

I! CLEANER!

Chapter 6 6: 0006 Level 3 Processor_1

This hidden trait... scapegoat?

Staring at the glaring word "termination," Leon, who had just crawled out from "Hell," shivered involuntarily. Instinctively, he wanted to remove the badge, but it yielded a "temporarily unable to remove" response. Helpless, he had to give up and instead silently prayed in his heart.

Heaven help me, during these two months before this badge upgrades to bronze, may nothing major happen at the Purification Bureau—my whole family is counting on this job to turn our lives around, not to mention my sister Anna's illness...

Oh right! Anna!

Thinking of his sister still waiting for treatment on the hospital bed, Leon, who had just completed his induction, hurriedly asked for leave. He then rushed out of the Purification Bureau to use the benefits he had just received to get Anna better treatment.

After he hurriedly left, the Black Goat, who had been silently observing, clicked its tongue twice, looked at the red-haired woman with schadenfreude, and said,

"Heh! You don't even want him to know the job content of the Purification Bureau, so you're not planning to involve him in any missions, are you?"

What is it then? Do you think this kid is at his wit's end and decided to lend a helping hand out of kindness?"

"No."

Somehow pulling out another bottle of liquor and chugging a large gulp, the red-haired woman concealed the smile on her face, her expression indifferent as she spoke,

"The more 'truth' we humans come in contact with, the deeper we are corroded by the dark side, and the smell on us more easily attracts new anomalies.

Leon's talent was quite good, but now the bureau was short-handed, and there was no way to assign someone to protect him continuously. I shielded part of his memory temporarily to prevent him from attracting anomalies.

As for the specific job content, it won't be too late to tell him when we find an Anomalous Object suitable for him."

Oh, give me a break. That kid has zero talent!

Completely disbelieving the red-haired woman's explanation, the Black Goat snorted disdainfully and said,

"Come off it! Although he withstood our 'Whisper of Degeneration,' it doesn't mean he has a strong willpower. The kid is merely rational in his personality and has a moral compass slightly better than average.

If it were up to me, he's the kind of guy who's had his instinct for fighting almost completely dulled away and has become accustomed to compliance like a sheep. He's less than even those death row inmates who serve as cannon fodder, most likely incapable of enduring the first mission."

"He'll endure."

Without revealing to the Black Goat about the "anomaly" Leon possessed, after another large swig of beer, the red-haired woman spoke calmly,

"He can go through the first few tasks with me, and Emma's job is about to wrap up; she'll probably return tonight.

After that, if I have the opportunity, I'll guide him myself. If I'm unavailable, Emma will substitute for me to help him until he can handle things alone."

Goodness, you're really looking after him, huh? What do you see in this kid?

"You better not mess around!"

The Black Goat furrowed its brows, annoyance written over its face,

"Purification Bureau's performance metrics are always calculated based on the number of regular members. Our sixth bureau's performance is currently ranked second to last, and with two months left until the year-end review, you're recruiting such a dead weight now? Concerned you don't secure the bottom spot?"

"None of your concern."

"I can't be bothered to care!"

The Black Goat sneered,

"The number of people you've killed exceeds everyone I've met in my life. Honestly, I've always admired you, except when you excessively display kindness.

As the most insane executioner in the Purification Bureau, can't you stick to your own business? Why pretend to be a kindhearted person? Do you know how disgusting your sympathetic acts appear?"

"Oh."

"..."

"Tsk... you can't seriously think lending a hand to that kid will save his life, can you?"

Observing the red-haired woman drinking indifferently with no intention of engaging, the Black Goat couldn't help but scoff and taunt,

"I know humans all too well; struggling in darkness has become a numbing habit that barely keeps them afloat. But now, you've dragged him ashore, exposing him to sunlight—there's no turning back anymore.

When the year-end review won't go through, leading to his ousting and experiencing firsthand the plunge from Heaven to Hell, the kid might just go insane. He might even resent you similarly to how a certain someone did, wondering why you bothered dragging him up...

What was it that certain someone said back then?"

Boldly stepping into the dimly lit office, sitting comfortably into a plush padded sofa, with his legs crossed, the Black Goat mocked in a theatrical manner in front of the silent red-haired woman,

"I am resentful, Olivia! I hate you!

I could have continued to endure the darkness; why drag me into the sunlight, showing me how a person ought to live?"

"Squeak!"

As soon as the Black Goat finished speaking, a screech pierced as if a blade was scraping against bone.

Like being cut by countless thin, sharp blades in an instant, the raised-hooved Black Goat shattered into pieces, with parts scattering all over the place.

