

# Endless Debt

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### Chapter 51: Chapter 25: High Above the Sky\_2

Then Norm Ward, a man who lives by licking blood at the crossroads of hesitation, where did he get the 'Alchemy Matrix' from?"

Bologue voiced the question in his heart.

"This technology is not monopolized by the Order Bureau, you know, in this world there's never a shortage of people who are crazy about knowledge. I guess this guy was aided by the Order of Truth and got the 'Alchemy Matrix' implanted."

"Order of Truth?"

This was an unfamiliar term, Bologue pursued further.

"An organization made up of... a group of alchemists whose minds have some issues. Generally speaking, everyone likes 'Scholars'; they have rich knowledge and their own insights, whereas the alchemists in the Order of Truth are a completely extreme bunch.

They pursue the truth of the 'Secret Source', seeing 'Secret Source' as a deity and themselves as followers, forming an organization much like a Sect."

Geoffrey remarked sarcastically.

"Scholars should have been breaking free from ignorance, but ultimately fell back into ignorance due to their fanaticism for truth."

"Are they the enemy of the Order Bureau?" Bologue asked tentatively.

"It's not to that extent yet. In the positioning of the Order Bureau, this is considered a neutral organization, but sometimes they do cause trouble, entering a temporarily hostile state... they're enemies, but not to the point of mortal enmity. Sometimes, we even cooperate."

Geoffrey recalled matters related to the Order of Truth. Because of their neutral inclination, he rarely dealt with these fanatics in his field work, but from a certain perspective, a portion of Geoffrey's troubles was caused by this group.

"These guys never care about rules, only pursuing 'Secret Source'. As long as there's money, they'll implant the 'Alchemy Matrix' for you. Of course, most of those 'Alchemy

Matrices' are their experimental products," Geoffrey gritted his teeth, "doing experiments and making money at the same time, quite a good deal."

"Arguably, most unarchived Condensers are created by these lunatics, like Norm Ward for instance."

Geoffrey continued.

"However, what's most detestable about these people is not only their wanton creation of Condensers, which disrupts the Extraordinary World, but more importantly, their bottomless pursuit of the 'Secret Source.'"

No means are spared, no costs are considered.

Many have perished in their experiments, including Extraordinary Disasters caused by experiments getting out of control, and those who survived by luck yet became monstrous, unknowable entities..."

"Sounds really awful..."

Bologue mumbled, his mind already picturing the scene, a group of mad scholars greedily craving knowledge, their greed making them lose their humanity.

"This is the necessary sacrifice to advance towards truth, to uncover the 'Secret Source'... those people always use this phrase to justify themselves."

Geoffrey's words were filled with disgust and hatred; such a fanatical group like the Order of Truth inherently stands on the opposing side of the Order Bureau.

"But the Order Bureau hasn't eradicated them," Bologue said.

"Because... sometimes you have to admit, these lunatics indeed can bring us surprises. Hence, the Order Bureau reached an agreement with them to maintain the status quo."

Geoffrey said with a hint of helplessness. He hated those people, but sometimes they actually need those people, an emotion of love and hate.

"Of course, if the Order of Truth shows any signs of losing control, we'll strike without hesitation, no mercy."

Geoffrey let out a creepy laugh. The Order Bureau tolerates the presence of the Order of Truth simply because the Order Bureau holds absolute power, which brings authority, as well as unwavering confidence and composure.

After this talk, Geoffrey suddenly stared intently at Bologue, as if pondering something. Bologue felt a bit uneasy under his gaze, ready to speak, when Geoffrey said.

"Bologue, when you go home to rest, you don't have much else to do, right?"

"Yes, what's up."

Indeed, when not working, Bologue led a simple life, getting up, fiddling with the war sand table for a while, then listening to his favorite music.

Bologue also found it somewhat boring, but in the past period, because it was an internship, there was a possibility of being sent back to Black Prison, he didn't have the heart to think about these things. Plus, with Adelle's passing, his restless heart became even harder to settle.

