

## Endless 371

### Chapter 371: Reversal

"Oh oh oh, it's the Minister, please come this way, please come this way."

Serey turned sideways and gestured invitingly toward Belli, while giving Bode a significant look.

No one knows what Bode understood from Serey's eyes, but he quietly kicked Sai Zong. The poor dog didn't have time to react before being kicked into the corner.

Bode quickly tidied up the bar counter, stood behind it, and took up the duties of a bartender.

After sitting down, Belli looked around, observing every corner of the Undying Club with curiosity, and said, "I've heard about this place for a long time, but the Field Operations Department mentioned that you can't enter without a member bringing you in."

Serey nodded with a smile, then suddenly grabbed Bologue, his expression turning fierce.

"Bologue, we haven't done anything to wrong you, have we?" Serey growled low in Bologue's ear, "How could you bring a Minister in!"

"I didn't want to either, but she's considered Aimou's supervisor, so taking her out required her consent." Bologue was also unwilling to be in this situation.

After work hours, Bologue went to pick up Aimou, only to find Belli sweetly holding Aimou's hand by the Sublimation Furnace Core entrance, seemingly showing deep camaraderie between senior sisters. But Bologue understood it was clearly a criminal displaying their hostage.

Under Belli's pressure and coaxing, Aimou couldn't keep any secrets, and by noon, Belli already knew about the evening's plans.

"You mentioned before that as a Minister, you're so important; can you just leave the Order Bureau like this?" Throughout the journey, Bologue tried every way to persuade Belli to return.

"Isn't that why you're here as a Field Staff? Besides, the Order Bureau isn't far," Belli entrusted Bologue with heavy responsibility.

"You..."

Bologue wanted to find Balder to see if he had any way to deal with Belli, but since Aimou became an intern assistant, Balder had locked himself in the lab, it was unclear whether it was to avoid Belli or due to genuine dedication.

Then the timeline returned to the present, with Bologue bringing the two to the Undying Club. When the undying learned Belli was the Minister, their reaction was like mice seeing a cat.

"Calm down, she's the Minister of the Sublimation Furnace Core, the department full of Alchemists," Bologue explained again.

The undead looked at Belli with confused expressions, continually assessing her Ether strength, then sighed collectively.

"Phew... scared to death." Serey clutched his chest; he didn't look like he was pretending.

"Are you all this afraid of 'the Minister'?" Bologue asked.

Wei'Er said, "You know who the usual 'Minister' that can come here is, right?"

Bologue pondered for a few seconds, and a name came to mind.

Minister Nesanel.

These undead feared nothing under the sky except for the Order Bureau's landlord with reverence.

The Undying Club could move across distances, but it had stayed in Opus in recent years. In retrospect, perhaps it wasn't because these undead particularly loved this city, but more like they were caught and held by the Order Bureau.

"I've said she's the Minister of the Sublimation Furnace Core," Bologue responded.

"The Sublimation Furnace Core?"

Serey murmured, resting his chin while observing Belli, who didn't avoid his crimson gaze.

"Hmm? Strange, can someone of your tier be the Minister of the Sublimation Furnace Core now?" Serey asked, "And Vibron?"

"Minister Vibron passed away over forty years ago."

Belli thought, truly, these undead have a poor sense of time.

"Huh? Vibron's already dead, huh." Serey scratched his head, thinking it was reasonable; that guy's lifespan should've ended by now.

"Who's Vibron?" Bologue whispered to Belli.

Belli explained, "The first Minister of the Sublimation Furnace Core, considered one of the founders of the Order Bureau."

"By the way, he was a Seeker of Glory."

Upon hearing this, Bologue understood why the undead reacted so strongly; in their eyes, anyone capable of being a Minister, even if not a Seeker of Glory, should at least be a Defender.

A Minister's arrival inevitably troubled the undead, making them wonder if they had done anything wrong recently.

"Don't look at me being so weak; this position was originally my teacher's." Belli shrugged helplessly.

Serey recalled, "Oh, I remember now, Bologue mentioned it before."

The original Minister was Teda, who was succeeded by Belli after involving in forbidden matters, leading to the current situation.

The misunderstanding was resolved, and the Undead were joyful again. Belli didn't join their revelry; instead, she observed her surroundings, occasionally asking Wei'Er about relevant matters.

Bologue listened for a while and realized that Belli was inquiring about the Void Realm. She seemed quite interested in the Void Realm of the Undying Club, which had been operating for hundreds of years.

Aimou remained silent, clearly unlike Belli; the neurotic entrance of the Undead left quite an impact on her.

"It's okay. When I first came here, it was even worse than it is now," Bologue comforted.

"What happened back then?" Aimou asked.

"Um..."

Bologue briefly recalled the past, his expression becoming awkward, "Better not let me remember it."

Those memories could no longer be simply described as terrible.

"So, this is the Alchemy Puppet?" Serey suddenly emerged beside Aimou, his scarlet eyes constantly appraising her.

Serey narrowed his eyes; the trajectory of Ether was visible to him. He could clearly see the surge of Ether, all converging into the Constant Motion Core at the chest, where the noble red glimmer could be faintly discerned.

"Is the Philosopher's Stone the core?" Serey murmured, "Your consciousness should also be born out of the Philosopher's Stone, right?"

Aimou nodded, surprised that Serey could see through it instantly. Bologue was also somewhat surprised. This fellow finally showed the erudition a Night Race Lord should possess.

"The Philosopher's Stone's owner was named Alice; she was Teda's daughter. After losing her due to an accident, Teda sought ways to resurrect her," Bologue began discussing recent actions, wondering if Serey might have any valuable advice, "During the raid on the venue, Teda formally opposed us and even stole the Immortal Heart..."

Bologue and Serey earnestly engaged in discussion, while Aimou listened quietly between them.

Belli had made some upgrades to Aimou, merely making her expressions more lively and voice slightly varied. She still had sensory deficiencies. For instance, to taste liquor, she would need to use the Shared Chord Body, borrowing Bologue's perception.

But for Aimou, this was already more than enough, and she was quite content with it.

"Hmm... is that so? I thought it would be Alice waking up, but it turned out to be an entirely new consciousness," Serey frowned, "He took the Immortal Heart possibly with the intention to use the body to confine the soul."

"What do you mean?" Bologue pursued, noting this was something Aimou had mentioned before.

"The soul determines the body, but sometimes this relationship can be reversed.

In ascension, our soul distorts the body, turning it ethereal. However, when the body's power suppresses the soul, it acts like a transformative vessel, shaping the soul hidden within to the form we desire.

This reversal is almost impossible, but with the Immortal Heart, it might not be, given what that thing..."

As he spoke, Serey's voice lowered; apparently, he also knew the secret of Calamity.

"You're suggesting that Teda plans to implant the Immortal Heart in Alice's corpse, allowing her to be physically resurrected," Bologue stated.

"After physical resurrection, reverse the Philosopher's Stone's Condensation Ceremony to restore the soul to the body," Serey sipped his wine, "I would love to say this sounds too far-fetched, but theoretically it's feasible."

"Have you heard of a theory regarding death?"

The body is the vessel for the soul, and once it dies, the vessel shatters, causing the soul to spill out. Even if the body is restored after death, the soul, which has already faded away, will not return. This is complete death.

Using the Undead as an example, the curse we endure seems to act on the body as a vessel, not on the soul itself.

Our bodies tightly bind our souls; even if the body dies, the soul will not disperse until the body recovers, allowing us to restart."

Serey glanced at Aimou while speaking, "Teda might think the issue lies with the Alchemy Puppet."

"What he wants now is to restore the vessel and then force the soul back into the original body, Alice's body. Under the body's confinement, the soul will shape into Alice's form, allowing her to awaken."

"You really know so much?" Belli inquired, "Have you researched this as well?"

"Well, as an Undead, in our long lives, it's unavoidable to feel reluctant to let go of some short-lived individuals and wish to revive them," Serey admitted.

"And did you succeed?"

"Do you think that's possible?" Serey laughed, "Not even the Devil can change what has already happened, let alone the likes of us Undead."

