

## Endless 401

### Chapter 401: Declaration of War

The azure car plunged into the Abandoned Land, disappearing amidst the vast Sea of Mist. Before this, Bologue and Lebius leapt from the vehicle, using the hook of the Arm of Adaptation to land steadily on the corner of the wandering crossroad.

The two stood at the corridor on the cliffside, gazing into the other side of the Sea of Mist, where violent Ether reactions were continuously transmitted, vaguely catching glimpses of figures fighting fiercely.

Bologue said, "Still a step too late."

Originally, he thought his actions were quick enough, perhaps he could find Teda and Aimou before the battle commenced, but still, Bologue arrived a step too late.

The battle had already erupted. In Bologue's calculations, after the King's Shield Guard ambushed Teda, Aimou and Teda separated, fled within the Great Rift, then ran into him, only to be captured again by the King's Shield Guard.

Lebius leaned on his cane, frowning, staring intently at the swirling Sea of Mist.

"No... Aimou was likely forced to make a wish."

"Forced? You mean..."

Bologue looked at Lebius. Nominally, Lebius was assisting him, but this was also due to the number of times he had experienced Time Reversal. In terms of relevant experience, Lebius was the more professional one.

"Don't you think it's too coincidental? Aimou had just used Fantasy Species, and then the King's Shield Guard ambushed her." Lebius questioned him.

"She was ambushed by the King's Shield Guard, forced to use Fantasy Species, triggering Time Reversal," Bologue murmured, then suddenly realized, "So the beginning of Time Reversal..."

"From the moment Time Reversal was triggered, the King's Shield Guard's ambush had already unfolded. No matter what, we wouldn't make it," Lebius said.

Bologue paused for a moment, then passed Lebius to lead in the front, "We need to hurry. Soon their battle will intensify, and Teda will conjure Calamity, destroying everything around."

His pace quickened, walking briskly through the corridor. In the previous Time Reversal, Bologue watched helplessly as this corridor was shattered by boulders. Now he moved faster, with many crumbling structures remaining intact.

"Leader, are you okay?"

Bologue turned back to glance at Lebius. Lebius always gave an oppressive and powerful impression, often making Bologue forget that his leader was actually a cripple.

"I have no problem."

Lebius's eyes flickered with a gleam, overlapping with an ethereal phantom, making up for the disability of his limbs.

It was only then that Bologue noticed that despite Lebius leaning on a cane, his pace was as agile as his own. The cane hardly served any function, more like an ornament held in hand.

Bologue knew very little about his leader. At first, he only knew that Lebius was a survivor of the secret war and never thought about the existence of time offensives in the war's later stages, not to mention Lebius was actually someone who turned the tide.

Moreover, Lebius's Secret Energy, from every indication, showed that Lebius was an Overlord commanding a pack of wolves. This type of Condenser power was primarily reliant on his Domination Object for combat.

But now Lebius was far from his Domination Object, alone.

Due to trusting Lebius, Bologue believed he was prepared. However, even so, Bologue couldn't help but doubt if Lebius could really stop those people?

"Right, their Secret Energy..."

Bologue recounted to Lebius the information he gained during the last Time Reversal.

Information about Secret Energy is extremely important to a Condenser. Once they understand the nature of their opponent's Secret Energy, they can devise a strategy to counter them in battle, and even defeat them.

This was Bologue's greatest advantage in this Time Reversal. With this information, even when facing the King's Shield Guard's attack, they would have the confidence to swiftly kill their opponent.

After hearing Bologue's discourse, Lebius nodded and said nothing, maintaining his silence.

"We are almost there. If my calculation is correct, soon we will encounter Aimou... and them."

Bologue estimated the time. This Time Reversal, he didn't seek out Belli, and therefore didn't have the tracker.

"They don't act together but dispersed. However, once the battle begins, they can rapidly reinforce each other."

Bologue recalled and continued, "The first to appear is that guy's Secret Energy. It can create invisible defenses. Killing him quickly is somewhat problematic... but not impossible."

"Don't forget one thing, Bologue. We have memories from the last Time Reversal, and so does Aimou. This Time Reversal won't be that simple."

Lebius's words brought Bologue back to clarity. Sometimes, overthinking leads to being stuck in a dead end.

"Alright, I understand," Bologue recalled a saying they often mentioned, "adapt accordingly."

"Yes, adapt accordingly."

Lebius agreed with a nod, and the two soon reached the site where they fought during the last Time Reversal, hiding nearby.

A few minutes later, a roaring explosion sounded, and they could see scarlet tendrils erupting from the other side of the Sea of Mist, throwing out boulders and destroying everything around.

In the constantly changing time reversal, the watch's timing seemed somewhat unreliable, and the eruption of this limb became a symbol, heralding the development of the situation.

Bologue lowered his breath, and the light emanating from his body dimmed. He entered a state of Ethereal Concealment.

Only in a state of stagnation could he completely suppress his own etheric reactions. Bologue awaited the appearance of Aimou.

Bologue believed Aimou would appear again. She did not know he could also retain memories, so she would continue along this escape route, and with previous experience, her escape would become faster.

But... how did the King's Shield Guards manage to pursue Aimou? They didn't have any tracking devices.

The image of the Fantasy Species flashed before Bologue's eyes, and the translucent, glowing tumor perched on Aimou's chest was precisely the Fantasy Species.

Could the King's Shield Guards detect the power of the Fantasy Species?

No, they could not perceive the power of the Fantasy Species but could sense the astonishing etheric reactions carried by the Fantasy Species.

Bologue closed his eyes. Based on the Ethereal Skills Bologue had currently mastered, Ethereal Perception could be considered his second most refined Extreme Technique.

He could detect the ether like tides and vaguely sense the presence of vortices in this Sea of Ether, some existing like storms, so immense, yet extremely distant from him.

As his perception kept expanding, Bologue faintly sensed a familiar etheric reaction. She, like a fox, was darting around. Just as he was about to reach it, a steady voice interrupted Bologue's meditation.

"Aimou has changed direction. She ran the other way."

Lebius's words startled Bologue back to consciousness.

Lebius pointed his finger towards the ground below, "She left from further down, and the King's Shield Guards were misled to come here, but they will soon realize they're chasing wrongly."

Bologue was stunned for a moment, then asked, "You can sense all this?"

"Mm, I'm proficient in many Ethereal Skills."

Lebius stood up as he said this, unhurriedly picked up his cane, and twisted it.

"Bologue, are you anxious?"

"Me?" Bologue didn't understand why Lebius was saying these words at this moment.

"You are also about to be promoted to Prayer Believer. As your leader, I feel obligated to give you some advice during your promotion... do you think my auxiliary school is the Origin School?"

Lebius gazed forward. He had already sensed those increasingly close etheric reactions.

"Probably."

Bologue replied, considering that if the derivative auxiliary school was the Origin School, it would allow the Condenser to master numerous Ethereal Skills more swiftly. Bologue judged this from Lebius's words.

"No, the path I walk is one of distortion, allowing oneself to have numerous possibilities, no longer bound by rules."

Lebius denied Bologue's answer. He knew what Bologue wanted to ask and promptly answered.

"You want to say, so how have I mastered these Ethereal Skills?"

In fact, every Condenser can fully master Ethereal Skills. After all, it's just more refined control over Ether, even if you are entirely unrelated to the Origin School.

In other words, as long as you are focused enough, you can also learn all this, transcending the limitations of the Origin School."

Lebius unscrewed the cane, drawing a slender staff sword, and the dazzling sword light reflected on Bologue's face, blinding him.

"Do you consider yourself an ordinary Condenser?" Lebius asked again.

Bologue did not hesitate and directly replied, "No."

To Bologue, ordinary Condensers posed no threat; even if the Prayer Believers weren't careful, they could be slain by Bologue.

Hearing this answer, Lebius smiled and nodded.

"Just right, I am also not an ordinary Negative Power User."

With those words, the ether roared, scorching brilliance erupted from Lebius's body like an explosive bomb, with etheric fluctuations mixed with airwaves spreading in all directions.

Lebius gripped the staff sword and declared war on anyone who could perceive his etheric fluctuations.

Soon after, like reverse sound waves, several etheric reactions rose and roared in response to Lebius's declaration of war.

#### Chapter 402: The Path

The aggressive demeanor of Lebius left Bologue somewhat bewildered. In Bologue's script, they were supposed to ambush here, using the experience from the last time reversal to catch the King's Shield Guard off guard.

But now, Lebius's actions were undoubtedly declaring his position and strength to everyone.

"Words are merely words; it's better to let you see for yourself."

Lebius said as he walked forward, with Bologue standing behind him. Only then did Bologue understand Lebius's intention.

The path of advancement for every Condenser is accompanied by countless important choices—hovering between narrow and sharp or broad and blunt, the choice of a derived school...

Through these continuous decisions, and with the experience of their predecessors, Condensers gradually explore a perfectly optimized path of advancement based on their own Secret Energy school.

The closest to Bologue are the Violence Suppression Action Group. As a group entirely composed of the Origin School, they follow paths constructed by the Origin School, such as the Path of Silence or the Path of Extreme Techniques.

However, due to the advancements in Secret Source Technology, new Alchemy Matrices are developed every year, giving rise to new Secret Energies. As such, many new-generation Secret Energies do not have paths from previous generations to learn from, and they can only advance based on similar Secret Energies.

For example, Geoffrey's Secret Energy·Tiger Eye was elevated following the Path of Command created by the Commanding School.

There are also ancient family-inherited Secret Energies. Through generations of optimization and improvement of the Secret Energies, their paths of advancement have gradually perfected to the extreme.

An example that fits this is Palmer, whose own Secret Energy·Wind Source will follow the Path of Wind Fury created by the Clarks family.

The Order Bureau also has many well-defined paths of advancement, but this obviously has nothing to do with Bologue, who carries the Alchemy Matrix of Overlord Xilin.

This mysterious Secret Energy is not well understood even by the Sublimation Furnace Core. Bologue still remembers Teda's evaluation of the Summoning Hand.

Perhaps this Secret Energy does not belong to the Commanding School. It is categorized there only because its current capabilities closely align with those of the Commanding School.

Bologue is like a treasured species, the kind with only two in the world, one of which has already died.

His path of advancement has no references, so he must make his own decisions and progress.



