

## Endless 281

Chapter 281: Freak\_4

Aimou didn't think much about it and spoke directly.

"Yeah, a good person."

"Is it because I took you out? So I became a good person?"

Bologue couldn't help but laugh, but after a couple of chuckles, he fell silent again and said.

"Humans are complex and multifaceted. You see me taking you out, so you think I'm a good person, but you've never seen how brutal and cold-hearted I can be to those people..."

Bologue felt this was a good moment, the atmosphere was right, and he rarely opened up about his feelings.

"I was greatly influenced by a friend of mine. She is a devout believer, and while I don't believe in religion, I was still influenced by her, and these influences have shaped my code of conduct.

The basic idea is that evil begets evil, and if no one punishes those people, I will replace fate and punish them."

"Sounds pretty good, like a dark hero?" Aimou recalled the novels she had read.

"No, actually, I am also a villain, but I possess greater power, so I can decide the fate of other villains," Bologue said, "Of course, I am not troubled by good and evil. On the contrary, I find it great and cool."

"But one day, that friend of mine told me, God does not only descend fire upon sinners, He also brings redemption to good people."

Bologue's words became hesitant.

"I am not good at helping others; I am better at punishing those villains. But sometimes I wonder if perhaps I could try some... good deeds?"

"So tonight, it's just because you want to try a good deed, is that it?" Aimou asked.

"Yes, do you think it's hypocritical?"

"No, regardless of your intentions, at least you're taking action, and I'm very happy, and that's enough."

When Aimou said these things, she was as thoughtful as a real human being; Bologue was momentarily confused.

"But, why me? Bologue, you could try good deeds with many people, why did you choose me in the end?" Aimou asked curiously.

"Why didn't you refuse me then?"

She turned her head to look at Bologue; the light was dim, making it hard for Bologue to see her face, and even if he could, Aimou often showed no expression.

But the blue halo in her pupils was clearly visible, no longer having the previous panic, the halo quietly oscillated back and forth.

"Maybe it's about shared empathy..." Bologue whispered.

"Shared empathy?"

"Don't be fooled by my appearance now, I'm actually almost ninety years old. My former friends, family, world... everything has already become unfamiliar, turned into dust and faded away.

Remember when you mentioned memory anchors? I can clearly remember everything from the past, as if it was just yesterday, but I can no longer find their existence, even the traces have disappeared as if my past life was just a dream, and once awakened, everything vanished.

I am like a ghost that has traveled through time to arrive here, and indeed, I have lived like a ghost until now. I'm unsure if this is the sentimentality of old age, or if on this holiday, emotions are inevitably more sensitive..."

The battlefield he once fought for has turned into Oubos, familiar old friends have long been sleeping in cemeteries, and Bologue had thought of seeing his hometown, but familiar Greenfield Town has become an industrial town shrouded in black smoke.

He feels like an outsider facing a world that is familiar yet strange.

"I think we're quite alike, the Undead having lost the past, and the newly born Alchemy Puppet, I believe we should have much in common.

That's it, any more questions?"

"No more."

The two sat silently on the Cliff, the cold evening breeze blowing, before the midnight bells rang, Aimou spoke.

"Happy Vow Festival, Bologue."

## Chapter 282: Workday

In the confined elevator, Bologue and Palmer occupied the entire space on either side. Bologue still maintained his meticulous demeanor, while Palmer looked somewhat disheveled, with dark circles under his eyes, appearing extremely lethargic, and carrying a faint smell of alcohol.

Bologue glanced sideways at Palmer, this unlucky fellow's body even started to sway slightly, almost losing his balance.

"What time did you drink until last night?" Bologue couldn't help but ask.

Palmer was different from him; this guy joined earlier and became a Condenser a long time ago. Palmer had already passed the first two trials of the triple trials, both his body and will strengthened by Ether.

But even with such enhancement, Bologue still felt that Palmer might suddenly drop dead at any moment.

"Until dawn..."

The exhausted voice squeezed out from between Palmer's teeth, this guy hadn't rested at all; he just tidied himself up at the Undying Club and rushed straight to work.

"What did you all do?" Bologue pressed further.

"It was Serey, that bastard suggested a new game at the end of the party. He picked eight usual bars for us to go one by one, see who could last until the end," Palmer leaned to one side, clutching his head, "I held till the seventh bar, I almost won."

"What was the bet?"

Palmer fell silent, after a while, he slowly spoke, "Bet? Seems like there wasn't any bet, just to see who could hold till the eighth bar, whoever was the toughest."

"Just that?"

"Uh huh, just that."

Bologue sighed complexly, he shouldn't have too high expectations for Palmer's mental maturity.

The elevator doors opened, Bologue and Palmer marched forward, along the gray-white corridor, and then into a meeting room.

In the past, task handovers only needed to be done in Lebius's office, but today's task was a bit different.

The others in the meeting room were all prepared, Lebius sat at the head, beside him was Geoffrey, then Ivan... Seeing Ivan, Palmer sobered up a bit, followed by a headache.

Next to Ivan was Yas, and on the other side of the meeting table were some unfamiliar faces that Bologue hadn't seen much; he thought they must be Yas's team members.

A man, a woman, and then someone... Bologue froze, along with Palmer beside him.

It was a slightly odd existence, his body was robust, full of muscles, with such a large physique that he seemed capable of packing the guy next to him inside, saying he could punch through concrete bare-handed wasn't an exaggeration.

Unlike the uniforms of others, this guy wore loose robes, but from the color and stripes on the robes, one could see it matched the others'.

Of course, throughout his life, Bologue had met countless people, even some Devils up close; he had seen great storms and waves, but unfortunately, he was seeing this for the first time today.

He had a body covered in black long hair, a head not of familiar human likeness, but a beastly head resembling that of hunting dogs or wolves. With his breathing, his fur gently shook, sharp canines slightly protruding from his black lips.

This guy wasn't like, he was a Beastman, a black Devil Dog Beastman.

"Am I still drunk?"

Palmer wiped his eyes, his vision becoming clearer; he thought the other was wearing a costume, but this costume seemed overly realistic.

Bologue couldn't help but whisper.

"Sido?"

"Ninth-Grade Detective and His Invincible Hound" is real, Sido really turned into a human, and so cool!

The other clearly noticed Bologue and Palmer's gaze; he was likely accustomed to this kind of scrutinizing look, "Sido" seemed already used to it and spoke first.

"Hello, Hart Vine, affiliated with the Sixth Group."

"Hello, Sido." Bologue failed to notice what he was saying at all.

"Sido?" Palmer remembered the movie instinctively and laughed, "Sido? Are you kidding?"

"Ah no, hello, nice to meet you, Hart." Bologue quickly corrected, then quietly said to Palmer, "Is this guy releasing Secret Energy?"

"Doesn't seem like it, no Ether reaction," Palmer responded.

"He... is like this naturally?"

"Maybe? Seems like a Debtor; anyway, any weird thing related to Debtors is never wrong," Palmer analyzed.

"If he's a Debtor, shouldn't he be in our action group? How did he end up in the Sixth Group?" Bologue felt something was off.

Their whispers obviously didn't escape anyone's notice; Lebius and Geoffrey were accustomed to it, Yas knew these two fellows well, Ivan also clearly understood his nephew's nature.

Because of this, everyone's reaction was quite calm, except for Yas's three team members, a man and a woman tried hard to suppress their laughter, Hart silently endured sandwiched between them.

"I am human, not a Debtor, nor a Demon."

Hart's voice was filled with fatigue and numbness; nearly every time he met a stranger, he had to repeat these words.

"My appearance was caused by an accidental incident during an operation; I fell into the Order of Truth's Alchemy Solution, crawled out, and turned into this form."

"Wow, if Sido became human, he'd probably look like this, right?" Bologue and Palmer whispered to each other, completely ignoring Hart's self-explanation.

"Ahem."

Yas coughed a few times, redirecting the attention of these two scoundrels away from his team member, but when he looked at Hart, Yas couldn't help but wonder who the "Sido" these two guys were talking about was.

Collecting their smiles and becoming serious, Bologue vaguely guessed what they were going to do today. He and Palmer sat in the vacant seats, and then Bologue asked.

"Is there any progress in the investigation?"

Lebius nodded, and at this moment, Yas began speaking from the side, "After my team's investigation, it can be confirmed that the Gray Trade Association is preparing an auction."

Auction.

Bologue knew what this was. Rather than an auction, it was more of a sacrifice to the Tyrant. In the auctions hosted by the Gray Trade Association, people would use value to exchange for goods, and the inflated value would eventually be directed towards the Tyrant.

"Are we going to raid the auction venue?" Bologue asked.

"Yes and no. Based on our previous dealings with the Gray Trade Association, their auction sites are not fixed, and are usually protected by the Void Realm. Without an invitation, it's very difficult to locate and enter them."

Yas, with a slightly pained expression, explained, "This part should be handed over to the Third Group. They are experts at breaking through the Void Realm, but recently the Third Group is fully focused on 'Joyful Garden,' so we'll have to handle this ourselves."

Bologue had heard of the Third Group, the Wall-Breaking Blade. Palmer called them the demolition team, mainly responsible for breaking through those complex and bizarre Void Realms, turning them into ruins.

As for Joyful Garden, Bologue was not yet clear on what that was, possibly another action event codename, so he did not continue to inquire.

"Should we collaborate among ourselves to create opportunities for a raid on the venue and put an end to these merchants' auctions?" Bologue looked at the Sixth Group members sitting across from him.

"Yes, but according to our current plan, it's mostly up to you." Yas said.

"Us?"

"The Wandering Crossroad is the Tyrant's domain. Even though he can't directly intervene in reality, warning the Gray Trade Association or driving them to action is extremely simple for him. If we enter recklessly, we will surely draw his attention, but you're different; you're Debtors."



Yas elaborated his thoughts to Bologue and Palmer.

"You carry an umbilical cord on you, which itself serves as a pass."

"You want us to act as undercover agents, infiltrate, and collaborate with you from the inside out?" Bologue asked.

