

I! Cleaner 611

Chapter 611: Let's Make a Deal

"Risking Death to Reveal the Truth, Why Did Prince Andre Shell the Palace?"

"Prince Andre Seeks to Control All Citizens Through New Technology!"

"The Broadcast Is True! The Royal Family Members Have All Been Killed!"

"Shocking! Prince Andre Did Such a Thing to His Own Family!"

Looking at the shocking headlines posted outside the roadside newsstands, the citizens who were already somewhat suspicious instantly became completely agitated.

The content of the broadcast turned out to be true, Prince Andre really betrayed the Kingdom!

Standing by the roadside, a bespectacled, scholarly-looking citizen read through the article "Risking Death to Reveal... Shell the Palace?" and couldn't help but fall into shock.

In order to cover up the truth, Prince Andre not only sent troops to attack Princess Philia but also blew up the broadcast building and even directly attacked the palace!

If it were just a written report, it might be difficult to convince people, but seeing the photos occupying more than half of the newspaper's pages, showing the mechanical army advancing toward the palace, the scholarly-looking citizen couldn't hold it together, instinctively adjusting his glasses, murmuring with shock:

"This... this is too crazy. How can His Highness Andre do this?"

"Heh, the real madness is yet to come!"

Hearing the scholarly citizen's mutterings, another middle-aged man standing by the road reading the paper glanced at the headline in his hand and couldn't help but sneer. He then handed over his newspaper, pointing at a series of six photographs:

"Look at this! This is truly insane!"

"?"

The scholarly citizen glanced at the middle-aged man who suddenly spoke to him in confusion, took the newspaper somewhat dazedly, and looked at the headline picture the middle-aged man was pointing to, his eyes widening in shock.

The six dimly colored photos showed the backs of heads of six different men of varying sizes, and the only commonality between these six backs of heads was that each had a metallic mechanical "spider" perched on it.

The six legs of these mechanical spiders, like sharp chisels, had broken through the thin layer of skin on the backs of the heads, with their sharp tips vaguely digging into the skulls, as if sucking something, firmly lodged in place.

After hurriedly scanning the content of the report, the scholarly citizen quivered and said:

"Is this... the method mentioned in the broadcast that controls people's thoughts? Did Research District No. 1 really develop a technology to turn people into puppets?"

"What else?"

The middle-aged man replied through gritted teeth with a face full of apprehension:

"Haven't you seen the photos? How can they be fake?"

"Maybe... maybe they're staged?"

Unable to accept such a crazy reality, the scholarly bespectacled man couldn't help but hypothesize:

"I see these people are all unconscious, what if these mechanical spiders were put on them afterward to frame His Highness Andre? Isn't that a possibility?"

"Tsk... you're just nitpicking!"

Faced with the bespectacled man's hypothesis, the middle-aged man couldn't help but curse before pulling out another newspaper and shoving it into his hands, angrily exclaiming:

"Those might be staged, but see if this is staged!"

Startled by the middle-aged man's loud voice, the bespectacled man instinctively shrank his neck, then took the slightly crumpled newspaper cautiously opened it, and then...

"Hiss!!!"

Upon seeing the main photo, a rush of coldness surged from the tailbone of the bespectacled man, all the way up the spine to the top of the head, causing his scalp to tingle, and he involuntarily gasped, tearing a large hole in the newspaper.

"Hey, watch it!"

After glaring at the bespectacled man, the middle-aged man said with dissatisfaction:

"I only lent it to you for a look, why did you have to tear my newspaper? You owe me a new one!"

But by this time, the bespectacled man couldn't hear what the middle-aged man was saying, his gaze fixed on the newspaper's main photo through the thick lens.

The location of the photo seemed to be a somewhat dim hall, with over a hundred expressionless and rigid people, exposed their upper skulls under the cold blue light, revealing grooved pink-purple brains, staring intently at the camera.

The photographer, perhaps due to poor skills or being frightened by these "cracked skull" people, captured the scene with a tilted lens, with most faces coming out somewhat blurred.

But this technical flaw nicely obscured most of the "cracked skull" people's faces, leaving only those pairs of dead, indifferent, human-yet-not-quite-human eyes.

And in the center of this intimidating group, hunched on the throne with an empty skull exposed was none other than King Fein, who was smiling and greeting the citizens of the Crolock Kingdom just a few months ago!

This... this... this...

Faced with this explosively stunning photo and the terrifying facts behind it, the bespectacled man turned pale and uncontrollably let out a scream.

"Ah!!!"

...

"Hey, what are you doing!"

The bespectacled man's sudden yell was so abrupt that it scared the middle-aged man into clutching his heart in complaint. Even Leon, who was flipping through the newspaper nearby, was so startled that he almost tore the newspaper on the stall.

Looks like the effect is good.

After scrutinizing the bespectacled man's expression, Leon couldn't help but nod in satisfaction. He then got up from the newspaper stand and merged into the crowd on the street.

With these newspapers distributed, the last obstacles can be considered removed.

Prior to this, with the help of Atifie 00's Soul Encoding Technology, Prince Andre still had the possibility to control other army leaders and muster another army. Apart from dealing with the Scorpio Director, I had to guard against any potentially mobilized armies.

But after these newspapers spread, to avoid becoming someone else's puppet, the remaining military chiefs in the Crolock Kingdom would certainly not allow Prince Andre's emissaries to approach them. Except for the Scorpio Director, he has no other cards to play.

And after possibly eliminating all "obstacles," we just need to make final preparations to attempt an operation on Research District No. 1.

Recalling the intelligence on the Scorpio Director, Leon reached his destination, left the crowd, and walked to the roadside greenery, squatting in the bushes to search for a while, pulling out a cream-colored flower, gently flicking its stem.

Immediately afterward, the emerald-eyed girl with closed eyes was tossed out from the flower stamen, landing with a plop in the greenery.

"Wake up."

After patting Feiliya's smooth cheeks to awaken her from unconsciousness, Leon, seeing her bewildered expression, seriously proposed:

"Let's strike a deal. I can save your life, and in return, you call me 'dad,' how about it?"

"Huh?"

Chapter 612: Pervert

After being awakened from a coma by Leon, thanks to her exceptionally intelligent mind, Feiliya envisioned at least seventeen or eighteen scenarios of what Leon might possibly do to her.

Whether it be deceit, threats, inducements, or intimidation, she considered all possibilities and even pondered how to respond to create an account of this troublesome and dangerous person with minimal suffering.

Yet, no matter how sharp her mind is, no matter how outstanding her personal calculation abilities are, Leon's statement, "How about I be your dad?" still directly caused her brain to crash.

No way... Are you crazy?

Facing Leon, who for some unknown reason suddenly wants to be her father, the emerald-eyed girl couldn't help but choke fiercely and then stood up abruptly with a hint of anger in her eyes, saying:

"You..."

"I already know, you are the core of Atifei-01."

"?!!"

Seeing the emerald-eyed girl's somewhat panicked expression, Leon sat down cross-legged in the green zone and then began to recount seriously:

"During the time you were unconscious, I took a trip to the palace and figured out your origin.

You are the 'core program' of Atifei-01, and the No. 1 District used the bones of the late Feiliya princess to create a body almost identical to hers from that time. After you occupied this artificial body, you became the new Feiliya princess... I didn't judge wrongly, right?"

"..."

Oh... I might be doomed...

Upon hearing Leon directly reveal the truth she had been trying to cover up and recalling the grudge between Leon and Andre, the emerald-eyed girl's face instantly turned pale.

If her "fake princess" identity hadn't been exposed, he, as a Cleaner, probably wouldn't have attacked her. But now that her "fake princess" identity has been exposed, he's likely to make a move to eliminate her.

