

Endless 291

Chapter 291: Opportunity

After obtaining the key, Bologue faintly sensed the eerie aura coming from it. Others might not perceive it, but for Bologue, the aura was as intense as a candle in the night.

The Debtor is connected to the Devil by an umbilical cord. Through this connection, Debtors are extremely sensitive to all things related to the Devil. The moment Bologue saw Teda, he acutely sensed the ominous aura.

Staring at the black Key of the Crooked Path, Bologue remembered Yas's warning. He suspected that Teda was the mysterious Delusional, but under the pressure of the Sect and the Gray Trade Association, such a marginal role as the Delusional was not much noticed.

Given Teda's obsession with resurrecting Alice, Bologue had thought there might be a connection between the two, but he never expected things to develop so quickly.

So, is Teda the Delusional?

There is currently no direct link between the two, but like Yas, Bologue can't help but suspect this possibility.

No, this is no longer a possibility; it's an implicit consensus.

Only Teda can create so many Alchemy Armaments, and only he has such a twisted obsession with wishes. If he is the Delusional, with his cooperation with the Gray Trade Association, getting an invitation would not be a problem.

Damn it, for the first time, Bologue felt annoyed at his own acuity. Why did he have to notice these things at such a time?

Bologue froze in place, every muscle tensed, his eyes fixed on Teda, pondering all possible scenarios ahead.

What exactly does Teda want to do? His way of being honest with Bologue didn't make him feel Teda's goodwill—instead, it made him even more uneasy.

Fortunately, Bologue also had the ability to threaten Teda. After all, Teda needed his Alchemy Matrix. He probably wouldn't directly attack Bologue but instead maintain a false peace.

Countless thoughts flashed through Bologue's mind. At this moment, Teda put away the key, maintaining a smile on his face, as if he knew what Bologue was thinking, silently waiting, his gaze never leaving Bologue.

No...

Bologue suddenly realized he had no ability to threaten Teda at all. Teda knew about his undying ability and clearly knew how to limit him. Although he's just an Alchemist, he is also a powerful Negative Power User.

Most importantly, Bologue was deep within Teda's Void Realm. No one knew what else could be hidden within that he was unaware of. He may have an undying body, but the partner tidying things up in the cabin was not undying.

So...

"You really do have connections with the Gray Trade Association, don't you, Teda?"

Bologue questioned, but he didn't point out Teda's identity as the Delusional, as if he was completely unaware of what Teda had done.

"The Order of Truth and the Gray Trade Association have always been in cooperation; they help sell things we cannot sell easily," Teda laughed, "I thought you always knew, Bologue. It's not hard to guess."

"But you never admitted it yourself." Bologue said.

"Then I'm admitting it now. How do you feel?"

"It feels terrible, makes me want to fight you."

Hearing this, Aimou seemed a bit flustered. She didn't want to see the two of them fight.

"Then why haven't you made a move?" Teda said, "Usually, when you say those things, you should have already acted."

"I may be a bit violent, but I'm not stupid," Bologue said with a hint of helplessness, "I'm not sure if I can beat you."

"More importantly, it seems we have no direct conflict, do we?" Bologue continued.

Indeed, Teda and Bologue had no direct conflicting interests. Not only did they not have a conflict, but they also used each other. Under the agreement with the Order Bureau and Teda, they managed to maintain a fragile peace before any direct confrontation.

It was terrible, Bologue found it all so bad. He had always suspected Teda but thought Teda would hide himself. Never did he expect Teda to claim everything so openly, which caught Bologue off guard.

Bologue's mind was a mess. Belli's guess was correct; her teacher had done too many dark things in secret. Yet, thinking carefully, Bologue found he had no proper reason to act against Teda.

Under the binding agreement, the Order Bureau had initially tacitly accepted Teda's actions, but with the frenzy of wishes, these actions would not remain unchecked.

"Yes, there's no conflict between us; stable interests will bring a stable friendship."

Teda wore a smile, but it was too ghastly to be comforting.

Bologue took a deep breath. As long as he didn't expose Teda's identity as the Delusional, they could temporarily maintain a semblance of peace.

"Then, we'll see you at the venue," Teda said.

"What... did you say?" Bologue asked.

Teda raised the black key in his hand, and the dial moved bit by bit until it reached the predetermined point.

The clock rang, as Ether burst forth on top of the key, violently thrumming as if trying to escape Teda's grip.

At the same time, a similar disturbance erupted from Bologue's pocket. He reached in to tightly grasp his key.

The rapid sound of footsteps echoed as Palmer dashed out from the cabin, sprinting through the corridor, waving a key as he shouted at Bologue.

"Bologue! It's activated!"

Both of them knew what it meant when the key throbbed.

The mission had started.

Palmer's enthusiastic shout didn't last long. He too saw the key in Teda's hand, and his expression instantly turned stern as he stepped back slightly. One hand gripped his key, while the other reached for the Flying Knife at his waist.

The people from the Clarks are skilled at knife throwing; no matter the occasion, he always carries a knife.

"What's the situation?"

Palmer complained while keeping his gaze fixed on Teda, his peripheral vision sweeping over Bologue.

"It's somewhat complex... but there's no need for violence yet."

Bologue said they didn't need to clash with Teda; destroying this transaction was the most important thing. As for Teda and the Delusional, there would be opportunities to distinguish and hunt them down.

"Do I need to put away the knife?" Palmer asked absurdly.

"What do you think?"

Bologue genuinely wondered if something was wrong with Palmer.

Hearing Bologue's reply, Palmer resumed his poised stance, tightly gripping the flying knife hidden behind him.

Their gazes collided, and everyone harbored ill intentions.

Finally, Teda broke the unbearable atmosphere by picking up a key and the suitcase Aimou prepared for him, then walking to the side door.

"Don't be so tense, gentlemen."

Teda couldn't comprehend why the two were reacting so strongly.

The key was inserted into the door, and Teda opened a murky, deep darkness, from which an ominous aura spread.

"Surprised, Bologue?"

The Key of the Crooked Path couldn't be used inside the Great Rift, yet this key broke through its confines. Teda's voice was filled with longing as he spoke deeply, "The Devil wields the power to break rules, yet is bound by those very rules... it's a fascinating power."

Laughter echoed out just as Teda was about to turn and step inside when Bologue's voice rang out.

"At the auction, there should be something you want, right?"

Bologue speculated.

"An opportunity to resurrect Alice?"

Bologue stared at Teda, his skin faintly glowing, with cold serpents crawling beneath his collar.

"Yes."

Teda candidly affirmed, glancing at Aimou, who dared not look at his teacher, keeping his head down and avoiding his gaze.

Teda's gaze then fell again on Bologue; he said nothing, turned, and entered the murky darkness.

Silence fell over the room, a deathly stillness.

This deathly silence did not last long as Bologue shouted at Palmer.

"Pack up! I'm going to report!"

Palmer nodded and, along with Bologue, rushed into the small stronghold house.

Bologue's and Teda's objectives were both at the auction. Teda needed something inside; Bologue wanted to destroy it. To a certain extent, their goals were aligned, so neither took action first, leaving combat for the auction.

Palmer quickly packed up, readying the suitcase in his hand, while Bologue connected the whistle, reporting everything that had just happened to Lebius.

"We're about to enter the venue."

Bologue and Palmer stood together in the ground floor salon as the two void doors swung open, each holding a suitcase.

"Teda has entered as well; his target is likely some auction item inside... perhaps the Immortal Heart." Bologue reported to Lebius.

If anything could revive the dead, Bologue could only think of the key item for this mission, the Immortal Heart.

After a moment of silence, Lebius's voice sounded in his mind, "Priority is the mission, don't mind Teda."

"Our contact might get interrupted once you enter the venue." Lebius's voice echoed in their minds.

"Then we'll rely on ourselves."

Bologue's voice was emotionless as he turned to look at Palmer beside him, "Even if contact with the Order Bureau is interrupted, communication between us in the venue should remain intact."

"Let's rendezvous; I understand." Palmer said seriously, the usual hint of casual joking entirely vanished, but no one knew if Palmer was earnest or playing Bologue.

Bologue lastly looked at the always silent Aimou, speaking emotionlessly, "Palmer, you go first; I have some matters to handle."

Palmer said nothing; at times like this, lingering talk would indeed make Bologue swing a hammer at him. Palmer grabbed the suitcase and entered the murky darkness, disappearing from sight.

Only Bologue and Aimou remained in the room; Bologue stared into Aimou's eyes and questioned.

"What do you know?"

Chapter 292: The Trial of Value

Bologue misjudged from the very beginning, thinking Aimou knew nothing, but in reality, it was the opposite. Aimou was the one who knew the most secrets; she was the cornerstone of resurrecting Alice, and everything in Teda's secrets was linked to her.

He didn't loudly question nor did he shout angrily at Aimou, his voice was calm, cold as a winter's day.

Aimou didn't remain silent for long, she spoke, "Teacher wants to resurrect Alice."

"How does one resurrect?" Bologue asked.

"The soul determines the body, but perhaps all this can be reversed, making the body determine the soul," Aimou lifted her head, staring directly at Bologue, "reshape the vessel, returning it to its original form, along with the soul within, corrected from its errors."

"Was this all part of Teda's plan? He never thought he could hide these from us, instead, he used us."

Bologue realized that the other reason Teda hadn't acted against himself and Palmer was to use the two of them, letting the Order Bureau locate the venue.

No idea how Teda plans to seize the Immortal Heart, but clearly, as long as chaos erupts at the venue, he has a chance to prevail.

The best way to cause chaos is to have these factions collide.

"Teacher never talks to me about these things, he just asked me to do what I needed to do," said Aimou.

"And what do you need to do?"

"Protect her well."

Aimou tapped her chest, where Alice's Philosopher's Stone was hidden within the Constant Motion Core.

"And what do you think, Aimou?"

Bologue asked again, but this time his question seemed somewhat inexplicable.

Aimou didn't answer but maintained silence.

Bologue took a deep breath, sometimes silence is also an answer.

"I just hope your teacher won't do anything crazy; though I don't quite like him, I've been quite cared for by him lately, and if possible, I wouldn't want to wield a blade against him."

Despite the words, this time, Bologue's gaze at Aimou carried a slight oddity.

"Is the teacher going to do something terrible?"

Aimou grew nervous, not even knowing where that door led. She just felt today's atmosphere was somewhat off.

The usual harmony was gone, everyone carried anger, glaring warily at each other.

"I don't know, but the place he's heading to is quite terrible... He shouldn't appear there."

After finishing, Bologue intended to turn and step through the doorway, but Aimou reached out to stop him.

"I'll go with you."

The halo in her eyes grew clearer, the edges defined, Aimou refused to let tragedy unfold.

"Only one can pass through."

As soon as Bologue's words fell, Ether burst forth, dazzling light flashed, garments lightly dropped to the ground, followed by a chill brushing along the body, a faint glow enveloping Bologue's form.

"What about now?"

The voice echoed directly in Bologue's mind.