"Pretty much. Most importantly, we only have two invitations, and having too high a Tier might raise suspicions, too low and it's useless, so we must choose the elite of the elite to go."

This was Yas's true intention.

"Are we considered the elite of the elite?"

Palmer asked Bologue, instinctively sensing the danger of this mission despite not having slept all night and being drunk.

"Probably, a sharp sword to shatter the enemy's deadly tail." Bologue mumbled softly.

Palmer's face turned pale, his eyes seeking help from Ivan, but Ivan turned his head away, not looking at Palmer.

"The date of the operation hasn't been set yet, but during the operation, you need to pay attention to a few things."

Yas took out two documents and handed them to Bologue and Palmer respectively.

"In the investigation, we discovered a mysterious entity known as the Delusional..."

Bologue quickly browsed through the contents on the document, and his expression became serious.

"You suspect that the Delusional is Teda."

"Just a suspicion, we have no solid evidence... But if he really is the Delusional, given what he's been doing, he won't miss the auction, meaning you'll see him at the venue."

Yas added, "During your operation, we'll also have people watching the Alchemy Workshop."

"But regardless of whether the Delusional is Teda, he's not so important in the mission, right?" Bologue asked in confusion.

Teda having a hidden identity was something he had long expected, especially since Teda was an Alchemist lurking in the Great Rift. He had already left the Order Bureau and joined the Order of Truth.

In Teda's hands, he didn't know how many outside Condensers had been created, causing significant trouble for the Order Bureau. However, due to the constraints of the pact, the Order Bureau still maintained a peaceful attitude with Teda.

"Just making early preparations. You've been with Teda for so long, you must have sensed those things he's hiding deep down, right?" Yas queried.

This time, Bologue fell silent. Teda's danger didn't lie on the surface but in his heart, in the things he hid deep within.

"In this mission, both the Delusional and the Gray Trade Association are just secondary targets."

At this moment, Lebius spoke up, gesturing for Bologue to continue skimming through the document.

"The real main threat is the buyers and the things the Gray Trade Association intends to sell."

Bologue turned to the next page, the scarlet symbols filled his vision, and he whispered.

"The Crimson Corruption Sect."

## Chapter 283: Target

Bologue always felt that recent times had been chaotic. First, there was Belli's commission, then the frenzied Teda, the strange and naive Aimou, and the Gray Trade Association that attacked him... There were far too many messy things, so many that Bologue almost forgot about the existence of the Sanguine Corruption Cult.

From Yas's tone, it seemed that all these troubles were secondary, and the real main issue was the Sanguine Corruption Cult.

The lights in the conference room went out, and in the dimness, a slide projector cast images onto the screen, with one crimson scene after another appearing before their eyes.

"The traces of the Gray Trade Association are well-hidden; after all, this is essentially their home ground. But the Sanguine Corruption Cult is different. In our investigation, the investigation of the Ninth Group is also proceeding simultaneously. They discovered several sacrificial sites within the Great Rift, where blood has soaked every inch of the soil."

Geoffrey stood in the back, switching the films.

Bologue had dealt with the Sanguine Corruption Cult before, and was not surprised by the bloody and brutal scenes. But the members next to Hart were clearly not as familiar with such matters, frowning as they observed the corpses strewn everywhere.

"Those who can be present here have been acknowledged by the Action Group through multiple missions, so there's no need to hide anything here anymore."

As Yas spoke, the film switched to another slide, showing crimson blood stored in containers.

"This is the Elixir of Immortality, offered by the Sanguine Corruption Cult to the Crimson Queen... It can also be understood as the contract material obtained from trading these flesh and blood. This blood possesses extremely strong healing properties; even if mutilated, a body injected with such blood will quickly recover."

Yas paused, then continued.

"This substance can only heal the physical body. As for what lies beneath the flesh, no one knows what will happen... The Sanguine Corruption Cult often uses this substance to promote their miracles."

Bologue listened and nodded. The handprint on his chest had not faded, and his dread of the Sanguine Corruption Cult only grew.

"In the event of encountering the Sanguine Corruption Cult during operations, you must keep in mind that they may carry the Elixir of Immortality, and they themselves are also under the Protection of the Crimson Queen. Each one of them is extremely difficult to kill, much like the Undead."

As Yas spoke, his gaze fell on Bologue.

These words were not directed at the members of the Sixth Group, but at himself and Palmer. The two of them were the elite who broke into the venue with invitations, while the others were the reinforcements that would sweep in after the two caused chaos inside.

"Aside from this, we suspect that the Sanguine Corruption Cult will likely join this auction as well.

Your main goal on this trip is to thwart the transaction, kill every member of the Sanguine Corruption Cult you come across, regardless of what they want from the Gray Trade Association or what the Gray Trade Association intends to sell to them, stop it all at all costs."

Yas's voice became stern, and fearing they might still not feel at ease, he added.

"If necessary, the Ninth Group will also support our operations. After all, hunting the Sanguine Corruption Cult is also one of their responsibilities."

After a moment of silence, Bologue spoke.

"Is this transaction so important because the Gray Trade Association wants to sell something?"

That thing is extremely important to the Sanguine Corruption Cult, so much so that these lunatics fearlessly confront the Order Bureau and delve into the Great Rift. Simply because this cursed item is too important, and if the Sanguine Corruption Cult gets their hands on it, it will definitely cause big trouble, which is why we need to take it so seriously?"

Bologue had his reasons for this judgment. Since joining, he had executed many missions, but it was the first time two Action Groups were cooperating on a mission, and the Ninth Group was present outside the field.

A mission concentrated on by three Action Groups clearly spoke to its importance.

Yas and Lebius exchanged glances, and the usually quiet Lebius spoke up.

"There's no need to be overly secretive, Yas. Besides that part, it would be better to let them understand more... Anyway, this information is only useful for these two guys."

Their gaze fell on Bologue and Palmer, with the Special Operations Group's Undying Body and Debtor infiltrating within, while the Violence Suppression Action Group carried out sieges from the perimeter. The plan was brilliant, fully exploiting the Debtor's traits.

Yas nodded, and Geoffrey continued switching the slides in the back, revealing a crimson heart to everyone.

Although it was a blurry and flat image, at first glance, it seemed to throb like an illusion. At the same time, Bologue felt as if his heart was being tugged, and others felt the same; unconsciously, everyone's blood started to heat up slightly, and the sound of their heartbeat became intense.

It was a heart resembling a human's heart, yet its flesh was not smooth. Instead, it was covered with patterns like crawling worms. More precisely, the entire heart seemed to be composed of intertwined blood-red worms.

Like a meticulously crafted piece of art by a certain artisan, its true form was soft flesh.

"This item is called the Immortal Heart, a Holy Relic within the Sanguine Corruption Cult. From the accumulated information of the Ninth Group, this item is also a product obtained after sacrifices to the Crimson Queen. But compared to the regular Elixir of Immortality, obtaining the Immortal Heart evidently requires a significantly higher price."

Yas continued narrating, part of which should have been Carnegie's, as today's meeting should have involved the Ninth Group. However, Carnegie refused to attend, using the excuse of continuing the pursuit of the Sanguine Corruption Cult.

This is typical of the Ninth Group, who, due to the uniqueness of their function, always maintain a sense of distance from other Action Groups, making them appear quite unusual in the entire Field Operations Department.

"For reasons unknown, the Gray Trade Association actually acquired this Holy Relic and is preparing to offer it to the Tyrant. The Sanguine Corruption Cult suddenly arrived at the Great Rift to reclaim this Holy Relic."

Indeed, it was ultimately this damned arms dealer that sparked the conflict.

"What is its effect?"

Bologue asked. The mission's target this time was that heart.

"In its normal state, it's just a piece of dead flesh. But when implanted into a body, it can continuously produce the Elixir of Immortality."

Yas calmly replied.

The meeting room fell into a dead silence.

Palmer had completely sobered up. Faced with such matter, not waking up was difficult. Yesterday was a happy Vow Festival party, but today it turned into a life-and-death mission. His mood had completely numbed.

Bologue bowed his head in thought. The effect of the Elixir of Immortality was already troublesome enough. Coupled with the Protection of the Crimson Queen, these cultists were extremely hard to kill, and now there was an added Immortal Heart...

"Can I understand that we are very likely facing a group of Undead?" Bologue asked.

"They aren't really Undead... just not that easy to kill." Yas answered.

"You can hasten their death, right? Just like my weakness." Bologue suddenly realized this point.

"That's right, we can create an Ether vacuum to restrict them, but you first need to infiltrate them, sabotage internally, so we can intervene from the outside."

Yas's gaze swept over his team members, all showing readiness.

"By then, we will be able to suppress them on a large scale."

"But there is an exception... if the Immortal Heart is implanted into a human body..." Bologue did not feel reassured by Yas's words, instead continuing to probe about this Holy Relic.

Blue eyes stared at Yas, waiting for his next words.

"We're not clear on that; even the Ninth Group has not observed the Immortal Heart being implanted into a body," Yas answered Bologue's question. "Our documentation on the Immortal Heart is scant, only aware of its powers and significance."

"Is that so..."

Bologue felt a headache coming on. He had thought about facing off against similar Undead in the future, but hadn't expected it would all happen this quickly.

Yet he also pondered that the Undying Body has a cost, his own undying traits even praised by Serey, then what would the undead nature of the Crimson Sect be like? Perfect, or flawed?

"Any other questions? If not, let's adjourn." Lebius said.

Everyone nodded silently, the meeting thus adjourned. Palmer slumped in his chair completely, taking quite a while to shakily stand up.

"Seems like you need a sleep." Bologue suggested.

"I think so too." Palmer's eyes were full of red threads, looking extremely miserable.

Ivan glanced at his nephew from afar, sighed helplessly, said nothing, and left. This operation also had the Crow's Nest's aid; all the crucial information was consolidated by them.

A tall figure blocked their way, Hart stood in front of the two. When this fellow stood up, Bologue realized he was truly a hairy monster. Just getting to know Hart more, Bologue really wanted to ask how much shampoo he had to use each time he showered...

