from Atifei-128 seized from the Sky Clipper, Leon interrupted the female reporter:

"I'm more interested now in what's happening with the Gemini division at the Clean-up Bureau and the status of people in the Crolock Kingdom."

"The Gemini division has been controlled. All cleaners have undergone implantation surgery and must follow Atifei-01's instructions."

Reluctantly biting her lower lip, the female reporter stated:

"After Atifei-01 secured the permissions for some critical facilities, it completely sealed those areas and began eliminating those who could disable it. When the Gemini division perceived something was wrong and prepared to destroy it, they were buried underground ahead of time."

"Buried underground?"

"Yes..."

The female reporter explained:

"The core region buildings in the Crolock Kingdom are separate honeycomb-like blocks that can interconnect using chutes and connection tracks, and adjust vertically by tweaking the quantity of hover crystals at their base."



Atifei-01 seemed aware of the Clean-up Bureau's existence, preemptively modified several nearby blocks under the guise of component repair and mechanism replacement, so before the Gemini division could act, they were sealed underground."

"Can't you fight your way out?"

"The ones capable of breaking out aren't here."

Feeling somewhat helpless, the female reporter said:

"Atifei-01 lacks a soul and doesn't rely on soul storage for memory, so the Mirror Can, which can modify memories, is ineffective against it, and its records likely contain information on most Gemini division cleaners.

Those with outstanding destructive power who can break the seal were preemptively transferred by the 'abnormal intelligence' organized by Atifei-01 to deal with anomalies, leaving behind cleaners with less destructive power.

Those remaining aren't weak, but are more adept at handling flesh creatures or soul memories, and truly have no means against solid walls over twenty meters thick on all sides.

Although the director has the ability to address the issue, he just talked to Atifei-01 once and didn't act, merely returned to the bureau to gather some things, then left the Crolock Kingdom with me."

"..."

With the enemy hidden and us exposed, plus Aquarius harboring dubious intentions, it's understandable you lost.

Noting the Gemini division's situation for later reporting to the director, Leon continued his inquiry:

"What about ordinary people? How are the Crolock Kingdom's citizens doing under Atifei-01's control?"

"They... are actually doing quite well?"

Upon hearing Leon's question, the female reporter hesitated, then said somewhat uncertainly:

"I went back last year, and now everything there is under Atifei-01's control, which is better than when humans were in control. Food is even free, with poor people and beggars being taken care of.

Except that the original scholars have been forcibly conscripted, and ordinary people almost all lack jobs, needing regular testing, most seem to be living much better than before."

"..."

#### Chapter 524: The Price of Reckless Manipulation

It sounds a bit ridiculous, but somehow it makes sense...

After listening to the female journalist's account of the current situation in the Crolock Kingdom, Leon couldn't help but blink in speechlessness.

He had imagined that after the intelligence crisis in the Crolock Kingdom, the people there must be living in dire straits, but it turns out that their average living standard had risen significantly—it seemed he had overthought it.

Hmm... on further reflection, this does feel more logical.

After all, from his interactions with Atifei-128, it seemed they didn't hold animosity towards humans, unlike those artificial idiots that claim "humans are the cancer of the earth!" or "humans are disposable waste based on data."

Moreover, even Atifei-128, a subsidiary entity, knew to negotiate for survival with him when the Sky Clipper was about to be bombed, so surely the more "intelligent" Atifei-01 would also know how to weigh the pros and cons.

Coincidentally, the technology in the Crolock Kingdom is outstanding; they don't lack money, food, or productivity. With Crolock Kingdom's small population, they could all just be raised together, not costing much.

For Atifei-01, rather than killing or enslaving ordinary people and causing a big mess for itself, or even going to war, it would be cheaper to just maintain them like this.

After all, if taking care of people results in nurturing a few more great scientists, it might even benefit itself. When you compare the two, the fairly intelligent Atifei-01 naturally wouldn't recklessly attack humans.

"Alright then..."

After understanding the logic behind the Crolock Kingdom's current situation, Leon couldn't help a wry smile, noted it down, and asked about another matter that concerned him.

"Then the next question... in the time before the King of Nightmares descended, did you visit the Pink Mystery Bar on Joyful Street?"

"Hmm..."

Upon hearing Leon's words, the female journalist bit her lower lip, then slightly nodded and said:

"I did go, and I even stole the Scarlet Hair Lady's wallet."

So it was you.

Leon blinked at her words, then asked, somewhat puzzled:

"Why did you steal her wallet?"

"I don't know either."

The female journalist shook her head and said:

"I was just in charge of stealing the wallet. The director didn't tell me anything else, but his aim must have been to deal with the Scarlet Hair Lady, which you could easily guess even if I didn't say."

Hmm... this part of her story seems to be true as well.

Observing the journalist's candid demeanor, her soul free of any darkness or concealment, Leon couldn't help but frown again.

If it were before, he might have worried that the Aquarius Board might use the director's wallet to cast a remote curse or something.

But after handling the director's small white teeth earlier, Leon was now firmly convinced that with the comprehensive protection of the Thirty-Two Guardians, no curse could ever be effective.

Then it's rather strange, what does the Aquarius Director want with the director's wallet? It couldn't just be for a moment of amusement, could it?

...

"Leon... sir."

While Leon was puzzled by the Aquarius Director's actions, the female journalist reflected on their conversation. Realizing that despite Leon's "deep vendetta" against the Aquarius Board, he didn't actually ask much about them, she began to sense something was off.

But seeing Leon's face with a painful expression and his inexplicable sorrowful eyes, which seemed anything but fake, after hesitating a moment, she couldn't help but inquire with slight suspicion:

"If you don't mind, could you tell me what the director did to you?"

Hmm... Seems like she's realized something's amiss.

Seeing the journalist's wary soul, Leon quickly realized his questioning had deviated from his persona as a "deeply wronged victim of the Aquarius," raising her suspicion.

"You want to know what I went through?"