"I tried many methods, but unfortunately, the person I wanted to resurrect was also a Debtor, her soul harvested by the Devil, and her body burned to ashes, leaving no trace behind.

I considered wishing upon the Devil, but I haven't even repaid my own debts, let alone ask for more from the Devil."

Serey perhaps had drunk too much or maybe the mood was just right; he casually shared past tales, though he didn't divulge much. This Night Race Lord, nearly akin to a stripper, his past remains chaotic, and hard to decipher.

"You're in quite a precarious situation now, new friend," Serey remarked to Aimou, "Your teacher, your father, he is bound to come back for you."

"And then kill you."

## Chapter 372: Inevitable Matters

Teda will surely find Aimou, kill her, and take the Philosopher's Stone from within the Constant Motion Core.

Everyone knows this, but no one has ever mentioned it directly, like an unspeakable secret, and now Serey has laid it bare in the sunlight.

Bologue wanted to say something comforting to Aimou, like he would certainly protect her, or maybe he would take down Teda, but he couldn't bring himself to say it.

In Teda's eyes, Aimou was just a tool for resurrecting Alice, but Bologue understood that, in Aimou's eyes, Teda was like a father figure.

Now that father and daughter are killing each other, it inevitably makes one feel sad. For Aimou, whether she is killed or Teda is killed, both are outcomes she is unwilling to face.

Serey's words made the cheerful atmosphere turn solemn, and Bologue recalled his conversation with Aimou in the Abandoned Land. If the Philosopher's Stone was taken away, Aimou might no longer be Aimou.

This would be, for her, another form of death.

"The essence of the soul resides within a sound body, thus giving birth to self-awareness."

Belli's voice was gentle, interrupting Bologue's oppressive thoughts, "Now Teda possesses Alice's corpse and carries the Immortal Heart, whereas Alice's soul is within Aimou's body. Only if both are combined can Alice's consciousness be awakened."

"Don't worry, unless you have a death wish and walk into the trap yourself, Teda can't do anything," Serey took another sip of wine and said with a smile, "He's carrying the Immortal Heart, the Sect of the Apes will surely not let him off, and the Order Bureau's Sixth Group is also hunting him down. He has no chance of doing anything to you."

Bologue nodded. Serey was right; they were holding absolute advantage at the moment. Not only is the Sixth Group pursuing Teda, but the Fourth Group and the Ninth Group have also been mobilized.

The Fourth Group has heightened vigilance, guarding against the Immortal Heart falling into the Abandoned Land, to prevent it from merging with the Calamity and awakening this abominable monster.



The Ninth Group hasn't stopped either; their duty is to chase down matters related to Devils, and the Immortal Heart clearly is one of their targets.

Bologue guessed that Teda must be under immense pressure right now, only able to hide and having neither the time nor opportunity to proceed with the next step.

"If it's really necessary, I could serve as a bodyguard for this new friend."

Wei'Er walked over, rubbing her head against Aimou's palm. It was Aimou's first time touching a cat.

Although compared to normal cats, Wei'Er speaking human language was strange, Aimou couldn't help but curiously rub Wei'Er's head.

Wei'Er purred contentedly, she really liked Aimou, rubbing against her non-stop.

"Wei'Er, your appearance is quite deceptive."

Bologue agreed, nodding. If Wei'Er stayed by Aimou's side, he would feel much more at ease. He hadn't seen Wei'Er in combat, but from her fierce punches to Night Race Lord and kicks to ancient undead, it was clear that before joining the Undying Club, Wei'Er was no saint.

No, there weren't many saints in the Undying Club, even Sai Zong, that dog, harbors an unspeakable past.

"Wei'Er, you know the rules; we can't interfere with the current world."

Serey's tone suddenly became severe. He rarely spoke to Wei'Er in such a manner.

"I was just joking."

Surprisingly, Wei'Er didn't refute but admitted her fault.

The Undying Club had no concrete rules but had one inviolable bottom line: interference with the current world.

This was a sanctuary, protecting these undead. When they vowed to remain here forever, all external grudges and feuds were supposed to be severed.

Socially speaking, these undead had essentially "died."

Yet once they leave the Undying Club and meddle with the current world again, the Club will no longer protect them, and those severed grudges and feuds will resume.

After the Dawn War, the Night Race was either burned or eternally imprisoned. Bologue always believed that Serey, as the Night Race Lord, could swagger here because of the protection of the Undying Club.

"This new friend is quite good," Bode also nodded in affirmation, "Lived this long, it's rare to see such an interesting new creation."

"From this perspective, Teda could indeed be considered an Alchemy Master. Though he cut corners a bit, he genuinely created a new life."

The undead kept examining Aimou endlessly, the creation of this new life for them brought a considerable impact, a miracle deemed impossible had actually been born.

"Thank you for the praise, thank you for the praise."

Aimou thanked softly, behaving very shyly; it's not entirely her fault. It was Aimou's first time attending a party, facing so many unfamiliar faces.

Moreover, Aimou was somewhat unable to control her own expressions.

Bologue noticed this point as well, Aimou previously, due to incomplete functions, always had a cold appearance like a mask, helping her hide her inner emotions.

But now it's different; her joys and sorrows are directly shown on her face. This honest expression made Aimou feel uneasy, she struggled to control her expressions.

The bar was lively nonstop, Belli and Bode chatted about the history of the Undying Club, Aimou kept petting Wei'Er, while Bologue suddenly noticed someone familiar lying over the bar.

They were chatting too happily, didn't even notice there was a drunk Palmer here.

"When did he get here?" Bologue asked.

"Not long ago." Serey showed a regretful expression.

"Why is he so drunk?"

"Might have run into some emotional troubles." Serey said vaguely.

"Huh?"

Bologue didn't understand. He remembered Palmer and his fiancée were quite happy, with a weekly fixed call, Palmer even previously invited him to visit Wind Source Highlands together.

Bode got up and lifted Palmer, taking him back to his own room. Belli took advantage of Bologue's membership status and followed Bode to take a look around the Undying Club.

Bologue doesn't drink much, and Aimou doesn't have any digestive function at all, giving her alcohol is purely wasteful, not to mention she's still considered a minor. Minors are prohibited from drinking.

In the end, only Serey drank by himself. As the intoxication gradually rose, Serey suddenly spoke.

"Hmm? This new friend, they are quite valuable indeed."

Value...

This word caught Bologue's attention, having dealt with the Devil for so long, these words seemed to carry a curse. Every time he heard them, he felt an ominous sense.

"A new consciousness born from steel and corpses, not even I have seen such an example... The Devils are like a group of collectors with strange hobbies. New friend, your soul in their hands should fetch a good price."

Serey revealed a meaningful smile.

"In the eyes of the Devil, would uniqueness also count as value?" Bologue asked in return.

"Why not? Just like a unique gemstone, even humans would go crazy for it, let alone the Devils." Serey said.

The two continued their conversation, while Aimou had fallen into silence as if Serey's words had struck a chord with her.

"Aimou sometimes sees visions of Alice and converses with them. What do you think?" After pondering for a moment, Bologue asked.

"You brought her here mainly to ask this, right?" Serey saw through Bologue's intentions.

"What else?" Bologue did not deny it.

Belli was taken away by Bode, and Palmer was sleeping like a dead man; the obstructive people had disappeared, so Bologue thought it was time to discuss this serious matter.

"Ask what?" Aimou had no idea what the two were talking about.

Bologue didn't intend to explain anything to Aimou; he sat up straight, staring into Serey's scarlet eyes.

"Serey, do you think the Alice that Aimou sees... is a Devil?"

The warm and lively atmosphere instantly plunged into freezing temperatures. Aimou became petrified, as if turned into stone, her body uncontrollable and unable to move.

But Bologue didn't notice any of this; his attention was solely on Serey, whose expression froze for a few seconds before maintaining a smile.

"A Devil? For some reason, hearing you mention them, I don't feel surprised."

Serey leaned back, conjuring a cigarette from his deep neckline like a magic trick, snapped his fingers, and flames ignited the cigarette, enveloping himself in smoke.