Now, Lebius proposes suggestions for Bologue's advancement path. Of course, more than suggestions, witnessing this power firsthand is of greater significance for Bologue.

In the distance, the rapidly moving Fast slowed down. He clearly felt the Ether reaction of a Negative Power User ahead, something that he, as a Prayer Believer, could not contend with.

Others also sensed Lebius's Ether reaction and quickly approached him, and soon Gold also penetrated the mist, appearing beside Fast.

Both of their expressions appeared extremely grave, as they had investigated the target well before the assault operation began.

An enemy of this Negative Power User Tier should only be Teda, yet now another Negative Power User has emerged.

Fast and Gold naturally thought of the same enemy.

The Order Bureau.

Their pursuit came to a halt. Faced with this suddenly appearing Negative Power User, the two could not make a decision, and the next actions needed to be handled by someone of a higher rank.

In a few seconds, another figure followed behind them, appearing at their rear.

Hood looked toward the thick mist where Lebius was located. At this moment, Lebius's Ether reaction remained very prominent, like a torch in the night.

He arrogantly announced his location to everyone, waiting for their attack.

Fast asked, "What should we do?"

Hood did not ponder for long and instructed, "The Negative Power User... he may affect this operation, so it's best to eliminate him quickly."

"Fast, Gold, you two move forward for a feint. No need for a life-and-death battle—just probe the opponent's Secret Energy, and I will find an opportunity to deliver a fatal blow."

Hood was also a Negative Power User. He assumed that given the same Tier, with his own Secret Energy-Profound Evil Sound, a direct hit would be enough to deal a heavy blow to Lebius.

Another concern was that Hood was uncertain whether their opponent truly consisted of only Lebius or whether they had also set a trap waiting for them to fall into.

They all remain absolutely loyal to the Shadow King, unquestioningly dedicated to the cause. Hood slowed his pace, trailing behind the two, while Fast and Gold quickly closed in.

Lebius waited for a while at his original spot. He could not see Fast and Gold's figures, but he could clearly sense their Ether reactions.

Geoffrey sometimes joked that Lebius need not worry about going blind since even without sight, he could precisely perceive through Ether.

Breaking through the Sea of Mist, Fast immediately noticed Lebius, but Lebius disappeared in the next instant.

It wasn't a disappearance in the visual sense; it was as if Lebius's etheric reaction was continuously decreasing, nearing nothingness, reverting from the extraordinary to the mundane.

Had he relinquished his secret energy? Giving up resistance at a time like this?

This thought flashed through Fast's mind, and then he realized, this wasn't the termination of secret energy at all; it was the Ethereal Concealment enveloping Lebius, compressing his etheric reaction to the extreme, making it undetectable even at such a close distance.

A chilling cold swept over Fast's mind, and he realized something was amiss. Although the opponent was a Negative Power User, the fear he felt was beyond what a Negative Power User could invoke.

"Gold..."

Fast tried to call out to his teammate, but before he could speak the words, Lebius vanished.

Bologue was also stunned, one moment Lebius was beside him, uttering "watch closely," and then he vanished.

After a brief disappearance, the next second was filled with the roar of fragmentation, the ground where Lebius had stood collapsing into countless fissures, as if trampled by a giant.

Bologue attempted to chase Lebius's shadow; he was as fast as thunder, only the sound could be heard, while the figure could not be captured.

"Is this the limping one?"

Bologue cursed inwardly.

Under absolute Ethereal Amplification, Lebius was immensely quick; when Bologue next observed Lebius, he was already before Fast.

A piercing killing intent surged forward, and Fast awakened all his ether; in an instant, his secret energy reached its peak.

The Shadowless Barrier enveloped Fast, continuously compressing, gathering, compressing again, sealing Fast within this suffocating coffin.

Lebius swung his Staff Sword towards him; this Staff Sword wasn't any powerful Alchemy Armament, just an ordinary weapon.

Yet now the abundant ether channeled through Lebius's hand into it, imbued with ether, protecting and sharpening it in the simplest manner.

Casually swinging it, like swinging a club at a ball, Fast's figure froze, dense sparks flared and burst from the blade's edge, after which Fast collided heavily with the ground, shattering it into pieces.

The fierce ethereal shock mixed with pain almost made Fast faint; he tried to rise but found his body paralyzed, unable to muster any strength.

The Shadowless Barrier had defended against Lebius's sword strike, or more accurately, part of it; a gap had been slashed into the sturdy barrier, a shallow wound blossomed on Fast's chest, had it penetrated a few more inches, the sword would have been fatal.

How could this be? Even if Lebius was a Negative Power User, he seemed absurdly powerful.

Fast could not comprehend any of this, but he saw Lebius approaching again with descending sword light; he could block it once, but could he do it a second time?

The ground trembled, thick roots coiled around Fast's body, dragging him out of the shattered ground.

At a critical moment, Gold extended a helping hand, his usual arrogance gone, his face filled with repressed fear. Lebius's strength surpassed their imagination; in an instant clash, this guy hadn't even activated his secret energy.

Perhaps the opponent was an Origin School Condenser? Only an Origin School Condenser could be so proficient in Ethereal Skills.

No time to ponder, Hood instructed them to make a feint attack, but at this moment, the question was whether they even survived this predicament.

Lebius landed, and the moment his foot touched the ground, the earth crumbled again as he charged towards Gold like thunder.

Thick roots rose from the ground, trying to intercept Lebius's steps, but Lebius seemed to predict the attack trajectories, dodging easily and bypassing the attacks.

This was not some foresight ability; rather, Lebius could clearly sense the flow of ether, adept not only in Ethereal Amplification and Concealment but also in this sharp Ethereal Perception.

Before Gold initiated his attack, Lebius could detect the direction the roots would coil from the ether's pathways.

Roaring booms erupted, sound waves almost entirely engulfing the battlefield, turning all traversed zones into clouds of dust.

Hood made his move at that moment, aware that if he didn't, both Gold and Fast would be mercilessly slain by Lebius.

As the rolling dust settled, Lebius stood unblemished in the distance, gazing at Hood, who launched the assault.

"If the enemy is only of this calibre, deploying me alone indeed suffices."

Lebius gripped the Staff Sword tightly, murmuring to himself.

#### Chapter 403: Workaholic

Bologue watched everything from afar, utterly stunned. Although he had long realized that his squad leader was no ordinary man, truly witnessing Lebius's prowess left him deeply shocked.

The other side speculated that Lebius was a Condenser of the Origin School, but Bologue understood that this fellow was clearly a Condenser of the Commanding School.

Not only was his squad leader a powerful Overlord, but his individual combat ability was also terrifying. Bologue couldn't help but imagine Lebius's past battles.

The opponent struggled through numerous obstacles, barely breaking through the wolf pack's defenses, thinking they could end Lebius with one strike, only for this guy to slowly draw his Staff Sword and start the second round.

It was like a terrible cold joke.

No wonder the Field Operations Department appointed Lebius as the leader of the Special Operations Group; only someone like him could command members who were Debtors, right?

Meanwhile, Hood furrowed his brows, his gaze firmly fixed on Lebius, even ignoring Bologue.

This Negative Power User was different; Lebius was unlike any Negative Power User Hood had ever faced.

Even with a difference in Tiers, the Secret Energy of the Prayer Believers had undergone a distortion in the path, so theoretically, they shouldn't have been so vulnerable against attacks from Negative Power Users.

But the facts were as they were; in the moment of battle, Lebius had already shattered Fast and pursued Gold. Without Hood's interference, both might have already been dead.

"Did you see that, Bologue?"

Lebius returned Hood's gaze with equal vigilance; the other was a Negative Power User of the same Tier, and Lebius couldn't be careless.

Now, he seemed formidable, but he could only bully these Prayer Believers. Without the pack beside him, Lebius's combat strength was significantly reduced... Yet he was still confident, relying solely on his Ethereal Skill and battle experience to deal with Hood.

"As for this Ethereal Skill part... no, the trace back to Ether, or even to the Secret Source, doesn't necessarily need the Origin School as an offshoot sub-school to achieve."

Lebius began teaching on the spot, trying to guide Bologue down another path, "Diligence and hard practice in later life can also accomplish this, compensating for one's deficiencies."

"I understand," Bologue nodded earnestly. Lebius's meaning was clear: in his future advancement, it was unnecessary to choose the Origin School as a sub-school.

Ethereal Silence and Ethereal Prohibition were exclusive skills of the Origin School, only mastered by Condensers of that main school.

Even if Bologue took the Origin School as a secondary sub-school, he couldn't obtain such power. As for the Ethereal Skill? Lebius had already shown him that it could be fully mastered through learning later in life.

Mortals are limited by lifespan and cannot bring all techniques to the pinnacle of the Extreme Realm, but Bologue was different; he was an Undead, and the most precious thing he didn't lack was time.

"Alright, next, go and do what you should, leave the rest to me,"

Lebius instructed once more, but this time his voice rose directly in Bologue's mind.

On the way here, Lebius, with his authority as squad leader, urgently expanded the Heart Core Net, linking the two of them together.

Poor Yuriel, now standing in her pajamas on the Secret Core Ceremony, maintaining the Heart Core Net.

Bologue carefully sensed the Ethereal Fluctuation of the Fantasy Species, searching for the storm in the sea of Ether, and soon he detected some traces amid the chaos.

Without saying much, Bologue followed the traces in pursuit, searching for Aimou's silhouette.

Only Lebius and the enemy remained in the battlefield; he seemed not to see the enemy, casually stretching his muscles, dull sounds emanated from his body.

Lebius felt he was somewhat unhealthy, sitting in the office every day, correcting files and drinking coffee.

Exhausted, he'd rest collapsed in his chair, sleepy, he'd push open the door on the other side of the office, behind which was his bedroom.

Lebius was a workaholic; he realized he severely lacked exercise. Even prior engagements had him standing afar, controlling the wolves in battle.

This was a good opportunity to exercise.

Lebius slowly clenched the sword hilt, as if intending to crush it, the phantom blue figure faintly appeared around him, overlapping with him.

If Bologue were here, he would surely find the sight familiar; when Bologue battled the Blade-Biting Wolf, beneath the cold armor, it was the same phantom blue that emerged.

Ether surged, released, surrounding Lebius's body, forging into tightly fitted Ethereal Armor.

