

Endless 341

Chapter 341: Touching the Crown

At the bottom of the Great Rift, in the Abandoned Land of Ashes, where Calamity lurks...

The Holy City of Remongedon, King Solomon's sacred city, has stood silently here since the Fall of the Holy City sixty-six years ago, echoing across the distance like a Shadow City with Oath City Oubos.

Endless flames of war during Scorched Earth Fury couldn't destroy this city, and sixty-six years later, neither could the burning and ashes of Calamity. It stands here eternally, like an obelisk that never collapses.

The thunderous roar sounded again, like a bell being struck, but this city is dead now, unable to awaken anyone. Then the scorching winds were cast out from behind the city walls, blowing over the ashes, spreading to the distant surroundings and the rift.

Bologue stood numbly beneath the magnificent city walls, which shielded him from most of the heatwave. Burning embers rose endlessly behind the high walls, and one could vaguely hear the eerie sound of the wind, resembling the whispers and roars of some monster.

"A light..."

Bologue whispered. Now, through personal experience, he had fully proven that long-standing hypothesis.

The Fall of the Holy City was not as simple as the official records claimed. At least, there was indeed some force akin to "a light".

Whether it destroyed both warring parties, Bologue wasn't sure, but it was certain that the formation of the Great Rift and the sinking of the Holy City into the rift must be related to it.

The earth shifted, all things burned, under his wrath, sulfur streaked across the sky, and everyone turned into pillars of salt...

This was a power beyond all, one even a Seeker of Glory might find difficult to achieve.

"Bestowed with the holy crown..."

Bologue murmured to himself. For a moment, all sounds vanished from his ears, leaving only the echoes of memory.

Bologue still remembered his previous conversation with Teda, where they discussed King Solomon's might and the destruction of the Fall of the Holy City.

Bologue once thought the destruction of the Holy City was merely a casualty of the long conflict between the Kagader Empire and the Rhine Alliance. But after becoming a Condenser and learning all these secrets, he found there might be other reasons behind the Fall of the Holy City.

King Solomon was not only a master of Alchemy but also a Seeker of Glory.

King Solomon was too close to the "Secret Source", so close that he might have been the first recorded Crowned in history...

"So he was destroyed..."

Bologue murmured.

All official records are untrustworthy. Bologue did not know what the war between the two colossal forces was truly about, but he knew for sure that King Solomon's emergence must have disrupted the balance between them.

From Bologue's perspective, he thought King Solomon probably didn't truly touch the actual crown. He was more likely discovered while ascending to become a Crowned, and both sides tacitly agreed to a truce and turned their forces towards King Solomon.

It's unimaginable how terrifying the power of a Crowned would be, but unfortunately, Bologue couldn't witness it. King Solomon was already dead.

From the moment King Solomon upset the balance, the bloodthirsty warring sides would never let him live.

"To touch the crown and become the one absolute King."

As if revealing a secret not meant to be known, upon realizing all this, Bologue felt as if he was being watched.

It was as if a curse had been placed on this secret, that anyone who knew would be detected by him. Bologue instinctively became wary, but all around him was just the gray deathly silence, with no life other than Calamity.

Bologue raised his head again, looking up at the ash-laden high walls and the sparks drifting out from behind them.

Behind this high wall once seemed to be the Celestial Kingdom, but now only the dead silence of Hell lies beyond it.

Bologue then gazed at the steep cliffs surrounding him, the rift constantly spreading, leaving terrifying scars on the earth.

If this entire deduction is correct, then Bologue understood why the Great Rift came to be.

This was a dying retaliation by a potential Crowned, just inches away from wearing that holy crown. Even without truly becoming the Crowned, Bologue believed that at that moment, King Solomon should have wielded that power beyond all.

Thus, in his final moments, King Solomon pierced through the earth, leaving this terrifying scar to ensure the world would forever remember his existence, along with his Holy City, which will remain here forever.

"Bologue, are you okay?"

Aimou spoke, noticing that Bologue had been dumbfoundedly standing since a few minutes ago, occasionally clenching his fist or holding his breath.

"I'm fine... I'm fine."

Bologue replied simply, needing some time to digest all this information.

If the deduction is correct, it also reasonably explains the scene Bologue witnessed before, rains of fire and sulfur, everyone burning into pillars of salt...

King Solomon's power.

With repeated deep breaths, Bologue then thought of another matter, one that he had repeatedly questioned himself about and continuously doubted.

Oath City, Opus.

Why has this place become the continuation of war, why does it seem like the core of a whirlpool, attracting all sorts of demons and monsters to this city, why have those sinister devils all taken seats on this land, watching on as humans slaughter each other.

Now Bologue understands, it's never been the Oath City, Opus that was special, but the events that once transpired here, this Holy City of Raymond Gaudent that stood amid shadows, forgotten by the world, they are the original masters of this land.

King Solomon.

If King Solomon truly touched that sacred crown, then he must have some path to ascend to being a Crowned...

Yes, this is what drives people mad about this land, it is also the source of the endless dispute between the Order Bureau and the Rhine Alliance. Whoever masters all of this, discovers the buried secret, may be the first to become Crowned and break the balance of conflict.

Bologue starts to get a headache, this is truly not a good time to know secrets.

Realizing all this, Bologue also harbors doubts about the past's history, much like this city submerged in ashes, past secrets have yellowed with time, unless experienced personally, no one knows what really happened on this land in the past.

What makes Bologue doubt are those sinister and frenzied existences.

The Devils.

Judging by the damnable nature of the devils, whether it is the Scorched Earth Rage that triggered a bloody war in various countries, or the Fall of the Holy City that ended it all, Bologue believes the devils must be involved, and they are enjoying it greatly. Most importantly, what role do the devils play in this continent-devastating event?

Are they facilitators, or destroyers?

Bologue cannot figure it out, these matters can only be asked of those devils, and the price needed, it surely will be extremely high.

"The devils are really a damn bunch..."

Bologue exclaimed once more; since the beginning, Bologue has been drawn into the pitch-black fate of the devils, the more he advances, the more he entangles with the devils.

Recalling when he fell into the Great Rift, that numb and irresistible feeling, Bologue even thinks his fall here, the discovery of all this, was orchestrated in secret by the Tyrant, intentionally letting him see these, and instilling a thirst for the secrets of the past, to pay a much greater price.

Bologue stops pondering these matters; he braces himself, dragging his weary body towards the high walls.

In memory, until he lost consciousness, the besieging armies still failed to break through the gate's defense. It stands there, like a natural hazard, blocking all foreign enemies.

As he approaches, Bologue's mind gradually calms, he now has a peculiar feeling, returning here after sixty-six years feels like he is about to fulfill his original mission, to conquer this already dead city.

The pitch-black shadows gradually engulf Bologue, just as he was about to reach the bottom of the city wall, thunder rumbles once more, scorching hot flames sweep past his head, and the entire city becomes part of an apocalyptic scene in the fiery light.

Bologue reached the bottom of the city gate. After sixty-six years of burning and eroding, a thick layer of ashes stuck together, forming a gray-white shell attached on it.

After forcefully knocking it off, corroded metal surfaces become visible, full of various dents and countless cracks, all these testify to the battles it had endured in the past.

Rather than a city gate, it is better to say it is two towering iron walls, with a narrow gap that extends to the top, Bologue tried to push the city gate, but his strength was obviously insufficient to budge it an inch, and attempting to pry it open with a folding knife is out of the question.

It was immovable sixty-six years ago, and it's the same sixty-six years later.

Thundering sounds roared, scorching winds surged behind the city gate, and amidst the continuous tremors, the decayed white shell fell off, revealing an angel holding a Fire Sword engraved on the gate, two Fire Swords crossed, guarding the existence behind the gate.

A slight ray of light seeped through the gap, transforming into a burning white line that crossed Bologue's vision, reaching deep into the heavy shadows behind him.

"Come here..."

A voice echoed by his ear, summoning Bologue.

The emerald eyes slightly dilated, veiled in bewilderment, Bologue had no room to resist and was captured by this mysterious voice.

His hands gripped the gap between the gates, even though the searing metal burned his hands, Bologue did not stop, vowing to open this door.

Aimou, at this time, also realized something was wrong with Bologue, but she had been disassembled completely by Bologue, except for loudly calling Bologue's name, she could do nothing.

This time the thundering roar did not cease, in the shadows where light couldn't reach, scarlet things crawled out, like a horde of serpents, they slithered through the ashes on the ground, gradually closing in on Bologue.

Bologue was too close to Calamity, the influence he received was amplified, he thought he was normal, not realizing since he approached the Holy City, sinister pollution had already covered Bologue's will, like a potent poison, finally erupting at this moment.

"Bologue!"

Aimou shouted in panic, but Bologue could no longer hear her voice, stubbornly persisting in prying open the city gate.

Scarlet appendages crawled from behind at this moment, gradually entwining around Bologue's calves, then thighs, waist, throat, until Bologue was completely ensnared.

The appendages exerted slight pressure, and Bologue was like a squeezed fruit, blood squeezed out from the gaps, and Aimou's remaining body emitted a cracking metallic sound.

At the moment of impending doom, a heavy sound resonated, followed by a sharp whistle, a massive crossbow arrow descended, pinning the scarlet appendages to the ground.

Chapter 342: Abyss Watcher

Blood and flesh shattered, with blood splattering everywhere. Breaking free from the limbs' restraints, Bologue and Aimou fell directly into a pool of blood, while the crossbow arrow was stuck not far from him. As for the impaled limbs, they convulsed painfully, spraying more blood.

The impact brought waves of pain, and Bologue's mind gradually cleared up. He struggled a few times lying on the ground but still couldn't stand up.

When caught by the limbs, it crushed Bologue's calf. With ether depleted, Bologue simply couldn't heal this injury.

Bologue could only laboriously crawl on the ground, and as he moved, he took the opportunity to observe the massive crossbow arrow.

The arrow itself was crafted from pitch-black metal, slender and sharp, more akin to a giant long spear made for hunting legendary sea monsters or giants; in any case, this weapon was not designed for humans from the start.

On the surface of the black metal floated a faint light, intricate patterns flashing; this arrow was an alchemy armament.

"Good news, we're saved."

Bologue said to Aimou, "I must have triggered some kind of defense mechanism, so it seems the Desperate Outpost will certainly notice the anomaly here."

The limbs struggled painfully, and the ground trembled violently. More limbs lifted from the ashes, their scarlet flesh covering mouthparts like human faces. They opened wide, sharp teeth interlacing and clashing, producing a chilling, tooth-gnashing sound.