In the mist, Serey's features gradually became obscured, leaving only those mesmerizing scarlet eyes.

"Devils, these guys are far away at times, yet sometimes right in front of you. Some people may never have any contact with them, while others live with them every day."

Serey stared at Aimou and questioned.

"New friend, you can see visions of Alice and converse with them, right?"

After hesitating for a moment, Aimou nodded.

"What do they talk about with you?" Serey asked.

Aimou remained silent for a time, but Serey didn't push her too hard, instead asking another question.

"Have they guided you in making any decisions?"

Pictures of the past came rushing in, Alice reaching out her hand...

"No," Aimou shook her head, "they haven't guided me in making decisions."

"Did they promise you anything?"

"No, nothing was promised."

Serey's body suddenly leaned forward, like a demon emerging from the mist, focusing his gaze in front of Aimou.

"Then, did they mention... wishes?"

Aimou looked at Serey with determination and denied it.

"No."

"Hmm? That's good, looks like it's not a Devil."

Serey clapped his hands, and the volume of the jukebox increased, driving away the oppressive chill, restoring the joyful atmosphere.

"The form of Devils can shift endlessly, but their goals remain unwavering. By grasping these few principles, it's easy to determine whether someone is a Devil."

Serey raised the glass and drained it.

"The unfortunate thing is, even if you determine whether someone is a Devil, it wouldn't change anything. You understand this, Bologue, the Devils never lie."

Serey murmured.

"Like a dark fate, no matter how hard you try to escape, some wishes are destined to be fulfilled."

Chapter 373: Lies

The time of song and dance celebrations didn't last long; Bode came out from the stairs with Belli, and Bologue vaguely read a sense of exhaustion from Bode's skeletal face.

"Compared to the other ministers we know, this minister is very approachable and quite eager to learn."

Afterward, Bode commented on Belli like this, but when mentioning the eager to learn part, he was clearly somewhat uncomfortable.

Bologue could already imagine the scene where Belli chirped endlessly, possibly even made demands, asking if things could be taken apart and looked at.

Back to the present, Belli glanced at the time and said to Bologue, "Are you done talking? I need to take Aimou back."

"Now she is an important asset of the Order Bureau, still under the watchful eye of the teacher, everything needs to be cautious, doesn't it?"

Bologue affirmed Belli's words; before the Field Operations Department could devise a hunting plan against Teda, Aimou must remain unharmed.

Aimou is both a hostage in the hands of the Order Bureau and the last chain restraining Teda's sanity.

In Bologue's understanding, Teda is a madman completely driven by desires, willing to become an enemy of the Order Bureau to seize the forbidden Immortal Heart.

Once Teda realizes he can never revive Alice again, only pitch-black despair awaits him.

A desperate Negative Power User carrying the Immortal Heart...

Bologue didn't continue to think further; he just hoped the situation wouldn't turn out that way.

"I'll walk you back." Bologue stood up and put on his coat.

The Undying Club is very close to the Order Bureau, so close that the Field Operations Department could go on duty without needing any transport; just step out the door.

But Bologue remains uneasy; he thought getting answers from Serey would bring him peace, but the unease in his heart hasn't diminished in the slightest; instead, it grows more intense, like a volcano ready to erupt, suppressing and accumulating a blazing flame.

"Leave Palmer to you guys." Bologue then said to Serey.

Regarding his unfortunate partner, Bologue still felt some concern, although only a little.

"Let's go!" Belli placed a hand on Aimou's shoulder, "Little junior..."

Just as Belli was about to whisper something to Aimou, the halo in Aimou's eyes quickly cycled back and forth, then solidified.

"For safety's sake, isn't this way more secure?"



Aimou stepped aside promptly, causing Belli's hand to land in vain.

After experiencing life and death trials, whenever Aimou and Bologue are in a Shared Chord Body state, Aimou spontaneously feels a sense of security.

With the Undying Body as a carrier, looking at it this way, Bologue is indeed a perfect, never-collapsing fortress.

Aimou trusts Bologue; she feels regardless of any difficulties or obstacles, Bologue, as an expert, will perfectly resolve them, and she only needs to provide support for Bologue.

She doesn't need to communicate with anyone; just quietly hide in the dark corners.

After living a life at forks in the road for a while, Aimou realized that she has some fear of socializing.

Aimou's tense emotions relaxed quite a bit, but the launch of the Shared Chord Body was stopped; Aimou was puzzled, when she saw Bologue with his arms crossed on his chest, rejecting her.

"Aimou, there're a lot of people here."

Bologue lowered his voice, and after a brief pause, Aimou realized what would happen if the Shared Chord Body had been successfully launched.

At this moment, another layer of poor laughter began to emerge, and the person tried hard to suppress their emotions, but still couldn't control them until they let loose loudly.

"It's okay, little junior, I'll find a way to get you clothes synchronized with Secret Energy later," Belli said, giving Aimou a thumbs-up.

This promise from the Sublimation Furnace Core minister is invaluable.

The hum of metal, Ether disturbance, the path of light swept across Aimou's body surface, accompanied by her emotions, like flashing lights.

Serey gave a glance signal to Bode, Bode understood and greeted a few people, "By the way, since you're here, let me take you to see some of our other members."

He should be referring to the old undead and that stone sculpture.

Belli didn't refuse, Aimou was also invited; she glanced at Bologue, and Bologue indicated for her to relax; then Aimou nodded and followed Bode towards the door.

Only Bologue and Serey remained at the bar counter; Serey leaned beside Bologue and whispered, "Do you have any premonitions?"

"Probably... just feel very uneasy, as if something terrible is going to happen." Bologue was dazed for a moment and then said.

"Trust your instincts," Serey poured another glass of wine, "Among us, you are the debtor most deeply connected to the Devil; your instincts aren't wrong, Aimou is not that simple."

"You felt it too?" Bologue looked sharply at Serey.

"No feelings, just experience," Serey said. "I've lived for so long, how can I not see through a young girl's lies?"

"Lies... Aimou is lying?"

"Anyway, she didn't tell the truth. She's still too inexperienced to hide secrets," Serey glanced at Bologue suspiciously, "But you, how could the expert not notice this?"

"Me?" Bologue suddenly felt a bit deflated, helplessly said, "I'm an expert, but I'm only good at solving problems with violence."

Bologue wasn't good at handling interpersonal relationships; he never had many friends.

"Indeed, violence is a very convenient means, it can solve ninety-nine percent of problems," Serey agreed, and then added, "But there are still some things that violence cannot solve."

Serey leaned back, propping one foot on the back of his chair, holding a wine glass in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

Footsteps came, and Belli led Aimou out. Belli still had a wild grin on her face, while Aimou seemed much more dejected, her eyes losing much of their shine after some struggles.

Aimou is lying...

Once suspicion arises, it rampages through the mind.

If Aimou is lying, then what part of her words are true, and which are false?

Bologue trusts Aimou and also trusts Serey; he just thinks everyone has some unspeakable secrets, like the various secrets he's carrying.

Do his problems involve Aimou's secrets? So what is Aimou trying to hide?

Just as Bologue was thinking, Belli suddenly walked over and said, "Do you still have matters to settle? Then I'll be leaving first."

"You're leaving first?"

"What else? You just take Aimou back later, remember to send her to the Sublimation Furnace Core, not the Field Operations Department!"

Belli emphasized it, realizing that Bologue was indeed competing with her for someone.

"Don't betray my trust, Bologue," Belli whispered in Bologue's ear.

Bologue didn't understand Belli's words at all, and after realizing Bologue truly didn't understand, Belli suddenly felt a bit stifled.

"Bologue, you..." Belli looked exasperated.

This only made Bologue more puzzled; he hadn't said anything, so why was she angry?

"You fool, don't mess up, take her to the Sublimation Furnace Core, understood?" Belli poked Bologue's face.

"Got it! Got it!"

Bologue waved his hands repeatedly, willing to do anything as long as he could get Belli to leave.