Bologue hesitated for a moment, picked up the suitcase Palmer prepared, and plunged into the void of darkness.

...

The dim light in the room faintly illuminated the man in the mirror, Gray looked at his reflection, finding his familiar self absent, replaced by a battered and decayed visage.

Gray no longer remembered how many days he had spent within this deep Great Rift, nor could he recall his past appearance, a subtle pain emanating from his body. Habitually, he grabbed the potion, injecting it along his arm, mitigating the disruption of the pain.

He had already begun to be addicted to the drugs; now, without the aid of tranquilizers, even sleep was difficult for Gray.

Every time he closed his eyes, Gray would return to that stormy night, where Jia Meng betrayed him, Milasha dying tragically before him...

Fortunately, Gray survived, thus gaining the opportunity for vengeance, even if it consumed him.

He forcefully washed his face to make himself a bit more lucid.

Upon coming to clarity, each sense sharpened, and Gray could faintly hear the tremor of metal, causing a rattling noise.

Since a few minutes ago, that thing had been making noise.

Gray wasn't anxious, knowing time was ample. He picked up the sewn-up clothing, which was the uniform of the King's Secret Sword, donned it once more, looking at himself in the mirror, recalling the day he joined the King's Secret Sword.

Finally, he picked up the mottled emblem, fixing it to his chest, Gray reached out to grasp the prestigious Secret Sword, which once belonged to Milasha.

"Jia Meng..."

Gray's voice was hoarse, full of curse and resentment.

At this moment, the door behind him slightly opened, light streamed in, and through the mirror, Gray could see the figure standing at the door.

"It's already started, aren't you going to set out?" the man asked.

"Is what you said all true? Those so-called King's Shield Guards." Gray ignored the man's words, instead asking about something else.

"Does their authenticity matter? Jia Meng is among them anyway. They're all your enemies," the man said.

"Indeed," Gray nodded, turned to look at the figure at the door, "And you, Vika, what are you doing all this for?"

"Vika?" The man chuckled, shaking his head, "Vika is taking a break today."

The man walked toward Gray, his features gradually becoming clearer. He had the exact same appearance as Vika; to be precise, he was Vika, but Gray understood that the essence beneath this facade was different.

"Who are you?" Gray asked. "Anyway, I'll likely die inside. A dead man knowing secrets shouldn't matter, right?"

The man thought for a moment, then he agreed with this reasoning and conversed with Gray using Vika's body.

"You can call me Mammon."

A peculiar light flickered in Gray's eyes; he didn't show much surprise, having lived here for so long, he had vaguely guessed these things long ago.

"What exactly do you intend to do? This is your kingdom; you know all the movements of the King's Shield Guard, and you are entirely aware of their purpose. Why do you allow them? Is it simply because you cannot directly interfere with reality?"

Gray continued to ask; these were his final moments, he wanted to know more secrets.

"Allow them? Do you think I am allowing them?" Mammon was somewhat confused.

Upon hearing this response, Gray's expression became stern; he realized it wasn't as simple as he thought.

"Are they also under your control?"

"No, I merely make use of them coincidentally." Mammon laughed and then said, "Don't judge me like that; I actually have personal intentions too."

"What kind of personal intentions?"

"You're asking too much, Gray," Mammon said.

"I AM part of your plan, aren't I? At least let me die with some understanding," Gray stated emotionlessly.

"How could that be? We're mutually beneficial; I sheltered you and gave you the chance for revenge..."

"But that is what you wanted, isn't it?" Gray pressed determinedly.

A raspy, strange laughter echoed, the man's eyes hollow, facial muscles twisting into an exaggerated and grotesque smile.

"I'm looking for someone, a brother of mine. We haven't seen each other in many years."

Mammon suddenly said, "I thought I would keep looking endlessly, but not long ago, I met another person who inspired me."

"You're right, Gray. I cannot directly interfere with this world, so such a simple task of finding someone has dragged on for so many years."

Hollow eyes cracked open like ever-dividing cells, dense pupils filled the whites of his eyes, Mammon approached Gray, a bizarre whisper lingered by his ear.

"This is a trial, to screen and select those truly of value."

Gray anticipated what was coming; he felt indifferent, just bored.

"The most valuable person will become your debtor, running errands for you."

Gray remembered that pale mask; he had countless ties with all of this.

"Is it the Delusional? You've seen their value."

"No, no, no, value is not fixed," Mammon denied, then asked Gray, "How do you think we should judge a person's value?"

Gray was silent, while Mammon again emitted a series of shrill laughter.

"Everyone has the chance to prove their value, including you, Gray."

Gray shook his head, uninterested, "The Devil's blessing? I'll pass."

He bypassed Mammon, grabbing the perpetually noisy object—a pitch-black key. Gray inserted it into the door's keyhole and then drew out a dark void.

Gray gripped Milasha's Secret Sword and stepped into it.

...

"Devils... I despise these bizarre and frenetic beings but am forced to admit, in sheer desperation, only they are willing to lend a hand."

The Shadow King sat on the glass round base; the Sea of Mist below emitted a hazy glow, his murky eyes beneath the mask observing intently.

Behind the Shadow King, the Third Seat stood guard beside him, akin to a sentinel, ready to protect him at any time.

"Have they set off?" the Shadow King asked.

"Already entered the venue; as for the Immortal Heart, we must secure it," the Third Seat responded.

"Must secure it..."

The Shadow King did not feel much excitement from the Third Seat's words but rather was filled with doubt.

"What's the matter?" the Third Seat asked.

"We are in the territory of the Tyrant, and now we are trying to seize offerings for him... His silence only makes one uneasy," the Shadow King said softly.

"We kept it well secret; no one knows our purpose, not even the Order Bureau can trace us," the Third Seat said.

"No, you underestimate the Devils. If somewhere else, it would be fine, but here is the Great Rift, his land, the Tyrant knows everything."

The Shadow King's mood was unsettled; he had never liked this place, whether past or present.

"But he has done nothing."

Listening to the Third Seat's words, the Shadow King paused for a few seconds, then said.

"Perhaps, he has already done what he intended."

The Third Seat didn't quite understand the Shadow King's words; the Shadow King had no intention to explain, instead he was absorbed in watching the Sea of Mist below, his voice low and hoarse.

"Never underestimate the Devils; they can do anything, but also don't overestimate them—they are merely pathetic prisoners."

Chapter 293: Sacrificial Ground

Perhaps it was the Devil's power at work. The feeling of traversing through the winding path this time was extremely dreadful. In the past, Bologue would only feel dizzy and nauseated, but this time the body's reaction was even more intense, with all sorts of unbearable twisting sensations charging violently through every nerve.

The force violently battered Bologue's will, almost grinding it to dust, then pieced it back together, only to grind it again.

Fortunately, this torturous feeling didn't last long. The chaotic vision gradually cleared. Bologue pushed open the door, his figure slightly shaky, and reached out to steady himself against the wall to avoid collapsing.

Repeatedly taking deep breaths, with each breath restoring strength to his body, muscles tense, and Ether poised to release, Bologue lifted his head, the worn and mottled forbidden mask already donned on his face.

It wasn't explicitly stated, but everyone knew this was an anonymous auction. Concealing one's identity was the most crucial thing. The power of the Face of Horror gently seeped out, and the aura of fear permeated around Bologue.

After regaining composure, the first thing Bologue did was observe his surroundings. Old dust swirled in the air, and dim light fell from above.

Scanning around, Bologue found himself in a vast Central Courtyard. Several rough stone pillars supported the space, and the surrounding walls and floor were similarly crude, unadorned, crudely displayed.

Behind Bologue was the door he came through. Pulling the door open revealed not another space but the same rough wall.

These doors were built surrounding the Central Courtyard, and besides Bologue, people continually arrived through different doors. Gray silhouettes filled the area near the massive stone pillars, slowly walking, whispering to each other.

Presumably, they were the guests of the auction. Bologue hadn't expected such a large turnout. Luckily, these people were gathered here from the start—Palmer and Teda should be among them.

Withdrawing his hand from the wall, just before pulling away, his fingertips seemed to touch something. Bologue turned his head and wiped the dust off the wall, carefully inspecting the rough surface.

The wall wasn't actually rough; it felt rough to the touch because dense patterns filled every inch of it, patterns Bologue was quite familiar with—countless engraved coins on the wall.

At first glance, others might think it was fish scales or waves, but Bologue knew clearly these were coins, countless Mammon Coins.

Walking toward the center of the Central Courtyard, the stone pillars obscured Bologue's view, but when he rounded a pillar, he clearly saw the majestic humanoid sculpture bathed in the hazy light.

The man spread his arms, attempting to embrace all the gold. Bologue knew the man's name, the greedy Mammon.

"This place is..."

A voice echoed in his mind, startling Bologue. It was then he remembered he was not alone.

"Mammon's... altar," Bologue said in a low voice.

Though called an auction, in reality, it was another form of faith gathering, where all wealth would be an offering to Mammon.

"This place is unsettling, and fearsome," Aimou continued.

At this moment, she could feel significant terror, with oppression coming from all sides, continuously instilling fear.

"That part seems unrelated to this place," Bologue explained to Aimou, "It's the power of my Contract Object."

The Face of Horror imposes fear on others, and it also imposes fear on Bologue himself. Under the Shared Chord Body, this fear was also shared with Aimou.

"Huh?"

Aimou was surprised, and hearing her reaction, Bologue decided it might be better to release some fear, putting some pressure on her.

They weren't just watching a movie; they were in the dragon's lair.

Everything happened too suddenly. Teda suddenly showed him the key, and then the key was activated and led them into the venue, leaving Bologue little time to think.

When Aimou wanted to come here with him, Bologue initially intended to refuse her. This mission was full of danger, but then he thought about the shared state of the Shared Chord Body, and given his own immortal nature, Aimou shouldn't be harmed, and she could even strengthen herself.

Most importantly, by holding Aimou, he indirectly had control over Alice's soul, turning Aimou into a sort of hostage in Bologue's hands. If Teda made any rash moves, Bologue could use this against Teda.

He glanced around at the people wandering in the Central Courtyard, each wearing different attire, but all shared the commonality of having hidden their faces, like a masquerade ball.

Whispers were constant, with languages and accents Bologue didn't understand.

The auction was unexpectedly grand. The Gray Trade Association had kindly invited everyone, and Bologue glanced at his briefcase, beginning to feel a sense of worry.

The place was a chaotic mix of people, and the attendees were likely all Condensers. He wasn't sure if launching an assault on the venue with just the Sixth Group would work when the action started.

Bologue didn't continue to ponder, those matters should be handled by Yas, and all he needed to do was perform his duties well.

Trying to suppress the aura of fear, Bologue hid himself within the darkness. Observing, Bologue didn't notice any members of the Gray Trade Association and didn't know their whereabouts.

Raising his hand to press against the wall, Bologue whispered.

"Aimou, help me conceal it."