In fact, this was an Ethereal Barrier. But unlike common Ethereal Barriers, Lebius compressed the Ethereal Barrier infinitely, keeping it at the body's edge, protecting himself.

In the distance, Hood and the others were ready for battle. Without warning, Lebius stomped the ground, declaring the start of the fight.

Under the protection of Ethereal Concealment, Lebius showed no ether response. Fast and Gold, as Prayer Believers, found it difficult to pursue Lebius by the flow of ether and could only rely on their sight to chase his figure. But worse, Lebius was too fast, even the naked eye had a hard time capturing his trace.

Hood, however, could keep up with Lebius' pace, his burning eyes tracking Lebius' figure while letting out roars of rage.



The impact of the sound wave shattered everything in its path, turning it into flying dust.

A cold staff sword tore through the smoke and dust, dense roots rose from the ground like countless hands reaching for Lebius. They surged up and crashed into the rocks, the ground trembled incessantly, and cracks spread continuously, even covering the cliffs.

Gold emitted low growls of unwillingness. No matter how he released his Secret Energy, the roots he created could not catch up with Lebius, nor could they even affect him.

Lebius moved like a swift in a storm, darting like a sharp sword, avoiding all the raindrops.

Gold was completely suppressed by Lebius. His Secret Energy was the Giant Wood Garden, allowing him to freely create plant-like structures such as roots over a certain area for combat. Every time he released his Secret Energy, it brought about a terrifying scene.

Such a large range of Illusion Creation had Gold's Secret Energy naturally lean towards a sprawling type. But it also meant his Secret Energy required some time to release. Usually, this brief delay could be smoothed out in his continuous attacks, but against Lebius, this weakness was fully exposed.

The Illusion Creation School was originally the easiest among all schools to detect ether flow. As long as one sensed those ether vortex points gathering in the air, avoiding them before they materialized into entities was sufficient.

Lebius avoided the growing roots, his gaze wandering among the three, seemingly deciding which to target first.

Fast stood among the three, his body shimmering with the glow of ether, providing the Shadowless Barrier to the three as a defense.

It seemed that Lebius had no chance to catch them off guard. Once he launched an attack, he would directly face the firepower of all three.

Lebius stopped his steps, pierced the staff sword into the rock, and hung himself high on the cliff.

Gold did not miss this opportunity. Toyed by Lebius, his heart was already filled with anger.

Secret Energy · Giant Wood Garden.

The roots grew like gigantic, wantonly spreading vines. Using the earth as the base of Illusion Creation, they swiftly climbed over the cliff, intertwining and twisting.

Lebius leaped into the air, becoming a target in mid-air without a place to gain footing. All the firepower focused on him.

Gold immediately launched an attack at him. Hood felt something was amiss. How could Lebius easily expose a flaw? He wanted to stop Gold, but it was already too late.

The roots tore through the cliff, with thick trunks branching out countless twigs and thorns, leaving Lebius nowhere to hide.

Yet just as Lebius was about to be shredded into pieces, his body inexplicably shifted a bit, the twigs swiftly attacked, and the staff sword cut them down one by one.

Amid broken wood chips, Lebius agilely maneuvered in the heavy encirclement, performing moves beyond human capabilities and physical laws.

Now, Lebius appeared like a marionette, controlled by invisible strings. At the same time, the ghostly blue aura on him became increasingly apparent, as if a specter beneath his shell was ready to break free.

"This bastard is from the Commanding School!"

Witnessing the wavering specter, only at this moment did Hood react, shouting out, but it was all too late.

Under the slow and powerful tangling of the roots, the rocks covering the entire cliff were filled with fissures. As they surged up to chase Lebius, the cliff collapsed along with them.

The sky was filled with falling rocks mixed with dust, blocking all light, along with Lebius' figure.

Hood let out a thunderous roar, the booming sound wave spreading out like a tsunami. The giant stones in mid-air temporarily stagnated and were then shattered into fine dust by the surging ether.

A strong wind followed, sweeping away the dust like a sandstorm.

Before the field of vision fully recovered, the sharp sound of the wind arose again, and the dazzling blades flickered incessantly from all directions.

Fast only felt concentrated slashes on the Shadowless Barrier, and then his proud defense collapsed in an instant.

The Death God broke through, Fast was unable to resist.

Hood sensed Lebius' assault. But when he turned around to rescue Fast, he could only see Fast's body standing in place, with a sword blade piercing through from his chest.

Lebius stood in front of Fast. The two seemed to be embracing, but Lebius' gaze was not on Fast.

He looked coldly at Hood, as if conveying through his eyes that Hood would be the next one.

#### Chapter 404: Spirit Wolf

Fast stared blankly ahead, with Lebius pressed tightly against him, thrusting the staff sword firmly into his heart. Endless cold spread from the slender metal, the chill of death gradually engulfing Fast.

Struggling to raise his hand, Fast's movements were incredibly stiff at this moment. He tried to fight back, wanted to say something more, but absolute death interrupted it all.

Fast's gaze dimmed, his body leaning powerlessly against Lebius, his life completely dissipated.

"Commanding School? What exactly is he commanding?"

Fast's death did not panic Gold. He maintained absolute calmness, questioning as root tendrils broke through the ground, swiftly elevating him and Hood, extending more branches to try and block Lebius.

Lebius was too lethal. Like a skilled assassin, once he got close, under his exquisite ethereal skill, they could easily lose their lives.

Hood's gaze was gloomy and trembling, a low voice emanated from his throat.

"He's commanding... himself."

"Himself?"

Gold didn't understand his words, but this was normal. There were not many deceitful enemies like Lebius in this world, let alone those facing him and surviving.

Fortunately, here was one person familiar with it all, because he too had participated in that secret war and survived by luck.

Hood realized who he was facing.

"Lebius Lovisa!"

Hood roared Lebius's name, the booming sound waves spreading in a conical shape, like a sudden storm, covering the entire battlefield. Lebius had nowhere to hide and wasn't planning to either.

Raising the staff sword, an ethereal barrier rose and spread before him, two ethereal forces clashing together, erupting dazzling sparks under the ethereal mutual exclusion.

"Lebius... Lovisa..."

Gold whispered the name, intelligence related to it exploded and spread in his mind.

The King's Shield Guard was an organization split from the King's Secret Sword, and their intelligence was partially shared.

He glanced around nervously. Gold knew very well that when Lebius appeared, his partner, that deadly Tiger Eye must be lurking nearby.

But no matter how Gold probed, he couldn't detect Geoffrey's presence, let alone the pack of wolves symbolizing Lebius.

What was happening?

"The pack is not here, Tiger Eye is not here either..." Gold murmured.

No wonder they failed to recognize Lebius at first, as in all records of the King's Secret Sword or the King's Shield Guard, Lebius was always accompanied by the pack, but this time he was alone.

Indeed, the guy wasn't even wearing a mask, Lebius had left too hastily.

After the roaring sound wave passed, on the shattered ground, Lebius remained spotless.

Hood scrutinized the disability on Lebius's right leg, which was the scar the Sixth Seat had left on him, but the supposedly crippled right leg was enveloped in a ghostly blue light, as was Lebius's entire body covered in the same ethereal blue phantom.

"He used his own secret energy to command himself, the puppet is him, the puppet master is also him."

In Hood's suppressive words, Gold recalled the records of Lebius's secret energy.

Like Geoffrey, Lebius had set on an entirely different path to advance, and his secret energy had mutated into an entirely unfamiliar new secret energy.

Like Geoffrey, the Order Bureau had given Lebius the power to name it. He and Geoffrey had coincidentally come up with similar names.

"What an ordinary name."

Back then, Nesanel read the name of the secret energy and commented.

"Secret Energy: Pack of Wolves."

He thought for a moment and then said, "So, what are you? The Master of the Wolves? Commanding all Wolf Spirits... the Spirit Wolf?"

Gold stared blankly at Lebius, murmuring.

"Since... since he is Lebius..."

Gold thought of something, decisively launching an attack, but the target was not Lebius.

The dense roots grew and curled, attacking the spot where Fast's body fell, trying to utterly destroy the corpse, but they only hit a pile of rubble.

A pitch-black shadow loomed over Gold's head. He looked up, and Fast's ghastly pale face came into view.

A roaring howl echoed, and the spreading sound waves threw Fast's body heavily aside, like a ragged doll, slamming it into the ground.

But a few seconds later, the body got up again, holding a sharp sword.

The body suffered Hood's angry roar head-on, but it didn't shatter, only gaining many wounds on its surface, which meant nothing to the corpse.

While Hood roared, Lebius also launched an attack. He never believed the corpse could have any effect on the two of them; only he could end the battle.

The figure rapidly approached, and even with branches obstructing the way, they were cut down by a single sword from Lebius.

Lebius continued to approach. At this time, Hood also returned to defense. Facing the approaching Lebius, he no longer roared, but instead whispered softly.

"Retreat!"

The sound entered his ears, and chaotic illusions surfaced before Lebius's eyes, which even slowed his advancing steps.

Gold found an opportunity, raised thorns, and like a whip blade filled with barbs, lashed towards Lebius.

Just as Lebius was about to be flayed, the corpse swung its sword to block the strike for Lebius, who then quickly regained his senses and retreated swiftly.

Their eyes interlocked, both of them warily watched each other, neither making a rash move.

"Fast's corpse is controlled by a pack of wolves..."

Looking at the corpse beside Lebius, Hood said emotionlessly.

Gold nodded in agreement. They all knew the nature of Lebius's secret energy and were clear about what was happening before them.

"That's the downside of having too much fame."

Lebius said in a complaining tone, although there was no trace of complaint in his voice.

Back during the secret war, Lebius's performance was extremely active. During the later attacks on time, his encounters with the Sixth Seat permanently engraved his name into the King's Secret Sword.

Unfortunately, Lebius couldn't kill the Sixth Seat, so the Sixth Seat returned alive to the Pillar of Royal Authority with information about Lebius, and thus Lebius's secret energy nature was recorded in the King's Secret Sword, shared now with the King's Shield Guard.

"Lebius Lovisa, Secret Energy: Pack of Wolves, main school: Commanding School, derivative sub-school: Illusion Creation School, he can create a phantom-like Spirit Wolf, everything hosted by the Spirit Wolf will be commanded by him..."

