

I! Cleaner 601

Chapter 601: Mobilization

"Beep—"

The dull blast of the military horn resounded over the Crolock Kingdom. Within the 1-3 military industrial blocks, six royal family-controlled legions almost simultaneously received orders to mobilize. As for the target...

"Besiege the royal palace?!"

Upon hearing the target of this operation from the Messenger, the Legion Commander of the Crolock Kingdom's First Army widened his eyes in disbelief and said:

"You want us to assemble troops to blockade the royal palace, then set up a large amount of hot weaponry and prepare to completely demolish Administrative Zone 1? Are you sure this is an order from His Majesty Fein?"

"I'm sure."

The Messenger nodded, then handed over the command order and mechanical signal token, with a slight twitch of his cheek:

"Though it's a bit hard to understand, both the command order and the signal token are real. Check them out, and if there's no issue, you can move out as soon as possible."

"..."

The Legion Commander, looking shocked, took the command order and signal token, quickly identified the marks on the command order, and then pointed the signal token at his hand to verify the encrypted code. Upon confirming everything was in order, he fell silent for a few seconds and then, still skeptical, asked:

"Though everything seems correct, are you certain this command order was personally issued by His Majesty Fein?"

Upon hearing the Legion Commander's question, the Messenger's expression turned slightly cold.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, is there a chance the broadcast abruptly cut off this morning was real?"

Looking at the hostile look of the Messenger, the Legion Commander narrowed his eyes slightly, then gestured to the guards behind him to circle around and restrain the Messenger, refusing bluntly:

"Although we, the one to six legions, are direct royal family legions and should unconditionally obey orders, I now have reason to suspect that His Highness Fein has been... ah!"

With a scream, the Legion Commander seemed to be bitten by something, flailing desperately, though the signal token clutched in his hand seemed magnetized and firmly stuck to his hand, bursting instantly into a dazzling purple-white arc.

"Legion Commander!"

In sudden alarm, the surrounding guards were shocked, some reaching to assist the fallen Legion Commander, while others continued towards the static Messenger, however...

"Zzzt..."

The purple-white arc seemed to expand instantaneously, enveloping everyone within a fifteen-meter radius except for the Messenger.

In less than a twentieth of a second, everyone within the arc fell to the ground. Though not unconscious, they were unable to get up, lying on their backs, staring fearfully at the sky.

"This is a micro-current explosive from Research Zone 3, originally scheduled for your official equipment listing next June, currently still in the experimental stage."

Raising his arm and pointing to the angry Legion Commander, showing the porcelain piece on his wrist, the Messenger informed matter-of-factly:

"Without the insulating patch, your nervous system will be disrupted by the bomb's electric field, causing loss of bodily control. The effect lasts about 1 minute and 30 seconds, so you have 1 minute and 2 seconds left to decide whether to follow this command."

"You... damn it..."

Trying to open his numb jaw, the Legion Commander angrily replied with slurred tongue:

"So... the broadcast... did you really... the Majesty..."

"There are 29 seconds remaining."

"I... will never..."

"Then I consider you have given up."

After hearing the Legion Commander's words, the Messenger's expression stiffened slightly. He turned the Legion Commander over, removed the hat to expose the back of his head, and then reached into his pocket, pulled out a spider-like object with six legs, and pressed it against the back of the Legion Commander's head.

"You... did you... something to my mind..."

"Don't worry, it's just a basic soul encoder, it won't kill you."

Adjusting the position of the 'spider' and ensuring the six legs penetrated the Legion Commander's scalp and contacted the embedded information chip, the Messenger touched the back of his own head, then woodenly responded:

"This is a product from Zone 1. It can perform basic coding on a living soul, forcibly adding several high-priority commands. As long as the special energy inside isn't depleted, it ensures your loyalty to the Kingdom."

"I refuse... you..."

"Once your body resumes movement and the paralysis wears off, remember to wear your hat to hide the encoder and have these guards watched closely, then mobilize according to orders and prepare to destroy the royal palace."

"..."

"Did you hear me?"

"..."

"Do you accept the order?"

"Yes!"

...

"Beep—"

After multiple similar scenes, the Crolock Kingdom, already in turmoil from a morning broadcast, was thrown into greater chaos.

Though there were still doubts in their hearts, upon receiving orders from above, the soldiers of the six royal family legions eventually obeyed out of habit, assembling quickly and moving to surround the six districts around the royal palace.

The Kingdom's dirigible-less airships, mecha walkers of armored legions, all-terrain vehicles equipped with large-caliber cannons, and steam tanks covered in strange rivets also arrived earlier, sealing the royal palace tightly.

"How could they be so quick?!"

Peeking out of Leon's belly and glancing at the airships adjusting their positions to aim their side cannons at the palace, the Cleaner Mona's weak soul was shocked and horrified.

"Wasn't Alger attacking the signal station? How could so many soldiers be mobilized?"

"Because Senior Alger only blocked the signal station, not the entire Zone 1."

Narrowing his eyes and looking far away, Leon, newly arrived at the palace gates, shook his head:

"Even without transmitting signals directly, they can still send people out. If not for Senior Alger, these soldiers might have arrived even faster."

"Then did we not do all this in vain?"

Hearing Leon's words, Ruben's soul also emerged, weakly asking:

"We went to all that trouble attacking the broadcast building to stop him from mobilizing troops, yet here they are now!"

"This outcome is not too bad."

Hearing this, Leon smiled:

"This is their territory, after all. Just a broadcast only causes some disorder; it can't pull him down entirely. Prince Andre isn't foolish; if he didn't have control over the army, he would've been ousted before we arrived.

But that's in the past. Now, by ordering the army to besiege the palace, he's essentially digging up his own roots to catch a mouse, wagering everything on the table. So long as we can endure this wave, he will be secure."

Chapter 602: Leave Professional Matters to the Professional...Goat

That's what they say... But is it easy to hold out this round?

Seeing the increasingly gathered troops in the distance, Ruben, who felt uncertain inside, wanted to ask something, but after hesitating, he finally kept silent.

Indeed, reaching this level was already quite rare.

After Edward's bureau was ambushed with life or death unknown, this mission could already be declared a complete failure, with almost no chance of success.

But Leon, with essentially no cards to play, not only rescued the three from the Realm of the Dead, but also severely trapped Prince Andre, shaking his foundation, forcing him to stake all on the table. He's already done exceedingly well.

Though the strength difference still felt significant, since everything that could be done was done, nothing more remained but to do one's best and leave the rest to fate, taking it step by step. The worst outcome would merely be death!

"Ruben, senior, we actually have a high chance of success."

Just like the Canine Deity once digested him, Leon was rapidly "digesting" Ruben's soul, vaguely sensing his soul's pessimism, and warmly comforted:

"My Leon Value is just over 10 points, barely reaching the level of a Second-level Cleaner, but the three seniors' Leon Values are all close to 30 points. Adding up our four Leon Values already exceeds 90 points.

Even if we can't cross the barrier between humans and gods, it's still the level of the Virgin Branch chief with 59 Leon Value, and with Leon Value reserves far exceeding a bureau chief, it might not lack the power to fight."

There's indeed power to fight, but after so many days, your reaction speed has been pulled to almost that of an ordinary person. Can you really guarantee your safety when facing organized armed forces?

Moreover, when Chief Edward was ambushed, and his flesh was destroyed, an eye appeared in the sky, forcibly sealing his soul within the flesh. From that point of view, who knows if the opponent has other helpers?

However, though he wasn't very optimistic about Leon's plan, feeling this "game's" winning chance wasn't high, the three of them were directly caught off guard in the ambush. If it weren't for Leon, they'd have no chance to even play this bad "game," Ruben could only nod his head:

"Do your best, next is all on you... But don't feel pressured, you've already tried your best."

