

Endless 127

Chapter 127: The Peace of the End

"Punishment and peace..."

Kedening pondered, a look of sorrow crossing his face.

Bologue's words reminded him of things long past, back when the "Man-eater" was just established, and he and David roamed the dark alleys, stealing one soul after another.

Every day, Kedening would wash his hands, washing them repeatedly until they reddened, but he wouldn't stop. Even though they were clean enough, he still felt dirty, with the filth of blood under his nails, impossible to remove even if he tore them out.

"I think... I can understand."

He was serious. Kedening still remembered those dreary days when nightmares woke him every night. Through the slits in the curtains, watching the passersby on the street, he always felt that a messenger of God was among them, watching him, ready to deliver punishment at any moment.

Kedening lived in a fear-laden unease, but as time passed, he wasn't sure if he'd grown accustomed to such a life or simply become numb to the fear of punishment.

Punishment never arrived, and the "Man-eater" only grew in scale, with countless Philosopher's Stones flowing every day.

Kedening even joked with David, "Either God is dead, or He doesn't exist."

David carried less of a psychological burden. He was a pure mercenary and said, "I prefer a world where God is dead."

"Why dead?" Kedening asked.

"Because then He existed at least once."

Kedening shook his head, casting away those terrible memories, mumbling to himself.

"My wife has some mental illness. She often does hurtful things, and every time she sobers up, she feels pained and guilty, which keeps her spirits low. She even contemplated suicide once."

Kedening wasn't lying; it was the truth, albeit a distorted one.

"Sometimes I think, and she probably thinks as well, that if only she were dead, no one would get hurt. She wouldn't have to berate herself daily and live in terror."

"Your... wife?" Bologue said.

"Exactly, it was long ago. An accident left her with this illness. Fortunately, Jini is strong and persevered," Kedening said, "The theater is named after her."

"You really love her."

"Of course, I'd dirty my hands for her."

Kedening spoke words only he understood.

"Then you sound quite happy," Bologue said with envy, "Whereas I'm just an utter unlucky wretch."

"My friend's good deeds went unrewarded and instead, he was murdered... Kedening, you know? Sometimes, I think what's damned about the world is just that."

Bologue cursed softly.

"Actually, life's misery isn't the worst part. The worst is when you persistently do good, sincerely treating everyone, loving everything about life... yet receive no acknowledgment or reward.

If you're a villain, committing all sorts of evil deeds, you might at least breathe a sigh when punished, saying, 'I deserved this.'

But when your heart is filled with kindness and unforgiving fate knocks you down, it makes you doubt your existence and question the reliability of what you cling to."

"That sounds awful." Kedening said.

"Yes, terribly so, which is why I'm often irritable, full of rage."

Bologue watched the hurried street. Adelle often said he had a twisted sense of justice, as if enforcing justice, but it couldn't quite be called justice, more like personal grievance vented.

She often mocked Bologue, saying if he were an angel sent by God, he'd surely be a Villainous Angel.

Villainous Angel, Bologue thought the term was cool.

This was the result of everything Bologue had endured, leaving him resentful of everything, stubbornly breaking down door after door with his fists.

"So have you found an answer?"

"I have," Bologue said after a few seconds, "If fate breaks my head, then I'll turn around and grab it by the throat, after all, if God doesn't exist, what's there to fear from fate?"

"I won't die; I have all the time to right these wrongs."

Bologue made jokes Kedening couldn't understand.

"Bologue, your violence can't solve everything. This world is vast. Your fists alone can't defeat every villain." Geoffrey once commented in memory.

"So what? Just because I can't defeat all evil, I should wallow in confusion and pain? No, no, no, Geoffrey, it shouldn't be like that."

Back then, Bologue argued like this.

"I'll defeat the ones I can see first and then slowly tackle those I can't see."

Bologue felt incredibly cool saying these words, like an irritable philosopher pursuing his own stubborn, warped logic.

This world is a ring, and Bologue is a boxer who cannot be defeated.

"Sounds pretty good." Kedening said.

The flower shop door was pushed open, and Bologue saw Palmer standing at the entrance, facing inside as if conversing with someone.

"I'm still sorry for not meeting your expectations."

Seeing this, Bologue opened his mouth to conclude their conversation.

"It's nothing; life always has unexpected turns." Kedening said.

"But I'll definitely watch the replay." Bologue emphasized.

"Oh? Replay?" Kedening's eyes showed some confusion. He looked towards the street, speaking playfully, "Maybe tomorrow night will be the last scene of 'Wandering Rat'?"

"The final scene? Might as well give me a spoiler." Bologue laughed, taking the so-called "last scene" as a joke.

Kedening shook his head at this.

"Need to keep it secret?" Bologue said.

