

Endless 113

Chapter 113: Face of Horror

"Good morning, Geoffrey."

Bologue tried to steady his breath and greeted Geoffrey, then said after seeing the figure behind him.

"Is that Balder?"

The sublimation furnace cores' protective clothing all looked the same; these people didn't take the initiative to talk to him, making it really difficult for Bologue to distinguish them.

"It's me, good morning, Bologue." Balder stepped forward and nodded slightly.

"I guess you came at Belli's behest? Don't even think about it, I'm definitely not going."

Bologue bent down and lightly touched the ground. Two cylinders rose up, Bologue sat directly on one, while the other hit Palmer's waist, causing a cry of pain.

"No, this time I've just come to deliver a gift as an apology."

Balder said as he lifted the briefcase, deliberately showing Bologue the emblem of the Thorn Sword.

Bologue initially intended to refuse and dismiss Balder, but upon seeing this unfamiliar emblem, he had to admit Balder did it right; he successfully caught Bologue's attention.

"What's inside?" Bologue asked.

"Masks, masks that every Field Operations Department employee needs." Balder said.

"Ah? Masks," Bologue turned to Geoffrey in confusion, "Is this true? No one has ever told me."

"I was planning to tell you later," Geoffrey explained.

"You know, we live in the city, fight in the city, issues of personal privacy are quite important, so during operations, everyone wears masks to conceal their identities, and over time, it became a tradition."

"Field Operations Department employees all have their own masks, as do I, as does Palmer."

"What does your mask look like?" Bologue asked curiously.

"Me? I haven't been on field operations for many years; I don't even know where my mask is anymore." Geoffrey said perfunctorily.

Seeing Geoffrey like this, Bologue knew it was hopeless to pursue further, so he turned to Palmer.

"You've just joined the Field Operations Department and got your mask?" Bologue had no idea about this.

"Me? I've always had one. Although the Crow's Nest isn't the Field Operations Department, it still counts as a department that frequently goes on field operations, so this tradition spread to us too."

Palmer swayed as he sat on the cylinder, reached into his pocket, pulled out a crumpled black cloth, and put it over his head, completely covering his face, leaving only two holes for his eyes.

Like a robber ready to strike.

"Just like that?"

"What else?"

Palmer's attitude was very casual, he liked his mask and boasted.

"It's just a mask, practical and convenient. I've even used pantyhose as a mask, just putting it over my head, it's extremely convenient."

Bologue ignored Palmer's voice; this person was beyond saving.

"It's a kind of tradition, not just to protect our identity, but also, more importantly, it's the stance we show to our enemies," Geoffrey added at this moment, "Enemies will remember our masks, so choosing a mask has a certain ceremonious feel."

"They'll make up strange codenames for us based on our masks, like years ago, I was called 'Tiger Eye.'" Geoffrey unusually revealed his past.

"Really? It sounds pretty good."

Bologue looked at the briefcase marked with the Thorn Sword logo, then at Balder, clearly understanding the sublimation furnace core's intent, he smiled.

"So is this your first step in enticing me?"

"Just a friendly exchange, of course, if you're willing to engage with us more deeply after this, that would be even better." Balder responded.

Bologue took a deep breath and squinted his eyes.

An open plot, this was a complete open plot, surely that crazy woman wouldn't let him off so easily and, worse, Bologue was somewhat tempted now, facing this unknown emblem, he couldn't think of any reasons to refuse.

What would Belli use to win him over?

"Open it and take a look, see if your gift is sincere," Bologue just finished speaking, then urgently halted, "But before that, I want to ask, what does this emblem represent?"

Bologue knew well that every emblem in the Order Bureau had its relative meaning.

"Do you remember what I said before? Bologue, your 'Blessing' is akin to an incomprehensible Alchemy Matrix, similarly, there will be Alchemy Armaments we cannot understand, right?"

Geoffrey's words carried another layer of meaning, which Bologue quickly grasped.

"You mean..." Bologue wanted to say something, but due to his lack of understanding, he didn't know how to express his intentions for a moment.

"In a deal with the Devil, sometimes the trader receives objects with mysterious powers, using them to fulfill their own desires.

For example, a writer might wish to write best-selling stories, and the Devil would grant him a typewriter that would make every story written on it captivating.

These objects are collectively referred to as Contract Objects, extraordinary entities born from a Blood Contract with the Devil."

Geoffrey looked at the emblem of the Thorn Sword, a chill stirring within him.