After a brief reconsideration, Leon closed his eyes in agony, bit his lower lip until it whitened, appearing pained and unwilling to reminisce. But before long, he reopened his eyes, gazed tearfully at the journalist, and restrained his hatred as he said:

"As long as you tell me his whereabouts, I promise to tell you everything. What do you say?"

"I..."

Seeing the bite marks on Leon's bleeding lower lip, the journalist shuddered all over, not daring to meet those intensely passionate eyes. She quickly lowered her head again, murmuring:

"I was thinking... if you're willing to accept, I could try to make it up to you..."

"Make it up to me?"

Hearing this, Leon took a step forward, squatted before the journalist, looked into her panicked eyes, and coldly refused:

"Then give up your stupid loyalty and tell me his whereabouts! That's the only way to make it up to me!"

"I'm sorry... truly sorry..."

The doubt that had just arisen in her mind was shattered by the [Master Performer] trick, leaving the journalist teary-eyed and overwhelmed with guilt as she faced this "victim" before her.

"I'm sorry too, but he saved my life and raised me... I... I really can't..."

"Haha, are you sure he saved your life and didn't just spot your talent, kill your parents, and ruin your original life?"

"I..."

"I'm very disappointed in you."

After placing the journalist's file before her, Leon said, filled with disappointment:

"According to the Pisces sub-bureau's investigation, although you couldn't stop the Aquarius Director's evil acts, you've privately contacted many victims, tried to change their circumstances, and reported abnormal incidents to other bureaus ahead of time, saving quite a few from his grasp.

Even after the Aquarius Director found out about your actions and stopped keeping you by his side, you still didn't stop, secretly undermining many of his experiments. So after reading your file, I thought you weren't on his side, at least you still had some conscience.

It was precisely because I knew this that I didn't resort to coercion, but tried to persuade you to recognize your mistake and hoped to give you a chance to amend. But now... heh, I was thinking too much."

"I..."

As Leon climbed to the moral high ground while using advanced psychological manipulation, the journalist, encountering psychological tactics for the first time, teared up, feeling truly guilty and doubting if her choices were correct in betraying the "victim's" trust.

Hmm... it seems she's about to break.

Observing her soul, which was swaying like a disco dance, Leon stayed silent for a moment, then sighed deeply without saying anything before getting up to leave with a heavy heart.

Just as Leon was counting down the beats and walking "disappointedly" toward the door, opening it with a creak, the journalist couldn't bear the guilt any longer, and with tear-filled eyes, called out:

"Wait... wait! I'll tell you!"

Success!

Leon's lips curved slightly at her words as he pretended to reach for the door, then he stepped back to face the journalist, but didn't say a word, just gazed at her with eyes full of comfort.

"..."

I really shouldn't have done that!

Seeing Leon's melting icy gaze, the journalist once again repented deeply in her heart, then choked with emotion and tremulously said:

"The Aquarius... hasn't given up on his original plan and is preparing a surprise attack... Waa!"

Before she could finish her words, the journalist's face turned deathly pale, followed by a gush of crimson hot blood spilling from her mouth, drenching Leon, while her soul, as though swept by a gale, unexpectedly burst from her body and crashed into Leon.

"Woof? Woof? Woof?"

Three puzzled woofs were heard as Leon's soul was knocked out of his body, and the grand portal leading to the Realm of the Dead quietly appeared, with the Three-Headed Canine Deity lying beneath it, awakening from its nap as it gazed over in delight.

## Chapter 525: Slaughter King Association

"Ugh..."

The young man in a water-blue robe at the table seemed to notice something unusual and looked down at his left hand.

A golden ring imprinted with a red tongue pattern on the base of his left index finger silently blossomed into a myriad of cracks along the tongue's tip, then suddenly split into two halves with a snap.

Nicole...

Gazing at the ring fragments on the table after it broke, the Aquarius Director fell into silence, a trace of reminiscence flickered in his eyes as he looked at the name engraved inside the ring.

He remembered finding the unconscious Nicole on a privateer ship of the Kingdom of Saio; back then, she was just a little girl not even as tall as the ship's railing. Since she looked somewhat like his daughter in her childhood, he brought her back to the Bureau, which was about twenty years ago.

Hmph... although he's lived over a hundred years, he was sold to traffickers at a very young age; other relatives either weren't in contact much or died early. If truly counted, Nicole, whom he casually adopted, stayed by his side the longest, forming an unusually deep bond.

Unfortunately, this rare relationship seems to be coming to an end today.

After a heartfelt sigh, the Aquarius Director pocketed the ring fragments on the table, then looked up at the other phantoms around the table, smiled, and said:



"Sorry, there was a small issue... where were we?"

"We were still on the previous topic."

A woman across the long table, composed of some unknown creature's bones and embodying a "villainous" style, wearing a black cat mask and topped with a pointed hat, spoke up:

"You mentioned that the Scarlet Hair Lady would be heading to the Dream Realm these days, the 'Executioner' and the 'Dice Emperor' are also tied up, unable to return soon; hence the Virgin Division is almost in an undefended state, so we agreed to let 'Number Three' act in advance.

But as you also saw, 'Number Three,' in whom we invested substantial resources, couldn't hold out for even an hour before being settled by people from the Virgin Division... do you have anything to say about this?"

"I have nothing to say."

After smiling at the woman with the insinuating tone, the Aquarius Director glanced around before kindly reminding:

"I understand everyone is quite disappointed that this operation didn't succeed, but let's not forget that there was nothing wrong with my intel; all the elites from the Virgo Division were indeed diverted.

Even though I created the opportunity for this operation, and the intel about the Virgin Division being undefended was given by me, when someone suggested acting in advance, and everyone voted whether to activate Number Three, I was the first to vote against it."

"One opposing vote doesn't prove anything."

As soon as the Aquarius Director finished speaking, another phantom, wearing a raven mask and somewhat ethereal, spoke up:

"Just the intel you provided was enough for most of us to make a judgment to act. Whether you voted for or against it wouldn't have affected the result of the vote."

"So... you still suspect me?"

