

Endless 149

Chapter 149: Ghoul

It was already late at night, a time when Manan should have been asleep, but he wasn't the least bit sleepy.

He was wearing gray pajamas, with a nightcap still on his head. He hadn't even had time to change his clothes as he hurried through the hotel corridor.

The King's Secret Sword was defeated in the secret war seven years ago, but they still held some influence over this city. It hadn't completely slipped out of their control.

"Damn it, damn it..."

Manan muttered. He rarely felt such urgency, but a piece of emergency information he received a few minutes ago made it hard for him to remain calm.

He paused in front of a door, adjusted his breathing, and, after trying to stay calm, knocked on the door before entering.

The window was open, the night wind swept in, lifting the curtains and making the room a bit colder.

A man was sitting by the windowsill, dressed casually, everything seemed normal except for the long sword hanging from his waist.

To the man, this sword never left his side, not even at home deep into the night.

The black leather sword scabbard was intricately embroidered with vine patterns in silver threads, faint glimmers floated across it, resembling dust particles.

The man's hand lightly brushed the silver cross guard of the sword, his fingers constantly rubbing against the cold metal, casually yet seemingly ready to draw the sword at any time.

To an outsider, the sword seemed ordinary, but to the man, it held extraordinary significance.

It was the "Secret Sword" bestowed by the King of the Kagader Royal Family.

Not every King's Secret Sword bearer possessed such a secret sword; only those Condensers recognized by the royal family received a secret sword as a reward.

It symbolized their identity and their direct service to the Kagader Royal Family, the blade in the King's shadow striking at the Extraordinary World.

The man was facing away from Manan, and he too was awake at this time, gazing deeply out the window in silence, leaving one to wonder what he was thinking.

The room was dim, with only the soft glow from the bedside lamp casting a faint light. Through this dim light, Manan could barely make out the room's layout, several body bags stood along the corners, stretching far into the darkness.

Manan couldn't help but shiver. Every time he saw those body bags, a chilling sensation seeped into his bones.

During the time working with this man, Manan felt it was his most difficult period.

"Manan, every time I see this city, I feel it's filled with magic... a magic that draws us to pour everything we have into it."

The man spoke before Manan could, mentioning things that Manan couldn't comprehend.

"I still remember the scene when we withdrew from here seven years ago. At that time, I wasn't even a Condenser, just an ordinary soldier, yet I felt immense sorrow upon leaving this city."

The man was puzzled. Over the years, he often recalled that day but could never figure out why.

"This isn't my hometown, I shouldn't feel a sense of belonging here, was it a thwarted sense of honor? I don't think I possess such a thing."

He reached out, trying to grasp the city.

"But it's so captivating that I've dreamt of its image countless times over the years..."

"Stop lamenting, Sandbox, there's a problem."

Manan strode forward, yet Sandbox ignored him, his face still filled with a fascination for this city.

He was used to it. Since the secret war's defeat and the forced withdrawal of the King's Secret Sword from Opus, many experienced this strange symptom, as if the humiliation of defeat had twisted and turned into a desire to possess the city.

Complex emotions, different motives, and the historical disputes during the Fall of the Holy City, so many emotions and purposes mixed, causing the King's Secret Sword's desire for the city to become increasingly distorted.

The King's Secret Sword yearned for another secret war to reclaim this City of Oaths, and every year there were calls for it within the King's Secret Sword.

There were also a few extreme zealots advocating to charge back into the "Cultivation Room" to recover the corpse of Xilin Kagader. As the youngest "Seeker of Glory" in the history of the King's Secret Sword, he held great influence within it, regarded almost like a true deity in some people's hearts.

"A few hours ago, the Order Bureau raided the 'Man-eater' factory. Everyone inside was dead, including David and Bill, and the goods couldn't be transferred in time," Manan said.

"I know," Sandbox pointed to the radio on the bedside, "the news reported it; a factory at the dock exploded and collapsed, the cause is still under investigation."

"What should we do? The Order Bureau is already aware of all this," Manan asked anxiously, "although you might get angry hearing this, you have to know, this city is indeed under the control of the Order Bureau."

A flash of displeasure appeared in Sandbox's eyes, but he hid it well, and there was no need to get angry with Manan.

"There were significant losses, but still acceptable. I met David once before, since then the 'Man-eater' goods started transferring, what remained with David was only a part, the bulk of the goods, if I'm not mistaken, should be heading towards the train station."

The situation was better than expected, and Sandbox had arranged everything diligently.

Manan sighed in relief, the tension easing from his brows as he felt the aftershock, "Luckily, the target was met."

"Yes, luckily we reached the target, though it's puzzling what so many souls are needed for," Sandbox said, shaking his head. Since the secret war, he had ascended to a Condenser and had been active against the Order Bureau, yet he couldn't imagine the strange orders given not long ago.

Collect souls by any means, this task was foreign to Sandbox, so he turned to that group of mercenaries, using the 'Man-eater' to gather souls.

"Fortunately, it's almost over. We're expected to board the train and leave Opus tomorrow night," Sandbox said.

"Train?" Manan was stunned, "That wasn't the plan. Weren't we going to reach Free Port along the Rhine River and return via sea?"

"That was the plan given to the 'Man-eater'. The real plan is to leave by rail," Sandbox replied.

"You never trusted those people?"

"Never, our operations must remain absolutely confidential, and only dead men can keep secrets."

Sandbox said coldly, "I never planned for them to survive, including David; it's just a matter of the order of their deaths."

His words were brutally harsh, perhaps explaining why he was dubbed the "Ghoul," like a cold monster greedily devouring warm flesh and blood.

"It's just that David died so suddenly, it surprised me. He was quite dedicated to his work..." Sandbox pondered for a few seconds before asking, "And Kedening? He's still alive, right? I remember he has a performance tonight."

"He's alive, but he disappeared after the performance. Our people went to his house yet found no trace of him. He's missing," Manan said with unease, "He might have been attacked."

Sandbox squinted, pondering something. After a moment, he spoke.

"Perhaps Kedening has defected."

"What?"

"In reality, Kedening is the true leader of the 'Man-eater'. Although I dislike him, I must admit, as a mercenary, he has some merits. It's possible he sensed something was amiss."

Sandbox suddenly contemplated, although unlikely, it was a point worth consideration.

"Maybe David betrayed us and warned Kedening... whatever, it doesn't matter. They have no use to us anymore."

Sandbox waved dismissively, leisurely standing up, walking into the darkness, his hand lightly brushing the upright body bags.

"Though, Kedening might still have some use."

Sandbox turned to look at Manan, giving him an order.

"Inform the 'Long Sword Squad' to coordinate with our action tomorrow night, to disrupt the Order Bureau's action team until we're safely out of Opus, and release the information about Kedening immediately. We can't let the Order Bureau be idle."

"Sending out the squad, who will protect us then? The rest are only feigning attacks at Opus's borders, they can't delve into the city to assist us, there's only this one squad in the city," Manan protested, "in that case, it's just you and me, plus some soldiers to escort the train?"

"Isn't that enough?" Sandbox questioned in return.

"I'm just an ordinary person, I'm not one of you Condensers. If something were to happen with only one of you escorting the train..."

"No mishaps, Manan, with just me, it's enough."

Sandbox stood in the midst of the upright body bags, turned his back to them, and raised the sword in his hand.

"Don't forget, I am recognized."