"You... If you want to kill me, just do it!"

Looking at Leon, who was squinting at her with what seemed like a murderous aura, Feiliya couldn't help but stomp her foot, straightening her pale neck and defiantly shouting:

"Brother Andre will definitely avenge me!"

"Hmm... Set aside whether to kill you for now, I think you seem to have quite a misunderstanding with that Prince Andre."

After clicking his fingers unconsciously on his knee twice, Leon looked at the emerald-eyed girl prepared "to die with honor," smiled and said.

"Princess Feiliya, do you think that Prince Andre values you very, very much?"

"Of course!"

The emerald-eyed girl snorted in response and lifted her chin slightly as she said:

"He could have forcibly controlled me and demanded I follow his orders, but when I told him I wanted to 'exit' the intelligence and experience human life with a human body, he took the risk of halting all research and released me directly!"

"Well, he does seem to indulge you, I agree on that point."

Nodding noncommittally, Leon gave a meaningful reminder:

"But do you know that he has already tried to kill you twice?"

"?!!"

Upon hearing Leon's words, Feiliya couldn't help but tremble all over and then glared back angrily.

"That's nonsense! Brother Andre couldn't possibly... Ah!"

"Hold onto this."

After tossing the black goat into the emerald-eyed girl's arms, Leon said:

"Its core abilities are sealed, but as observing souls is a great demon's gift, it should still be functional. If I bear the consumption, you should be able to use it to see the state of my soul."

Pointing to his own head, Leon continued to explain to the confused-looking Feiliya:

"Remember, if what I'm saying is true, my soul will remain calm without any big fluctuations, but if I lie, my soul will ripple and produce a mother-of-pearl-like diagonal shallow texture.

Hmm... or maybe it'll look like spiked fish scales, which is usually not so good, while if my soul remains mostly calm, it'll prove what I'm saying is true."

"So... you want to use this thing to make me believe that Brother Andre plans to kill me?"

Quickly grasping Leon's intent, the emerald-eyed girl stroked the black goat in her arms and said skeptically:

"But this ugly thing is your abnormal object. How can I know if its effects match what you claim?"

"Screw you!"

Before Leon could respond, the black goat, in the emerald-eyed girl's embrace, opened its mouth and cursed angrily:

"You're the ugly thing, your whole family is the ugly thing! I'm damn handsome! Back when I was a great demon, these horns of mine charmed countless enchanting demons! Do you have any taste whatsoever, young lady?"

"Ah!"

Shocked by the black goat suddenly cursing, the beautiful emerald-eyed girl breathed heavily a couple of times, and then she frowned with her exquisite little face:

"This goat is disgusting..."

"You're looking for trouble, aren't you?!"

"Alright, get to work first."

After stopping the goat from continuing its tirade, Leon turned to the still shaken emerald-eyed girl and said:

"If you don't believe it, you can ask two questions to test it. See how my soul reacts, and then compare it to know."

"Okay then..."

After hearing Leon's proposed testing method, Princess Feiliya hesitated for a moment and then tentatively asked:

"Are you a pervert?"

"I am not..."

"Your soul didn't move!"

Glancing at Leon's soul, the emerald-eyed girl suddenly shrank back, looked at him suspiciously, and said:

"You're lying! This thing's effects don't match what you said!"

"..."

Tsk... I really should have let the black goat curse you out properly just now.

After clicking his tongue in annoyance, Leon asked back darkly:

"Is it possible that I really am not a pervert?"

"Impossible!"

Faced with Leon's return question, the emerald-eyed girl refuted without hesitation:

"You not only kidnapped me but even took off my shoes and tickled my feet with wool. No matter how I see it, you're a pervert!"

"..."

"Alright, let me prove myself!"

Realizing she was taking revenge for earlier, deliberately trying to provoke him, Leon had no choice but to skip this step. He told a couple of truths and lies, allowing Princess Feiliya to check his soul's different states, and then said expressionlessly:

"According to my investigation, Prince Andre at least twice planned to put you to death, Or to put it another way, although he seems like he's pampering you, your priority in his heart is absolutely not as high as he portrays."

Well, seems... It's the truth?!

Seeing Leon's soul remain calm, the emerald-eyed girl's expression stilled a bit, and then said somewhat unwillingly:

"Where's the evidence? This ugly goat's ability can only prove you think so genuinely, but cannot prove the things you've investigated are the truth!"

"The biggest evidence is his attack on the Scorpio Bureau Chief."

Leon said calmly:

"To ambush Chief Edward and the others, Prince Andre mobilized a total of eleven corps' weapons, with over two hundred heavy weapons, and in less than half a second, he leveled an entire block.

But just less than an hour before that, Chief Edward handed you over to me, so he's absolutely impossible to know you weren't with Chief Scorpio and Nicole and them. In his information, I should have taken you to converge with Chief Edward."

Pausing slightly at this point, Leon said to the drastically changed expression emerald-eyed girl:

"So why does your Brother Andre think he can unleash such force capable of leveling a whole block in half a second, putting Chief Edward in mortal danger, without assuming you might get killed too?"

Chapter 613: Is There Anyone Willing to Accompany Me to the Underworld?

Yeah, knowing that I've been taken hostage and unable to confirm whether I'm within the target range, just ordering a scorched-earth bombardment, isn't that saying...

He truly wants to kill me?!

"It seems you've figured it out."

After glancing at the emerald-eyed girl's difficult expression, Leon continued:

"Of course, if you want to forcefully explain it, you might insist he has a way to detect whether you're in the target range, ensuring you won't be accidentally hurt before ordering the strike.

But as I mentioned earlier, he has tried to get rid of you at least twice.

Besides this ambush on the Scorpio Branch Chief, he also gave Atifie00 orders to constantly monitor the situation outside the Crolock Kingdom. If a suspected target like me or another cleaner tries to leave, unleash heavy bombardments until completely annihilated."

After relaying the information heard from Atifie00, and seeing Feiliya's face turn ghastly pale, Leon summarized:

"I don't deny he cares about you as his sister, but you must understand one thing: to him, your safety isn't as important as it appears.

He will go all out to try to save you, but if there's a chance you might leave the Crolock Kingdom and come under the Clean-up Bureau's protection, he'll kill you without hesitation... Do you agree with my judgment?"

"..."

"If you remain silent, I'll take it as agreement."

After glancing at the silent Feiliya, Leon calmly asked:

"So, now that you understand your actual status in Prince Andre's eyes, would you consider cooperating with me?"

"?"

Upon hearing Leon offer an olive branch, Princess Feiliya couldn't hold back anymore. She widened her emerald-like eyes in frustration and yelled:

"Are you crazy or something?"

If you hadn't taken me hostage, things wouldn't have gotten to this point! Yet you dare to ask me to cooperate with you?"

"Is there a problem?"

Leon raised an eyebrow and asked in return:

"He wants to kill me; I want to kill him, so we're enemies. Now he wants to kill you, too, so why not turn the tables and cooperate with me to kill him?"

"You... It's not that simple!"

Confused by Leon's overly straightforward logic, the emerald-eyed girl stamped her foot, angrily arguing:

"If it weren't for you, he wouldn't want to kill me! And if I could be rescued, he wouldn't harm me either. So I just need to wait for him to defeat you, and I'll be saved. Why should I cooperate with you?"

"Hmm... Makes sense."

After seriously listening to the emerald-eyed girl, Leon nodded in agreement, then took out the [Silver Dagger of Cutting], pressing it against her heart, and seriously proposed:

"I can leave a mechanism within you ahead of time, like cutting open your heart with this dagger but not piecing it back together. If I destroy the dagger before I die, the ability left on your incision will fail, ensuring my death also means your death.

