

Endless 271

Chapter 271: 56 Shared Chord Body_3

"P...probably."

"For example?"

"For example, the first time she met me, she suddenly rushed over and touched me all over. At that time, I thought that's how humans expressed friendliness." Aimou slowly recounted the past.

Upon hearing this, the gloom on Bologue's face deepened. This wasn't an expression of friendliness but rather Belli's twisted curiosity about Aimou's structure.

"Then, as soon as the teacher left, she dragged me into the lab... I almost got disassembled."

Aimou's voice started trembling, her memories of Belli were even worse than Bologue's.

"Oh..."

Bologue found himself lost for words; it wasn't a prank, it was attempted murder! It seems Belli is even more sinister than what he presumed.

"Alright, I'm coming in."

Aimou suddenly said.

Before Bologue could prepare, he felt warmth enveloping his back, like a heater penetrating his clothing, gently blowing over his body.

Aimou's hands turned ethereal, entering Bologue's body, then she slowly opened her hands until their arms merged together.

It was like overlapping images, stepping forward, Aimou's body turned into an ethereal shadow with golden trails, hands, feet, torso, head... aligning one by one, flesh bathed in radiant golden light.

During the merging, Aimou found her senses continually enhanced, her vision sharpened, her hearing acute, able to sense the flow of blood, and the heartbeat within.

Hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, pleasure...

All of Bologue's sensations were mirrored in Aimou's perception, using Bologue's body as a link, she reached sensations never felt before.

For a moment, Aimou stood frozen, unable to speak, wholly immersed in experiencing the strange sensations.

As their figures completely overlapped, Aimou vanished, while golden threads appeared on Bologue's body, the green pupils adorned with golden halos.

Unlike Aimou gaining new perceptions, Bologue felt a vast ether infusing his body, ceaselessly drawn in by the Constant Motion Core.

They complemented each other, Bologue granting Aimou human perception and body, while Aimou bestowing Bologue with the strength of an Alchemy Puppet, her world.

The indistinct ether flow began to clear in Bologue's eyes, his sensitivity to ether heightened, Bologue even felt as though he mastered Ether Perception momentarily.

The ether calmed, turned silent, and the golden traces on Bologue's body dimmed, the light in his eyes weakening, leaving only golden rings merging within the green pupils.

"What is this?" Bologue asked.

"According to Condensers, this is Ether Concealment, you wouldn't want to be a searchlight, right?"
Aimou's voice resonated directly in his mind.

"You can directly adjust ether?"

"Isn't that an Alchemist's specialty?"

Bologue remained silent, ignoring Aimou's presence, contemplating his current form.

After applying Shared Chord Body, there's a constant ether replenishment. Though the Constant Motion Core cannot extract large amounts of ether swiftly, this supply extended Bologue's combat endurance several times.

Apart from that, after empathizing with Aimou, Bologue became extremely sensitive to ether, vaguely mastering Ether Perception, while Aimou could release similar Extreme Techniques.

"Aimou... ever thought of working with me?"

Bologue suddenly asked abruptly.

"Huh? Working?"

"Yes, you've seen 'Night Hunter', right? My job is somewhat similar, going out at night to fight evil."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Upon hearing her favorite story, Aimou exclaimed excitedly.

"Wait... Why do I feel a bit of a dark thought?" Aimou said suspiciously, her voice questioning Bologue,
"Are you thinking of something bad?"

"You can sense my thoughts?"

Bologue indeed imagined dark things earlier, such as smashing enemies' heads under the Shared Chord Body enhancement.

This is fantastic. With support from the Constant Motion Core, he no longer needed to conserve ether.

"I can only feel a vague outline, like joy, anger, sorrow." Aimou said.

Having his thoughts detected made Bologue uncomfortable, even if Aimou could only grasp a vague silhouette, it still gave him a dreadful feeling of having his dark inner thoughts uncovered.

"Can I actively expel you?" Bologue asked.

"Yes, ether is mutually exclusive. If you reject me, I will be kicked out... you won't do that, right?"

Aimou exclaimed loudly, her voice resonating directly in his brain, echoing painfully in Bologue's mind.

Turning around, Aimou had already folded and packed clothes into the suitcase. If he expelled her, chaos would ensue again. Bologue simply assured.

"I won't."

Sitting back at the dining table, it finally returned to the scene of eating birthday cake, yet Bologue felt uneasy, rather than at ease.

This reminded him of horror movies he had watched, where ghosts would attach themselves to human bodies, driving them to fulfill wishes from their past lives.

Now Aimou was like an intangible ghost occupying his body, wanting... to eat a piece of birthday cake.

Too bizarre.

Laughter echoed in his mind, Bologue asked, "What are you laughing at?"

"I'm laughing at 'what are you laughing at'." Aimou said.

"Ah?"

"We are empathetic, I feel your joy, and follow suit, what's wrong."

Bologue fell silent, he started doubting his mental state, such strange occurrences, he found amusing? Even affecting Aimou along with him.

Picking up the fork, Aimou became tense, she shared the vision with Bologue, staring intently at the birthday cake on the plate.

Bologue considered Aimou's position indeed peculiar. Now she could be seen as an Alchemy Armament, attached to his Alchemy Matrix, enhancing his sensitivity to ether and providing vast ether support...

If there's a chance, Bologue must find a way to bring Aimou into the Special Operations Group, she's much more useful than the unfortunate Palmer, he even considered applying with Lebius to switch partners.

"Eat quickly! Eat quickly!"

Aimou urged in his mind, she lacked the initiative to control the body, mostly an internal fixture.

Under her eager gaze, Bologue took a bite of cake, the sweet cream and soft cake filled his mouth.

There wasn't Aimou's shrill cheer, nor any lengthy reflections, nothing at all, everything seemed particularly calm.

Bologue chewed and swallowed.

He felt something trickle down his face, reaching to touch, his hand dampened.

Chapter 272: Fantasy Becoming Reality

Bologue looked at his damp palms, complex emotions rose in his heart, both joy and sorrow, a weight so heavy it made Bologue struggle to breathe... These were not Bologue's emotions, but Aimou's.

In the long silence, not a sound could be heard, Bologue and Aimou remained silent, neither of them breaking the tranquility first.

Bologue moved mechanically, continuously feeding cake from the plate into his mouth. He ate slowly, but the cake was not endless, and he finished it.

At the center of the dining table, half of the birthday cake remained. Only then did Bologue remember something. He pulled the birthday cake over, placed three candles on the remaining half, and lit them, the warm glow illuminating Bologue's face.

Sitting on the chair, the candles burned almost halfway before Bologue spoke.

"What wish do you want to make?"

"I'm thinking."

"Hmm? I thought a wish would be something you'd always remember." Bologue didn't expect Aimou would have to think up a wish on the spot.

"I know, but some wishes are mere fantasies, ones you know from the start won't come true, only to be hidden in your heart as an expectation."

Aimou paused, a touch of smile in her voice, "It's not often I have someone to celebrate my birthday with, so I want to make a wish that might come true."

Bologue did not ask what Aimou's fantasy was, he merely remained silent.