Ether flowed over his palm without causing any surges, and with Aimou's assistance, Bologue's aura became increasingly faint. If one didn't deliberately look, they couldn't notice Bologue hidden in the shadows.

He activated the Summoning Hand against the wall, just as Bologue anticipated, this was a massive Void Realm, with ether rushing through the building. Bologue's ether struggled to break through their protection, thus making large-scale effects impossible.

But Bologue didn't need large-scale destruction; he just needed a small aperture, a hole just big enough to insert explosives.

Opening the suitcase, it was packed with tubular explosives. Differing from ordinary explosives, this batch was sent by the Third Group, usually split up due to the dangers.

Palmer, unusually diligent this time, assembled these components in the afternoon.

The Third Group specialized in Void Realm offensive operations. According to their task records, one major challenge in Void Realm incidents was destroying the carriers of these realms, namely the buildings.

The full name of these explosives is the Void Realm Demolition Device. When detonated, ether fluctuations would impact the Void Realm, while the explosion from the powder itself would destroy the building.

The demolition squad was busy tearing down Joyful Garden, having no time to take over here, merely delivering this batch of materials. Bologue and Palmer only received a small portion, with the remaining materials held by the Sixth Group, making it easier for them to attack from outside.

Sometimes walking, sometimes stopping in the Central Courtyard, Bologue pried open one hole after another in the solid walls, stuffed the Void Realm Demolition Devices inside, then used Secret Energy to seal the wall again.

Under the training of mechanical watch, he could even perfectly simulate the patterns on the wall, leaving no flaws visible.

This period of intensive learning allowed him to deepen his understanding of Void Realms. For instance, the Void Realm protects the entire area, but unless excessively damaged, the Void Realm won't sound any alarms.

The damages Bologue caused on the buildings would be ignored by the Void Realm. Perhaps the Gray Trade Association would never expect they'd encounter such a skilled demolition expert.

Most crucially, relying on the Ether Flow Scope, Bologue could easily locate areas where ether flows were sparse, where the defenses of the Void Realm were weaker.

After finishing all this, Bologue tossed the suitcase aside, strapped the remaining explosives to himself as if nothing had happened, canceled Ethereal Concealment, walked out of the shadows, and stepped into the crowd.

During this period, the Central Courtyard had already gathered quite a number of people. Fortunately, the courtyard was spacious enough, and the crowd wasn't dense, with everyone maintaining a safe distance, cautiously watching one another.

Until the bell rang, members of the Gray Trade Association finally appeared. At the far end of the courtyard, a massive stone door slowly rose, opened the path ahead.

The attendants behind the door had been waiting for a long time. They were dressed in dark blue attire, faces covered by masks outlined with gold filigree, depicting men's faces. Faintly, they aligned with the faces on the sculptures.

"Palmer! Palmer!"

Bologue attempted to lower his voice, but no matter how he called, the other end of the whistle returned no response.

The time gap between him and Palmer was less than a few minutes. Bologue couldn't believe within those few minutes his partner could be dead... but maybe, Palmer was a complete unlucky fellow after all.

The crowd had already started moving towards the gate, yet Bologue still hadn't found Palmer. Not only hadn't he found Palmer, but he also hadn't detected any sign of Teda.

He remembered the pale doll masks, but after scanning each one, nothing was found.

There wasn't just one such Central Courtyard. Did Palmer and Teda arrive at different courtyards? But even then, Palmer ought to respond to his call, or was the distance just too far?

Bologue had no choice but to follow the crowd, triggering multiple ether responses, light rising on each person's body. Out of vigilance, everyone activated their ether.

Serpents crawled beneath Bologue's clothes, Void Realm had a suppressing force on Condensers. Ether release wasn't smooth, but the sense of controlling power reassured many.

Walking through the long corridor, attendants directed guests into the venue, which was actually a grandiose Beast Fighting Arena despite being called a venue, with guests seated on ringed staircases, a podium rising in the center, attendants dressed in similar attire stood on it.

Bologue found a convenient position at the edge to sit. Shortly, a man wearing a golden mask ascended the podium, he spread his arms towards everyone, loudly proclaiming.

"Welcome, everyone!"

Bologue observed the man from afar. For some reason, the voice sounded familiar, as if he'd heard it somewhere before.

Chapter 294: Sacrifice

Bologue had never attended an auction before, and neither had Aimou. Bologue's expertise was of little use here, especially since this auction was completely different from those in the past.

There was no capital verification process, nor any identity check. The Gray Trade Association exercised an unusually loose control over the venue, making a vigilant person like Bologue feel uneasy.

So far, Bologue had only spotted a few scattered guards, but it was clearly impossible for them to manage the scene effectively with just a handful of people.

The sound of a bell echoed from the pale light above, drawing everyone's attention to the man on the high platform. Everything proceeded quickly and silently, with only the man speaking to introduce the items.

The auction progressed rapidly; everyone came with clear objectives, having decided what they wanted before the auction even began.

Interestingly, everyone was bidding with Mammon Coins. Although many came from other regions, they could still produce the Mammon Coins that only circulated within the Great Rift.

First, there were some precision Alchemy Armaments, followed by expensive and rare Alchemy Materials. Occasionally, a few Contract Objects appeared in the auction.

Many items piqued Bologue's interest, but unfortunately, he didn't have enough Mammon Coins to trade, so he could only watch silently from the side.

Currently, a type of Alchemy Material was being sold. It was a glass container with exaggerated curved decorations on the surface, inside which thunderclouds churned, lightning flashing in and out, as if a storm had been trapped inside a bottle.

Bologue knew what this was: a rare Alchemy Material known as "Thundercloud Qi," one of the key foundations for ascending as a Negative Power User. It was said to be a product refined and collected from the thunder and lightning exhaust generated during metal transformation in a furnace.

Unlike regular Alchemy Materials, this Thundercloud Qi's stability was extremely poor. The container not only held it but also provided stability; once the bottle was broken, it would release an unstable thundercloud.

Buyers fiercely competed for this item, as Alchemy Materials that could be used for ascension often fetched high prices. After several rounds of bidding, only one man and one woman remained in the fight, but it was clear the man was about to be defeated; he was running out of money.

The woman felt victory was within her grasp when the man called out to the host with a number he could not bear.

"Sir, don't bid recklessly,"

The host said kindly, but beneath the gentle tone was pure menace.

"I am willing to offer my value," the man spoke.

The host was momentarily stunned, then burst into laughter, cheering to everyone.

"Value!"

All eyes were on the man again, and beneath the golden mask, the host's sinister laughter continued.

"Please step forward, sir. We never reject any value."

The man slowly walked to the stage, appearing a little nervous. It was his first time attending an auction, and his understanding of everything here came from information he had acquired, including the notion of offering value.

Fortunately, Gray Trade Association's transactions were different from the Devil's. While the Devil cares only for your soul, the Gray Trade Association values anything with worth, even if it's not a soul, as long as it holds value in their eyes, they are willing to trade with you.

"What kind of value are you willing to offer?" the host asked.

"What kind would you like?" the man retorted.

The host examined the man's eyes as if through them he could see everything about the man's past.

"Oh... I see, you crave more powerful strength, just pure strength."

The host whispered in the man's ear.

The man's gaze remained resolute, and after a few seconds of silence, the host inquired again.

"Are you sure you want to offer value?"

"I am sure."

With a strange and piercing laugh, the host grabbed the man's hand, and beneath the mask sounded the voice of madness.

"Counting the Mammon Coins you've paid, please offer your fingers!"

Before the man could react, the host easily twisted off his little finger and ring finger, the flesh and bone tearing away together. The man did not utter a sound amidst the agony, while the host placed the bloody fingers onto a tray beside him.

Turning his attention to the bidding woman, the host asked, "Will you raise your bid?"

Without a moment of hesitation, the woman spoke, "Raise."

The man understood what this meant. He silently extended his other hand, allowing the host to take his index finger. The woman raised her bid again, and the man lost his thumb.

Finally, after losing four fingers, the man obtained what he wanted, holding the container with his bloodied hands, the thundercloud churning within.

Bologue squinted his eyes, watching everything that transpired on the stage. Since the man offered his value, more people began to imitate his behavior, sacrificing their own things when their Mammon Coins were insufficient.

Someone offered their eyeball and obtained a Contract Object capable of observing the short-term future. Another formed a contract with the host, allowing the Gray Trade Association to command them, in exchange for receiving a potion to extend their lifespan.

Most bizarre of all was witnessing a person sacrifice their time; their robust body withered, and in the blink of an eye, they aged to decrepitude...

Everything unfolding before his eyes challenged common sense. This was the true essence of the auction, and Bologue found himself amidst a maddening ritual of sacrifice.

The air was thick with the stench of blood. Unknown when it began, the platform was already drenched in fresh blood, which flowed and seeped down the edges, merging with the sands below.

Bologue felt a strong sense of nausea—it wasn't him, it was Aimou. Aimou was appalled by the brutal scene before them, the warped sensation affecting Bologue as well.

Lowering his head, Bologue takes deep breaths to relieve his own stress.

"Is this your first time here?"

Suddenly, a woman's voice rings out. Bologue looks warily in the direction of the sound and turns his head. Unexpectedly, a woman has taken a seat next to him. She is dressed in a light, black robe, her face completely hidden beneath a veil.

"Don't be nervous."

Seeing Bologue's reaction, the woman laughs softly.

"Who are you?"

Bologue looks at her warily. Her silent appearance and sudden conversation triggers his alarm bells, and the serpent beneath his collar has already crawled to his wrist, ready to morph into a sharp short dagger at any moment.

"Who am I? Do you think such a question is meaningful in this setting?"

The woman looks at the mask on Bologue's face. Here, identity is worthless, everyone remains anonymous.

"I just find you very familiar," the woman continues.

"But I'm certain, I don't know you," Bologue states firmly.

Bologue has few friends, let alone female friends. Through simple elimination, it's crystal clear.

As for enemies?

Enemies of Bologue rarely leave alive from his grasp; so far, only Gray under the Tyrant's protection has successfully escaped his pursuit.

"I meant the scent on you, there's a familiar scent of blood."

Beneath the veil, blood-red eyes faintly reveal themselves. The crimson gaze suddenly reminds Bologue of someone.

The woman doesn't continue, instead talking about something else.

"That's the unique aspect of the Gray Trade Association; they act like Devils, strictly adhering to absolute fairness in value exchange. If your Mammon Coin is insufficient, you can compensate with your own value."

On the platform, the host takes away a person's rib, making the woman frown. "I can't imagine what value those things have, but the Gray Trade Association finds delight in them."

"These things are worthless to others, but to themselves, they hold extraordinary value."

Aimou's voice echoes in his mind. This is the first thing he hears after offering value.

Fingers, eyeballs, ribs, time...

All of this is meaningless to others, yet it's the most precious to themselves. They trade away the things they regard as valuable in exchange for their desires.

Those who desire power lose the fingers to wield a sword; those who dream of prolonging life become slaves; those who see the future lose sight...