So now, you can choose to cooperate with me to defeat Andre; maybe both of us survive. Or abandon cooperation to see me lose, and accompany me in death, while Andre, who tried to kill you twice, ends up surviving... Which outcome do you prefer?"

This man... He's practically a devil!

Looking at Leon's calm and steady tone, but with words like knives constantly provoking her dark thoughts, the emerald-eyed girl felt a chill running up her back.

Subconsciously stepping back to break free from the knife's tip against her skin, Feiliya covered the slash on her chest with her hand and gritted her teeth:

"I... I choose the second option!

Prince Andre doesn't really want to kill me; he has his reasons! Compared to surviving by betraying him, I'd rather die with you!"

Reasons?

After exchanging a glance with the sheep head in the emerald-eyed girl's embrace, from the Black Mountain Sheep's meaningful expression, Leon got the answer that 'this is the truth', nodding slightly before questioning again:

"So, you and Prince Andre are both members of the organization targeting the royal family?"

"?!!!"

Seeing Leon disclose her biggest secret, the emerald-eyed girl trembled, and spoke in shock:

"How did you... Ugh..."

"Don't worry, I'm not bluffing; I genuinely guessed this."

After quickly grasping the situation, and covering her mouth sharply, Feiliya's exquisite face was full of regret, Leon shook his head slightly:

"Earlier, you mentioned Prince Andre had 'reasons'. I interpret reasons like—if you might fall into the Clean-up Bureau's hands, he'd have to choose to kill you.

This proves there's definitely some kind of 'restraint' on him, and the restraint's content is likely to ensure the royal bloodline must be cut off. Who but that organization could impose such a 'restraint'?

Based on my observation of Prince Andre, this person probably isn't afraid to die and even has slight self-destructive tendencies, so threats of force likely don't affect him much.

Then, it must be through receiving some irresistible condition from that organization that he chose to join it and accept such strict restraints... Would you like to tell me about this?

"..."

It's just because I said he has his reasons, and you deduced all this?!

Marveling at Leon's perceptiveness, and afraid of accidentally revealing more deadly information, the emerald-eyed girl tightly covered her mouth, deciding not to utter another word to him, however...

"If you don't want to speak, then don't."

Seeing Feiliya defensively covering her mouth as if guarding against a thief, Leon couldn't help but shake his head slightly and sigh:

"After all, you are siblings by blood, and under such circumstances, it's normal you're unwilling to betray him; I understand."

"..."

Feeling Leon's words carried hidden meaning, the emerald-eyed girl held back her curiosity but eventually couldn't help it, covering her mouth and muffledly pursuing:

"What do you mean?"

"What I mean is, although over ten years have passed, and the original brain is lost, both your soul and body are indeed the original Princess Feiliya."

Acknowledging her shocked expression, Leon slowly uncovered the truth:

"I doubted earlier, if you were merely a derived core program from intelligent machinery, it would be impossible to have a genuine soul, incapable of deceiving my eyes."

After questioning Atifie00, who claims to be your aunt, I confirmed your soul, while somewhat peculiar, is indeed a human soul.

You are a recreated Princess Feiliya through combining the adjusted soul using Soul Encoding Technology with an artificial Feiliya's body. So you aren't merely a core from intelligent machinery; you are yourself, a living human being."

Chapter 614: The Fastest ZB Legend

I... am human?

After listening to Leon's words, Feiliya was stunned and incredulously asked:

"Are you sure?"

"I'm very sure."

After conveying the information obtained from Atifie-00 in the briefest possible terms, Leon looked at the somewhat bewildered emerald-eyed girl in front of him and spoke sincerely:

"Princess Feiliya, you should now understand why you must cooperate with me, right?"

"Huh?"

"Simply put, choosing to cooperate with me appears to be betraying Prince Andre on the surface, but in actuality, you're helping him correct his mistakes."

Under the bewildered gaze of the emerald-eyed girl, Leon spoke persuasively:

"You are not an AI but a human. To prevent you and your brother from dying of illness together, with neither child surviving, your parents had no choice but to make you the core of an AI, a painful decision made out of necessity.

Your brother, however, due to misunderstanding, resented your parents and, under the manipulation of an evil organization, ultimately went astray, raising the knife against your family in the name of avenging you, leading the entire kingdom into chaos.

So I ask you, as a princess of the Crolock Kingdom, as your parents' daughter, and as your brother's sister, what should you do at this moment?"

"I... what should I do?"

"Of course, you should cooperate with me, find a way to defeat the misguided Prince Andre, and rescue him from the evil organization's control, correcting the mistakes he's made!"

Pulling the confused emerald-eyed girl to sit in the greenery, Leon patted her shoulder, looking serious, and asked sincerely:

"Prince Andre treats you so well, don't you want to save him?"

"I... I want to..."

With her mind a bit muddled by Leon's words, the emerald-eyed girl opened her mouth, feeling faint before her eyes, and said:

"But you just told me he was planning to kill me twice and asked if I wanted to join you against him..."

"Didn't you say he had his reasons?"

"I did say that... but..."

"Then there's no problem."

Forcefully patting Feiliya's shoulder, interrupting her thoughts, Leon confidently concluded:

"His disregard for familial ties in wanting to kill you is proof that he's controlled by the evil organization, and you choose to forgive him because of those ties, even preparing to save him from the evil clutches. Such a touching sibling bond! Isn't it wonderful?"

"..."

It seems wonderful... but why does something seem off?

After losing the support of Atifei-01's massive computational power, the 12-year-old Feiliya, with a brain like a blank slate, couldn't withstand Leon's excessive scribbling, continuously sending warnings to her.

However, the core feature of Soul Encoding Technology is a logic so precise it's like machinery, with different priority levels of strict "instructions" suppressing and organizing the complex and vague human soul's thoughts.

And Leon's proposed logic... no matter how insane it seems upon careful thought, it appears correct and fits perfectly with the soul encoding logic, so theoretically, it can "run."

Seeing Feiliya holding her head in confusion, unable to figure out the problem, Leon patted her back gently and said:

"If you can't figure it out, don't think about it. In any case, helping your brother correct his mistakes is undoubtedly the right thing to do, so why not focus on that first and discuss the rest later?"

"Then... how do I help him correct his mistakes?"

"It's simple. I'm also working on this. By helping me, you're effectively helping him correct his mistakes."

After moving around the long Yan Country map past the equator once, Leon finally pulled out the dagger hidden inside, speaking earnestly:

"In these past few days, I've already laid the groundwork for you. Now you just need to step out and make an impassioned speech at tonight's celebration. Those citizens unwilling to have their thoughts controlled by Andre will enthusiastically support you ascending to power.

The commanders of six royal guard legions, whom I've already rescued from Prince Andre's control, are furious about being controlled and have expressed their willingness to support you, the last royal family member, in correcting Prince Andre's mad governance as initially intended.

So as long as they finish reorganizing the legions, relying on the citizens' support and those six royal guard legions, with Crolock Kingdom's transportation, around six hours should be enough for you to take control of the entire kingdom, seize all armed forces, and become the new Crolock Queen."

"Huh?!!!"

"Oh, and also."

Ignoring Feiliya's shock, Leon seemed to remember something and reminded:

"According to the public narrative, you were severely injured in unveiling Andre's conspiracy. When giving the speech at the celebration tonight, remember to powder your face paler and bandage your chest with some bloodstained bandages. If someone asks, just say you were shot by Andre's personal guards. Got it?"

No... what is this all about? I was only held captive for a few days, so how did things escalate like this?

"Explaining the details would be complicated. You can let this sheep explain it to you then."