Yet strangely enough, even though the Black Goat had turned into a mass of sheep offal, no bloody odor emerged in the office. The woman behind the desk maintained her original posture unaffectedly, taking big gulps from her beer.

However, her striking red hair suddenly dulled in color, and at the slightly curled tips—neglected due to a lack of care—an odd, deep crimson began to seep.

"I've warned you plenty of times not to call me by my name directly."

Discarding an empty bottle she didn't remember finishing, the red-haired woman crooked her finger towards the sofa. A sheep's head with its mouth sewn shut with red thread floated over, sitting squarely on her desk.

Exchanging a glance with the wide-eyed and furious Black Goat on the desk, the woman named Olivia shook her head,

"I allowed you free rein in the bureau on account of your decent work last time. But now, it seems this form suits you better.

Moreover, I plan to visit Welsh County in my spare time, to thoroughly investigate what happened back then and why you'd fear men from Welsh County.

Until I return, stay like this! Once I understand what you are afraid of, I shall ensure you pay dearly for a foul mouth!"

"Ugh? Uh! Uh!!"

...

Unaware of what transpired after his departure, Leon, hurried back to the hospital, urgently knocking on the Respiratory Department's office door, handing over his not yet warm new credentials before the head department chief clocked off.

The Sixth Purification Bureau? Does the Police Department have such a division? What exactly is the position of Level Three Incident Handler?

Accepting the credentials Leon handed over, flipping through them with skepticism, recognizing a few special markings, the previously doubtful fat chief's expression suddenly tightened.

The Kingdom's civil service framework comprised five levels, ranking from highest to lowest: Executive, Administrative, Clerical, Assistant, and Auxiliary.

As the head of a secondary hospital's respiratory department, barely scraping the front end of the Auxiliary level, by the time retirement came around, with some maneuvering, there might be a chance to sneak into the tail end of the Assistant level.

Yet this scruffy young man standing before him, wearing an old coat, was already an Assistant-level civil servant, and the benefits were directly aligned with a Clerical-level!

Someone like this, in three to five years, might just climb higher, entering the ranks of Clerical civil servants directly.

Damn! Wouldn't that make him equivalent to our hospital's director?

Looking at the youth who probably hadn't turned twenty yet, the fat chief couldn't hide strong envy and a deeply rooted sense of jealousy.

Leon Laine, a surname the same as Duke of Lionheart's, coupled with a sub-twenty-year-old Assistant-level civil servant status—his background was self-evident. Undoubtedly from a prestigious noble lineage, likely even a well-resourced direct line.

Having struggled at the hospital tirelessly for over twenty years, the greatest aspiration before retirement was merely reaching an Assistant-level position; yet this young man had already reached that threshold at his teen years, sitting at the end of a lifetime's dream, with room to spare half a seat—is there any justice in that?

Cursing under his breath at the connection, giving him an internal label of someone not to cross, the fat chief's face bloomed into layers of flesh folds, smiling as he approached Leon, rubbing his hands,

"Mr. Leon, is there anything bothering you?"

"Not me, it's my sister."

Briefly explaining Anna's situation, Leon hadn't even made a request when the rotund chief eagerly proposed transferring her immediately to the best ward, equipping her with the finest potions. He even patted his chest to assure Leon that he would personally follow up to ensure Miss Anna received the highest level of treatment throughout the Capital City.

Somewhat unaccustomed to the fat chief's overly warm reception, Leon, repressing the awkwardness surging in his heart, managed a few polite exchanges, then under a nurse's guidance, moved to a plush sofa in the VIP ward, awaiting Anna's arrival.

Alone in the quiet and tidy ward, gazing at the pristine new bed with its white linen, Leon sat upright on the sofa, involuntarily feeling a strange sense of nostalgia.

From fleeing the hospital wielding a scalpel to now, barely an hour had passed, yet the dire predicament cornering his family was already resolved.

Not only was there hope for his sister's illness, but his family, long struggling bitterly at the bottom rungs of the Capital City's society, could now anticipate a decent living standard on his earnings. The only cost for all this was...

Hmm? What was the cost again... ouch! Hot! Hot!!!

Deep in thought about what exactly he had paid, Leon suddenly experienced a scorching pain at his chest. The badge representing the Sixth Purification Bureau, the Dung Beetle

Lady, radiated a frighteningly intense heat like a branding iron, burning him fiercely through three layers of clothing.

[A suitable Uncontrollable Afflicted conforming to job content has been detected, activating Black Iron Badge "Probationary Worker," your work efficiency has slightly increased.]

Chapter 7 7: 0007 Abnormal_1

"The job content complies with... Wait, did I ever ask the Purification Bureau about the job content?"