Wait a second, he probably uses pet shampoo instead, right?

"Let me reintroduce, Hart Vine." Hart pointed at himself, with sharp claws growing from his hand.

"This is Kingsley Stanford," Hart introduced the man beside him, then the woman, "And this is Fanny Field."



Kingsley nodded at Bologue; he seemed like the steady type. Fanny kept smiling at Bologue, and before Bologue could introduce himself, she spoke first.

"I heard about you from Kemp. Bologue Lazarus, he said you saved him and Shelley."

Bologue thought of those two newcomers, saying flatly, "Nothing, just a rescue mission."

"And you're Palmer Clarks, right?"

Kingsley pointed at the nearly dead Palmer.

"Am I that famous?" Palmer spruced up a bit, not expecting his reputation to reach the Sixth Group.

"Hm," Hart nodded, seriously, "The Clarks family's jinx. The leader said, during operations, better stay away from you."

## Chapter 284: Void World

In the lounge of the Special Operations Group, Bologue flipped through the documents in his hand, while three members of the Sixth Group sat opposite him.

The start time of the mission was unclear, but based on the principle that acting together makes them teammates, Bologue discussed the details of the mission with these people.

At the moment, only Bologue was communicating with them, as Palmer was lying on the couch in the activity room, completely drunk with a strong smell of alcohol.

The three members of the Sixth Group occasionally glanced at Palmer, and from their eyes, it was clear they very much doubted how Palmer managed to infiltrate the Order Bureau and whether this guy was really from the Clarks.

Bologue was much better than them, having long been accustomed to Palmer's strange behavior.

"The venue for the auction is usually a Void Realm space, meaning we also can't determine its exact location. Only after you infiltrate first and send out your signal can we identify the location," he said.

Hart sat on a chair, but because of his large size, Bologue felt he looked like a bear in a circus stepping on a ball... oh no, based on Hart's beastly form, he looked more like a black wolf stepping on a ball.

The documents in his hands looked like little strips of paper, so he wore special glasses to read the fine print.

"And what about the 'invitation'?" Bologue asked. "We need that to reach the venue, don't we?"

"No need to rush on that point, other members are working to get the invitation," Kingsley said.

"Huh? Get it?" Bologue was a bit confused by what he meant.

"Do you think the Gray Trade Association would kindly invite us?" Kingsley said. "Other members are pursuing those connected with the Gray Trade Association. According to the information, the invitations have already been distributed, and they should be trying to capture those people and seize the invitations."

"Then... how are you sure there are two?" Bologue asked.

"Because we've only identified two people with invitations."

Hart said earnestly, but his words were filled with an absurd sense of banditry.

Bologue rubbed his head and thought it over, feeling there wasn't anything particularly wrong. Absolute violence could conquer many plots and schemes, even this one.

"But... can you really do it?" Hart questioned.

"Are you doubting me?" Bologue countered, the expert didn't allow any doubt.

Hart surprisingly nodded honestly and said to Bologue, "We can't enter the Void Realm, and can only try to mount a strong assault after you send out the signal, which makes your mission very important. If something goes wrong, we can't do anything but wait in vain."

"And... to be honest, how long has your Special Operations Group even been established, a few months?" Hart's suspicious gaze grew heavier.

Kingsley and Fanny also showed the same gaze. It was something they had to pay attention to, considering how peculiar the composition of the Special Operations Group was.

One well-known jinx and a newly promoted Condenser. Luckily, they didn't know Bologue's experience in the Black Prison, or their gazes might have been even stranger.

All in all, in their view, the Special Operations Group's background was still too shallow, inevitably giving rise to doubt.

"If you don't trust me, at least trust your leader," Bologue couldn't be bothered to argue with them.

"Hmm..."

The three fell silent. Before the meeting started, they had already suggested to Yas that such an important mission should at least involve a more reliable operations group as a partner.

Though the Special Operations Group had Lebius and Geoffrey, these two luminaries couldn't even handle their own assignments, let alone participate in these operations.

Even if they could get involved, given the vigilance of the Gray Trade Association, the arrival of these two Negative Power Users would surely draw their attention.

After hearing this, Yas thought for a while and reassured the three, saying the Special Operations Group was very trustworthy.

"Actually, it's not that we don't trust 'you,'" Hart specifically pointed to Bologue. "You saved Kemp and Shelley, and they praised you highly for that. We are very grateful because if not for you, we might have lost those two newcomers."

"Then... what are you suspicious of?"

Bologue found it strange. Hart was suspicious of him but didn't seem to show any contempt, until Bologue noticed his gaze and followed it to look behind him.

"Actually... he's not always like this."

Bologue tried to defend Palmer, but listening to Palmer's snores and the smell of booze made all excuses seem feeble.

"That's the gist of it. Don't be too tense, we're just planning in advance. When the mission approaches, the invitation will be delivered to you,"

Hart stood up, nodded to Bologue, and left with Kingsley and Fanny.

...

Bologue didn't wait for Palmer to wake up but instead left alone, took the subway to Qiushang Town, and then returned to the Alchemy Workshop.

After sending Aimou back to the Alchemy Workshop last night, he didn't stay in the cabin at the base but wandered the streets, leisurely strolling back to the Shenbei District, slept for only a few hours before getting up to come to the "Cultivation Room."

On the way, he passed through the Undying Club, originally intending to bring Palmer along, but Palmer was drunk at another bar at the time, regarding the Undying Club itself.

Oh my, when Bologue arrived, it was a complete mess.

Entering the Alchemy Workshop, everything was as usual, with the sound of iron being hammered coming from the experiment area above, Teda had returned and was directly immersed in work.

Bologue passed by Aimou's repair station, she wasn't there, nor was she in the kitchen, Bologue thought she must be busy somewhere in the Alchemy Workshop.

The documents mentioned that a mysterious figure named Delusional appeared in the Great Rift, and this Delusional created numerous Alchemy Armaments and caused them to flow into the Great Rift, triggering chaos.

Yas suspected Teda to be Delusional, but after a comparison of traces with the Alchemy Matrix, those Alchemy Armaments didn't seem to come from Teda's hand, and coupled with threats from the Gray Trade Association and the Sect of Corrosion, the Delusional was temporarily not considered an important target, Yas just reminded himself to be extra cautious of Teda.

Being cautious was one thing, cooperation was another, Bologue knew his own weakness, for this he needed a stronger power.

He knocked on the door and pushed open the laboratory door, Teda stopped his work at this moment and turned around to look at Bologue.

"Are you busy?" Bologue asked.

"What do you think?"

Teda displayed the tool in his hand, he was adjusting a piece of the Arm of Adaptation, with circles of hooks entwined around it.

"Ah... okay, I wanted to ask about soul detection." Bologue leaned to the side and asked.

"Are you that eager?"

"Just like you alchemists have a fervent pursuit of 'Secret Source,' we Condensers are full of anticipation for power, isn't it?" Bologue said.

Normally, he would wait patiently, but he felt pressure from the upcoming tasks, if possible, he hoped to undergo a trial before action, to enhance his body with Ether.

Teda looked at Bologue, then sighed helplessly.

"Wait for me for a moment."

Teda didn't let Bologue wait long; it wasn't long before he finished processing that Arm of Adaptation, Bologue watched from the side, Teda didn't load other functions, just adjusted the hooks.

Bologue also had this equipment and wore it all the time, in the complex environment of the Great Rift, the hooks were really useful.

"Follow me."

Teda said to Bologue, then walked out of the laboratory, proceeding through the dim corridor.

Having lived here for so long, in fact, there were many places in the Alchemy Workshop Bologue hadn't been to, not that Teda hid them from him, just many places were closed when not needed.

The door slowly opened, lights turned on one by one, a surgical table appeared under the pale lights, the trolley loaded with various tools surrounded it.

Bologue looked at this surgical table, feeling somewhat familiar, it was very similar to the one used during his implantation ritual, but much simpler by comparison.

"How are you going to detect it?"

Bologue asked, not finding this part in the books he read.

"Just like how you implanted the Alchemy Matrix before, do it again to recheck," Teda said.

"Huh? Implant again?" Bologue didn't understand.

"Redo the implantation ritual, only this time without implanting the Alchemy Matrix, just condensing your soul and observing its situation."

Teda finished and added, "This will be very painful."

The surgical table adjusted, mechanical arms slowly opened wide, like a monster baring its claws, Teda turned around, looking at Bologue, filled with bewilderment in his tone.

"I'm seeing for the first time someone so eager for pain as you."

Bologue's face darkened, thinking it over, indeed, whether it was a trial or promotion, danger and pain came hand in hand.

Many Condensers would only venture when fully prepared, only Bologue, this Undead, would treat such serious matters like a regular exam, if he accidentally died, he would just try again.

"I'm just... very curious."

Bologue mentioned something Teda didn't understand, having fought frequently recently, Soul Shards replenished then consumed again, causing Bologue to often feel the urge of Bulimia Nervosa stirring.

Fortunately, he had stabilized lately, and collected many Soul Shards while on duty, Bologue wanted to observe his own soul, not only to assess its stability but also to see the impact of Soul Shards on the soul.

Also... that place like a fleeting dream.

That void space, briefly descended upon each time he died.

#### Chapter 285: Too Close

Bologue had two major mysteries in his life. One was why he had descended into this world, and the other was who the devil he had made a deal with truly was.

Unlike the Tyrant and the Crimson Queen, these two devils could be contacted in many ways, even face-to-face communication. Yet the devil who traded away his soul was different. Since Bologue became a debtor, that devil vanished, never to appear before him again.

Bologue forgot the contents of the transaction, only remembering that it happened during the battle of the Fall of the Holy City. But when the deal was complete and he awoke again, many years had passed.

His memories became blurred and fragmented, even the devil's appearance was unclear, as if the devil had never existed.

Initially, Bologue did not care much, but as he learned more about this world, he became keenly aware that all conflicts seemed to stem from the Fall of the Holy City, and it was within the Fall that he became a debtor.