"The bad news is the defense mechanism might kill us along with it."

Bologue growled while dragging his body, striving to avoid contact with the limbs and maintain a safe distance.

In this situation, Bologue's resistance was utterly meaningless; he simply couldn't escape the hunt of these limbs. Worse, he had awakened from Calamity's temptation, but his mind continued to suffer tearing pain until it exploded, unbearably.

Bologue's complexion was pale, cold sweat soaking his collar, and his expert instinct led him to make the wisest judgment.

He let go of Aimou, shielding her beneath him. In these circumstances, Bologue was not concerned about his survival; now, he just needed to protect Aimou, even if he died, others could handle the aftermath.

The limbs ahead suddenly lifted, but at that moment, more whistles sounded, and arrows kept arriving, accurately shooting down these awakened limbs.

Above Bologue, further above Holy City, the sprawling buildings, like rings, constructed along the steep cliffs. On the extending platforms, large arrow platforms continuously fired down at the awakening limbs.

This building complex, similar to wandering crossroads, had a name Bologue was very familiar with, having witnessed personally.

Desperate Outpost.

"Careful not to hit that unlucky guy."

The steady voice echoed in the minds of the crossbowmen, then shattered by the whistling of arrows.

After the man finished instructing, he overlooked down into the Abyss from the high platform, with Holy City standing calmly within. In its original Golden Palace's location, a sunken pit replaced it, burning fiercely, seemingly reaching deep into Hell, from where the relentless firestorm originated.

The sight shifted outside the city gates, as crimson awakened from the earth, and arrows continued firing, piercing flesh and pinning them back to the ground.

In this roaring apocalypse scene, a figure lay among it, seemingly dead.

Seeing that figure, Holt's expression was somewhat complex.

"This guy actually managed to reach here..."

Holt felt a bit uneasy. As early as a few days ago, Lebius had already cautioned him that Bologue Lazarus always gave people unexpected surprises, hoping the fourth group's rescue would be quick to prevent Bologue from discovering these things.

Initially, Holt didn't care much. In the Desperate Void of Abandoned Land, judged by just First Stage ability, Bologue couldn't get far, let alone reaching the core area and coming before Holy City.

Bologue managing not to die in the outer regions was considered a miracle.

But now the facts unfolded right before his eyes. Bologue had quietly reached here, and the Desperate Outpost was completely unaware.

"According to our judgment, he should have fallen at the perimeter, so the rescue team kept lingering there..."

Standing beside Holt, the man analyzed, bearing thick lenses, appearing knowledgeable.

He was astonished that in the face of the unknown, Bologue dared to risk and chose to delve into the Abandoned Land, evading continuous firestorm.

In the deputy's view, the entire Abandoned Land was a self-contained, massive cage. The Serenity Defense Line's constructed ether vacuum could revert any Condenser setting foot into a mortal's state, while the firestorm ignited by Calamity alongside light scorching could destroy anyone attempting to approach. Moreover, occasionally Calamity might briefly awaken, instinctively consuming.

"Evan, stop analyzing, fact is this guy truly reached here," Holt shook his head, interrupting Evan's words, "now let's think about how to explain these to him."

"By the way, can the Border Sanatorium help erase his memories?" Holt asked again, "Instead of weaving lies to explain, it's more prudent to simply delete the memory."

As the leader of the fourth group, the Abyss Watchers, Holt only needed to do two things: watch over this place, ensuring it remained in its eternally desolate state, and bury the secrets here forever, preventing anyone without authority from knowing the stories of this place.

"Sorry, we have no such cooperation with the Border Sanatorium. To be accurate, in recent years, there has been no case of someone mistakenly entering the Abandoned Land, witnessing the Holy City, and surviving," Evan remarked calmly.

"So we're just going to let him leave like that?" Holt doubted.

"That depends on your discussion with Lebius," Evan said, pressing his hand against the whistle by his ear. After a few seconds, he continued, "Lebius is already on his way."

Holt was silent for a moment, his gaze ominously fixed downward.

The pitch-black crossbow arrows embedded into the ground, crushing flesh at the same time. The towering black iron columns resonated with each other, collectively forming some kind of Alchemy Matrix. Pale blue arcs throbbed across the metal surface like obscure runes, and then they linked together, forming a Holy Words of electric light.

Dazzling thunder enveloped the crossbow arrows, erupting into a fleeting storm of lightning. Roaring thunder struck the surrounding material, easily piercing thick ashes, and even the flesh hidden below turned into foul blood.

Bologue pressed Aimou down, hiding under layers of the lightning storm. The deafening noise destroyed Bologue's hearing, with blood flowing out of his ears.

"We're still alive!"

Bologue shouted at Aimou.

Though he couldn't hear his own voice, Bologue felt he was yelling. He wanted to say more, but his vision uncontrollably plunged into darkness, his consciousness weighted down until he passed out.

Bologue had reached his limit; consecutive injuries accumulated and finally killed him.

After the thunder, the awakening flesh was subjected to some invisible suppression, no matter how furiously it struggled, its own support continued to collapse, as if giant hands were grabbing them, dragging them back under the ashes, burned into ashes by the rolling flames.

"The suppression is over."

The report sounded in their minds. Holt gestured slightly to Evan, who pulled a lever by his side. After a few tremors, the platform below began to slowly descend.

The descent continued for a few minutes. Holt arrived at the ash-covered Abandoned Land; he had been stationed here for many years, but to this day, he was still unaccustomed to this Ether vacuum feeling.

Arriving at the gate of the Holy City, Evan checked the condition of the gate and saw it was still tightly closed, which relieved him a lot. Holt stood next to Bologue's corpse, looking at this scarred fellow.

"Is this guy dead? Can we just leave him here?" Holt frowned slightly, not expecting Bologue to die at a critical moment.

Evan pushed up his glasses and explained, "Leader, he is an Undead. If you take the corpse out, he will come back to life."

"Ah, is that so? Did Lebius mention that?"

"He did, but you probably forgot."

There was no trace of helplessness in Evan's tone, as he was already accustomed to the leader's demeanor.

"Honestly, my memory is getting worse. Should I retire, Evan?"

Holt said as he picked up Bologue's body. At that moment, the ground beneath them trembled slightly, and a crimson limb raised again, apparently a remnant from the earlier suppression.

"Leader, you're only 37 years old this year, in your prime, and still some time away from retirement."

Evan stood expressionlessly beside Holt. Holt casually raised his hand, and a massive surge of Ether disappeared in an instant, with the crimson limb shattered into countless fragments in a moment.

"I'm only 37 this year?" Holt showed a surprised expression and then helplessly rubbed his head, "I feel like I'm almost 85. When can I retire? I'm really fed up with this hellhole..."

Holt kept complaining, while Evan sighed quietly; listening to these complaints for too long made even him feel quite irritable, but unable to comment since this was his leader.

The two were about to leave, but Holt stopped again, noticing something. He then looked at what Bologue had been protecting beneath him.

A ball of charred, slightly shining scrap metal.

"Did Lebius mention there's such a thing?"

Holt asked.

Chapter 343: 2nd Hospitalization

Opening his eyes, the gray-white ceiling came into view, a slightly chilly breeze brushed by, and Bologue saw a pure white angel descending from the sky, reaching out to him.

Is this... the Celestial Kingdom?

Bologue was bewildered for a few seconds and quickly realized that given his actions, he wouldn't end up in Hell, nor in the so-called Celestial Kingdom, right?

With ample self-awareness, Bologue struggled to open his eyes, trying to discern the curtains dancing in the wind.

Indeed, he probably should wear glasses normally.

He wasn't dead, nor in any Celestial Kingdom; he just slept too long, his mind became jumbled together, and his consciousness had slowed.

His body was overwhelmed with a fatigue difficult to alleviate, Bologue tried to lift his hand to rub his eyes, but then a wave of pain shot through his arm, immobilizing him.

At times like this, he should just rest quietly, but stubbornly, he raised his hand, enduring the pain to lift it, only to see his arm wrapped in bands with an IV line attached.

"It hurts so much... Aimou, what happened?"

Bologue asked, he had gotten accustomed to querying his state with Aimou, knowing that Aimou remained conscious when he himself fell into a coma, which was quite advantageous for him.

Realizing Aimou wasn't there, Bologue felt uneasy, instinctively assuming that Aimou would always be in the Shared Chord Body state with him.

Bologue lay motionless on the hospital bed, beginning to carefully recall his experiences before falling into a coma. As an Undead, upon awakening from death, Bologue couldn't control where he would appear; like after a hangover, he had to strive to recall events before his death and connect the story.

Soon, the lightness on Bologue's face vanished, he sat up nervously, looking around in panic.

The ward was empty; only Bologue was there. Normally after resurrection, he should be restored to his complete state, yet this time he still felt fatigued, lacking strength, with an unsettling hunger stirring deep within.

Few things could still affect Bologue post-resurrection, Bulimia Nervosa being one of them.

Suppressing the nausea in his heart, Bologue pushed open the room door, searching for something along the corridor.

...

"I'm truly envious of that bastard! Died so miserably, yet managed to come back alive!

Wow, you guys should have seen what he looked like then, like he was swallowed by a monster, partially digested, and then expelled again."

In the corridor of the Border Sanatorium, Palmer sat in a wheelchair, chatting with the nurse behind him.

The last time he was admitted to the Border Sanatorium, Palmer hit it off with the nurses, and now with his second admission, Palmer felt like he was back home, experiencing a full sense of belonging.

"I really envy these Undead..."

Palmer said, touching the cast on his arm. Bologue's lance pierced through Palmer's arm, saving his life, but also extending his vacation in the Border Sanatorium by several weeks.

Palmer was a Condenser, but not an Undead, and even with the assistance of Alchemy Potion, his injuries would take time to heal.

Although injuries made the time tough, looking on the bright side, Palmer considered it a vacation.

An invaluable, albeit somewhat painful holiday.

"Speaking of which..."

Palmer suddenly spoke mysteriously.

No need for Palmer to continue, the nurse smiled and nodded, then she, too, adopted a mysterious demeanor, reaching into her uniform pocket.

Palmer's breathing slightly hastened, watching the nurse's hand with full expectation. In his excited gaze, the nurse took out two cassette tapes from her pocket.

"Here, remember to keep it quiet, you'll have them confiscated if you disturb others," the nurse cautioned.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Palmer exclaimed in anticipation upon receiving the tapes.