Picking up the grumbling black sheep from the greenery and putting it back in the arms of the emerald-eyed girl, Leon stood up, patted her shoulder, and encouraged expectantly:

"Come on, Your Highness. Whether or not we can save the Crolock Kingdom and the misguided Prince Andre depends on your speech tonight."

"Wait a minute! Hold on!"

Seeing Leon about to leave, the completely bewildered Feiliya quickly stood up and grabbed his sleeve, speaking incoherently:

"But there's still Atifie-00! She controls more than half of the kingdom's automated weapons, even if I..."

"Don't worry about that issue."

Patting the back of the emerald-eyed girl's hand, Leon explained:

"I'll go attack Research Area One now. I'll go down from Cooling Lake next to Area One and completely destroy the AI body soaking in the lake, so it won't be a problem for you."

"Huh?"

One thunderous piece of news after another poured into her mind, and the emerald-eyed girl hesitantly reminded:

"Didn't you just say you'd made a deal with Atifie-00 to fight against Andre together? Why are you going to destroy her body?"

"Who said that's her body?"

Leon responded puzzled:

"Isn't that your body? I'm going to destroy Atifie-01's AI body. What does that have to do with Atifie-00? These are separate matters."

"It seems... maybe that's right?"

"Right!"

When the emerald-eyed girl was once again thoroughly confused and nodding aimlessly under the sheep's pitying gaze, Leon slightly crouched down, looking directly into her eyes kindly, and said:

"Actually, from the first moment I saw you, I felt a connection with you. Look at how I'm helping you and your brother; even your dad wouldn't do this much. Could you fulfill a wish for me and call me dad?"

"..."

"Of course, if you truly can't say it, signing this will do."

In Feiliya's bewildered expression, Leon pulled a sloppily written document from the mirror world and placed her hand on it, while the emerald-eyed girl, in a daze, lowered her head and started reading subconsciously.

"Considering the significant efforts by international friend Leon Laine to save the Crolock Kingdom, I, in the name of the sixth princess of the Crolock Kingdom, hereby confer upon him an honorary membership in the Crolock royal family?"

Chapter 615: Aberration

[Through a deceitful act, you successfully obtained an honorary royal member's order from Princess Feiliya, aged 12, and received a silver identity badge "Crolock Royal Family (Honorary)"]

[Crolock Royal Family (Honorary): A royal member of the City of Machinery, Crolock Kingdom, although it's just an honorary title with no rights to inherit the throne, your honorary royal status is still recognized by the Crolock Kingdom.]

[Wearing effect: As the "savior" who secured Crolock Kingdom and thus gained an honorary royal title, you will receive the respect of all Crolock Kingdom citizens and enjoy the same power and treatment as royal family members of the Crolock Kingdom.]

[Advance Route: If you can establish a marriage relationship with Princess Feiliya after she reaches adulthood, this badge will automatically advance to a gold badge "Crolock Prince"]

[Hidden attribute (no need to wear): Due to your "correction of chaos" justice behavior, your reputation among all friendly forces will greatly increase, but your fierce methods of subverting the kingdom may also cause vigilance among certain forces.]

Only silver?

After glancing at the description of the [Crolock Royal Family (Honorary)], Leon let out a sigh of disappointment.

He had gone through so much trouble, initially aiming for a gold badge like the [Migratory Thrush Prince] to gain the ability to command people to bow, adding an extra ten percent chance of success when dealing with the Scorpio Director, but all he got was a silver identity badge without any practical effect...

Oh well, gaining something is better than nothing.

After closing the badge panel, Leon took out a dozen "borrowed" identity cards from the mirror world and handed them to the still dazed green-eyed girl, then instructed:

"I still have a lot to do; you take these identity cards and wait until the time is right, then swipe a card and take the bus to Celebration Street to give your speech... do you have any other questions?"

"Yes..."

Holding a large handful of identity cards, Feiliya couldn't help but twitch her mouth, then asked incredulously:

"I'm going to deliver a coup speech; such a big deal, and you're just letting me take the bus by myself? And even the bus fare is stolen from others?"

"What's wrong with taking the bus? Last time I staged a coup, I also rented a public carriage to the palace, and it worked just fine."

With a nonchalant wave, Leon comforted her:

"Trust me, I have experience in staging coups. The key to success lies in how solid your support is and how swift and decisive your actions are; it has nothing to do with your mode of transportation, and if your support is strong enough, even walking there won't make a difference."

"..."

A coup is a serious matter! Why does it sound so casual when you say it, like taking a leisurely stroll outside?

"Well, if this doesn't suit you, I actually have another plan."

Seeing the green-eyed girl in front of him biting her lower lip and staring at him, face flushed, Leon thought for a moment, then said seriously:

"The cards you're holding are precious identity cards obtained at great risk of exposure and through contact with royalist citizens.

In all the districts of the Crolock Kingdom, under Atifie00's stringent surveillance, the only way to bypass their evil monitoring and reach Celebration Street is to use these precious cards donated by helpful citizens.

With these hard-won identification cards, cautiously boarding a vehicle traveling at high speed, you'll arrive at our planned key location to deliver a crucial speech to overthrow Prince Andre's vile regime..."

It's the same result!!!

After hearing Leon's seemingly impressive yet still bus-dependent "new" plan, the green-eyed girl stomped her foot in anger and protested:

"You..."

"I've already arranged everything for you."

Gently patting Feiliya's head, having gotten back at her earlier accusation of "creep," Leon smiled and said:

"Several legion commanders of the royal family's direct legion should already be waiting over there; your pet sheep has memorized their soul waves and will guide you to find them.

Moreover, the sheep can see others' souls and identify any hostile targets toward you. With it around, you don't have to worry about your safety. So, go on without concern!"

...

"Atifie, your skills remain as reassuring as ever."

Looking at the tall and slender man in front of him, unscathed and humbly bowing with a large suitcase in one hand, Prince Andre nodded in satisfaction.

When they dug out the Scorpio Director from the ruins of Administrative District 38, although he was still alive, over three-fifths of his body was damaged, and his soul was tightly sealed within his body by "White Snake," leaving him on the verge of death.

It was unexpected that in just a few days, Atifie00 had fully "repaired" him, not only completely mending his damaged flesh but even restoring the soul's strength detected by the instrument to over 80% of its original, far exceeding his expectations.

This just attests that although her computational ability is not as good as Feiliya's, as a former chief controller of the No. 1 Science Area and a genius scholar qualified to leave a legacy in the Crolock Kingdom, her scientific prowess far exceeds that of Feiliya, who died at 12.

"That's rare."

Glancing at Prince Andre, whose expression was surprisingly content and even smiling faintly, Atifie00 commented in astonishment:

"You actually say nice things about me?"

"I'm not a nuisance who likes to provoke people; I just don't like what you do and can't be bothered to deal with your movements usually."

For some reason, Prince Andre was in an exceptionally good mood today. After appreciating the "very lively" Scorpio Director in front of them, he turned to Atifie00 with a smile, saying:

"You did a great job this time; naturally, I won't criticize you without reason."

"..."

Why does he seem a little strange?

Watching Andre, who was usually aloof but now had a downright sunny demeanor, Atifie00 blinked, momentarily unaccustomed to this new disposition.

"Actually, the 'puppet' isn't as good as it seems."

For some reason, Andre's sunny disposition made Atifie00 a bit uneasy, so after a moment of hesitation, she decided to be straightforward about a situation she'd initially intended to keep under wraps, and said:

"His body may still look 'human,' but its form and structure are more than just human; there are many parts that surpass human limits, essentially making him a different species altogether.

Although I repaired as much as possible and even integrated some of the Divine Blood and flesh provided by Aquarius Director in the past, the materials' strength is insufficient, not reaching his original capabilities, and under full exertion, his patched-up body could experience a collapse."

Chapter 616: Exposed

"It's alright."