Bologue found it hard not to connect everything together, making him increasingly focused on that devil.

After repeatedly speculating, Bologue sometimes began to doubt whether his ability to absorb Soul Shards might not be some kind of special blessing...



Just like those Carnivores, who can heal their bodies by consuming flesh and blood after receiving the Crimson Queen's protection, could his absorption of Soul Shards also be a form of the devil's protection?

Blessing and protection coexist.

Bologue did not find such examples in the "Devil and Electric Guitar Operation Guide," but that does not mean they do not exist.

And then there was the void world he would see after death.

Bologue believed everything had meaning; he would not arrive in that world for no reason. Even if it was void, it surely had its own significance, and these two would be his clues in pursuing the devil.

"You really are a strange person, Bologue."

Teda looked at Bologue lying on the operating table. Perhaps the undead had dulled senses toward pain and danger, sometimes Teda really could not fathom Bologue's thoughts.

"But to be clear, I can conduct soul detection, but if you want to undergo trials, you need to return to the Order Bureau, where there are enough Alchemy Materials."

Teda said as he fastened Bologue's limbs tightly with straps, then applied electrode patches to his body, wires densely covered Bologue's body.

"I remember the Order Bureau provides Alchemy Materials free of charge until I advance to become a Prayer Believer," Bologue said.

"That's correct. After becoming a Prayer Believer, the Alchemy Materials needed for advancement are extremely expensive and rare, so you need to strive for yourselves."

Teda explained as he worked, "Different Alchemists will propose different Alchemy Materials, so the materials needed for advancement are not fixed."

"I don't know about those, my understanding of this knowledge is limited to the 'Golden Thesis'," Bologue said.

"Then you are rather ignorant. The 'Golden Thesis' is, in our eyes as Alchemists, merely a catalog of knowledge... Do you know the specific principles of advancement?" Teda wondered, asking Bologue.

His vision was obscured by the overhead lights; everything was a blur as he could not see Teda's face, only a vague silhouette.

"After completing three trials, the Condenser's body, mind, and spirit are further strengthened, becoming closer to the Ether. Advancement will proceed like a transformation of metal, along with the Alchemy Matrix," Bologue recalled the knowledge from the book.

"Do you know what the consumption of Alchemy Materials during the advancement ceremony is for?" Teda asked again.

"I don't know," Bologue shook his head, unsure, "What are they used for?"

"I don't know either."

Teda's answer was surprising, causing Bologue to look at the fuzzy silhouette with a confused gaze.

"It's hard to describe... We can produce different effects through various Alchemy Material combinations, but in the advancement ceremony, the connection between Alchemy Materials and the Condenser is insignificant," Teda said.

"The Alchemy Materials don't act on the Condenser?"

"Correct, compared to the Condenser, the Alchemy Materials have a deeper connection to the 'Secret Source' — like a ticket. Using expensive Alchemy Materials opens the path toward the 'Secret Source', allowing you to acquire the power of the 'Secret Source' and complete advancement," Teda said.

"Are you saying, during my advancement, I will briefly come into contact with the 'Secret Source'?"

Bologue's curiosity was fully piqued.

Secret Source.

It is far more mysterious, the ultimate source of all Ether.

Alchemists believe the "Secret Source" to be the sum of all worldly truths, while Condensers think attaining the "Secret Source" would grant supreme power.

Silently existing in the void, yet more alluring than the devil.

"Every Condenser during advancement will infinitely strengthen their connection to the 'Secret Source', although this connection is very brief, and you may not even notice it yourselves, but it is indeed so."

"Just like the three trials, right? The more we etherealize ourselves, the closer we get to the 'Secret Source', meaning..." Not waiting for Bologue to finish speaking, Teda interrupted.

"Yes, every advancement grants the Condenser an opportunity to glimpse the 'Secret Source'. The higher the tier of the Condenser, the more they can feel the presence of the 'Secret Source' and have a tighter connection."

Teda then mentioned another name, his voice carrying a deep respect.

"Do you know why alchemists hold King Solomon in such high regard?"

"He was a grandmaster of alchemy, reaching an unprecedented pinnacle in his mastery of the craft. Some even believe he grasped the truth... namely, the 'Secret Source.'

Bologue shared his knowledge of King Solomon, and precisely because King Solomon was infinitely close to the 'Secret Source,' everyone unanimously chose to destroy him.

The information about the Fall of the Holy City was tightly sealed, burying King Solomon's secrets along with it. The intelligence that Bologue obtained was compiled from the books of the Order Bureau.

So many years have passed, and despite the layers of sealing, the intelligence he acquired is sparse, making it difficult to discern its truthfulness.

"Not only that," Teda added, "King Solomon was also a powerful Condenser."

Bologue seemed to have realized something, his eyes filled with disbelief, as Teda's voice softly arose.

"He was not only an alchemy grandmaster but also a Seeker of Glory."

There was no need for Teda to elaborate further, for Bologue had already guessed.

"Is this the reason the Holy City was destroyed?" Bologue's voice quivered slightly.

"At least, according to the intelligence I had access to as the minister of the Sublimation Furnace Core, and my personal conjectures, this seems to be the case."

Teda spoke as he initiated the ritual, and the glow of the Alchemy Matrix surfaced on the operating table, with golden dust pervading every corner of sight.

"King Solomon was too close to the 'Secret Source.'

So close that he almost received that sacred crown."

Crowned.

Bologue had no time to ask more questions, for the ritual had already commenced, sending piercing pain like broken bones through his entire body, and dim light arcs emerged from within, appearing one by one in Teda's eyes.

What many failed to notice was the true form of a soul; some believed the soul to be a phantom resembling oneself, but Teda knew well that in reality, a soul is just a mass of shapeless light.

The reason the soul presents a human-like form during the ritual is merely due to the reflection of the body upon it. Once the body perishes, the soul loses its tether and dissipates.

If one could reverse this entirety...

If one could once again bind the soul to the body...

Teda refrained from further contemplation and instead focused on examining Bologue, as the ethereal light gradually clarified, and compared to others' souls, Bologue's was undoubtedly dimmer.

This was a normal condition, considering his soul was incomplete. Upon keen observation, slender trails interwove within it, those being the Alchemy Matrix engraved upon the soul.

The golden dust began to fall, evenly spreading over the ethereal light, the glow of the spirit body remained stable, without signs of disintegration or reformation, indicating Bologue's soul was unexpectedly stable.

"Strange indeed, how long has it been since you advanced to a Condenser, and yet your soul is already so stable, or is it the undead nature rendering your soul extremely resilient?"

Teda questioned, but Bologue did not respond.

His gaze shifted toward Bologue, and only then did Teda realize Bologue had already closed his eyes, his face pale and covered in cold sweat.

Turning his gaze to the side at the electrocardiogram, the fluctuating lines had long vanished, replaced by a steady forward-moving line, with a prolonged beeping echoing in his ears.

...

Opening his eyes, every part of his body was enveloped in a frigid and biting cold, lifting his hand, tiny ice crystals clung between the lines of his palm.

Bologue once more found himself in this void-like world, with massive rocks colliding and grinding against each other, dim and resplendent lights traversing in all directions.

At each death, he witnessed such scenes, yet typically, he could not wander this dead world for long, unable to explore anything even if he desired to.

What's most peculiar, Bologue found it difficult to retain memories in the after-death realm.

Everything experienced here felt like a wondrous dream to Bologue; upon awakening, he could vaguely recall the scenes of the after-death world, yet they always appeared blurred, unreal.

During the implant ritual, he remembered arriving in the after-death world, and on that occasion, he seemed to have watched a movie here, yet the content of the movie completely eluded his memory.

Everything was fragmented and enigmatic, entirely dissipating after waking from the dream.

However, upon subsequent contemplation, Bologue discovered one fact, in a conventional death scenario, he would only briefly linger here, but during the implant ritual, though his memories were unclear, Bologue could be certain that he stayed here for a long time.

After a simple process of elimination, Bologue concluded that when the soul is affected and dies, he is able to dwell here for an extended duration.

Now it seems, Bologue's conjecture was correct, and so what remains is the search.

Bologue turned his gaze toward the deathly still world.

Searching for clues related to the Devil.

Chapter 286: Unknown Territory

"This is really strange..."

Bologue drifted in the void, like someone who had fallen into water, going with the flow.

What he didn't quite understand was why the manner of death affected the void world differently, or was the problem with his own soul?

When the soul is impacted, does one's connection to this place become tighter?

Bologue couldn't quite figure it out. If he were in the real world, facing those mysteries, he would still have the ability to explore them one by one. But here, Bologue was truly, absolutely ignorant.

There wasn't much time left for him to explore, yet Bologue did not even have the ability to move at will, blindly extending his hand, but grasping nothing.

Broken rocks loomed like mountains, completely obscuring his view. A faint glow appeared from behind them. Bologue tried to see clearly, but the rock formations were too immense. Even if Bologue could move by himself, he wouldn't know how long it would take to get through.

A strip of ethereal blue light passed before his eyes, giving Bologue a sense of familiarity. He remembered the ether streams he'd observed through lenses, having this same color and shape.

He tried to recall past experiences, seemingly arriving at different places in the void world each time. Sometimes in vast darkness, other times amidst a group of rocks like in front of him now.

It seemed knowing these vague conditions wasn't enough; he still needed some luck to arrive at a suitable position, instead of at this eerie place.

Then Bologue began to ponder, was this void world real? Or perhaps a blurred projection of his thoughts.

Just like dreams.

Dreams aren't truly real but are illusions pieced together randomly according to human consciousness.

Bologue believed that the void world was a different kind of dream, with the most direct evidence being such bizarre scenes rarely exist in reality.

The deceased colossal entities like stars, the broken and colliding mountains, and those slithering paths of light...

With Bologue's current understanding, he didn't think such scenes could appear in reality, not even created by the power of a Seeker of Glory.

This place is similar to the illusory creation of dreams, which is why there is such bizarre scenery here. Once he revives, this place will shatter like a dream.