Everything at the Border Sanatorium was wonderful, except the lack of entertainment.

Recently, Palmer's amusement, aside from sleeping, consisted of chatting with the nurses. Though he liked telling strange jokes that no one quite understood, his brilliant comedic persona consistently won everyone's affection.

By Palmer's own evaluation, he had laid the cornerstone of friendship and next wanted to see love bloom among them.

Of course, whenever love seemed about to blossom, Palmer lamented.

"It's really a pity, but alas, I have a fiancée and must remain faithful to her, otherwise, we might have had another story."

Palmer felt like a wandering young man bound by his marriage, but in the nurses' eyes, he was a poor patient with a brain somewhat troubled, telling them strange jokes every day.

"Are all the field staff like this now? Is his mental age really considered adult?"

"Shh, I heard from other doctors that he wasn't like this before; an accident during a mission made his mind somewhat impaired."

"Ah? So unfortunate."

After the nurses finished chatting, they, too, looked at Palmer with a similarly regretful gaze.

Their care for Palmer came purely from a harmonious doctor-patient relationship and Palmer's noble spirit of dedication to his career, thus the two groups interacted on completely different frequencies but remained harmonious to this day.

Palmer fiddled with the tape in his hand, something he had asked the nurse to buy for him. In this era, where communication wasn't very advanced, what music you could listen to depended entirely on what the radio played and what the shops near your home sold.

Because of this, Palmer had a peculiar habit of visiting local shops whenever he was in unfamiliar places to see if there were any new gadgets he hadn't come across before.

Just when Palmer felt that his boring life might have some changes, a rush of footsteps came from the end of the corridor.

A disheveled figure rushed out; he was barefoot on the cold ground, his figure swaying slightly, so he took an infusion stand as a walking stick.

To anyone else, this would be a sorry sight, but those familiar with him knew that this thing looked like a walking stick, but in his hands, it could turn into a lethal weapon at any moment.

Palmer paused for a moment and then recognized his companion.

"Alive! Alive!"

Palmer stammered, while Bologue quickly walked up to him.

"Good morning, Palmer."

"Goo... good morning, Bologue."

Palmer's response came out dryly; he felt something was off about the atmosphere.

"Sorry," Bologue glanced at Palmer's plastered arm, "I couldn't think of any other way at the time."

"No... it's nothing."

Palmer felt quite uncomfortable; Bologue was being... too polite; he preferred Bologue's usual stern demeanor, which meant Bologue was in a normal state.

A psychopath who goes out every day to murder, cleans up the scene afterward, and brings you dinner, that's perfectly normal, too normal.

But if one day, this psychopath starts discussing the meaning of life with you and whether what he does holds any significance... that's too strange, definitely the prelude to trouble!

"So... how long has it been since I fell into the Great Rift?"

Bologue sighed. If he hadn't encountered anyone else on his way here, he wouldn't have wanted to ask Palmer, this unreliable guy.

"Almost half a month."

Palmer blinked, "Anyway, I've been here for nearly half a month, and you were brought in a few days ago. Oh, you looked terrible back then, like you were discharged from some monster."

"Just me? Did you see Aimou?" Bologue automatically ignored Palmer's rambling.

Bologue was very worried about one thing; when he fell into the Great Rift, Aimou and he were in a shared chord body state.

In Geoffrey's view, only he fell, and then Aimou was torn apart by him. If not careful, she might be forgotten there.

The more Bologue thought, the more anxious he got; he always had a sense of responsibility towards Aimou; he got Aimou involved in this conflict, used her shared chord body for his benefit, so he must be responsible for Aimou. If Aimou died in such a ridiculous way, Bologue would feel deep guilt and self-reproach...

Bologue hated guilt; it felt like a curse that couldn't be lifted, accompanying you day and night, reminding you of your past mistakes when you're most vulnerable, and you have no ability to rectify them; everything is already destined.

"Aimou?"

Palmer assessed Bologue for a moment, suddenly showing an expression of realization, as if he knew what Bologue was thinking, with a playful smirk.

"Relax, partner, don't be so tense."

Palmer's voice was slow, like an old man basking in the sun.

A sharp look fell on Palmer, an icy chill ran through him, making Palmer shiver. His speech began to accelerate, though even under such circumstances, Palmer didn't forget his damn cold jokes.

He loved cold jokes too much.

"Guess a riddle, Bologue; when a person gets sick, they go to the hospital. When a machine breaks, where should it go?"

Bologue's eyes remained sharp; he wasn't in the mood for riddles.

"Take it for repair, of course!"

Palmer shouted in a panic.

"So she's at the Sublimation Furnace Core now?" Bologue asked.

"Belli is responsible for rebuilding her body. What's wrong! What's wrong!"

Palmer explained halfway, clearly sensing something off about Bologue's aura.

"Belli..." Bologue muttered Belli's name with a complex expression; he remembered Aimou's evaluation of Belli, but now it seemed there was no one else to be entrusted with repairing Aimou besides Belli.

Because...

"And the Delusional... Teda?" Bologue asked again.

Upon hearing this, Palmer put away his smile and replied solemnly.

"He disappeared, along with the Immortal Heart."

Chapter 344: Moving Castle

Returning to the ward, Palmer recounted all the events of the past half month to Bologue.

"First was the raid on the venue. The operation was a success, not only did we thwart the Crimson Sect's conspiracy, hunted down a Crimson Bishop, but also captured a Negative Power User among the King's Shield Guards, who is now under thorough interrogation by the Order Bureau.

As for the Gray Trade Association, those guys fled fast. As soon as the incident happened, everyone disappeared as if they had evaporated overnight in the Great Rift."

These merchants vanished not just quickly; when the battle erupted inside the venue, they were already gone, leaving these greedy guests to keep fighting among themselves endlessly.

Seeing Palmer's puzzled expression, Bologue was well aware of the inside story.

That place was the Tyrant's domain, and as a believer of the Tyrant, the Tyrant opened a back door for them, making it extremely convenient for their departure.

Looking back now, the auction seemed to be a setup done by the Order Bureau on the surface, but Bologue always felt it was more like a scheme orchestrated by the Tyrant, who drew everyone into it, unnoticed by them all.

Palmer thought for a moment and continued speaking.

"Recently, the Sixth Group took over our work, but during this time, they haven't found anything unusual inside the Great Rift... It seems this incident has ended."

Bologue listened to Palmer and occasionally nodded in agreement, but at the end, Bologue softly said,

"No, not all matters are over."

"Yes, when one wave settles, another arises."

Palmer stretched lazily, yawned greatly, paused for a few seconds, and then continued speaking.

"The following events happened after you fell into the Great Rift."

About the other participants of the operation Palmer wasn't familiar with, but their elite duo took heavy hits; not to mention the plaster cast on his own body, just Bologue's underground journey, returning alive, was a miracle.

"After confirming Teda is a Delusional, the Sixth Group immediately launched a manhunt... Actually, his identity isn't the crucial part; the most important thing is the Immortal Heart Teda was carrying."

Palmer was midway in saying this, abruptly interrupted by Bologue, who asked, "Do you know what the Immortal Heart truly is?"

Being queried on the Immortal Heart, Palmer fell silent.

In the whole operation, they both chased the Immortal Heart all along, battling batches of monsters for several rounds because of that damned thing, thinking victory was within grasp, eventually it was intercepted by the Delusional.

Upon recalling this, Palmer felt frustrated; as a fierce bandit, he was robbed of his belongings by someone else, no matter what, he needed to find a way to snatch it back.

"The Immortal Heart?"

Palmer hesitated, but he still spoke.

"I got this from Geoffrey; he said it's... the Calamity's heart."

The expected answer.

Bologue leaned against the wall behind him, a tangle of thoughts in his mind, now thoroughly unraveled.

This explained why the Order Bureau resisted the Crimson Sect, as the Calamity beneath the Great Rift seemed to belong to the Crimson Queen, and once it contacted the Immortal Heart, perhaps the Calamity would instantly awaken.

"You're aware of the Calamity's existence?" Seeing Bologue's calm reaction, Palmer was instead surprised.

"Don't underestimate an expert's knowledge reserve."

Bologue confidently tapped his own head, then asked, "Anything else?"

"The Sixth Group raided Teda's Alchemy Workshop, and that Alchemy Workshop... vanished?"

"Vanished? What do you mean?"

"Literally vanished; this seems to be the power of the Void Realm, causing positional migration of the entire Alchemy Workshop. But based on the intensity I've encountered before, Teda's Void Realm isn't perfect, it can't move far, likely still within the Great Rift. This time the Sixth Group patrols while searching for the Alchemy Workshop's location."

Palmer noticed the bewildered look on Bologue's face, and with a bit of a mischievous grin, he said.

"What? Is there something the expert actually doesn't know?"

Bologue looked at Palmer expressionlessly; the two stared at each other for a few seconds, Palmer waved his hand complaining, "Are you threatening me?"

Admittedly, Bologue is skilled in interrogation; when he stares silently at you, you'd inevitably spill the little secrets inside your mind, seeking a shred of safety.

"For chatterbox like you, this effectively reduces the cumbersome nature of our communication."

Bologue didn't care about it; whenever he didn't want to listen to Palmer's blabbering, he did this, and Palmer would boil his lengthy discourse down to a few succinct sentences.

"Just like a Cultivation Room can continuously extend in spatial dimensions, different Void Realms possess varying degrees of power."

Palmer found such conversations devoid of any fun.

"Remember the Undying Club? It was also protected by a Void Realm, and the Void Realm enveloping it had the ability to transfer location."

I heard from Serey, the Undying Club changes location every now and then, but lately, they've grown rather fond of Oubos, and plan to stay here for a hundred years."

Palmer explained, those Undead are often hidden away inside that little house, and the little house itself can move too, just Palmer wasn't clear on the specific movement criteria, after all, he isn't a member of the Undying Club.

"Sounds like a mobile castle."

"To be precise, it's a mobile bar, but... can the Undying Club do that too?" Bologue was slightly surprised, "Serey didn't tell me about this."

"That's something you need to reflect on yourself."

Palmer said as he reached out and poked Bologue, "Stop thinking about that damn Alchemy Puppet. Do you remember the last time you came to the Undying Club and happily got drunk with everyone?"

Palmer's tone softened, tinged with a bit of resentment, "Do you still care about us?"

"I... I don't like getting drunk."