Belli glanced at the two of them, greeted Bode, "See you next time!"

It seemed Belli and Bode had a good rapport.

"She's quite good, her eagerness to learn reminds me of my daughter." After Belli left, Bode murmured.

"Your daughter?"

Bologue glanced at Bode, unlike the free-spirited Serey, Bode had always been quiet, rarely mentioning his past.

Bode didn't say much, only picked up a mop, and started cleaning the bar.

"I hope to see you alive next time!"

Serey waved at Aimou. It sounded strange, but Serey was indeed being friendly.

Not long after Belli left, Bologue took Aimou out of the Undying Club. The sky was completely dark, pitch black, street lamps lit up one by one, illuminating the streets.

Aimou stood at the doors of the Undying Club, waved back, but Serey and Bode didn't come out to see her off, only Sai Zong emerged, crouching at the door watching Aimou.

Even though Bologue had introduced these members to Aimou, she still couldn't quite accept Sai Zong. When something becomes too bizarre, it only makes people uneasy.

Sai Zong barked twice at Aimou, then quieted down, watching them walk out of the alley and disappear into the street.

Suddenly, a piercing ringing shattered the silence of the alley. At the other end of the alley, a red phone booth stood at a fork, continuously ringing as if calling someone.

Sinister forces surged and lingered through the alley, everyone felt reverence towards this power, but Sai Zong ignored it and directly turned back into the Undying Club.

Yes, now he's a dog.

And dogs don't answer phones.

The ringing soon stopped, and inside the red phone booth, it returned to darkness, with the door slowly pushed open from the inside...

Chapter 374: Probability Theory

The Undying Club wasn't far from the Order Bureau, just a few streets away, and if you looked up, you'd see that gigantic, black obelisk towering between the buildings.

Belli had already gone back first, with Bologue and Aimou following closely behind, like ordinary workers just off from a day's work, their pace leisurely as they strolled through the streets.

Neither of them spoke, savoring the leisure after a busy day, while people thronged the streets, and the noise never ceased.

As night fell, the signs of the shops along the way lit up, like the dazzling lights of a dance floor, casting a riot of color everywhere.

Amidst the neon and bustling traffic.

Aimou looked around, her eyes brimming with curiosity, every glimpse a rare newness to her.

Bologue also deliberately slowed down his pace, and the two ambled along, unconcerned with the passing of time.

In the past, Aimou would never have dared to appear on the streets like this directly. No matter how human she seemed, her imperfections always made her uneasy. But after Belli's enhancements, her appearance was more human than before, even the seams between her limbs filled, almost flawless.

Her expressions became lively, her speech carried intonation, and even the halo in her pupils had adjustable brightness.

Bologue glanced at Aimou from the corner of his eye, really wanting to ask Belli for a list of Aimou's upgrades, to see what improvements she had made.

If necessary, would Aimou's arm suddenly pop out all sorts of chaotic weapons like a multifunctional military saber?

Bologue's thoughts unconsciously drifted in a strange direction, while Aimou kept studying the shops along the way.

In Aimou's life, walking so openly in the streets without worrying about her identity being exposed had only happened twice, once during the Vow Festival when she shared the chord body with Bologue, and now this time.

Although Aimou couldn't perceive the myriad experiences like humans do, such a state also satisfied her greatly.

At least in this moment, the differences between her and humans nearly vanished.

Then...

The halo in her eyes trembled slightly, a chilling cold interrupted Aimou's train of thought as she unconsciously looked up, her gaze sweeping across the steel jungle to the pillar of light rising beyond the mist.

The instant she noticed the light pillar, Aimou seemingly saw something terrifying, a flash of fear crossed her face, her steps rooted in place.

"What's wrong, Aimou?" Bologue took a couple of steps and noticed Aimou hadn't followed up.

"Nothing... nothing at all."

Aimou hesitated for a few seconds, then smiled and shook her head, her gaze resting on Bologue, forcing herself not to think of the light pillar.

"Hmm? You don't look well, don't want to go back to see Belli?" Bologue furrowed his brows.

Aimou reacted for a while, as if hearing a particularly funny joke, and burst into laughter, unable to contain herself.

It was too funny.

"Haha! Bologue, you..."

Aimou placed a hand on Bologue's shoulder, laughing for quite a while before she collected herself, standing up straight with a touch of liveliness in her eyes.

"No, I actually quite like Senior," Aimou said, "She's quite gentle in private."

Bologue said, "Gentle? That's terrible, Belli only understands gentleness when she's researching."

He wasn't joking; when working for Belli, she was extremely caring toward him, always showing concern.

Aimou was again amused by Bologue, clearly a simple sentence, yet she couldn't stop laughing.

"Alright, alright, control yourself!"

Aimou laughed so loudly that others started looking over, making Bologue a bit flustered, thinking of covering Aimou's mouth but feeling it wasn't appropriate.

Because of this, Bologue's movements became comical, his hands waving around without any resolve.

To think a serious expert could have such a clumsy side; Aimou wanted to laugh a bit more, but upon seeing Bologue's earnest expression, she tried hard to control herself, pushing down her emotions.

"Okay, I'm fine now," Aimou said, confidently giving Bologue a thumbs-up.



Bologue let out a deep breath, hoping that when Belli handed over the upgrade list, she'd also include a maintenance manual for Aimou.

"Are you busy lately?" Aimou suddenly asked.

"Not busy, I'm sort of on a break lately, why?"

"If so, would you mind seeing me home a bit later?" Aimou suggested.

"Huh? But Belli..."

Before Bologue could finish, Aimou took his arm, looking at him imploringly.

"What are you up to?" Such tricks were obviously ineffective against Bologue.

"Just want to stroll more outside, it's a rare chance," Aimou said.

"Hmm... but we can't just pop into some restaurant or anything," Bologue thought for a moment, then explained, "Though, we could go to some unseen place and share the chord body. But you wouldn't want me carrying a bunch of clothes back to the Order Bureau, right?"

Thinking of that image, Bologue felt it would be terrible.

"Even if I don't mind, you wouldn't want to face Belli's wrath again, would you?"

Bologue's words made Aimou's smile freeze.

Belli's personality was much like a witch from tales, or a witch in the woods; even if Aimou said she could be gentle, Bologue found it hard to imagine it.

Bologue thought, Palmer might be able to handle Belli; when a Witch meets a fool, unpredictable things might happen. But the result was that Belli threatened to hit Palmer every time she saw him if he dared to get close to the Sublimation Furnace Core.

Palmer really is disliked by others.

The two sat down on a street bench. In the past, Bologue could walk from the Undying Club to the Order Bureau in a matter of minutes, but this time, the short journey seemed unusually long.

Aimou sat quietly beside him, while Bologue pondered what Aimou could experience.

"Bologue, a long time ago, I used to stand at the edge of the crossroads in hesitation, gazing at this city from afar. At that time, I felt that this city didn't belong to me, and I would never set foot in it."

Suddenly, Aimou spoke. She didn't look at Bologue but instead watched the bustling streets, where cars were stuck together, and drivers impatiently honked their horns. Despite the noise, Aimou found it quite interesting.

"But now, I'm in this city. I've met people here, and it's no longer unfamiliar to me."

She turned to look at Bologue, her face full of joy.

"I know what cake tastes like, I've watched a movie, my voice has gained intonation, and even my expressions are no longer numb... It's something I never imagined before."

Bologue felt the atmosphere was somewhat... warm. He recalled that in his expert's long career, he rarely encountered situations like this.

So, what should he say now?

Bologue had an idea.

"From a probability standpoint, as long as you live long enough, good things are bound to happen."

Bologue responded earnestly, "So you have to live well."

For a few seconds, it seemed like time stopped, and Aimou appeared to be holding back laughter. Bologue couldn't figure out what was so funny until she couldn't contain it any longer, and like a seal slapping its belly, she patted Bologue's shoulder.

"Oh my, Bologue, has anyone ever told you that you have a knack for comedy?" Aimou laughed so hard she almost leaned back.

"Comedy? I feel like I'm serious!"