"..."

No, I've been struggling so long, if it's just another attempt to do my best, then wasn't my effort wasted?

Upon discovering Crolock Kingdom's troops starting to form ranks, Leon pondered for a moment, then instead of persuading, he reached out to pat the black goat's horn.

"Do your thing, this is what you're good at."

"Ahahaha! Finally it's our turn!"

Upon hearing Leon's words, the black goat with a sheep face full of anticipation couldn't help but tremble, first indulging in a deep breath of the battlefield's tense air, then laughing in utter joy:

"That's the smell! Ahahaha, give me five minutes! Just five minutes, and I'll make them rivers of blood!"

"Blood, damn it! You can't change this lousy habit, can you?"

Upon hearing the black goat's words, Leon's face darkened, and he fiercely smacked its head:

"What are you talking about! Have you forgotten what I told you before? Just make them lay down their weapons and start fist-fighting, knocking each other unconscious and that's it, no wanton killing!"

"Tsk, you brat..."

"Will you do it? If not, I'll find someone else!"

"Okay, okay, we'll do it!"

After inwardly cursing Leon a couple of times, the black goat floated up with a displeased face, the spiraled black horns slightly dimming, visibly trembling several times.

And as the War Cornerstone dimly yet intensely vibrated, an unseen hot wind suddenly swept out from the palace, taking just a few breaths to cross the open ground and reach the soldiers in formation, even penetrating tanks and mechas, reaching up to the sky, into the souls of soldiers aboard the Sky Clipper.

"Boom!"

Accompanied by an imaginary explosion sound, the six royal direct corps of Crolock Kingdom, comprising over eleven thousand soldiers, simultaneously ignited with black and red demonic flames, and all their noses simultaneously smelled a familiar intense scent.

Salty iron, bloody scent;

Suffocating heatwave, pungent sulfur;

Suddenly inflating blood vessels, scorching anger within;

The black and red flame burned ever fiercer, reddening the soldiers' eyes, heating their flushed faces, boiling the hot liquid in their veins, and their throats uncontrollably erupted with roaring shouts!

"Kill!!!!"

Under the extreme drive of 59 Contamination Value, the Black Goat that had been oppressed in the Virgin Branch for years, for the first time revealed its true power.

In less than a minute, the resilient souls of over eleven thousand soldiers were entirely shrouded in the color of iron and blood, the nameless rage from the depths of their souls overbearingly burned away all reason, turning all into beasts driven only by slaughter.

Weapons capable of piercing walls, artillery able to collapse buildings, the Sky Clipper floating beyond gun range...

Under the full force of the near-god level demon, all those massively destructive weapons belonging to Crolock Kingdom, capable of leveling an entire city within half an hour, lost their operators in an instant, becoming unattended scrap iron.

All within the Black Goat's capability range abandoned everything cumbersome in their hands, madly charging at any moving target nearby.

These beasts possessing only innate combat instinct seemed to lose all fear and dread, disregarding the hands clawing at themselves, desperately choking others' necks until either themselves or their targets fell unconscious, either then dropping to the ground or glaring with blood-red eyes, roaring fiercely as they leaped at another target...

minutes and 15 seconds, Crolock Kingdom's royal direct corps, annihilated.

...

"This... This..."

Witnessing the Crolock troops completely knocked out in the span of mere moments, the three Second-level Cleaners who had been worrying moments ago were now entirely dumbstruck.

The female Cleaner Mona, staring at the rampantly laughing black goat as if recognizing it for the first time, murmured in shock:

"This... this goat head is actually such a powerful abnormal object?!"

"Haha, I've told you before, we're demons! The most ferocious greater demons under True Gods!"

Hearing the female Cleaner's amazement, the black goat, feeling exuberant, turned its head with pride and bragged:

"And that was merely one-seventh of our power! Are you scared now? Ahahaha!

Let me tell you, with our once-in-millennium talent, if not for being too greedy at the time, trying to seize seven kinds of original sins simultaneously, we'd have become Demon Gods long ago!"

Chapter 603: Secret Nail

Only one-seventh of the power, and it can achieve such an effect?!

After listening to the Black Goat's boast, the three Cleaners inside Leon's stomach were immediately taken aback.

From the activation of the Black Goat's abilities to the annihilation of the six legions outside the palace, only a little over two minutes had passed. If even this level of effect is just one-seventh, then how strong must this goat-headed demon be at its peak?

"Can't you boast a little less?"

As the smug Black Goat enjoyed the shocked gazes of the three Cleaners, Leon, having caught his breath, couldn't help but expose:

"Dear seniors, don't listen to its nonsense. When it says one-seventh, it means this is just one of its seven abilities, not that it's seven times stronger at its peak.

Moreover, the main reason it can cause such an effect is because its abilities are suited for manipulating war and anger. Besides, you three seniors provided power, temporarily boosting me to a Leon Value level of 59 points. Otherwise..."

"Otherwise, we are still very strong!"

Seeing the looks of the three Cleaners shift from shock to understanding, the Black Goat felt vexed and angrily retorted:

"You ungrateful thing! If it weren't for me protecting you through all those times, you wouldn't even know where you'd have ended up dead!

Among all those random abnormal objects in your possession, which one compares to me? I am your greatest trump card! Even if the rest of those abnormal objects were to be discarded, I still have the confidence to lead you to victory!"

"..."

My goodness, you really are puffed up with pride...

Listening to the ever more absurd boasts of the Black Goat, Leon couldn't help but roll his eyes in exasperation.

Truly, while the [War Cornerstone] is a formidable abnormal object, the reason the Black Goat could "strike down" over ten thousand soldiers in one go was primarily due to a professional match, the enhancement from 59 points of Contamination Value, and the strengthening effect of its Gold-level Devil's Badge.

To say nothing of the fact that the 59 points of Contamination Value alone were already quite mighty; if it were replaced with [Silver Dagger of Cutting], it might even have the ability to slice through the entire block in front of the palace, causing tens of thousands of soldiers to tumble from the upper level of the Kingdom to the lower.

The only reason for choosing to use the Black Goat in the end was mainly to avoid causing injury. Furthermore, the Black Goat, being more professionally suited, consumed less, yet after receiving a couple of compliments, this guy started to swell with pride again. Truly...

"I see."

Just then, a hoarse voice echoed from afar, and the boasting Black Goat suddenly let out a scream, as a black long nail pierced into its forehead, causing the entire goat to wilt.

In Leon's astonished gaze, a middle-aged man, dressed in a Messenger's attire, pushed aside the legion commander pressing on him. After straightening his wrinkled uniform, he smiled at Leon and said:

"I didn't expect a level three Cleaner like you to possess such a powerful abnormal object, no wonder you dare to defy Prince Andre... Unfortunately, no matter how strong the abnormal object, it has weaknesses. Now that I have sealed it, the remaining six powers can no longer be used. You have no chance of victory."

"..."

Well, is it possible that this guy was just bluffing earlier?

After a slight twitch at the corner of his mouth, Leon naturally would not be foolish enough to explain to the opponent. Instead, he smartly put his hand behind his back, and in the worried gaze of the three Cleaners, he quirkily inquired:

"So you are...?"

"I am also a Cleaner, but from the former Gemini Sub-Bureau."

The middle-aged man bowed slightly, then with an arrogant smile said:

"My name is... hmm?!"

Accompanied by a surprised grunt, the middle-aged man felt the world before his eyes tilt, his lower body stayed put, but his upper body skewed sharply downward.