It was as if someone had wiped away the fog from the glass, or like a curtain that covered the stage had been lifted. The previously forgotten "job content" bizarrely broke through the red-haired woman's smiling blockade and emerged from the depths of Leon's mind.

A dimension demon attempting to plunder souls, a mad Evil God wanting to descend its will, a radical deity preparing to control the world, special anomalies born from human obsessions, an Undying Specter that escaped the normal temporal sequence... Hiss...

His face was instantly covered with a dense layer of sweat, and every time he recalled a part of the job description given by the red-haired woman, more sweat would accumulate on his face.

Some kind of near-instinctual intuition was constantly warning Leon that the beautiful yet dangerous red-haired woman might not just be pulling his leg...

As Leon desperately tried to remember the job content of the Purification Bureau, trying to figure out how dangerous this "Uncontrollable Afflicted" could be, Anna, who was also filled with unease, was wheeled over by two nurses.

"Brother?"

Seeing Leon in the intensive care unit, the pale-faced girl seemed to find her backbone. Her tense expression relaxed a little, then she urgently said,

"Cough... They might have the wrong person! Cough cough... Our family can't afford the special care fees, but no matter how I explain, they won't... Cough cough cough... Brother! Please help me talk to them! We... Cough cough cough..."

"Don't worry, they didn't make a mistake!"

Hearing Anna's heart-wrenching coughs, Leon, who was breaking out in cold sweat, quickly stood up, rushing over in a few strides to help the nurses settle his struggling sister back onto the bed. He gently reassured her,

"I got a job yesterday. Now I'm an accident handler under the Department of Road Administration, and there's an annual reimbursement quota from the Medical Bureau. We won't have to spend our family's money!"

Got a job? And it sounds like a government position in the Kingdom?

Anna couldn't help but show a happy expression upon hearing that. A flush of excitement appeared on her pale cheeks as she seemed eager to say something.

But the next second, she realized it wasn't very likely for her brother to find a good job given his current situation. However, the hospital's attitude couldn't be faked, so...

"Brother... Tell me the truth!"

Gathering some unknown strength, the pale-faced girl grabbed the bed's handrail, forced herself to sit up, and glared at Leon urgently,

"Did you... Cough cough... Did you take on some dangerous job to pay for my treatment? You... You... Cough cough cough cough!"

"It's not dangerous, not dangerous at all! I'm perfectly safe!"

"Liar!"

Hearing Leon's explanation, the pale girl became more anxious, covering her mouth and nose while coughing. She gripped the handrail and shouted,

"If you didn't take on those deadly jobs, where... Cough cough cough... Where would the money for this special care room come from... Cough cough cough cough..."

"In your current state, you shouldn't be talking so much!"

He held onto Anna's shoulders, forcing his coughing sister back onto the bed. Leon quickly explained,

"This job really isn't dangerous. As for why the benefits are so good, it's mainly because there's no vacation as I'm on call all year round. If anything happens, I must immediately be present, and it's also very hard."

Pulling out the "Dung Beetle Lady Card" and showing the title of "Level Three Accident Handler," Leon made up a serious-sounding explanation,

"See the job title? Accident handler! My job belongs to the Purification Bureau under the Department of Road Administration. Usually... hmm... I'm mainly responsible for investigating and cleaning up crime scenes and accidents."

"For instance, if there's a serial dismemberment case or a large-scale traffic accident, I would clean up the bloody and messy scenes that ordinary people can't stomach seeing even for a glance!

"This job is tiring, dirty, and creepy, so few people are willing to do it. That's why the benefits are quite good... Does that put your mind at ease now?"

The Purification Bureau? Responsible for cleaning up grisly crime scenes?

After hearing the explanation given by her brother, the pale girl hesitated for a moment, then asked half-believingly,

"Really?"

"Really!"

Not wanting to tell her that he had joined a mysterious department where he might kick the bucket any day, Leon raised his right hand with an earnest face and solemnly swore,

"If I'm lying to you, then let me be single forever and never find..."

"Brother! You... Cough cough... Don't say that!"

She pinched Leon's arm hard, forcing him to swallow the rest of his words. The slender girl, now filled with worry, finally calmed down.

Dealing with bloody crime scenes wasn't a great job, but it was better than mining under a furnace or selling oneself as a test subject because, given their current circumstances, what could they really choose?

Although it belonged to the relatively dangerous Department of Road Administration, this post was in the Purification Bureau, which sounded similar to the cleaning bureau in the Department of Road Administration. It should also be a logistical post. Apart from being dirty, tiring, and frightening, her brother was unlikely to encounter any danger. But...