"I've made it."

Bologue nodded, then blew out the candles.

The room fell into dimness, the only remaining light was the azure-gold in Bologue's eyes.

Bologue's mood was calm and contemplative, while Aimou started to feel somewhat awkward and embarrassed.

She saw the tears Bologue wiped away, knowing they stemmed from herself, tasting the birthday cake's flavor through Bologue's taste. It was a feeling she had never experienced before, and correspondingly, her emotions grew increasingly complex.

Her thoughts were like a storm, and at the eye of that quiet storm, Aimou's dark thoughts were being nurtured.

"Then... I should leave now."

Having tasted the birthday cake, Aimou felt extremely satisfied at this moment, not daring to wish for anything more, preparing to dissolve the Secret Energy.

"Can you continue the aberration of the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid?"

Bologue suddenly asked, as a silver snake crawled up his finger.

"What's wrong?" Aimou didn't understand why Bologue asked this all of a sudden.

"You understand this aberrated product the best, and only your Secret Energy can make it more complex and bizarre... As I advance, it will eventually be unable to keep up with my strength. I need your help for a new round of qualitative change."

"Oh... no problem." It was originally Aimou's creation, she knew the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid very well.

The conversation once again fell into silence, sometimes their talks flowed smoothly, while other times, like now, both were hesitant, unsure of what to say next.

"Then Teda will only return tomorrow?" Bologue asked again.

"Yes, what's up."

Aimou was somewhat puzzled about what Bologue was planning to do.

"So, even if we leave, no one will know, right?" Bologue cautiously said.

"But the Void Realm will record it."

Aimou mentioned the Void Realm that enveloped the Alchemy Workshop, protecting it and keeping vigilant over every visitor.

"As Teda's assistant student, you should also know how to clear the records, right?" Bologue's voice lowered.

It was only then that Aimou belatedly realized something, even as the Ether fell silent, the golden rings in Bologue's eyes continued to brighten.

"You mean..."

Aimou's voice also lowered, as if she were conspiring with Bologue.

"Do you want to give it a try? This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Bologue continued to entice.

After a brief silence, a powerful voice resonated in Bologue's mind.

"Alright!"

Bologue's mood turned to excitement, unsure if it was his own or Aimou's excitement, but light shone in both their eyes.

Reaching for the suitcase containing Aimou's clothes, Bologue donned his coat and pushed open the Alchemy Workshop's door, stepping directly into the dense fog without a hint of hesitation.

...

The somber street was painted with splendid neon lights, filled with citizens in strange costumes, laughing as they moved toward their next destination.

Songs lingered among the buildings, and airships glided low, massive celebratory banners hung down, stirring cheers and excitement that even warmed the winter snow of the cold days.

Each year during the Vow Festival, residents would gather here in the Agreement District, following the street march with the enormous floats, starting this grand parade.

To prevent chaos, at this time, Opus's sheriffs would all turn out in full force, their presence found in every corner of the Agreement District, maintaining order and controlling the heated atmosphere.

Everyone gathered in the Agreement District, making the other districts in Opus seem rather desolate by comparison, although there were some prepared activities, they paled in comparison to the grand festivity in the Agreement District.

Teda walked through the Agreement District streets, laboriously weaving through the crowded people.

Having stayed in the Great Rift for so long, spending every day accompanied by Alchemy, Teda could no longer recall the last time he saw so many people. Now, seeing such a crowd made him feel uneasy and uncomfortable.

Chapter 273: Fantasy Becoming Reality_2

Everyone wears a mask, twisted in the light, resembling fierce beasts. Teda tries not to look at these people to avoid becoming one of them.

The residents' building Teda visits is hidden within dense canopies. From afar on the street, one can see only lush greenery. Yet trying to approach reveals that the building is obscured by other structures, the path winding and indirect.

It's easy to get lost here, but it's not Teda's first time visiting. Following the path in his memory, he returns to the familiar building front, everything seeming unchanged. He silently pushes open the door and climbs the stairs, stopping in front of a door.

The owner of this house seems to have been away for a long time; the carpet is piled with dust. Teda takes out a key and opens the door, with the stale air flooding through.

Teda walks carefully into the room, gently closing the door, afraid of waking any sleeping souls within.

The interior is full of life, with various personal items filling every corner. If one ignores the dust, it's as if the family has just left to join the Vow Festival parade.

Teda's resolute expression softens slightly, like hard rock crumbling into an unremarkable state.

Opening the window, cold wind rushed into the room, making the air clearer. Teda sits on the couch in the living room, imagining when everything had remained unchanged.

He reaches out, picks up a nearby photograph, and wipes away the dust. It's a family portrait of three, showing a younger Teda next to a beautiful woman holding a sleeping child.

Staring at the photo, Teda reminisces about his wife and Alice.

Singing and cheers came from outside, yet they have nothing to do with Teda. He keeps recalling his resolute decisions, hardening his once softened heart with no mercy.

While struggling in thought, a series of knocking sounds echoes.

Teda looks alertly towards the door. Since leaving the Order Bureau, Teda has settled in the Alchemy Workshop. This old residence is a place he visits only on the Vow Festival day. No one else should come here.

Seeing the knocking unanswered, the visitor takes out a key and turns the lock.

A thief?

Teda's face filled with anger. He slowly stands, ready to unleash his fury when the door opens to unexpected visitors.

"Yo, teacher, happy Vow Festival."

It's Belli, full of energy regardless of the early morning. But even she can't smile much seeing her teacher here.

Behind Belli stands Balder. Surprisingly, he wears protective clothing even just to step outside, his face hidden beneath the helmet.

Teda looks at his two students, and they walk in without waiting for his permission. Belli swings the key, casually taking another photograph as she passes the cabinet.

Seated on either side of Teda, Belli wipes dust from the photo, leaning on Teda's shoulder, she says.

"I miss it, teacher."

In the photo are three people: Belli, Teda, and Balder. But Belli and Balder appear as children, with Teda much younger, his beard dark, not now graying.

"What are you here for?" asked Teda.

"Don't be so cold, teacher. We thought you'd be too bored spending Vow Festival alone, so we came to keep you company."

With a playful smile, Belli is the same as she always was, looking a bit annoying. Balder, as usual, sits silently beside her.

This time even Belli struggles to smile. The room fills with deathly silence while the outside roars with celebration.

After a long silence, Belli speaks.

"Teacher, stop. The dead cannot be resurrected."

...

The dead cannot be resurrected.

This rule is implicitly accepted by all Alchemists, like the third law restraining the Devil—it cannot change what has already occurred, nor can humans.

When a life ends, it's a settled matter.

After speaking, Belli becomes wary. Teda is her teacher, but the Teda she knows has changed greatly in the past seven years.

For Teda, it's a frightening yet truthful secret. No one has the courage to reveal such truth to an ardent Seeker like Teda, which would negate his actions over the past seven years.

But Belli can't wait any longer. She doesn't want her teacher to descend into madness. It is time to end all this.

Beside her, Balder slightly turns to watch their teacher. Belli has little fighting strength; though she could bash a grown man's head with one crowbar, it's powerless against a Negative Power User.