Bologue looked at Palmer with disdain in his eyes and replied dryly.

Seeing this, Palmer shook his head while showing a pained expression.

"It's over, everything's over, even experts can have their minds bewitched, this all feels too familiar."

Palmer actually started reminiscing.

"Back then, it was the same with my fiancée, ended up neglecting my friends, they wouldn't invite me to hang out, and then I joined the Order Bureau, now even my fiancée is gone."

Speaking emotionally, Palmer seemed about to cry. Bologue, apart from feeling some disdain, really didn't know how to respond.

Should I ask someone else?

As a member of the Undying Club, Bologue, apart from passing through the club on his way to work, rarely went to the House of Drunks on his own initiative.

Palmer was different; whenever he had time, he would hang out in the Undying Club, chatting away with Serey.

The blood feud between the Clarks and the Villeries was nonexistent between the two, who treated each other like brothers, singing and dancing together.

"Is this really okay? Shouldn't your family be very angry if they knew?" Serey would sometimes ask.

"What's done is done!" Palmer would raise his glass high, then quietly add, "Once we step outside this door, we should pretend not to know each other. How about that?"

"You're a Night Race Lord, I'm the heir of the Clarks... We can pretend to have a fight when we meet, of course, just pretend. After all, you can't die; why not let me win a little?"

"Perfect!"

Palmer's shamelessness was met with Serey's thumbs-up of approval.

"And so, Teda disappeared along with the Immortal Heart and his Alchemy Workshop, but he can't escape; he should still be hiding in the Great Rift, finding him is just a matter of time." Palmer concluded.

Bologue thought for a moment and then remembered another thing.

"What about that thing promised by the Tyrant?"

"What?"

"The Fantasy Species, did anyone get it?"

Palmer carefully recalled the conversation, looking as if he were racking his brain, and then said, "No, no news about that."

"I feel more like the Tyrant issued an empty promise, deceiving everyone."

Recalling the information he had learned, Palmer continued, "Devils are like that, a damn bunch of cunning villains."

"No... devils are indeed sinister and detestable creatures, but they never break their word, nor do they lie." Bologue whispered.

"Are you saying..."

"Someone did indeed obtain the Fantasy Species, but who it is remains unknown."

Thinking of those hidden things beneath the surface, Bologue felt a headache, wondering if he was worrying too much. Such matters should be left to Geoffrey and them.

Sometimes Bologue felt a bit... arrogant, always wanting to control everything, yet his abilities couldn't keep up with it all.

It's time to advance the matters of promotion and become that Knight of Prayer.

"Speaking of which, Bologue."

Palmer's eyes were full of curiosity as he pursued the question.

"What's really beneath the Great Rift?"

Bologue's eyes flashed with an imperceptible color; he didn't know how to describe it all to Palmer, more importantly, whether to tell Palmer about these secrets.

The crown of King Solomon, the buried Holy City...

Just as Bologue was about to speak, a knock on the door sounded, and then a stranger walked in.

"Mr. Bologue Lazarus." The man called out Bologue's name.

Bologue sized up the man; he looked refined, wearing thick glasses, a kind smile stayed on his face, and he looked at him softly.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Evan Rudolph, deputy leader of the Fourth Group, Abyss Watcher."

Chapter 345: Seal

Upon hearing the visitor's name, Palmer's expression showed a noticeable shift; he hadn't expected such a mysterious fourth group to appear before him so suddenly. Bologue, however, reacted calmly, as the remnants of his memory informed him that it was these fourth group fellows who had rescued him.

Those continuous, thunderstorm-inducing, pitch-black crossbow arrows.

Based on Bologue's understanding of the Order Bureau, upon awakening from a coma, an interrogation and recounting of his experiences were inevitable.

Having gone through such peril, even without anyone explaining it to him, Bologue profoundly felt the terror of the Abandoned Land and the secret that the Desperate Outpost had been vigilantly guarding.

The city buried in ash, and the calamity hidden beneath the ashes and flames.

"Palmer, step outside for a bit, give us some privacy," Bologue ushered Palmer away.

Palmer glanced at Bologue in confusion, then at Evan. He said nothing, awkwardly turned the wheelchair with one hand, slowly moved out of the ward, and even closed the door behind him.

Evan pulled up a chair, sat opposite Bologue, took out a report, and began browsing through it on his own.

Glancing at the document and then at Bologue, Evan spoke, "I won't waste too much time, please tell me, what did you see in the Abandoned Land?"

"Abandoned Land? That's what you call that place."

Bologue didn't think it was a slip-up from Evan; it seemed more like Evan was intentionally revealing the place's name to him.

Evan did not answer Bologue's query, simply gazing calmly at Bologue. Their eyes intertwined; he wasn't afraid of Bologue's lousy stare, and Bologue didn't intend to get tangled up with him.

"I don't know the precise spot where I fell, but when I awoke, everything around me seemed normal, just black rocks."

"Then you started moving inward?"

Evan noted, "The Abandoned Land is very complex, like a massive maze; logic dictates that those who fall on the edges find it hard to navigate towards the central region."

He suddenly stopped his note-taking, voicing a suspicion, "Umbilical cord? The umbilical cord with the Devil guided you, like a light shining in the darkness, leading you to the central area."

"Maybe..."

Bologue wasn't sure. When he was in the peripheral area, he indeed felt nothing, but as if driven by fate, Bologue unintentionally moved closer to the central area, and the umbilical cord's sensation became clearer, leading him to the buried Holy City.

Like two travelers walking in the dark with lanterns, when Bologue saw the Calamity, the Calamity also noticed him.

"Even as a Debtor, you have a deep connection with the Devil."

Evan analyzed, stating that for anyone else, reaching the Holy City within the Abandoned Land was elusive; they would only be lost in the massive rift maze, amidst the pervasive ash.

But Bologue was different; he had what was called the umbilical cord pass. All the anomalies beckoned to him until he became one of them.

"And then there was the burning wind you encountered...what is that?"

For the various defense mechanisms of the Abandoned Land, Bologue had already formed speculations, but he wanted more assurance from Evan's words.

"The breath of Calamity, you saw it, that thing is immense. The dormant breath drives the burning flames, forming that lethal burning wind."

Evan concealed nothing, "The ash you saw is the same, the flames constantly scorched the Calamity, keeping its rebirth and demise balanced. Over the long years, the ash gradually filled the Abandoned Land."

"Oh, and everything thrown into the Great Rift meets the same fate, devoured by the Calamity, turning into its flesh, then burned into ash."

Bologue nodded, still with some unclear points, but at least now he knew where the things falling into the Great Rift ended up.

"Sounds like you've made Calamity into a...garbage recycling station? And kind of eco-friendly disposal at that." Bologue chuckled.

Evan took a moment to react, then understood what Bologue meant. He adjusted his glasses, a slight smile appearing on his face.

"This is the first time someone's described that monster like that."

With the explanations done, Evan gestured for Bologue to continue.

Bologue thought for a moment, digesting the information he'd gotten from Evan, "Then, as you said, I kept approaching the source of the burning wind according to the umbilical cord's guidance, and thus discovered the city..."

"Hmm....could you, from your perspective, describe to me the information you gathered from the Abandoned Land?" Evan suddenly made a bizarre request, "In your view, how do you think all this in the Abandoned Land came about?"

Bologue didn't refuse and shared his speculations.

"The Fall of the Holy City wasn't as simple as the official records state. Something must have happened that's been deliberately buried, like if King Solomon was a...Crowned?"

Mentioning these, Bologue carefully observed Evan's reaction, but unfortunately, Evan remained as composed as ever, showing no flaws.

"You've heard such rumors, right?" Bologue relaxed, raising his hand to gesture in the air, "A beam of light."

"I've heard of it; do you think it relates to King Solomon and his powers as a Crowned?" Evan followed Bologue's words.

"King Solomon released that light, piercing the earth, causing the Holy City to fall into the Abyss, and thus the Great Rift was born."

Bologue continued to recount the ancient story according to his own conjectures.

"After the Great Rift was formed, you suppressed the Calamity here and established layer upon layer of seals, like that damn Ether vacuum down below."

"Serenity Defense Line."

Evan corrected, as if aware of Bologue's thoughts, and went on to explain.

"You've witnessed the power of that Calamity, blessed with protection by the Crimson Queen, turning it into a genuinely immortal and indestructible entity. To limit its regeneration, we removed its heart and subjected it to fiery enchantment, yet even these measures are not enough to completely bind it."

"So you created an extensive Ether vacuum in the Abandoned Land, which is the Serenity Defense Line."

"Yes, that's correct," Evan nodded in agreement with Bologue's words, his gaze resting on Bologue, "The resurrection of the Calamity is much like... you."

"Resurrection requires Ether support, so you severed the Ether."

Bologue suddenly realized, and he couldn't help but ask, "Can the Serenity Defense Line be understood as an encompassing Void Realm of the massive Abandoned Land?"

"Interesting conjecture."

Evan smiled but did not directly answer the question, instead saying, "Please continue."

Bologue knew well that Evan's lack of a response indicated it was information beyond his reach. Both maintained silence, and Bologue didn't press the matter further.

"Is the Wandering Crossroad also part of the defense line? I am unsure of the Tyrant's exact role, but if the entire Great Rift is thought of as a bottle, then the Wandering Crossroad serves as a cap, sealing everything below.

A cap made by...the Devil sounds bad, but if the Tyrant is also bound by a Blood Contract, then even a treacherous Devil can become reliable."

Bologue speculated.

"Perhaps the Tyrant's power is usually hidden and only assumes part of the defensive duties in necessary situations, rooted in the Order Bureau's initial pact with the Tyrant."

"Hmm, quite a plausible assumption, is that all?" Evan asked next.

"That's all," Bologue replied, "Aren't you going to answer anything?"

"Answer what?"

"Whether my conjecture is correct."

This time it was Evan who began to ponder, carefully considering Bologue's responses, and then said, "Mostly correct."

"Mostly?"

Bologue laughed, understanding just how vague "mostly" could be, a subtle detail could unleash an entirely different story, a trick on Evan's part.

Regrettably, Evan had no intention of further explanation, instead reassuring Bologue.

"I know you have many questions, but I'm sorry, you know the regulations."

Bologue nodded silently. The strict regulations of the Order Bureau bound them tightly; what he managed to learn was already exceptional.

"I look forward to our future cooperation, Mr. Lazarus."

Evan spoke, shaking Bologue's hand briefly before leaving the hospital room without hesitation.