"You should find some hobbies, or raise some pets to help with your psychological health," Geoffrey said.

Speaking of this, Bologue paused, remembering that Adelle once said something similar to him.

"Pets..."

Bologue murmured softly, a gentle voice came through the memories.

"Bologue, have you considered getting a pet?"

In memory, it was a gloomy afternoon. At that time, Bologue hadn't moved off Adelle's couch yet.

"Pets? I haven't considered it."

Bologue lay on the sofa, watching Adelle walk out of the kitchen. She had already become quite old, but Bologue always forgot she was elderly, as beautiful memories still lingered on her.

"I think you should get something," Adelle sat beside Bologue, gently stroking his head.

"Whether it's a cat, a dog, or even a small mouse, you need some living things to bring some life to your dead life, don't you?"

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"I think my life is quite lively, I'm just alive." Bologue said.

"It's not like that, when you're alone, whether hungry or satiated, it's ultimately just your own business... You need to care about something, some little lives that need your attention."

"Need care, need attention..."

Walking out from the memories, Bologue was somewhat surprised, not expecting so much time had passed, and so many things had happened.

He also couldn't recall exactly what he said to Adelle at the time, but in his impression, Bologue was still worried about the ups and downs afterwards, and wasn't sure whether he would continue to maintain his freedom or be sent back to the Black Prison. So he didn't pay much heed to the issue of pets.

"I feel my mind is quite healthy, if it wasn't, I would've gone insane in the Black Prison long ago... As for pets, I'll consider it."

Bologue didn't think it was a problem.

Geoffrey was momentarily at a loss for words. Was there really nothing wrong with Bologue? He did seem fine, a perfectly normal person capable of effective communication, but did Bologue really have no problems in his mind? Geoffrey had his doubts about this.

Just like being in an asylum for too long, Bologue had already absorbed some of the madness, yet he failed to notice it, considering such "abnormality" as "normal."

Geoffrey had clearly realized these things over the year they spent together, so he would always intentionally or unintentionally interfere with Bologue, not expecting Bologue to be cured, but at least to prevent further deterioration, and to maintain a resemblance of being human, whether in appearance or in mental state.

Awkwardly coughing twice, Geoffrey dug into his pocket, took out a ticket, and handed it to Bologue.

"You should find something to do, meet some living people... How about watching a play?"

Bologue accepted the ticket, a theatre ticket, with time and location printed on it, along with the programs to be performed.

"Hmm... alright."

Bologue did not reject Geoffrey's goodwill and put the ticket away.

In fact, Bologue thought he didn't need rest. Being resurrected, he was like a strong iron man, iron-cast body, iron-cast will.

He thought it was pretty good, but Bologue also understood that being so lively inevitably caused Geoffrey to worry, so he might as well listen to him and relax appropriately, not for himself, but to give peace of mind to those around him.

"I really like this theatre group, if it weren't for the overtime these days, I wouldn't have had the time to go, so you benefit." Geoffrey added.

"Then... shall I head back?"

"Go back! Go back!"

Geoffrey urged Bologue to leave, Bologue got up and walked to the door, just about to push it when he turned back.

"Oh, Geoffrey, when I captured Norm, I also obtained some unknown potions and Philosopher's Stone, how should you deal with these things?" he asked.

Geoffrey understood Bologue's meaning and responded.

"There are people specialized in examining the potion's components, and the Philosopher's Stone as well. We'll hand it over to the Alchemists, letting them revert the Philosopher's Stone to the 'Golden Soul.' I'll have them pay attention to distinguish the soul within, and if it's Adelle's soul, I will inform you."

Hearing such a reply, Bologue nodded, glanced at the chessboard, and picked up the black pawn, holding it in his hand.

"Then I'm off."

Bologue said, waved goodbye to Geoffrey, and left directly before Geoffrey could say anything.

The return journey seemed somewhat prolonged without the Key of the Crooked Path. Each time returning from the Order Bureau to his home could be counted as a long voyage, Bologue decided to either get hold of a Key of the Crooked Path later, or to move to the Ligna District, as this damned commute was truly torturous.