Since Belli became the head, Balder has been her attendant, ensuring her safety. This risky move might turn into a battle between teacher and students.

The expected rage didn't come, everything remains calm. Teda lets out a long sigh, his face hidden in darkness as he bows his head.

"But since she left, Alice is everything to me."

With rough fingers rubbing the photo, Teda mutters.

Chapter 274: Fantasy Becoming Reality_3

Belli remained silent, she did not expect the conversation to progress so smoothly, as if Teda had guessed what she was thinking, his voice carried a hint of bitter laughter.

"Do you think I would harm you? After all, you are my students."

Putting away the group photo, Teda turned his head to look at Belli, "Don't worry, I'm very rational, I know the limits of control."

"And what about Aimou?"

Belli wasn't deceived by Teda's words; she knew her teacher very well.

"You've already lost your distinction, haven't you? Teacher, the boundary between Aimou and Alice is starting to blur... Are you really prepared to sacrifice Aimou?"

Hearing Belli's words, Teda's figure stiffened, and his eyes showed a mix of surprise and anger.

"Curious how I knew? Please, I am your most outstanding student and currently the head of the Sublimation Furnace Core."

As she spoke, Belli felt that rebellious sentiment rising again, she said with a grin, "I'm progressing quickly, in a few more years I might surpass you, thinking of these things isn't difficult."

Baldur felt a bit uneasy at the side, managing to control the teacher's emotions, only to see Belli stirring things up again.

Teda is an Alchemist, but he is a Third Stage Negative Power User, compared to ordinary combat-type Condensers, he is much less potent, but to fight the two of them is more than easy, not to mention he is a pure Illusion Creation.

Belli and Balder had witnessed with their own eyes the moment when Teda's insane fantasies became reality.

"Humans cannot create souls, you took advantage of Alice's Philosopher's Stone to find a shortcut, making Aimou move, but there's only one Philosopher's Stone, only one soul, do you want to resurrect Alice, or want Aimou to die?"

Belli stared straight into Teda's eyes, not allowing him to evade, her words as sharp as swords.

"Do you... want to lose another daughter?"

Teda clenched his fist, the veins on the back of his hand bulging with amassed strength.

If it were someone else provoking him like this, Teda would have acted long ago, but this is Belli, just like Belli understands him, Teda understands Belli.

Surprisingly, Teda smiled helplessly and released his grip, leaning back comfortably on the sofa.

"I don't care, just like I taught you all, Aimou is just a tool, and I am an Alchemist, I can create many tools, if it fails, I'll just try again, my goal has never wavered."

Teda spoke with extreme rationality and cruelty, long before Aimou was created, the dark warehouse was already filled with the corpses of Alchemy Puppets.

Hearing this, Belli shook her head, couldn't help but say, "Then she is really pitiful, born only to die for the resurrection of another."

"That is the fate of a tool, we are Scholars, you should understand such reasoning, Belli." Teda turned the education back on Belli.

Belli just smiled and said nothing.

Silence continued for a long time, Belli opened her mouth once more, "Then, teacher, how do you plan to resurrect Alice?"

"Fantasy Becoming Reality."

"Fantasy Becoming Reality again?" Belli shook her head, "You've tried many times already, this path is unworkable."

Teda did not respond, he didn't want to explain too much to Belli.

"Let's not talk about this anymore, Belli, it's the Vow Festival, a day worth celebrating, not like now, making it seem as if we're about to turn against each other the next second." Teda said, trying to force a smile.

"How could we turn against each other? I'm just concerned about you, see?" Belli said, placing a hand on Teda's shoulder, acting like a buddy.

"It's just that, teacher, you really are a lot like Balder."

Belli looked at the silent Balder.

"Like a turtle, always shrunk back into your shells along with those chaotic thoughts of yours, I haven't figured a way to pry open your shells to see what lies beneath."

The topic shifted to Balder, who had been silent, never imagining it would come to this, and now Teda's gaze was on him, staring at that dark silhouette.

The atmosphere between them changed, marked by an undercurrent of unresolved tensions.

"You've been like this ever since seven years ago, haven't you?" Teda asked.

Balder nodded, "It's been so long, teacher."

"Take off your helmet, there are no outsiders here, and I almost forgot what you look like." Teda said.

Balder hesitated for a moment, after contemplating, he followed Teda's words, raising his hands to remove the helmet, cold air contacted his skin, bringing a sensation difficult to describe.

In the dim room, under the helmet appeared a disfigured face, burns covering Balder's features, making him grotesque.

Seeing this face, Teda's heart trembled, speaking with some sorrow.

"I'm sorry."

"It's nothing, teacher, if it wasn't for you back then, I might have died." Balder shook his head, he only ever took off his helmet in solitude, not showing his true face for so long, Balder felt a complex emotion.

Seven years ago, during the invasion of the "Cultivation Room" by Overlord Xilin, the brutal assault destroyed all of the Alchemy Armament, including Balder's Protective Clothing, Teda dragged him from the flames, but he was still seared by the blistering fire, becoming what he is now.

Unintentionally, the shadow of seven years ago covered the three of them, everything has changed, yet it seems nothing has.

"Truly nostalgic, teacher."

Belli couldn't help but say, her face now serious without the usual grin.

"The past is settled, you've been trapped by Alice's death for too long."

With a rueful smile, Teda shook his head, speaking self-mockingly, "That's how these things are."

"Just like when we study the 'Secret Source', sometimes we are trapped by a problem for many years; other times we find the solution in a moment of clarity."

Teda tried to be more honest, sincerely telling his students.

"I want to move on too, but every time I close my eyes, it's her final words to me before she died."

His muddled eyes looked at the group photo, where Teda's wife stood.

"If not for what happened seven years ago, Alice would have grown to be just as beautiful as her... but such things, that's how they are, I understand everything, I know I'm trapped, but... it's like being unable to save myself, I know all the causes and effects, yet I can't get out."

Teda mused, burdened with oppressive thoughts.

Many things are like that; everyone knows the right choice, but they are bound by heavy emotions, unable to take steps in the path of reason, like a cocoon woven by humanity itself.

Belli had nothing to say, she also understood this truth, others' persuasion is meaningless to Teda.

Either remove all of Teda's hope, or one day Teda himself decides to walk out of despair.

"But just like those problems, perhaps one day I will suddenly understand, and nothing will trap me anymore."

Teda tried to make his tone happier, carrying a bit of anticipation.

Belli looked at her teacher earnestly, "Just hope by then, you don't regret it, teacher."

Her words carried advice, yet also had a trace of threat, Teda paused, affirming.

"I won't regret it."

"Then we'll leave for now, won't bother you anymore."

Belli stood up, gesturing for Balder to follow, Balder put his helmet back on, and after a fruitless negotiation, they briefly bid farewell to Teda and left, their figures disappearing into the stairwell.

The room was left with only Teda again, alone as he caressed the group photo, muttering to himself.

"I am right, I won't regret it."

Teda tried hard to harden his soft heart once more, colder and tougher, all this was just a study, a study to bring Alice back to life, to achieve that, Teda could do anything.