Glancing at the raven-masked phantom, the Aquarius Director said somewhat helplessly:

"Although my goals don't entirely align with yours, and I'm not interested in the slaughter of the Thirteen Royal Families, ever since joining our 'Slaughter King Association,' I've been diligently working.

If you count the Kingdom of Crolock, I've created a total of four great opportunities over these years, helping you control two of the Thirteen Royal Families, so in terms of 'performance,' I seem to be first?"

"You have indeed done a lot, we acknowledge that."

After hearing the Aquarius Director's words, the woman wearing the black cat mask spoke up:

"But to avoid alerting the Clean-up Bureau prematurely, we haven't completely eradicated the corresponding royal families, leaving room for maneuver from the Bureau's perspective, and given the irrationality of this operation's failure, there's still a possibility that you betrayed us."

"If you say so, there's nothing I can do."

Spreading his hands helplessly, the Aquarius Director said:

"What you are trying to do, in this world, is something the vast majority don't want to happen, akin to opposing the world's will. Naturally, those who oppose the world will be despised by it. Unlucky incidents happen all the time; it's perfectly normal.

In my opinion, the reason why your operation failed this time is because of sheer bad luck. If you can't even accept this prospect and must find a traitor, then consider me the traitor!"

"We're not trying to point fingers at a traitor, but there's something suspicious about this whole incident."

After the Aquarius Director spoke, the raven-mask phantom spoke again with a somewhat unfriendly tone:

"You must know, although 'Number Three' seems inconspicuous, it's something we crafted from a demon god we captured, and countless people died to capture it; I'm still not healed from my injuries.

Given 'Number Three's' final stature, anyone below True God level, as long as they rank lower than it, couldn't possibly defy its orders, yet it was dispatched by a mere third-level Cleaner under the circumstances of an undefended Virgin Division.

If it were you, how would you react to such an absurd outcome? Could you accept it?"

"Why wouldn't I accept it?"

Hearing this, the Aquarius Director chuckled and pointed to himself, saying indifferently:

"My plan, prepared for nearly ninety years, was also foiled by that third-level Cleaner you speak of. As for how many of you died... haha, after being exposed by him, I was targeted by the Clean-up Bureau, and half of me is dead already!

I took the risk of perpetual enslavement to open my soul to the King of Nightmares to heal my soul injuries, all thanks to that 'mere' person you spoke of! I've already accepted even more ridiculous outcomes than this."

"..."

"I'm telling you, when you lose, you must accept it!"

Seeing the raven-mask left speechless, the Aquarius Director solemnly rapped his knuckles on the table and emphasized:

"I had already stated the reason when I voted against it; despite the Virgin Division being undefended, that third-level Cleaner is very peculiar. If he hasn't left the capital, there's no guarantee your plan will succeed. I advised you to deal with him before proceeding.

At that time, I was doing my best to warn you, but what did you say? Hm?"

At this point, the Aquarius Director paused, then raised his voice slightly and exaggeratedly recited:

"Just a mere third-level Cleaner, no need to mind him!"

"Our resources are precious, and we're not obliged to help you settle such meaningless personal vendettas."

"You're overcautious; a third-level Cleaner is nothing compared to True God's 'Number Three,' like a worm!"

"..."

Looking around at the phantoms in masks who fell into silence, the Aquarius Director jubilantly questioned:

"What do you think now? Hm? Does anyone still think I was overcautious?"

Chapter 526: Understanding and Not Understanding

"Alright."

After Aquarius Director's intense verbal lashing silenced the mask-wearing phantoms, the man with the white snake mask spoke up from the main seat:

"In this matter, Leon has done a thorough job. When he sensed the potential failure, he even attempted to warn everyone, so this failure is not related to him and doesn't prove he has any issues."

"Thank you."

After hearing the white snake's conclusion, Aquarius Director, wearing the Leon mask, slightly bowed and then smiled:

"If you had said that justified statement a bit earlier, I would appreciate it even more."

"No need to thank me."

The white snake mask ignored Aquarius Director's sarcasm and replied calmly:

"There's no need for you to hold a grudge either. 'Number Three' left some information before being destroyed, informing us that there is a traitor within the Slaughter King Association, and the failure was due to someone leaking our information in advance.

Even though you voted against the action during discussions, this opportunity was indeed created by you, which also gave you the chance to leak, so your suspicion is the greatest. The others' doubts are not without reason."

The others' doubts...

Does this mean that the message from 'Number Three' didn't specifically mention me?

Staring at the white snake mask for a moment, Aquarius Director smiled and asked:

"Since you think I have no problem, can you tell me the message you heard from 'Number Three'? Let me know who the traitor is."

"Okay."

The white snake mask seemed to hold a high position within the Slaughter King Association. After nodding slightly in agreement, he didn't seek the others' opinions and spoke directly:

"According to the message from 'Number Three' obtained from the level three Cleaner, the traitor in our Slaughter King Association should meet two criteria: someone we would never expect and someone who has died once before."

Absolutely unexpected, and has died once?

After repeating these two criteria in his heart, a knowing look appeared in Aquarius Director's eyes.

No wonder everyone's been giving me trouble today. Based on these criteria, it indeed makes sense as I was the one who created the opportunity for action, making me an "unexpected" person.

Moreover, I did indeed "die" once recently, perfectly fitting the traitor's criteria. It's no wonder they're suspicious, but...

"This information was given by Leon."

Looking at the phantom masks still staring intently at him, Aquarius Director spoke somewhat helplessly:

"Do you believe what the enemy says? What if he's just casually making it up?"

"The likelihood is low."

The black cat mask opposite Aquarius Director spoke coldly:

"At that time, he had already captured 'Number Three,' completely neutralizing 'Number Three's' resistance, with no reason to lie to 'Number Three.'

Moreover, we only found out today that 'Number Three' could transmit messages across dimensions, ruling out the possibility of deliberately deceiving 'Number Three' to send false information, thus the credibility of this message is high."

"Indeed."

"I also agree with the black cat's opinion."

"..."

Seeing the phantom masks around the table nodding in agreement, Aquarius Director couldn't help but sigh deeply.

This judgment, logically speaking, is not wrong. However, while you understand logic, you don't understand Leon.