It's all my fault for dragging you down...

Biting her bloodless lips, Anna held Leon's hand, lowering her head in guilt as she said,

"Brother, when we get back to Veteran Lane, if anyone asks about your job, just say you work at the Department of Road Administration. Best not to mention the dismemberment... or the specific job content to others."

"Huh? Why?"

"Because you still need to start a family."

Grasping her brother's hand tenderly, the slender girl said with concern,

"While cleaning up dismemberments isn't shameful work since you're earning an honest living, it's still somewhat... If word about your job content gets out, you might not find a good partner..."

"..."

Looking at the sister who, despite being seriously ill, was worried about his future marriage, Leon couldn't help but smile wryly.

Get real! To think of marriage in my current state?

Given the Purification Bureau's job scope that could cost anyone their life, it's better to think about who could join me in the afterlife instead of who I might marry...

"Of course, I'm not stupid. I won't say a word."

Considering his current situation, where he could be gone anytime, Leon had long since given up the notion of settling down for fear of dragging someone else in. However, there was no need to share these thoughts with Anna.

Seeing his sister visibly relieved after registering his words, Leon couldn't help but smile and promise,

"As for my marriage, don't you worry about it. When it's time for me to settle down, I'll definitely bring you the best sister-in-law."

After reassuring his sister with a few words, Leon, constantly pondering over the "Uncontrollable Afflicted," took a deep breath and then turned to the nurse beside him, proactively asking,

"Excuse me, where's that... very plump doctor? He didn't come?"

"The director originally wanted to come with us."

Hearing Leon's inquiry, the young nurse, who had already been briefed by the chubby director, immediately apologized and explained,

"But just halfway through, the emergency alarm in the hospital went off, and a large number of critical patients were brought in. There should've been a major public emergency.

"According to the hospital's rules, whenever such an incident occurs, all attending physicians and above must be present, so the director had to go ahead...

"But don't worry, before the director left, he instructed that your sister would receive the best treatment."

A major public emergency... Could it possibly be related to that "Uncontrollable Afflicted"?

Remembering the Purification Bureau's job scope that could only be described as "madness," Leon immediately tensed up. He instinctively wanted to take Anna and leave to prevent her from being caught up in any danger.

But after glancing at the IV line in Anna's arm and her extremely weak condition, Leon hesitated. He then pulled a nurse aside and quietly asked in the corridor,

"How is my sister's condition now? Can I stop the IV temporarily and take her home?"

"Well... it's better not to,"

the nurse said with some difficulty,

"The director knew you might inquire about your sister's condition, so he specifically talked to us about it earlier.

"Because your sister stopped taking her medication for two months on her own, three-quarters of her right lung have already been destroyed by alchemical waste gas. Her left lung is also severely damaged, and the situation has barely stabilized with continuous intravenous cellular supplements.

"If you stop the medication and take her home now, delaying the treatment could result in having to remove the entire right lung. Not only would her life span significantly shorten, but she would... Where are you going?"

"I'm going home to get something! You first go back and take care of her, and don't come out no matter what's happening outside!"

Chapter 8 8: Social Person_1

The second time Leon burst out of the hospital room that day, he didn't hesitate, bypassing the crowded reception area and climbing out of a window on the second floor, sprinting in the direction of the Purification Bureau.

Since leaving with Anna was not possible, his only choice was to hurry to the Purification Bureau and bring someone who could handle the "Uncontrollable Afflicted" back!

Whether it was the mental strain creating an illusion of time slowing down, or "reporting to the Purification Bureau" counted as work that provided a bonus from the "Probationary Worker" badge, he couldn't tell.

Despite having stayed up all night and feeling exhausted, Leon was running much faster than before, reaching the Bureau in no time.

However, as Leon endured the burning pain in his lungs, stumbling into the innermost office, he only found an empty room.

Where was everyone? Why was there no one here?

Gazing out the window at the darkening sky, the anxious Leon suddenly realized that it was long past office hours, and that mysterious red-haired woman must have left already.

Trouble... Should I search the building first to see if anyone's on duty?

Leon, having found nothing, bit his lip, and was about to leave the red-haired woman's office when a thud sounded behind him, as if something heavy had fallen onto the carpet.

Surprised, Leon turned back to find that a goat head ornament had fallen off the desk. Eager to find help, he paid it little mind and was about to leave when he noticed the goat head strangely twisted by itself, turning to face him directly.

In Leon's shocked gaze, the goat head with a stitched mouth rolled its eyes twice, then furiously glared at him.

?!

In the dim corridor, the elaborately and bizarrely decorated office, a goat head with its mouth sewn shut was glaring at you...