Hood recited the records of Lebius, Fast's body being hosted by the Spirit Wolf, becoming a member of Lebius's wolf pack.

As for Lebius himself, he was also hosted by his own Spirit Wolf, allowing him to command his body through secret energy in battle, performing nearly impossible moves.

Like a dual amplification, under the hosting of the Spirit Wolf, the dual ether boosts Lebius, making his Ethereal Skills even more lethal, and these skills can also be applied to the commanded wolf pack.

Thus, when Lebius brings the pack of wolves, enemies face not only Lebius but also a terrifying group of nearly Origin School-like, undying Blade-Biting Wolves.



Lebius rubbed his ears, while Hood scrutinized him, he also scrutinized Hood; the experience tempered in blood and fire allowed Lebius to make a judgment.

"So... it's the Deceitful Structure School?"

Lebius stared directly at Hood, the ethereal blue radiance gradually intensifying as the power of the Alchemy Matrix steadily rose.

"When you roar, you can release terrible impacts; when you whisper, you can create chaotic illusions... It's related to your tone, isn't it? Your tone is the trigger for releasing secret energy."

Hood remained silent, but his gradually clenched fist undoubtedly proved Lebius's inference correct.

Lebius shook his head, unconcerned.

"Never mind, I can slowly test this."

Before he finished speaking, his figure once again rushed forward and clashed with Hood.

Within the Great Rift, numerous ether reactions rose and then extinguished, like a grand doomsday symphony, the blood and flesh brought by death were placed on the altar, pleasing those sinister beings.

From within the void came waves of mad laughter and excited applause.

Bologue sensed the waves of ether coming from afar; Lebius had already engaged with his opponent, and he himself needed to act quickly.

The Summoning Hand easily broke through the rock, forging a path. Bologue knew he was getting closer to Aimou.

## Chapter 405: Cat and Mouse Game

Now Bologue had ventured deep into the Great Rift, a place where toxic mist lingered everywhere, and with each breath, Bologue felt a burning sensation scorch his throat.

An ordinary person without protection wouldn't last long in such an environment and would soon suffocate to death in the poisonous mist, but it didn't affect Bologue; it only made him very uncomfortable.

His body was constantly in a self-healing state, continually consuming Bologue's Ether, a sensation akin to being trapped in a swamp, where every movement required considerable effort.

The distance from here to the Wandering Crossroad wasn't far; beneath it, the mist obscured the vision. In the dim light, Bologue saw many abandoned structures built between the rifts.

This place was once inhabited, with continuous buildings stretching along every part of the cliffs, transforming them into a suspended city. Yet as the toxic mist spread throughout the Great Rift, the lower sections became unsuitable for human habitation, gradually falling into disuse and being engulfed by the mist.

Bologue felt as if he was wandering through a silent city, where a gentle breeze stirred the mist, akin to invisible phantoms pacing beside him.

The harsh environment couldn't restrict Bologue's movements, nor could it restrict Aimou.

Bologue proceeded cautiously, surmising what Aimou might be thinking. However, he couldn't directly change Aimou's mind, implying that Aimou remained in an antagonistic stance against him.

In previous instances of time reversal, Aimou managed to survive the pursuit of the King's Shield Guard, indicating that she wasn't as fragile as one might think; she possessed a certain level of combat ability.

Exactly, Aimou was a Delusional. How could she possibly be as weak and frail as she appeared on the surface?

Ever since Bologue and Aimou got acquainted, at every encounter in battle, Aimou would employ the Shared Chord Body to hide within Bologue, so he had never witnessed Aimou's combat prowess.

Continuing along this line of thought, Teda entrusting Aimou to act on his behalf must stem from tremendous trust, believing the chaotic Great Rift posed no threat to Aimou...

Finally, Bologue recalled his skirmish with Gray. Even amidst those chain traps, Bologue found it unbearably challenging.

Bologue abruptly halted his steps, his gaze scanning all around.

The lighting here was dim; everything was shrouded in a misty blue-gray, the thick mist obstructing vision, while menacing black silhouettes loomed and wriggled behind the mist like a nightmare's paradise.

Ether silently surged; Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid coated Bologue's body like snug-fitting scale armor, safeguarding his torso.

This abandoned town was indeed perfect for laying traps; Bologue guessed that Aimou had initially planned to escape here, to ambush her enemies in this place.

But this time, the pursuer wasn't the King's Shield Guard; it was Bologue himself.

Holding his breath, Bologue moved forward slowly. Suddenly, he sensed the flow of Ether; it was faint and nearly indiscernible. Had Bologue not remained alert, even he might not have noticed it.

Here it comes. From where will the attack initiate?

Bologue tensed up entirely. For some reason, despite his Undying Body which rendered any assassination attempt useless, he inexplicably felt tense.

Instinctively, he sensed a threat from Aimou; perhaps she couldn't kill him, but she might have the capability to trap him.

What could trap him?

Past memories surged like tides, Aimou's various abnormal behaviors previously flashed repeatedly in Bologue's mind. He recalled Aimou's sorrowful demeanor when they fell into the Abandoned Land, and the words she uttered facing the Calamity.

Yes, from then on, Aimou had already revealed her tail, yet Bologue hadn't realized it at all.

As a Debtor, Bologue was acutely perceptive to the Devil's madness. If he had continued to accompany Aimou, her secrets would never have remained hidden from Bologue. Therefore, she had to find a way to remove Bologue, or at least distance him from herself.

"I'm sorry."

When he awoke in the Abandoned Land, Aimou repeatedly apologized to him. At the time, Bologue didn't understand why, but now he understood somewhat.

At that moment, Aimou must have considered killing him.

In that Ether vacuum environment, his Undying Body would be utterly ineffective, turning Bologue into a literal corpse until he regained the strength of Ether.

Then...

The movement of Ether suddenly intensified. Bologue heard a sound akin to a Fire Dragon's roar, followed by a surging heatwave rushing toward him.

Blazing fire illuminated this dim world, dispelling the pervasive toxic mist. Bologue's shadow stretched long and thin under the firelight, as if a sinner struggling in a sea of fire.

"Really, this direct?"

Bologue flung out a hooked rope, swiftly leaping out of the burning range.

Even though he escaped the grasp of the flames, the relentless heatwaves left Bologue in a sorry state, the firelight too dazzling to gaze upon directly.

"Aimou, you're serious!" Bologue cursed loudly.

This wasn't like the inferior Fire-Calling Staff he'd encountered before; this one was a genuine Alchemy Armament packed with formidable firepower.

Light laughter echoed in the darkness, seemingly Aimou mocking him.

"Since you want to play so much..."

Bologue said as he gripped the group of snakes tightly, the dense snake scales intertwined to forge a slender, long Iron Spear.

"Then let's play!"

The patterns on his arm gleamed brightly, and with the launch of Ethereal Amplification, Bologue hurled the Iron Spear like a missile.

The Iron Spear pierced through the mist and fire, creating an open void, followed by a rapid whirlwind that swept up flames and mist, spinning towards the Fire-Calling Staff.

After an ear-splitting crash, the burning of the Fire-Calling Staff extinguished. Bologue twisted his wrist smoothly, a silver-white chain now in his hand.

As he cast the Iron Spear, the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid had already formed into a chain, connected to the spear tail, and Bologue rapidly charged towards the end of the flames.

This time, Bologue didn't hold back. He recalled Belli saying she entrusted all her Armor to Aimou, and in the last time reversal, Bologue personally witnessed the power of those armors.

A sharp long sword tore through the mist. When Bologue pounced, besides the shattered rocks and an embedded Iron Spear, there was nothing else around.

Aimou wasn't there, yet Ether was still surging.

A glimmer of light shone under Bologue's feet, followed by intricate light trails covering the entire ground.

Aimou knew Bologue too well. This violent expert, fueled by the power of his Undying Body, always acted with such violence and speed. Bologue never sat back; he was one who liked to attack proactively.

As long as she showed a shred of her whereabouts, it would invite his stormy assault, a fact which was undoubtedly exploitable.

The ground seemed to burn red, under the stimulation of Ether, bursting into dazzling flames. Bologue watched coldly as the explosion rose beneath him, fully encased in his sturdy scale armor before the flames devoured him.

Ground-shaking explosions rang out, the impact obliterating surrounding buildings, roaring airwaves dissipating the surrounding mist, yet soon the mist suppressed down again, coalescing like a descending dark cloud.

In the ominous black smoke emerged a grayish-black silhouette, and scale armor fell off one after another as Bologue grimly shed the tattered Armor.

The explosion's shockwaves left Bologue feeling dizzy, parts of his body slightly burned, but these weren't problematic.

Bologue stood calmly, snakes had long since overflowed from his ankle, burrowing into the ground, crawling and searching around.

Aimou, gauging situations encountered in each time reversal, would prepare countermeasures for the next time reversal. Having seen him in the last one, surely she'd devised numerous strategies against him this time.

Luckily, Aimou didn't appear to realize that Bologue too could retain memories during time reversals, granting him a significant advantage.

Aimou thought she had everything under control, oblivious to Bologue also joining the hunt.

"So, what other tricks do you have, Aimou?"

Bologue faced the silent world, waiting for the phantom's counterattack.

#### Chapter 406: Reset

Aimou hid in the corner, watching Bologue in the mist from a distance, one hand tightly gripping the Fire-Calling Staff, the other resting on her waist pouch.

As Bologue expected, with each time reversal, Aimou would change the equipment she carried based on the enemies she encountered and the situations she faced.

After all, when releasing the Fantasy Species, Aimou was inside the Alchemy Workshop, acting under her identity as a Delusional, she crafted many Alchemy Armaments either to trade for funds or to incite turmoil along Forked Paths of Hesitation.

If Bologue could push open those locked doors, he would be amazed to find piles of gleaming Mammon Coins behind them; over the years, Aimou and Teda had exchanged large amounts of Mammon Coins through Alchemy Armaments.

Teda directed this part of the operation, while Aimou loyally executed his orders. As for the purpose of stockpiling so many Mammon Coins, Aimou never asked, and Teda never explained.

But Aimou thought it should be related to the Tyrant. If the legends circulating within Forked Paths of Hesitation were true, using Mammon Coins to calculate individual contributions to Forked Paths of Hesitation, Teda was undoubtedly the Tyrant's most faithful follower—provided Teda returned all those Mammon Coins to the Tyrant.