Walking along the street to the station, perhaps due to the upcoming winter, the cold of the night could be distinctly felt, with a few withered leaves hanging on the dry trees, rustling with noise.

Bologue's hands were tucked in his pockets, still clutching that pawn tightly.

He was thinking about some things, things Bologue himself wasn't sure how to describe.

Bologue felt that naming this Extraordinary Power using chess pieces wasn't for any resemblance reason; it should have a deeper meaning.

Just like intuition.

Whether a lowly 'Condenser' or an exalted 'Seeker of Glory,' all these chess pieces were members on the board from the beginning to the end...

So is it possible that outside this vast chessboard, something is watching over it, they are hidden Chess Players, since hundreds or even thousands of years ago, holding matches, and this dispute has not ended to this day.

Bologue's steps came to a halt, a chill arising from the deepest part of his soul burst forth, spreading from the heart and coursing through the surging blood to encompass everything around him.

Taking a deep breath, exhaling a puff of white mist, Bologue ceased his thoughts and headed straight into the darkness.

### **Chapter 53: Chapter 26: Gray Mist, Industry, and Delicious Shrimp Crackers**

A new day, a beautiful day.

Bologue stepped into a brief vacation. Although the vacation was only a few days, the feeling of having nothing to do was quite nice.

Climbing out of bed, the feeling of getting on track became clearer in his mind, but it was inevitably followed by a lingering cold sensation.

It hovered over Bologue's head, always pricking his nerves at unexpected moments.

The Chess Player...

Fortunately, Bologue didn't let his doubts about the Chess Player trouble him for long, treating them as his own wild thoughts. After all, he wasn't even a Condenser yet and had no ability to enter the game.

First, he needed to become a Condenser. Thinking about these things now would only lead to pointless mental exhaustion.

"Ah..."

Yawning, Bologue washed his face and brushed his teeth, emphasizing the point that, although a somewhat obsessive executioner, he still maintained a semblance of decorum. His razor scraped repeatedly across his cheeks, obstinately removing nonexistent stubble until everything was clean.

Standing before the mirror, Bologue gazed at his reflection, his hair unkempt, his sharp eyes hidden amidst it.

Slowly raising his hand, Bologue tried clenching his fist a few times, clearly feeling the fullness of his strength. Compared to before, there was no particularly significant improvement, but the strength was palpable.

Blueish light points flickered before his eyes, the mysterious power known as Soul Shards.

After raiding the Nom Clinic, Bologue had slain several Demons, extracting Soul Shards from their corpses. This unknown power wrapped around him, providing a significant amplification.

Nearly a year had passed since Bologue first came into contact with this strange power, during which time he could clearly feel the benefits the Soul Shards brought him, like a mysterious force vaguely circling around him.

"Shards... Ether..."

Bologue recalled the intermittent surge of power during his battles, which made him swift and lethal... He now suspected that he had unconsciously grasped the Extreme Technique known as "Ethereal Amplification."

He wasn't sure how other Condensers learned this Extreme Technique, but to Bologue, it seemed his ability to absorb Soul Shards had caused a large reserve of pure Ether to accumulate within his body, suppressing Bulimia Nervosa while also strengthening him.

With every fight, as he vented his rage, he released power, enhancing his strength to swing a heavier Hammer.

This way, everything seemed reasonable. Setting aside "Resurrection," Bologue was merely an ordinary person. Even with the assistance of Alchemy Armament · Shock Hammer, it was difficult to cause massive destruction.

But now, the more battles he fought, the more berserk power was granted to him.

Bologue began to look forward to what would come next.

Becoming a Condenser, possessing his own "Secret Energy," learning more Extreme Techniques, and bringing down fire upon villains.

After tidying himself up, dressing, and sitting on the sofa, Bologue glanced at the clock, turned on the radio, and counted one, two, three, and when he reached four, the sound of static crackled, accompanied by harsh music, and a male voice began.