"Exactly! That's the feeling of someone telling jokes with a straight face!"

"Uh?"

Should we say, as expected of sisters? Bologue started to think Aimou was somewhat like Belli; her humor was quite quirky.

Afterward, the two fell silent again, with neither speaking, quietly waiting for time to pass.

"Are we daydreaming?" Aimou asked.

"Probably... What's the matter?"

"I feel like it's a waste of time, it doesn't seem like your style."

"Me? What's my style?"

"Probably that very meticulous style that makes the best use of every moment, never allowing time to be wasted."

"Oh? That's true, but I'm off duty now."

"Off duty?"

"Yeah, off duty," Bologue stretched lazily, relaxing his body, and said drowsily, "After work, the Order Bureau doesn't pay overtime, so why should I be so professional?"

"Not bad, Bologue."

Aimou said cryptically, and then she stood up, reached out, and pulled Bologue up too.

"Let's go, we should head back."

"Just like that?" Bologue asked, "I thought you wanted to stay out a little longer."

"There's always a chance later," Aimou thought for a moment, "How about when everything is over?"

"When it's all over, you mean Teda's matter?" Bologue asked.

"Uh-huh, after the teacher's matter is resolved, there will be nothing left to affect us. By then, we can do whatever we want, freely." Aimou fantasized about a beautiful future.

"Do you have anything you want to do then?" Bologue countered.

Aimou thought for a while before helplessly shaking her head, "Can't think of anything, do you have any suggestions?"

This time, Bologue fell silent, displaying a look of distress.

Bologue's daily life was very routine, so routine it was somewhat boring. He himself was enjoying it, but if Aimou joined...

"Speaking of which, Geoffrey got us a car," Bologue remembered, "Because of our outstanding performance, he got us a fieldwork car, parked in the Order Bureau's parking lot."

"And then?"

"I can take you for a drive, this city is quite big... just the two of us."

Upon hearing this, Aimou was a bit surprised, not expecting Bologue to have such a moment of enlightenment, but then Bologue added.

"Just the two of us is enough; let Palmer stay away," he mumbled, "Having Palmer with a mode of transport is practically a disaster."

Bologue recounted his first experience riding a motorcycle alongside Palmer.

Aimou froze, then laughed again wildly. Bologue really couldn't understand, and asked her what she was laughing at. Aimou didn't answer, just kept making faces at Bologue.

## Chapter 375: Conclusion

No matter how long the journey, there is always an end. Bologue and Aimou stood at the entrance of the Order Bureau, bidding farewell to each other.

Due to the cognitive interference from the Cultivation Room, the other end of the street was bustling, whereas on this side, it was very quiet, with only Bologue and Aimou standing there.

Bologue was in no hurry to part with Aimou, as Serey's words kept echoing in his mind.

"Aimou, do you remember what you told me in the Abandoned Land?" Bologue asked.

"What?"

"We shouldn't lie to each other, and we must absolutely trust each other." Bologue repeated.

"That's right, why?" Aimou confirmed the statement.

"Is there anything you're hiding from me?" Bologue continued.

"No." Aimou answered decisively, and then asked back, "Why are you asking these things?"

"I just feel that if you have something on your mind, we're friends, I can help you, you should understand that." Bologue said.

Aimou blinked, "Hmm? Is this some kind of promise?"

"I don't have many friends, you can think of it that way."

Feeling a bit tired from standing, Bologue sat down on the steps, and after a while, Aimou also sat down.

The two leaned against each other, their figures appearing particularly small under the vast city.

"Bologue, actually, there are some things that even friends can't help with." Aimou said in a low voice.

"Like what?"

"Like things that violate your principles?" Aimou turned his head, smiling at Bologue.

"Just like the teacher, who was once the head of the Sublimation Furnace Core and was my senior sister's teacher. I think such a relationship is close enough, right? But when the teacher went mad, everyone stopped him, instead of helping him fulfill his wishes."

"But what Teda did..."

Bologue just started to speak when Aimou interrupted him.

"It's very crazy, I know, so when some things go beyond principles and become unforgivable mistakes, even friends can't help him. He has to move forward alone."

Aimou's voice lowered, "The teacher must have understood this too. He was doing things wrong, but he couldn't reconcile with himself.

He couldn't convince his heart to give up Alice.

He couldn't ask his friends for help, nor dare to guess their thoughts, so he could only continue on the wrong path without turning back."

Bologue didn't know what to say.

"If I wanted to fulfill a wish, and that wish would violate your principles, what would you do, Bologue?" Aimou suddenly asked.

"Would you violate your own principles and duties to help me fulfill it, or would you deny me and stop it all?"

Before Bologue could answer, Aimou said with a smile.

"This is the dilemma of choice. If I ask you for help and you don't, I would be sad, but seeing you go against yourself, I would still be sad. Instead of that, it's better not to tell you anything from the beginning.

I wouldn't be disappointed, and you wouldn't be in a dilemma.

I think the teacher thought the same way."

Aimou could understand how Teda felt at that time.

"Instead of giving the choice to others and testing their thoughts, it's better not to expect anything from the start and hold the power of choice firmly in one's own hands."

So Teda put on that white doll mask and acted as a Delusional.

Bologue fell silent; the reason he was able to interact with Aimou was because of Belli's request. She couldn't help Teda, nor did she want to be an enemy of the teacher, so she had Bologue watch over everything to prevent the worst outcome.

But it still happened.

Bologue's expression was calm as he looked up at the pitch-black sky. The mist spilling from the Great Rift formed a dome, blocking all light.

"So... do you have a wish, Aimou?"

"Me? You can guess."

"Transform into a human?"

"Didn't we talk about this before? Humans are too fragile. What's the point of becoming one?"



Hearing this, Aimou remembered something, mysteriously raising her left hand and deftly moving her fingers, "Guess what this arm can turn into?"

"A multi-functional military saber?" Bologue answered without thinking.

"Correct."

Aimou nodded in agreement, whether it was true or a joke.

"So what exactly is your wish?" Bologue asked again.

"Nothing, just a..."

A very small, insignificant wish."

Aimou was mysterious and refused to say it straight, teasing Bologue on purpose, promising, "How about this? If you treat me to dessert, I'll tell you, how about that?"

"That's all? Just a dessert?"

"After all, it's you who eats, and I get to feel it, what more do you want?" Aimou said angrily.

"No... I just thought, is that really all it takes?"

"I've told you, it's insignificant, not worth mentioning. If I open my mouth wide, wouldn't that be inflating the price?"

Aimou stood up, dusted herself off, and continued, "Tomorrow after work, you decide the place, how about that?"

"Okay, I'll come pick you up tomorrow night."

Ever since Geoffrey settled the bonus for the raid on the venue, Bologue was now filthy rich. He was even considering moving his house near the Order Bureau, and treating Aimou to some dessert was a breeze.

"See you tomorrow!"

Bologue waved at Aimou, sent her to the Pillar Courtyard, and only when he saw her enter the elevator did he slowly leave.

After saying goodbye to Aimou, Bologue returned to the Undying Club, where only Bode was left cleaning up the place. Sai Zong had wandered off somewhere, and Wei'Er probably found a random room to sleep in.

As for Serey, it was simpler; now that night had fallen, it was the perfect time for Serey to show off. Word was that Serey had become somewhat of a legend in the nightlife of Opus.

Bologue just hoped that when he returned, he wouldn't be too noisy. Unlike these idle people, he still had work to do the next day.

Before returning to his own room, Bologue paused for a moment, turned the knob of the door next to him, and as soon as he entered, a wave of alcohol hit him in the face.

Palmer was curled up on the bed, drooling all over it. Seeing that his partner had not died of alcohol poisoning, Bologue returned to his room with peace of mind and lay flat on the bed.

Thinking about it, he and Palmer might as well be roommates; he just hoped nothing unlucky would happen.

...

"Back so soon?"

Belli pushed open the bedroom door and looked at Aimou with surprise, "I thought you'd be back after midnight."

Aimou had no intention of responding to Belli's babbling.

