

Endless 178

Chapter 178: 21-Gun Salute

The rain poured down, stirred by thunder, as the train shattered all troublesome raindrops, racing on the iron tracks, moving along its predetermined route.

It was like a mad dash at the end of the world, carrying thousands of souls, futilely attempting to escape this abyss-like city.

"Prepare your salutes!"

"Get ready to welcome those twenty-one cannon shots!"

Manan hummed along with the melody, raindrops drenched the windows outside, but inside the carriage, it was warm. He listened to the rowdy music, raising his glass.

It was a night worth celebrating, a few minutes ago, they had smoothly crossed the edge of Opus, with no incidents.

No field staff descending from the skies to slash the carriage, no obstructive security checks on goods; everything went so smoothly that Manan felt a bit uneasy.

But soon, his unease was washed away by joy, the days of oppression swept clean, and Manan could finally bid farewell to this cursed city.

He danced with joy, and if not for the cramped carriage, Manan would have liked to dance to the music at this moment.

Leaving Opus not only meant safety but also signified that Manan could finally clock out. This job was more exhausting than he had anticipated, and he intended to go home and rest thoroughly, perhaps even indulge in a few nights of drunken stupor.

Manan's joy was extreme, but the other person in the carriage showed no reaction. Sandbox sat on the other side, neither drinking nor making merry, showing no expression, silently staring at his book.

Sometimes, Manan found it hard to understand what Sandbox was thinking. These Condensers always wore a gloomy expression, as if this was a terrible world, and they all had dreadful fates.

"Manan."

Suddenly, Sandbox called out.

"What's up?" Manan's tone carried a hint of respect. In terms of status, Sandbox was his superior.

"Stop your singing, it's too loud."

Sandbox appeared impatient; he didn't like this rowdy rock music and preferred quiet, elegant tunes.

Hearing Sandbox speak, Manan had no choice but to cease his singing. Soon, silence swept the carriage, with only the sounds of their breathing, the low hum of steel, and the chaotic raindrops.

Manan's cheeks flushed slightly, the alcohol bringing a sense of intoxication, and in this tranquility, he felt somewhat sleepy.

"Speaking of, we've successfully evacuated, what about the Long Sword Squad? They're also on their way out, right?" Manan asked, for tonight's operation was supported by a Long Sword Squad.

"Not sure, I'm still waiting for their news."

Sandbox also lacked information about the Long Sword Squad, as if they had melted away into the heavy rain.

Glancing at his watch, Sandbox realized they had lost contact with the Long Sword Squad for nearly ten minutes. According to operational protocol, they should be reporting their status every five minutes.

Encountered field staff? Even if faced with formidable foes, they should issue a warning signal instead of remaining silent. Or was it that all members were ambushed and killed in an instant, leaving no time to send a warning?

Sandbox found this unlikely. The Long Sword Squad itself wasn't weak, and to achieve such a suppressive hunt would require at least a Third Stage Negative Power User. Moreover, Negative Power Users wouldn't easily dispatch forces capable of instantly exterminating many people, preventing any intel from being sent.

Most importantly, among all Extraordinary Organizations, Negative Power Users are considered backbone forces, such strength wouldn't be dispatched lightly. Sandbox didn't believe the Long Sword Squad would encounter such formidable foes while casually roaming the streets; this situation surpassed mere bad luck.

Eliminating various possibilities, a most dire thought emerged in Sandbox's mind.

"Did they defect?"

Sandbox's words startled Manan, dispelling not only his drowsiness but even awakening some of his tipsiness.

"What are you talking about?"

Manan inquired in a low voice. Defection in any organization is the most reprehensible act, let alone in the King's Secret Sword.

Though he was just an ordinary person with limited insight into internal affairs, like standing outside a cave and catching the nauseating scent from the wind emerging from the cave's depths, Manan could sense that repulsive smell of blood.

"Nothing, continue drinking your wine."

Sandbox didn't intend to share this suspicion with Manan. Just as their status differed, Manan was merely an ordinary person; the more he knew, the more troubled he would be. There were still many things he needed to handle, and Sandbox didn't want this matter to decrease Manan's work efficiency.

"We've encountered internal conflict, some traitors lurk among us."

The words of Sixth Seat echoed in his mind, Sandbox initially thought it was Sixth Seat's paranoia, but now those things lurking beneath the ice seemed on the verge of surfacing.

Sandbox's expression grew heavy; the task that was meant to be completed weighed him with no sense of relief.

Tries to read, the text on the white paper gradually turned alien, he couldn't understand the words, which appeared to come alive, twisting together like black snakes, crawling relentlessly, even climbing from the touch of the paper up Sandbox's body.

Sandbox withdrew his hand, the book fell to the ground, making a crisp sound. He blinked forcefully, realizing it was just an illusion.