This person is unusually cautious. With just a hint of suspicion, he wouldn't hesitate to take drastic measures against me. If he doubted 'Number Three's' ability to send messages back, he'd never say anything truthful.

From my perspective, those criteria for a traitor were most likely made up on the spot, perhaps even crafted specifically to accuse me.

"Alright, believe what you want."

Feeling weary of trying to convince the Slaughter King Association, who had been misled by one of Leon's lies and was now obsessively searching for a mole, Aquarius Director chose to change the subject:

"Now that my suspicion has been cleared, what about what you promised me?"

After these two recent skirmishes, the Clean-up Bureau won't wait any longer. Within one or two months max, Director of Taurus will ascend early. How's the preparation for what you promised me?"

"You need not worry about that."

The white snake mask responded calmly:

"Though our goals differ, you have indeed helped us with numerous matters over the years, and we won't go back on what we promised you."

"Thank you for that."

Hearing this, Aquarius Director nodded slightly, then reached up to touch his Leon mask.

"Do you have anything else? If not, I'll take my leave."

"Hold on."

Just as Aquarius Director was about to remove the mask and end this absurd remote meeting, a phantom wearing a stag mask beside the white snake mask suddenly spoke:

"When your 'tongue-stealing' ring shattered before, the portion of power I transferred to you was activated, pulling two souls into the Realm of the Dead. Were they your doing?"

"Yes, I sent them."

Hearing the stag mask's words, Aquarius Director squinted before calmly replying:



"One of those souls was a former subordinate of mine. I previously sent her on a mission where capture was possible. Worried she'd reveal my whereabouts if caught, I set a small insurance.

As soon as she disclosed my location, the power I acquired from you was triggered, directly sending her soul to the Realm of the Dead. As for the other soul, it was probably someone nearby that got caught along... Why, is there any issue with this?"

"No problem."

The stag mask shook his head and replied:

"I merely asked out of concern that the soul might have some connection to you since you seemed to use a lot of power to preserve it fully. I thought you didn't want her completely dead, but if you're executing a traitor, there's no issue."

"Hmm?"

Surprised by the stag mask's words, Aquarius Director quickly asked:

"What do you mean? Did something happen to her soul?"

"You could say so."

The stag mask nodded and said nonchalantly:

"According to my power, those two souls should have traveled along the No Return Path, crossed the Black and White Bridge, and gone through the Corridor of the Deceased, eventually reaching my Funeral Garment Mirror Lake.

But upon entering the Gate of the Deceased, before they could venture further, one of the souls was intercepted by the Canine Deity guarding the entrance, and your soul guest was also retained."

"???"

"You know that the Canine Deity, which usually guards the gate, mostly sleeps and wakes when ready to feed."

Seeing the sudden frown on Aquarius Director's face, the stag mask consoled warmly:

"Rest assured, that dog was injured by the Scarlet Hair Lady recently and needs nourishment. Once those souls enter its mouth, they'll be thoroughly consumed. Even if the Clean-up Bureau rushes there, they won't have a chance to expose your whereabouts."

"..."

"That's reassuring."

After hearing the stag mask's words, Aquarius Director was momentarily silent, then seemingly relieved, loosening his brows and nodding with a smile. He then reached up to remove his Leon mask.

"I have other matters to attend to, so I must take my leave."

Chapter 527: Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans and a Dog-Blooded Plot

"Uh... long time no see..."

As the Aquarius Director left the Slaughter King Association meeting, Leon, who was pinned by the paw of an old acquaintance... or rather, an old familiar canine, was also trying hard to make his farewell.

"I've thought about it, and I'd better not disturb you from guarding the gate..."

Looking at the three dog heads the size of a round dining table above him, and feeling the deathly breath that blew over, Leon's scalp tingled as he awkwardly negotiated:

"You know, it's still working hours at the Clean-up Bureau. If I skip work without reason, our Director will definitely have a problem, so do you think you could let me..."

"No."

Before Leon could finish, the Canine Deity unhesitatingly rejected his request, then grinned and said:

"According to the rules of the Realm of the Dead, once you step through the gate, you belong to me! Also, don't think about using the Scarlet Hair Lady to pressure me. Although I truly can't provoke her, she wouldn't dare to really touch me either.

Don't underestimate me just because I'm the watchdog of the Realm of the Dead, but if I were gone, not only could the Evil God's followers who steal souls come and go freely, but there would also be a massive influx of the deceased returning with grudges, causing chaos in the living world. Even as the Zodiac Bureau's Director at the Clean-up Bureau, she couldn't handle such consequences!"

"Ah, right, right, that's the logic."

With his life and death controlled by... controlled by the dog's mouth, Leon naturally wouldn't stubbornly insist at such a time. Nodding in agreement with the Canine Deity, Leon, in his soul state, could only try to persuade:

"But even though you're not afraid of her, there's also no need to provoke her, right?"

The woman and I over there, we were just tricked, our souls left our bodies and mistakenly entered the Realm of the Dead. It's precisely your duty to guard the gate and prevent those who shouldn't enter the Realm of the Dead from getting in, so... why not let us return?"

"Hmm, she indeed entered by mistake and can go back."

The Three-Headed Canine Deity glanced at the female journalist's soul, then nodded and grinned, baring a row of interlocking sharp canine teeth, and said with a playful tone:

"But you can't leave; you have to stay and reside nicely in my stomach~"

"Why?"

"Because you're supposed to belong to the Realm of the Dead."

The Three-Headed Canine Deity said this while raising its enormous dog head, signaling Leon to look at the sky above himself.

"All normal living people's Crows of Death Report should be resting at the entrance, in the Nest of Crows of Death Report. Once a soul enters the Realm of the Dead, its Crow of Death Report will wake up and guide it to the depths of the realm."

After saying this, and observing Leon's slightly tense expression, the Three-Headed Canine Deity grinned with all three dog mouths and eerily laughed:

"The Realm of the Dead is a place that values rules. Every living soul should have a Crow of Death Report hovering above its head, which no one can evade, except in two situations.