"Hello, listeners! I'm Dudel, your loyal friend broadcasting twice a day. Welcome to this program!"

This was a music radio program named "Gray Mist, Industry, and Delicious Shrimp Crackers." Many of Bologue's records were discovered through this radio station, but perhaps due to niche tastes, Dudel's show wasn't widely popular, airing only in the early morning and late night.

"Today's new track for everyone is..."

A burst of song emanated from the radio, distorted and accompanied by some buzzing static, the sound quality quite poor, but it was considered decent to Bologue.

He hummed along, raising his hand to play with the sand table before him, reenacting past wars.

Looking down from above, one could see that the terrain inside the sand table bore some resemblance to the map of Opus, except this sand table lacked the city-spanning Great Rift, offering only vast plains and legions galloping upon those plains.

Legions came from all directions, their numbers as vast as a sea of sand, encircling the lone city in the center of the sand table, determined to destroy it by fire.

Bologue focused intently on all this, and in his trance, he could even hear the roaring sounds of fighting.

The sand table replicated an extremely famous battle, marking the final punctuation on modern history's most frenzied and terrifying war.

That was a story from seventy-two years ago.

The southern Kagader Empire rose, devouring various nations and incorporating them into its massive territory. Just when it was about to reach the northern Rhine River Basin, the northern countries united to form the present-day Rhine Alliance to counter it.

Their fierce clashes drove the war into madness, dragging more and more countries down, eventually evolving into a world war known as "Scorched Earth Fury."

This war lasted six years, with smoke and fire encompassing the entire continent. After countless sacrifices, the two behemoths focused their final battlefield on a particular city-state.

The Holy City of King Solomon.



From the beginning to the end of the war, King Solomon maintained a stance of neutrality, viewing his city-state as the City of Scholars, where scholars would only record the war and not participate in it.

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But the two behemoths didn't think like that, the Holy City stood between them, they both wanted to capture this city as their bridgehead and push the front line into the enemy's territory.

Thus, sixty-six years ago, a battle for the Holy City began, both sides dispatched troops to the Holy City. As for King Solomon, no one cared about his thoughts, his stubborn neutrality had long angered both parties.

King Solomon did not give up, he gathered the army to resist the assaults from the Kagader Empire and the Rhine Alliance. These two giants, wary of each other, started a mutual war, turning the battlefield into a chaotic three-way fight.

Bologue picked up a flag from the sand table, simulating the offensive back then and completely surrounded the Holy City.

King Solomon, taking advantage of the chaos of the battle, sought a chance for survival. Regrettably, reality was too cruel. He led the army to hold on desperately for a hundred days, but eventually, the tottering city gate was breached by the Kagader Empire's army.

When the Empire's troops stormed into King Solomon's Golden Palace, they found him already dead on his throne, while the Rhine Alliance's troops also entered the dilapidated Holy City.

One hundred days of chaotic warfare completely exhausted both fatigued parties. They looked at the scorched earth beneath them, too weary to continue fighting, and what followed is a story everyone knew.

Scholars called that battle the "Fall of the Holy City". After the Fall, both sides negotiated peace in the ruined Golden Palace, bringing the sweeping world war, the Rage of the Scorched Earth, to an end. Not long after, this land witnessed the birth of Oath City, Opus.

It was a history marked by blood and tears. Perhaps intending to conceal something, both the Kagader Empire and the Rhine Alliance coincidentally sealed off information about the Fall of the Holy City, leaving most people only aware of the beginning and end of the Rage of the Scorched Earth, but unclear about the details of the Fall.

Bologue was very curious about that piece of history, one of his few hobbies. He often went to the library to borrow materials and then recreated the Fall of the Holy City on the sand table.

In later years, some scholars proposed novel views. They claimed the history books' account of the Fall of the Holy City was wrong and had been altered.

From various resources like steel, manpower, and food, they analyzed that, given the military strength of the Kagader Empire and the Rhine Alliance at the time, they could have continued the war. However, after the destruction of the Holy City, they suddenly stopped, as if they had come purposely to destroy that place.