"Lately, mental pressure has been quite high." Sandbox sighed.

Looking out the window, imposing buildings stood at the horizon's edge, making the city appear so grand and seeming so alive, still expanding outward over the years.

This city was in rapid flux, visiting it at intervals left Sandbox with an indefinable sense of unfamiliarity. He had once wanted to reside in Opus long-term but had to abandon the idea due to the presence of the Order Bureau.

Amid the cacophony, loud singing arose; it was as if someone cheered in the darkness, unleashing the melody along with the storm and thunder.

Sandbox felt a headache; he turned his head toward Manan, his voice carrying a hint of anger.

"Didn't I ask you to stop the singing?"

"I... had already stopped."

Manan looked utterly bewildered, not knowing why Sandbox was angry. Then he heard it, that faint song.

Someone was singing.

"Those who are ready to give their all!"

The roaring thunder sank and surged through the storm clouds, akin to serpents descending to Earth.

The carriages shook uncontrollably due to the thunder, followed by the resounding shatter of windows. Amid countless shards, a sharp iron spear pierced through the barriers accompanied by a chilling wind.

The end of the metal pierced through Manan's neck with such force it nearly tore the head from the body, nailing him to the ground, tilted and standing awkwardly within the carriage.

Simultaneously, the cheers of madmen poured in from outside the shattered windows.

"Those who are ready to take everything!"

The song crashed into the carriages, with a giant silver wolf racing wildly across the wasteland, in hot pursuit of the speeding train.

It wasn't a giant silver wolf; it was a racing motorcycle, defiantly roaring its engine.

"I told you we could catch up! Haha!"

Amid the celebratory singing, Palmer laughed, wrapped within Secret Energy-Wind Source. They were almost one with the storm, riding the wind to arrive.

The motorcycle's sidecar had long disappeared, replaced by several crooked iron spears on Bologue's back. He crouched low on the motorcycle's back seat, one hand on Palmer's shoulder, and the other raising another iron spear.

Aiming, throwing.

Bologue threw thunder, driven by Ethereal Amplification, each of his strikes like launched cannonballs.

With the assistance of the Tyrant, Bologue easily found the carriage where Sandbox was located via the list in his hand. Another hit directly, causing the entire carriage to shake violently, and even the tracks beneath them sparked from impact.

"Bologue, have you seen that movie? I think we're just like the bandits at the end!" Palmer shouted.

"Haven't seen it, but compared to that, that guy is the real bandit at the end," Bologue raised another long spear, "and we are the sheriff putting him to rest."

Once more, thunder streaked across, piercing through the carriage's iron panels, with torrential rain and fierce winds surging in.

Inside the carriage, Sandbox no longer stayed put. Indeed, things weren't going so smoothly; he didn't know who those two madmen on the racing bike in the wilderness were, but he knew only by killing them could the night's events be concluded.

He didn't leap out of the carriage to face the enemy — being held up and losing contact with the train, Sandbox wasn't sure if the Order Bureau reinforcements would come later, especially given his primary mission to protect the cargo.

He pushed open the door, sprinting towards the front of the carriage as Bologue saw the beam of light moving forward.

"Get closer! Palmer."

Bologue yelled at Palmer, the rushing wind swallowing their voices whole.

"I'll deal with that Condenser, leave the rest to you!"

Patted on the shoulder, Bologue casually handed the lethal task to Palmer.

"Huh? Wasn't I just responsible for riding? That's not right!" Palmer shook his head quickly; riding was indeed fun, but killing enemies was a no-go, especially after hours.

"Already at the party's door, can you resist joining?" Bologue didn't give Palmer the right to refuse, "Like you said, it's all about participation!"

'All about participation,' this phrase spun endlessly in Palmer's mind as Bologue continued humming that unfinished song.

"Those moments when you're ready to fight! We welcome you!"

Humming, Bologue donned a menacing mask.

"Wait, those aren't the lyrics!" Palmer had heard the song; Bologue sang it wrong.

"What are we facing next?" Bologue retorted.

"A battle, what's the matter?"

"Then it's not wrong!"

Amid Bologue's wild laughter, he threw a hook into the carriage, launching himself through the air, leaping towards the train.

Palmer hesitated for two seconds, his face no longer showing complaints, changing into wild joy akin to Bologue's.

"All about participation, all about participation."

Muttering self-deprecating words, yet Palmer was full of energy, pulling a black hood from his pocket to cover his head, then like a magician, he casually took out a submachine gun.

Though outwardly resistant, he was already enjoying every bit.

Taking a deep breath, Palmer shouted.

"Robbery! Stop the train!"

Dense bullets rained across the carriage, shattering glass, splattering flesh.