"What are you staring at, you dumbass!"

A voice full of fury echoed in Leon's ear, breaking the terrifying atmosphere.

The Black Goat rolled several times across the carpet but couldn't straighten itself, so it glared at Leon with anger and "spoke" harshly,

"Aren't you going to help me up? When I was a Great Demon, I'd have slapped an inattentive fool like you to death!"

Great Demon... The Black Goat? It's only been a couple of hours, why're you just a head now?

"You... Hello!"

Recognizing this was the same Black Goat from before, and worried about the situation with his sister, Leon took a deep breath and directly asked,

"I just encountered an Uncontrollable Afflicted at a hospital three streets away. Is there anyone on duty at the Purification Bureau right now?"

"Of course not! If there were anyone else here, do you think you could just barge in? That bunch of madmen would have skinned you alive!"

The Black Goat was about to roll its eyes and continue "ranting" when Leon, skilled at hitting the right note, quickly added,

"As long as you help me find someone! I'll buy you cigarettes! A pack of 'Gotth'! No, two packs!"

"..."

Two packs... Tsk... I'm so kind-hearted, can't bear to see suffering in the world, helping you is not impossible, but there's just... a problem...

Sigh...

In Leon's tense expression, the Black Goat first sighed, then regretfully shook its head,

"The deal's off. I'm a demon of credibility, and I won't take benefits without doing my part, but the Bureau's empty right now, and I can't assist you even if I wanted to."

No one left?

Hearing this, Leon couldn't help but exclaim,

"How come such a big building doesn't even have one person on duty?"

"Blame that red-haired woman,"

the Black Goat sulked,

"It's all her fault for sloppiness in her usual work, leading to consistently poor task evaluations. Worried she wouldn't pass the end-of-year review, she sent everyone out last month to boost performance, leaving the Bureau so empty rats could run through...

Kid, I'm telling you, don't be blinded by her beauty!

Though she's good-looking, unrivaled even among pureblood Succubi, she's a drunkard, a spendthrift, petty, and unhygienic. I've even seen her scratching her feet with the office door closed! That woman is pure trash... Hey?"

Halfway through his profane rant, noticing something, the Black Goat strained to look east, then slightly curled its sewn mouth into a grin, chuckling at Leon.

"You're in luck, kid. Just started and already scored a job... Hurry! Pick me up and hold me, there's someone useful back, and I'll take you to get things settled!

Remember, you promised two packs of cigarettes! Miss even a single stick, and I'll kill you!"

As long as you can solve this, forget two packs, two cartons are no problem!

...

Upon hearing the promising turn of events, Leon was overjoyed, picking up the goat head and rushing out of the Purification Bureau. Following its guidance, he ran nearly two streets east and finally stopped a tall woman wrapped in bandages at a street corner.

"You are... uh... the Bureau recruited someone new, huh."

After exchanging a glance with the goat head in Leon's arms, and seemingly receiving a lot of information directly from it, the tall bandaged woman smiled at Leon, extending her right hand warmly,

"I'm Emma, I've been with the Purification Bureau for six years, and I consider myself fairly knowledgeable about the Bureau's operations. If you need any assistance with work in the future, please feel free to ask."

"Ah... okay..."

Initially stopping this bandaged, strange woman, Leon thought she might be another peculiar character full of "personality" like the Black Goat, but he didn't expect such a "professional introduction."

But... she seems easy to talk to?

Thinking of the situation at the hospital, Leon immediately set aside his awkwardness, shook the bandaged woman's hand briefly, and then spoke a bit hurriedly,

"The situation at the hospital..."

"I will go, but not right now."

The bandaged woman smiled gently, speaking slowly,

"According to the Bureau's four-step tactical operation protocol, we should first carefully observe and determine the type and danger of the abnormality, as well as the Uncontrollable Afflicted's identity;

"Next, based on the victim's situation, initially speculate about the Afflicted's ability effects and assess the potential impact;

"Then, find specific tools and special items, confirm our status, and formulate a comprehensive action plan;

"Finally, initiate the operation, aiming for minimal casualties and impact to control or eliminate the target, completing the clean-up task."

Seeing Leon somewhat dumbfounded, the bandaged woman kindly reminded him,

"It's already past sunset now. We would risk impaired action capability due to poor visibility, and without the sun's suppression, most Anomalous Objects become more active at night. It's not a good time to act.

"Moreover, I just completed a two-and-a-half-month-long task, and my physical state and focus have both reached their limits. I need at least a week's recovery to ensure adequate concentration, not suitable for immediately taking on new, unknown-danger tasks.