Clearing away all chaotic thoughts, Teda's eyes were steely cold, the eerie murmurs continued.

"Fantasy Becoming Reality... Fantasy Becoming Reality..."

Chapter 275: Pragmatists

Belli and Balder walked downstairs side by side, both feeling extremely oppressed. After pausing for a moment, they continued forward until they left the residential building and reached the bustling street, finally breathing a sigh of relief.

The previous heavy concern for their teacher was completely gone, and Belli breathed heavily, muttering something like "not dead" under her breath.

Balder beside her also finally relaxed, the recent experience was quite pressure-filled for him as well.

Teda was their teacher, but the secret war had changed too many people, including the teacher they were familiar with.

No one knew what effect their earlier questioning would have. Perhaps Teda really would go mad and kill them both?

A figure had been waiting on the street for a long time, and upon seeing the two appear, he approached and inquired.

"How did it go?"

"As expected, the teacher is an old stubborn fool. He said he would consider our suggestions, but his thoughts have never wavered," Belli replied.

Today's visit was ostensibly to persuade Teda, but in reality, it was to gather intelligence.

"His condition is terrible, he's already completely a fanatic, no different from those lunatics at the Order of Truth," Belli continued after calming down, leaning against the wall.

"Yes, the teacher is already caught up in it," Balder also confirmed.

The one who came felt a headache upon hearing such answers, as this was the worst possible scenario for the situation.

"Fortunately, the teacher probably isn't that vigilant yet. He should think of tonight's event as students caring for him, instead of being monitored by the Order Bureau."

Belli thanked the man standing in front of her.

"Thank you, Yas, without you, we wouldn't have dared act so rashly."

"It's nothing, this is part of my duties," Yas said, his eyes glinting with light, "Besides, I also wanted to use you two to test Teda."

Tonight's visit to Teda involved not just Belli and Balder, to be safe, Belli had also called Yas over. As a Negative Power User from the Origin School, he's very effective against Teda's Illusion Creation.

As long as all the Ether in the forbidden zone was eliminated, without the support of Ether, even the most insane fantasies were just illusions.

Therefore, while Belli was meeting with Teda, Yas stayed downstairs, keeping the room under surveillance, ready to unleash Secret Energy at any time.

Belli sat down on a bench on the street, with Balder and Yas following her, one on either side.

After carefully organizing her thoughts, Belli looked up at Yas and asked him.

"You suspect the teacher is involved with the Gray Trade Association, right?"

"The Sixth Group is currently investigating the Gray Trade Association incident, but besides the Gray Trade Association, in our investigation we have discovered another mysterious presence."

Yas didn't directly answer Belli's question but talked about the origin of the incident.

"We tracked down several Condensers, they all mentioned a guy who calls himself a Delusional. Delusional had sold them a large amount of Alchemy Armament in exchange for Mammon Coins, and some people were instructed by Delusional to participate in certain actions."

"What does that have to do with the teacher?"

"Through extensive investigation, we found Delusional's activities could always be traced back to several years ago, but since the Gray Trade Association appeared within the Great Rift, this guy just vanished into thin air."

Yas's voice lowered, he knew Teda's importance to the two, but the more crucial, the clearer things needed to be.

"Instead of dealing with these ordinary Condensers, why not directly trade with the Tyrant's followers to obtain a large amount of Mammon Coin? Moreover, Mammon Coin possesses Magic Power...

Paying taxes to the Tyrant to obtain the power of wishing."

With Yas's explanation, a terrible suspicion arose in Belli's mind, she wanted to rebut but realized that Yas was right.

"Besides Teda, I can't think of anyone else in the Great Rift who could produce such a large amount of Alchemy Armament, and besides Teda, I can't think of who would desire Mammon Coins so much for wishing," Yas said.

"Fantasy Becoming Reality."

Balder murmured at this point, his voice like a curse.

"Is Teda determined to do this?" Yas's voice became stern.

"He's a pure Illusion Creation, what do you think? Besides, the teacher had been researching 'Fantasy Becoming Reality' a long time ago," Belli found the situation becoming quite tricky.

Every Secret Energy faction has its specialty, like the Commanding School could be further distinguished between Overlord and Domination Object, while the Origin School excelled in various Ethereal Skills.

The Illusion Creation faction has a mysterious power as well, which is 'Fantasy Becoming Reality'.

Illusion Creation could create illusionary entities and manipulate them to fight, but these are ultimately illusionary creations made of Ether. Over time, the Ether within them would dissipate, along with the illusory creations.

Therefore, illusion creation entities have a time limit, but 'Fantasy Becoming Reality' is different, it can turn illusion creation into a true entity.

Crossing over from illusion to reality.

Balder possesses the capability of Fantasy Becoming Reality, and through Secret Energy-Furnace of Cast Iron, he could transform his illusionarily created metal into real metal.

"The teacher's power is Illusion Creation, pure Illusion Creation. As long as the conditions are sufficient, whatever he thinks will become absolutely real," Balder said softly.

Chapter 276: Pragmatists_2

Fantasy Becoming Reality.

Belli suddenly understood why Teda was so certain she could succeed; the Wandering Crossroads was originally a land where wishes could be fulfilled, and Teda possessed the power to make wishes come true.

"Is the Order Bureau going to take action against the teacher?" Belli asked.

"We examined those Alchemy Armaments, much like handwriting, each Alchemist leaves distinct marks when implanting an Alchemy Matrix, which are highly individualistic. When we compared it with Teda's, the marks didn't match, so we can't confirm Teda is the Delusional one, only suspect it."

Yas explained, but just thinking about the situation in the Great Rift gave him a headache and a sense of powerlessness. "Moreover, over at Bologue, there are no new findings. According to his report, Teda is quite honest, barely leaving the house and has had no opportunity to connect with the Gray Trade Association."

Belli's entrustment of Bologue to monitor Teda coincided with the Sixth Group's subsequent investigation of Teda. Yas unfolded Bologue's report, noting that Teda had been extremely compliant since their settlement, with no signs of suspicion.

But this wasn't enough to dispel doubts.

"Under usual circumstances, we should have begun acting, but..."

"But what?" Belli pressed.

"But the situation in the Great Rift... it's a bit too chaotic right now."

At this, Yas couldn't help but smile bitterly.

...

"Wow, what's that!"

"A parade float."

"Wow, what are they doing!"

"Celebrating the Vow Festival."

"Wow, so this is how everyone celebrates the Vow Festival?"

"Not really, there are many ways for everyone to have fun."

A gray figure carrying a suitcase strolled through the crowded street. He was a somewhat eccentric person; while others wore bright colors, he donned muted gray. Even stranger was his habit of talking to himself as if conversing with someone, yet he was alone with no one around.

"How wonderful..."

Aimou, borrowing the senses of Bologue's body, was enjoying the festival's joy, while Bologue's face bore a hint of weariness.

All around were crowds following the parade float, with songs and cheers incessantly ringing. The environment was already noisy enough, but ever since arriving in the Agreement District, Aimou kept uttering "Wow."