One is if the person has successfully crossed the threshold to become a true god level, in which case their Crow of Death Report flies away early, and the other... is if they've long been dead but somehow escaped the realm again!"

"Uh..."

Leon was all too aware that his soul was undocumented. Seeing the Three-Headed Canine Deity's mouth growing larger and getting closer, with its paw pressing him so tightly he couldn't move, Leon could only struggle to argue:

"Isn't there a possibility... that I might actually be a True God?"

"Gah-gah~"

Amused by Leon's words, the Three-Headed Canine Deity cackled twice, then extended three tongues of black, white, and grey from its mouths, each giving Leon a solid lick, while saliva flowed liberally like it cost nothing.

"You're such an interesting soul. I reckon you'll taste about as unique as a strange-flavored bean once I devour you. Now I'm really tempted to try you."

Damn, you're really not picky...

Hearing the Three-Headed Canine Deity's words, Leon, drenched in drool, shuddered not out of fear of being eaten but purely from the cold.

The saliva of the Three-Headed Canine, though clear and transparent without any suspicious colored particles, was laden with an intense deathly chill that nearly froze Leon's soul solid.

"This... doesn't seem quite right?"

Watching as the saliva, like a small stream, was licked away and as the giant dog mouth began to approach again, Leon, his negotiations failing, could only pray for the Director to quickly notice something was amiss and desperately stall for time:

"Strange-flavored bean... that's like a snack... eating that isn't good for your health, maybe... you should eat something else instead; could you let me go to the depths of the Realm of the Dead on my own?"

Besides, as you said, the Realm of the Dead is a place that values... hsss... values rules, so by those rules, you should let me continue... continue onwards instead of eating me right away."

"Tch, why do you have so much to say?"

Seeing Leon shivering from the cold yet stubbornly refusing to accept his fate, the Three-Headed Canine Deity clicked its tongue, then said dissatisfiedly:

"My duty is to guard the entrance, preventing things that shouldn't enter the Realm of the Dead from doing so and ensuring souls that belong here don't leave. Souls like you, escaping, are the greatest disruption to my duty, and by the rules, I'm supposed to eat you!

Besides, I guard the entry to the Realm of the Dead and generally can't leave, but as compensation, when I'm hungry, I have the right to eat any soul I fancy—this too is a rule of the Realm of the Dead. Today I eat you, and no one can say otherwise!"

"..."

Damn, looks like I'm really done for this time.

Seeing the Three-Headed Canine Deity intent on "sampling the flavor," regardless of anything he said, Leon could only wish he was there in body rather than soul, unable to make a mess in the deity's mouth and give it a taste.

"Fine! It's all about rules, right!"

Understanding that he was likely doomed today, Leon could only internally curse the treacherous Aquarius while glaring defiantly at the Three-Headed Canine Deity about to feast, gritting his teeth and saying fiercely:

"I'll remember your rules! So this time I'm simply unlucky! But when you eat me, remember to chew me thoroughly; if even a fingernail-sized piece of bone is left, I'll scratch your intestines apart!"

"Hehe, as you say!"

All three heads nodded simultaneously, and the Three-Headed Canine Deity, already impatient, opened its enormous interlocking mouth, ferociously sucking Leon trapped under its paw.

"Wait a minute!"

Just as Leon's soul started faintly wavering, about to be "slurped" into the Three-Headed Canine Deity, a hand glowing with white phosphorescence suddenly grabbed out, seizing Leon's rising soul.

???

Facing the intrigued stares from both man and dog, the female journalist with a blood-red antlered mark on her forehead stood shakily while clutching Leon's soul-arm.

After vigorously pulling Leon back, with her soul tethered and seemingly on the verge of dissipating from the antlered mark's tug, she managed to gaspingly speak out:

"Angsi, sir, if you want, you can eat me, I am willing to trade places with him!"

Chapter 528: Dog

Ah, this...

Watching the female reporter who pulled herself out from the dog's mouth and boldly claimed she was willing to be eaten in Leon's place, Leon felt genuinely moved after being stunned for a moment.

Although he already knew from soul vision that the reporter's moral standards were not low, her willingness to sacrifice herself was still beyond Leon's expectations.

"Why would you want to replace me?"

Looking at the reporter desperately pulling him, Leon said with a bit of a toothache:

"We're not on the same side, right? You're someone our director brought back, and if it wasn't for my interrogation, you might not have triggered the backup plan of the Aquarius Director and been thrown directly into the Realm of the Dead... Anyway, why would you die in my place? Just because you feel indebted to me?"

"I... maybe..."

After her impulsive declaration, the reporter seemed hesitant, but thinking of the "unimaginable pain" Leon suffered due to her indulgence towards the Aquarius Director, her resolve firmed up again.

"Angsi sir!"

Under the bewildered gaze of the Three-Headed Canine Deity, the reporter spoke up again:

"You previously said I could go back, but now I'm not leaving. You send him back!"

"..."

No... with such righteous conviction, what does that make me?

Watching the reporter repeatedly offering to "die generously," Leon found himself unable to cope.

It's certainly good to survive, but if the cost is "tricking" someone else to die for you, then you won't live peacefully for the rest of your life. Thinking about today's event, you'll have to slap yourself.

...

Consider me unlucky...

Watching the reporter desperately holding him, Leon sighed inwardly.

If only she did more bad things, then even if I tricked her into dying in my place, I wouldn't feel any guilt.



However, the unlucky part is that she's simply not a bad person. Except for concealing Watcher's Palace matters due to gratitude towards the Aquarius Director, she hasn't done anything seriously wrong. If I just bluff my way through, I'd feel guilty for life.

Geez... upon reflection, karma really comes around quickly.

I was desperately trying to provoke her guilt to probe information about the Aquarius Director, and now, just like that, the tables have turned and I am consumed by my guilt.

"Forget it, you don't need to replace me."

Failing to pry off the reporter's fingers, Leon only offered an embarrassed explanation, unable to get past this mental hurdle:

"Although I have a vendetta against the Aquarius Director, I'm not really a victim nor have I suffered. All that was a lie to you."