"No, it's just that I haven't decided on the ending yet."

"Huh? The show is tomorrow night, and you still haven't figured out the ending?"

Bologue exclaimed in surprise, wondering what was going on with these creative types.

"It's not that I haven't thought of an ending. I've written several drafts, but they all feel unsatisfactory, like something is missing."

Kedening was also troubled by this. He was like the wandering rat in the story, lingering between the normal world and the 'man-eaters.' The pressure from the Order Bureau, the urging of the King's Secret Sword, all made it impossible for him to calm down and complete this final performance.

Kedening was often tormented by a huge sense of disconnection, sometimes even experiencing hallucinations.

"Don't you need to rehearse?"

"No need. Although I haven't decided yet, according to my plan, the last scene will be Bart's monologue, and I'll be the only one performing," Kedening said.

Bologue stood up, and Palmer was already waving to him.

"Is that your friend?"

"Probably, but to be precise, he's the driver," Bologue said with a smile, showing the low status Palmer held in his heart.

"Actually... sometimes I feel like I don't love my wife."

Just as Bologue was about to leave, Kedening abruptly spoke.

Bologue turned back, and Kedening still had that calm expression, as if he hadn't realized what he had just said.

"I know she's in pain. If I truly loved her, as she herself said, I should give her peace. But I... I'm not sure if I'm being selfish, wanting to possess her forever, or if I'm cowardly, afraid to face a future without her. I've forcibly kept her with shackles."

Kedening's face was expressionless.

"The pain continues, my pain and hers, intertwined with the pain of many others, endlessly extending. Sometimes I comfort myself that at least Jini is still alive, at least I can still hold her.

But what is this feeling? Selfish desire for possession? Fear of the future? Or just my wishful thinking?"

It was as if he was reciting lines from a script. Kedening recited poorly, without the slightest bit of emotion, like a cold recorder.

The world in Kedening's eyes had split into two forms, one being a frenzied, dark hell, and the other a stage of universal revelry.

"Bologue, I think... although God doesn't exist, the wicked must also be longing for it, longing for the moment when punishment arrives."

Kedening said softly.

"At the end of life, they can finally stop fleeing and calmly accept the arrival of peace."

"Ked... Kedening?"

Bologue looked at Kedening with concern. Kedening blinked his eyes, suddenly coming back to his senses, and said embarrassedly.

"Sorry, I was thinking about plot matters, got a bit lost. It happens often, immersed in my own world."

"Wow, professional! Truly a creative type,"

Bologue praised, not sure whether Kedening was truly lamenting from his heart or for the sake of some so-called creation. Only he would know.

"See you sometime, Kedening."

Bologue waved his hand, saying goodbye as he headed towards the flower shop, while Kedening slowly got up, his gaze gloomy, pondering something unknown.

He also got up and left, but looking at the labyrinth-like Opus, Kedening felt terror and confusion, not knowing which way to go.

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In a small restaurant near the flower shop, three people sat at a small table in a corner, their eyes meeting.

"Palmer, you bastard, how many times have I told you not to follow me here?"

The conversation among the three began with a man's low curse.

"What do you mean by following you? I just happened to come to buy flowers, happened to bump into an old colleague, happened to have time to catch up with an old colleague,"

Palmer said, biting a fresh flower with a shameless look.

In their exchange of insults, Bologue carefully observed the man. The man wore clothes similar to Bologue's, like an off-duty employee, with ordinary looks and glasses on his face. When he was silent, he seemed disciplined and reliable, but once your gaze shifted from him, it was like he was intentionally forgotten, his image collapsing in the mind until it vanished to nothing.

Secret Energy? Bologue wondered.

After some simple friendly exchanges, the man's gaze turned to Bologue.

"And who is this?"

"My new partner, Bologue Lazarus,"

Palmer said, reaching out to place a hand on Bologue's shoulder with a brotherly demeanor, not forgetting to introduce Bologue as well.

"Bologue, this is Church Burton, my former partner."

The two exchanged a glance and nodded, thus becoming mutually acquainted.

Bologue's eyes conveyed understanding, while Church's eyes conveyed sympathy. For some reason, despite not saying a word, both of them clearly understood each other's thoughts.

Church sighed, looked at Palmer with disdain, and frowned.

"Though Palmer, you're a damn bastard, you must be up to something. You wouldn't just intrude into my private life without reason... So, what's going on?"

Palmer had messed up his weekly date, and out of old friendship, before smashing Palmer's face, Church was willing to hear his explanation.

"You've been assigned to investigate a factory at a dock, correct?" Palmer said.

"That's right, why?"

"I need more detailed intelligence, the kind you can't include in your reports."

Palmer put away his smile, speaking seriously and solemnly.

"Tomorrow night we will raid there."