After carefully listening to Atifei-01's account, Prince Andre nodded and then smiled as he replied:

"According to the Slaughter King Association, this Scorpio Branch Chief's level, while not yet at the Pillar God level, is not far off. In terms from the Clean-up Bureau, it's around the level of 70 Leon Value.

And the materials you have at hand are merely the flesh and blood of ordinary True Gods who died long ago. Not only do they differ greatly from the human body, but the best quality only just broke the level of 60 Leon Value. It's not your fault that they can't fully compensate."

"..."

Prince Andre today... is he being too easy-going?

Seeing that after hearing about the actual situation with the Scorpio Bureau Chief's body, Andre's attitude remained good, even taking the initiative to excuse her, left Atifei-01 feeling uneasy.

A kind of instinct different from synthetic inference, a human brain leftover, was frantically warning her that if she doesn't break this abnormality, what awaits her might not be something good.

"In fact, there are also some defects with his soul."

Unconsciously clenching her fists, Atifei-01 calmly said:

"As you know, the strength of his soul is fundamentally different from all previous experimental materials, and my Soul Encoding Technology still cannot perfectly parse a soul of such power.

So, just like his body, if Leon truly forces him to his limits or causes him excessive stimulation, his soul might break through the control of the Soul Code."

"Hmm, you mentioned this before."

Nodding again, Prince Andre replied calmly:

"I remember you proposed a solution, didn't you? If his soul shows signs of breaking through control, immediately disrupt the Soul Code yourself, putting him into a 24-hour slumber, and only reawaken him once his soul stabilizes...

Has something gone wrong with this added safety valve?"

"Not really with this..."

"Then there's nothing to worry about."

Smiling at Atifei-01, Prince Andre said:

"Since you've done your best, whatever the outcome, I won't blame you... Oh, right."

As he reached this point, Prince Andre seemed to remember something and curiously asked the somewhat uneasy Atifei-01:

"You've always been using synthetic computing to calculate the probability of my ultimate victory, right? What's the probability now?"

"Uh... about sixty-four percent."

Feeling a chill down her spine, Atifei-01 instinctively took half a step back, then explained:

"Previously, it was seventy-three, but that Leon Prince is stronger than I originally assessed, along with the Scorpio Bureau Chief's poor condition, so your success rate dropped a bit, but it's still about sixty percent, higher than that of Leon Prince."

"I see."

Nodding indifferently, Prince Andre smiled.

"I trust the probabilities you calculate, but whether the change from seventy-three to sixty-four is due to the Scorpio Bureau Chief's poor condition or because you're preparing to completely align with Leon Prince?"

?!!!

He knows?!

Startled by Andre's question, Atifei-01 instinctively retorted with a smile:

"My dear Andre, your aunt loves you very much; why would you have such strange thoughts? You..."

"Don't worry, I don't mean to blame you."

Interrupting Atifei-01, Prince Andre smiled and said nonchalantly:

"Though you don't have good intentions, your dealings with him were actually tacitly approved by me; otherwise, I would've used the Scepter of Time Division to simply order you not to interact with him, right?"

"..."

In Atifei-01's uncertain expression, Prince Andre moved to a corner of the room, took an easel out of the cabinet, and started drawing on it. As he calmly pursued his inquiry:

"I did consider you might collaborate with him, after all, I've indeed kept you locked up for many years, so it's normal for you to harbor resentment towards me; wishing to partner with others to overturn me is even more reasonable.

Yet, from some details within your 'collaboration,' it seems he is the mastermind behind the plan, and you appear to be completely subservient, just following his lead from start to finish, so..."

After a few strokes on the old canvas pinned to the drawing board, Prince Andre raised his head with curiosity and asked:

"Aunt Atifie, do you have some leverage over you?"

?!

Looking into Andre's curious eyes, Atifei-01 suddenly felt a chill run down her spine.

The "leverage" held against her is the truth from back in those days, and what's even more damning is that, as Leon pointed out, she wasn't completely innocent in those past events either.

Feiliya and Andre's "illness" was real, but besides sacrificing Feiliya, another solution existed, which was to periodically destroy the unused parts of their brains, mimicking an ordinary person's brain.

This procedure, while painful, accompanied by unpredictable memory loss and intermittent bodily coordination issues, could result in long-term aftereffects, possibly persisting until their thirties or beyond, or even for life, but indeed could save both children.

However, she didn't want Feiliya's extraordinary talent to go to waste, so she intentionally moved scholars capable of proposing and executing this plan more than a year in advance, forcing Fein to proceed with "choosing one of two," ultimately turning Feiliya into Atifei-01.

If Andre knew about this...

"It seems to be something you can't tell me."

Staring into Atifei's eyes and finding a certain resolution within them, Prince Andre paused his drawing pen and frowned slightly, troubled.

"Your expression tells me that if I were to push you for an answer with the Scepter of Time Division, you'd rather breach the Soul Code rule and get temporarily 'shut down' for defying my orders than tell me."

"Yes."

Taking a deep breath, Atifei-01's expression calmed, then she smiled at Andre and said:

"Andre, every person has secrets they don't want others to know. Learning to avoid these things is an unspoken rule among adults. Not probing into others' secrets is beneficial for you, me, and everyone."

"Heh."

Hearing Atifei's words, Andre chuckled lightly and couldn't help but remark:

"How interesting, father mentioned that you always despised such 'unscientific' matters like interpersonal relationships, yet here you are saying such things."

"..."

"Alright, since you don't want to tell, I'll just guess myself."

Bowing his head, he sketched a few strokes, capturing Atifei-01's silhouette in the corner of the canvas. Then, in Atifei-01's rather troubled expression, Prince Andre, without lifting his head, said:

"Aunt Atifie, what you prefer to trigger the Soul Code to be forcibly shut down rather than tell me, isn't about my and Feiliya's 'choose one of two' back then, is it?"

Chapter 617: Does It Look Like You?

He knows! He already knows!

Though there was already a vague premonition in her heart, Atifie00 couldn't help but shiver when Andre casually revealed the truth she had desperately hidden.

Looking at Prince Andre before her, who was focused on painting an oil painting and hadn't even glanced at her, Atifie00, after a moment of silence, suppressed her violently beating heart and asked as calmly as possible:

"When did you find out about what happened back then?"

Upon hearing Atifie00's question, Prince Andre's brush faltered slightly, leaving a speckled stain on Atifie00's dress hem in the painting.

"Not too early, not too late—right after I killed my father."

Picking up a scraper from the side, Andre Prince removed the speckled stain from Atifie00's dress position while applying paint again, with an air of loneliness:

"As you said before, my 'talent' is on par with Feiliya's, but unlike her, my talent lies in art. In essence, artistic talent is nothing more than superior insight and a far more sensitive inner world than others.

When my father heard my reason for attacking him, his face was not filled with anger and hatred towards me, but rather with sorrow and self-reproach. It was then I realized the truth about what happened back then wasn't what I had thought."

After fixing the recent mistake, looking at the stern face of the heroic middle-aged man in the center of the canvas, Prince Andre couldn't help but reach out and gently touch the face of King Fein in the painting, then said with lowered brows and eyes:

"A person who would sacrifice his daughter for power, violating the parental instinct to devote themselves to their children, must be extremely selfish. Such a person, even if wrong, would not blame himself, but would instead try to shirk responsibility and pin it on others. His reaction told me he's not that kind of person.

Unfortunately, due to what happened back then, every time I saw my father over these years, my mind was filled with Feiliya weeping in pain and asking how long the surgery would take, leaving no room for any extra thoughts.

And by the time I discovered all this and understood things weren't as I thought—that my father and mother seemed to have their own difficulties—my hands were already stained with blood, and there was no going back... Aunt Atifie."