This time, Aimou's escape went smoothly; from leaving the Alchemy Workshop, she had not encountered any battles, whereas in previous time reversals, Aimou would be caught up by the King's Shield Guard upon reaching this area.

Yet after seeing Bologue during the third time reversal, things improved considerably; the King's Shield Guard's firepower was attracted by Bologue. Unfortunately, Aimou was eventually captured by Hood.

To seize the Immortal Heart, the King's Shield Guard deployed extremely strong forces, including several Negative Power Users, which Aimou couldn't possibly resist.

Even with the armor entrusted by Belli, Aimou still appeared fragile in their eyes.

In this fourth time reversal, Aimou successfully avoided various obstacles, aided by the intelligence gained from the third time reversal and Bologue's appearance.

Until a few minutes ago, she was still safe; Aimou expected Bologue to attract firepower for her, but she didn't anticipate that in just those few minutes, Bologue would once again catch up.

Did he take care of those King's Shield Guards?

That's unlikely; Bologue might match Prayer Believers in battle, but against those terrifying Negative Power Users, the tier gap is one Bologue can never bridge.

Aimou sensed a shift in the situation, something happening beyond her sight, but there's no time to consider these now—Bologue has already caught up, she needs to find a way to deal with him.



A series of traps exploded with fiery blasts engulfing Bologue, yet as the smoke cleared, he still stood firm on the ground—Aimou knew this wouldn't defeat Bologue.

"So, what other tricks do you have next, Aimou?"

Bologue's voice came from the scorching black smoke, carrying a tone of provocation.

Aimou silently smirked, with only a few minutes' difference between their arrivals, but within those minutes, Aimou had laid numerous preparations.

A faint light hovered over Aimou's body but after a few seconds of shimmering, it settled silently.

Unlike Bologue's half-baked Ethereal Concealment, Aimou was highly proficient, her Ether reactions shielded; then Aimou activated the pre-set traps.

An Ether reaction rose from a building in the distance, prompting Bologue to swiftly turn around, but this time he didn't advance recklessly as before, yet still threw the Iron Spear there.

After a resounding boom, the building collapsed into rubble, shrouded in thick smoke, and the Ether reaction therein vanished.

But a few seconds later, another Ether reaction arose, followed by many more like a constellation of stars, emerging from surrounding buildings, instantly surrounding Bologue like a swarm of specters.

Bologue stood bewildered for a moment, unable to distinguish between these Ether reactions, wondering which might be traps or decoy attacks, while Aimou with Ethereal Concealment certainly wasn't among them.

Aimou secretly observed Bologue's actions, thinking his expertise showed; after a moment's hesitation, Bologue quickly made a decision, summoning more Iron Spears, throwing them at each Ether reaction, employing a brutally direct method to destroy all potential targets.

"The expert was still careless." Aimou murmured.

Bologue's spear-throwing slowed down gradually, only then realizing he'd lost most of his strength.

Despite Ether surging, Bologue's body couldn't escape fatigue, even his consciousness drifting into weariness.

He thought he stayed in place without triggering any traps...

Bologue gazed at the surrounding mist, seeming to possess life force, permeating his body, affecting his nerves through his breath.

It's nerve-paralyzing toxic gas.

Bologue was accustomed to Great Rift's deadly poisonous mist, typically highly corrosive, yet unable to affect his will.

Aimou took advantage of this, making herself suspicious of the trap, staying in place, and the time she lingered undoubtedly allowed the slow poison gas to be released perfectly.

Bologue coughed heavily, trying to escape the influence range of the poison gas, but the hazy mist seemed to cover every corner of his view.

This must also be Aimou's design; she doesn't need to breathe at all, this poison gas doesn't affect her, and it can perfectly merge with the fog of the Great Rift.

Bologue guessed that Aimou foresaw the discovery of this situation early on, which is why she designed the current predicament.

Aimou watched Bologue from afar as his movements gradually slowed down; he seemed to lose all his strength, slowly stopped, and half-knelt on the ground.

The paralysis caused by the poison gas wasn't a temporary design by Aimou; it had been placed here a long time ago.

Aimou acts in the Great Rift as a Delusional, but after all, the Great Rift is a Land of Chaos, and Aimou herself doesn't possess any strong combat power.

For self-preservation, Aimou set up traps in this harsh environment a long time ago, ready to activate when encountering enemies, allowing her to escape here and use the pre-designed ambush to kill opponents.

In each Time Reversal, Aimou fled towards these traps, relying on them to obstruct enemies. Otherwise, even if Aimou carried a large package, the number of traps she could set was limited, not to mention whether she had time to deploy them all.

"Very suitable for you, Bologue."

Aimou's gaze gradually turned cold; she had spent a long time with Bologue and understood him well.

With her harmless appearance and seemingly tragic past, Aimou could easily gain others' sympathy. Likewise, these people would only see her as a delicate doll, rather than some deadly weapon.

Bologue still underestimated her.

Bologue's Undying Body is troublesome, but that doesn't mean there are no ways to deal with it. An Ether vacuum environment can prevent Bologue from resurrecting, while paralysis can make Bologue lose consciousness and unable to act.

Tactically speaking, both can achieve the same purpose.

Perhaps out of caution, Aimou reached to her thigh's strap and took out a gun she assembled herself. The gun's design was bizarre, with rough marks left from the grinding process.

It seemed to be a weapon Aimou made recently, in a rush; she didn't have time to refine it, but it was enough to deal with the current situation.

Aimou placed her index finger on the trigger. In the previous Time Reversals, Aimou didn't carry this weapon because it was prepared for Bologue. Now it's activated.

This was a gift Aimou personally prepared for Bologue, but if possible, Aimou didn't want to use it on him.

Perhaps Bologue was one of the few who genuinely treated her well; Aimou didn't even want to meet Bologue here.

Last night's departure without a word was Aimou's attempt to leave a perfect image in Bologue's mind. As for what came afterward, she was uncertain, but she was sure that there shouldn't be Bologue in the upcoming stories.

Aimou stepped out of the shadows, cautiously approaching the edge of the mist, her right hand raising the gun's muzzle aiming at Bologue's fallen figure, her left hand holding the Fire-Calling Staff beneath her right wrist.

Everything went smoothly; Bologue was unknowingly paralyzed and passed out, and now Aimou just needed to continue her escape plan.

Then... then the wind howled.

The figure that should have been down and unconscious suddenly rose. He ignored the poisoned gas entwined around him and charged straight at Aimou.

The Fire-Calling Staff burst into blazing flames, trying to block Bologue, but the sea of fire was easily split open by him. The familiar face appeared right in front of her.

In the ear-piercing clamor, the Fire-Calling Staff clashed with the long sword. Aimou's figure retreated a few steps, but with the output force of the machine, she stubbornly stopped Bologue's slash.

"Surprised?"

Bologue looked at Aimou in front of him. All previous worries vanished; now he only had a surge of anger, an urge to teach a lesson to this child.

Aimou remained silent. She already knew why Bologue was still able to move.

Looking at the gradually healing wound on Bologue's chest, one had to admit, Aimou still underestimated Bologue's expertise... or perhaps his degree of madness when it came to violence.

Realizing he was about to be dragged into unconsciousness by the poison gas, Bologue made a very decisive choice.

The Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid pierced Bologue's heart, and when he opened his eyes again, Bologue returned to his most perfect state.

#### Chapter 407: Fighting

In the gloomy, deathly town, two figures intertwined with each other. Bologue, filled with bloodlust, driven by anger, had the mask on his face wriggling, twisting his visage into a ferocious look. Aimou, who was struggling to support herself beneath him, resembled a brave fighter against a Demon.

Bologue questioned angrily, his voice hoarse, "Aimou, what on earth is going on?"

"Hasn't anyone ever taught you not to inquire about a girl's secrets?"

Aimou revealed her rebellious side, something Bologue had never seen before. The Fire-Calling Staff erupted, and the scorching flames engulfed Bologue.

Had it been any other Condenser, they would likely have been repelled by this strike, but Bologue was different. A hazy shadow emerged from within the sea of fire.

Bologue emitted steam all over, raising yet another long sword. He showed no mercy as the two blades danced in unison.

Each strike was immensely heavy, easily generating a whistling sound. Bologue thought it was time to give Aimou some punishment. Moreover, Aimou wouldn't die; at worst, he could make her a new body after they return.

Aimou dodged the swords to the side as best she could. She intended to pull the trigger and let Bologue see the gift she had prepared for him, but upon seeing those silver serpents, Aimou realized it wasn't the right time to fire.

Bologue seemed disheveled, but beneath his ragged attire, the serpents, using their resilient snake scales as armor, protected Bologue's torso.

Aimou holstered her firearm and retreated a step. Bologue initially thought she was going to flee, but instead, Aimou charged towards him.

The obsidian arm swung out a shadow, colliding with the long sword. Under the fierce impact, the sturdy sword cracked open with a gap.

Aimou then reached out to grip the long sword, using it as a pivot, raising her small frame, delivering a whip kick towards Bologue's head.

Bologue was indifferent to Aimou's attack. He even attempted to cut with his sword, only to hear a cracking sound as the blade was shattered by Aimou's kick. The whip kick continued forward, carrying shattered metallic fragments, landing heavily on Bologue's head.

A dull thud echoed, and Bologue's eyes became bloodshot, his head tilted slightly, causing his entire body to lean to one side.

Bologue had smashed many people's heads with a hammer, but it was the first time someone else had smashed his. A searing pain and dizziness surged through his mind, blurring his vision.

As an Alchemy Puppet, Aimou had a great affinity for Ether, hence she excelled in many Ethereal Skills, complemented by mechanical output, alloy limbs, and Ethereal Amplification... With all these enhancements, Aimou's whip kick was incredibly fierce.

While it was called a whip kick, it could easily be seen as an iron whip propelled by Ethereal Amplification, and this whip struck Bologue's head unhindered.

Bologue staggered a few steps but quickly regained his footing, blood trickling past the corner of his eye, his breathing heavy and oppressive, like a beast losing blood.

Seeing Aimou poised in a fighting stance, Bologue laughed instead of getting angry, "What a surprise, Aimou."