She was practically like a "Wow" machine; whenever Aimou exclaimed, Bologue couldn't control his volume, feeling as if his mind shook with each sound.

However, Bologue was quite happy, or rather Aimou was happy to the point of bursting. Under the shared sensations of the Shared Chord Body, Bologue's usually gloomy mood was heavily influenced by Aimou's delight, forcing him to be cheerful.

This made Bologue feel very conflicted, but fortunately, the Vow Festival only happened once a year. If he could endure these hours, it would all be over.

As for Aimou?

Right now, her thoughts were blank, completely overwhelmed by the festive atmosphere.

Aimou constantly adjusted her body, attempting to become more human-like, adding senses to herself, but it was ultimately a clumsy imitation.

But now it was different. With the help of the Shared Chord Body, she used Bologue's body to feel experiences she never had before. A flood of information swept over her consciousness, like a drug-addicted patient, she was nearing being consumed by it.

Ether began to stir, and the golden halo in Bologue's eyes became increasingly noticeable.

Bologue turned and ducked into a dark alley, away from the joyful crowds, allowing the excited Aimou to calm down a bit.

Geoffrey had once suggested he keep some pets as emotional companions and to divert energy.

Bologue seriously considered Geoffrey's advice, even contemplated getting a dog, and had learned some relevant knowledge, like when dogs play too happily or get over-excited, they tend to lose control...

Even though it was just some pet knowledge, Bologue felt he learned quite a bit. He thought Aimou's state was akin to being overly excited, worried she might overload him, and then an unadorned Alchemy Puppet would pop out of his body.

Bologue wasn't worried about causing panic primarily, but because there would be no way to explain it to Teda. If Teda found out he had sneaked Aimou out, he might witness the power of Illusion Creation again.

Actually... sneaking her out wouldn't be impossible.

Bologue was a pragmatist; his love for the Sheep Horn Shock Hammer showed he didn't care about appearance as long as it was functional.

If you handed him a plunger and said it could smash mountains and split rocks, Bologue wouldn't mind carrying a plunger around.

"I'm a pipeline repairman, carrying a plunger is normal."

If anyone asked, Bologue would undoubtedly answer earnestly this way.

For Bologue, Aimou was very practical; with her, he had a constant supply of ether replenishment and the effects of Ethereal Concealment and Ethereal Perception. Unfortunately, time was short; Bologue couldn't experiment with them all.

Under the enhancement of the Shared Chord Body, Bologue felt like he was reinforced, having no pressure facing Prayer Believers.

He wasn't sure how effective it would be after he advanced, but theoretically, Aimou could evolve self-sufficiently...

The more Bologue thought, the more he felt he couldn't let Aimou go back. Besides, the Order Bureau wasn't far away, Teda, a Negative Power User, shouldn't be able to break into the "Cultivation Room."

Of course, Aimou was entirely oblivious to Bologue's wild thoughts. With his perpetually gloomy look, whatever he was pondering made him resemble a psychopathic killer preparing for work.

Aimou gradually calmed down, soothing her inner excitement, and coolly asked.

"Where do we go next?"

Where to?

That was a question; they couldn't just keep following the parade float, and the night was still long. For Aimou, every moment was extremely precious.

Everything seen and heard tonight far exceeded Aimou's past experiences, and every instant showed her the novelty of the world.

"Is there anything you want to do?" Bologue countered, wanting to hear Aimou's opinion.

"Hmm..."

Aimou couldn't think of anything for a moment since she had barely ventured through Opus. Even when leaving the Great Rift, it was to the Border Sanatorium.

To Bologue, the world was vast, with the Rhine Alliance and the Kagader Empire, the Wind Source Highlands and Free Port, countries wedged between gaps, and islands beyond the continent.

But to Aimou, the world was exceedingly small, with just the Great Rift and the Border Sanatorium.

She knew pathetically little about the outside world, like a hamster living in a cage suddenly one day lifted out and thrown onto a bustling street.

Bologue realized this point too and was about to suggest some ideas when Aimou suddenly spoke.

"I want to eat something!"

"Huh?"

Bologue was stunned.

"Every day, every day, every day I cook, but I can't eat, do you understand how this feels!"

Aimou's voice rose, no longer reserved as before, she let herself go.

"Food?"

Bologue could clearly feel Aimou's excitement. He began to suspect he might actually experience what it feels like to be stuffed to death this time.

"I want to eat... Delicious Shrimp Crispy Cakes!"

"Delicious Shrimp Crispy Cakes, Delicious Shrimp Crispy Cakes, Delicious Shrimp Crispy Cakes..."

Aimou, like a looping tape, repeatedly mentioned in Bologue's mind.

At this time, Bologue remembered that Aimou had come to call him in the morning some time ago, coincidentally catching him listening to Dudel's radio. Since then, Aimou also developed the habit of listening to the radio to learn about the city.

What intrigued her the most was the Delicious Shrimp Crispy Cakes that Dudel always mentioned; Aimou couldn't grasp how good these must be for Dudel to constantly bring them up, even becoming part of the radio's title.

Bologue felt a bit reluctant to tell her that Dudel's initial radio program was sponsored by a restaurant whose signature dish was this special delicacy.

"Alright, alright, Delicious Shrimp Crispy Cakes."

Bologue nodded helplessly and took steps towards the restaurant on the street.

Chapter 277: Life's Anchor Point

Today is the Vow Festival, and everyone has gathered on the streets for the carnival or is attending various parties. The restaurant is pathetically empty, with Bologue sitting in the corner, several empty plates in front of him.

"How does it taste?"

Bologue wiped his lips and asked.

"Not bad, not bad, it's really delicious." Aimou was extremely satisfied.

She was overjoyed, but Bologue was feeling uncomfortable. Usually, he would eat very lightly in the evening, but at Aimou's insistence, he felt as if he had just participated in a competitive eating contest.

"Can I have a bit more?" Aimou whispered, "I want to try that."

"No! I can't eat anymore." Bologue sternly refused.

"Then... how about some wine?"

Aimou was curious about everything, and the first thing she did when entering the restaurant was to order every dish on the menu.

"In a way, you're only three years old, aren't you?" Bologue retorted, "Minors are prohibited from drinking alcohol."

"Huh?" Aimou was stunned for a moment, then said, "But you're an adult."

"It's you drinking; I'm just sharing the sensation." Aimou argued.

"That's just cheating."

"Hold on, I'm an Alchemy Puppet, not a human. Human rules shouldn't apply to me, right?"

"But Alchemy Puppets shouldn't have human senses, should they?"

Aimou realized she couldn't out-argue Bologue and quieted down completely. Bologue went to the desk to settle the bill, and with every step, he felt his stomach weigh him down heavily. It was a feeling he'd never experienced before.

The two strolled down the street, though in reality, it was just Bologue alone. On the road, he asked Aimou about the Constant Motion Core. With the continuous Ether replenishment, Aimou could maintain her Secret Energy release for a long time, and Bologue didn't have to worry about her suddenly running out of Ether and falling out of his body.