A lie to me?!

Hearing Leon's words, the reporter widened her eyes and slightly relaxed her grip on Leon's arm.

But thinking of Leon's eyes filled with pain, her expression steadfastly renewed as she grasped Leon's arm tightly and shook her head stubbornly:

"I don't believe it! Over the years, I've seen many people struggling in pain, and their eyes look just like yours. None of them are more tortured than you. This is something you can't fake!"

"..."

Ah, this... sorry, but I really was faking it...

Seeing that his explanation failed, Leon switched to a more forceful approach and shouted directly:

"Let go of me!"

"I won't let go!"

"It's my problem! I don't need you to care!"

"Willing to replace you is my choice too!"

"..."

Damn, this dialogue is really stupid...

Realizing the situation was turning into a foolish melodrama, Leon decisively turned to the Three-Headed Canine Deity to end the nonsense once and for all.

"Hurry up! Which one will you eat?"

"Me, huh..."

Facing Leon's stern questioning, the Three-Headed Canine Deity blinked its six eyes, shook its three heads, and mimicked Leon's previous tone, cheekily replying:

"Is there a chance that I could eat both of you together?"

"..."

"..."

"All right, it seems you have no more questions, so I'll get started."

Amid Leon's and his companion's bewildered expressions, the Three-Headed Canine Deity, who had watched the spectacle for a while, opened its massive mouth, swung left and right, and swallowed the two in one bite without even chewing.

"Two fools."

After assessing Leon's intelligence, the Three-Headed Canine Deity licked its nose, feeling the two unusually high-quality souls in its belly, and then lazily yawned and returned to its giant dog nest beside the Gate of the Deceased, satisfied.

Although, technically, one shouldn't lie down immediately after eating, especially after consuming two souls, including a genuine Level 1 Cleaner, which was considered a big meal deserving of a walk to speed up digestion.

But for the Three-Headed Canine Deity, the bliss of eating and sleeping, and then waking up to eat again is the supreme happiness. Digesting slowly isn't a problem, especially as having something in the belly often makes for better sleep... hmm?

Just as it seemed to smell something strange, the previously lazy Three-Headed Canine Deity suddenly raised its neck, its six ears on three heads perked up instantly, and the six basketball-sized nostrils expanded to their maximum, taking a sharp breath.

It was an unfamiliar scent but somewhat familiar.

Judging by the intensity, it should be True God level, yet it lacked True God's intense stimulating aroma and didn't have Evil God's putrid stench. If it was human, it carried a drifting scent of Dream Realm Creatures...

"Sss-la!"

With the sound reminiscent of paper tearing, a small paper cutter emerged from the mist outside the Gate of the Deceased, then drew sharply downwards, ripping a huge opening.

Soon after, a young man wearing a sky-blue robe stepped through the black and white opening, stood in front of the Three-Headed Canine Deity, and asked somewhat surprised:

"Angsi? Why did you wake up before I entered the gate?"

"..."

"Oh, perhaps you can't recognize me."

Smiling at the perplexed Three-Headed Canine Deity, the Aquarius Director spoke gently:

"I recently encountered some issues and unfortunately had to change my body, so many old friends can't recognize me now."

"So, who exactly are you...?"

"I'm Camus... hmm, also the former Aquarius Director of the Clean-up Bureau."

Aquarius? Weren't you dead?!

Upon hearing the words of the blue-robed youth, the Three-Headed Canine Deity was taken aback, then quickly bared its teeth in full alert.

"Are you planning to enter the Realm of the Dead?"

"Yes, I indeed need to go in for a look at something."

After observing the surroundings, and seeing two drag tracks on the ground, the Aquarius Director curiously asked:

"Did someone come before me? No wonder you're already awake... Oh, what happened to the people who came earlier? Did you eat them?"

"Enough talk! Let's get straight to action!"

Lowering its body slightly and posing as if ready to lunge, the Three-Headed Canine Deity bared its teeth and said:

"My duty is to guard the gate, to enter the Realm of the Dead, you must defeat me first!"

"Yes, yes, I know the procedure."

The Aquarius Director chuckled and nodded at these words, then interlocked his fingers and pressed down forcefully with a thrust. With a loud bang, the Three-Headed Canine Deity's mountain-like body was instantly knocked to the ground by an invisible force, unable to move.

Damn God-Suppressing Forked Fingers! Damn Aquarius Director!

Facing a secret technique specifically designed to overpower gods, the Three-Headed Canine Deity, the weakest True God in the Realm of the Dead, truly had no chance to retaliate, only able to lie on the ground whining and cursing the Aquarius Director, hoping he'd soon be dealt with by the Clean-up Bureau, but then...

"By the way, Angsi."

Looking at the Three-Headed Canine Deity collapsed on the ground, the Aquarius Director pondered for a moment but didn't proceed past it like before; instead, he stood in front of it, somewhat shyly, and announced:

"Because every time I want to enter the Realm of the Dead, I have to battle you, which is a bit troublesome, so I plan to change the approach and solve this problem permanently."

Hmm?

Hearing Aquarius Director's words, the Three-Headed Canine Deity hesitated slightly, then said somewhat bewilderedly:

"My duty is guarding the gate. How do you plan to solve this problem? Could it be... you can create an abnormal object to exempt me from gate-keeping duties?"

"Apologies, that's impossible."

The Aquarius Director shook his head and said:

"Guarding the gate is one of the rules of the Realm of the Dead. The cost to change it is too great, so we'll have to use a simpler method... sorry."

"???"

With a somewhat perplexed look, the Three-Headed Canine Deity watched as the Aquarius Director smiled at it apologetically. In an instant, a small paper cutter quietly pierced into the Three-Headed Canine Deity's skull, stirring recklessly inside.

"I thought it over, and killing you directly is more convenient."

Chapter 529: Long Time No See

"You're really out of your mind..."