"Did you know? Here, Mammon Coin can to some extent replace the soul," the woman whispers.

Bologue's composed demeanor surprises the woman. His voice rises slowly, "I've known that for a long time."

Bologue fiddles with the coin in his hand, engraved with silver symbols.

The Crimson Queen sect can sacrifice flesh to receive her protection. In this regard, it seems the Gray Trade Association is also bound by some pact with the Tyrant.

Now the contract's content is obvious; it is the underlying rule of the Forking Paths itself. Offer value to the Tyrant, and the Tyrant will fulfill your wish, even allowing Mammon Coin to substitute the soul for transactions.

The woman looks at Bologue a few more times, about to say something when the host's voice interrupts.

"Next item!"

The host's voice carries a hint of mystery, full of anticipation as he looks towards the audience on the stage. Then he abruptly removes the white cloth behind him, revealing the object under the cage.

In an instant, raging hostility permeates the atmosphere, impacting everyone present. Though Bologue has long been accustomed to fear, he's slightly shaken for a moment, while Aimou's situation is worse, nearly losing herself under the ritual's fierce strike, dark ripples flickering across Bologue's body.

Pained wails arise from beneath the cage. Bologue focuses all his attention forward, his blurry vision gradually clearing. He sees the object under the cage.

It's a mass of flesh, layers of crimson blood tissue covering it. The surface of the flesh ball bears numerous overlapping arms clinging tightly to it, with gaps revealing open eyeballs, open mouths, breathing noses, and faintly visible white bones beneath the membrane...

Silence envelops the scene, everyone's breathing suppressed, while some struggle with bouts of nausea at the sight.

"Are you okay, Aimou?"

Bologue murmurs softly. Such an image is indeed a bit excessive for Aimou. She doesn't speak, merely utters a soft "Hm."

The nearby woman's gaze grows serious, while some emit slightly excited breaths.

"This is a creation from the Order of Truth, entrusted to us,"

The host announces loudly.

"Blood and Flesh Derivation."

Chapter 295: The Remaining Night Race

Forget the offering that is akin to a freak show; as the host unveiled the white cloth, exposing the Blood and Flesh Derivation, the auction truly heated up, with sellers who hold wealth beginning to take it seriously.

Bologue did not know what that thing was, but he could sense its importance from the reactions of those present.

A quick sidelong glance revealed that the most crucial aspect was that the mysterious woman beside him also increased her focus, staring intently at the twisted mass of flesh, as if the purpose of her visit was precisely this bizarre object.

"What is that?" Bologue asked proactively.

The woman gradually calmed down, turning to look at Bologue, with a vague smile beneath her veil.

"Are you asking me for information?"

"You seem like a generous person," Bologue said.

The woman chuckled, her blood-red eyes examining Bologue, who did not shy away, his blue eyes meeting hers; even with dim lighting and separated by a veil, her eyes were still dazzling, as pure as blood-red rubies.

"What are you looking at?"

The woman deliberately covered her chest, moving her shoulders, her voice carrying a magical allure, like the sirens in tales that bewitched men.

"Your eyes."

Bologue's expression remained icy, his gaze as clear as ever.

The woman frowned slightly, moving closer to Bologue, with a subtle scent of blood mixed with some perfume wafting towards him.

The two were very close, separated only by a veil, yet Bologue remained unaffected, his complexion as pale as a bloodless corpse.

The stare lasted for over ten seconds, ending with the woman's retreat, restoring a safe distance between them as she regarded Bologue with slight frustration.

Bologue's calm demeanor was so unyielding that it caused the woman to feel somewhat defeated.

Previously, her few words were enough to leave men muddle-headed, but they had no effect on Bologue, as if she was merely a clothed ape to him.

"Your eyes are beautiful," Bologue stated unexpectedly.

The woman paused, looking at Bologue in disbelief, realizing there was someone able to resist her allure while simultaneously countering her.

The worst part was, she seemed to misunderstand Bologue's intent.

The woman's eyes became more tempting, yet this was also her way of taking Bologue seriously, having finally met an evenly matched opponent after years of dominating the romantic world; although the encounter's setting was less than ideal, the woman found it quite romantic.

But just as she prepared to launch a new offensive against Bologue, he redirected his gaze back to the stage, looking at the crying mass of flesh.

"I have a friend, his eyes are like yours, also ruby-like, very beautiful."

"Ah?"

The woman was somewhat baffled; was this some new type of romantic conversation? Isn't the topic supposed to revolve back to herself? Why suddenly mention a friend?

The most unimaginable part was Bologue's ensuing words.

"My friend's surname is Villarys; he said it is an ancient family name. What do you think?"

Bologue's tone became cold, as he turned back to look at the woman again, she noticed the faint golden halo concealed within his blue irises.

The woman fell silent, and her silence confirmed Bologue's suspicions.

The Night Race's eyes were too distinguishable, those blood-infused rubies that lacked human coloration.

Since their conversation began, Bologue had been carefully observing her, apart from her ruby eyes, another identity marker was her blood aura and its frenzied essence.

Bologue was a Debtor, his umbilical cord to the eerie exceptionally sensitive; in his recent close encounter, he keenly sensed the woman was also a Debtor.

As for the woman's sense of familiarity, Bologue suspected it might be due to the mutual feeling between Debtors, the other possibility stemming from the blood of Serey.

Serey had told him before, the Night Race was very sensitive to blood, particularly to the blood of High Tier Night Race.

With generations of bloodline continuation, pure blood would inevitably accumulate some impurity, rendering subsequent Night Race descendants less pure and noble.

As the Night Race Lord, direct bloodline of the Night King, Serey's blood was immensely valuable, even after simple purification by Alchemists, his blood could directly be utilized as Alchemy Materials.

"Many Low Tier Night Race spend their lives praying for my blood," Serey drunkenly told him one time.

"Speaking of which, Bologue, you are already an Undead. If you drank my blood, could you become a Night Race member? If you became a Night Race member and carried dual undead status, would you become a super undead?"

Serey's logic began to falter at that time, growing excited while speaking, then directly slitting his wrist before Bologue's eyes.

It must be said, being an Undead indeed lives up to its name. Relying on their immortal nature, they cut their wrists so cleanly and neatly, blood spraying several meters high and splashing all over Bologue's face.

Then Serey gave Bologue a bear hug, restraining him while shouting, "This is Lord Serey's blood," and simultaneously stuffed the wound into Bologue's mouth.

One had to admit, Serey's muscular body wasn't just for show. No matter how much one resisted, it was impossible to budge Serey. Fortunately, Bode intervened at a crucial moment, the old skeleton knocked Serey down with a punch, but by then, Bologue was already bathed in blood.

Afterwards, Bologue washed himself repeatedly several times, but there was still a strange blood aura lingering on his body. When he was at the Order Bureau, Geoffrey even asked if he had turned blood into perfume.

Bologue suspected that another major reason for the familiar feeling coming from this female Night Race in front of him was Serey's blood. After all, it was the blood of a Night Race Lord, and it was normal for some residual power to remain.

Thinking about this, Bologue recalled another doubt. To this day, he still didn't know what Tiers the Condensers in the Undying Club belonged to.

"Vileris..."

The woman whispered this ancient surname and, after pondering for a moment, smiled slightly, "It's been a long time since I've heard that surname."

In the next moment, the woman's gaze turned fierce, the seductive aura vanished, replaced by a piercing murderous intent. Bologue's skin felt slightly pricked, as if pierced by needles.

"May I know the name of your friend?"

"I'm a newcomer."

Bologue showed not the slightest fear; instead, he took advantage of the woman.

The woman was at a loss for words, unexpectedly finding herself being blackmailed by Bologue.

Reflecting back, their conversation was strangely odd. The woman, with her heart set on a romantic duel, played several rounds of mental chess with Bologue. Yet Bologue had never thought about such matters at all; from the start, this guy was scheming to make her his guide.

"Blood and Flesh Derivation... a technique for creating life."

The hazy pink atmosphere dissipated as Bologue spoiled the woman's mood, and she couldn't be bothered to keep up the pretense, speaking coldly.

"Those madmen create deformed flesh infused with powerful fusion and regeneration. Of course, this flesh has no consciousness, it's more like screaming in biological instincts."

A hint of disgust flashed through the woman's eyes, the blob of flesh on the high platform still emitting wails, as if its very existence was a form of extreme suffering.

This sound was too disturbing, so the host brought in a sedative and repeatedly injected it into the flesh to calm it down, while the audience bid feverishly.

"Why do you want it so badly? What use is it?" Bologue continued to ask.

"Healing, no matter how severe the physical injury, if placed inside for a period, it can be healed. Even severed limbs can recover."

The woman spoke, pointing at the organs scattered over the lump of flesh.

"See? In fact, from birth, it's meant to be a repository for human organs. Its fusion and regenerative capabilities are excellent. Cut open the lump of flesh, place the injured inside, and their flesh will grow together with the flesh lump. After a period of healing, just cut the injured back out of the flesh lump.

As for the issue of severed limbs, while coexisting with the injured, it will use the injured's flesh to grow. You could say the organs it grows are the injured's organs, ready to be used for surgery."

"Oh? Is that so," Bologue remained unfazed, then said, "It sounds like the Elixir of Immortality."

"You know about the Elixir of Immortality?"

The woman found Bologue to be more mysterious, piquing her curiosity thoroughly.

"I'm not as ignorant as you think," Bologue said.

"Then do you know the difference between it and the techniques of the Scarlet Sect?"

The woman asked again. This time, Bologue lost his words, while the woman, as if having won over Bologue, let out bursts of laughter.

She didn't keep Bologue hanging; after a few laughs, she admitted frankly.

"The Elixir of Immortality stems from the power of the Crimson Queen. From the start, it was sinister and impure. When you use it to heal flesh, you also attract the attention of the Crimson Queen... Are you willing to be noticed by such a terrifying being?"

The woman's rhetorical question only made Bologue feel a chill, the cold coming from the handprint like a scar on his chest.

"Then why do you need it? As an immortal Night Race, this thing should be useless to you, right?" Bologue countered.

The woman's initial various reactions exposed her intentions. She was also very interested in this Blood and Flesh Derivation; perhaps her visit tonight was precisely for it.

"Hmm? You could say it's not entirely useless," the woman showed a troubled expression, "but its blood can be used for sustenance, and with it, it can feed a large group of the Night Race."

The woman showed an amused expression, reiterating to Bologue.

"A large group indeed."

Chapter 296: The Night Race's Mole

The woman's words had nothing to do with the current task but still startled Bologue. From Serey's mouth, he knew that the Night Race had long vanished from history, yet suddenly there was a female

Night Race before him, and she seemed intent on purchasing that flesh mass to nurture more of her kind.

"Who is your friend?" the woman asked again.

"The auction isn't over yet. There might still be many things I can't understand," Bologue delayed.

The woman narrowed her eyes, a hint of anger showing, but she quickly smiled as if she didn't mind.

"Are you going to betray your friend?"