Aimou was responsible for maintaining the Void Realm of the Alchemy Workshop. Often, when internal issues arose, she used the Shared Chord Body to penetrate the machinery and perform operations and modifications.

"Actually, could your Secret Energy also allow you to become ethereal and thus avoid attacks?" Bologue asked.

It seemed that Aimou's Secret Energy truly deserved the title of the Deceitful Structure School. It not only influenced the Alchemy Matrix but also penetrated matter, making it extremely convenient to evade attacks in combat or infiltrate buildings.

"Hmm? The conditions are a bit harsh. If it's a solid, like a metal weapon, I can avoid it, but if it's imbued with Ether, based on the properties of Ethereum Mutual Exclusion, I would be disturbed and separated."

Aimou's voice echoed in his ear. Bologue himself didn't resist Aimou, which was why Aimou could successfully share a chord with him. If Bologue resisted Aimou, his own Ether would immediately expel Aimou.

"Is that so? But it seems there's no problem. With advancement, these defects should be addressed one by one."

Bologue finished speaking, a bit puzzled in his heart.

Aimou's positioning was quite peculiar, and he wasn't sure if Aimou could advance like a Condenser. But even if she couldn't advance like a Condenser, she could continually optimize and transform herself.

"Mm."

Aimou responded and soon started giggling.

"What are you laughing at?" Bologue asked.

"Nothing, just feels like... you're a giant robot, and I'm the one piloting the robot." Aimou said.

A strange metaphor. Bologue thought about it and felt that it wasn't entirely off the mark.

Who would've thought that another being—no, not even a person, but a wondrous life—was hidden within his body?

Uncertain of how long they wandered, the novelty of the scenes became familiar, repetitive, and tedious.

Bologue checked the time. There was still some time left before the night ended. He guessed that Palmer was currently on the phone with his fiancée, but he had no idea what kind of person Palmer's fiancée was.

Who could fancy someone like Palmer? Isn't the fiancée afraid that this unlucky fellow would be a hindrance?

Aimou hadn't made a sound for a while; she observed the world through Bologue's eyes.

Suddenly, Bologue stopped and asked Aimou.

"You haven't watched a movie, right?"

"Mm-hmm."

"Wanna watch a movie?"

Bologue looked at the movie poster on the wall; it was a new release. The cover featured mysterious figures wearing black coats, holding bright long swords, with looming sinister buildings in the background.

"Is this... 'Night Hunter'?" Bologue exclaimed.

"Oh wow, this book got turned into a movie!"

Aimou was even more excited.

Since Bologue and Aimou mentioned movies, she had been intensely curious about them, especially about this movie adapted from the 'Night Hunter' novel.

"Wanna watch it?"

"Sure!"

Bologue looked at the poster again, assuming it was a bloody horror movie. Wouldn't it make more sense for family-friendly films to be released during the Vow Festival?

Entering the cinema, it didn't take long for Bologue to come out looking utterly disappointed. It was the Vow Festival, and the movie tickets were already sold out in advance.

"Sorry," Bologue comforted, "I forgot that tickets need to be booked in advance for the festival."

Actually, Bologue had only been out of prison for a year. He understood this world but had been detached from it for too long. Even if he tried to catch up, there were still discrepancies in some details.

"It's nothing," Aimou replied.

Bologue sat on a bench at the street corner, communicating with Aimou in his mind.

Occasionally, passersby would glance curiously and perplexedly at Bologue, not understanding why he was so alone on the Vow Festival day, not to mention talking to himself, as if he were mentally ill.

Indeed, Bologue seemed like a mental patient, communicating with a voice only he could hear.

"So, why did you think of taking me out?" Aimou asked, "And why today? Is it because today is the Vow Festival?"

"It has nothing to do with the Vow Festival..." Bologue thought for a moment and replied, "Isn't today your birthday?"

"So?"

"A birthday needs a birthday gift, right?"

Bologue felt it was only natural. Even he received gifts from Adelle, so Aimou should have them too.

"Is this my birthday gift then?"

"Mm-hmm, it was all so sudden, this is the best we can do... consider it a thank-you for cooking for me."

After speaking, Bologue seemed to think of something, gazing up at the night sky.

The night sky was tinted a faint dark red by the radiant lights on the ground. All starlight retreated behind the clouds, as if this city existed outside the cosmic cycle, time frozen.

"But... this is a secret, Aimou," Bologue reminded.

"A secret known only to you and me?"

"That's right, make sure not to let Teda know, nor anyone else besides Teda." Bologue emphasized again.

This night's choice went against Bologue's style. He didn't consider himself a kind or gentle person, but in that situation, his mood couldn't help but align with Aimou's.

Placing himself in Aimou's perspective, Bologue felt as if he were trapped in swampy mud, struggling to escape. He couldn't stand Aimou's predicament, so he made an effort to take her away from there, though only for tonight.

Suddenly, Bologue remembered something and got up from the bench, walking silently toward the dim street area.

The night's festivities gathered in the Agreement District and nearby areas. Other cities had activities too, but nowhere near as lively. Therefore, once leaving the Agreement District, the city reverted to its original state.

Aimou didn't ask Bologue where they were headed. She was already very satisfied with tonight, everything she saw constantly impacting her soul.

"I came across something like this in a book before."

As Bologue advanced, Aimou spoke in his mind.

"Human childhood is always long, but after adulthood, time seems to fly past rapidly, as though ten years pass in the blink of an eye...

When you were a baby, your world was merely a small room. As a child, your world was the neighborhood you lived in. When you grew older, it was the streets, then the city, country, and continent..."

Aimou's voice was gentle, like telling Bologue a bedtime story, or like a child tired from playing, murmuring while resting on the couch.

"The book says human memory is structured by anchor points; humans don't clearly remember daily details but do remember significant days.

In human childhood, every day brought new discoveries, continually expanding the world.

Each day was important, hence there was an anchor point placed, inserted into the timeline of life.

During childhood, such anchor points filled every day, making each day extremely meaningful and memorable. But after reaching adulthood, this world offers nothing new to humans.

Humans may not set an anchor point for several years, decades, hence those lengthy periods become blurred."

"Childhood days are clearly visible, yet past days are vague... Is that why humans feel time passes so quickly after adulthood?"

Bologue muttered softly, slightly moved by Aimou's words. The long time in the Black Prison now seemed like fleeting smoke compared to his time in the military, where every day was distinctly vivid.

"It's been a long night indeed."

Aimou felt this way.

Neither of them spoke, leaving the busy Agreement District behind, walking into the murky dark. After a while, Aimou couldn't help but ask.

"Where are we going? Are you taking me back?"

"No, another place."

Bologue said as he looked into the distance. The parking lot maintained its desolate appearance, with only a few scattered old cars parked there, and not a single person visible on the stairs.

Today was the Vow Festival, everyone joined the celebrations, yet there were always some who strayed from the crowd, still steadfast at their posts.

The old projectionist dozed in the pavilion, the projector casting light and shadows, displayed on the giant screen.

"Looks like we made it."

Bologue found a suitable spot on the steps and sat down, a burst of noise emanating from ahead.