Once away from the room, the gentle expression on Evan's face vanished, turning sharply serious as he connected to the Whistle, Holt's voice echoing in his mind.

"How much does he know?"

"Basically everything except what's inside the Holy City... he even speculated about King Solomon's involvement with the Crown."

Evan took a deep breath, remembering his own feelings upon first learning these matters, he had been terrified that such monsters, existing only in theory, were real, followed by relief that it was dead.

Regardless of whether King Solomon was the Crowned one, he was buried sixty-six years ago in the Fall of the Holy City.

"Lebius mentioned, he said such secrets can't be hidden from the experts." Holt seemed uneasy.

"But these experts often have a fatal flaw," Evan chuckled, "They are overly confident, once they form an understanding of something, they feel they are correct."

"What's the matter?"

"He thought our layered defenses were solely to seal the Calamity."

Evan exhaled long and recalled that unquenchable fire, the curse from King Solomon.

"Bologue doesn't know that the Calamity is just one part of sealing the Light Scorch."

Chapter 346: Digging Into Oneself

Three days after meeting with Evan, Bologue arrived at the underground Border Sanatorium, where a subway station was established, connecting to Opus's vast network, leading directly to the Deep Nest Courtyard of the Order Bureau.

Bologue still wore his usual gray-black attire, standing alone on the subway platform. Apart from the necessary Face of Horror and Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, he didn't bring anything else.

After three days of rest, as an Undead, Bologue quickly recovered to his best condition. With the doctor's consent, Bologue immediately prepared to return to the Order Bureau.

In fact, Bologue wanted to bring Palmer along, but Palmer was fiercely opposed to it.

"You should be fine now, right? The cast will be removed in a few days, and the leg injury can be managed with crutches. Why not come back with me?"

Bologue said to Palmer this morning.

Palmer might not have been fully awake; he stared blankly for a few seconds, looking at Bologue, recalling his appearance when he was carried in, like a piece of rotten meat, and then seeing his current full form.

Eyes as sharp as to make one afraid to look directly, a resolute face, a robust body, fists capable of smashing several Demons in one blow...

"Are you insane?"

Palmer cursed furiously.

The Undead could just catch their breath and get back into the fight, but I'm just an ordinary person. A light touch would have me in the hospital for ten days or half a month!

"You'll be fine, most of your wounds can be treated within the Order Bureau, can't they?"

As he spoke, several Silver Snakes crawled out of Bologue's collar, reaching straight towards Palmer like tentacles, ready to bind him.

"Wait! Physical injuries are one thing, but I still have psychological scars!"

Palmer wailed, tears streaming down his face.

"I'm just an ordinary Condenser. This blasted action involved the Crimson Sect, the King's Shield Guard, and Negative Power Users everywhere, but me?"

I'm just a First Stage Condenser and a jinx at that. Do you know what a psychological shadow this has cast on me?

I applied for psychological counseling, at least let me finish it before returning to work!"

Palmer appealed emotionally and reasonably, knowing well that in his current state, if Bologue was determined to take him back to work, he wouldn't be able to resist.

Bologue extended his hand toward Palmer, and just as Palmer was about to call for the nurse, Bologue simply patted Palmer on the shoulder, his tone unexpectedly gentle.

"Then rest well and heal."

After advising Palmer, the Silver Snakes retreated under his clothing, and Bologue left by himself, leaving Palmer dumbfounded.

On the empty platform, Bologue awaited the arrival of the subway. The Bologue of the past would have taken Palmer away without hesitation; he knew Palmer's little schemes all too well—Palmer merely wanted a vacation.

But after returning from the Abandoned Land, Bologue's mentality had changed somewhat. Back there, Bologue nearly experienced a life-and-death separation.

Palmer almost died, and Aimou nearly did too.

He is the Undead, but those around him are not. Bologue didn't harbor any reclusive thoughts, like acting alone in the future to protect others.

Bologue pondered whether, if he were a Prayer Believer, or even a Negative Power User, the situation might have been entirely different.

This is why Bologue is so eager to return to the Order Bureau. Teda disappeared with the Immortal Heart into the outside world, and this issue has not yet concluded.

At least, for Bologue, all of this is not yet over.

Bologue needs greater power to handle all this. He might not have time to advance to become a Prayer Believer, but at least he should resolve the Triple Trials, closing the gap as much as possible.

The sound of a rumble echoed, bright lights emerged from the tunnel's end, the train tearing through layers of dimness, steadily stopping before Bologue, and the door abruptly burst open.

...

Pushing open the door, Bologue stepped directly into the office, feeling he had been away for quite a while, yet upon returning, the office remained exactly the same.

Lebius sat behind the desk with piles of files before him. The slight difference was that this time Yurriel and Geoffrey were not present; only Lebius was in the office, occupying himself with some unknown tasks.

Lebius glanced at Bologue and then said, "You did quite well."

"What?"

Bologue was caught off guard by the sudden remark and then remembered one thing about his team leader being quite a peculiar person.

"The raid operation and returning from the Abandoned Land, you performed quite well," Lebius muttered, eyes fixed on the files, never lifting his head.

"Oh..."

Bologue sat opposite Lebius without hesitation and directly said, "I want to apply for the Triple Trials."

"The Trial of Salt?"

Lebius still didn't lift his head, seemingly having anticipated Bologue's request.

"No, I mean all Three Trials together."

The sound of writing stopped, and Lebius looked up, his gaze carrying a hint of confusion as he stared at Bologue.

He had heard many strange requests, but this was the first time Lebius heard such a request.

Bologue's eyes were resolute, "I did some tests before. My soul has stabilized, and since I am an Undead, even if I fail, the threefold trial cannot kill me, it might just put me to sleep for a while."

"So... the threefold trial? All at once?"

Lebius frowned, thinking Bologue was joking, but seeing his serious manner, it didn't seem like a joke.

"Salt, sulfur, mercury, I think I can do it."

At this moment, what supported Bologue was not a confident mindset, but a pursuit of power, a craving for greater strength.

"You're a bit impulsive, Bologue," Lebius answered calmly.

"Teda is a Delusional, he carries the Immortal Heart, stubbornly wanting to resurrect his daughter... who knows what he'll do next," Bologue said.

"Are you worried... about Aimou?"

Lebius recalled that name and said pointedly.

Bologue fell silent, then slumped in his chair like a deflated ball, his voice carrying a hint of heaviness.

"Compared to that unfamiliar Alice, I hope Aimou can survive more. Her Secret Energy is interesting and possesses talent in Alchemy, she'd make a good team member."

Unexpectedly, Bologue was candid, pouring out his thoughts in one breath.

"Are you recommending her as a team member to me?" Lebius asked.

"Consider it a recommendation... if there's a chance."

Bologue understood, the choice was in Lebius's hands, and looking at the Special Operations Group's selection method, Aimou was far off on various metrics.

First, Aimou needs to be a person, secondly, Aimou needs to be a Debtor.

At this moment, Bologue fully realized again how bizarre his action group truly was.

Lebius put down the pen in his hand, looked up at Bologue, Bologue felt Lebius was smiling, or maybe not, his leader was truly emotionless, guessing his thoughts was too taxing, so Bologue simply didn't bother thinking about it.

"Hmm? A recommendation from the expert, truly hard not to notice," Lebius asked again, "Besides this, do you have any other reason? Bologue, things that can make you pay such attention are not many."

Bologue was stumped by Lebius's question, recalling carefully, indeed, there were not many things he cared about, besides the mystery surrounding himself, only Adelle could motivate Bologue, but she had left long ago.

His partner? Palmer Clarks?

Bologue felt he didn't really care much for Palmer, to be precise, when it did not involve life-threatening situations, he wasn't much concerned about this partner.

Then...

"She's my friend," Bologue answered, "I don't have many friends."

"But she actually counts as Teda's asset... an asset of the Order Bureau," Lebius deliberately said, "You can't decide her fate."

"But she's my friend."

"In the eyes of the Sublimation Furnace Core, her positioning is just a sentient Alchemy Armament."

"Then apply to have her assigned to us, we never lack weapons, do we? And didn't we just make a great achievement? Although we couldn't protect the Immortal Heart, we at least killed a crimson Bishop."

Bologue stared intently at Lebius, rarely being so serious and earnest in looking directly at Lebius, usually, he had great respect for his leader.

Lebius raised an eyebrow, not delving further into this matter with Bologue.

"Don't worry, she's with the Sublimation Furnace Core, managed by Belli, you can go see her after."

Lebius drew open his seemingly bottomless drawer and took out a document printed with four locks and swords, directly tossing it to Bologue.

"Rather than these, you might want to look at this first, have an accurate perception of yourself, before helping friends, understand who you are."

Bologue saw the level markings on the document, realizing that within it was a certain confidential intelligence.

"Information related to the Abandoned Land?"

"No, the Abandoned Land is something you cannot access for the time being, this is for your own good, as for this here..." Lebius said, "It's information related to yourself."

"What?"

Information related to himself, what does he want to know, does he need someone else to tell him?

"Haven't you always been curious, about your resurrection, what is it exactly?"

Lebius's words made Bologue tense, he pointed at the document in Bologue's hand.

"Why don't you open it and see for yourself?"

Chapter 347: Exclusively Experiencing the Nightmare

Bologue appears to be a rational, rigorous expert, yet he is keenly aware of one thing: he has always been consumed by long-term chaos and mysteries.

The content of his deals, the Devil who seized his own soul, the source of the Soul Shards, the true nature of Resurrection...

Bologue himself is a walking enigma, but these mysteries have coexisted with him for so long that the unknown has become commonplace, even indifferent.

Bologue's mind was empty as he stood forlornly in the corridor, holding the file Lebius handed him.

This is the area of the Special Operations Group, and unless there is a report to make, few non-group members come here, so naturally, no one sees Bologue at this moment.

Gazing at the file in his hand, Bologue was both shocked and delighted, having repeatedly questioned Geoffrey about all this, never imagining he would gain it so easily today.

"There is quite a lot of content inside, and most of it is derived from the various conjectures we made based on experiments."

Lebius's voice echoed beside him, "Thus, there may be some inaccuracies in the analysis of your Undying Body, but that can't be helped. The true nature of this power is known only to you and that Devil, yet it's clear you yourself are unaware of it."

"Resurrection..."

Looking at the blood-red chains and sword, Bologue spoke emotionlessly.

He hesitated for a while, suppressing his curiosity and thirst for knowledge, stuffing the file into his coat, and deeply breathing repeatedly to control his restless emotions.