Some also said the outcome of the Fall of the Holy City was that King Solomon severely damaged both sides. This view was supported by some people's memoirs, stating that during the Fall, some claimed to have clearly seen a supernatural light rising from the direction of the Holy City.

That light was so intense, like a miracle.

From the capital of the Kagader Empire to the ends of the Rhine River, from the Free Port, all the way to the Wind Source Highlands, everyone saw that light rising up, spanning the skies.

They said that light killed all the participating soldiers, including King Solomon himself, which is why records of the Fall of the Holy City are so scarce, not because they were sealed, but because no one survived. Also because of that light, which severely harmed the two giants, they had no choice but to negotiate peace.

As for what the truth is, probably no one knows anymore, after all, it has been so long since then, the once scorched land has now become the present Oath City, Opus.

Bologue pondered, initially confused, but as the doors of the Extraordinary World opened to him, he gradually realized that those unsolved mysteries seemed to have a second face.

One face towards ordinary people, and another towards the mysterious Extraordinary World.

"A beam of light."

Bologue murmured, his gaze turned to the window, passing through layers of thick fog and dark clouds, crossing the buildings and rising cranes, finally resting on the misty expanse of the Great Rift.

Nobody knows how the Great Rift was born, yet combining these rumors, Bologue had a brand new idea.

Perhaps those people were right, that light shattered both sides and left a scar named the Great Rift on this scorched land.

"Listeners! May we meet again at midnight!"

Dudel's voice rang out, accompanied by a soothing piece of music, concluding the morning program.

Bologue slowly got up too, glanced at the sand table of the Fall of the Holy City, walked to the window, and gazed at the Great Rift.

Countless mysteries troubled Bologue, the reason for his coming to this world, the details of his deal with the Devil... even the history buried under Opus's shadow.

He didn't think too much about it, vaguely noting it all in his mind before tossing it aside. Just like the doubts of the "Chess Player", until his power reached that tier, all the thinking only added internal wear and tear.

He rummaged through his pocket, pulling out the chess piece he brought back, walked to the sand table, and placed the piece atop the highlands, where its base lay the advancing troops.

The pocket held more than just the chess piece, it also contained a ticket given by Geoffrey, now crumpled by Bologue's hands.

"A play?"

Bologue muttered.

If he hadn't reached into his pocket, he would have almost forgotten the ticket, thankfully he glanced at the date, and the performance was today.

In truth, Bologue quite enjoyed reading books, watching plays, movies, and the like...

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In short, as long as something contains a "story," Bologue likes it. He believes these things extend human life to some extent, allowing people to see more beautiful things and experience what they haven't in their limited lifespan.

Thinking of this, Bologue can feel himself slowly reintegrating into the world, from listening to noisy rock music to now watching stage plays.

Bologue picked up the keys and walked out the door. He decided that if he ever had to move in the future, he'd try to get a TV or something.

Leaving the building, the gray and dim light fell, and the sky was still familiarly gloomy.

"Speaking of which, how is Geoffrey's progress? Did Norm finally speak?"

Bologue muttered to himself, feeling that the Order Bureau was really too far from his home, a four-hour round trip at times. Without necessity, he was really too lazy to go there.

"Yo! Bologue!"

A shout rang out, and Bologue suspiciously turned toward the sound. He had almost no friends and couldn't figure out who was calling him.

The iron fence at the street corner was pulled open, and an old face poked out from the shadow of a small window, waving at Bologue.

"Bologue, is it your day off today? It's rare to see you during the daytime."

The old man looked surprised, in his memory, Bologue appeared very rarely during the day.

"Yeah, you could say it's a day off."

Bologue walked to the railing and struck up a conversation with Vincent.

The friendship between Bologue and Vincent was rather peculiar. During his one-year internship, Bologue spent most of his time tracking and hunting Demons, something that was obviously not smooth during the day. So Bologue usually worked at night and slept during the day.