Aimou said nothing, she was entirely engrossed in the story unfolding on the screen, oblivious to the simplicity of the environment.

Inside the parking lot cinema, Bologue sat alone on the steps, the light and shadows casting his face pale, with a slender shadow extending into the endless darkness.

Chapter 278: Freak

No drinks, no popcorn, no comfortable seats, not even a place to shelter from the wind and rain. The cold wind was biting, but it didn't affect Bologue much; he quietly watched the movie until the story ended.

How interesting that the movie being shown at the parking lot cinema was exactly the one Palmer had mentioned to him before. The poster of the detective and the dog was pasted on the wall.

The movie was titled "Ninth-Grade Detective and His Invincible Hound," featuring a down-and-out detective who, despite the title, wasn't smart and lacked detective skills. He was more like a thug than a detective.

One day, after passing out drunk on the street, the detective woke up to find a hound beside him, seemingly having recognized him as its owner, and followed him home.

When they got home, the interesting part of the story began.

The hound could speak.

It scared the detective half to death, but after calming down, he learned that the hound was the product of a mad scientist's experiment, granting animals human-like intelligence and the ability to communicate.

Now this mad scientist wanted to capture more people to push the experiment forward, which was the reason behind the recent spate of disappearances.

After understanding the situation, the down-and-out detective decided to become famous and a real detective by teaming up with Sido to defeat evil.

Who is Sido? That's the hound's name.

It gave the name to itself.

It's an amusing comedy film. Sido is much smarter than the detective; the detective remains the fool, sometimes the roles should be reversed—Sido should be the detective, and the detective should be the hound.

Palmer was right, the movie was extremely funny, even Bologue was entertained and laughed.

There was a dispute between the detective and Sido. The detective, being a slow-witted guy, clearly couldn't win the argument with Sido, and in a fit of fury, threatened to take Sido to get neutered.

Sometimes Sido would request to use the bathroom like a human, but the detective would tell it to relieve itself in the dog park, which made Sido furious, chasing the detective to bite him.

While laughing non-stop, the story continued to develop—the two became increasingly tacit, the detective completely gave up thinking, becoming Sido's thug, while Sido grew into the true decision-maker, uncovering one enemy plot after another.

After going through many trials, the man and the dog forged a true friendship and destroyed the mad scientist's scheme.

The detective received everyone's attention, and wherever he went, a hound would follow him.

The story ended.

Bologue felt his tears were almost laughed out, but after calming down, he inexplicably felt a faint sadness in his heart.

"And then what?" Aimou asked.

"What do you mean 'and then'?"

"What happens to the detective and Sido afterward?"

"Nothing happened; the story ended. That's it," Bologue said.

"Then wouldn't the lives of the detective and Sido continue somewhere out of sight?"

Aimou found it hard to grasp such a movie conclusion; she thought even if the story ended, the lives of the people in the story would still continue.

"I suppose so, likely more of those chicken-flying-dog-jumping moments." Saying this, Bologue chuckled; the interactions between the man and the dog were truly entertaining.

After laughing, he found that the lively Aimou had fallen silent, and the sadness in his heart grew stronger.

"What's wrong, Aimou?"

"Sido is just a dog, it probably won't live long, will it?" Aimou said sadly.

Bologue was momentarily at a loss for what to say. He hesitantly said, "Well, there's nothing that can be done. Sido isn't a human but a dog."

"But what's the difference between it and a human? It was even smarter than the detective; the detective was the one that seemed more like the dog, right?" Aimou protested.

If the detective had been more reliable in the movie, Sido wouldn't have needed to save the day so often, which could've cut half an hour from the plot.

"I think Sido is human, just... just without a human shell."

She whispered.

Bologue didn't know what to say, Aimou's words sounded like a child's protest, but upon deeper thought, Bologue also felt unable to laugh.

"Sido wants to live like a human. After all, it's as intelligent as a human, but the detective just laughs at it, saying something like, 'Can you use a toilet?'

In the eyes of this foolish detective, at best, it's still just a dog, perhaps a smarter, talking dog at most."

Aimou's voice grew quieter until it vanished.

Bologue had nothing to say. To him, it was just a comedy film, there was no need to be so serious. But for Aimou, it was completely different; she couldn't even understand why the detective would use neutering to threaten Sido—is that funny, entertaining?

"I read a story in a book before, it's a story with a bit of cruel humor."

Aimou watched as the end credits flashed black-and-white names continuously.

"Similar to this story, it was also about a group of scientists conducting experiments.

They endowed apes with intelligence, then told them about their inevitable death.

And then the story ended, leaving the apes' tales for the readers to imagine."

Aimou's voice stopped, and Bologue fell into contemplation. He was a smart person; the stories beyond the story weren't hard to deduce.

The apes didn't possess intelligence; they lived carefree, leaving everything to instinct. But one day, they gained wisdom and learned of their inevitable demise...

Chapter 279: Freak_2

Panic? Fear? Powerlessness or anger?

A carefree life shattered, living in constant fear every day, they possess intelligence similar to humans but are locked in cages, observed and experimented on by another group of apes.

In terms of consciousness, they are the same species, yet their physical forms are so different.

What do the apes in the cages think about? They are powerless to change reality, sinking deeper and deeper into the whirlpool of despair... Maybe they should long to lose their intelligence, so that by becoming carefree apes again, they won't have to ponder over this agony.

"Do you want to be human, Aimou?" Bologue asked.

The girl was still too naive; she didn't know how to hide her thoughts, or maybe today was a good time, and she was willing to reveal her true inner self.

Aimou is Sido, is the ape. She is more outstanding and intelligent than most people in this world, yet she is an alchemy puppet, relying solely on Bologue's body to further perceive everything in this world.

"Me? No, humans are too weak, who wants to be human?"

Aimou gave an unexpected answer.

She hid inside Bologue's body, making it impossible for Bologue to judge her emotions through the changes in aura.

"If nothing unexpected happens, I can run indefinitely, which means I can somewhat be considered half-Undead, but humans? Humans will all die after a hundred years, some people won't even last a hundred years.

Their lifespan is already so short, and they waste a lot of time on sleep, not to mention humans get injured, get plagued by diseases..."

Aimou spoke on her own, desperately proving her superiority over humans.

"Sido and apes are in pain because they are inferior to humans, but I am different. I will become stronger than humans, one day I will achieve it."

These words made Bologue's heart skip a beat, should one say it's worthy of being Teda's student? She goes crazy just like Teda does.

"Steel is the future, Bologue."

Aimou didn't forget to conclude with one sentence.

"Alright, alright, I look forward to that day, after all, I'm also an Undead."

Bologue repeatedly praised her; he never thought that Aimou's mental state was better than he expected. He initially thought she would say she was trapped in a shell of steel, unable to become human.

But in reality, Aimou didn't care about the human shell at all, because, after all, flesh and blood are too weak.

"Then don't you feel lonely?" Bologue asked again.

"I'm so unique, so what about loneliness?" Aimou said confidently, "Have you seen an alchemy puppet like me?"

"No, to be precise, you're the first alchemy puppet I've seen."