Behind him, the chest of the fainted legion commander bore an honor medal polished as smoothly as a mirror, from which a hand holding a small silver knife slowly retracted.

"Ah?! What... what did you do to me?"

"..."

What did this person come for?

Using Mirror Dog and [Silver Dagger of Cutting] to launch a surprise attack, Leon frowned slightly after promptly chopping down his opponent in one fell swoop. He reached out to touch the black nail on the Black Goat's forehead.

[Name: Damaged Capricorn Secret Nail (secret technique, infallible)]

[Appearance: A plain black long nail, upon being driven into the target's flesh, it rapidly scorches a black Capricorn Secret Pattern of an antelope head on a fish body near the target's forehead, disappearing in 12 hours]

[Ability: Can use an incomplete Capricorn Palace "Abnormal Purification" secret technique and is guaranteed to hit the target]

[Price: Can only be used by those born between December 22 and January 19, and will disappear completely after use]

[File: One of the failures in the "Secret Technique Popularization Project - Capricorn" initiated by the Clean-up Bureau nine hundred years ago. Due to its exorbitant cost and its limited ability to temporarily disrupt operations of sub-deity level abnormal objects, it has been completely shelved and no longer produced. Only a few finished products remain...]

[Evaluation: An immature secret technique condensate with outstanding tactical value, yet its exorbitant cost and effect lasting only 12 hours render it insignificant]

[Contamination Value: 0.1]

hours? So the Black Goat can't be used in the meantime?

...

That should roughly do it.

When Leon sliced through the middle-aged man and began checking the ambushed Black Goat's situation, Prince Andre in the No. 1 Research Area, upon seeing the signal disappear on the instrument console, instructed:

"That 'Secret Nail' has completed its task, sealing off the target's strongest abnormal object. You may release the other Cleaners now!"

"Okay."

Upon hearing Andre's words, Atifie00, seated at the instrument console, nodded and then proposed:

"Are just these Cleaners enough? I have a batch of reserved code spiders, would you like to control a few more legions? To coordinate with them?"

"No need."

Prince Andre shook his head and said:

"Only the 1st to 6th legions directly under the royal family can achieve complete obedience. With the compliance of the other legions, if they are indeed sent, there's a risk they might be persuaded to mutiny temporarily, and instead attack us, creating more trouble."

"That's true."

Atifie00 nodded in agreement, then curiously inquired:

"By the way, how did you know that Leon possesses an abnormal object with a large range effect on the military? Did the Slaughter King Association provide you with the information?"

"I don't know."

Prince Andre fixed his gaze on the light on the instrument console, without turning back he said:

"I only know that most of the Cleaners' strength relies heavily on abnormal objects. Facing a legion capable of utterly destroying the palace and erasing all evidence, he would certainly not dare to be negligent, and would undoubtedly employ a very strong abnormal object."

At that point, as long as the 'Secret Nail' seizes the opportunity to seal that powerful abnormal object, it would effectively cripple most of his strength, making it easier to send other Cleaners to deal with him."

"I see."

Atifie00 nodded in understanding, then reassuredly said:

"Since you've calculated to this extent, he probably won't hold out much longer, saving me some trouble."

"No slacking."

Glimpsing at her, Prince Andre replied:

"This Leon is peculiar, and those Gemini Sub-Bureau Cleaners might not necessarily solve him. To prevent any eventuality, you still need to proceed according to the original plan... How's it going with the Scorpio Bureau's director? Has his brain been dealt with?"

Chapter 604: Scheming and Infighting

"It's almost done."

Atifie00 replied:

"His soul is troublesome. I've been using all my computational power until now, and I can only perform very basic encoding. Sometimes he even breaks free from control, but his brain is quite easy to handle.

Even though his brain can quickly heal itself after being damaged, its structure is not much different from a normal human's. With the highest quality gel and some special components added, it's enough to trick his brain."

"So is it a success or not?"

Prince Andre frowned slightly and turned his body with a displeased expression, saying:

"I don't want to hear those things. Now I just want to know, if even the cleaners who went after him failed, can I send the director of the Scorpio Branch to deal with him!"

"Almost, almost~"

Atifie00 smiled and said:

"There's no problem with the physical aspect, the main issue is the soul.

If a normal person's soul is fog, then a low-level cleaner's soul is cotton, and the soul of the Zodiac Branch Office director is the hardest diamond. Trying to control him to do your bidding is like carving flowers on a diamond, it's hard to ensure there won't be slip-ups."

"So it can be used, but the possibility of losing control is also high?"

"That's right."

"..."

"How about this, why don't you go find the Slaughter King Association again and see if they can help?"

Atifie00 suggested:

"When you dealt with the Scorpio Branch director before, didn't they give you a hand? This time, find them again and have them help you solve that Leon, wouldn't that work?"

"It's not that easy."

Prince Andre shook his head and said:

"The Clean-up Bureau's Watcher's Palace is very troublesome. They paid a huge price to barely send a small force through it and help me seal off the Scorpio Branch director's soul.

And repeatedly impacting the Watcher's Palace in a short time is very likely to attract the Clean-up Bureau's attention. By then, both our situations will just become more difficult."

"Then there's no way."

"Why is there no way?"

"No way with my limited ability."

Atifie00 spread her hands and said:

"With my technical skills, I can't fully control the Scorpio Branch director's soul. I can only forcibly add some basic instructions while keeping his consciousness clear. If his emotions become too intense, the possibility of breaking free is very high."

"Then don't let his emotions get too intense."

After glancing at Atifie00, Prince Andre said:

"Your research in the field of brain and soul is at least a hundred years ahead of all the scholars in the Crolock Kingdom. Using what the Slaughter King Association provided, target and destroy part of the Scorpio director's brain to keep his emotions always indifferent. That shouldn't be too difficult for you, right?"

"Alas...fine then!"

Hearing this, Atifie00 nodded and then said with a somewhat regretful expression:

"What a pity, this is a brain of a cleaner on par with our ancestors. It's my first time getting such excellent material. But before I could study it, I have to destroy his brain first. Such a waste."

"Wasting it is better than being killed by an out-of-control puppet. Besides..."

After another glance at Atifie00's face, Prince Andre stared intently and said:

"Atifie, are you doing something behind my back?"

"Hmm?"

Atifie00 was startled and said:

"My dear nephew, how could you think such a thing?"

If a direct answer isn't given, then it means yes...

Prince Andre nodded after observing Atifie00's unchanged expression, then squinted his eyes and said:

"If I remember correctly, you should have equipped the 'Secret Nail' with a device for detecting souls, and 'Secret Nail' lost contact close to the target. The detecting device should have collected the soul data of the target. Have you found anything?"

"Yes, and it's highly valuable."

Atifie00 said with a smile:

"His soul is full of an evil scent, radical and stubborn, arrogant and greedy, with ambitions to dominate everything and madness to destroy everything. It feels even more dangerous than you."

"I see..."

Upon hearing this, Prince Andre raised an eyebrow.

"So...you admire him?"

"A little bit~"

Pinching two fingers and making a tiny gesture, Atifie00 said with a smile:

"Since you figured it out, I won't hide it from you. In these years of being locked up by you, life has been pretty dull for me. If you bring back Feiliya, I suppose I'll continue being locked up, so naturally, I don't really want you to win.

Plus, you didn't really gain much in your two encounters with him. To avoid being in trouble if you fail, it makes sense for me to hedge my bets just a little, right?"

"Fair enough."

After listening to Atifie00, Prince Andre nodded slightly and then said calmly:

"If I win, you'll be locked up until the day I die, and then I'll directly destroy you before I die. It's normal for you to want to find a way out for yourself. I won't get angry over such matters."