At this point, Prince Andre suddenly looked up, called out to Atifie00, and then gently asked:

"I've finished your portrait; come see if it resembles you?"

"I'd rather not go over..."

Looking at Andre's increasingly gentle face, some instinct to avoid danger, even after being transformed into a mechanical core, began warning Atifie00 frantically once again.

Faced with Prince Andre's invitation, she shook her head without hesitation:

"I've seen your painting skills, even without looking, I know it must look just like me."

"You should come and take a look."

Two gem scepters—one long, one short—appeared in Andre's hand at some point. After smiling at the suddenly tense Atifie00, he said:

"Aunt Atifie, you wouldn't want me to forcibly shut you down over such a trivial matter as just taking a glance at my painting, right?"

"..."

Though her instincts kept warning her, faced with the threat of being completely shut down, Atifie00 bit her lip and still stepped forward, stood beside Prince Andre, and looked at the somewhat old canvas on the easel.

The canvas depicted a scene, probably from a royal banquet.

In the long-abandoned garden at the back of the royal palace, several familiar royal family members were gathered around King Fein and his spouse, along with two fully grown princes, sitting on the dais behind them.

And on the green lawn ahead, a dozen or so children not yet matured were chasing and playing, scrambling for a colorful painted gold ball; the child leading the pack seemed to be a young Andre.

Looking at this joyous and peaceful painting, and herself in the corner with thick glasses, holding a brain model while measuring and writing something, Atifie00's heart calmed a bit. Then she said somewhat nostalgically:

"Is this from Feiliya's first birthday, when Fein invited clan members and his friends to the palace banquet with their children?"

"Yes."

After glancing at the queen holding a pink baby with green eyes, and then at the scene of chasing balls with carefree abandon on the grass, Prince Andre put down the brush and scepter and said, full of warmth:

"That day was the happiest of my life... If only time could stop flowing and forever stay on that day, Aunt Atifie, wouldn't it be wonderful?"

"..."

Looking at Andre's increasingly gentle expression, Atifie00 couldn't help but unconsciously hold her breath, then nodded in agreement:

"That period was indeed nice, quite nostalgic."

"It's wonderful that you feel that way."

After laughing towards Atifie00, Prince Andre grabbed her arm, and then, with an expression of surprise, pressed her hand forcefully against the canvas on the still-wet 'Atifie'.

"Aunt Atifie, I hope you can be happy in the future."

"?!!!"

Hearing Prince Andre's strange blessing, Atifie was suddenly shocked, but before she could speak, the canvas Atifie suddenly began to move.

In Atifie's terrified eyes, those colorful paints astonishingly left the old canvas, climbing along her fingers rapidly to cover her entire body.

She only felt her left hand slightly sink, holding an old brain model; her right fingertip grabbed a quill, and worse, her entire view became dazed, an abrupt yet harmonious thick-bottomed glasses perched on her nose as if it always belonged there.

"Andre?!!!"

"Don't worry, Aunt Atifie, everything will be fine."

Watching Atifie, covered in colorful oil paints with form, clothes, and facial features all morphing into his memory of her, Prince Andre nodded satisfactorily and gently responded:

"You wait over there for a while; Feiliya and I will arrive later, everyone won't be missing."

"You... you..."

"Look, the banquet has already begun."

Gesturing to the lively feast that somehow began, with glasses clinking and laughter, Andre softly said:

"Aunt Atifie, father and the others have waited for you many years; look, they're waving at you!"

With Andre's words, the final piece of paint covered her, completely masking Atifie's terrified face. When she reopened her eyes, it was no longer the original chamber, but the host-guest enjoying banquet from years ago.

And King Fein, who had died years ago, was frowning at her holding the brain model and notes, cuffs stained with ink and smudges, giving a helpless yet doting look.

"Atifie!"

After calling out, King Fein, sitting on the ground, waved to her, and admonished:

"Can't you put down those studies? Even at big brother's banquet, you must bring them?"

"..."

Watching his sister standing dazedly, King Fein doubtfully frowned.

"What's wrong? Why are you silent?"

"I... I'm very busy! The development of Soul Code is at a critical stage. If you hadn't insisted, I wouldn't have come!"

After a few seconds of delay, Atifie00 mirrored his helpless expression, complaining with a headache:

"Just this once, next time don't call me!"

Chapter 618: Kun?

This rare and difficult task, I hope this is the last time you'll find me for it...

As Atifie, wrapped in paint, entered the painting and returned to that year's banquet, Leon carefully stepped into the Cooling Lake behind Research Facility No. 1, his feet treading through restless waters.

"Don't worry, just keep going forward boldly, there shouldn't be any issues."

Noticing Leon seemed a bit nervous, the female Cleaner Mona's soul emerged and comforted him:

"No matter what stands in between, my [Forward Path] can always open a road, even crossing life and death temporarily if not for that Death Messenger stopping us before.

This is just a small lake. As long as you leave a bit of strength to ensure the effect of [Forward Path] doesn't suddenly cut off, you won't drown in the lake water."

"Mm-hmm."

Leon responded and then explained:

"Actually, I'm not worried about drowning but about being detected by the abnormal object detection instruments. If the Scorpio Bureau intercepts us before we destroy the intelligence machine core, Feiliya's coup will become a joke."

"There's no need to worry too much about that."

After hearing Leon's concerns, the fishing guy Frankie also piped up, speculating together:

"Among the abnormal objects frequently used by Director Edward, most are rule-based and offensive types. The few defensive ones are mostly for single-target defense, lacking in large-scale protection measures.

And the intelligence machines of the Crolock Kingdom are so large, there's always a place he can't cover. Even if intercepted by the director's puppet, our goal to destroy the intelligence machine is still achievable."

"Let's hope so."

Not sounding very confident, Leon squinted at the huge circular shadow at the bottom of the Cooling Lake and frowned slightly:

"Senior Ruben, what kind of abnormal objects does Director Edward commonly use?"

"The director has a very special abnormal object, probably named [Between Puppets], that can enhance puppets and dolls to ensure they can't be destroyed by any means, hence he loves to collect various puppet-type abnormal objects."

After hearing Leon's question, Ruben's soul also emerged and replied:

"The most commonly used one is a pale doll covered in thorns. Anyone it gazes upon whose Leon Value is lower than the director's will be forcibly transformed into a similar doll and suffer the same damage as the pale doll.

Second most common is a cross puppet board hanging with many transparent strings. If these strings touch you, you lose control of your body and become a puppet manipulated by him.

Then there are a dozen or so dolls each with different effects, or uniquely shaped transforming puppets, to handle various unexpected situations and use in different environments."

"What about in the sea?"

"I'm not sure about the sea."

The female Cleaner Mona shook her head:

"Director Edward hasn't often taken us on missions, nor has he gone underwater with us, but he did mention once that he does possess corresponding abnormal objects for that."

"I see."

Hearing this, Leon nodded and then pointed to the massive shadow below, his brow furrowed as he inquired:

"The thing down there, is it not one of the abnormal objects your director uses in the water?"

The thing down there?

Upon Leon's inquiry, the three cleaners of the Scorpio Branch were taken aback, then all simultaneously leaning forward to look down, followed by a collective sharp intake of breath.

Lo and behold, as Leon ventured deeper into the Cooling Lake, the huge circular shadow below finally revealed its true form.

The intelligence machine body they were looking for was still deeper at the lake's bottom, and what they initially thought to be the machine body was actually a gigantic strange fish suspended vertically in the lake.

In the dim light of the lakebed, the streamlined tubular body of the fish was completely made of wood, coated with waterproof paint. Its two enormous pectoral fins were tightly pressed against its belly, glimmering with a metallic luster.