He often worked late into the night, and when he stayed at Adelle's house, she would prepare some late-night snacks for him on the table. But after he moved out of her house, no one cooked for him anymore, and Bologue didn't have the energy to cook for himself, making it difficult to find food late at night until he discovered Vincent's shop that operated until late.

As the visits added up, Bologue and Vincent became familiar, and Vincent could be considered an old customer.

"You seem to be in a good mood. So, has something good happened?"

Vincent looked at Bologue, clearly sensing that his mental state had improved a lot.

"Probably... I found a job, stable and long-term employment, and the salary and benefits are quite good," Bologue replied.

Compared to the many companies in Opus, the treatment at the Order Bureau was indeed good, not only providing meals but also covering funerals, which sounded very thoughtful.

"Oh? That's not bad. In this damn Opus, there's wealth everywhere, but the foreigners who come here to strike it rich are endless. Those who can earn money and live a stable life are still the minority, not to mention those who can buy a house in the city center and have a place of their own; they are very few."

Vincent rambled on. This old guy seemed to have experienced a lot in his youth, with a murky gaze flickering with past memories, and then he suddenly remembered something.

"Wait, you're not working in the Great Rift, are you?"

The old man's cloudy eyes suddenly became clear, staring intently at Bologue.

"No, no, I can't stand that place."

Bologue lied, though he didn't consider it a lie. He worked for the Order Bureau, only occasionally needing to go on business trips to the Great Rift.

"That's good."

Hearing Bologue's answer, Vincent breathed a sigh of relief, then coughed forcefully, warning Bologue.

"My lungs were damaged from working in the Great Rift. I was lucky to resign early. They say the old guys of my generation all ended up dying in hospitals... Dying of respiratory failure."

Vincent's voice gradually lost emotion, becoming monotonous and indifferent.

"They say it feels like you're drowning, unable to breathe, suffocating to death."

Taking another glance at Bologue, Vincent smiled and then said.

"Don't worry too much. Remember to work hard. Although this place is terrible, you have to strive to live well."

"Yeah, bye, Vincent, see you tomorrow."

Bologue nodded, thanked Vincent for his concern, then waved and left.

## Chapter 56: Chapter 27 Destiny

Riding the tram all the way forward, passing through several districts, finally reaching the city center, which is the core of Opus, the most prosperous and magnificent place, where towering buildings are countless, like a jungle of iron and concrete.

The official name of this district is rarely mentioned, citizens often call it the "Agreement District" because sixty-six years ago, it was here that the Kagader Empire and the Rhine Alliance signed a contract, made a vow, and agreed on the future of Opus.

It's said that the vow contract is still preserved in the ruins of King Solomon's Golden Palace, but unfortunately, it is not open to the public, citizens can only see the gold reflected in the sky from a distance, under which is the Golden Palace cast from gold.

Viewing the scenery outside the window, Bologue can clearly feel the changes in the city, the Agreement District is undoubtedly much better than other districts, here gathers ninety-nine percent of Opus's wealth, high officials and gentry live here, and it's also the place with the best law and order in Opus.

Equipped riding police patrol the streets, the streets are clean and tidy, with no sewage or garbage at all, between the towering buildings, there are also low-flying airships with giant billboards, beautifully dressed ladies can be seen everywhere.

Compared to the ghostly environment of Shenbei District, Bologue even feels as if he has come to another city.

Inside the tram, other passengers also looked out of the window, everyone appeared like outsiders, and their accents were messy.

In the eyes of these foreign outsiders, the division of Opus is not too complicated, they don't care at all about the district divisions, in their perception, Opus is only divided into two areas, the Agreement District and other districts, as for the Great Rift...

They are accustomed to calling that place the mine.

Countless people come here, excavating the imagined gold in the Great Rift, hoping to take them back home, but often they end up buried here along with the gold.

A terrible city, a city to be longed for.

The tram stopped, Bologue arrived at the station, stepping out of the compartment, he stood on the crowded platform, surrounded by people coming and going.