Aimou seemed not to be just for show; she had some real skills.

"Nothing to be surprised about," Aimou shook her head, nonchalantly said, "acting as a Delusional often attracts attention, but they all ended up dead."

Even during the third Time Reversal when she met Bologue, Aimou had already calculated things in her mind.

She didn't think Bologue's presence here was a coincidence. Bologue must have learned some of her secrets, but how much he knew, Aimou was still unclear.

What made Aimou fearless was that she was in the midst of a Time Reversal, revealing her identity to Bologue not only allowed her to observe his reaction to gauge how much he knew, but in the next Time Reversal, Bologue would forget everything.

Aimou continued, "What are you thinking? Why am I a Delusional?"

Bologue's face was obscured by a mask, so Aimou couldn't see his expression, but judging from his eyes, Bologue didn't seem surprised by this.

Aimou couldn't understand the situation; it had only been a few hours since her last encounter with Bologue, and she wasn't sure what had transpired in those hours...

Whatever, anything is possible, right?

Aimou recalled her last few hours' experience, from heaven to Hell, and chuckled self-mockingly.

"No, I was thinking Belli is such an overprotective mentor," the serpents crawled up Bologue's arms, forming silvery Arm Guards, "what kind of metal did she use to forge your limbs? They're so resilient."

Belli had mentioned that if Aimou knew any Fighting Techniques, she could easily kill a whole street of Demons with her alloy limbs. Now, it seemed that description underestimated Aimou; if Aimou caught the opportunity, even a Condenser could die at her hands.

Damn, was Aimou this strong? He had always thought she was just a pitiable little girl; turns out he had been kept in the dark all along.

Bologue's emotions at this moment were complex, but complexity aside, he had to deal with the current situation first.

Stepping forward, throwing a punch, Bologue's punch was fierce, suppressing Aimou the moment they engaged, but Aimou was not willing to be outdone, always seeking an opportunity to counterattack.

With each collision, a metallic clang resounded; the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, in terms of hardness, was clearly no match for Aimou's alloy limbs, but fortunately, it could continuously proliferate, filling the gaps.

Bologue's fighting style was rough and wild, relying on his Undying Body. He didn't care about defense, putting all his strength into every punch.



Aimou's movements were like flowing water, her heavy mechanical body fighting with incredible lightness. She had no intention of facing Bologue head-on but instead employed various locking techniques.

Just like a supple venomous snake, Aimou's body entwined around Bologue's arm, her hands tightened around his wrists, while her legs pressed against his throat.

Simultaneously restraining his joints and causing Bologue to suffocate, it was clear this was not a formal combat arena but rather a free-for-all street brawl.

Bologue directly swung Aimou up and smashed her to the ground, letting his limbs be twisted as he threw heavy punches at Aimou.

"Why is it so hard!"

Bologue cursed, with every punch he felt like he was hammering metal, like boxing with a tin man. And that was exactly the case.

"That's no way to describe a girl!"

Aimou shouted unhappily.

She let go of Bologue's wrist, landed lightly, and leapt, moving swiftly towards Bologue's head with a knee strike.

Silver serpents swayed around Aimou, and as their limbs interlocked, the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid crawled along Bologue's arm onto Aimou's body.

The serpent swarm tightened like chains, and Aimou's movement halted for a moment before Bologue grabbed her ankle.

"Damn it!"

Aimou muttered, not expecting the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid she created to turn against her at this moment.

If she knew it was this that exposed her as a Delusional, she would probably regret it tremendously.

Bologue tightened his grip on Aimou's ankle, with no trace of mercy, swung her like a massive hammer, driving her into the ground so hard that her body sank down into it.

"I think we should have a good talk, Aimou." The serpents in Bologue's hands condensed into chains.

"You haven't beaten me yet!"

Blazing flames ignited again, and at close range, the Fire-Calling Staff caught Bologue off guard, his hands clutching at empty air. As the flames dissipated, he tried to find Aimou, looking up to see a dark shadow descending over his head.

Aimou wielded the Fire-Calling Staff like a hammer, intending to smash it onto Bologue's head. Bologue tried to block, but Aimou feinted, slipping the Fire-Calling Staff back to her waist and crashing into Bologue.

The sensation was unpleasant; Bologue felt as if he had been hit by a heavy cannonball. Aimou moved nimbly and swiftly, wrapping her thighs around Bologue's head and hooking her calves together behind his back.

Aimou perched steadily on Bologue's head, swinging a heavy punch at him. Bologue tried to pull Aimou off, but after reinforcement from Belli, her mechanical body was impenetrably tough.

As Aimou attempted to throw another punch, the serpent swarm extended from Bologue's body to hers, and both were engulfed together. The liquid form shifted to solid, with the solidified metal binding Aimou's joints like cement.

Bologue barely lifted his head, looking at Aimou who was only inches away, "I've caught you!"

"Not yet!"

Aimou maintained her punching posture, the serpent bindings restricting her movement, but the ether's glow sparkled on her ring at her fingertips.

"Damn Belli!"

All Bologue could manage was such a low growl; a powerful impact unleashed from the ring shattered the serpent bindings in an instant.

As if standing in the eye of a storm, Bologue was buffeted by the airflow, unable to open his eyes. He tried to hold onto Aimou, but Aimou tightened her thighs around Bologue's head, twisting and spinning, executing a scissor kick that flung Bologue away, and he crashed into a building under the push of the air currents.

"Are you okay, Bologue?"

Putting some distance between them, Aimou called out in a gentle tone, feigning concern.

Moaning came from the rubble, and Aimou paused, then mocked, "Stop pretending; you are the Undead."

The moaning ceased, Bologue pushed aside the bricks that buried him, stretching his neck, "You know I'm the Undead, so why the pretense?"

"We've been through thick and thin together; some superficial concern is necessary, no?"

As Aimou said this, she once more assumed a fighting stance, the faint light on her surface pulsating, the Constant Motion Core spinning rapidly, with mechanical components locking and storing energy, overheated like a machine, emitting steam-like hot gas from her back.

The ghostly blue in her eyes gradually turned to gold. Aimou stepped forward, then abruptly turned, and dashed into a nearby building, with Bologue cursing behind as he followed in pursuit.

#### Chapter 408: Heart-to-Heart Talk

Bologue chased Aimou; after all, this was Aimou's home turf. Aimou deliberately lured Bologue into pursuit, misleading him towards the pre-set traps.

This place was akin to a minefield; every few steps Bologue took triggered a trap, and the constant rumbling explosions left Bologue in a sorry state.

Bologue possessed a certain degree of Ethereal Perception, but faced with the layer upon layer of traps set by Aimou, his perception only granted him brief evasion time once triggered.

The obstacles were many, and Bologue's pace quickly slowed. Aimou hid once again in the shadows, while the bait laid beforehand continued to emit ether reactions, confusing Aimou's figure.

A myriad of snakes stirred, the gusts scattering the pervasive toxic gas, while Bologue panted and grimly surveyed his surroundings.

Ether reactions were continuous all around; if Bologue pursued them one by one, he would inevitably fall into Aimou's trap, possibly delayed, allowing Aimou the opportunity to sneak away.

Bologue shouted, "Aimou, what exactly are you trying to do?"

Time was tight; Bologue did not want to continue playing games with Aimou.

"Who knows?"

The voice came from all directions, hard to pinpoint. Bologue found this normal, not expecting his words to easily persuade Aimou.

Her resolve was strong; it was apparent from Aimou's fierce attacks.

"Such a stark contrast..." Bologue continued, "I always thought you were a frail little girl."

"It shows that even professionals can overlook sometimes, don't judge by appearance."

Aimou casually chatted with Bologue, making him feel the atmosphere was strange, though he couldn't pinpoint exactly what was odd.

However, it was certain that for Bologue, this was a hunt; he was the Hunter and Aimou the prey.

Yet, the roles of Hunter and prey were not fixed; a slight oversight in Aimou's hunting ground could swap their roles.

From afar, intense ether reactions seemed to signal a battle breaking out, Bologue knew what was happening: Lebius and Hood were likely confronting each other, a deadly clash between two Negative Power Users. If not for Aimou, Bologue would have liked to watch.

But the time Lebius fought so hard to gain for him was being spent playing hide and seek with Aimou, leaving Bologue feeling somewhat helpless.

What exactly was Aimou thinking?

From the close combat earlier, Bologue felt something was amiss; logically, Aimou should be focused solely on escaping. If so, she should not have risked close combat with him.

Yet she did just that.

It was a wrong decision; Bologue did not believe Aimou would make such a mistake.

"Leaving without saying goodbye is such a bad habit," Bologue hunched down, as the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid began to morph, his hand clutching the Sword and Shield, "I was really looking forward to tonight's date."

"Bologue, have you ever been deceived by a woman?" Aimou mocked.

"Not really in that aspect."

Scale Armor gradually covered Bologue, fully arming him, the voice from beneath the armor sounded, rumbling, "So the wish you told me, was it just a lie?"

"..."

Aimou didn't respond, and Bologue knew he had hit her sore spot, continuing, "Aimou, I actually know what your wish is."

"Oh? Let's hear it," Aimou replied, "You think I want to be human? I recall telling you humans are too fragile; I have no interest in that."

"I never said you wanted to become human, you're the one who mentioned it now."

Bologue continued his fierce attack, "Are you hiding something? Deliberately seizing the initiative in conversation, acting high and mighty, looking down on everyone."

"Are you afraid?"

Bologue delivered the final blow, Aimou didn't respond, and he knew he was right.

Aimou was indeed still a child; although prematurely mature, she was still a child, too inexperienced.

"Your wish is..."

Bologue abruptly stopped mid-sentence, charging like a silver giant wolf towards one side of the building.

While his words paralyzed Aimou, Bologue also kept sensing Aimou's whereabouts. There were too many decoys around, countless ether reactions disrupting his perception, coupled with Aimou's own ethereal concealment, making her extremely difficult to find.

But Bologue was no ordinary Condenser; he was also a Debtor.

Bologue could vaguely perceive the power of the Fantasy Species and the crazed intent of the Devil, a strength that only comes after contact with the Devil.

As Bologue expected, the Devil eventually found Aimou. He only hoped he could intervene in time to nip the disaster in the bud.

"Here you are!"