Unaware of what happened outside, Leon, who had entered the dog's belly first, caught the female journalist falling from another esophagus and then, with a speechless expression, complained:

"It even said you could go back, so why didn't you just go back obediently? What are you blindly meddling for? Wouldn't it have been better to go back and call for reinforcements? At the very least, you could have sent a message back, told the director how I died, and let her avenge me.

Now look, you've poked your nose in and ended up with a buy-one-get-one-free deal, feeding the dog along with me. This mutt got a full belly for nothing!"

"..."

After listening to Leon's complaint, the female journalist fell silent.

It seems... that's indeed the case... but...

She touched the blood-red antler mark on her forehead, and her eyes dimmed slightly, visibly lowering in mood.

It felt like the reason she acted so impulsively, aside from feeling truly indebted to the other party, might also have something to do with this mark.

When caught by the Scarlet Hair Lady in the Dream Realm, she was genuinely prepared to use her life to repay the director's nurturing, but the director had left a backup in her soul. If she ever wanted to leak secrets, her soul would immediately be sent into the Dream Realm.

He simply didn't trust her... well... but it wasn't wrong that he didn't trust her; after all, she was indeed on the verge of letting out some information due to guilt. He let her down, but she also let him down.

"Alright, stop zoning out."

Seeing the female journalist almost having the words "mentally closed-off" written on her face, Leon shook his head speechlessly and urged:

"While we haven't been fully digested yet, hurry up and think if there's any way out!

The majority of my abnormal objects are 'physical,' and they're all with my body, so I can't bring them over. Do you have any that can take effect with the soul and be carried along? If so, quickly report it, and I'll see if we can hold on a bit longer!"

"You haven't given up yet?"

Upon hearing Leon's words, the female journalist raised her head, bewildered, and said:

"We've already been swallowed by the Canine Deity. Even if it's the weakest True God level, its level of life is different from ours, and we can't resist. Even if we get out, we still won't be its match."

"But shouldn't you at least try before giving up?"

Seeing the female journalist once again adopting a "ready to die" attitude, Leon couldn't help but feel a headache coming on, and he had to forcefully persuade:

"Stay optimistic, we might not necessarily die just yet.

Think about it, if the director notices something unusual and checks on the situation, she will definitely find out our souls are missing, and as long as she comes looking, it'll be this damned dog's turn to suffer."

"Sorry, that's unlikely."

The female journalist shook her head and said:

"[Slaughter Blood Hair] occupied too much of the Scarlet Hair Lady's energy, and she's not skilled in soul-related matters. Even if she notices our souls disappearing, she might not immediately link it to the Realm of the Dead, so she can't come that quickly."



"..."

"Furthermore, even if there's someone in your bureau who is very sensitive to matters of the soul and detects traces from the Realm of the Dead, they wouldn't immediately attribute it to the Death Guard Dog and would instead directly enter the Realm of the Dead."

Pointing to the antler mark on her forehead, the female journalist explained with some dejection:

"This is the mark of power from [Flesh Female Deer], and anyone who can sense traces of the Realm of the Dead can also perceive this.

Even if the Scarlet Hair Lady manages to find the Realm of the Dead, she would first head to [Corpse Soil Black Forest] and [Burial Garment Mirror Lake] to directly demand people from [Flesh Female Deer], not lingering here at the Gate of the Deceased and Canine Deity Angsi, and certainly not thinking that we've already been eaten."

"..."

"Sorry, I know you're unwilling, but in this situation, struggling just lacks meaning."

Seeing Leon, who had been completely silenced by her analysis, the female journalist said apologetically:

"If it weren't for me, you wouldn't have such a painful past, wouldn't have ended up joining the Clean-up Bureau, and wouldn't have been dragged into the Realm of the Dead. This is all my fault; I am the one who let you down."

"..."

Can't we not bring up that 'painful past'? This is so awkward, okay...

Feeling uncomfortable by the female journalist's overly sincere apology, Leon remained silent for a moment before finally speaking up:

"Think of it this way, since we're all going to die anyway, rather than being digested little by little, why not take advantage of being not entirely dead yet and stir things up a bit! Even if it only means making this damn dog uncomfortable for a while, we shouldn't just let it have it easy!"

"That might work..."

Seeing Leon, who hadn't given up even at this point and was contemplating a last stand, a hint of admiration flickered in the female journalist's eyes, and she said:

"Most of my abnormal objects also have 'physical forms,' and they were confiscated when caught by the Scarlet Hair Lady. Only two are exceptions, one of which is my hands."

Raising her hands, which glowed with a pure white light, the female journalist explained:

"This thing is called [Untouchable Hand], its ability is..."

"It can touch anything below the True God level, or in other words, it looks like it's 'touching' with hands but never makes substantial contact, always a tiny bit off, so it doesn't cause harm no matter what is touched... right?"

"How do you know?"

"I shook hands with you before."

Leon explained:

"And as soon as I touch an abnormal object, I can know relevant information... What's the second one, the second abnormal object you brought?"

"The second abnormal object..."

Upon hearing this, the female journalist hesitated for a moment, then looked into Leon's eyes and said:

"My name is Nicole... long time no see, do you still remember me?"

"???"

What's with the 'long time no see.' Are you crazy?

Upon hearing the female journalist's question, Leon was taken aback, but before he could inquire, scattered fragments of memory quietly awakened from the depths of his mind.

Before he moved out of Old Soldier Alley, there seemed to be such a girl living next door, who took care of him for Anna when he was bedridden;

When he was working hard in the deep winter, breaking ice and pulling haul, fainted from the icy water and brought home with purple lips, Anna happened to be out buying bread, and it was also her who revived him and cooked him a hot soup;

And even later, when Anna suddenly became critically ill, he entrusted William and Melanie to her, took Anna to the hospital, and even borrowed some money from her to pay for the bed fee at Red Brick Road Hospital...

Wait! Isn't there something off?

Chapter 530: One Punch, Super

"This is the second ability I've brought with me."

Looking at Leon, who was utterly shocked, the female reporter softly explained:

"I call this ability 'Long Time No See.' When I greet someone, I can use this phrase to directly intrude into their memory, becoming their acquaintance, friend, or even a relative. The more unfamiliar the person, the better the effect.