"As long as you understand~"

After glancing at Prince Andre's expression, Atifie00 said with a smile:

"So aren't you curious about what I'm doing behind your back?"

"It's not hard to guess. You cannot disobey the Scepter of Time Division's commands and can't truly betray me. So it's likely something insignificant to me but significant to them..."

After pondering for a moment, Prince Andre said calmly:

"You're informing him through those cleaners about the whereabouts of the woman captured with the Scorpio director, right?"

"Absolutely correct~"

Atifie00 blinked and said with a smile:

"And if they chose to rescue first instead of confronting you, then I've actually bought you some time to prepare your measures against them. In that sense, I've been helping you... well, how's that, I've been good to you, right?"

"It's decent."

Glancing at Atifie, Prince Andre urged:

"Go get to work, quickly deal with the Scorpio Branch director's brain. There aren't many cleaners left."

"I'm on it, I'm on it, really on it!"

...

"Ah!!! Don't come any closer!"

Just as the aunt and nephew plotted against each other, the battle on the other side was reaching its end.

In the terrified expression of a plump female cleaner, Leon, with a wine-red face, hiccupped, grabbed a bunch of transparent fishing line, and pulled her in front of him, decisively beheading her in one swift move!

And seeing the last companion being taken down, the scattered heads of twenty Gemini Branch cleaners piled nearby couldn't help but emit a collective sigh of despair.

"We're finished..."

"Why can't this guy die!"

"Weren't we told his most powerful abnormal object was sealed? Why is he still so strong!"

Chapter 605: Seventy-Thirty Split

"Hic..."

After letting out another alcohol-laden hiccup, Leon bent down to pick up the head of the plump female cleaner who was screaming, and tossed it onto a pile of heads belonging to the Gemini Branch cleaners. Then, with his hands on his hips and six-tenths drunk, he loudly challenged:

"Anyone else?"

"Say something!"

"Is this all Gemini Branch has?"

"..."

Facing Leon, who was throwing a drunken fit, the Gemini Branch cleaners couldn't help but shrink their necks and avert their eyes, with no one daring to meet Leon's gaze.

They couldn't win; it was impossible to win.

This was the most powerful abnormal object that had instantly destroyed six legions, and even with the "secret nail" sealing it in advance, this alleged third-level cleaner who had joined just over three months ago exhibited a crushing force that was utterly despairing.

On the entire battlefield, as long as there was the tiniest hint of a reflective surface, a hand holding a knife could stretch out at any time, slicing a lingering cleaner in two.

Even directly obliterating everything around and destroying all reflective surfaces was useless; the terrifying arm and knife light could even emerge from one's pupil and directly cut down any body that appeared within one's line of sight.

As long as that silver-glowing knife cut even a hair's breadth of a nick on the body, regardless of whether there was an abnormal object protecting it, it would instantly be cleaved alive into two screaming, terrified remnants.

In contrast, all our methods of attack, when contacting him, bizarrely had no effect whatsoever and caused not the slightest bit of harm.

Be it direct abnormal object strikes, small meteorites summoned indirectly, commanding unconscious soldiers to fire at him, or even sinister soul pollution, the result was invariably ineffective!

It wasn't that his wobbly body could heal like some Undying Body after being injured, but rather a complete exemption from harm, outright and absurdly negating all damage. After hitting him for such a long time, not even a hair had been lost.

What's the point of fighting then!

Even knowing that such a powerful ability either has a damage limit that, once reached, can be breached, or a time limit that will end after a while.

But knowing how to do it and having the ability to do it are two completely different things. With our attacks failing to breach his defenses and our inability to withstand getting hit, what else can we do but wait for death?

...

Absolutely absurd...

Not just the Gemini Branch cleaners, but even the three Scorpio Branch cleaners inside Leon were stunned by his virtually undefeatable combat mode.

The Gemini Branch cleaners weren't weak; each had their own exceptional main battle abnormal object, and even facing attacks from more than fifty abnormal objects at once, even if our director, Edward, came, he'd likely struggle for a bit.

After all, no matter how strong a cleaner is, it's hard to cover every angle, and there are always some weaknesses that could be exploited, resulting in failure. But Leon was literally shielding absolutely nothing, just standing there taking the hits.

And after each hit, a simple lift of his hand with a knife meant the attacking cleaner fell while screaming. He didn't even move from where he started as the battle progressed, not stepping a single foot.

This meant that the second-level cleaners on the same level as us three didn't even qualify to make him move.

All one can say is, as expected of a monster capable of handling six "True God level" tasks in just three months, he's not on the same level as us three anymore, only lacking some Leon Value compared to those director-level beings.

What's even more terrifying to think about is that Leon, who achieved this formidable record, still had his strongest abnormal object sealed away. If that Black Goat wasn't nailed down, and he employed the other six one-against-a-thousand abilities, could he even take on Director Edward?

"Huh, pitifully weak."

After shouting a couple of times and seeing the group of cleaners before him with evasive eyes, the drunken Leon snorted, then reached out to pat his own belly.

"Frankie senior, help me tie them up."

"Okay!"

Though Leon's address was still very polite, upon hearing his words, Frankie couldn't help but shiver slightly, as if receiving some command, and hurriedly pulled the fishing line, tying the twenty-some cleaners who had been sliced to bits into a bundle, handing the line end over to Leon.

Just as Leon was pulling the fishing line, intending to drag these people over, the twenty-some groaning heads suddenly stopped all reactions, then abruptly straightened their necks. One head spoke with a vacant expression:

"Mr. Leon, are you interested in talking with me?"

"?"

Upon hearing this cleaner's inquiry, Leon raised an eyebrow and, after pondering a bit, responded somewhat uncertainly:

"Are you... the one controlling these cleaners?"

"Yes."

The first speaking head remained silent, while another head moved a bit, then grinned slightly:

"My name is Atifei-00, you can just call me Atifie."

Atifei-00?

Upon hearing what Atifei-00 said, Leon, in his [Immortal in Liquor] state with a not-so-clear mind, frowned and directly asked:

"Who are you? And what is your relation to Atifei-01?"

"I am the first test subject of Soul Encoding Technology, also the creator of Atifei-01. As for my specific identity... I used to be a former member of the Crolock royal family. I'm Andre's aunt, and the Feiliya you captured counts as my niece."

Andre's aunt? Meaning she preceded Feiliya and was the first to be turned into an intelligent machine?

Leon fell silent for a moment upon hearing this and then proceeded to ask:

"What do you want to talk about?"

"It's actually nothing much, just a heads up."

Glancing around the surrounding situation, another cleaner head said:

"You're a bit stronger than I anticipated, and although Andre has other cards up his sleeve, my calculations show that his win rate against you is roughly 30-70, so to avoid you choosing to settle accounts with me after you win over him, I wanted to specially give you this notice."

"Why 30-70?"

Upon hearing this, Leon did not respond immediately, while Mona, the female cleaner in his belly, couldn't help but poke her head out and asked with a puzzled expression:

"The royal family's direct legion is gone, and the controlled Gemini Branch cleaners are also defeated, how can your win rate still be thirty percent?"

"Not so."

Looking in surprise at the female cleaner's soul, the fourth cleaner shook his head and smilingly explained:

"Andre's win rate is seventy percent, your win rate, however, is thirty."

"..."

"As for the reason, don't ask. I'm still under Andre's control, and if I were to truly betray him, it would result in me being forcibly shut down."

After letting out an unfortunate sigh, the fifth cleaner head, with an earnest face, said:

"Good luck, you must push Andre to the brink, or I will surely be in trouble!"