"Therefore, the best plan now is to return to the Bureau and hand off this task to the director after she returns to work tomorrow, so we should..."

"Why are you doing this again..."

Jolted by the other's professionally cold attitude, Leon was momentarily speechless, while the goat head in his arms wriggled a bit, grumbling discontentedly,

"Your director's on a business trip to Welsh County and won't be back for three days. Are you really going to wait for her?"

"We'll wait until she returns."

Seeing Leon's expression suddenly change, Emma, the bandaged woman, smiled gently once more, her eyes slightly apologetic,

"Judging by your expression... You have relatives in that hospital, don't you?"

"Apologies, I have reasons to stay alive no matter what, and won't act rashly, regardless of circumstances, if I can't ensure absolute safety. So, please wait for three days!"

Chapter 9 9: 0009 Slot and Fire_1

Wait three days... Will that still be in time?

Leon had not expected the bandage-wrapped woman, who seemed friendly, to refuse to help. Worried about the situation at the hospital, he gritted his teeth, lowered his head, and tried to plead again,

"If you're willing to help, I can..."

"Sorry, this isn't about the cost."

Interrupting Leon's words, the woman wrapped in bandages shook her head, regretfully saying,

"The reason I've been able to stay safely in the Purification Bureau for six years is because I never act without certainty.

Although I sympathize with your situation, I have my reasons for not risking it lightly. I hope you understand my decision."

"..."

Understand, of course, I understand. After all, what else can I do if I don't? Drag you there by force?

After hearing the other's unarguable refusal, Leon helplessly loosened his grip.

While it sounded somewhat cold, she was actually right. She had no obligation to take risks for his matter, but... what about Anna?

At this moment, Leon could still choose to return to the hospital and take Anna out early before the "Uncontrollable Afflicted" caused a bigger commotion.

But if what that nurse said was true, then stopping the medication and taking Anna away now would mean she would be bedridden for the rest of her life, probably unable to even do chores like laundry and cooking.

Over the years, Anna had already suffered a lot because of the domestic burden caused by her lung disease. Given her outwardly gentle and obedient yet stubborn personality, if she realized she'd become a complete "burden," she'd probably...

'Kid, you better not renege on our deal!'

Just as Leon was weighing his options between the two choices, hesitating whether to take Anna out, the Black Goat in his arms twisted uncomfortably and reminded him worriedly,

'We agreed before, we'd help you find someone, and you'd buy us cigarettes! Now that we've found someone, even if she won't help, you still owe us the cigarettes, not a single one less!'

"..."

Right, there's this one too!

Seemingly glimpsing a lifeline drifting past his eyes, Leon's gaze suddenly brightened. He eagerly grabbed the goat's head and said urgently,

"What about you? Can you solve this matter? If you can, as long as I'm still working at the Purification Bureau, I'll buy you a pack of 'Gotth' every week!"

Tch... you're trying this on me again... are you taking me for granted?

Hearing Leon's proposal, a trace of annoyance appeared on the Black Goat's face.

Kid! Do you really think I helped you find someone because of the cigarettes? I, a Great Demon, wouldn't bother over a cheap pack of cigarettes that sells for just three Silver Wheels from you!

I'm telling you! If that red-haired woman didn't take a liking to you, forget about a lousy pack of cigarettes, even if you knelt and begged me to claim your soul, I wouldn't bother, you hear?

'At least three packs!'

"Deal!"

Damn! Asked for too little!

Pouting with some annoyance, the Black Goat cursed itself for being spineless, then sighed as it pushed deeper into Leon's embrace.

Sigh... what can I say, it's my weakness.

Plus, with my sheep-headed look right now, I don't even qualify to rob. If I'm not careful, not only do I end up without cash, but I might also get stewed, leaving me without a penny to buy a pack of cigarettes.

Damn it! Just thinking about it makes me uneasy! That red-haired woman isn't poor, but every week the second her salary arrives, she blows it all on booze, won't even spare half a Copper Wheel for me!

Once I smoke enough and gather the strength to turn the tables, I'll trash every tavern in the Capital City, including factories that make alcohol-scented cologne! You'll have nothing to drink, you wretched woman!

While secretly plotting vengeance, the Black Goat gathered its remaining power, branding Leon's chest with a demonic mark, and willingly granted him the "right" to use its power.

Meanwhile, a familiar noise echoed once more in Leon's ear.

"Zzzzzz"

[For the first time, you have acquired the right to use Anomalous Object; the hidden trait of the Heterochromatic Badge "Materialist Soul (Crimson)" has been activated.]

[Materialist Soul (Heterochromatic, Crimson, Non-Upgradable):...]

[Wearing Effect:...]