"Then that's it, besides, don't you have me? You're also an Undead, there's still quite a resemblance." Aimou added.

It could be felt from the previous conversation that Aimou was very concerned about life and death... mainly about death, she strongly resisted death, so she wanted to continually optimize and live on.

Bologue didn't understand why Aimou thought this way, but survival itself is an instinct for every consciousness, such things don't need a reason.

"If that day really comes, I'll introduce a bunch of friends to you."

"Who?"

"You'll know when the time comes." Bologue said mysteriously.

The movie ended, and the path became darker and more desolate.

Bologue felt much calmer; within the small alchemy workshop, Teda obsessed over the fantasy of Alice's resurrection, already a headache-inducing matter, but luckily Aimou was very honest, without too many delusions.

But...

Bologue remembered something, how Aimou felt when she first tasted cake in the alchemy workshop.

If you don't care so much about becoming human, why then do you feel such an uncontrollable joy towards all of this?

The ecstasy of something new?

Bologue couldn't figure it out, nor did he press on; the two already understood each other deeply enough tonight, each person has their own little secrets, no need to probe excessively.

But Bologue completely overlooked that the golden aura in his eyes had ceased all its agitation at some point, inscribed in his pupils with a dull, numbed emptiness, lending his entire eyes a few shades of deep void.

Like the walking dead.

...

"Are we heading home?"

"I don't know, maybe just wandering around."

"What are you thinking about?"

"Hmm... about the upcoming ascension ceremony."

As Bologue and Aimou continued their exchange, Bologue felt more like he was talking to himself.

"I'm planning to conduct a soul test to see if the soul has stabilized, then the trial of the Triple Law..."

Bologue was planning the subsequent agenda.

For himself, being an Undead, the ascension ceremony posed no real danger, at most just required a few more attempts.

For this reason, a few days ago, Bologue proposed to Teda whether they should accelerate the pace and start the trial of the Triple Law first, enhancing the three major elements of salt, sulfur, and mercury to complete the ascension to Prayer Believer.

Teda pondered for a moment and advised Bologue not to rush. Although he is an Undead, able to disregard the soul's deficiency and the risks brought by the ceremony, his soul was already in shambles; who knows what abnormal consequences might arise from such reckless actions.

Carrying the power of Overlord Xilin, Teda unexpectedly showed concern for Bologue, fearing that Bologue might get himself ruined, leaving no sample for research.

Chapter 280: Freak_3

After several discussions, Teda decided to first test Bologue's soul to see if it had returned to stability, leaving the rest for later.

Compared to the ascension ceremony, the Trial of the Triple Law beforehand for the Condenser wasn't considered difficult, just requiring a lot of Alchemy Materials.

Bologue's first trial would be the Trial of Salt, which corresponded to the soul of desire, as well as Bologue's body.

A Condenser who passed this trial would have their physical body significantly strengthened. Alchemists had researched this phenomenon and concluded that as Condensers ascend, they grow closer to Ether until becoming assimilated by it, resulting in bodily transformation or perhaps transcendence.

This is why many Condensers are never afflicted by diseases in their lives, as their shell, protected by Ether, is no longer troubled by illness.

"You're an Undead, which means as long as you keep going, you'll eventually become a Seeker of Glory, right?" Aimou asked.

"I suppose so, it's just unclear how long it will take," Bologue affirmed.

Strangely enough, Bologue sometimes felt a sort of... mission.

He could understand why Nesanel had been so cautious of him before, and why, after accepting him, Nesanel placed such high value on him.

In a future not too distant, he would become a Seeker of Glory, while Nesanel, such a short-lived human, would long be dead.

In some sense, he was now the legacy that Nesanel left for the future, the Watcher of the Order Bureau.

"Maybe one day you'll get in touch with the essence of the 'Secret Source,'" Aimou mused, "I really want to know what the 'Secret Source' is."

"I hope so,"

Bologue nodded in agreement.

From the influence of Ether on Condensers, Alchemists reached another conclusion: the higher the Tier a Condenser reached during ascension, the closer their intimacy with Ether became, culminating in their body, mind, and soul undergoing Etherealization.

Therefore, the closer the connection with Ether, the nearer Condensers were to the "Secret Source."

Currently, the highest Tier in the world is that of the Seeker of Glory, and theoretically, they are the beings closest to the "Secret Source." However, these Seekers of Glory are so mysterious and rarely seen by the world that Bologue has nowhere to verify these unknowns as truth or falsehood.

Bologue walked further, not feeling tired, and Aimou didn't ask where he was going. Eventually, a cloudy mist slowly spread before their eyes.

This was a high cliff. Below the cliff rolled a mist, while brilliant rays of light spilled from the Rift, blurred through the mist into large swaths of halo.

A heavy rumble came from afar, as a light rail slipped like a serpent under the Crossing Abyss Bridge, moving through the light mist. Further skylines loomed indistinctly in the fog, as if a false illusion.

Even with the Constant Motion Core, Aimou's Ether wasn't infinite. More of it could be absorbed from the surrounding environment to alleviate her Ether consumption.

After a night of Secret Energy release, she was struggling to maintain such continuous depletion, eventually disengaging the Secret Energy and separating from Bologue's body.

Bologue sat on the cliff, expressionlessly gazing at the Great Rift below and the distant city. Aimou, having changed, came over and sat down beside him, feet dangling and swaying.

"I found this place during a mission once," Bologue said lightly, "I was chasing a bastard then, not a Demon, but a serial killer, and I couldn't be bothered to hand him to the Sheriff, so I just pushed him off here."

"There's nothing special here during the day, but at night, the scenery isn't bad, and sometimes I come here to daze off."

Bologue didn't continue. Being so close to the Great Rift, after dazing off, he could directly immerse himself in work, slaughtering with a good mindset.

Thinking of this, Bologue couldn't help but let a smile slip across his face.

Aimou obviously didn't understand Bologue enough. She genuinely thought Bologue was just appreciating the scenery but also knew they were near the Great Rift, and tonight's revelry was henceforth concluded.

"You really are interesting, Bologue," Aimou said.

"Are you taking me as the entirety of humanity?" Bologue shook his head, "Humans are complex, I am but a tiny individual among them, don't misapply."

"No, at least among the very few humans I've encountered, you're the first to take me out," Aimou looked towards the hazy light mist, "My teacher refused to take me out, and Belli didn't want me to stay too long... Why did you want to bring me out?"

"Because you wanted to come out, and today is your birthday. Everyone should have a birthday gift," Bologue added after a thought, "Even if you're not considered human, even detectives in movies prepare gifts for Sido, right?"

Aimou laughed heartily, and after the laughter subsided, Aimou fell silent, then spoke shortly.

"Actually, I didn't expect you'd risk taking me out, I've always thought you were a... hm? very strange person."

Aimou racked her brain, unable to find a suitable analogy to describe Bologue.

Hearing Aimou's assessment of him, Bologue felt it was alright. He said, "You thought I wouldn't bring you out?"

"Pretty much, you should be a very rational person."

Bologue pondered for a moment, then turned his head and asked Aimou.

"Aimou, do you think... I'm a good person?"