Chapter 606: Scepter of Time Division

"..."

In this Atifie 00's calculation, does Andre Prince still have a seventy percent chance of winning?

After glancing at Atifie 00, who was speaking through the Cleaner's head, it was hard to tell if it was true or just boasting. Leon pondered slightly, then squinted and said:

"Let's assume everything you're saying is true. Then, since you and Andre Prince aren't on the same page and don't want him to win, how do you plan on helping us? Will you turn against him as soon as I charge into the Number One Research Zone?"

"That's impossible~"

The sixth Cleaner's head shook and said:

"During the Soul Code experiment, to gain Fein's support, I had to add a top-priority command to the underlying soul code of all 'Atifie', requiring all soul code receptors not to defy the commands of the 'Scepter of Time Division' holder."

"Scepter of Time Division?"

"The Scepter of Time Division is a pair of abnormal objects passed down in our Crolock Kingdom, possessing the unique ability to confuse time perception."

Atifie 00 explained:

"The person chosen by the Scepter of Time will have their one hour feel as short as a minute, while the person chosen by the Scepter of Division will have their one minute feel as long as an hour."

"Time-based abnormal object?!"

"That's not what it means. For example, the Scepter of Time held by every King only makes one hour 'seem like' a minute, and doesn't actually turn one hour into a minute."

Simply put, the Scepter of Time Division confuses time perception, increasing personal reaction speed sixty times over and locking onto opponents with that sixtyfold response, reducing their reaction speed to one-sixtieth of what it originally was, but it can't truly manipulate time."

Even if it's not a time-based abnormal object, isn't that still insane?

Imagining the consequences of his reaction speed slowing sixty times while his opponent's reaction speed increased sixty times, not only did three second-level Cleaners' hearts skip a beat, but even Leon couldn't help but take a deep breath.

Sixty times sixty equals a staggering three-thousand-six-hundred-fold difference in reaction speed. If speed could match reaction, it could let a common ant catch up to a high-speed train.

No wonder Atifie 00 said Andre's odds were still seventy percent. With such a monstrous abnormal object in hand, even thirty percent winning odds seem generously given.

"Rest assured, the Scepter of Time Division isn't that formidable."

Seeing Leon's silence and seemingly worried about losing the confidence to confront Andre, the seventh Cleaner's head quickly comforted:

"These two scepters can only be used by members of the Crolock royal family, and they consume a lot of energy, approximately one Leon Value per minute of effect.

If someone with one Leon Value uses it, it can only make someone's one minute into fifty-nine seconds, with an amplifying effect of merely one-sixtieth. Even someone with ten Leon Values using it can only increase their reaction speed by ten percent."

After listening to Atifie 00, Leon hesitated slightly, then squinted his eyes.

Though that's true, if this falls into the hands of someone with thirty Contamination Values, it can widen the reaction speed gap fourfold. If it crosses the difference between man and god, a Cleaner with sixty Contamination Values can still produce a three-thousand-six-hundred-fold enemy reaction speed difference.

So, no matter how you view it, this is a terrifying "late-stage divine artifact"!

After noting down information about the [Scepter of Time Division], Leon frowned deeply and said:

"Why are you telling us such important information? Aren't you afraid of being shut down for betraying Andre?"

"It's no problem~ this information isn't important~"

Atifie 00 smiled gleefully and said:

"Andre is not a Cleaner and lacks the Cleaners' unique Leon Values, so the Scepter of Time Division in his hands has no effect, acting only as two tokens to control me.

Also, because these two scepters have the highest authority over all 'Atifie', he can't hand them to others either. Moreover, only the recognized royal family members can use them, and the royal family has long been killed by him, so he can't give them if he wanted to."

I see.

Leon nodded slightly and continued questioning:

"So back to the previous question, how do you plan on helping us deal with Andre?"

"I've already mentioned this before; I won't help you deal with Andre."

Atifie 00 blinked and said:

"Currently, his odds of winning are higher, so I'm just hedging my bets, selling you a favor just in case~"

Your fence-sitting is rather blatant...

With a somewhat speechless shake of the head, Leon asked:

"So what are you planning to sell me?"

"The whereabouts of your captured companion, is that enough?"

The eighth Cleaner's head lifted up with a smile and said:

"That Cleaner named Nicole from the former Gemini branch wasn't killed in the previous ambush. Instead, she was captured by Andre and is being held in the basement of the Number Three Military Zone.'

"Oh."

Leon nodded upon hearing this.

"I see. What else?"

"Isn't that enough?"

Atifie was slightly stunned by those words and somewhat perplexed as she asked:

"Aren't you companions? Aren't you going to rescue her immediately?"

"Why rescue her?"

Rubbing his temples to clear the haze of alcohol, Leon shook his head and asked in return:

"Are you going to kill her?"

"Uh... no..."

"So are you torturing her? Subjecting her to punishment?"

"This... is also not happening..."

"Then what am I rushing for? Let her stay with you!"

Glancing at Atifie 00, Leon calmly said:

"Besides, since you can't betray Andre, you can't help us, and you can't even reveal Andre's other cards, you naturally can't specifically help us increase our fighting power at this time.

So, if I'm not mistaken, Nicole must be under control now, or her abnormal objects have been sealed. Even if we rescue her, she can't do anything, right?"

"..."

"Looks like I'm right."

In Atifie 00's wordless silence, Leon summarized:

"If I don't rescue Nicole, not only will we not be in danger, you'll also have to feed her well and guard her, and other than lacking freedom and having bad meals, she won't face any hardship;

But if I go to rescue her, first, we'll be in danger, secondly, she won't be able to help, and with her abnormal objects sealed, she'll be stumbling along with us, slowing us down and hindering our actions. It's better to let her stay captured by you."

"..."

Sounds like...that's indeed the case...

"So if you want to cooperate with us, and avoid being held accountable after we defeat Andre, you'd better offer something more practical."

Leon calmly said while threading fishing lines to bind the dismembered Cleaners together:

"Since you can communicate with me through them, I won't knock these guys unconscious for now, but if you want something from us, you'd better think about what you can offer us... I'm leaving first, I'll wait for your good news."

"..."

In Atifie 00's silent contemplation, Leon turned and entered the Crolock palace with its door blown up, then sternly said:

"Three Seniors, we should probably prepare to confront Director Edward."

Chapter 607: Cracking Open the Skull

What?!

Hearing Leon's words, the three Cleaners could not help but be taken aback.

Why should they prepare to face Director Edward? Could it be...

"Do you think Director Edward has been controlled?!"

The female Cleaner, Mona, was the first to speak, her face full of shock as she questioned:

"Why do you think that? Did that person give you a hint just now?"

"It didn't give me any hint, but the possibility is very high."

Leon said with furrowed brows:

"Director Andre has already crossed the difference between man and god, so even if his body is destroyed, he wouldn't die immediately. And when I went to the Realm of the Dead to fetch you, I indeed didn't see his soul, so he should have been captured like Nicole.

And in the absence of his direct legion and the Cleaners from the Gemini Branch, that Atifie No.0 still concluded that Prince Andre had a higher chance of winning. Plus, it didn't mention anything about Director Edward's situation from the beginning, seemingly avoiding something deliberately.

So, I can only suspect that the controlled Director Edward is the reason behind Prince Andre's seventy percent chance of winning."

"..."

Indeed... if that's the case, it makes sense.

Exchanging glances for a moment, the three Cleaners from the Scorpio Branch couldn't help but feel a flush of despair in their hearts.

No one knew better than them how strong Director Edward was.

Even after absorbing most of their soul power, although Leon's displayed level was also astonishing, it was still far behind Director Edward.