Lebius was right, his emotions have been fluctuating a lot lately, and an expert should perfectly control their emotions to prevent any errors.

The file felt like a birthday gift, where other children eagerly unwrap it, but Bologue restrained himself, acting as if nothing happened, leaving the Field Operations Department's area and arriving at the Pillar Courtyard, pressing the Sublimation Furnace Core symbol in the elevator.

Rather than the truth of Resurrection, Bologue cared more about Aimou at the moment, needing to see her condition himself as his trustworthy partner who shared life-and-death bonds.

Aimou was a flower growing in a greenhouse, making its first exploration of the outside world, only to encounter a raging storm.

Forget the flower; even Bologue, who went out with it, nearly stayed forever in that Abandoned Land.

As the elevator began to move, in the sealed solitary space, Bologue's mind was vacant, followed by an uncontrollable surge of another thought.

Staring at the gleaming elevator door, Bologue's visage was reflected within.

The elevator slightly trembled, the lighting quivered with it, and in a momentary illusion, Lebius sat within the mirrored surface, causing the recent conversation to rampage in his mind.

"So sudden?" Bologue asked Lebius in the memory, "Just handing it over to me so easily?"

"This itself isn't any major secret, and it's inherently related to you, so you have the right to know."

Glancing at the file, Lebius continued in his unruffled tone, "The reason we didn't inform you before was partly because we needed to observe for a while longer."

"Like a probation? One assessment after another to determine whether I am capable of receiving this information?"

Recalling the conversation with Evan, Bologue had never understood the various aspects of the Abandoned Land during his employment, expecting Evan to employ some memory-erasing means or have him sign confidentiality agreements upon confirming the intelligence he knew.

But Evan merely gave some advice about not leaking information, then left directly.

Unknown secrets hold extraordinary value, but after knowing them, they become meaningless.

"To some extent, yes, like when you got promoted to Condenser, if we were to pour all the details about the Abandoned Land, Sect, Calamity... how could any expert bear it?"

"Probably... I suppose."

Hearing this, Bologue didn't know how to respond for a moment.

"Knowledge progresses step by step. Another reason is due to regulations; each employee has their own permissions, limiting your intake of knowledge. But what you explore yourself is not subject to these limitations."

"So if I have the ability to sneak into the archives, won't the regulations punish me?" This sounded like encouragement for transgression, prompting Bologue to ask.

"Provided no one catches you. Unnoticed means unknown, being caught is another matter entirely."

Lebius appeared quite experienced in this regard.

"Of course, the reason for such regulations... don't you find knowing too much can sometimes be burdensome?"

Bologue was stunned.

"Suppose we inform everyone now that monsters named Calamity exist, once powerful Seekers of Glory, growing stronger post-fall, and currently one such Calamity sleeps beneath the Great Rift, ready to destroy all upon awakening."

Lebius used analogies, asking Bologue, "What would be the response of ordinary employees upon learning this?"

"I trust in the employees' convictions to resist anomalies, but trust is one thing; truly using calamity to test it is another." Bologue replied softly, slightly nodding as if in agreement with Lebius.

"Yes, precisely, not everyone has a sufficiently resolute will to endure the psychological pressure of knowing secrets, so we open some back doors for those curious enough."

Such as you."

Lebius took a sip of the hot coffee beside him.

"We know disaster is coming, but we can't drag everyone into fear, so we must endure this nightmare alone."

"Enjoying the nightmare alone?"

Bologue murmured to himself.

Who else in this world enjoys the nightmare alone? Only he knows, unable to tell a second person, the secret that is eternally watched.

The elevator shook, emitting clanging metal sounds, interrupting Bologue's wild thoughts. A crisp bell rang; Bologue had arrived at the Sublimation Furnace Core.

As the elevator doors parted before him, the face of Lebius in his memories shattered alongside.

Bologue stepped out of the elevator; the Sublimation Furnace Core was as scorching as he remembered. Someone signaled to Bologue to get a piece of Protective Clothing before proceeding, but the Undead clearly wouldn't care about such things.

In the orange warning color, the gray-black on Bologue seemed like a stain, exceptionally conspicuous, traversing in a cold sea of orange flowers.

After a simple identity check and some directions, Bologue quickly found Belli, who never wore Protective Clothing, her cool summer outfit just as eye-catching here.

"Yo! Bologue, you're discharged?"

Belli, seeing Bologue, was as excited as before, spreading her arms wide, ready to give Bologue a loving hug.

If it weren't for her duties binding her, Bologue might have seen Belli upon waking up in the Border Sanatorium, and Belli could very well have been one of his attending physicians.

"Why come here right after discharge? Missing your sister?"

Of course, her nonsense was just like before.

Bologue raised his hand and pressed it against Belli's face. If not for caring about the dignity of this department head, he'd really want to kick her away.

Pushing Belli away forcefully, Bologue knew once caught by Belli, she'd cling to him like an octopus, hard to shake off.

"You know why I'm here." Bologue said.

"Oh?" Belli's expression was subtle, "Here to find my junior sister?"

"Junior sister?"

Bologue took a few seconds to think about this term, then realized it referred to Aimou.

If Belli hadn't mentioned it, Bologue could hardly imagine that Belli and Aimou were from the same sect. Remembering the missing Teda, Bologue harbored deep doubts about the legitimacy of this sect.

"How is she?"

"Hmm? I'm her attending physician after all. The doctor's diagnosis is that the patient needs rest right now, and can't see outsiders."

Belli finished speaking, signaling to Bologue with her eyes, a move she'd used to intimidate Bologue many times.

But this time Bologue looked on expressionlessly, showing no intention of cooperating with Belli's intimidation game.

"You're really boring this way." Belli said, turning around to motion Bologue to follow her.

"I'm not at every venue to become interesting." Bologue replied.

Belli turned back, looking at Bologue with a hint of disdain, "Bologue, has anyone ever told you that girls don't find you appealing this way?"

Scarlet hues flashed before his eyes, and Bologue recalled the Night Race named Olivia.

Bologue listened to Olivia's warnings, but listening was one thing, executing was another.

"Mhmm, someone mentioned it."

Bologue nodded in agreement with Belli's words.

Belli wanted to say more, but Bologue's interruption left her words stuck in her throat, expressing both anger and frustration, finally complaining.

"You're truly impervious to everything."

"I'm personally very firm; ordinary words don't affect me."

The damnable thing was, Bologue even self-affirmed his stance.

Belli felt a pang in her chest, almost suffering internal injuries from Bologue's words. Few could anger Belli this way, and few could ignore her charm.

To be honest, during their previous conversation, Belli did find Bologue somewhat humorous, but clearly all his humor turned into verbal weapons against her.

"Alright, alright."

Belli grumbled, ending this bout of competition with Bologue as the victor, unwilling to endure Bologue's provocations any further.

Bologue followed behind Belli, she being the walking pass. One heavy gate after another opened, and soon a bluish glow enveloped Bologue.

Belli suddenly stopped, then pointed ahead and said,

"Look, she's right there."

Chapter 348: Ornamental Fish

The transparent cylindrical container was located in the center of the room, with silk-like light trails floating in the rolling liquid. It was condensed and liquefied Ether, fully integrated into the Ether, creating an Ether-rich environment.

The bluish light permeated everyone around, including Bologue, making him feel as if he had entered an aquarium, with a delicate ornamental fish suspended inside the central cylindrical container.

Bologue wanted to get closer to observe, but found another glass wall obstructing his path; the complex light made Bologue overlook its presence.

"The patient needs rest; it's better to just observe from here."

Belli wasn't joking earlier; as Aimou's attending physician, her advice was indeed for rest.

Bologue nodded, then looked at the shattered body inside the container.

Using the term ornamental fish to describe Aimou, Bologue felt there was no issue, as Aimou indeed appeared like a fish immersed in the liquid at that moment.

Unlike the pitiful appearance in his memory, under Belli's emergency repairs, Aimou's body has been restored to the position of the abdominal cavity, although still in a half-body state, much improved from before. At least now, a vague human form can be discerned.

From the severed section of the torso, Bologue could see the intricate mechanical structures inside and the dense cables. The soft gel-like shell was gone, replaced by cold metal armor.

The metal spine extended out, connecting numerous floating cables. Bluish micro-glows pulsed through the gaps in the metal, flickering.

Aimou's face had lost its previous beauty; the shell that mimicked human skin was gone, replaced by a mask-like shell resembling a doll. Her head was bare, with metal weld seams spread across it.

The left eye was extinguished, and the right eye occasionally flickered with micro-glows, indicating Aimou's normal operation.

In Aimou's mind and along the spine section on her back, rows of external cables connected to her, eventually bound together and extending to the top of the container.

"Aimou's injuries are severe. Aside from the Mind Projection and Constant Motion Core—the two critical parts being undamaged—everything else that could be damaged has been damaged extensively."

Belli said, "When I received Aimou, her head had split open... literally 'split open'."

Bologue felt a bit guilty; if he hadn't taken Aimou on the mission, none of this would've happened.

But if Bologue had left Aimou in the Alchemy Workshop, Aimou might have already disappeared with the workshop by now, or even...

"Whew, you almost killed my little apprentice sister. If Aimou had also died, I don't know if I could still have a little little apprentice sister."

Belli mumbled endlessly on the side, complicating Bologue's sorrowful emotions.

"Little little apprentice sister?"

Bologue didn't understand this perplexing title.

"Alice is the apprentice sister, Aimou the little apprentice sister, and another would be the little little apprentice sister. Is there a problem?" Belli retorted.

Bologue shouldn't have bothered talking to Belli.

"Fortunately, the Sublimation Furnace Core has enough technology to repair Aimou. What you see now is the repair and tuning of the main torso. This is a complex process; we need a long time to set various parameters."

Belli pointed to a nearby isolated area, sparks flying from a small machine bed, with researchers in protective gear directing mechanical arms, continuously polishing metal and assembling them piece by piece.

"You can think of Aimou as an assembly toy; they are currently remanufacturing her limbs. Once the main torso tuning is complete, installation will be straightforward."

Belli explained these complex processes to Bologue.

"Then comes adding protective coatings and some anthropomorphic treatments, oh, and planting hair too. This bare look is really ugly."

Belli thought for a moment and described, "Just like a chick that hasn't grown feathers—it's too ugly."

"Does she have consciousness now?" Bologue asked.