Bologue wanted to conduct a deeper observation, when suddenly a great pull emerged from inside his body, no stranger to him, like two giant hands trying to drag him out from the deep sea.

He was about to be resurrected.



But logically, with his soul impacted, his time here should have been extended, why was the resurrection happening so quickly this time?

His body began to turn ethereal, then collapsed from the heart as a point, twisting into nothingness and dissipating.

Bologue disappeared, and the void world became even more desolate and lifeless.

Mountains collided, splitting into broken paths, and a barren white land appeared at the edge of darkness.

The void world didn't dissipate with Bologue's departure, just as dreams don't shatter with a person's awakening. And on that white land, a blurry figure moved their gaze away from the screen before them, looking toward the spot where Bologue had vanished, lost in thought.

...

Suddenly opening his eyes, the piercing light fell from above. Bologue breathed deeply like a drowning man, with a dull pain erupting one after another, nearly tearing his body apart.

Teda injected a potion for him, which could alleviate the pain and help Bologue recover quickly. After struggling for a while, Bologue barely collected himself and turned to Teda to ask.

"How long was I dead?"

"About a few minutes?"

Teda wasn't paying attention to when Bologue died, but after noticing his death, he stopped the ritual, waiting for Bologue to resurrect.

"Only a few minutes?" Bologue's head throbbed.

"Yes, I saw you died, so I halted the ritual," Teda said.

"So that's why..." Bologue muttered. That's why he returned to the real world so quickly; Teda interrupted the ritual.

"So how's my soul?"

Bologue focused on differentiating the primary aspects of the matter, although it sounded a bit strange, he had plenty of opportunities to die and could explore the void world gradually. Now the main focus was detecting the stability of his soul.

"Very stable, you can start the trials anytime," Teda said with a hint of curiosity in his eyes, "You really are a peculiar case, Bologue."

"What do you mean?"

"In just a few months, your soul has stabilized, very few people can do this, let alone you being a debtor with a fragmented soul."

Bologue thought about it, unable to figure it out, and could only respond, "Perhaps I'm gifted, naturally suited for this job."

"Just wait a moment, I'll write a proof for you. Report this to Lebius, and they should be able to prepare the next trials for you."

Teda untied Bologue, letting him sit up from the operating table.

Bologue did not leave immediately but bowed his head in contemplation, then asked, "Besides my soul, did you see anything... else?"

"What do you mean?"

"Any unusual situations? After all, I'm a debtor."

"Apart from the soul's dimness, nothing is unusual."

Teda said. The more fragmented the soul, the dimmer its glow.

"Okay."

Bologue nodded, unsure of what was going on.

He carried a lot of Soul Shards; logically, these shards should manifest once the soul is materialized, but Teda saw nothing... Or maybe these Soul Shards had fused into his soul.

The more Bologue thought about it, the more his head hurt. He was certain the Devil who traded away his soul knew everything, but somehow he couldn't even find his shadow.

Teda explained some related matters to Bologue and handed him a couple of potions, saying they'd make him feel more comfortable. When Bologue asked what they were, Teda couldn't give a clear answer.

"I just mixed them randomly, using some invigorating ingredients... You could think of them as coffee, a special kind of coffee."

Bologue stared at the tube in his hand, filled with a glowing green liquid.

He hesitated a bit, but eventually drank it down. As an Undead, Bologue wasn't afraid of consuming poison; he'd just wake up after a while anyway.

The taste was strange, but the effect was notable, his mind cleared instantly, and his vision brightened.

Teda often used these potions to refresh himself during busy times, and Bologue thought Palmer would need them more than him as they could help him recover from a hangover.

As soon as he returned to the first floor, the door to the Alchemy Workshop swung open, light slipping past the visitor to outline a clear silhouette.

Palmer entered, eyes filled with bloodshot veins.

"Did you just wake up?" Bologue glanced at the time; Palmer should have slept for a few hours in the activity room.

"Geoffrey kicked me out. He warned me that I was affecting the image of the Special Operations Group too much. If I keep it up, he'll dock my pay next time."

Palmer spoke with exhaustion that made it hard to discern his tone.

Bologue nodded in agreement; he indeed affected the image too much. Hart's suspicious gaze was still fresh in his mind.

Palmer rubbed his eyes, and Bologue understood without words that he intended to head back to the cabin to continue sleeping. No wonder he loved that place so much; as long as there were no tasks, he could happily be a salary thief there.

As they turned into the corridor, they met another person from the Alchemy Workshop, Aimou, who held a tray with several baked desserts.

The three exchanged glances.

"Good afternoon, Bologue!" Aimou said energetically.

"Good afternoon."

Bologue nodded, his mood as usual.

"You look a bit rough, Palmer," Aimou turned to Palmer, with eyes that seemed to analyze him, "Are you sick?"

"No... worse than sick, what's this?" Palmer pointed to the items on the tray.

"Oh, some desserts I baked. Want to try?"

Aimou was ostensibly speaking to Palmer, but his eyes inadvertently shifted to Bologue, unnoticed by the two, though Palmer jolted awake instantly.

With the tray in hand, Bologue returned to the cabin with Palmer, while Aimou continued with his work. In the enclosed room, Bologue tried a piece; the taste was decent, meeting Aimou's usual standards.

"What are you looking at?"

Bologue swallowed and noticed that Palmer had been staring at him from the single bed since entering the room.

Upon hearing Bologue's question, Palmer sat upright, his gaze sharper.

"What did you do to her?" Palmer demanded.

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

Bologue couldn't fathom what was running through Palmer's mind.

"Just a little dessert~" Palmer mimicked Aimou's tone, acting smugly, "What was with that weird attitude? Expert, what have you been up to?"

Bologue squinted, and out of nowhere, he produced the Sheep Horn Shock Hammer.

"Alright, since it's a personal matter, if you don't want to talk about it, that's fine," Palmer waved it off, his smile faded as he spoke seriously, "But, Expert, you can't always think of solving problems with violence."

Bologue held a dessert in one hand and the Sheep Horn Shock Hammer in the other, speaking calmly, "If you're willing to shut up and sleep now, I might consider leaving you a piece."

"Okay, Expert."

Palmer lay down, but after just a few minutes, he suddenly got up again, and with full respect, gave Bologue a thumbs-up, exclaiming loudly.

"You're too strong! Expert! As expected from you!"

Bologue remained puzzled at Palmer's remarks but was sure that this guy was definitely mocking him.

## Chapter 287: Proper Property

Palmer is a weirdo, a freak who shows exactly what he thinks and feels without any disguise. This guy always plasters on a smile, finding joy even in misfortune, as if he has no idea what sadness is.

So when the two are together, Bologue looks like an unhappy, aloof assassin, while Palmer is a complete, brainless maniac.

Palmer slept all through the day and only woke up in the evening, greeted by a pounding headache. The remnants of his hangover made him miserable.

Flopping around on his single bed like a fish out of water, he finally came to a stop and soon made a hoarse wail from his throat.

"Palmer, I think you should quit drinking."

Bologue, wearing high-magnification glasses, carefully polished a small object in his hand and said without looking up.

"Life's bad enough. I need some alcohol to escape reality..." Palmer lay flat on the bed.

"Reading books, watching movies... I think either is better than drinking."

Bologue put down what he was holding, took off the glasses, and looked at Palmer.

"Just think of it as a little indulgence for the Vow Festival," Palmer's voice suddenly filled with energy. He sat up abruptly, grinning at Bologue, "So, what's up, expert?"

From looking like he was on the brink of death, he suddenly burst with vitality.

Bologue figured this might be the boost Palmer got after passing the triple trials; the protectorate granted to the Condenser's body, mind, and spirit meant that a hangover, which troubled ordinary people, was something Palmer could completely recover from with just a nap.

"No wonder it's you, Bologue Lazarus."

Palmer staggered to his feet, circled Bologue, and made strange noises from time to time, as if Bologue were a piece of art and he was the connoisseur, appraising him critically.

"I was away for just one night and you've made such rapid progress," Palmer complimented, feeling like he was getting to know his partner anew, gazing at Bologue's gloomy, disheartened face, "I really didn't see that coming."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

Bologue was creeped out by Palmer's weird look and didn't understand what Palmer was saying. Sometimes the guy spoke in gibberish even he couldn't comprehend.

It's sometimes recognized that due to their different environments and life experiences, there really was something called a "generation gap" between Bologue and Palmer.

Knowing Bologue's past, whenever Palmer lost a fight with him, he'd call him an inflexible old wreck.

Being nearly a century-old relic, Bologue naturally wouldn't fuss over petty verbal wins and losses with someone young like Palmer. He'd simply quietly pull out his Sheep Horn Shock Hammer and stare at Palmer with a blank expression.

"You... and that alchemy puppet, you're the only two here for the Vow Festival. What did you do? Just look at her reaction, oh my!" Palmer asked excitedly.

Bologue still couldn't grasp Palmer's meaning, but the mention of Aimou nudged him to discuss these matters with Palmer too.

"Nothing much, just got to know her better."

At this, Bologue's expression trembled slightly.

It wasn't just getting to know each other, they became a fusion—an upgraded version of Bologue Lazarus.

Endowed with Ether Perception and Ethereal Concealment, along with strong Ethereal Endurance, she was far more reliable than his drunken partner Palmer.

Bologue's mind sometimes wandered off as he pondered, after parting ways with Aimou, if he really managed to recruit Aimou, during missions, should they fight in that state, would it be fitting to come up with a cool name.



Maybe something like "Overdrive Mode" or "Infinite Ether Mode."

"Just that?"

Evidently, Palmer's understanding of "getting to know" was vastly different from what actually happened.

"Mhmm, and I also got to know a bit about her Secret Energy."

Bologue didn't mention Aimou's birthday or taking her out. He was someone who kept his promises, and since this was a secret only between them, it shouldn't be revealed to a third party... More importantly, Bologue didn't trust Palmer's mouth.

From what he knew about Palmer, if he told him these things, Teda would come knocking furiously in no time.