"Since that's the case... how about sleeping with your elder sister?" Belli said and attempted to fully open the door to drag Aimou in.

"No no no!" Aimou waved her hand quickly, refusing sternly.

"What a pity, then goodnight!"

"Wait a minute!"

Before Belli could close the door, Aimou reached out to stop her. Belli squinted her eyes and grinned, "What, you really want to come with me?"

"Can you be a bit more normal?" Aimou chided her.

"Okay, okay, what do you want to say?"

Aimou thought for a moment, then suddenly opened her arms to Belli. Belli paused for a moment, then with a somewhat bewildered understanding, stepped forward and hugged Aimou.

"Why the sudden change?" Belli was a bit puzzled, but her hands didn't stop moving.

Aimou didn't explain anything, but after releasing Belli, she said to her.

"Goodnight, see you tomorrow."

"Goodnight... goodnight..."

Even after Aimou left, Belli was still a bit perplexed, unable to understand where Aimou's sudden warmth came from. She just pinched her palm, recalling the sensation just now, and then sighed, as expected of something she made herself, the feel was top-notch.

After parting with Belli, Aimou turned and walked out of the staff dormitory area. She didn't require sleep, and late at night, she preferred to make small things or maintain herself.

Belli knew this and didn't have any doubt.

Aimou's expression cooled, like she had put on a mask. She came to the Sublimation Furnace Core, but didn't stop, passing through gate after gate, returning all the way to the Courtyard of Winding Paths on the first floor.

In the dead of night, most of the staff had left, with only a few on-duty staff remaining in the Order Bureau.

Aimou moved silently, her presence was ghostly thin, like a specter, attracting no one's attention. With a temporary pass, the Cultivation Room identified her as a friendly unit.

Everything was peaceful, not the slightest incident occurred.

Finally, Aimou arrived at the entrance of the Order Bureau. Recently, it was here that she bade farewell to Bologue, and now she had returned.

Aimou let out a long breath. Through the entire process, she was incredibly tense, but fortunately, she had smoothly left the Order Bureau.

"Your goody-two-shoes disguise is excellent, even Bologue would be fooled by you." A gentle voice arose as Alice appeared from behind Aimou.

"You and I both know the outcome," Alice continued, "but you're still going to try, aren't you?"

"Yes... I have to try, otherwise there will always be some unwarranted hope in my heart."

Aimou murmured, "I need to put an end to this."

"Oh? You're finally getting brave, huh!"

Alice praised, turned her head to look toward the direction of the Undying Club, and sighed again, "What a pity for Bologue, you guess what he's doing now? I wonder... maybe planning where to take you for dessert tomorrow?"

She let out a disturbing laugh, mocking the whole affair.

"He's preparing for a date that won't happen, how interesting."

To this, Aimou made no reply, only looked up at the towering pillar of light, which served as a beacon, guiding her.

Aimou walked toward the light, and as she left, a strange power surged within the Cultivation Room, attempting to stretch out invisible arms to pull Aimou back.

"Quiet."

Alice raised her hand, halting that pulling force.

"Don't disturb me."

The Mad Roar Power cut in sharply, completely concealing Aimou's presence, making even the Cultivation Room lose track of her temporarily, allowing Aimou to leave, drifting farther and farther away.

#### Chapter 376: Self-Sacrifice

It was already late at night, and the streets of Opus had quieted down, with only Aimou's solitary figure moving slowly forward on the empty street.

Soon, Aimou headed toward the center of the city, the giant scar that spanned the ground.

Waves of mist rushed forward, and many people appeared quite flustered upon seeing the Great Rift for the first time, as this land was indeed eerily terrifying.

But Aimou was different; in her short life, one could say almost all her time was spent within this dark and damp Great Rift.

What others might see as a fearsome Great Rift, to Aimou, was a warm homeland.

Even though she had left not long ago, she felt as if she had been away for many years.

The beam of light in her eyes gradually became clearer; this was a function set within the Constant Motion Core long ago to deal with emergencies, now activated to guide Aimou's path.

Alice's figure followed closely behind Aimou, periodically scrutinizing Aimou, observing the trembling pupils of her eyes and her composed facial expression.

A chaotic electric sound echoed in Aimou's ears, and shortly after, a familiar voice sounded nearby, causing Aimou to pause and look toward the rolling darkness in the mist.

The darkness faded, and familiar figures stood at the edge of the corridor.

"Alright, this is as far as we can go," said the tall figure.

"Why can't we keep going? There's clearly a path ahead," the small figure didn't understand.

The tall figure spoke gently, "Outside is a world that doesn't belong to you."

The small figure tilted her head, evidently not understanding why the outside world didn't belong to her, clearly she had already been created, why be imprisoned in this small land?

But she wasn't troubled by this for long; she knew nothing about the outside world, nor did she have any longing for it, let alone the fact that she really liked this life, feeling it was alright even if she didn't go outside.

"You're an aberration; aberrations aren't welcomed in groups, but here it's different; the Great Rift welcomes everyone."

He reached out his hand, gently caressing her face, his rough fingers tracing the seams of her metal joints.

She barely grasped these things, raising her hand, revealing palms made of hard, cold metal, with rivets lined along the edges, and blue and red cables visible between the seams.

She was different; his body was soft and warm, while hers was hard and cold.

But she felt it was alright; she was capable of many things he wasn't, such as driving nails directly with her hand, unlike him, who needed to use tools.

"Like this? Then let's stay here forever, I think there's nothing wrong with that," she said.

Alice observed the illusionary scenes from afar, preparing to say something, but she heard footsteps growing distant, and turning her head, Aimou had already walked far away.

Aimou strived to maintain composure, ignoring the memories' hallucinations, but regardless of how she ignored them, countless figures stood within the heavy mist.

Those two figures appeared again on the aerial corridor; the tall figure lifted the small figure, and she reached out her hand, collecting the faintly glowing gas above.

"The Great Rift is filled with this Alchemy Waste Gas; once gathered, I can teach you how to decompose it."

"Alright!"

Aimou walked through the aerial corridor, shattering the illusionary figures into dispersing dust. Alice remained silent, following closely behind her like a hunting wolf pursuing its prey.

Having crossed the aerial corridor, the bewildering crossroads were near the edge of the cliff, where two figures huddled in the shadows.

"See, whenever it rains, the water accumulates and flows into the Great Rift, cascading down the cliff like a waterfall," he gestured toward the distant cliff, the water rushing over and pouring into the Great Rift.

"Shouldn't we hurry home? Or else I'll rust!" she wasn't in the mood to appreciate the scenery.

"It's okay, it's okay; after this upgrade, I replaced you with Alchemy Metal, so you don't have to worry about that," he said.

She raised her hand again; her rough metal palms replaced by hands as exquisite as crafts, the surface polished to a gleam, and her slender fingers deftly danced.

Then came more figures.



The tall figure replaced her eyes, loaded new auditory systems, followed by an entire overhaul, making her more human-like.

She was like a clay sculpture, undergoing constant touches and adjustments, little by little transforming into a human, into... someone.

Aimou halted, she could see the rising light behind the mist, that was her destination, yet she, who never slowed, found herself uncontrollably slowing down, stopping.

"Going to escape? Aimou, you still have time to turn back now; you can return to the Cultivation Room, as if nothing happened tonight. I can help cover your tracks, and no one will know about what transpired tonight..." Alice's voice echoed in her ear.

Aimou ignored her; since entering the Great Rift, she no longer responded to anything Alice said.

The momentary pause gave Aimou the courage, just as she had previously stated, she must make a conclusion.

No longer hesitating, Aimou stepped into the mist, which seemed to conceal ghosts, the frightening howls continually sounded.

Stepping onto the steel corridor, then onto the wooden floor, the air swirled with a stale scent, Aimou stiffened, overlapping hallucination with reality, standing before a door, hand clasping the handle.

## Chapter 377: Self-Sacrifice\_2

Turning the doorknob, a familiar yet unfamiliar figure stood before the door.

She looked at herself, her gaze shifted from shock to excitement, and she hugged herself tightly. A faint sound of crying could be heard as she repeatedly uttered.