"Yes, you see her eyes, the light inside still flickers, indicating Aimou is running stably," Belli said. "But currently she can't respond to any external stimuli."

"Why?" Bologue didn't understand.

"To illustrate with humans, Aimou now has lost all senses."

Belli looked at Bologue's body, from pupils to lips, from ears to skin.

"Like humans, she lost sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell... All abilities to perceive the outside world are blocked. Simultaneously, she herself has lost every means of communicating with the outside."

"You see, essentially she is now just a piece of scrap metal. She can't speak or perform any motions."

Aimou inside the container resembled a delicate piece of workmanship, unable to react to the outside world except for the flickering light in her eyes, which merely assured that she was running normally.

Contact with the outside was completely isolated; Aimou received no feedback.

"It's like being locked in a pitch-black prison."

Bologue muttered to himself.

Bologue was very familiar with Belli's description; he had experienced it when trapped in the silent Black Prison.

But in the dark Black Prison, Bologue could touch himself, hear his own breathing, affirm his existence, yet Aimou couldn't. All she could feel was pure darkness.

"We still need some time to reload Aimou's senses. You can't wait here forever," Belli said.

Bologue understood this. He looked again at Aimou in the container; her once innocent and adorable appearance was gone. Now she was bare, reduced to just her torso, her body slightly curled up like an ugly caterpillar.

"Hmm, I'll be back later."

After confirming Aimou's condition, Bologue bid farewell to Belli and left.

Bologue's thoughts were in disarray, with strange ideas running endlessly. He left the Order Bureau, walking the streets of Lingna District.

In his arms was information regarding his resurrection. The image of Aimou as a caterpillar flashed before him. Walking aimlessly, Bologue stopped and looked up, unknowingly arriving at the Undying Club.

Bologue pushed the door open and went inside. At once, he saw Serey lounging to one side with several bottles in front of him. A certain incense smell lingered in the air, and Wei'Er was curled up on the bar, forming an indistinct lump that was hard to distinguish without attention.

"You're drinking even in broad daylight?" Bologue couldn't help but comment, looking at Serey in a drunken state.

"Nope, actually, I started drinking since last night," Serey raised an eyebrow at Bologue, "I just got rid of those clingy folks."

"I can smell it; this perfume is too strong."

Bologue nodded, recalling the events. Serey brought women back to the Undying Club last night and drank together until now. Not long ago, the women left, leaving Serey slumped to one side, his gaze a bit unfocused.

It's pretty normal, at least for Serey. It was part of his daily life, taking advantage of his status as an Undead, joyfully swimming in alcohol's ocean.

Bologue looked forward to him drowning one day.

Sitting at the bar, Serey rose and went behind the counter, facing Bologue as a bartender.

"Yo! Bologue!"

Wei'Er caught Bologue's scent and woke up, rubbing against him and leaving black cat fur on Bologue's clothes.

The Undying Club remained as welcoming as always, but luckily Bologue was already accustomed to this.

Serey pushed over a glass of orange juice. Bologue took a sip, feeling a bit more refreshed.

"Is there a free room here?"

"You decided to stay here?" Serey's eyes lit up.

"Not really, just temporarily."

Bologue's place was just too far away. With Palmer hospitalized, there was no one to ride him back and forth, and his mind was in turmoil alongside the resurrection information in his jacket.

All this left Bologue exhausted, so he decided to rest at the Undying Club for a while; these folks always managed to cheer him up with strange antics, killing two birds with one stone.

Yet two other reasons made Bologue decide to come here. First, the Undying Club was very safe. Although these Undead were each more unpredictable than the last, they were all ancient monsters who's lived countless years, discernible from the Order Bureau's attitude towards them.

And the other reason was...

"Serey, after the Dawn War, did all your Night Race die off?"

"No, most of us died. The remaining ones were confined in the Land of Eternal Night. What's up?"

"So, besides you, other Night Race members should be indefinitely in the Land of Eternal Night, unable to leave, right?"

"Yes."

Serey completely overlooked Bologue's change of expression. He even jumped from behind the bar, grabbing a glass to toast with Bologue.

"You've made sure that only you are outside?"

Bologue coldly stared at Serey, making him feel uneasy.

"Wh... what's going on?"

Serey tried hard to recall related matters. Unfortunately, his mind was nearly poisoned by alcohol, failing to think of anything.

"Have you heard this name?"

Bologue observed Serey's expression, then slowly said.

"Olivia Villeries."

Poof—

Upon hearing the name, Serey uncontrollably spewed out all his drink like a shower head, drenching Bologue.

Bologue wasn't too surprised; he was used to all this. Silently, he took a tissue, wiped his face, and calmly spoke.

"It seems you know her, right?"

Serey swallowed hard. His gaze wandered nervously, the old monster who'd lived for who knows how long, trembling before Bologue's eyes.

Chapter 349: Dark History

"Wei'Er! Have you been thinking about traveling lately? Just like before, find a place to wander about. You've been cooped up in this hellhole for almost a few years now, don't you plan to move somewhere?"

Serey started rambling nonsensically like he was having an episode.

"Though we've traveled through all the countries, what about the southern archipelago? The northern Icefield? And the other side of the sea... There are so many unresolved mysteries waiting for us to explore in this world! What are we waiting for!"

Serey didn't answer Bologue's question. He picked up Wei'Er and excitedly painted a picture of that bizarre future.

Wei'Er was obviously not going to indulge Serey, and she slapped him directly on the face.

"My face!"

Serey wailed, clutching his face as he rolled around on the ground for several laps.

"Together with you? Traveling? That's impossible, Serey, ever since you left me in the sea, I never want to go out with you again."

Wei'Er licked the bloodstains on her claws; even now, she still harbored resentment toward that terrible underwater journey.

"I'd even go alone!"

Serey shrieked ghost-like as he quickly picked himself up and dashed off into the upstairs bedroom. After a series of clanging noises, this guy emerged with a packed bag.

"Wei'Er, please help me notify the others that I'm going out traveling, roughly... roughly within a hundred years I'll definitely be back!"

Serey finished instructing Wei'Er and was ready to leave without looking back, but then cyan light tracks swept across, and the swirling group of snakes sealed the door layer upon layer.

Bologue raised his hand, the glow of ether shining in his palm. The feeling of wielding ether was really nice; if possible, Bologue never wanted to experience an ether vacuum again.

"Bologue... we're good brothers, aren't we?"

Serey slowly turned his head, his tone heartfelt and moving, playing the emotion card.

"What's really going on?"

Bologue asked again, "That person named Olivia Villeries."

"Olivia?"

Wei'Er's eyes lit up. She seemed to know this name too, about to say something, but was interrupted by Serey's scream.

"Wei'Er!"

The voice was so shrill it moved those who heard.

Wei'Er hesitated a bit. She was not on good terms with Serey, but considering past sentiments, things should be kept separate; she still decided to keep his dark past a secret.

Bologue sighed helplessly, "Then let me ask in another way, do you have any grudges with her?"

"A big grudge."

Serey thought for a moment and added, "One that's unending."

"Great, she's definitely coming out to kill me, the Undead are really annoying like that; everyone has endless years, so people are unexpectedly stubborn about certain things."

Serey muttered to himself, his eyes trembling endlessly.

For ordinary people, matters of hatred and enmity usually end after a hundred years or so, but not for the Undead. They have endless time to figure all things out.

Bologue rarely saw Serey like this. The last time he saw such an expression was when several women he was dating simultaneously gathered together.

Serey is a powerful Undead, but when faced with the wrath of women, even he found it hard to stand against, and his face was marked with several slap prints.

Bologue wanted to keep asking something, but Serey wouldn't reveal any information. He just drank by himself, mobilizing what little brain matter he had to think about how to handle this.

"For you all, the Undying Club is akin to a sanctuary."

Bologue mumbled.

Bologue didn't continue to pursue further; everyone has their own secrets, and one should respect Serey's privacy.

Only unexpected, Serey's grudges are so many; it's best to keep distance from Serey when going out in the future.

"I need to take a bath."

Bologue suddenly said, not sure how many baths it would take to wash away Serey's blood aura.

Can't figure out anything from Serey. More importantly, Olivia's issue is currently not of importance; in her eyes, I'm probably already dead at the venue.

Bologue suddenly stopped, looked at Wei'Er, then at Serey, and thought of the others in the Undying Club.

These guys have gone through long ages, have experienced the shifting of times, and have witnessed many things firsthand; each one is a living witness to history.

Perhaps I can pry out past secrets from their lips; for instance, about the Fall of the Holy City...

Bologue shook his head, dispelling these thoughts from his mind. Things needed to be done one step at a time; the most important now was to review his files and recover the Immortal Heart, and capture Teda.

As long as Teda roamed free, Bologue couldn't feel at ease. The ultimate target of this guy was Aimou, and no one knew what kind of outcome this insane desire would eventually lead to.

No longer paying attention to Serey, Wei'Er led the way in front, guiding Bologue into the interior of the Undying Club.

Bologue had been a member for some time now, but he had always stayed within the bar, rarely venturing deep into the Undying Club.

He maintained a suitable distance from these lunatics.

The dim yellow lights illuminated the brown floor, and various luxurious paintings hung in the hallway, evoking a sense of time passing by. Bologue recalled what Serey had said before.

Compared to the Undying Club, these undead were all young. The Undying Club had existed many, many years ago, and the ancient Void Realm shrouded within the building was also born since then.

Currently, Serey managed the Undying Club, but in his own words, he was really just a bartender, at most a storekeeper.

The most important member list was not in Serey's hands. He wasn't even sure if such a list existed. He didn't know much about how many members there were in the Undying Club either.

Aside from these, what surprised Bologue the most was that Serey didn't know who founded the Undying Club. The only one with more seniority than Serey, Sai Zong, was now obsessed with being a dog, answering any question with "woof woof woof".

In playing the part of a dog, Sai Zong was particularly dedicated.

The spiral staircase extended upward without end, with corridors arranged in order, and doors standing on both sides.

"Has anyone ever tried to invade the Undying Club?" Bologue asked.

"Yes, but not often. We're very concealed. Even if some unlucky ones strayed in, Bode and the others would take care of it," Wei'Er replied, wagging her tail.

"You are a member of the Undying Club, so there's no hostility here towards you. If an unwelcome person came, they would only be lost within."

Wei'Er said this and stopped, looking at the corridor beside the stairs that stretched infinitely until it narrowed into a pitch-black point in view.