"From what I understand, Aimou's Secret Energy is very compatible with mine, even ignoring her alchemical skills. Based on that alone, I think we could consider recruiting her to the Order Bureau."

Bologue said earnestly to Palmer, whose face turned a pale, helpless shade, and this wasn't the conversation he had in mind at all.

Giving Bologue a deep look, Palmer had to admit that in some areas of understanding, the two truly were at odds.

"Even if you say so, you should first know that Aimou is not an independent individual. To be precise, she is 'property' belonging to Teda."

Seeing his indirect hints were unsuccessful, Palmer began discussing seriously with Bologue.

"Uh-huh..."

Bologue realized this was an issue, but after a brief contemplation, he said, "Isn't there an agreement between Teda and the Order Bureau?"

"Yes, so what?"

"I'm not clear on the specific contents of the agreement, but I'm sure the Order Bureau really values these technologies, which is why they allow Teda to operate so wantonly within the Great Rift, and receive the Order Bureau's support."

Bologue crossed his arms, a strange thought rising from the bottom of his heart, and he continued to ask.

"Actually, the way I see it, Aimou is tantamount to shared property between the Order Bureau and Teda, right?"

"If you want to think that way... it seems that's not wrong," Palmer thought for a moment and agreed with Bologue's idea.

Since the King's Secret Sword lost the secret war, Oubos has been completely under the control of the Order Bureau. The only lawless area, the Great Rift, and the monsters lurking there have strict treaties with the Order Bureau, restraining each other.

In this way, the Order Bureau certainly should own a part of Aimou... Aimou.

"Dismantle Aimou?"

Palmer had a bad idea.

"Aimou is not human but an alchemy puppet. If one day the Order Bureau and Teda really fall out, we would need to..."

Palmer made a slashing motion at his waist with his hand as if it were a knife, "Split her half for you and half for me?"

Bologue looked at him as if he were an idiot, saying, "Get your mask out."

Palmer pulled out a black hood from somewhere, the fabric moist with the smell of alcohol.

"Put it on."

Palmer obediently donned the black hood, with Bologue retrieving a mirror to let Palmer see himself in it.

"What do you think you look like?" Bologue asked.

"A bandit."

"Yes, a bandit," Bologue started speaking in a bandit-like manner, "This is the Order Bureau's turf; if things really go south, we might as well start looting."

Palmer looked enlightened, exclaiming, "You really are the expert."

"But... isn't this a bit improper? Teda was, after all, the former minister of the Sublimation Furnace Core," Palmer cautiously said.

"Which camp does Teda belong to now?" Bologue retorted.

"Order of Truth?"

"Exactly, he was once one of us, and we fondly remember that time. But unfortunately, every journey has an end, and Teda was the first to break away from us. We remember his good deeds but must also

defend our own interests," Bologue said, lowering his voice, while clenching his fist, exuding a sense of strength.

Palmer was dumbfounded, not expecting this expert before him to justify himself so effectively, but it seemed not so much justification as truth.

Yet, hearing such words from Bologue felt peculiar irrespective of anything else.

Bologue remained silent for a second or two, his gaze fixed on Palmer, then turning to the door of the base's small cottage. Both were in the Void Realm, uncertain if Teda had the ability to spy on them, even though Bologue had already examined every corner of the room beforehand.

"There's another thing, Palmer, you need to believe in me completely and unconditionally," Bologue said solemnly.

"It's a must; you are my partner," Palmer nodded repeatedly.

Bologue asked, "Do you remember today's meeting content?"

"I remember..."

Dizzy, blurry memories surged towards Palmer. The more he recalled, the stranger his expression became, looking at Bologue as Bologue picked up pen and paper, hastily writing a sentence to show Palmer.

"Teda is not to be trusted."

Bologue continued to write,

"If necessary, we might very likely become enemies with him."

Palmer opened his mouth, speaking silently, forcefully shaping his words, "Become enemies with a Negative Power User? You've lost your mind!"

"I know, if we oppose Teda, our chances are extremely slim, but sometimes it's not merely killing the opponent that constitutes victory in a battle."

Bologue raised the paper, a sly gleam flashing in his eyes.

Palmer froze momentarily before quickly understanding Bologue's intention.

"Is this considered human trafficking?" Palmer whispered. The topic of their discussion was now unlikely to be overheard.

"The premise of human trafficking is that the trafficked must first be human," Bologue retorted using Palmer's words against him.

"We call this safeguarding the Order Bureau's rightful property," Bologue asserted righteously.

## Chapter 288: Blizzard

The city is completely shrouded in winter, gloomy snow clouds pile up on the towering skyscrapers, scattering heaps of snowflakes between heaven and earth. The gusts of wind drag these crystalline fragments, scraping pedestrians' cheeks like razors.

Bologue put on a thick coat, wrapped a scarf around his neck, and walked with uneven steps on the streets of Opus.

It has been more than a week since the end of the Vow Festival, yet the echoes of the festival still linger in the city—the decorations that haven't been taken down, the ribbons mixed with gray-black slush, the celebratory songs occasionally played at store entrances...

Blizzard and strong winds hit his face directly, each breath of cold air scratched his chest. Bologue felt nothing of the festive atmosphere; rather, there was a desolate sense of destruction.

Only a chaotic gray-white remained between heaven and earth, snow and ice hanging from building surfaces. It was clearly morning, yet the heavy snow obscured all light, within the chaos, street lights turned on, and vehicles struggled to move through the snowstorm.

Today was not a good day for work, but regretfully, an important task had to be done, and Bologue had to make a trip to the Order Bureau.

Entering the "Cultivation Room," Bologue forcefully closed the door, sealing the snowstorm outside, and vigorously brushed off the snow clinging to his body, letting it fill the floor and melt into puddles.

There were many such puddles at the entrance, suggesting everyone found it difficult coming to work today.

Pushing open Lebius's office door, Bologue collapsed onto the sofa, vigorously rubbing his hands to warm his cold body.

"This weather is truly deadly," Bologue muttered.

"You won't die."

Geoffrey remarked, having arrived earlier than Bologue.

"Not dying doesn't mean not cold... the feeling of freezing is truly deadly." Bologue said with lingering fear, as if he had truly frozen to death before.

"Have a cup of hot coffee."

Yuriel handed Bologue a steaming cup of coffee.

Bologue quickly took it, warming his hands while thanking her, "Thanks, Yuriel."

Yuriel smiled at Bologue and continued with her busy work, assisting Lebius with various tasks.

Watching Yuriel's busy figure, sometimes Bologue nearly forgot there was such a person in the group, but every time he saw Yuriel, he felt a sense of relief.

Yuriel, oh Yuriel, in this Special Operations Group, she is one of the few normal people, making Bologue feel the baseline of reality still had a connection.

"Opus winters are always like this; this is just the beginning. The deep winter blizzards haven't arrived yet," Geoffrey said.

"Deep winter blizzards..."

Bologue muttered softly, the "deep winter blizzard" was something he had experienced firsthand.

When he was released from prison, he collided with Opus's winter. Fortunately, Adelle sheltered him, and Bologue spent the entire winter on her sofa.

During deep winter, a thick layer of ice formed on the windows. When light fell, it was blurred into a hazy white, and when the blizzard descended, it was as if thousands of ghosts marched through the storm, the gusts brought wails and murmurs.

Bologue always felt Opus's blizzards were true natural disasters. After the blizzards passed, street traffic often came to a halt, but the worst wasn't inside Opus—it's the Great Rift.

It's said that every winter, many people freeze to death in the Great Rift, and the snow and ice cover the already rusted corridors, making movement within the Great Rift even more dangerous.

The office door was forcibly pushed open, Palmer walked in leisurely. Unlike Bologue's disheveled state, Palmer seemed unaffected by the storm, his clothes impeccably neat.

Bologue felt a bit surprised, knowing Palmer should have entered with snow all over him, screaming as he pushed the door, then snatched Yuriel's hot coffee, huddling on the sofa, complaining about working in such weather.

"Wind Source is really a useful Secret Energy."

Noticing Bologue's gaze, Palmer seemed to know what Bologue was thinking, raised his eyebrows, and said.

The external weather was extremely harsh, but with gusts clearing the way for him, Palmer didn't need to worry about being noticed, he used Secret Energy all the way to the "Cultivation Room."

Sitting beside Bologue, he casually asked Geoffrey, "What's so urgent today that we need to report in such weather?"

"Rather than urgent matters... Palmer, if you violate the regulations again, I will dock your salary," Geoffrey said sternly as he stared at Palmer.

Upon hearing Geoffrey's words, Palmer instantly transformed back to his familiar self, straightening on the sofa, repeatedly apologizing.

The employee manual at the Order Bureau contains such a regulation: unless necessary, the use of Secret Energy in the city must be avoided, not only to conceal the existence of Extraordinary Power, but also to prevent causing unnecessary alarm.

Oubos is vast and has been continuously developing and growing over the years.

As a city wedged between two giants, it houses countless foreigners, and no one is sure how many desperados are hidden beneath the quiet life, even whether exiled Condensers exist.

Activating Secret Energy within the city is bound to cause Ethereal Fluctuations, and if there are potential Condensers nearby, it is undoubtedly actively exposing one's identity and location.



As a professional, Bologue had always adhered to the employee guidelines. He practiced Secret Energy to refine his skills only at home, and even then, he would often observe if unfamiliar faces appeared nearby, ever vigilant.

Palmer, on the other hand, is another extreme. He often races through the night with Secret Energy, making him a habitual offender. Geoffrey has deducted his salary countless times because of it, but it usually only makes Palmer restrain himself for a few days.

"Okay, okay, I'll be careful," Palmer nodded repeatedly.

Since the Clarks stopped Palmer's living expenses, Palmer's lifeline has completely depended on the salary from the Order Bureau.

"Don't be like those old radicals, always thinking about stepping into the spotlight."

Geoffrey said something unclear, but Palmer felt even guiltier upon hearing it.