Everyone is bright and shining, here, Opus turns colorful, instead of a persistent gray-white hue.

In the surrounding people's laughter, Bologue felt uneasy all over, but fortunately, he quickly adapted, and not many people noticed him.

He was wearing the Concealer coat distributed by the Order Bureau, with a white shirt and tie underneath, Bologue has always looked like this, never having had another attire.

Taking out the ticket, he glanced at the address on it, and walked into the crowd, heading towards the destination.

...

Kedening sat at the dressing table, tidying up his appearance, his face expressionless, as if wearing a blank mask, any expression could be carved on it.

Breath in, breath out, after a brief preparation, a soft smile emerged on his face, his eyes lively, speaking lines to the mirror, instantly breaking out of the cold state, his demeanor serious and vivid, as if behind the mirror, there really was another person speaking to him.

Other actors passed by behind him, all casting admiring glances at Kedening, he is acknowledged as the best actor here, everyone knows this.

Even so, Kedening never grew conceited, in the fiercely competitive Agreement District, maintaining this small theater is not easy, each of his performances requires exerting all his strength, tolerating not a bit of negligence.

"Mr. Caesar, it's really hard to meet you."

A voice came from behind, as the person arrived beside Kedening, sat down on the chair beside him, the light from the dressing table lamp illuminated his face clearly.

Kedening didn't glance at him, instead, kept staring at the mirror, through the corner of the mirror, the man's appearance could be seen, if Bologue were here, it would be a face that surprised him.

"Mr. Nawellen, I've made it very clear, right? My theater won't be sold to anyone, this is the result of the efforts of me and my wife, I just want it to continue to maintain."

Kedening rejected him without mercy.

The person was called Nawellen by Kedening, but in Bologue's ears, he had another name, Yas Cyril.

It's unclear why Yas appeared here, nor why he used a pseudonym.

Yas squinted his eyes slightly, scrutinizing Kedening in front of him, every time he saw him, Kedening's face was painted with heavy makeup, hardly seeing his true self, as if he always wore a mask, never taking it off.

"Are you sure? The offer we made is very reasonable, even generous."

Yas's word choice was urgent, but his tone remained calm, as if he didn't really care about the matter, his gaze subtly sweeping around, seemingly searching for something.

"I'm sure, it won't change."

Kedening answered coldly.

Seeing this, Yas could only helplessly stand up, he took his hat in hand, placed it in front, bowed slightly, saying to Kedening.

"Then I'll take my leave, Mr. Kedening Caesar, if you change your mind..."

"My mind won't change."

On this issue, Kedening was unexpectedly firm, leaving no possibility of negotiation.

Yas awkwardly smiled, didn't say more, put on his hat, took a few steps but stopped again, he glanced back at the dressing room, sniffing forcefully, but only smelled the choking scent of perfume.

Through the mirror's reflection, Yas's gaze met with Kedening's, he smiled again, turned, and left.

With Yas's departure, Kedening's icy countenance gradually relaxed, he sighed deeply, then furrowed his brow, clouds gathering.

Yas's appearance ruined his good mood of the day, even the subsequent performance lacked some passion.

"Sir, there's a phone call for you!"

At this moment, a staff member came quickly, whispered by Kedening's ear, Kedening nodded, left the dressing room, heading toward his office.

The theater was small, all the rooms were crowded together, calling Kedening's office more like a dressing room with tables and chairs, he closed the door, walked to the telephone, picked it up.

"Hello! Kedening."



A familiar male voice sounded, and hearing his voice made Kedening feel a lot more at ease. Before the other party could say anything, Kedening spoke first.

"That person named Nawellen has come, he seems a bit odd... I suspect he's someone from the Order Bureau. We might already be under surveillance."

Kedening's gaze turned cold, with a slight chill running down his spine. The thought of that slight possibility made him feel a wave of fear.

The Order Bureau, a mysterious and terrifying Extraordinary Organization.