Aimou's voice sounded. To avoid attracting the woman's attention, she tried her best to lower her presence since the conversation began.

Of course, Bologue couldn't answer her verbally but shook his head subtly.

Betray?

Bologue did want to betray Serey, but the problem was that Serey was riddled with suspicion.

According to Serey, after the Dawn War, the Eternal Night Empire of the Night Race completely collapsed. Most of the Night Race were killed by the sunlight, while a few were imprisoned for life, unable to leave. The most mysterious Night King also disappeared after the Dawn War.

But despite such a cruel conclusion, Serey, a Night Race Lord, was overlooked. With his status, even if he wasn't killed by the sunlight, he should have been confined somewhere.

In reality? Serey not only lived well in the Undying Club but also dated different women daily, drank, and hosted various weird parties...

If the Undying Club were actually a form of imprisonment for Serey, then his treatment was quite good.

All signs forced Bologue to start suspecting what role Serey played during the Dawn War.

A general fighting at the Night King's frontline?

Those generals had long died under the sun; clearly, Serey wasn't one of them.

This led Bologue to only think of an inside mole who betrayed the Night King.

Serey being a mole...somehow, recalling Serey's image as a nightclub dancer, Bologue wasn't surprised.

If this were true, Serey would be a sinner of the entire Night Race. If his name were mentioned in front of the woman, perhaps a conflict would erupt between the two right now.

As for telling the woman Serey's name after the auction ended.

Bologue glanced around at the guests immersing themselves in fervor, continuously bidding. It seemed only Bologue knew the outcome of this auction.

Oh, right, there was also his perpetually missing partner.

"Aren't you going to bid?" Bologue asked.

The bidding for the Blood and Flesh Derivation was nearing its end. As an undead, Bologue didn't think much of it, but for others, the Blood and Flesh Derivation was undoubtedly a chance to survive, so they were biting hard over the price.

"I don't like repeated bidding."

The woman said lightly, which Bologue could discern. Since they started chatting, she hadn't looked at the high stage and had been watching Bologue instead.

"But you make me find it a bit interesting. Making friends with someone from the Night Race these days isn't easy," the woman said meaningfully.

"I can only say I'm good at making friends; everyone likes me."

"Haha."

Upon hearing Bologue's words, the woman couldn't help but laugh.

Does Bologue know how to make friends? It was obviously a no. If he did, the two should have had a showdown in the field of romance just now. This guy completely missed the woman's hints and instead held onto his expert analysis of her relentlessly.

"You see, everyone likes me, even the Night Race," Bologue said.

The woman understood the meaning behind Bologue's words. She stopped smiling and, shaking her head, said,

"My liking isn't the same as what you think, just like you see an interesting little dog on the roadside. That's how I see you."

The woman's expression cooled as the bidding drew to a close, and the host began counting down. At this moment, the woman elegantly raised her hand.

Everyone's gaze was drawn to her, and with a simple wave, she withdrew it. She made no bid, nor said anything, merely performing that simple action. Everyone gave her puzzled looks, with some already predicting the ensuing tragedy.

Mocking the host wasn't something funny.

But to everyone's surprise, the host vigorously hammered and shouted with joy.

"Congratulations, you've bought it."

Another buyer was dumbfounded; he had been prepared to offer his worth, but the host simply ended it with a hammer.

Before the buyer could protest, the host added,

"Her value is extraordinary; you can't compare."

The voice was stern, allowing no doubt.

"Even if you offered all you had, it still wouldn't compare."

No Mammon Coin, no expression needed; her mere presence was a testament to value.

Others in the venue turned their gaze to this place, trying to get a clear view of the woman, who remained indifferent, still looking at Bologue as before, causing others to look at him too.

They mistakenly thought the two were together and whispered continuously.

"I want to buy something else," she said, looking at Bologue.

"You speak."

The host asked respectfully.

Only then did the woman shift her gaze to the host on the stage.

"I want to buy a piece of information."

"What will you offer?"

"Also a piece of information."

The host fell silent, wearing a mask outlined with golden threads, with thoughts hidden beneath.

"He will meet you personally."

The woman nodded, her gaze returning, as if this was just an interlude, the host immediately resumed the auction, as if nothing had happened.

"Then his name." Her voice was cold.

"Are you trying to show me your power?"

Bologue was completely unfazed by her threat.

"Is it not enough?"

"I told you, I'm new here."

"Newcomers wouldn't come here." She was getting a bit annoyed.

"I don't understand anything about this place, including your display of power."

Bologue paid no attention to her tone, continuing to narrate his self-crafted persona, "Unless you and the host have a close relationship and you're telling me, if I listen to you, I can take a shortcut and get what I want?"

Bologue smiled, lying with open eyes.

"Aren't you afraid of dying?"

"I won't die."

"Regarding the power you displayed behind you," Bologue continued, "I work at a company with decent perks, which shouldn't be much less than yours."

Listening to Bologue's earnest reply, the woman was suddenly puzzled, unsure why he was so composed. To her, he seemed either similar to her or far stronger, but clearly, Bologue was just a weak Condenser.

Only one possibility remained, that Bologue was a fool, and only a fool would be so dim-witted, only this explained everything so far.

The woman's gaze shifted from irritation to curiosity and slight pity.

Bologue's expression was unchanged; he seemed expressionless, without any change even in his eyes, the only variation was the occasional flicker of golden rings in his eyes.

The woman rubbed her forehead slightly, realizing how pointless her actions were, that she had wasted time on someone like Bologue.

"Forget it, you'll tell eventually."

The woman decided not to argue anymore, waiting for the auction to end, knowing she'd have ways to get Bologue to reveal the person's name.

"Do you know the most valuable item in this auction?"

As she remained silent, Bologue took the chance to press on.

"I don't know." She dismissed him; she was tired of talking to Bologue.

"I do."

Truthfully, Bologue's demeanor was indeed deceptive, with an earnestness so profound that made everything he said or did appear expert and serious.

Yet thinking deeply revealed inconsistencies in every step now she sensed it too, believing Bologue must be a fool, yet his earnest attitude seemed honest; he really knew what the headline item was.

"You know, approaching women like this is quite a failure."

She shook her head, concluding Bologue was someone with a problem, with strange interactions typical of talking to a fool.

"But I really do know."

"Then go ahead?"

Bologue fell silent, remaining quiet for a long while, during which the host sold quite a few items, strange things constantly appearing, though most were within Bologue's understanding, those beyond it were identified by Aimou.

Aimou's level in Alchemy could crush Bologue's, as she explained these things in his mind.

Powerful alchemical armaments, deceitful contract objects, even human trafficking appeared, as did odd products from the Order of Truth; fortunately, none were peculiar like Blood and Flesh Derivation, so Bologue didn't need to ask her for explanations.

After the grotesque and distorted display, Bologue gained new insight into the Order of Truth, realizing how these madmen operated.

Comparatively, Bologue realized Teda among them was one with relatively mild conditions.

He now understood why the Order Bureau found Teda safe and rational, someone using only alchemy puppets in experiments was a refreshing exception among these lunatics.

It also led Bologue to consider not being entirely antagonistic with Teda, knowing things might adjust.

Hoping Teda wouldn't do anything foolish.

Bologue's gaze swept across the crowd, aware Teda was among them.

The atmosphere was heated by the host, gearing up for the headline item, a crimson curtain draped over a box, with fervor in the host's speech.

"Next is the headline item of the auction..."

He declared, placing his hand on the curtain.

"Immortal Heart."

Bologue spoke before the host, his voice low, heard only by the woman, as her expression slightly shifted before relaxing again, thinking he was merely spouting nonsense.

"Holy Relic from the Blood Curators Sect."

The host uncovered the curtain, his voice booming.

"Immortal Heart!"

On the high platform, the crimson heart was still amidst cold quartz, its eerie ripples from inside affecting everyone's heartbeat and blood.

Chapter 297: The Beginning of Chaos

The scarlet heart lay still within the cold, transparent quartz. The surface of the crystal shimmered with a faint light, seemingly sealing the heart away, yet even so, the vibrant color still carried with it an abundance of life force, causing the heartbeat of everyone who gazed upon it to involuntarily quicken.

Bologue felt this, as did the woman beside him.

"Could it really... be the Immortal Heart?"

The woman, shedding her previously lazy demeanor, sat upright, a mix of excitement and unease flickering in her eyes.

The others were the same; the quiet atmosphere could no longer be maintained as whispers grew more and more cacophonous until the venue was in an uproar.

"You actually know about these? Who are you?" This time, the woman finally regarded Bologue seriously.

"In an occasion like this, does that question hold any significance?"

Bologue, wearing a mask, retorted with the woman's own words.

The woman let out a cold laugh, clenching her fist. It had been a long time since she felt such irritation and anger from one individual.

The host started introducing the Immortal Heart. His introduction wasn't long, merely mentioning that it was the Holy Relic of the Scarlet Decay Sect and that it could produce the Elixir of Immortality.

"If it were implanted into the human body, just imagine what could happen."

The host spoke mysteriously, but he did not drag it out for long, soon proclaiming candidly.

"The Undying Body!"

After the proclamation, the venue fell silent again, followed by even more fervent murmurs.

Undying.

To shed the fragile mortal shell and gain an immortal, indestructible body—how many people dreamt of such power, now displayed atop the podium, sold as a commodity.

"Aren't you interested in this thing? It might help you get rid of the curse of sunlight," Bologue whispered temptingly.

"Power comes at a cost."

The woman clearly knew more; aware of the Devil's cunning, her eyes showed no fervor for the Immortal Heart, only rationale and unease.

"What about you? Aren't you concerned about immortality?"

The woman turned the question on Bologue. She wasn't concerned about the Immortal Heart because she knew the price it demanded, but what about Bologue? A mere mortal like Bologue would charge ahead knowing the cost, yet why was he unconcerned?

"Not at all, anyway, I'm not going to die."

"You do have great confidence, indeed."

The woman began to find Bologue an interesting fellow; in her long life, this was the first time she'd met such a weirdo.

She grew interested in Bologue, but regrettably, Bologue was about to die. The woman didn't dwell on this; having lived long enough, she occasionally encountered interesting individuals, so someone like Bologue wasn't rare in her eyes.

Bologue was contemplating something entirely different; with Palmer missing, he had to carry out the task alone. With so many people in the venue, even the Undead Bologue couldn't cut a wide swath through them.

For this, Bologue thought of trying to make use of the woman beside him; as a member of the Night Race, she should possess great power, possibly instigating her desire for the Immortal Heart to create chaos.

Surprisingly, the woman clearly knew something he didn't, making her completely indifferent to the lure of the Immortal Heart, giving Bologue a headache.

The atmosphere in the venue turned frenzied, everyone shouting and constantly raising their bids, and as Bologue was racking his brains on how to act, the woman's words sank him deep into an icy sea.

"Your friend, he's Serey Villeries, isn't he?"