"Alice, is that you? Alice."

Who is Alice?

I didn't understand at all, and soon the other person realized something was wrong. They began arguing with him, and during the argument, I learned that the visitor's name was Belli Yiyeta and she called him Teacher. In her excitement, Belli even shouted the name Teda Yzhede.

I watched the argument, and then Belli left. Before leaving, she looked at me reluctantly. In the silent house, he suddenly seemed much older. I walked over and softly asked.

"What is Belli? And Teda?"

"It's her, it's me."

"Is this... a name?"

I had read in books that everyone is referred to by a certain word, and that's a name. It was only then that I realized I didn't have a name, and he had never told me his name.

"Then... what am I?" I asked again.

Teda fell silent for a long time and then replied coldly.

"Alchemy Puppet."

Through layers of illusions, moving down the rust-stained corridor, past twisted and bizarre structures, Aimou walked deeper into the Great Rift until the beam of light was close at hand.

She tried not to hear those voices, but the arguing and clamor gradually intensified until it was deafening.

The mist almost covered her entire vision, the corridor faintly visible in the chaotic gray and white, and then another door appeared in the fog.

Aimou remembered this door.

In the days that followed, Aimou often wondered if everything would be different if she hadn't opened that door.

But she always had to push it open; it was her destiny.

So she pushed open the door and saw another self lying on the bed.

She had thought she was unique.

How absurd.

"What are you doing?" Teda was always gentle, but this time he was full of anger.

"She is..." She didn't understand, her expression flustered and uneasy.

Teda's anger suddenly extinguished, and he stood for a long time, giving his explanation.

"Alice Yazhede, she is my daughter."

The false game of playing house was over, and Teda felt it was time to explain everything and draw a line.

She couldn't process these issues all at once, her mind a jumbled mess, almost about to explode.

Looking at the sleeping figure on the bed, at the body identical to her own, she looked down at her hands, a fear beyond words erupted from within.

She staggered backward, sat against the wall, and let out a shriek of fear and anguish.

"No... this isn't right..."

She muttered, she was supposed to be herself, that's how it should be...

Teda said nothing, he simply picked her up and pushed her through another door, throwing her inside.

She was thrown into a pile of garbage, not understanding why Teda had become so cruel; he wasn't like that before... Was he sick? She knew humans were fragile, they could get sick, and some people's personalities changed when they were ill.

Yes, Teda was sick, and once he recovered, he would return to the way she knew.

But...

"As you see, she is my daughter."

Without emotion, Teda explained to her everything about his resurrection plan.

Those words were like the ravings of a demon, the glow of Ether flickered continually on her surface, and she felt she was on the verge of an overload.

"But..."

She shook her head forcefully, denying it all.

"I am your daughter?"

Teda looked at her coldly, then said, "Look around you."

She turned her head, saw one discarded puppet after another piled up, their eye sockets empty, resembling death itself, densely packing the darkness.

When the fear reached its peak, her emotions became unbearably numb. She remembered those beautiful memories, everything seemed so real, but the current pain was just as sharp.

She didn't understand why Teda, who had been so kind to her, was now so cruel, only because of her different identity?

Teda slowly closed the door, and all the light vanished as well. She scrambled over, but couldn't stop the door from closing.

Pounding on the door with force, her pleas went unanswered.

Afraid, she shrank into a corner, and at this point, Aimou walked over and sat beside her.

Nobody knew that Aimou was not as obedient as she seemed, quite the contrary, she was a deceitful, habitually lying child.

The pitiful identity of the Alchemy Puppet made everyone who knew her feel a touch of sympathy, while her expressionless face and cold tone made her lies seamless.

Bologue had heard this story from both Aimou and Teda, but neither told the truth about what actually happened that day; only they themselves knew.

"It was that day, you appeared," Aimou said softly.

Alice stood aside, her hands behind her back, "You needed me, so I came, didn't I?"

Aimou did not respond; she heard footsteps approaching.

Teda was here.

When Teda opened the door again, it was already the next day. She sat quietly atop the puppets' corpses, like another puppet herself.

Teda asked, "Do you understand your place now?"

Chapter 378: Self-Sacrifice\_3

She didn't reply, merely muttered one phrase over and over, her voice so low that only she could hear it.

"I'm not anyone's substitute, I'm not... I'm special, I'm unique..."

Like a curse, she forced herself to believe it.

The illusion collapsed with a roar, a rock wall blocked the path, Aimou seemed somewhat weary, yet she still crashed directly into the wall, then passed through it, the familiar door was within reach, she hesitated for a moment, then knocked on the door.

Footsteps sounded from behind the door, then the door was pushed open a small crack, revealing a horrifying face.

The sense of familiarity vanished, replaced by a strange fear, his face was overgrown with messy beard, eyes deep and hollow, hidden pupils in darkness glimmered with a mad brilliance.

Aimou hesitated to recognize the man in front of her, he was so haggard, yet the corners of his mouth bore a fanatic smile, like a hysterical madman.

Teda stared for a long time, he had no comment on Aimou's current appearance, he merely pushed the door completely open, "Come in, the Void Realm has been open too long, they'll notice."

Entered the Alchemy Workshop, Aimou froze in place, the once pervasive smell of oil had vanished, replaced by the foul stench of blood.

She saw thick veins extending from dark corners, blood surged beneath the membrane, raging, vine-like flesh entwined with steel, pulling the machinery into operation, the ground was also covered in a layer of fleshy constructs like a fungus mat, dense fleshy tendrils swayed endlessly.

Aimou faintly heard a deep hum, as if war drums were being struck in the darkness, accompanied by a slight trembling of the ground.

In this nest of flesh, seemed to be an unimaginably gigantic heart, currently sleeping in the darkness, hard to imagine what it would be like when it awakened.

Teda locked the large door behind him, the Void Realm returned to its closed state, isolating others' prying eyes, as for the current twisted cacophony, Teda had no intention of explaining.

"How is Alice?" Teda asked emotionlessly.

Aimou clutched her chest, "She's safe."

As Aimou's creator, Teda had guessed what she had been through just by seeing her for the first time, only when her shell was completely damaged would such a thorough reformation be necessary.

Teda didn't care about Aimou, but emphasized, "You're merely borrowing her life, if you can't protect her..."

"I understand," Aimou replied coldly.

"That's good."

Teda turned and began busying himself, reaching out to dismantle the congealed flesh, extracting metal parts.

He didn't forget to instruct, "The Immortal Heart has been implanted, now it just needs to fuse completely with Alice. There's nothing else for you to do during this time, just stay quietly aside."

Ether surged beside Teda, arms Illusion Creation reached for heavy components, stacking them aside.

During this period, apart from focusing on Alice's revival, Teda had been busy with these things, gradually transforming the Alchemy Workshop into a fortress.

Teda understood, the Void Realm here couldn't shelter him forever, eventually he'd be discovered, fortunately he didn't need to fight the Order Bureau to the death, he only needed to hold out until it all ended.

"Why are you still here?" Teda turned, discovering Aimou still standing there, not leaving.

"I just wanted to take another look here."

Aimou gazed up at the drastically changed Alchemy Workshop, her voice devoid of emotion.

"After the fusion, the Philosopher's Stone within the Constant Motion Core will be taken out, right? Reversing Condensation, returning the soul to the body," Aimou murmured, "I'll be damaged then, right?"

Her previous suspicions were merely to deceive Bologue, Aimou was quite aware of her fate, what she hadn't expected was, Bologue was so easy to deceive, as if anything she said, he'd believe.

This wasn't good, the easier it was to deceive Bologue, the more Aimou felt distressed.

"Are you afraid now? If so, why did you come back?" Teda asked.



"I'm not afraid, I'm an Alchemy Puppet, I don't think the way humans do," Aimou said calmly, "Humans fear death, but I don't."

Aimou smiled, "On the contrary, I feel joy when the fate of a tool is fulfilled."

The value of a wrench doesn't lie in rusting while idle, but in breaking while turning a screw.