"What's the pressing matter today?" Bologue changed the subject, his eyes glancing at Palmer.

Sometimes, Bologue feels like he hasn't utilized Palmer enough, even though he's unlucky, a salary thief, and quite unreliable, none of these can overshadow the fact that he is part of the Clarks.

As an ancient Extraordinary Clan, the Clarks should know quite a few secrets, though it's unknown how much Palmer knows.

He needs to find a way to pry Palmer's mouth open and extract those secrets.

"Pressing matter..."

Geoffrey muttered a couple of words and then looked at Lebius.

At this moment, Lebius put down his current work and looked at the two, expressionless.

Bologue's heart tightened; his boss always maintains silence, and whenever he speaks, it's usually about matters of life and death.

"The Sixth Group has already received the invitation."

Lebius said as he opened a drawer, taking out two black keys, placing them on the table.

"This is... the Key of the Crooked Path?" Bologue noticed the Ethereal Fluctuation floating on the keys.

"These are two keys to the auction venue," Lebius laid out the mission details, "Contractors of the Gray Trade Association have inscribed the Devil's Power of Contract on them, setting various limitations."

"Such as?"

"This Key of the Crooked Path is one-time use. Once used, it will be destroyed, and it can only allow one person through," Lebius explained.

"Is that so..."

Bologue fell into deep thought; once the action begins, he and Palmer would be deep in enemy territory.

"This Key of the Crooked Path won't send us somewhere else, will it? If that happens, the Sixth Group won't be able to catch up for a while," Palmer said.

"No, this is a sacrifice for the Tyrant. No matter what, everything must proceed within the realm of the Crooked Path," Geoffrey said.

"Then... it's about these things."

Lebius said as he took out two black cubes from the drawer. This guy can always pull out all sorts of things from drawers; if he could, Bologue would love to see how big it actually is.

"These are signal generators. They emit specific Ethereal Fluctuations, allowing us to pinpoint your location."

Bologue stepped forward to take these items, sharing one with Palmer.

"By the way, did you read those books carefully?" Lebius asked again.

"I did... but it didn't help. I'm a Condenser, not an Alchemist; how can I learn all that in such a short time?" Palmer complained.

"I read a portion. I didn't understand much either, but as long as I keep destroying, it should be fine, right?" Bologue said.

"That's roughly correct." Lebius nodded.

The primary task for the two is to expose the venue's location and destroy the Void Realm as much as possible.

Destroying the Void Realm sounds simple, but it's a technical task. To facilitate their actions, Lebius has brought the operation records of the Third Group for them to learn from the professionals' experience.

"When will the mission start?" Bologue asked.

"Not sure." Lebius shook his head, "No one knows when the Gray Trade Association will begin."

"But when they start the auction, the Keys of the Crooked Path in your hands will begin to agitate, reminding you to open the nearest door and head to the venue. That's when the mission begins," Lebius added.

"Okay, we'll maintain the Whistle communication at all times."

Bologue tightened his grip on the key, ready to head to the battlefield.

Lebius nodded, but when Bologue wasn't paying attention, he silently opened the drawer, glancing at the mask within.

#### Chapter 289: The Old Nobles

Leaving Lebius's office, Bologue and Palmer rested for a while in the activity room. The snow outside was heavy, and conditions inside the Great Rift would only be worse. They planned to wait for the snow to stop before heading out.

"What do you have in that box?"

Palmer noticed Bologue had brought a box to work. Ever since Bologue acquired the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, he had an endless supply of steel to utilize, and he rarely carried a bunch of weapons with him anymore.

Being fully armed felt good, but over time, it inevitably seemed cumbersome.

"Just some daily necessities."

"Huh? Are you planning to stay long at the outpost?" Palmer asked.

"Not sure, just preparing in advance. The weather's horrible. If possible, I don't want to experience this awful commute again," Bologue said.

The wind today was so strong that Bologue truly felt the hardship of going to work.

Palmer's gaze revealed suspicion. From Bologue's previous words, it seemed more like he was preparing to wait for the opportune moment in the outpost hut, gathering strength.

"But... the mission..." Bologue murmured.

He fiddled with the black key in his hand. From now on, Bologue would keep this key close, with an underlying tension in his heart. It was like a silent bomb, ready to explode at any moment.

"Feeling pressured?" Palmer noticed the doubt in Bologue's eyes.

"A bit... I love the feeling of controlling the whole field, but this mission is shrouded in uncertainty. I don't even know where we'll act, nor do we have a concrete image of the enemy we'll face."

Bologue's tone carried a hint of threat as he spoke to Palmer. "Imagine, Palmer, you open a door and find yourself in an unknown land, surrounded by a group of fully-armed Negative Power Users."

"Alright, stop, I'm feeling the pressure now." Palmer immediately felt a headache.

The two had to delve into the heartlands, but what lay there was unknown. Lebius understood this, so their primary task was to send signals, expose the location of the gathering, and, before the Sixth Group arrived, cause as much damage to the Void Realm as possible to facilitate the invasion.

"If we're lucky, we might be able to complete the mission without conflict," Bologue pondered. "Until we're exposed, we're just a group of customers here to buy goods."

"Lucky? I don't think so."

Palmer really couldn't trust his luck, and with a pleading look in his eyes, he asked Bologue, "Do you have any plans, expert?"

Bologue looked into Palmer's eyes, saying nothing, but smiled meaningfully, a smile that sent a chill down Palmer's spine.

"Speaking of, Palmer, as an ancient Extraordinary Clan, your family should know many secrets, right?" Bologue asked.

"Don't think about it, there's nothing to say."

Palmer crossed his arms and suddenly became firm again, then he deflated, "The secrets are guarded by the old folks. I'm the successor but haven't taken over yet, right?"

Palmer knew exactly what Bologue wanted to ask. His partner rarely showed interest in certain matters, but once he did, he would become particularly invested, like slaughtering enemies or exploring his own secrets.

Since knowing Bologue's fate, the two debtors often talked about these matters. Palmer was quite free about it; he didn't care about bad luck or complete denial of the soul. If it could help him avoid that blood-colored nightmare, Palmer didn't mind maintaining the status quo until death.

On this point, he was just like Bologue. Since becoming a debtor, Palmer had never interacted with the Crimson Queen again. He was terrified of that existence.

Palmer said that sometimes he would hear strange whispers, but drinking a little alcohol helped him sleep through it. This guy's slight penchant for alcohol was somewhat related to this.

Bologue was envious of Palmer in a way. He wanted to communicate with his own Devil but didn't even know where it was or who it was.

"What's with what Geoffrey said?" Bologue and Palmer chatted about other topics to pass the time.

"What do you mean?"

"What does 'come to the platform' mean?" Bologue asked with curiosity.

Sometimes Bologue felt a strange sense of disparity. He had become a field staff for the Order Bureau, the top enforcer of this vast violent organization, fighting on secret battlefields invisible to ordinary people.

He had learned secrets that ordinary people couldn't comprehend in their lifetime. But when truly immersed in it, he felt his own ignorance. Despite knowing so much, he still felt incredibly small in this Extraordinary World.

Palmer fell silent, his rarely serious face appeared, followed by a helpless sigh.

"Well... this counts as black history for our Extraordinary Clans."

"What black history?"

"Bologue, do you think we're still ordinary people?" Palmer asked in return.

"Not really."

Bologue considered carefully before replying.

According to the Golden Thesis, in a sense, Condensers are no longer considered humans. They are beings that have evolved from humans into entities that resemble but are internally superior to humans.

Even without considering this point, the indicators of a Condenser far surpass those of ordinary humans.

"Hundreds of years ago, humans divided into commoners and nobles, but this distinction was merely in terms of power and wealth. Anyone stabbed with a knife would die just the same, but Condensers are different..."

Before Palmer could finish, Bologue had already figured out what kind of story was unfolding. He spoke, "Is that so?"

"This was a conflict from many years ago, which I only learned about during my studies of history. Some Extraordinary Clans felt they were above humans, like shepherds leading a flock, and aggressively wanted to control everything," Palmer said, recalling Serey. "This is just like the Night Race—they wanted to create an Undead Empire, while these people wanted to create an Empire of Condensers."

"Looks like they failed."

Bologue said, the outcome was evident. In today's world, Condensers hide in the shadows, controlled by the vast entity known as the Order Bureau.

"Yes, this happened after the Dawn War. The Night Race was dealt with, and some people wanted to replace them. After another war, the radicals were buried while the victors continued to develop. Later, under the operations of the Rhine Alliance, they united to form the Order Bureau."

Hearing Palmer's words, Bologue was slightly surprised. He considered this the predecessor of the Order Bureau.

"For this reason, our collective consciousness chooses to hide, which is why Geoffrey often warns me with this." Thinking of this made Palmer a bit headache.

"What about those who were defeated? Were they hunted down and exterminated?" Bologue asked.

"No, the conflict between us was not as irreconcilable as with the Night Race... After all, Night Race members are all Undead; they can completely hide somewhere for hundreds of years, then come out to wreak havoc again," Palmer explained.

"A pact was made between the two sides to hide together in the normal world, but inevitably, time and conflicts have caused the division to grow larger until there is no contact."

At this moment, Palmer remembered something and said to Bologue, "Remember? The Order Bureau didn't unite all the Extraordinary Organizations within the Rhine Alliance."

"Those who weren't united are the defeated and the neutrals, right?" Bologue said.



"That's right. As for what those guys are doing now, I'm not sure. After being defeated, these people who wanted to rise to prominence went against their nature and instead secluded themselves. If it weren't mentioned, I would have almost forgotten them."

Palmer recalled carefully, most of his knowledge about them was learned from his family's teachings.

"Aside from some annual exchange banquets, I almost never encountered those people elsewhere, not to mention the Order Bureau."

Palmer paused, then added again.

"All Secrets Order."

"What?"

As Palmer spoke of history, a foreign term suddenly popped out midway, leaving Bologue confused.

"Their name, ever since the birth of the Order Bureau, these scattered ones began to band together and keep warm, they called their union 'All Secrets Order,'" Palmer explained.