Bologue broke through the building, wrapped in armor, like a rampaging bull.

In the broken smoke and dust, Aimou's figure was not seen in the dim building; there was only a stable-running decoy releasing ether waves to attract Bologue's attack.

At the same time, multiple ether reactions rose, and the Fire-Calling Staff erupted in dazzling firelight once more, released from the other end of the desolate town.

This fire could clearly not affect Bologue as he searched for Aimou's movements in the sea of fire. Rapid footsteps sounded from behind him.

Bologue turned around, swinging a crude great sword. This backslash didn't hit Aimou; she agilely evaded, rolled and leaped, brushing a hand on the great sword, lifting her body further.

"You've walked into a trap!"

The armor on Bologue's body began to wriggle, rupturing into several silver hands reaching for Aimou. Before being grabbed, Aimou threw a smoke bomb at Bologue.

The smoke bomb hit the armor and then exploded, releasing not smoke but nerve-paralyzing gas.

Bologue immediately held his breath as Aimou lashed out with a whip-leg toward him, but before it could strike, the silver hands entangled Aimou's body, binding her firmly.

The mutable nature of Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid was well-suited for binding targets, wrapping around Aimou like vines, the solid nature shifting to flow over her body like water.

In an instant, Aimou was turned into a silver-white sculpture, and the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid sought gaps on Aimou's body, trying to penetrate her to paralyze her.

Bologue intended to move Aimou out of the gas's range, but as he prepared to move, his body became overwhelmingly heavy. The ground beneath him shimmered, with Light Forged chains sealing Bologue layer by layer, immobilizing him.

"Triggering this trap wasn't easy..."

Aimou barely turned her head, like a living sculpture, her neck twisting to break through the hard metal as she looked at Bologue.

The triggering condition of the binding trap required Bologue to stand still above it for a period, which, given Bologue's way of moving, was hard to achieve. Aimou had no choice but to engage Bologue in combat.

Bologue kept silent, maintaining his breath-holding to avoid inhaling gas.

The trap had bound Bologue, but he also held Aimou, the two in a deadlock until a moment broke the silence.



Bologue broke free from the trap's bindings as Aimou twisted her body, using her strength to escape the restraint of the silver hands.

Aimou tried to retreat, but Bologue wasn't giving her that chance. He strode forward, transforming the great sword in his hand into a lance, striking like a battering ram toward Aimou.

With Aimou's agility, such a brute force attack could be easily dodged, but the lance's head suddenly split open into several silver hands reaching for her, some grabbing her limbs, others wrapping around her torso.

Aimou suddenly regretted creating the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid. The two crashed into the building one after another, the continuous roaring turning everything chaotic, a scene of ruins.

A few seconds later, with piercing explosions and firelight, a figure was thrown backward from the ruins. Bologue rolled several times on the ground, staggering as he got back up.

Throwing off his tattered coat and rolling up his sleeves, Bologue, looking furious, rushed back into the ruins.

A few more seconds passed, muffled sounds echoed from the ruins, and another figure was thrown out.

Aimou skilfully rolled a few times in the air and then landed steadily, her eyes now a brilliant golden color, her body in overload operation, hot gases seeping out.

Reaching to tear off the obstructing clothes, Aimou revealed a white vest, brushing her scattered short hair back. She headed towards the ruins again, her pace quickening, then drew her Fire-Calling Staff, gripping the end like a hammer and wielding it.

After the noisy commotion, the ruins fell silent for a dozen seconds before becoming noisy again, incessantly.

Bologue felt that he was quite a powerful Condenser. Crossing tiers to fight Prayer Believers was no problem, but when facing Aimou, Bologue was endlessly vexed.

Aimou's body was as hard as a rock, yet her movements were incredibly agile. The ground was littered with traps she had set long ago, and she was equipped with all kinds of bizarre Alchemy Armaments.

Bologue felt that his style of violent enforcement was gone, turning instead into a street brawl, with each side landing punches, leaving everyone in a sorry state.

On the other hand, Aimou shared the same thoughts. Bologue's Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid was extremely treacherous, and his Summoning Hand was terrifying to the extreme. Most damningly, no matter how perfect Aimou's traps were, Bologue always had a way to break through them, and moreover, he was unkillable.

During previous instances of Time Reversal, Aimou had used these tactics to seriously injure Fast and Gold, but against Bologue, she only felt a profound sense of powerlessness.

The two kept fighting endlessly in the dead-silent town. Bologue punched Aimou into a dust-covered kitchen, and Aimou took the opportunity to grab a rusty kitchen knife and threw it at Bologue.

Bologue sidestepped to dodge, while Aimou quickly delivered a flying kick, sending him into the living room.

Crashing into a dust-covered sofa, Bologue tore out a wooden plank and slapped it on Aimou's head, shattering it into pieces.

The entire building was on the verge of collapse, until at one point, Bologue swung Aimou out, smashing through several walls, wedging her into another pile of rubble.

Aimou's body was covered with dents, and her delicate cheeks were scratched, exposing a metallic sheen.

She struggled to her feet, pulling out a broken steel rod from the rubble, spinning it a few times in her hand.

"Can't you let me finish my sentence?"

Bologue tugged at his collar, the fight leaving him drenched in sweat. Kicking aside pieces of debris on the ground, he sat heavily on the tattered sofa.

"Aimou, you desire Teda's fatherly love, am I right?"

Bologue looked at the gaps in the layers of walls, at the end of which Aimou sat on the rubble.

"I am an Alchemy Puppet, not a human. Teda is merely my creator, not having the physiological relationship found between humans," Aimou replied coldly.

Bologue laughed, "Has anyone ever told you you're stubborn?"

"No... Has anyone ever told you you're not likable?" Aimou retorted.

"Hmm... It seems there have been a few."

Bologue carefully recalled, remembering Olivia once told him he wasn't the kind of guy women liked.

"Stop making excuses. This is your true desire; you crave Teda's love and approval, but his attention is all on Alice. No matter how hard you try, he won't spare you another glance."

Bologue laid out his suspicions, "You could have had freedom, yet you returned to Teda's side. Is it self-sacrifice you're after? Hoping to sway Teda's cold heart and make him open it to you?"

"Shut up!" Aimou snapped.

"Then why aren't you by Teda's side now? Have you realized that even self-sacrifice can't change Teda's mind?"

Bologue shouted, brutally tearing open Aimou's wounds.

"You can't get Teda's love, so you spiral into hysterical madness... I thought you would destroy Alice's body, making Teda watch you crush the Philosopher's Stone in your chest, witness him fall into despair and remorse."

Bologue's words were venomous, as if cursing Aimou.

"Wouldn't that be wonderful, transforming love into hatred, completing your revenge on Teda, listening to his cries of grief, watching his pain, feeling his repentance..."

It would be perfect, even the Devil would love such a show!"

"Shut up!"

Aimou let out a hoarse roar, completely enraged by Bologue, raising the steel rod in her hand and leaping through the gap in the wall.

"Did I say something wrong? Then refute me!"

Bologue met Aimou head-on, now serious, he grabbed the swinging steel rod, followed by a straight kick to Aimou's abdomen.

Aimou was knocked to the ground by Bologue's kick, and Bologue seized the steel rod, striking down at Aimou.

Aimou rolled to dodge the blow, curling her body, and then springing up like a spring, kicking towards Bologue's face.

The two did not use Secret Energy or Alchemy Armament, only relying on their physical strength, the battle between the Condensers turned into mutual catharsis, venting emotions in this primitive way.

Bologue leaned back forcefully, dodging Aimou's kick, then reached out to grab Aimou's ankle, and with all his strength, he swung Aimou up.

Crashing through one side of the wall was just the beginning, Bologue grabbed both of Aimou's ankles, and like a windmill, he pulled Aimou out of the collapsing rubble, spun her a few times, and flung her away.

Aimou fell into the bedroom, crushing the decayed wooden bed, the accumulated dust rising, and in the haze, Bologue leaped over like a fierce tiger, pinning Aimou between the broken bed boards.

Bologue gripped Aimou's throat, taking the opportunity to control her, Aimou tried to turn her head and attack Bologue instead, but she finally realized that her arm length was much shorter than Bologue's, she couldn't reach him at all, only randomly pounding his arms.

Aimou retorted, "Don't bother me! Can you just let me leave alone?"

Aimou just wanted to quietly leave alone, to fulfill her wishes, without disturbing anyone.

"Alone?"

Bologue's words paused for two seconds, then his anger surged even more, he exclaimed loudly.

"What are you thinking? You belong to the Order Bureau! You're my booked team member, if you want freedom, shouldn't you clear your debts first!"

Aimou was stunned for a second, provoked by Bologue's stupid remark, "What kind of damned possessiveness is that?"

"I'm just settling accounts with you!" Bologue shouted, "And the injuries I've suffered, the experiences of death..."

Bologue tried to further restrain Aimou, "You owe too much! Aimou!"

"I'm... I'm sorry!"

Aimou originally wanted to reply forcefully, but when the words reached her mouth, her confidence unwittingly weakened.

Bologue recalled her apology to him in the Abandoned Land, it turned out that everything was like this, but Bologue wasn't ready to let her off, "Without context, suddenly an apology, who can understand that!"

"I didn't know death was like this... I'm sorry!"

Aimou's words suddenly carried a tone of crying, as if she was truly repentant.

Aimou knew of death's existence, but had never experienced it, after all, who but the Undead can experience death?

But Aimou had experienced it, within Bologue's Shared Chord Body, when Bologue died, she also deeply sensed the feeling of Bologue's death.

The icy chill of that silence terrified her greatly, just thinking about the things she'd done made Aimou suffer immensely, so she offered that ambiguous apology upon Bologue's awakening, filled with self-blame.

Aimou could harden herself against everyone but Bologue; facing Bologue, she only felt ashamed and self-critical.

"Yes, so you're still salvageable, Aimou."

At this moment, Bologue also began to speak something cryptic; he lowered his head to look at Aimou, yet what he saw was not a sad face, Aimou remained defiant, then the dark muzzle pointed at him.

Bologue recognized the gun; it was the short-barreled shotgun he wore on his waist.

"Aimou, you..."

Aimou's expression of sorrow was gone, she smiled as she continued Bologue's words, "Damn it?"