"Just pick a room, infuse your Ether into the nameplate on the door, and then the room will be 'fixed'."

Listening to Wei'Er, Bologue stood in front of a door. He had stayed here before, but those rooms were always arranged by Serey for him.

This place was like a hotel. For the first time, Bologue opened a room himself, and after infusing Ether into the nameplate, his name, Bologue Lazarus, appeared, and then the doorknob twisted, and the door opened automatically.

Bologue was about to walk in, but then he noticed something, took a few steps towards the other side, and looked up at the nameplate above.

"Palmer... Clarks?"

Bologue read the name on the nameplate and then suspiciously looked at Wei'Er.

"You've let that guy stay here?"

Wei'Er licked her paws and replied, "Serey and Palmer surprisingly hit it off. Although Palmer isn't an undead, he was given 'good friend' privileges."

Bologue still remembered this damned "good friend." These bored undead even collected mementos for these short-lived good friends—those variously styled drinking glasses.

Recollecting in his mind what Palmer had told him, compared to himself, Palmer seemed more like a member, spending his days in the Undying Club, bonding with these lunatics.

Especially with Serey, the relationship between Palmer and Serey was as if they hit it off at first sight. If Palmer had been born earlier, he might have been turned by Serey into an inside mole in the Clarks family.

Hmm... perhaps it could have been Serey being turned, becoming an inside mole for the Villeries family.

"You can press the call bell if you need anything, and Serey will respond immediately," Wei'Er continued, whispering, "Take this opportunity to give him a hard time."

"Because of that Olivia?"

Bologue understood Wei'Er's meaning; as long as he didn't continue to press further, Serey would be very willing to do many things for him.

"Of course, Serey is truly unlucky. So much time has passed, yet someone was still able to dig up this black history," muttered Wei'Er, "What's even more unfortunate is that you're undead, and a member of the Undying Club, our good brother, so Serey can't do anything to you."

Bologue caught the hinted meaning in Wei'Er's words and asked, "What about the others who knew these things?"

"All dead."

The cat's eyes watched Bologue, "Beheaded, hanged, burned at the stake... even related books weren't spared, utterly erasing that segment of history."

"Serey thought that by wiping out everyone in the know, he could keep these secrets. But we all know it's just self-deception; some things he'll eventually have to face."

Bologue pondered, "But as long as you stay in the Undying Club, no one can influence you."

"It's like a self-fulfilling prophecy... One day, we will step out of the Undying Club for some strange reason."

Realizing she was saying too much, Wei'Er advised afterward.

"Anyway, just pretend you don't know about these things. The Night Race's situation is too complicated, and undead are complicated enough, let alone an undead family. Just thinking about it gives you a headache."

Bologue nodded, thanked Wei'Er, and closed the door, darkness enveloping him.

Chapter 350: Time Regression

The Undying Club prepared a luxury suite for itself, everywhere filled with extravagance; add some wine bottles and ancient paintings, and it would look exactly like Serey's room.

Bologue was not surprised by this, after all, this is the Undying Club. It has existed longer than the Order Bureau, possessing some unsolved peculiarities, which is normal.

During a conversation with Wei'Er, Bologue wondered for a moment if the club's founder perhaps always lived in the club, his room hidden in the deepest part of the maze.

Bologue turned on the lights, soft glow illuminated the study, after closing the door tightly, Bologue sat at the desk, took out the document Lebius handed him, and spread it flat on the tabletop.

Chains and swords etched on the folder, the crimson emblem like blood, blood-drenched, as if it would melt in the next second, seeping into the paper.

Bologue's breath unconsciously lightened, he cautiously opened the envelope, taking out the papers inside.

"Resurrection..."

Bologue murmured, he was finally about to unravel his own mystery... one of them.

For a long time, Bologue maintained a strong curiosity about his own resurrection, as did Serey and the other Undead, because his own immortality was so perfect.

Except for needing Ether to resurrect and the inability to die repeatedly over a short period, his resurrection was virtually flawless.

He wouldn't age, nor did he fear sunlight and silverware, and each revival happened in an extremely strange way.

Sometimes blood flows backward, sometimes flesh resurrects, or mysteriously recomposes out of thin air... all of it is so special.

Bologue turned to the first page, it was an experimental report, the cover bore Bologue's name, beneath it was small writing that read extreme test.

The cover also contained some other information, Bologue guessed it must be related to the experiment's supervisor, recorder, etc., but these details were obliterated with black ink, completely hidden.

Bologue flipped through a few pages roughly, this kind of black redaction was present throughout the experimental report.

The report he received wasn't complete, but processed by the Order Bureau, who hid all the names of the participants from the time, leaving only what Bologue was permitted to know.

Bologue thought it was fine that way, most of those participants back then were probably dead, if not, they likely were old folks anyway.

He didn't care about those things; what truly mattered to Bologue was the true nature of his own resurrection.

Turning the page, Bologue read the text on it.

"First extreme test record, the maximum death threshold the test subject can endure..."

The words lined up together, narrating agonizing pain and memories surged from graves, flashing ceaselessly before Bologue's eyes.

He recalled the dark laboratory and himself tied on the operating table, surrounded by white-coated personnel, injecting toxins into his veins, noting down the number of his deaths.

After waking from the Black Prison, Bologue suffered from guilt's torment, always feeling related to people's deaths, though he remembered nothing.

As if seeking redemption, easing his heart, and probing into the mystery, Bologue cooperated greatly with the Order Bureau's research.

As for the agony of death, Bologue had long grown accustomed to it.

In the earliest phase as a Debtor, Bologue's memories were shattered and mostly incoherent; even if he remembered something, it was dreamlike, illusory, until fully awakening during the extreme tests, when his mental state steadied.

During that chaotic time, Bologue wasn't clear about what happened specifically but sensed numerous deaths and pain.

"Third extreme test record, form of target's resurrection..."

Bologue read the text expressionlessly, those people tested him with traditional contrasting methods.

In a living state, severing limbs, observing the way injuries healed.

In a dead state, severing limbs, observing the resurrection manner.

Maintaining a certain distance between the main body and limbs...

Resurrection manner at different distances...

Beneath the cold text were countless deaths, bodies piled into mountains, thick blood seeping through the gaps.

Bologue received no influence whatsoever, regarding death, he was already numb, devoid of feeling, as if the deaths recorded were someone else's, not his own.

During the reading, Bologue pressed the call button for Serey to send something to eat.

Serey sported a cheeky grin, asked if he needed a massage or similar services, showing off his muscles while speaking.

Bologue didn't bother with him, directly closed the door.

Sipping red wine, the dark crimson liquid slid down his throat, the alcohol somewhat relaxing Bologue's tense nerves, allowing him to continue reading the records in a more relaxed state.

"The removal of internal organs, the stripping of bones, multiple deaths in a short period, the destruction of the psyche..."

Bologue muttered as he recounted one gruesome test after another. In the records, interspersed were a few black-and-white photographs, reflecting grotesque and twisted forms.

With one hand flipping through the records, the other hand held a fork, spearing a sausage from the plate and stuffing it into his mouth, chewing it into mush.

"Oh? Crushing experiment."

Bologue mumbled indistinctly, spearing another sausage, chewing and swallowing it.

Continuing to flip through, Bologue finally found something interesting.

"According to the latest experimental records, we have overturned the previous assumptions; the target's time is not fixed."

Upon reading this part, Bologue realized that they thought their own time was frozen because they had always maintained this eternally youthful appearance.

But if Bologue's time were truly frozen, he should have stopped all bodily growth, such as not growing hair or beard, and not needing to eat or excrete.

Yet Bologue lived like a normal person, sometimes annoyed by the endless shaving, considering whether to have the beard removed.

"If we study it from the perspective of time, perhaps new progress can be made."

Upon reading this sentence, Bologue perked up a bit and continued to read on. What followed were a bunch of tiresome experimental records, but Bologue didn't skip them; he patiently, persistently read on.

At least he could infer from these tests how his injuries in battle would heal.

It sounded quite useless, but Bologue was a diligent learner who didn't mind learning these things; his lifespan was so long, with plenty of time to waste.

Bologue always had a premonition that learned things would eventually come in handy, even if they were inexplicable.

Flipping further, suddenly a blood-red page appeared before him, filled with numerous warning signs. Black lines crossed out much of the information, filled with ominousness.

"After repeated extreme tests, it can currently be determined that this is a completely new form of immortality."

Bologue turned the page and read such a passage.

"The target's state is peculiar; he seems to adaptively make some changes, yet there are still some patterns that can be followed."

Bologue set down the fork, pushed the plate aside, and began seriously reading the following content.

"The target's soul remains active, and over time, it disperses and stabilizes."

Underneath the text, a soul detection report was annotated. They conducted a semblance of a Condensation ritual to determine if his soul could be interfered with.

"Unlike the initial assumptions, the target's body's time is not frozen, meaning he indeed maintains a 'living' state rather than being stagnated by time.

From a physical perspective, the target is bestowed with eternal, ageless, nearly undead properties.

But from the direction of the soul, the target's soul remains affected, allowing it to be condensed, ascended, and still exert influence over the body.

This is an extraordinarily complex situation we've never understood.

The target's revival mechanism is not the preliminary judgement of physical resurrection, but a regression on the timeline, erasing the temporal state of death with minimal Ether consumption, and instead loading the state of life.

Time regression can be maintained in a local context, allowing the target's injuries to continuously restore to the optimal condition until falling into a death state for complete temporal regression."

"Time... regression?"

Bologue murmured softly, having mentally prepared himself in advance; such an explanation did not surprise him.

"There are still many unsolved mysteries about the target, such as the current conclusion of time regression. [Information Cover] believes that time regression might not be the full picture of the target's Blessing, but due to current technological limitations, we can only reach this conclusion.

The target is unaware of his own chaos. Repeated affirmation by the Crow's Nest indicates that the target indeed does not understand the process of becoming a Debtor, nor knows the specifics of the transaction.

Ultimately, confirmed by [Information Cover], the target himself has an independent time axis outside the world's time axis, continuously cycling and regressing.

It's unclear what impact this independent time axis will have, requiring further observation."

Bologue turned to the end; this was the entirety of the information. Bologue felt there should be more, but obviously, Lebius hadn't provided that part to him.

But for Bologue now, what he knew was already enough.

"Time regression?"

Bologue raised his head, looking toward the nearby mirror; the smooth surface reflected Bologue's face. Thus far, he finally caught a glimpse of a narrow aspect of his own chaos.