Bologue was dumbfounded, while the woman leaned forward, tilting her head to look at him. However, unlike the previous pink-tinted atmosphere, Bologue could clearly feel the killing intent emanating from the woman.

Obviously, she and Serey were archenemies.

"After the dawn judgment, a part of the Night Race was imprisoned in the Land of Eternal Night, while another part was under my dominion... apart from the traitor Serey, I can't think of anyone else straying outside these two factions, especially with such pure bloodline."

Scarlet eyes glimmered faintly, the killing intent nearly becoming tangible, like a sharp knife slowly slicing through Bologue's nerves.

"Want to fight? Here?"

Bologue's tone held no fluctuation, the Silver Snake slithered over his wrist, transforming into a sharp short dagger; judging by his serious demeanor, he seemed truly prepared for a showdown with the woman.

When the killing intent peaked, the woman chuckled, with the hostility dissipating.

"Someday, I will personally slaughter Serey, roasting him under the sun from dawn till dusk, repeating for seven days and nights."

"As for you?"

The woman seemed aware of what would happen next. Rising to leave, she said to Bologue before departing, "You're going to die here."

"These maniacs have no idea what they're fighting over."

Looking at the heart on the podium, the woman murmured,

"Who are you?" Bologue inquired.

"A dead man doesn't deserve to know my name," the woman replied.

"Since I'm already a dead man, knowing before I die wouldn't hurt, would it?" Bologue retorted, "The dead keep secrets."

"Olivia.

Olivia Villeries."

After a moment of silence, the woman suddenly revealed her name, reaching out as her sharp nails grazed Bologue's neck, her speed swift, like a gentle breeze.

By the time Bologue felt the delayed pain, a slender line of blood had already extended; the wound wasn't deep but still bled copiously.

Olivia took out a small bottle, collecting the blood that dripped from her nails.

Throughout the entire process, Bologue stood there in a daze. It wasn't that he didn't want to resist, but he simply couldn't move. An invisible ether bound his body, heavy shackles tightened his limbs.

It wasn't until Olivia sealed the blood away that this suppression vanished. Cold sweat soaked through Bologue's collar, this woman was far more powerful than he had imagined.

If she's like this, then what about Serey?

Bologue truly found it hard to connect that muscular man dancing on the steel pipe with the ancient and mysterious Night Race strongman.

This world is so absurd.

"What's your name, freak?"

Olivia pocketed the small vial containing the blood and smiled at the disheveled Bologue.

"Does a dead man's name matter?"

Bologue replied with a hint of amusement in his tone. Perhaps he couldn't beat Olivia, but in verbal exchanges, she was clearly lacking.

Olivia looked at the odd creature before her, he was truly peculiar. Even in such circumstances, he displayed no fear.

To think someone like this would be involved with Serey...

Recalling Serey's image in her memory, Olivia felt it wasn't impossible. Men with such strange personalities surprisingly appealed to someone like Serey.

"Then, does anyone else want to bid?"

The auctioneer called out from the high platform. The bidding for the Immortal Heart was coming to an end, the platform was filled with blood and bodies.

In the end, many began sacrificing their worth, some cutting off limbs, some offering freedom, everyone competing, bringing increasingly painful costs upon themselves.

Blood pooled beneath the auctioneer's feet, amidst the pervading despair, he continued to shout.

This time, no one responded. Everyone had been emptied of their worth. The auctioneer looked at the silent venue, feeling a bit disappointed. He had thought the scene would become even crazier.

"Well... it belongs to you then."

The auctioneer proclaimed the final winner.

The man had lost an eye, an arm, and both legs. He could only crawl desperately in the pool of blood, and he had lost fifty years of time. His body was aged beyond recognition, his movements painfully slow.

But it was all worth it, for as long as he got hold of that heart, everything he sacrificed would be restored.

With the last ounce of strength, the man raised his hand, but just as he was about to touch the heart, his arm fell lifelessly, blood fleeing from his aged body, turning into a bloodless corpse.

"Hmm... looks like this buyer has died. Is there anyone else who wants to bid for a chance to snatch it?"

The auctioneer became excited again, the remaining few on the platform had their eyes light up, preparing to fight once more.

At this moment, an eerie, oppressive murmuring sound arose, coming from all directions.

Instantly, a sense of extreme frenzy descended upon the place, everyone sharply sensed something bizarre and insane arriving, even the auctioneer curbed his smile.

Ether surged up in a moment. Even with the suppression of the Void Realm, the golden halo in Bologue's eyes became dazzling. The other people in the venue were the same, all entering battle preparation.

Olivia clearly understood what was going on; she looked at Bologue, regretting that Bologue was about to die. Otherwise, taking this guy back would have been quite interesting.

"Here's a final lesson for you: never speak to a lady with such eyes."

Olivia didn't care about what was going to happen next. She had full ability to escape.

"Why?"

Bologue also sensed that eerie power, but his expression remained calm.

"Because you look at me as if I'm a monkey in a zoo." Olivia said, "The way you look at me makes me doubt my own charm."

Her figure began to blur, then dissolved like ink into the air.

Bologue tried to locate Olivia's trace, but she had disappeared, just as she had come.

The sense of tension in his heart became increasingly clear. Bologue guessed that the anomaly happening now was what Olivia referred to as death.

A thunderous explosion sounded in an instant, and the entire venue shook violently.

The agitation in Bologue's heart was significantly eased, presumably because Palmer had detonated the bomb. Although still out of contact, his partner proved reliable in such deadly times.

The signal generator had been sealed by Bologue into the wall long ago. Unclear of the source of this eerie feeling, but the venue had already descended into chaos. All he had to do was cooperate with Palmer to completely destroy this place.

The explosion kicked up dust, rampaging through the corridors and extending into the venue.

Dense Iron Armor formed beneath his collar, Bologue was ready to engage, eagerly looking at the dust, waiting for Palmer's grand entrance.

But the anticipated boisterous laughter of raiders was absent, replaced by an even clearer sense of frenzy and an overwhelming scent of blood.

After the dust settled, knights clad in Iron Armor appeared before the corridor, silent, sealing all the exits of the venue.

The sound of flesh tearing resounded, and Bologue followed the sound to see that the auctioneer had become a headless corpse, the head rolled off the high platform, landing at the foot of the man dressed in a blood-red robe.

"Ah... we have come to welcome you."

Latis paid no attention to the head by his feet, looking fervently at the heart sealed within quartz.

After the fervor, he turned coldly to everyone in the venue, and ordered coldly.

"Offer them to Mother."

The silent knights all leapt up, wielding their heavy long swords as they came down with a chopping attack.

Chapter 298: Explosion

Bologue felt something was wrong. At least from the moment the explosion sounded, the original plan was completely disrupted, turning into the beginning of this madness.

The explosion wasn't caused by Palmer, but by the Simian Corrupt Sect. The most deadly thing was that their appearance was somewhat different from what Bologue had imagined.

In the original plan, Bologue had thought that the Simian Corrupt Sect would make a move for the Immortal Heart and battle with the Gray Trade Association, but the reality was that the Simian Corrupt Sect was not in the venue from the start. The defense of the Gray Trade Association was easily dismantled by these cultists until the venue was completely surrounded.

Bologue cursed the Gray Trade Association. These merchants sell such expensive things, yet didn't think to strengthen security?

But... it seems they can't be entirely blamed. The Simian Corrupt Sect are unwelcome guests. They didn't have an invitation, but they still found their way here.

Bologue looked at the heart on the high platform. It seemed to possess awareness, sensing the arrival of the believers, awakening for them, flesh swelling and twisting, countless cracks breaking out on the embedded quartz, blood oozing along the gaps, seeping beyond the quartz.

This was how they found the location of the venue. From the beginning, the Immortal Heart was constantly calling for their arrival.

"This wasn't in the documents!"

Bologue cursed fiercely, leaping from his position, then the sharp long sword shattered the place where he stood, the silent knight once again raising the blade, the darkness beneath the helmet gazing at Bologue.

"Is this the scenario the best of the best have to face?"

Bologue steadied himself, his indifferent expression gradually replaced by anger.

Geoffrey often told him, when performing field operations, to adapt to the changes in the situation, but isn't this phrase 'adapt to the situation' a bit too vague?

The Simian Corrupt Sect, in pursuit of the Immortal Heart, found the venue ahead of the Order Bureau. The merchants were routed, his partner was missing from the start, and now, before reinforcements arrived, everything relied on Bologue himself.

Oh, right, there's also a deadly Negative Power User in the venue, eyeing the Immortal Heart.

The silver lining amidst misfortune is that Bologue is not alone this time.

"Aimou, have you ever considered changing jobs?"

Next to him, an unlucky fellow was sliced in half by another knight, the corpse rolling down the steps, and in this horror film-like scene, Bologue calmly asked.

"What? What?"

Aimou was so shocked by the sudden change in the scene that she couldn't speak.

Everything she experienced today was like a minor, still in school age, suddenly thrown into a trench, the world refreshing at the speed of seconds.

"For example, joining the Field Operations Department? We are very short-staffed right now, and our benefits are great."

Bologue pulled out the Sheep Horn Shock Hammer, engaging directly with the knight, the metal clashing and rumbling constantly.

"Won't you consider it? I think you have extraordinary potential, and now is a great time to start nurturing it."

Bologue sidestepped a slash, his speed much faster than the knight's, the Sheep Horn Shock Hammer delivering a fierce blow to the side of the helmet.

He spoke like a human resources manager, telling Aimou, who came for a job, about the wonders of the work, but his hands were merciless. With a powerful blow, the head beneath the helmet was smashed into a bloody mess, a large spray of blood mixed with flesh splattering out.

"Ah? I... I'll consider it!"

Aimou stuttered.

Her current state was a bit chaotic, the Face of Horror and this grotesque freak show continuously affecting Aimou's mind. Even as an alchemy puppet, it developed a strong sense of fear.

But she's not that scared now, not because Aimou suppressed her emotions, but because another emotion was affecting her.

Bologue Lazarus.

It was Bologue influencing her. When this guy pulled out the Sheep Horn Shock Hammer and smashed the enemy's skull, this guy had no fear, instead, it was a near-perverse delight. This joy directly swept away the fear in Aimou's heart.

She's also starting to get excited. Aimou clearly knows that in such a damned situation, excitement is very unreasonable, but she can't control these feelings.

"Great! Then I'll get you an application form when I get back, and who knows if there's a bonus."

After smashing the skull, the knight fell over, seemingly dead, but Bologue's actions did not stop. He pressed his body low with force, another long sword grazing his hair as he passed, yet another knight reached his back.

The collision of metal sparked bright glitter, blood swung, transforming into scarlet wings.

Bologue closed in on the knight, leaving him with no space to swing his sword, and the next second, dense iron spikes burst from Bologue's arm, like rampantly growing steel thorns.

The Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid proliferated and solidified, and Bologue thought this move could penetrate the knight's armor, but after the sparks friction, the armor only had many shallow scratches. It was harder than Bologue expected.