"But the Devil isn't so kind, is he? Contract Objects are a double-edged sword.

The writer can produce mesmerizing stories, but such stories also enchant him, causing him to type day and night until his nails break, blood soaking the machine, until he dies exhausted before the typewriter.

Such is the nature of Contract Objects; they bring power but come with corresponding costs.

They themselves are complex; some Contract Objects do not bring significant harm and benefit us, so they are used by us, while some have extremely high danger, hence they are contained by the Safety Containment Department."

As Geoffrey's words ended, Balder lifted the suitcase and continued.

"Regarding their danger, please don't worry. As I said, it's a carefully selected gift you'll definitely love."

Balder spoke, opened the suitcase, and Bologue's curiosity was fully piqued, as the suitcase opened, revealing its contents.

There was nothing particularly startling; within the black sponge block lay a mask, which to Bologue's knowledge, resembled a restraint mask for psychiatric patients.

The mask's body was black leather and, unlike regular masks, it only covered the mouth and nose. The leather surface was slightly cracked, with a slit on the left side, but had been wound back again with twisted iron wire. The surface bore many dark stains, as if remnants of dried blood.

At the mouth and nose area was an opening, inside which were vertical, interwoven rivets, overlapping in a crisscross pattern. Some rivets were slightly curved, resembling a beast baring its sharp fangs.

Bologue reached out and took it out; up till now, no unusual event had occurred.

But if there was something strange about it, it was the intense scent of blood emanating from the mask, clearly indicating someone had tried to wash away the dark bloodstains, but no matter how many times it was rinsed, the rich scent of blood seemed to have fully seeped into the mask and merged with it.

Merely sniffing this scent, one could faintly hear the sound of blood dripping.

This kind of object was initially used on beasts to prevent them from biting humans, but now it has been used on humans themselves... humans akin to beasts.

"This item is named 'Face of Horror,' recovered from a psychiatric patient who made a deal with the Devil. He hoped the Devil would help him escape the asylum, and the Devil empowered his mask. Everyone who looked directly at the mask would feel a terrifying fear.

He relied on this power to fight his way out of the asylum, but Contract Objects come with a price: it can make those who gaze at the mask feel fear, yet the bearer also experiences the same fear.

Trapped in endless fear, he descended into complete madness and savagery, driven by hunger and insanity..."

Stopping his narration, Balder continued, "In short, this is the story of the mask, and we believe its power suits you, even the cost."

"This thing sounds downright awful," Palmer muttered.

No one present understood the entanglement of power and cost better than Palmer, ensnared by both fortune and misfortune, always receiving a brief respite amidst drowning, prolonging never-ending torment.

"Do you want to try it, Bologue?" Geoffrey asked, abiding by Bologue's thoughts.

"Fear? Both bearer and gazer will feel the emitted fear?"

Bologue touched the mask, its leather surface having an unusual greasy feel, as if it continually oozed oil, and he could even feel some warmth, as if the mask was alive.

"Exactly, according to the tests by the Safety Containment Department, this fear effect intensifies with the injection of Ether, and similarly the backlash will intensify," Balder said.

"At its most intense, it might even evoke your deepest fears."

Bologue nodded, seemingly understanding, without any forewarning, he directly donned the mask. The moment the leather met his skin, the eerie greasy sensation returned, instantly making the mask seemingly come alive, bonding with Bologue's skin.

"Bologue!"

Geoffrey exclaimed in shock, as no one expected Bologue to be so decisive, leaving no time for preparation.

A deep breathing sound echoed, faint airflow seeping from the intersected bloodstained rivets, emanating a thick bloody scent.

The three observed Bologue, and in that instant, in their sights, Bologue changed.

Familiar visage no longer, replaced by a kind of malicious, indescribable hateful presence, providing no reason, everyone instinctively felt fear and disgust.

A twisted, shrill fog enveloped Bologue's face, displaying chaotic, intricate grimaces within its mist, as if an illusion, everyone saw different horrifying things within the fog.

Fortunately, the Condensers were not so fragile; such strange sensations lasted only a moment before their minds stabilized again, though the feeling of horror still lingered between their minds.

Breathing escalated, as if that of a bloodthirsty beast.

"I like this gift."

A sluggish voice arose, Bologue seemed to become the embodiment of fear in the human world, his eyes bursting forth a chilling azure light, transforming into an Evil Spirit walking out from the story.