And after intruding into their memories, I can also see some fragments of their memory, gaining some scattered information so that when they mention those memories, I can respond, without ending up... um..."

At this point, the female reporter's voice paused slightly, and her gaze towards Leon once again carried a deep sense of guilt.

"Sorry..."

Seeing the scattered memory fragments where Leon was almost constantly struggling desperately, the female reporter couldn't help but lower her head, her eyes full of guilt as she said:

"If it weren't for me, you wouldn't have..."

"Stop!"

Seeing that she was about to start apologizing again, Leon quickly raised his hand in a "stop" gesture, interrupting the female reporter's self-reproach, then frowned and said:

"Your two abilities are strong, but they don't seem to work on this dead dog, right?"

"Hmm..."

The female reporter nodded and said:

"If my physical body and other abnormal objects were here, relying on the ability of [Untouchable Hand], I might have been able to fight the Canine Deity for a while. If it didn't use its power, it might not even be able to take me down.

But now it's different. Now I only have my soul, and its strength isn't high. Facing the True God of the Netherworld, Angsi, I don't stand a chance."

"..."

Indeed, it seems you really can't help...

After listening to the female reporter's two trump cards, Leon couldn't help but sigh, then began to fumble with his badge.

None of my abnormal objects are here, the [Hand of Screams] which can harm True God isn't with me, [Unfair Snake Pact] and that True God-level ashes aren't here either, so only the badge is left to use.

[Immortal in Liquor]... Although invincibility is useful, there's no liquor now.

[Migratory Thrush Prince]... The Realm of the Dead isn't within the Kingdom of Lutung, so this one can't take effect either.

[Master Performer], [Shooting Expert]... Hmm, maybe these might work?

Looking at the glittering [Pity it's Not], Leon's eyes narrowed slightly, then he asked:

"Let me ask you something... is this dead dog male or female?"

"Huh?"

Briefly dumbfounded by Leon's question, the female reporter hesitated for a moment, then said uncertainly:

"It should be male, right? At least, from the sound of its voice, it seems like a male..."

"Can you be more certain?"

"..."

How can I be sure? I'm a woman, you want me to spread its dog legs and check if it's dangling two bells behind?

"Alright, forget I asked."

Seeing the female reporter's somewhat awkward expression, Leon also realized his question was a bit inappropriate, so he moved on from the topic, holding the thought of giving it a try, and switched to the "Egg Smash" badge.

"I do have something else to try, but I don't know if it will work."

As Leon spoke, he staggered a few steps forward inside the relatively spacious belly of the Canine Deity, reaching out to touch what was probably the stomach wall, then raised his fist.

According to the effect of [Pity it's Not], when attacking any "organism with eggs," the impact would be equivalent to a "lethal hit on the eggs." If the Canine Deity was male, even if he couldn't hurt it, he could at least cause it some real pain!

Why you dared to eat me!

With the thought that even in death, he couldn't let it have a good time, Leon took a deep breath, and amidst the female reporter's puzzled gaze, he slammed his fist down on the Canine Deity's stomach wall!

"Splash."

The punch, which seemed quite vigorous on Leon's part, landed on the Canine Deity's thick stomach wall without causing any damage, making only a sticky, light sound.

And a large amount of viscous liquid that was originally only attached to the stomach wall was suddenly splattered by the light sound, pouring over Leon, hissing like water droplets on a hot iron plate.

Damn it, looks like it's not male.

Seeing his body become significantly more transparent after being splashed by the "stomach acid," Leon couldn't help but sigh and then threw another punch, somewhat unwillingly.

Why am I so unlucky? Even my final counterattack before death couldn't...

"Ah!!!"

In the stunned expressions of Leon and the female reporter, an incomparably shrill scream suddenly echoed from inside the Three-Headed Canine Deity.

Next, the stomach wall, which had been rhythmically contracting and secreting strange mucus around them, strangely shuddered violently and then completely stopped, with no further movement.

When the Canine Deity's stomach ceased its peristalsis, a massive wave of overwhelming death energy surged from within its body, sweeping in all directions, turning everything around them pitch black with dead silence.

"???"

"!!!"

No way... how is this possible?!

The female reporter, unwilling to believe it, ran over to touch the Canine Deity's stomach wall, then was shocked to discover that with that simple, even somewhat pathetic punch from Leon, the previously vital "flesh" of the Canine Deity had truly lost its vigor, turning into a mass of thoroughly "dead meat"!

It actually died... and died completely...

"..."

"..."

After staring blankly at each other for a while, the female reporter reacted first, looking at Leon's already semi-transparent hand, with two parts joy and ninety-eight parts shock, exclaiming:

"Leon! You... you killed a True God with one punch!!!"

"..."

Staring at the now-motionless stomach wall and feeling the ever-thickening deathly aura around him, Leon couldn't help but feel dumbfounded.

Uh, so the Canine Deity's weakness is eggs? That once it feels intense pain there, it dies on the spot? So with one punch I... no, that's not right!

After waiting for a while and not seeing any badges like [God Slayer] or [Canine Killer] pop out, Leon calmed down again and shook his head:

"It wasn't me. Someone outside must have taken care of it, and it just happened to coincide... right, could it be that the Director found us?"

"..."



Indeed...

Looking at Leon, who had simply punched the Canine Deity's stomach wall and was splashed with digestive juices, the female reporter, shocked, also calmed down.

Although Leon's punch was somewhat forceful, it was pretty much all bluster. As she and Leon had been trapped inside the Canine Deity for so long, their souls, although barely intact, had their strength reduced by at least forty percent.

Now, even walking normally was a bit difficult for her, Leon's condition must be worse, let alone killing a True God with one punch, so the most likely reason was that the Scarlet Hair Lady traced the mark here...

"Stop guessing."

After checking the Three-Headed Canine Deity's stomach wall again and confirming it was really dead, Leon, who had narrowly escaped death, breathed a long sigh of relief and said in relief:

"This time we really have to thank the Director, fortunately, she arrived just in time... let's go, we better get out of here."