The crescent-shaped flattened caudal fin below was made of some unknown strange material, neither stone nor jade, appearing extremely heavy. Each subtle sway stirred strong currents in the lake.

This is way too big!

Looking at the giant fish puppet over 20 meters long, the size of an eight-story building, the four of them felt their scalps tingle.

Even among Cleaners with abnormal objects, there aren't many who can "spar" with such a large creature underwater, let alone one reinforced by [Between Puppets], making it indestructible.

With its predictable power and toughness, if this thing caught up and struck, even people made of iron would likely turn into flat iron discs!

More troublesome was, before Leon could react, the overwhelmingly intimidating puppet fish had already responded first, spreading its metal fins on its sides, slashing through the water, and then with a powerful swipe, shot up instantly!

Oh crap!

Seeing the puppet giant whale below accelerating like an arrow leaving the bowstring, Leon discarded his backup plan, chugged a bottle of liquor, and threw a handful of hazelnut-sized seeded shells.

"Ruben!"

"Right away!"

With Mona's urgent reminder, Ruben's weak soul suddenly blazed, and the seeds thrown by Leon rapidly expanded, aging in seconds to produce hardened fruit the size of small table tops.

Prepared in advance, Frankie flung out a tangle of transparent fishing lines, connecting these odd-looking large fruits to form a massive net anchored by weights on all sides.

"Boom!"

The giant strange fish surged upward blindly, crashing straight into the net without dodging, slightly slowing down but still bullheadedly pushing against the hundreds of table-sized "weights," continuing its determined ascent.

"How is that possible?!"

Seeing their combined effort with Frankie's only briefly stalled the fish, Ruben was astonished.

Those were specially chosen seeds! Even without Frankie's net, the weight of over a hundred shellpieces of sunken wood should be around eighty or ninety tons. How could the fish still push upward with such a heavy load?!

"I'll do it!"

Without anyone maintaining the path, [Forward Path] in the lake was fractured by the fish's massive water currents, with water seeping in from all sides.

Taking advantage of the fish's deceleration, the now fully activated Immortal of Liquor Leon seized the [Silver Dagger of Cutting] tight, diving underwater in reverse to slash directly at the charging whale head.

Chapter 619: Showdown for Supremacy

It's over.

Watching as Leon, instead of accelerating to escape the Cooling Lake when the giant monster fish was momentarily blocked, turned back to charge, the tall, lean man holding a large suitcase at the bottom of the lake couldn't help but slightly curl the corners of his mouth.

This [Whale Shark Puppet] of mine, though it only possesses the simplest capabilities like fin slapping and full-force collision, without any impressive special abilities, sometimes the sheer force of physical destruction itself is the most insurmountable attack.

When a colossal beast weighing over a hundred tons hurls itself at full speed of over forty knots an hour, the impact it creates is beyond what an average person can imagine.

Even the largest unanchored ship in Thousand Sails Maritime Country finds it hard to withstand the full impact of the [Whale Shark Puppet]; with Leon's physical strength only slightly better than an ordinary human's, he likely doesn't even have a chance to become a fragmented mess.

By my judgment, more likely than not, he would be "smeared" onto it, body and blade together, becoming an unremovable stain on the whale's head upon first contact.

Though Leon wouldn't be easily taken down due to his Undying Body, if one were to simply segment and handle that "stain" before his body heals, it could leave him neither dead nor alive... Huh?

Looking at the [Whale Shark Puppet] that seemed to split like soft tofu along its spine's center line, the Scorpio Bureau Chief's eyes didn't help but widen in surprise, gazing in amazement at the blurry figure between the two halves of the whale shark.

What's going on? Why wasn't [Amongst Puppets] triggered?

...

A gamble paid off...

Thanks to the effect of [Silver Dagger of Cutting], Leon, cutting the incoming monster fish into two at once, couldn't help but let out a long breath, having been tensed for a while.

According to what Senior Ruben and the others said, the Scorpio Bureau Chief's [Amongst Puppets] could strengthen a puppet ensuring it wasn't "destroyed" by any external force, but [Silver Dagger of Cutting]'s own effect wasn't about destruction, but to seamlessly split anything the blade touched.

In this back and forth, it seems they managed to exploit a loophole successfully.

While [Amongst Puppets] from Scorpio Bureau Chief prevents puppets from being destroyed, it can't defend against the "like-breaking" of [Silver Dagger of Cutting]; this knife gifted by the Aquarius Director happens to be the nemesis of the Scorpio Bureau Chief.

Leon, taking a slight breath, once again used [Forward Path], dispersing the lake water that had leaked around him, and then raised his hand to again throw out a large cluster of seeds.

"Senior Ruben!"

"Right away!"

Following Ruben's response, the tree seeds Leon cast instantly expanded, erupting with hundreds of thick root systems in seconds.

These banyan tree-like aerial roots grew rapidly in the Cooling Lake, spreading a vast network of intertwined roots in just several breaths of time, firmly binding the monster fish struggling and twisting.

The fins of the fish, used to propel and move water at its chest and tail, were given extra attention, being tightly locked by numerous aerial roots, making even slight movements a luxury.

Resolved!

With the monster fish split in half and completely restrained, a subtle sense of relief washed over one person and three souls.

No matter the level of destruction this monster fish could unleash at full sprint, after being tied up by Ruben just like this, it probably couldn't ram ahead anymore; the next step is to just...

"Well done."

A voice, all-too-familiar to the four, suddenly sounded off nearby, causing the one person and three souls to instantly tense up.

When Leon looked towards the voice, he found the Scorpio Bureau Chief, who had "disappeared" for many days, with his somewhat old large suitcase, stepping into the water-free zone separated by [Forward Path], blocking the "path" with a playful expression.

"Ruben, Mona, Frankie."

After calling the names of the three Scorpio Branch Cleaners, with a sense of joy, the Scorpio Bureau Chief said:

"I thought you all had been blown up, didn't expect to see you again, this is truly wonderful."

"Director Edward..."

Upon hearing the Scorpio Bureau Chief's words, complex expressions unfolded on the faces of the three Scorpio Branch Cleaners.

Good news, the director isn't dead.

Bad news, he's switched sides.

Worse news, if we can't beat him, we're finished.

"Director, the three of us are actually already dead."

After receiving Leon's "stall for time" cue, the female cleaner Mona steadied herself and spoke complexly:

"Leon went to the Realm of the Dead just in time, and when the Grim Reaper wanted to eat us, drove him away and pulled the three of us back."

"I see."

Upon hearing this, the Scorpio Bureau Chief shifted his gaze to Leon, a slight gratitude crossing his features as he said:

"Thank you for saving Mona and the others. To be honest, I'm really grateful I didn't refuse when they wanted you to participate in this mission."

"You're welcome."

Nodding slightly to the Scorpio Bureau Chief, as Leon stealthily touched the split halves of the [Whale Shark Puppet] nearby, he asked hopefully:

"So, given that I saved your subordinates' lives, when we start fighting later, can you go a bit easy on us?"

"Easing up is off the table, but I can try to leave you with an intact corpse."

"..."

With a thankful smile towards the speechless Leon, the Scorpio Bureau Chief pulled out a rapier and said, somewhat awkwardly:

"Actually, I'm fully conscious now, I know you are on the right side, you might even be here to save me.

But there's nothing I can do, my soul has been manipulated, my rightful 'cognition' is suppressed, right now I'm wholly prepared to kill you, and I cannot resist this notion... can you understand this?"

I understand your mom!

After hearing the Scorpio Bureau Chief's words, Leon, whose intoxication was slowly rising, let out a sarcastic laugh, rarely issuing a provocation:

"Then just give it a try."