"I'm not sure about your first statement, after all, I haven't seen that guy, but for the second half, you're probably right. I also suspect we've been targeted by the Order Bureau."

A man's voice came through the receiver, sounding not at all relaxed.

"What happened?" Kedening pressed on.

"Norm Ward, our contact, he's missing. I went to Wanderers' Lane today to check. His clinic was a complete mess, everyone is dead, bodies piled up together."

A whiff of blood permeated through the phone line, leaving Kedening silent.

"I inquired a bit at the Cobweb Bar, nobody knows anything, just some rumors, rumors about an 'Evil Spirit.' They say it was an attack by the Evil Spirit."

"Evil Spirit?"

"Yes, Evil Spirit. You really ought to see the scene, it looked like some monster was feasting there. The clinic was torn apart, bodies and limbs mingled with congealed blood, forming a wall of corpses."

The man's voice carried some hesitation as he spoke.

"For a moment, even I believed that the Evil Spirit might be real."

"Never mind the so-called Evil Spirit, where's the goods?" Kedening asked.

"Gone, both the Liquid Spirit Potion and the Philosopher's Stone have vanished... The loss is massive," the man complained, "we shouldn't have stored so much at Norm's place."

"Stop whining. If it really was the Order Bureau's doing, I guess Norm is already howling in an interrogation room. He didn't know much about us, but eventually, some clues will be unearthed..."

Kedening's voice gradually quieted down until the man picked up the conversation again.

"We're no longer safe, Kedening. Prepare to evacuate. We've already provided 'them' with enough profit; there's no need to risk our lives."

"I know, David, but before leaving Opus, we need to get the goods out. These things cannot stay within Opus... How's your preparation going?"

Kedening rubbed his temples, the bad news coming one after another.

"The route is ready. I'll handle the first batch of transport to test if the route is safe. If it is, you'll be in charge of taking the remaining goods out of Opus."

David recalled the arrangement of the route and continued speaking.

"Once we leave Opus and reach Free Port, we'll be safe... Damn it, those people said they could hold the Order Bureau off. How did we get noticed so quickly?"

"I don't know, who knows, maybe it's some meddlesome newcomer?"

Kedening speculated casually, unaware that his guess was quite accurate. Had Adelle not died, they wouldn't have drawn Bologue's attention, causing all this chaos.

"We might need some backup. I'll report this to the 'Ghoul', " Kedening thought aloud, then said, "Anyway... stay safe, David. We're just small fry, our lives are most important."

"Alright, I'll go arrange that. Remember to give my regards to Jini."

With that, David hung up, and Kedening lowered his head, his gaze falling into the shadows, gradually clenching his fist as if it were a block of iron.

He was like a volcano about to erupt, his expression twisting into a menacing snarl.

"Sir?"

The door was pushed open, and someone in a performance costume poked their head through.

"What's the matter?"

Kedening looked up with a smile, the menacing air completely vanished, as if he were a different person.

"The performance is about to start."

"Alright."

Kedening nodded and left the room, walking down the corridor as more people appeared around him. He could vaguely hear the murmurs of the audience, everyone anticipating today's performance.

Standing behind the curtain, Kedening's mind was a chaotic whirl, leaving him mentally exhausted, but just then the music started. The curtain slowly drew open, and the spotlight descended from the dimness, landing on Kedening.

Raising his head, Kedening's gaze momentarily lost focus. In the next moment, all the overwhelming noise dissipated. He smiled and recited his lines loudly, as if reborn. The other actors also took to the stage, gradually elevating the theatre performance to its climax with the rising music.

Wave after wave of applause crashed like the sea against the stage, captivating everyone's attention, touching their hearts.

Even Bologue, seated in the audience, was no exception.

Bologue watched Kedening, sometimes cheering, sometimes applauding. It truly was a remarkable performance.

In later times, Bologue often recalled this scene, thinking that if there were truly a deity of fate in this world, surely it would be a being with a perverse sense of humor.

Messing with everyone, leading them to make wrong choices, step onto the wrong paths, and arrive at wrong endings.