Not to mention anything else, the existence of the "difference between man and god" alone was an insurmountable chasm.

Don't be fooled by the mere one-point gap between 59 Leon Value and 60 Leon Value; it's like 1°C water is still liquid, but at 0°C, it's starting to freeze. This 1 point difference in Contamination Value is the beginning of a qualitative change.

Once a Cleaner's power reaches the standard and successfully crosses the difference between man and god, there will be an earth-shaking change in their "density" or "presence," making it increasingly difficult to be "shaken."

It's like a gentle breeze can ripple a lake's surface, but even a level ten gale can only lift and shatter ice without causing ripples; after a Cleaner "freezes," abnormal objects with insufficient status find it hard to "move" them.

And although Leon's strength was astonishing, when facing the already "frozen" Director Edward, his highly powerful abnormal objects would surely have their effects greatly diminished.

If Prince Andre could really control Director Edward and fully utilize his strength, not to mention having a thirty percent chance of winning, there might not even be a 0.001 percent chance!

...

"Seniors, don't be discouraged. We might not necessarily lose yet."

Having personally experienced the difference between man and god, Leon naturally understood the disparity behind that 1 point Contamination Value. But feeling the despair rising from the souls of the three Cleaners, he still spoke to encourage them:

"If they could really fully control Director Edward and let him exert his full strength, then that Atifie No.0 would not have come to greet us, so the control method must be imperfect.

If I were to guess, they either cannot perfectly reproduce Director Edward's strength, or when Director Edward goes all out, he might break free from their control, having an 'output' limit that is not too high, and may not necessarily overpower us greatly."

Could the control be less than perfect?

Hearing Leon's analysis, the three Cleaners couldn't help but calm down a bit. The female Cleaner with the best psychological composure pondered for a while before clenching her fists and speaking proactively:

"Yes! When we were attacked before, Director Edward's body was also half-destroyed, and at his level, it certainly wouldn't be easy to repair, so Director Edward's strength must be somewhat diminished!"

"And the soul should also have issues."

Recalling those Cleaners from the Gemini Branch who were hacked to pieces by Leon, Frankie tugged at his beard thoughtfully:

"When Leon was fighting those Cleaners from the Gemini Branch earlier, I took the opportunity to observe their souls and felt that their souls seemed a bit stiff, with a slight delay in their reactions each time.

If their method of controlling Director Edward is the same as that used on those Cleaners from the Gemini Branch, it could also have this problem."

"Now that you mention it, I do feel something is off."

After hearing Frankie's words, Ruben also poked his head out and began to analyze:

"Aside from their souls, their fighting style also seemed awkward, as if those Cleaners from the Gemini Branch were always too 'rigid' and their development of their abnormal objects was highly peculiar.

For example, if I were using those abnormal objects to attack Leon, I wouldn't use full force again after finding it ineffective the first time. I would conserve my energy and try to attack the ground under his feet to force him to move.

But those Cleaners from the Gemini Branch seem completely unconcerned about expendings and don't consider adaptability, always attacking full force without restraint. This might also be an exploitable flaw."

Damaged body, delayed soul, and rigid fighting style?

Noting the potential flaws analyzed and identified by the three individuals on the controlled Scorpio Director, Leon, who was on his way deeper into the palace, couldn't help but slightly lift the corner of his mouth.

Although the three seniors were indeed shaken upon learning the grim situation and the potential need to face the controlled Scorpio Director, they immediately calmed down upon hearing there was still a chance. They began to rack their brains to analyze the situation and desperately search for potential turning points.

This could only mean that as elites of the Scorpio Branch, the three seniors were all top-notch regarding psychological composure and professional skills.

And considering their familiarity with the Scorpio Director, as long as they could maintain their composure and provide more intelligence on the Scorpio Director, perhaps he, Leon, might be able to wrestle with Edward!

With the determination to fight tooth and nail, Leon passed through the transparent glass walkway of the Crolock Palace amid the analysis of the three Cleaners, bypassing the clock-like circular corridor and arriving outside the main hall door referred to as the "Preservation Hall" by Feiliya.

And just as Leon was about to push the door open, a mechanical voice suddenly came from inside the main hall.

"Everyone, gathering you here today is to discuss a significant matter concerning the Kingdom's future."

Curiously pushing the door open and seeing the source of the voice, Leon's pupils suddenly contracted.

On the throne in the center of the "Preservation Hall," the middle-aged man speaking had a cut across his forehead, his upper scalp lifted back, leaving the place where his brain should be empty.

Although his facial features appeared familiar and resembled Andre somewhat, the middle-aged man seemed completely oblivious to his open skull and continued to narrate with a blank expression:

"After being assessed by Atifie, my daughter Feiliya's brain has talent surpassing hers tenfold, so it was suggested to extract her brain and make it into a new core... what do you think?"

Chapter 608: The Reason for the Annihilation

So this is what Feiliya meant, by simulating past scenes to keep all the Atifie bodies in minimal cognitive activity when not in use, to "preserve" the brain?

After glancing around the preservation hall and seeing six or seven "preservation vessels" similarly opened up like the middle-aged man, Leon couldn't help but hiss, feeling a tingling sensation on his scalp.

This is truly... quite perverse...

After shaking his head wordlessly, Leon hesitated slightly but then did not disturb the "small theaters" of these Atifie bodies. Instead, he activated the Secret Tail and found a seat towards the back.

"Fein, what are you talking about?!"

Before the royal family members below could respond, the queen beside the middle-aged man, with a face full of shock, demanded:

"Didn't we already agree that such a crazy thing is absolutely not allowed? How can you..."

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

It seemed that after the brain was taken out, it affected the body's ability to express "emotions." Facing his wife's angry questioning, King Fein first let out a mechanical sigh, then read aloud expressionlessly:

"You understand the current situation of the Kingdom. Whether it's non-renewable resources represented by Thunder Ore or consumable materials like Hover Crystals, in recent years, they've been insufficient. Nearly 20% of factories have shut down, and over sixty thousand people have lost their jobs.

Our contract with the Vandastone Kingdom is about to expire in half a year. They are preparing to raise energy prices. Over twenty mining areas such as Cheshire and Black Mountain have been causing trouble since last year, trying to break free from being just mine locations; the kingdom's current situation is not optimistic.

If a stronger 'Atifie' could appear to manage the entire kingdom, these losses could be reduced by a minimum of 15%, with a maximum reduction of up to 35%. The crisis facing the kingdom could be greatly alleviated, so..."

"It's not about how much we can reduce!"

The queen interrupted the middle-aged man's explanation, angrily scolding:

"Feiliya is our daughter! She's just a teenager! How can you say such heartless things as a father?"

"Besides being Feiliya's father, I'm also the King of the Crolock Kingdom, and although Feiliya is just a child, she is also the princess of the Crolock Kingdom."

Lowering the open skull slightly, King Fein continued in a seemingly pained voice:

"Whatever a person gains from their identity, they must bear the corresponding cost. I've enjoyed the authority brought by being king, and so I must bear the responsibility of maintaining the kingdom. Feiliya has enjoyed the benefits of being a princess, so she too has the responsibility to bear with that identity..."

"She's still a child! What do you want her to bear?"

The queen fumed:

"Fein! You make me sick! Do you know what you're saying? If Andre finds out..."

"If I don't do this, neither Andre nor Feiliya will live to see their 15th birthday!"

"What?!!"

Hearing King Fein's impulsively shouted words, the queen was stunned, and even Leon below couldn't help but raise an eyebrow.

In a moment of complete silence, the brain-opened King Fein sighed and then spoke in a low tone:

"As you know, due to the influence of our bloodline, our family generally has frail bodies, but our brains are naturally much more developed than normal people's.