Bologue immediately changed tactics, the iron spikes turned soft, transforming into a cluster of snakes that tightly coiled around the knight's sword-wielding hands.

He turned and waved his hand, a silver snake emerged from Bologue's sleeve and solidified into a slender blade in his hand. It sliced through the armor's gaps and beheaded the knight, killing yet another person.

Warm blood splattered on the mask, seeping into the leather. Bologue could smell the strong scent of blood, an excitant urging his nerves forward.

This task was far worse than Bologue had imagined, mainly because the situation on site changed too quickly. Aside from these suddenly attacking Corrupt Sect members, there was also a lady from the Night Race.

Despite the complaints, Bologue felt it was alright; after all, experts are born to tackle complex tasks.

Bologue enjoyed this slightly challenging situation. A game that's too easy to complete leaves him without a sense of accomplishment.

With the activation of Secret Energy, the intensity of the melee continued to escalate, bodies and blood aplenty.

This was also Bologue's first encounter with a large-scale melee involving Condensers, the various bizarre Secret Energies dazzling him. Aside from First Stage Condensers, some Prayer Believers were present as well.

Bologue guessed there might also be Negative Power Users hiding amongst them. Unlike Condensers and Prayer Believers, Negative Power Users have enough capability to conceal themselves, remaining independent from the chaos around them, and their intentions were clear.

Latis slowly walked up to the high platform, completely ignoring the chaos around him, with only his eyes fixed on the heart sealed in quartz.

Bologue took a deep breath, contemplating the next move; he wouldn't allow anyone to get hold of the Immortal Heart, aiming to prolong the chaos until the Order Bureau arrived.

Just as Bologue was considering what to do next, the knights who were supposed to be dead started moving again.

The beheaded ones picked up their own heads and placed them back on the severed necks. After the flesh healed, they reattached once more.

Only this time, after resurrection, one could clearly see bloated lumps of flesh growing out from the necks, almost pushing out the helmets.

This scenario kept happening again and again; some knights' armor already shattered, losing the restraints of the armor, and their flesh wildly proliferated, growing ferociously from the damaged parts until the end, hanging like tumors on the armor.

Undead?

Bologue shook his head; this evidently had nothing to do with the Undead, it was more like some sort of power from the Corrupt Sect.

The resurrected knights raised their blades once again. This time, Bologue held nothing back. The snake cluster forged into a round shield, blocking the blade's cleave. With a forceful swing, knocking the blade aside, the knight's chest was left completely exposed, and the Sheep Horn Shock Hammer came down mercilessly.

Once, twice, thrice.

The rumbling kept going until Bologue had completely shattered the knight's chest armor.

The nauseating stench rose up; underneath the chest armor was a mass of writhing and intertwined flesh that hadn't died from Bologue's heavy blow but instead showed a strong life force.

It was then Bologue vaguely understood; the armor wasn't protecting the flesh, it was restricting the flesh. Freed from the constraints of the armor, the flesh unabashedly began to grow.

The knight was still trying to stand up again, but at that moment, the flesh at his chest had grown into a giant sack of meat, heavily hanging on the chest. It took a few steps, unable to maintain balance, stumbling directly to the ground, but the growth of flesh didn't stop.

The flesh, like plants rooted in the earth, spread a layer of sticky blood-flesh fungal blanket on the cold stone steps.

Bologue looked elsewhere; others encountered the same situation. Some unlucky ones were caught by the flesh, which looked very much like the Blood and Flesh Derivation he had seen before, ripping open huge mouths filled with sharp teeth, eagerly devouring the unlucky ones' flesh.

Unlike the stable Blood and Flesh Derivation, these flesh masses exhibited extreme aggressiveness, consuming everything edible around them as if never satisfied.

Some were weary from dealing with the knights and the flesh's attack, some panicked and fled, searching for a way out, while others still stood in the venue, gazing complexly at the Immortal Heart.

"These merchants sure know how to pick a place."

Bologue muttered softly; now it has indeed become a Beast Fighting Arena.

Life and death, blood and bone. Everyone here happily chopped away as if they had deep-seated grudges amidst themselves.

Bologue lowered his head, took a deep breath, and when he lifted his head again, his blue eyes brightened, accompanied by the golden halo within them.

He took out the detonator from his pocket, and without any hesitation, pressed the switch, activating the Ether.

After a brief delay, a ground-shaking explosion erupted, the shock of the Ether swept through layers of buildings, and roaring booms plunged everyone's hearing into a void.

Soon, the storm descended upon everyone's ears.

The Void Realm maintaining the venue suffered heavy damage, the original suppression on Condensers weakened, along with the buildings cracking, large stones tumbling down from above, crushing the flesh into powder.

In the apocalyptic scene, Bologue stood together with the terrified Aimou amidst the smoke and dust.

Bologue ignored the falling boulders, indulging in his art creation as an explosion enthusiast.

Chapter 299: Orientation Training

For Aimou, this was absolutely the worst day of her short life.

First, Teda suddenly revealed the Key and chose to attend the Gray Trade Association's auction. Aimou didn't know the details of these events, but could tell from Bologue and Teda's reactions that this was a bad thing, even something that could make them hostile to each other.

To persuade her mentor, Aimou and Bologue came here together, only to witness the beginning of this madness.

After releasing the Shared Chord Body and co-existing with Bologue, Aimou felt like she was watching a movie.

Yes, a movie.

A bloody, violent, first-person perspective movie.

This must be the most realistic movie in the world. You can even feel the emotions of the protagonist in the movie.

Aimou watched herself smash one skull after another, swinging her sword to cut through twisted flesh, in the crimson ecstasy, pressing a switch like a terrorist, detonating pre-placed bombs.

All in one go.

From Bologue's emotional feedback, it seemed like he had no hesitation, decisive and fierce.

Is this the real Bologue?

Aimou felt she had gotten to know Bologue again, and also understood what his so-called Field Staff job was, as well as... this world.

This mad and chaotic world.

Aimou was too well-protected by Teda, completely ignorant of the darkness of this world. Now Bologue showed it all to her, unreservedly and brutally, exposing her to this bloody panorama.

"Are you scared?" Bologue suddenly asked.

"I..."

"It's natural to be," Bologue instructed Aimou, "You need to hold a sharp sword to reason with people," Bologue counseled Aimou, "and only by holding a sharp sword can you prevent seeing some things you don't want to see."

"Letting all of this happen, will it lead to terrible things?" Aimou asked.

"Hmm? I'm not really sure," Bologue looked around at the collapsing buildings, the continuously growing fleshly fungi, "but it seems so."

The emotions Aimou had painstakingly stirred up vanished thanks to Bologue's damn tone.

"But... unrelated to the current situation, sometimes you need to understand a principle, Aimou."

Bologue suddenly started talking about a principle in a very serious manner, knowing that Aimou was ignorant of this world's cold rules.

Even if she had some understanding from books, those were just fictional stories in books, she had never truly ventured into Hell, even now it was the same.

She was just hiding under Bologue's shell, Aimou had never truly faced all this.

Bologue didn't believe there is any absolute perfect protection in this world, not even for Aimou. In the future, there will come a day when she has to face all these.

"Pleading won't bring you mercy, if you want something, you must take it with your own hands."

Bologue's voice was severe.

"Destiny is only in your own hands."

Aimou seemed slightly disoriented, she asked back, "Can one decide their own destiny?"

"I don't know," Bologue replied bluntly.

"Huh?"

These fluctuating words left Aimou puzzled, but he continued, "But letting destiny control you, versus resisting it yet still being manipulated, are two different things."

"Isn't the result the same?"

"But the process is different," Bologue argued, "like how everyone will die, then why not just die early? Since everyone is going to die."

"You won't die."

"Then I'm an exception."

The dialogue fell silent, but during the conversation, Bologue had not stopped fighting, he fully assumed the role of a terrorist, fiercely engaging with the monstrosities around.

Aimou suddenly laughed, in this critical situation, the two were actually discussing such serious matters, it seemed quite absurd no matter how you looked at it.

"Why did you suddenly say these things?" Aimou asked, puzzled.

"Job training."

"Job training?"

Upon hearing Aimou's doubts, Bologue seemed more confused, saying, "Wasn't it agreed to join the Field Operations Department?"

Aimou was stunned, damn, this lunatic was serious!

...

The booming explosions escalated the site's chaos to a new peak, everyone was fighting with bloodshot eyes, either striking each other or panicking to escape.

In the midst of the collapsing stones, Latis also put away his composure, quickly ascending the high platform, wanting to embrace the Immortal Heart in his arms, but just as he was about to approach the Immortal Heart, it was as if he suddenly woke up, forcibly suppressing the fervor in his heart, swallowing his saliva, he called out silently.

"Protect the Holy Relic!"

The scattered cultists moved towards the high platform, while the knights obviously couldn't follow orders; they only acted on instinct, attacking nearby living creatures.

Chunks of flesh covered the ground, quickly blanketing most of the venue with a sticky fungal carpet. Some Condensers conjured intense flames, but the fire could not completely burn the flesh; it regenerated rapidly, shedding its charred black crust and growing more resilient scarlet branches.

"Ignore those rotten roots!" Latis shouted.

The knights were merely vessels that restrained them. Once damaged, these rotten roots grew wildly like plants, absorbing all available nutrients nearby.

These wicked creations were flesh constructs devised by the Scarlet Sect, and under the insatiable hunger of the Crimson Queen, these constructs imbued with her power possessed the same voracious appetite. Even sheltered followers, if too close, would be devoured by them.

One landed on the ground would trigger a calamity of flesh, and today Latis had released many rotten roots.

These creations were extremely dangerous but also immensely valuable. If it were not for reclaiming the Immortal Heart, Latis wouldn't have paid such a high price.

Most importantly, without these rotten roots, with his current power, he truly had no confidence in reclaiming the Immortal Heart.

Not only were there enemies from the Gray Trade Association here, but also guests who desired the Immortal Heart, as well as the land's rulers, the Order Bureau.

For now, the Scarlet Sect controlled the scene, but that didn't mean they had won. The Order Bureau had yet to enter, and no one knew how they would appear.

A cultist stepped forward, and without hesitation, sliced open his abdomen with a dagger. His intestines spilled onto the ground, but as if unable to feel pain, he reached to grab the Immortal Heart and stuffed it into the wound in his abdomen.

Latis understood the power of the Immortal Heart better than anyone and knew how bizarre it was. To safely transport it, various seals and protections were needed, but clearly, there was no time to do so now. They had to use a flesh body to transport it.

This could only temporarily stabilize it, but for Latis, this was enough.

"Construct the Blood Gate!"

Latis ordered once more.

Another group of cultists carried a large quantity of flesh, piling broken limbs and organs into a shape resembling a door.

The entire venue was concealed within rocks and soil. Latis found its precise location through resonance with the Immortal Heart.

It was easy to come, but difficult to leave. This place was within the Great Rift, where unknown forces constrained the land, making the Key of the Crooked Path unusable. Only devil's power could barely break the rules.