[Advancement Route:...]

[Hidden Traits: Badge Slot +1, Current Slot Count: 4, Anomalous Items Required for Next Slot: 2]

With the mechanized prompt, the virtual panel, which originally had only three slots, scrolled and quietly added a fourth slot, with a cyan badge shaped like a sheep's head already embedded inside.

[You have obtained the right to use "Demon's Horns"; the Bronze Level Badge "Demon's Follower" has been successfully activated.]

[Demon's Follower (Bronze): After completing a filthy and despicable transaction, agreeing to perform an extreme evil sacrifice weekly thereafter, you have successfully received the favor of a high-ranking demon.]

[Wearing Effect: Increases your affinity with Anomalous Objects marked with "Corruption," slightly reducing the Cost of use while significantly enhancing usability.]

[Advancement Route: Completing ten agreed-upon evil sacrifices in secret without being discovered by the "Demon's Horn" previous owner, Olivia, will advance this badge to the Silver Badge "Friend of Demons," current progress 1/10.]

[Hidden Traits (unneeded for wearing): Your soul is faintly tainted with demonic aura, making it easier to attract the attention of certain evil entities.]

[Your Contamination Value has increased.]

[Current Contamination Value: 0.1]

...

'Hiss... you kid... actually suit my taste!'

Lying in Leon's somewhat uncomfortable embrace, feeling the "like a fish in water" harmonious sensation, the Black Goat raised its head in surprise, commenting,

'The way you controlled yourself in that situation, not stabbing that fat guy from the Department of Road Administration, I thought you had a strong sense of morals and wouldn't get along with you.

But seeing our compatibility, you're clearly not a good person! Although not overly heinous, you surely have some dirty tricks up your sleeve, haven't you? You must have done quite a bit of deceiving and scamming, right?'

"..."

The high compatibility with you is due to the badge's effect. I've led a law-abiding life over two lifetimes, okay?

Although his usually strong sense of morality was unfoundedly questioned, Leon's mind remained clear. Naturally, he would not confess to a demon about his cheat.

Holding the rambling goat's head, Leon was overjoyed to discover that he seemed to have temporarily acquired the ability to glimpse souls.

Centered on the goat's head he held, a radius of about two kilometers suddenly lit up with thousands of flickering, weak "flames."

Hatred, betrayal, deception, jealousy, rage... innumerable cold and dark thoughts flared painfully within souls like ghostly blue phosphorescence drifting in a cemetery by night, emerging dot by dot before Leon's eyes.

As long as he focused his mind, he could penetrate through layers of concrete and stone, directly perceiving the seething malice contained within those "flames."

Leon even felt an unusual premonition. *As if he only needed to reach out and pluck, and these cold venomous fires would swell instantly, burning away all rationality of their hosts and staining their souls, which were merely tinged dark gray, with a blackness ten shades darker than charcoal!*

Chapter 10 10: 0010 Transfer_1

Was this the power of the Anomalous Object...?

Through the connection with the Black Goat, after borrowing its "eye" to observe this world, Leon vaguely understood why it could lock onto the bandage woman's position from two blocks away.

In his soul vision, which had a radius of about two kilometers, everyone's soul had distinctly different colors. These weren't colors in the physical sense like red, orange, yellow, green, but rather a wondrous hue beyond the naked eye and spectrum, one that only the soul could perceive.

Those joyful and positive souls appeared pure and intense in hue, whereas the dark and obsessive flames seemed murky and somber.

Yet the tall woman covered in bandages before him, while astonishingly bright, also possessed an immensely "profound" darkness. Light and dark were distinctly divided, yet they constantly clawed at each other in madness, making her easy to discern among the multitude of gray souls with just one glance.

Enthusiasm, warmth, friendliness, love... The kindness she had just shown him wasn't a facade, but her indifferent, ruthless, hateful, and mad dark side was equally real.

Leon found it really hard to imagine how these nearly completely opposing emotions could forcefully fit into the soul of the same person without eroding each other.

...

'Haha, kid, are you scared by my power?'

Seeing Leon stunned for a while without speaking, thinking that he was overwhelmed after obtaining the soul vision for the first time, the Black Goat arrogantly said,

"Although I was killed once, I was once a ranked Great Demon, who could stir the evil desires in the hearts of millions of lives with just one glance! Even if now I'm just left with two horns, that's still not something ordinary playthings can compare with!"

"Uh-huh..."

Nodding in agreement, Leon half-sincerely and half-flatteringly exclaimed,

"Even if we don't count that ability to amplify evil desires, just being able to see the souls within a two-kilometer range is already impressive. With your ability, I'm sure I can find that out-of-control Infector!"