But Feiliya and Andre... The difference between their brains and ours is even greater than the difference between ours and ordinary people. This extraordinary talent isn't so much a gift from heaven as a curse."

Pausing a bit here, King Fein continued with a more oppressive tone:

"These two children have brains which are different from everyone else's. Some parts that should have matured and then stopped developing during infancy will continue to develop endlessly, crazily occupying space from other brain tissues.

While they're still young, there aren't many abnormalities, but as their brains continue to develop, it'll gradually affect their motor skills, potentially bringing about losses in vision, taste, and touch.

In the final few years, they will even completely lose control over their bodies, losing all sensory perception of the outside world, and will be helplessly confined in an empty prison by their wildly operating genius brains until death."

"This... this..."

Shocked by the truth King Fein revealed, the queen exclaimed:

"Then Andre has been frequently falling and complaining of blurry vision in the mornings recently, is that because..."

"Yes."

King Fein nodded.

"Andre's brain is gradually becoming overloaded, and there's no way Atifia at its current capacity could sort out his brain, which is a hundred times more complex than usual, but... Feiliya could.

So the choice now is either to do nothing and watch both children little by little... or to choose to sacrifice Feiliya to give Andre a chance to grow up healthy."

"Oh my god..."

Learning the truth of the matter, the queen's eyes instantly reddened, and she sobbed softly:

"Why... why must we make such a cruel choice? Moreover... Feiliya and Andre are so good. If he finds out in the future that it was by sacrificing Feiliya that he lived, that child... that child might..."

"He won't find out."

King Fein shook his head, reading aloud expressionlessly:

"As I initially said, the decision to sacrifice Feiliya is mine alone as her father, moved by Atifie to save the declining kingdom, having nothing to do with Andre... Everyone!"

At this point, King Fein made a gesture of removing his crown, then bowed profoundly to the silent audience below.

"When I make this decision, I ask that you not stop me and keep it a secret, never allowing Andre to know what happened today."

"..."

After a long silence, one of the Atifie bodies below, a white-haired old man, sighed and nodded slightly.

"Fein... it has been hard on you."

After the elder's statement, four more older royal family members nodded in succession.

"There's really nothing else we can do."

"Sigh... even saving one child is good."

"But Andre might hate you for life."

"How about this, let's say it was us who forced you to do it, and that you agreed because of the pressure from us elders... would that be a bit better?"

"..."

Well then... you sure handled this...

Upon hearing this, Leon couldn't help but stand up and glance at the last elder who made the suggestion.

No wonder Andre harbors such resentment, wiping out all the royal family members in one go. If I'm not mistaken, this single sentence probably led to the extermination of the entire Crolock royal family.

At this moment, the queen, who was crying bitterly in the front, suddenly sat up straight and smiled familiarly at Leon.

"Mr. Leon."

With her hands clasped at her abdomen, returning to her original graceful posture, the Crolock Queen—or rather Atifie 00—using the queen's "body," smiled and inquired:

"I wonder if this piece of history has satisfied you?"

Chapter 609: It's Not Easy Being a Fence-Sitter

So that's how it is...

Looking at Atifie00, who had taken over the Queen's body, Leon couldn't help but flash a look of understanding in his eyes.

No wonder I've been so lucky; as soon as I entered the hall of preservation, I stumbled upon this little drama revealing the truth from those years. It was specifically arranged for me to see.

"Well, let's make do."

After nodding noncommittally, Leon stared at the gentle-smiling 'Queen,' and asked:

"These things you just showed me, does Andre know about them?"

"Of course not."

The Queen... or rather Atifie00, smiled and replied:

"Feiliya's computing power is indeed much stronger than mine, but when it comes to the soul and memory, it's not something that can be easily sorted out just with computational power. As the creator of the Soul Encoding Technology, I thought hiding a little something in my 'creations' shouldn't be too difficult."

"I see... It seems the relationship between you and Prince Andre is even worse than I had imagined."

Narrowing his eyes slightly, Leon spoke:

"Did you hide these past events just to use them against him when the time came?"

"Don't put it so harshly."

Atifie00 replied with a smile:

"After all, I'm still Andre's aunt. Maybe I just didn't want to tell him the truth because I was worried that it would devastate him?"

"..."

Yeah, right...

Glancing at her speechlessly, Leon did not continue the conversation but pondered over the backstory of these past events.

After all, if what Atifie00 showed him was true and Prince Andre also wasn't aware, the tragedy that befell the Crolock royal family was caused by a misunderstanding.

Out of not wanting to see his two children die in despair amid sickness, the old King decided to sacrifice one to save the other. Not wanting Andre to bear the guilt of "surviving because his sister was sacrificed," the truth was hidden from him.

But in Andre's eyes, it was as if the entire Crolock royal family had gone mad; to solve the Kingdom's crisis, they pressured the old King to sacrifice his twelve-year-old sister.

Not only did his parents fail to protect Feiliya, but one gave the order, and the other tacitly approved. On his sister's birthday, they had her brain removed while she was alive and turned into a cold machine.

Honestly, if it were me, I'd have gone insane in such a situation.

Standing from the perspective of a fellow sister-protector, Leon couldn't help but shake his head slightly as he thought about Andre's experiences and somewhat understood the reason behind all his actions.

King Fein and his wife didn't want Andre to live bearing guilt, but as it turned out, they took even more from him by doing so.

In Andre's perspective, if his father could sacrifice his sister for the Kingdom, he could naturally be sacrificed too. Thus, everything from the past became a web of lies, and the happier his life originally was, the deeper the pain.

Honestly, if Prince Andre's last name were Uchiha, this event would probably have been enough to awaken his powers, and at least it'd be a three-tomoe Sharingan. Being stuck with such a disastrous affair, who wouldn't flip out?

But understanding aside, given the current situation, if I can use this information against Andre, I should absolutely use it without hesitation.

Sympathy and understanding are matters for after the fact—after dragging him out of Research Area No.1 and stripping him of all resistance, there will be plenty of time to sympathize with him.

As for whether this information can actually be used against Prince Andre...

It can.

If Prince Andre truly knows nothing about this, then exposing this "truth from back then" could indeed cause him significant psychological harm, but the outcome might not necessarily be in our favor.

Considering that the ancestors of Crolock's royal family were very strong Cleaners, it's not unlikely that Prince Andre, after suffering a "mental blow," could create an abnormal object like Joshua did in the future.

If he doesn't mentally collapse and surrender, but instead, starts to go insane upon insane, erupting into a frenzy, then I would only be hitting myself. Rashly exposing the truth to Prince Andre might not be a good thing, and this information isn't as valuable as it seems. However, it might not be entirely valueless either.

At this thought, Leon glanced at the "Queen" in front of him, and then took the initiative to ask:

"Atifie... I'll just call you Atifie. There's something I'm very curious about, and I wonder if you can answer me."

"Go ahead, but whether I can answer depends on what you're asking. If you're asking about Andre's trump card, I definitely can't tell you."

"Don't worry, I'm not asking about his trump card. What I want to know is about what happened back then."

Staring into the Queen's emerald green eyes, just like Feiliya's, Leon spoke each word clearly:

"Did Andre and Feiliya really 'fall ill' back then?"

"..."

"What do you mean?"

After a brief moment of silence, the smile on the "Queen's" lips faintly disappeared, and she frowned:

"I've just shown you what happened back then; apart from the fact that Fein's actions were simulated by me because his brain was removed, all memories related to these events are from their own minds. I don't have the capability to falsify in that aspect."

"I'm not doubting your fabrications."