The roar of gunfire overshadowed the tail end of Aimou's words; Bologue was easily predictable in some aspects, like his sparse vocabulary of curses... always the same few.

The scorching fire illuminated this dim world, Bologue was hit head-on by the Dragon Breath Bullet at close range; even though he summoned the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid instantly, his figure was still forced back, slammed against the wall.

The building trembled and collapsed into ruins, the sea of flames scorched the earth, amidst the blinding flames, Aimou shakily got up.

The sound of fragments could be heard, Bologue pushed away the bricks pressing on him, heat emanating from his body, his chest a bloody mess, the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid seemed to have melted, dripping constantly, like silvery, heavy raindrops.

Aching pain surged, Bologue stiffly stood in place, several more holes were added to the bloody mess of his chest, he lifted his head to look far ahead, Aimou was steadily firing at Bologue.

Bologue wanted to continue forward, but this time his pace slowed, his consciousness began to blur, he couldn't understand what was happening, but quickly he realized.

Like a cracked water balloon, Ether continually oozed from the bullet holes, escaping his body.

Aimou calmly held the gun, ejected the shell, and reloaded the specially prepared bullet for Bologue.

#### Chapter 410: Sublimation Theme

"What... did you do?"

Bologue stared at Aimou with a somewhat dazed look. Various negative conditions enveloped him, but the most lethal was the paralysis of nerves and the escape of ether.

"An alchemy warhead prepared specifically for you, I call it the Forbidden Spirit Bullet. As for its effect, you can feel it, right?"

Aimou spoke softly as she walked towards Bologue, the firearm precisely firing shots, repeatedly hitting Bologue's chest, turning him into a sieve.

"The poison contained within can paralyze nerves and will affect the Alchemy Matrix, penetrating to some degree the defense of the Rectangular Soul Critical."

Bologue's eyes were filled with bloodshot veins, his heart pounding violently, his breathing becoming rapid as he slowly knelt down, his limbs numb and cold.

"You should know about the Rectangular Soul Critical? Derived from the Alchemy Matrix, it's a defensive mechanism that protects the Condenser's dominion over themselves and their ether.

The Forbidden Spirit Bullet can penetrate the Rectangular Soul Critical, causing an ether outburst, letting the ether escape from your Alchemy Matrix."

Aimou made an analogy, "Like a bucket with a leak, you can continue to draw ether from the outside world, but it's certainly slower than the rate of loss."

"You actually reserved such a lethal weapon just for me?" Bologue rasped.



Paralyzing nerves while also interfering with the Alchemy Matrix and penetrating the Rectangular Soul Critical—the power of this alchemy warhead is truly terrifying; if used properly, it can completely change the course of a battle.

Yet Aimou used this alchemy warhead on him, and Bologue didn't know whether to feel honored or something else.

"No choice, it only affects First Stage Condensers and needs to directly hit the target. For an ordinary First Stage Condenser, being hit directly by the bullet would mostly mean death; it wouldn't even be worth paralyzing nerves or causing ether chaos... Only you would still be jumping around."

Aimou pulled the trigger for the last time, sending the final Forbidden Spirit Bullet into Bologue's body.

Bologue felt a sharp pain. Even though he was losing the fight, he still taunted, "I'm truly flattered."

Aimou coldly responded, "Just treating you seriously."

This place was set with countless traps by Aimou. If lucky, even the Prayer Believers could have a chance to kill, but when used against Bologue, it's a completely different outcome.

With these traps and Aimou's full combat capabilities, they barely managed to restrain Bologue. What Aimou hadn't mentioned was that the Forbidden Spirit Bullet could only reduce Bologue's own ether, and it's time-limited.

Once the duration ends, it won't be long before Bologue returns to his peak state.

Fortunately, Aimou was impeccably prepared; she wouldn't give Bologue any chance.

During the damage, the self-healing of the Time Reversing Axis was also occurring simultaneously, rendering Bologue in a state of heavy injury yet not dead.

For Bologue, this state was unfavorable; he couldn't take effective action nor die to reset.

Bologue made no hesitation, decisively ordering the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid.

Cold serpents slithered up Bologue's neck, ready to bite through his throat to use death for resetting his state.

A black, scratched, and dented hand stretched out, grabbing the snake. Aimou appeared like the wind in front of Bologue.

"You've already used this trick."

Aimou looked down at Bologue. The negative effects from the Forbidden Spirit Bullet slowed Bologue's reaction, preventing him from taking the next step. Before he could react, shadows swept past, and Bologue felt severe pain in his hands.

"I know you too well! Bologue."

Two daggers pierced through Bologue's arms. Aimou understood the nature of Secret Energy·Summoning Hand; the venom on the dagger further consumed Bologue's perception, making it difficult for him to precisely release the Summoning Hand.

Out of control, the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid boiled relentlessly.

"I didn't expect you to deal with me so earnestly..." Bologue felt he was truly at Aimou's mercy this time; from the beginning, she had calculated everything precisely.

Aimou taunted, "Do you feel humiliated? Even experts have a day of defeat?"

"Humiliation? I just feel a bit sad," Bologue remained nonchalant, "You prepared this weapon... Because you guessed it, right? I would definitely come to find you."

Aimou's actions paused, then she softly said, "I'm sorry."

She had apologized enough today but still felt it wasn't enough.

While speaking, Bologue opened his arms, "Rather than saying sorry, why not chat with me properly? I'm quite generous."

Aimou ignored him, remaining in a low mood, "You're very professional; it was just that I cheated."

"Cheated?"

Aimou didn't intend to explain anything. She reached out, laboriously dragging Bologue, fearing that he might completely die. She somehow found an Alchemy Potion and poured it down Bologue's throat. Worried about Bologue's self-healing speed, she occasionally patched him with a few more cuts.

Her movements were crisp and tidy, completely different from the girl who once feared strangers; Aimou was as cold as a butcher, while Bologue was the lamb to be slaughtered.

Was it really like this?

Bologue secretly clenched his fist, understanding what Aimou meant by cheating. She had used Time Reversal, knowing he would come.

Aimou was fully prepared for this encounter, so much so that Bologue felt Aimou hadn't even considered an escape plan or the pursuit of the King's Shield Guard.

In this Time Reversal, everything Aimou did was aimed at confronting himself.

Why? Sacrifice a precious opportunity for Time Reversal just to beat himself up?

Bologue couldn't quite understand, but he felt he would soon know the reason why.

Aimou took a decidedly irrational action; instead of fleeing, she dragged Bologue to the living room of a building.

Bologue thought this might have been a spur-of-the-moment decision by Aimou, as she seemed to be picky about her choice while on their way here.

The place had been abandoned for years, dust was everywhere, and under the corrosion of the fog, the wood and bricks looked dilapidated.

Bologue was thrown onto the sofa and panted in pain, while Aimou sat steadily beside him, and they both fell silent.

If they forgot about the preceding events, the injuries both of them bore, and the hellish environment, the atmosphere might actually be quite cozy.

"What now? Truce?"

Bologue shifted, leaning back into the sofa in a comfortable position.

He reckoned himself Aimou's captive now; unable to mount any effective resistance, yet he felt no shame in being a prisoner... More precisely, from the moment when they were alternately cursing and fighting, Bologue felt the nature of things had changed.

This was no real battle, more like a quarrel, even now.

Aimou coldly said, "Do you think it's meaningful for the two of us to continue fighting?"

"Meaning? I find meaning unimportant... Honestly, I quite enjoy the process."

Bologue's reply remained true to his character; once in work mode, he's a consummate violence enthusiast, like a child on the beach reveling in the destruction of sandcastles.

Aimou chuckled coldly a few times, then Bologue continued, "Why didn't you flee, Aimou? Ready to face all this head-on?"

There were several daggers stuck in Bologue, his chest was a bloody mess, and blood kept dripping all over him, yet he felt his condition was not too bad; hence, he wore a grim smile.

Aimou didn't answer Bologue's question, instead, she queried, "What are you laughing at?"

"I'm laughing at our current situation. I feel like I'm a negotiation expert trying to pull you back from the brink of destruction."

As Bologue spoke, animation filled his brow, grateful for the time spent with Palmer, Bologue was no longer as cold as before, there was a hint of humor about him now.

"Not long ago, our conversations had to be conducted through brawling, but now we're able to calmly engage face-to-face and talk without resorting to violence."

Bologue looked over his own body again, "Of course, if you're willing to help pull out these daggers, I believe it would be more beneficial to our dialogue."

Aimou gave Bologue a deep look, though she was covered with Bologue's blood, she still adopted a look that friends might exchange — a mix of helplessness and reprimand.

"Bologue, do you think Palmer is a normal person?"

"Probably... not." Bologue thought carefully and shook his head.

"Then stop imitating Palmer's way of speaking, it only makes things worse... and you aren't as entertaining as Palmer."

"Why am I not as entertaining as him?" Bologue suddenly felt a strange sense of competitiveness.

"When Palmer jokes, his tone is exaggerated, and his expressions are theatrical, much like a comedy actor, whereas you? With that icy demeanor of yours, saying such things only comes across as provocation."

Bologue nodded, sinking deep into thought, actually considering how to make his speech more entertaining.

Then Bologue followed up with, "Provocation? I believe using provocation at this time isn't incorrect either."

Their conversation flowed smoothly, like banter between friends, although mere minutes ago they were fighting to the death, and even now, Bologue's miserable state would make one's skin crawl.

Everything in the current scene was bizarre — an abandoned building dead silent, poisonous fog pervasive, a rebellious Alchemy Puppet wounded all over, and an Undead filled with daggers, covered in blood, but still able to calmly crack jokes.

These elements together prompted Bologue to murmur, "I feel like we're shooting a movie."

"It indeed feels like we're shooting a movie."

Aimou gently touched the Fantasy Species on her chest, the Time Reversal triggered by the Fantasy Species akin to repeatedly reshooting a movie, regrettably, never capturing Aimou's desired scene.

"If you were the director, how would you shoot this movie?" Aimou asked Bologue.

"Hmm? For me..."

They naturally transitioned into this absurd conversation, chatting casually.

"Start with a lavish amount of blood and violence, follow with a bit of love and hatred, appropriately add some deadpan jokes, and my favorite rock music."

Bologue murmured, and then seemed to think of something, promptly adding.

"Oh, right, also elevate the theme of the movie!"