Absolutely!

Upon hearing Leon's flattery, the Black Goat proudly lifted its head.

Even though it didn't have much direct combat power, couldn't even defeat a rural farmer with a pitchfork, and almost got pinned down by him, its ability was undoubtedly practical, especially considering the full two kilometers of...

'Wait? Your soul vision radius is two kilometers?'

Leon was slightly stunned at hearing this, then shook his head and said,

"No."

Damn! You scared me!

Hearing Leon's denial, the Black Goat let out a sigh of relief.

Damn that red-haired woman, now I'm so weak that my vision diameter is just over two kilometers. If this kid also had a two-kilometer vision diameter, wouldn't he be catching up to me? Luckily, he doesn't...

"Two kilometers is the radius of my soul vision."

"..."

?!

After hearing Leon's words, both the Black Goat and the bandage woman froze, especially the Black Goat, whose shock and envy were almost spilling out of its dark face.

Your vision radius is two kilometers? My vision diameter is damn well just two kilometers! Damn it! The ability I lent you, you're using it better than me?

"Wait."

Casting a glance at the Black Goat, whose expression was a mix of shock and anger, the bandage woman, who just had a face of guilt, straightened her expression and pointed at the astonished Black Goat, asking,

"Did you just get its approval and acquire its ability? Now you also have soul vision and can see the colors of others' souls?"

Pah! I didn't approve of him at all! Hurry and return the ability! I'm not giving it!

Under the envious stare of the Black Goat, Leon nodded and said,

"Yes, for instance, your soul is black and white..."

"Prove it to me!"

Interrupting Leon's words, the tall bandage woman grabbed Leon's shoulders with eyes seemingly burning with fierce flames and excitedly said,

"I don't know what my soul looks like. No need to tell me what you saw; since you have obtained that goat's ability, then amplify my evil intent so I can feel it!"

"..."

Looking at the bandage woman full of excitement, feeling the vice-like grip on his shoulders, Leon's breathing suddenly quickened.

It seemed... she had something very important, needing the Black Goat's power? Then if I used this as a condition, could I...

"I'll help you!"

Seeing through Leon's thoughts with ease, not even needing him to speak, the bandage woman, who had just sternly refused to take risks, fervently promised,

"As long as you prove it to me, then promise to help me once more in the future, I will immediately go to the hospital!"

"Alright!"

Unexpectedly, the situation took a turn for the better. Overjoyed, Leon hugged the sheep's head tightly and tried to extend his will, gently guiding the dark side of the bandage woman's soul.

Bang!!!

It was as if a long-repressed volcano had been completely triggered, countless ferocious black "flames" exploded instantly, burning all the way along Leon's will.

And the bandage woman's gaze abruptly changed, the excitement and joy in her eyes were instantly replaced by something sharper than knives and colder than glaciers, making souls tremble.

Just one look into her eyes made Leon's breath catch, for the first time understanding what it meant to "turn murderous intent into solid form."

At that moment, the way the bandage woman looked at him had surpassed anger and hatred, as if staring at a heap of rotten flesh mixed with blood and bones, ready to pounce and tear him apart at any second!

"Sorry..."

Releasing the grip from Leon's neck, the bandage woman apologized with a look full of remorse, seeing the handprint on his neck quickly turning from red to dark,

"I... lost control for a moment... Sorry, I'll make it up to you, whether it's money or anything else you want."

"No... cough cough... no... cough cough cough!"

So... I really almost got strangled to death?

As Leon managed to recover from the glance, his throat hurt like hell. While waving his hand repeatedly, he bent over and began coughing hard, his eyes filled with the relief of narrowly escaping death.

Luckily, he hadn't dared to use more "force," only gently stirring a bit. If he had provoked a little more of the bandage woman's dark side just now, he might indeed have been strangled dead on the spot by her.

'Haha, fool!'

Watching Leon cough persistently, the Black Goat, who had silently observed everything, couldn't help but mock gloatingly,

'You don't even know how to redirect the target's evil intent to others, just return the ability to me. Giving you such a good ability is a pure waste!'

Return the ability to "you"? Does that mean the ability you lent me, you can't take back on your own?

Keenly catching the information within the Black Goat's words, Leon discreetly noted this intelligence in his mind, then sincerely asked,

"Can you teach me how to..."

'No way!'

Before he even had the chance to finish speaking, the Black Goat, displeased at being outdone by a human, snorted,

'Don't even think about it! Our deal ends here!'

'Even if I am never picked by Gotth again, if that red-haired woman bullies me daily, or even throws me back into the sheepfold of Welsh County, I will never teach you anything again!'