The Tyrant obviously wouldn't be so kind as to open the door for them, so they could only call upon that gluttonous existence.

Still within the venue... no, the Beast Fighting Arena, the Condensers were all wearied handling the continuously growing rotten roots. Latis also showed no restraint in using his Negative Power User abilities, as the Ether hovered around him, warning any malicious individuals.

Thus, the Scarlet Sect's actions proceeded unexpectedly smoothly. Until now, nobody interfered. But no one noticed that the previously deceased host was slowly rising, the headless body searching all about, finally finding its head within a mass of rot.

"Everyone!"

A piercing voice rang out, overshadowing all noise, accompanied by an undeniable force.

Everyone stopped moving, even the rapidly growing flesh froze. All eyes fell upon the source of the voice.

The headless body held up its head high, the voice issuing from the golden mask covering the head.

"How do you show your devotion to a god?"

The voice questioned, then answered itself.

"Ascetic practice, celibacy, day after day of prayer, continually inflicting pain upon oneself to prove one's piety."

Everyone listened, forced to listen.

"I don't need such devotion, I don't want your pain, nor require your sacrifice. What I need is value.

Show your value.

Offer your value to me, to my lands."

The voice was like a storm, sweeping over everyone, not just echoing within the Beast Fighting Arena, but across every inch of land the Void Realm could encompass.

"In return, I shall bestow my protection, and the one of the greatest value will receive the fruit of imagination...

fulfill his wish."

The words ceased, and the headless body lost all strength, collapsing, the power vanished, and it truly died.

Everyone remained silent. Strangely, they didn't need to ponder the content or the truth of the words; the moment they listened, they could confirm the reality of it all and the promise of that voice.

The silence was shattered by a piercing howl, and then a sharp Iron Spear traversed a great distance, accurately striking the yet incomplete Blood Gate, shattering the limbs and flesh into countless fragments.

At the end of that trajectory, Bologue slowly retracted his spear-throwing hand, carefully inspecting the patterns on his palm. Aside from his own and Aimou's Alchemy Matrix, a layer of ghostly blue arc glimmered faintly.

Bologue confirmed something, and so did everyone else.

From this point, everyone believed the words of that voice.

...Protection had descended.

"Tyrant!"

Tiras roared angrily, he knew who the voice belonged to and understood what was happening; yet he couldn't comprehend why the Tyrant would intervene in all of this.

The Tyrant's power should be limited, unable to directly influence this world. But just as the Crimson Queen could use sacrifice to grant protection to her followers, the Tyrant possessed his privileges, and these privileges belonged solely to this land.

This was a land where wishes could come true.

Chapter 300: Screening Value

While different forces were fighting to the death within the venue, the Wandering Crossroad seemed surprisingly quiet. Like always, it was gloomy and profound. After the blizzard, every corner of this malformed building cluster was covered in ice.

The pedestrians on the street had decreased significantly, and even within the Spider Web Bar, there were only a few guests.

It's unclear whether the harsh weather had restricted people's movement or if they too were invited by the Gray Trade Association to participate in that chaotic slaughter.

Some people knew such information and then looked suspiciously towards the bar counter.

Compared to these events happening in secret, what truly intrigued them was the mysterious absence of Vika, who had never been missing from behind the bar counter.

Now, Nelli had taken on the bartender's duties, and when someone asked him about Vika's whereabouts, he calmly replied that Vika was resting today.

Resting?

No one believed this answer. For many people, since they first knew Vika, he had never left the bar counter. If the Spider Web Bar was the center of Wandering Crossroad, then Vika was the center of this bar. Now that he left, it made people feel somewhat uneasy.

Above the Spider Web Bar, between the twisted buildings, countless cables crossed each other, finally intersecting at the massive, egg-like grotesque structure above.

Everyone who came to the Spider Web Bar could look up and see the giant egg shrouded in mist deep inside, wrapped in countless cables, as if it was birthed by some creature, nurturing a bizarre madness.

Now within this enormous egg-like building, there was only one extremely dark room. Vika sat on a worn sofa, his body comfortably collapsed back.

The air was filled with the scent of alcohol, and at his feet were several empty bottles.

The black-and-white TV in front of him was the only source of light in the room. Accompanied by the static noise of the current, its pale glow shone on Vika's face, making his complexion utterly bloodless.

He focused intently on the content of the TV, where rampant blood and flesh was spreading unchecked, devouring everyone around.

A familiar figure was hacking through them, brutally killing each monster born of blood and flesh.

Vika recognized this person; his name was Bologue Lazarus.

"Is this really okay? A rare opportunity to harvest value, but it ended up like this."

Vika suddenly spoke as if conversing with another person, but in this dark room, he was evidently alone.

"From the beginning, we all knew that something like the Immortal Heart was beyond our control. Even if we did control it, the Order Bureau would never accept it. But what about the fruit of imagination?"

Vika shook his head in confusion. Despite being with them for so long, he still couldn't understand the thoughts of these entities... It made sense, as these beings were inherently unfathomable.

"The fruit of imagination requires someone to use it to reveal its true value. Stored in my hands, it's just another dull collection."

Another voice echoed, one so familiar to Vika.

Vika turned to look at the other side of the sofa, where no one was seated, but a mirror was placed. In the mirror, a familiar yet strange face looked back at him.

"This is a selection, a trial, to choose the most valuable person..."

The self in the mirror said joyfully.

"And then?" Vika asked.

"I want to see what kind of wish he would make with the fruit of imagination," the Tyrant replied.

"Is that all?"

Vika continued to inquire, knowing that the creature in the mirror was definitely not so kind-hearted. There was another purpose, a cruel intention.

"Hmm... I want to see if his wish can be fulfilled, and also, when even the fruit of imagination cannot satisfy his desires, whether he will..."

The Tyrant didn't continue but instead let out a hoarse laugh.

Vika was not surprised; he was long accustomed to the ways of these Devils.

Devils never lie nor deceive. They're honest and follow the rules, but unfortunately, every piece of advice given by the Devils leads people to a more insane abyss. The most sorrowful part is that people are fully aware of this yet cannot find a reason to refuse.

"Who have you set your eyes on?"

Vika understood the Tyrant's little schemes. His role to the Tyrant was limited, merely serving as his vessel in the physical world.

What the Tyrant needed was not a vessel like Vika but a true Deputy capable of executing his commands.

"Is it him? Or him?"

Vika pressed the remote, causing the images on the TV to rapidly switch.

First appeared a guy seemingly lost, looking around while standing before the austere gate. The screen switched to a woman wearing a veil quickly proceeding forward. From the structure of the buildings, the two seemed about to meet.

"Hmm? No, it can't be, they've both already been chosen by my siblings."

The Tyrant shook his head and spoke in a low voice.

"Beelzebub is still manageable; she seems crazy, but she's truly a glutton. As long as she's well-fed, she doesn't care about anything happening.

But the other one is more troublesome. We all rather dislike him, and if possible, I'd prefer not to disturb him for now."

"What about them?"

Vika continued pressing the remote.

The black and white images continued to switch. A group of fully armed gray-white warriors was fiercely attacking a wall covered with light trails. Their firepower was intense, and the solid Void Realm and walls were breaking bit by bit, as if they might be completely destroyed at any moment.

"Oh, the Order Bureau? I've always suspected that they had the shadows of my siblings behind them, but I've never been able to discern who it is," murmured the Tyrant.

"And these people?"

In the black and white images, another group of people was running wildly in the corridor. Unlike the chaotic crowd, these people were clearly trained to standard, each carrying an aura of murder with a clear purpose.

"Interesting, I've been observing them. Maybe they will bring me an unexpected surprise," said the Tyrant meaningfully.

Pressing the remote, the image switched to another end of the corridor, where two people who shouldn't be there appeared before the Tyrant. They were walking slowly, as if they were searching for something.

Seeing them, the Tyrant laughed out loud, pointing at the screen and said, "I like these two guys."

"It's unfortunate that they have his eyes on them," the Tyrant said regretfully. "What a pity."

"And what about him?"

Vika brought another person into view. Amidst the chaotic venue, he was hiding in the shadows, his gaze never leaving the Immortal Heart.

The Tyrant said nothing, only laughed heartily, as if mocking the man on the screen.

Finally, the image returned to the beginning view. Just like before, the berserker was wielding his sharp weapon, grinding all approaching monsters into minced meat.

The Tyrant fell silent, appreciating the scene before him. After a long while, he stared at Bologue in the image and spoke softly.

"Immensely valuable."

Listening to the broadcast, Vika put down the remote and quietly watched all this.

No one could have guessed that this was the true purpose of the Gray Trade Association... or rather, the Tyrant. The true value that was offered to the Tyrant was not the goods sold at the auction, but these people who came driven by desire.

Their identity, their actions, their impact on the world's trajectory.

This is where the true value lies.

...

Olivia advanced quickly down the corridor. She accepted the invitation of the Gray Trade Association just to find the information she needed from that terrifying figure, buying things was entirely secondary.

Yet the situation on site changed too rapidly. The attack of the Blood Rot Sect, followed by consecutive explosions, clearly someone had set up layer upon layer of traps here, and she had the misfortune of stumbling into it.

"These lunatics."

Olivia muttered under her breath. She had just attempted to head back to the Central Courtyard, but before she could reach it, a violent explosion had already turned it into ruins, destroying all the doors.

Unlike others, as an ancient member of the Night Race, she also possessed some means to break through rules, but soon she heard the voice of the Tyrant, that madman had turned this place into a Beast Fighting Arena, the frenzied power had descended, and no one could leave easily.

When she heard the fruition of fantasy, Olivia was indeed tempted. For her, the value of that exceeded the Blood and Flesh Derivation and the Immortal Heart, but she was also aware of one thing, the gifts promised by the Devil were not easily obtained.

Now she only wanted to stay away from the chaos and find a suitable opportunity to escape from here.

"The real big shots haven't arrived yet."

Olivia talked to herself, knowing the location of the venue, and outside this land, there loomed a menacing behemoth.

So far, the Order Bureau hadn't appeared, or maybe they did, just hidden in the shadows she couldn't see.

She once dealt with the Order Bureau, but that was a century ago, during the Dawn War that destroyed the Night Race.

For the Undead, such a time wasn't long, everything felt as if it had happened yesterday.

Besides anger, there was complete fear as she knew meeting people from the Order Bureau in such a place would lead to unforeseeable actions on their part.

Too terrible.

Olivia even suspected whether this auction was a trap set up by the Order Bureau and the Tyrant, after all, this wouldn't be their first collaboration.

Are they fishing for me?

Olivia quickly dismissed the idea. If she was the target, she should have already been captured by now, perhaps even exposed to the sunlight.

Blood Rot Sect?

That was indeed possible. Olivia knew what was hidden beneath the Great Rift, and the Blood Rot Sect definitely wasn't the most welcome guest to the Order Bureau.

They could allow the Tyrant to set up his territory here, but would never allow the approach of the Blood Rot Sect.

But... Olivia felt that it wasn't that simple.