"Are they enemies?" Bologue was quite concerned about this matter.

"Not... at least not now," Palmer said, "but if we defeat the King's Secret Sword one day, then that could be uncertain."

Under pressure from the Night Race, the Extraordinary Organizations banded together. But after the Night Race was destroyed, some rushed to replace them, and it is still the same today, with the Kagader Empire eyeing from the south and pressure from the King's Secret Sword, forcing the Extraordinary Organizations of the Rhine Alliance to unite. Even amidst differences, until a formidable enemy is eradicated, everyone will join forces hypocritically.

"All Secrets Order..."

Bologue softly whispered.

The silence between them didn't last long before Palmer continued, "Bologue, since you got out of prison, you haven't been anywhere else, have you?"

"No, I've been here in Opus ever since I got out," Bologue said, "Why?"

"Do you have any thoughts about traveling?" Palmer said.

"Travel?"

"I might go home for a while, want to join me?" Palmer talked about his future plans, "Since I left home, I haven't been back, it's about time to go once."

"Why take me along?"

Bologue was suspicious, but deep down, he was quite interested in the Wind Source Highlands and even more intrigued by Palmer's family.

"Well..."

Palmer was momentarily at a loss for words, his expression complex.

"We'll share the blessings since we're partners, right?"

Bologue felt that things weren't so simple, yet Palmer gave a familiar chuckle, stood up, and tidied his clothes.

"Let's go, the snow should have lessened."

## Chapter 290: The Beginning of Chaos

The Great Rift after the blizzard, like a cracked ice valley, thick frost hanging in every corner of the view, ice spikes extending from the metal, under the pull of the wind, sketching a dynamic sense of the hurricane, like thousands of wildly dancing arms.

The situation inside the Great Rift is now very bad. Facilities that have been in disrepair for years have become even more fragile after the cold and blizzard, and the ground has also become slippery. In this perilous place, slipping and falling is not a good thing.

Bologue knew about such matters, it was not uncommon for unlucky ones in the Great Rift to fall inside for various reasons, never to be seen again.

The aerial walkway had become extremely dangerous, no one sure if it might suddenly break in the middle. Bologue and Palmer took a different path, and after a long time, finally returned to the Alchemy Workshop.

Compared to the cold outside, the Alchemy Workshop was very warm, and the temperature was still rising. Bologue took off his coat and hung it on the coat rack, clearly feeling the entire building subtly trembling, the silent furnace roaring, transporting heat to every corner of the workshop while refining steel.

"Do we still need to patrol in this weather?" Palmer asked, truly not wanting to go out on this day.

"No need, Lebius asked me to prepare for the next mission."

Bologue shook his head, Lebius was considerate enough to give the two a holiday, but it was actually a time to prepare weapons and wait for the invitation from the Gray Trade Association.

Lebius was not sure when the auction would start, but according to the intelligence from the Sixth Group, it should be soon, so during this period, the two must be constantly prepared.

"From this perspective, Lebius is indeed a good boss," Palmer praised.

His hand reached into his pocket, stroking the rough and ominous black key, Bologue pondered for a moment and said to Palmer, "I'm planning to stay here for the next few days, what about you?"

The Alchemy Workshop stored a large number of weapons and potions, enough to support Bologue in dealing with any unexpected situation.

"I'll do the same."

Palmer nodded, understanding Bologue's intent, before resolving this mission, both needed to be fully prepared, even sleeping fully armed, ready for the auction to start at any moment.

"However... regarding the door."

Bologue took out the black key, examining it carefully in his hand, "The power of the Great Rift will affect the Key of the Crooked Path, we can't open the door here."

"Then let's get out of the influence of the Great Rift and then open the door," Palmer thought this wasn't a problem, "After all, in emergencies, if we can use Secret Energy, we can travel quickly."

Bologue affirmed Palmer's idea; him being so unlucky yet surviving until now was closely related to the speed brought by his Secret Energy.

"There's a problem, Bologue."

Palmer stared at the black key, posing another question, "Why can't the Key of the Crooked Path open the door now? Not activated yet?"

Palmer had never heard that the Key needed activation, but if this involved the Devil, he wouldn't be surprised by anything that happened.

Bologue thought for a while, under Palmer's slightly fearful gaze, directly inserted the Key into the door lock.

Unable to turn.

"Clearly, the key is here, but the door that should be opened hasn't appeared yet."

Bologue pulled the key out and put it back in his pocket.

"Now, about the mission plan."

Bologue sat on the chair, Palmer on the single bed, the two exchanged glances, Bologue's voice was serious.

"Have you already thought of the plan?" Palmer asked.

"Thought of a vague outline, as the enemy remains entirely unknown to us, we need to be flexible."

Bologue stretched his body vigorously, then shared his thoughts with Palmer.

Palmer's pupils slightly enlarged, absurd words swirling around his ears, but on careful thought, this indeed fit Bologue's style.

"Setting aside the messy mission purpose, it can actually be summarized in one word."

Bologue elaborated on his idea.

After hearing Bologue's simple and rough plan, Palmer was dazed for a long while, then belatedly gave a thumbs-up, uncertain if it was praise or criticism.

"You're quite the expert in demolition."

"Hurry up and prepare; the mission might start anytime," Bologue urged.

It could be in a few days, or it could start tonight, it's something no one can predict.

Bologue remembered something, a Mammon Coin appeared in his hand, engraved with a mercury symbol.

Calling the Tyrant, and asking him directly what kind of nonsense he was up to?

Bologue himself was amused by the absurd idea, put away the Mammon Coin, thinking maybe it could come in handy during the upcoming mission.

Palmer got busy; he opened the boxes in the small base hut, combining some strangely shaped items together.

These things seemed very dangerous, Palmer's eyes were full of focus and care, his arm steady like steel.

"Wait a minute, when we enter the venue, won't they search us?" Palmer asked, "Can these things be taken inside?"

"I don't know," Bologue shook his head. He had never participated in an auction, let alone one held by the Gray Trade Association. "When the time comes, I'll carry these things. Even if something goes wrong, I can handle it."

"Alright."

Palmer shook his head. After all, this operation was planned by Bologue, so everything was left to him.

As for any problems arising?

Bologue, who was he? Palmer didn't know him at all!

Although both were debtors, there were considerable differences between Bologue and Palmer. Palmer was a mix of luck and misfortune, but he only had one life, whereas Bologue was different; he was the undead, with infinite chances to start over.

This kind of high-risk, life-threatening job was perfect for him. Bologue was practically born for this.

Their preparations continued into the evening. Palmer opened the supplies sent by the Order Bureau, assembling them piece by piece and carefully placing them into a briefcase, then locking it tight.

Bologue, on the other hand, was flipping through the action reports of the Third Group. Although he couldn't understand how these guys broke through the Void Realm, there was still a lot to learn from their experiences.

As for preparing weapons?

Bologue couldn't really think of anything he needed to prepare. Driven by the Summoning Hand, Bologue would never lack weapons, and with the enhancement of Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, this power was pushed to its limit.

He also had some alchemy warheads stored, already carrying them on him. After much thought, if conditions allowed, he would hope to bring Aimou along.

Her Shared Chord Body could greatly enhance her own power, but regrettably, this was an Order Bureau operation, and Aimou should not be involved. More importantly, Aimou was a decent alchemist, but knew nothing about combat.

"Do we need to prepare some Mammon Coins?" Palmer asked. "After all, it's an auction."

"Do we look like people who are going to buy something?"

Bologue always thought Palmer was a clever guy, but sometimes this guy seemed unusually foolish.

"What are we?" Bologue asked back. "Think carefully, Palmer."

After pondering for a moment, Palmer said, "Bandits, demolition crew, terrorists..."

"Of those identities, which one do you think needs to bring Mammon Coins?" Bologue whispered in his ear.

Palmer's eyes lit up, looking at Bologue with a bit more respect. Then he continued assembling the weapons with such speed, like a worker on an assembly line.

Bologue pushed the door open. The two had been busy the whole day and hadn't eaten anything. He and Palmer were a bit hungry and planned to check the kitchen. But after opening the door, he noticed much more noise in the Alchemy Workshop than before.

Picking up the Ether Flow Goggles, Bologue observed that the ether flows in the Void Realm had become much more dazzling, not knowing what Teda was doing.

What surprised him most was that Aimou hadn't come to disturb him.

Since the Vow Festival, Bologue and Aimou had become quite close, already considered friends. She would often come to see Bologue and sometimes bring some food for Palmer.

Over time, Palmer was also won over. For this, Bologue even talked with Aimou about them.

"Palmer? Actually, Palmer is quite easy to get along with," Aimou said seriously.

"Why do you think that?"



"As long as you bring food for Palmer and tell weird jokes with him, he'll consider you a friend."

"Palmer is like... a dog, a very cheerful dog."

Aimou ultimately evaluated Palmer this way.

Leaving the small base, Bologue found Aimou at the entrance on the first floor. She had brought a briefcase, with something unknown inside it, looking heavy.

Bologue was about to say something when he noticed something was off about Aimou's demeanor. Unlike her usual vibrant self, the halo in her eyes was static and unmoving.

Aimou noticed Bologue, and the halo quivered for a moment but then returned to a standstill.

Something bad seemed to have happened.

Footsteps approached from the stairway, and Teda slowly walked down. Bologue glanced at him, his gaze then resting on him.

Despite no words being exchanged, a strong sense of crisis erupted from within Bologue, as if an invisible thread entangled him with Teda.

Bologue stood motionless, an intangible umbilical cord linking him with that deceitful power.

Teda seemed to have noticed this as well; he was not a debtor, but he knew all too well the ominous aura of the Devil.

In the long silence, Teda showed a helpless expression.

"Teda, do you have something on you?" Bologue asked warily. "Something not too pleasant."

"You mean this?" Teda said, taking something out and admiring it. "Are all debtors this sensitive to the Devil?"

Bologue saw clearly what Teda held in his hand.

A pitch-black Key of the Crooked Path.