Glancing at the Scorpio Bureau Chief's chaotic soul and then at his distinctly different colored hands, one yellow and one white, Leon abruptly lowered his stance and, fueled by alcohol, recklessly charged forward with the dagger.

"Given your current state, it's not clear who will end up killing whom!"

...

Thirty seconds later.

"You're really hard to kill!"

After snatching the [Silver Dagger of Cutting] from Leon's hand, poking towards his eyelids several times and not even being able to cut down an eyelash, the Scorpio Bureau Chief exclaimed in awe:

"What on earth is this abnormal object? It actually directly immunizes against all harm, even the [Soul Gnawing Puppet] doesn't work? Is this what you used back then to hold off the King of Nightmares?"

"..."

"What's wrong? Why aren't you saying anything?"

Upon hearing the Scorpio Bureau Chief's curious question, Leon, gripped by a peculiar puppet figure with twenty pairs of arms, couldn't help but roll his eyes fiercely at him.

Having just spoke harshly under the influence of alcohol, and failing to last a minute before falling, where's my face to make a sound?

Chapter 620: Questions and Answers

Although I knew before coming that the odds against the Director were slim, this is just too miserable...

Just like Leon, who immediately went silent after losing, facing a battle outcome that couldn't be described as anything but a total, disheartening defeat, the three Cleaners of the Scorpio Branch had no choice but to return dejectedly into Leon's belly, filled with despair.

This can only be said as that even though the three experienced Second-level Cleaners combined could muster a Contamination Value of 59, they couldn't craft a carefully designed set of abnormal objects to handle various situations, couldn't accumulate years of experience dealing with abnormal objects, and absolutely couldn't react at the True God level.

Faced with Leon rushing forward holding a knife, the Scorpio Director immediately sent out a batch of sturdier puppets. Just after a slight test, he discovered the problem lay with the [Silver Dagger of Cutting], and then instantly shifted to target Leon's wrist.

When he found that Leon wouldn't get hurt under attacks and couldn't damage his wrist no matter what, the Scorpio Director changed tactics again, beginning to use restraining abnormal objects to avoid direct contact with the [Silver Dagger of Cutting] as much as possible.

After Leon wildly slashed down six or seven puppet abnormal objects, finally, a speed-type puppet successfully dodged the blade of the [Silver Dagger of Cutting], gripping Leon's wrist.

With the only weapon capable of breaking through the "puppet domain" being restrained and lacking other powerful offensive means, confronting a crowd of indestructible dolls, Leon had no other path but to surrender.

Having finished his harsh words, Leon didn't even reach the Scorpio Director; he was just five or six steps away when a swarm of dolls shot out from a suitcase and "buried" him, pinning him down with numerous hands, completing a textbook falls from grace at lightspeed.

And from the time Leon valiantly charged up to being seized by a group of dolls, only more than twenty seconds had passed. The [Whale Shark Puppet], which was previously bound by branches, had not even sunk to the lake bottom yet.

...

"Never mind if you don't want to talk."

Seeing Leon refusing to communicate, keeping a sullen face without uttering a word, the Scorpio Director shook his head and gave up trying to converse with this defeated opponent.

He picked up a bizarre-looking rapier, casually slashed it twice through the air, cutting the tree roots binding the [Whale Shark Puppet], and controlled the two halves of the [Whale Shark Puppet] to slowly meld together as he did with other puppets destructed by the [Silver Dagger of Cutting].

"Hey!"

However, just as he awaited the [Whale Shark Puppet] to rejuvenate, Leon, who had been silent, suddenly raised his head and asked:

"Director Edward, since you're so powerful, why were you almost blasted to death previously?"

"Oh, that..."

Hearing Leon's question, the Scorpio Director hesitated for a moment, seemingly unsure if it would breach confidentiality, but seeing Leon couldn't escape now that he had caught him, he contemplated and decided to answer:

"Two weeks before the attack on Ruben and me, the entire Crolock Kingdom's sprinkler system had been infused with diluted adrenaline antidote. Though normally unnoticeable, at critical moments, my reaction speed couldn't rise, so I couldn't even activate my life-saving surrogate doll.

By the way, when you suddenly vomited on me at that time, though I couldn't dodge and got it all over, that was the adrenaline antidote taking effect... It's a pity, if only I had realized it then, maybe I wouldn't have ended up like this."

"Knocked down by just a little bit of antidote?"

Glancing at the somewhat unwilling expression of the Scorpio Director, Leon frowned and said:

"After Mona and the others died, they almost came back from the Realm of the Dead. With your ranking, even if your physical body was destroyed, couldn't you have fought on for a while relying on your soul?"

"Yes, but my soul was sealed."

Sighing deeply, the Scorpio Director chatted leisurely with Leon while waiting for the whale shark to merge:

"Prince Andre is a member of the Slaughter King Association. He got their help to kill a True God, burned its flesh and blood, and sent the power of one of its members into the scene.

When I was preparing to separate my soul from my body, part of the power from the Slaughter King Association forcibly pushed my soul back. And because the soul's dependence on the body is the law of this world, the soul can't remain conscious separately when the body faints, which is how I got captured."

Slaughter King Association...

After firmly remembering that name, Leon continued to ask with disdain:

"So you didn't even resist and got caught right away?"

"Not really, I resisted a bit."

The Scorpio Director shook his head and explained:

"But Prince Andre dismantled and decomposed all the abnormal objects seized from the Gemini Branch's warehouse and made something called 'Position Stones' from the materials, spreading them across over eight hundred districts of the Crolock Kingdom.

When I strived to fight back, I was already on the brink of exhaustion, and then being dispersed by those Position Stones, rendering only one-eighth of the effect, it didn't cause much damage and was blocked. It probably just jolted the entire Crolock Kingdom."

After detailing the failure, the Scorpio Director simply sat cross-legged smilingly, proactively inquired:

"Do you have any other questions? Considering that you saved Ruben and the others once, before your immortal abnormal object's effect ends and I kill you completely, I can satisfy a bit more of your curiosity."

"No, I've asked about everything I wanted to know."

Hearing the Scorpio Director's words, Leon slightly shook his head, pondered for a while, and then spoke:

"Director Edward, how about this: considering how patient you are with me, after this is over, if you want to know how you actually lost, I can give you a proper answer then."

"?"

The Scorpio Director paused slightly, then frowned and said:

"What are you trying to say? I don't get your point."

"Hiccup... You'll understand soon... Oh, by the way..."

After a hiccup full of the smell of alcohol, having achieved the goal of stalling for time, Leon grinned, then indicated with his chin towards the foot of the Scorpio Director feet, happily asking:

"Do you like pretty feet?"

"???"

Still unable to follow Leon's train of thought, the utterly baffled Scorpio Director could only follow his gaze to his feet, and then he noticed a sculpture of a human right foot with smooth muscles and clear bones, looking just like marble.

"What is this?"

With new curiosity, Scorpio Director heard Leon smilingly explain:

"This is called [The Foot of Fitness], an abnormal object I crafted myself, its effect is to make the right foot especially beautiful, and now it's yours."

"???"

For me? What am I supposed to do with this?

Still not understanding Leon's intention, the Scorpio Director was just about to continue his question but suddenly realized something was amiss: at the moment that "beautiful foot" appeared, it felt as if "something" was suddenly "missing" from his heart.

Meanwhile, the [Whale Shark Puppet], already sunken to the bottom, eerily turned around, flapping its chest and tail fins for a full charge, crashing into the cooling lake bottom's intelligent core.

Before the sound of this violent impact could reach them, the glass protective layer, two meters thick around the intelligent core, exploded in the Scorpio Director's shock-stricken gaze, and a massive volume of lake water poured in, crushing the structure of the exceedingly intricate machinery inside!