Leon shook his head upon hearing this, pressing on:

"I'm questioning whether the message King Fein received back then was true or not."

Can you please tell me, were Andre and Feiliya really sick back then, with no choice but to sacrifice one to save the other, or did someone secretly manipulate things to create a mind machina ten times smarter than themselves?"

"You're suspecting that I fabricated their illness?"

Upon hearing Leon's words, the "Queen's" expression turned slightly cold, and she replied with hostility:

"Stop with the wild imagination. Our Crolock Kingdom has deep research into the brain, with over three hundred scholars having made contributions. If I had tampered with something, wouldn't Fein have sought others for confirmation?"

"There are many scholars who understand the brain, but you were the only mind machina at that time, and given that the brains of your royal family differ greatly from ordinary people, those scholars might not have seen through any deception."

Looking at the "Queen" who was glaring daggers at him, with implicit anger in her expression, Leon concluded:

"So in this matter, the possibility that you tampered isn't zero, am I right?"

"..."

"Of course, maybe I could put it more bluntly."

Leon slowed his speech, looking at her as he continued:

"The important thing isn't what the truth is, but what Prince Andre is more willing to believe.

One side is that he, due to a misunderstanding, slaughtered his family and kin with his own hands, making himself the greatest mistake, not knowing who to seek revenge on;

And the other side is someone manipulating from the shadows, deliberately using him to create this tragedy, with a mastermind to target for revenge. Which do you think he's more willing to believe?"

"..."

It would surely be the second one... and if Andre learned of this "truth," he might immediately destroy me!

Looking at the aggressive Leon in front of her, the "Queen's" previous jesting and ease had completely vanished. Regretting the initiative to contact Leon, she couldn't help but frown and ask:

"What exactly do you want by saying all this?"

"Of course, I want to cooperate with you in a deeper way."

Leon replied without changing his expression:

"What I want isn't a fence-sitter but your more thorough and unreserved support... Atifie, you wouldn't want your good nephew to learn the truth about that matter back then, right?"

Chapter 610: Mr. Li

"..."

Watching Leon fabricate a handle out of thin air, then use this newly crafted handle to ruthlessly threaten him, Atifei-00's brain, miles away, throbbed painfully.

This person seems even more troublesome than Andre. I must have been out of my mind to think about greeting him before.

After cursing twice in his mind, Atifei-00, with a gloomy face filled with frustration, said:

"I've already told you, between you and Andre, I prefer you to win. Even if you don't do such things..."

"If I don't do such things, you'll continue to be indecisive and never truly put your all into helping us."

Interrupting Atifei-00, Leon confidently said:

"Besides, as the 'Creator' of Atifei-01, you haven't been destroyed by Andre due to his anger, which proves that you're useful to him and possibly irreplaceable."

So, before this, even if we couldn't subdue Andre, you wouldn't really be destroyed by him. At most, you'd live an average life; you have a way out with him. But now it's different."

At this point, Leon reached into his pocket, fished out an ear whose end frayed into numerous threads, and waved it in front of Atifei-00.

"This is Senior Aljay's ear. He has been eavesdropping on all our previous conversations."

As Atifei-00's expression drastically changed, Leon calmly stated:

"Senior Aljay won't participate in the following matters; he will try to stay away. If we lose to Andre, he will immediately report everything he heard to him, word for word.

In other words, if we win, you might be safe, but if we lose, you will surely die. So how to proceed next, I shouldn't need to teach you, right?"

"..."

Seriously... I just wanted to say hello, how did I end up wrapped in chains, tightly bound to the front of his war chariot?

Hearing Leon's blatant threat, Atifei couldn't help but bite her lip in frustration. Then, taking a deep breath, she said with an unfriendly expression:

"That's what you say, but as I mentioned before, my control is all in Andre's hands. If I do anything against him, I'd be shut down immediately, so..."

"So you can assist me in doing things without directly betraying him."

Leon stared at Atifei-00 and demanded:

"Tell me first what commands he issued to you. Not to disclose unfavorable information about him? Not to reveal his trump cards?"

"His phrasing is a bit different, but both of these do exist."

Atifei replied helplessly:

"Besides that, I must constantly monitor, and if I find any potential targets likely to be yours attempting to leave the Crolock Kingdom, I'm to cover them with heavy firepower and bomb them until they're completely eradicated."

Thank goodness I didn't run at that time, or else I'd probably be bombarded all the way through. I might survive with Immortal of Liquor, but the others certainly wouldn't make it.

After pondering for a moment, Leon asked:

"So he didn't order you to report on the situation of the Crolock Kingdom to him, right?"

"He didn't."

Atifei-00 shook her head.

"Andre's brain isn't skilled at handling information. The Crolock Kingdom might be small, but it's still a country with numerous daily events; he can't manage them all."

"Alright."

Leon raised an eyebrow and said:

"Because of the morning broadcast, Andre is now huddled up in Research Zone 1, unable to come out, so he basically can't receive outside information. You're his only channel to learn about external news, am I right?"

"That's correct..."

"Then it's simple."

Leon nodded in agreement and, while rummaging through the mirrored world, instructed:

"Aren't the districts of the Crolock Kingdom mobile? Without moving Research Zone 1, shift the other districts, trying to position Research Zone 1 near the edge."

"Are you planning to head straight for Zone 1 and attack Andre directly?"

"Who knows."

Without having true control over Atifei-00, Leon wouldn't be foolish enough to reveal his entire plan.

Smiling at her puzzled expression, Leon found a camera larger than his head from the mirror world. He stepped forward and took a couple of shots of the old King's skull, then instructed:

"Lend a hand, uncover everyone's skulls for me to photograph."

"Alright..."

Faced with Leon's request, Atifei-00, being blackmailed, had no choice but to comply.

Soon, under her control, all the sub-bodies in the Preservation Hall raised their hands, pressing the mechanism under the back of their heads, flipping up the cover-like top half of their skulls, exposing the delicate brains within, encased in transparent gel. The sight made one's scalp tingle instinctively.

"Are you planning to send these photos out to completely confirm the morning's broadcast?"

Watching Leon, armed with a camera acquired who-knows-where, snapping vigorously at the Atifei sub-bodies in the Preservation Hall, Atifei-00 pondered for a moment before suggesting:

"If that's the case, I can easily control their expressions. Would you like me to adjust them, make their expressions more painful and despairing?"

"No need."

Without hesitation, Leon refused Atifei-00's suggestion and continued shooting while answering casually:

"While an expression of pain and despair isn't bad, it only scares people. Though the impact is decent now, once turned into static photos, the effect is just barely passable.

On the other hand, their current numb and dazed look, staring at the camera like puppets, eerily human yet not human, can make one's skin crawl at a glance, sending chills from the heart outward... Oh, right."

Upon saying this, Leon paused his photography and, after examining the surroundings with a frown, demanded:

"The lighting is a bit too bright. Replace this batch with dimmer lights, preferably the cold, bluish kind that makes faces look ghostly pale.

Once that's done, adjust the lights and people's angles. Make sure they tilt their heads slightly, shading the lower half of their faces diagonally in shadows, to highlight those dull, dead eyes... Yes, that's the feeling!"

"..."

Seriously... How is a pampered prince so skilled at such tasks?

Watching Leon, after adjusting the setup, snapping vigorously in the now eerier Preservation Hall, the exposed brains of the Atifei sub-bodies as his focus, Atifei-00 couldn't help but twitch at the corners of her mouth. She then ground her teeth and stomped a foot before voluntarily offering:

"I also have evidence of Andre controlling the army corps commanders, want to take some shots of that too?"

"Yes!"