Aimou moved aside, pried open layer upon layer of flesh, took out a familiar puppet mask, past memories flashed continuously before her eyes.

After a long silence, Aimou couldn't help but speak.

"Father, I..."

Suppressing Ether interrupted Aimou's words, Teda slowly turned his head, his haggard face filled with anger and ferocity.

"How many times have I told you, Aimou."

Aimou didn't back down, retorted, "Shouldn't parents love their children?"

After saying this, Aimou suddenly felt relieved, she'd finally asked the question she had long been holding in.

"To you, what am I?" Aimou continued to ask.

"Alchemy Puppet."

Teda answered without hesitation, "A tool for resurrecting Alice, satisfied with that answer?"

His voice was calm, carrying an indescribable sense of fatigue.

Aimou didn't refute, merely answered mechanically.

#### Chapter 379: Self-Sacrifice\_4

"I understand, teacher."

Aimou no longer lingered, turning around and heading deeper into the Alchemy Workshop. She had intended to rest on the repair platform, but it was already covered by overgrown flesh.

Eventually, Aimou pushed open the door to the outpost's small cabin. Bologue and Palmer had taken good care of the room; in its sealed state, it hadn't been permeated by flesh, and everything remained as it was when they left.

Aimou closed the door tightly, sat down slowly on Bologue's single bed, hugged her knees, and curled into a ball.

She finally returned here, got the answer to the question from Teda's mouth, intending to put an end to it. But instead of the expected relief, there was a difficult-to-describe bitterness.

"See, didn't I say it would be like this? He never cared about you. Even if you dressed up as a Delusional and cooperated with him on so many things, even sacrificing yourself to revive Alice, he wouldn't glance at you.

Poor Aimou, you actually harbored an expectation you shouldn't have. Do you think your self-sacrifice would make him care about you?"

Alice sat on Palmer's single bed, tauntingly.

"A tool is just a tool, you were never his daughter."

Aimou lowered her head even further.

"You know, you're really an easily satisfied person."

Alice laughed, moved to the table, and casually played with the things Bologue and Palmer left there.

Bologue's personal items were all hammers and knives. This guy was like a cold weapon Collector; the drawer contained nothing but deadly weapons, while Palmer had pile after pile of fantasy novels.

Their only commonality was that they both had prepared quite a few tape records.

"Even Bologue, who is closest to you, couldn't guess your wish. Transforming into a human, in reality, you just wanted so-called... paternal love?

Or perhaps a sense of being chosen?"

Alice toyed with the records, tossing them like darts. Some hit Aimou, and she didn't react at all.

"In fact, you didn't have to return. Belli was kind to you, and even took these things out for you. You could have easily gained affection and acceptance from her.

Bologue could too, a violent man even I'm afraid of was toyed around by you. It should've been easy to trick some affection out of him, right?"

Alice glanced at the time, "He should be asleep by now, dreaming about you?"

Amid continuous laughter, Alice placed a record onto the player, and as it slowly turned, a light melody began to play.

"See, you have so many choices. If you stayed in the Sublimation Furnace Core obediently, Teda might die tomorrow, and everything would end."

"If I don't return, I'd never know the answer," Aimou finally responded.

"Hmm? Why do you insist on Teda's approval?" Alice couldn't understand, "Just because he's your creator? Your so-called... father?"

Aimou did not reply.

"Hmm, now you know the answer, but you're not well-off, Aimou," Alice approached Aimou, "You had anticipated this ending from the beginning, right?"

"You gave the choice to Teda, but Teda didn't choose you... That's why you hid it from Bologue, isn't it?"

Alice ruthlessly tore open Aimou's wound without mercy.

"Even your father wouldn't choose you, let alone Bologue.

You dare not test Bologue. If Bologue doesn't choose you either, your last bit of hope would be extinguished.

In this light, Aimou's short life is truly a failure."

No response, Aimou only curled up tighter, and after a while, her voice trembled.

"Why won't parents love their children?"

"Why can't I be loved?"

"Is it just because I'm an Alchemy Puppet?"

"But I feel like I'm no different from humans, I have the same consciousness they do. I'm even better than most of them."

"So why?"

"Why was I born to be someone's replacement?"

Aimou quieted down, trying to recall some beautiful things.

Her appearance often led to misconceptions about her age, but in truth, Aimou was just a child, and in her short life, there wasn't much beauty.

She remembered the Vow Festival, her first taste of cake, the first movie she saw, and that detective with the hound...

Bestowing an Alchemy Puppet with wisdom, only to tell her she's destined to be a replacement.

It's awful.

Alice came to Aimou, squatted down slowly, and looked playfully at the disheveled Aimou.

"Don't leave your choices to others anymore, Aimou. Your fate should be decided by yourself, not for some ridiculous wish, at the cost of everything."

Alice shook Aimou's shoulders vigorously, shouting at her.

"Now you've gotten the answer you wanted, he doesn't love you, and that won't change, even if you sacrificed yourself."

Mentioning this, Alice couldn't stop laughing.

"That's how kids are, the emotion you long for won't be reciprocated, no matter how hard you try.

Therefore, you only have that most extreme choice.

Self-sacrifice.

To punish Teda with death, making him regret and acknowledge your existence."

But even so, there was still no response. In comparison, Aimou seemed more human, while Teda was just some machine faithfully executing orders.

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"What do you want to do now? Kill Teda? I can help you with that, or destroy Alice, I can do that too."

"I can make Teda regret endlessly, make him live in pain and guilt for the rest of his life. I can inflict all worldly tortures upon him!"

Alice pressed close to Aimou, resolutely saying, "As long as you choose me, I will be almighty."

Aimou shook her head.

"No, I don't want to hurt anyone, Alice was dead from the start, it has nothing to do with him. Teacher... the teacher was just too persistent..."

Alice fell silent, then she sneered.

"Look, Aimou is truly kind. You can understand them, but who understands you? Who can love you?"

"You're right, your wish is really insignificant, worthless. As long as Teda is willing to show you a little bit of love, you are willing to self-sacrifice... Even if he's pretending, you can accept it."

But even this small wish cannot be fulfilled."

Alice became angry, "You should be a bit more selfish, Aimou."

She clenched her fist forcefully, as if to grasp fate.

"You should think about yourself! Don't make wishes for others, make the wish you truly desire for yourself!"

Aimou slightly lifted her head, showed a sad gaze, and once again questioned, "Alice is already dead, who are you really?"

Alice smiled at this, her voice soft, without deceit.

"Does it matter who I am now?"

Aimou silently shook her head, "Yes, it doesn't matter anymore."

A bitter laughter arose, Aimou leaned her head against the wall, talking to herself.

"I read a sentence in a book, apart from pain and disease, all human suffering comes from their own thoughts."

"But I don't suffer from pain and disease, all my suffering comes from myself."

Aimou slowly closed her eyes, no one would choose her resolutely, even if it meant death."

She dared not test others' intentions, rather than trusting others, it was better to march forward in loneliness initially."

Suddenly Aimou understood why humans like to keep pets, only pets absolutely belong to oneself, and only pets absolutely won't betray."

She understood."

Only through absolute possession of a person, a thing, or something to entrust emotions, can humans give all their emotions without reservation, without fear, without cost..."

In fact, Aimou already knew who Alice was, but she didn't feel scared."

Aimou just felt it was absurd, like a destined fate, you know what will happen, yet unable to stop it."

There's nothing to stop anymore."

So Aimou reached out her hand and grasped a piece of shattered illusion."

Aimou made a wish, a selfish wish."

A series of knocks sounded, the doorknob was turned, but when the door opened, it wasn't the familiar corridor behind it, only chaos and darkness."

The familiar figure walked out of the darkness, his body surrounded by a mad aura."

"I got the Fantasy Species... so we're even, Delusional."

Gray said placing the iron box at his feet, he didn't linger, nor say another word, he closed the door and disappeared into the hazy darkness."



Only Aimou was left alone, curled up indoors, as the song began to rise."

"I want a perfect shell, a complete soul."

"I wish to be like you, yet I am so strange, out of place."