

Endless 491

Chapter 491: The Faceless Man

"In that case, you guys won't get any rest during this time," Palmer thought carefully for a moment, then relished in their misfortune.

Church asked, "What's up?"

"I'm planning to take Bologue back to the Wind Source Highlands after his promotion ceremony," Palmer recalled something and continued, "Remember Vasilina, whom I often mention to you? She's always been interested in my partners and wants to meet you all."

Church nodded lightly; he remembered the name Vasilina as Palmer's fiancée who existed only through phone calls.

As was everyone's reaction upon learning about Palmer having a fiancée, Church echoed the classic remark.

"If you didn't keep reminding me, I would really find it hard to believe that a person like you could have a fiancée."

"You could just say your opinion directly."

"Nothing, um... I wish you happiness."

The two conversed coldly, while on the other side, Hart laughed so hard he leaned back.

Palmer said, "Vasilina has always been quite interested in the people around me; she constantly says on the phone that she wants to meet my friends."

"Does she still remember me?"

"Of course, you were my first partner, after all," Palmer said, glancing at Bologue. Church was sandwiched between them, while Hart sat on the other side of Palmer, at the far edge, "and then there's my second partner."

Palmer added, "Well... if there aren't any accidents, Bologue should be my last partner."

"Indeed, given that Bologue is the Undead — if your bad luck could also kill the Undead, then I'd truly admire you," Church joked.

"Killing me, huh? Honestly, I'm kind of looking forward to that; it should be quite thrilling," Bologue responded.

Even though he said so, Bologue knew it was impossible. Even if it were possible, it would definitely be related to the Devil who stole his soul.

"Let's not talk about this anymore; it's the day off, talking about work ruins the mood."

Palmer put his arm around Church and asked with concern, "How are things with Afeiya?"

"You know, Palmer, the thing I regret the most is telling you Afeiya's story,"

Church's face showed indifference, and his eyes were filled with rejection.

"I'm just concerned about my former partner's romantic life. I'm pretty much locked down by Vasilina for life, so I don't see any new romances coming — that's why I'm focused on you,"

Palmer shamelessly said, "I'm seriously looking forward to being your best man!"

Church imagined the scene: in a beautifully celebratory atmosphere, Palmer standing next to him with a smile, but after walking only a couple of steps, Palmer tripping on flat ground and eating dirt, pulling open his shirt in the process...

Church stopped fantasizing, shook his head strongly, "I'm certainly not inviting you."

If he did invite Palmer, who knows what the wedding might turn into.

"Why not? We're partners who have fought through life and death together!" Palmer shook Church's shoulders vigorously.

Church remained indifferent, "I think you should have a clear self-awareness about this."

Bologue watched their interaction, gaining a new understanding of how much Palmer could be both lovable and detestable.

"Sigh..."

Palmer sighed sadly, propping his head with his hand and looking sideways at Church, studying his plain and average-looking face.

Bologue also paid attention to Church's appearance, noticing subtle changes from when they'd met earlier that morning. As he recalled, Church had reverted to the look he had when Bologue first met him.

The ordinary, unnoticeable appearance.

"Honestly, after knowing you for so long, I don't really care about your face anymore. But what about Afeiya? If you really like her, you can't just keep using that face to meet her, right?" Palmer started talking about things Bologue didn't understand.

"Is it possible that I use my real face when meeting Afeiya?" Church chuckled.

"Your real face?"

Palmer mimicked Church's smile, and then his smile froze, his voice rising, "Are you sure?"

"We've known each other for so long, fought through life and death so many times, and I've never seen your real face. But Afeiya gets to see it?"

His lie being exposed didn't embarrass Church as he swirled his glass, "I say, I'm facing you with my real face right now, would you believe it?"

Palmer scrutinized the face he'd seen countless times, only to see that Church's expression was plain and ordinary.

Palmer expressed his disappointment, "If this is the real face of a No-face person, then you look incredibly average."

Church said, "Well, there's nothing to be done; even the most powerful Condenser was just an ordinary person to start with."

Church then asked, "What do you think my appearance should be? Fierce, intimidating, or sinister and eerie?"

Palmer pondered for a while, unable to figure it out — over the years, Church had constantly changed his appearance. To make it convenient for Palmer to recognize him, Church often used this face of average appearance when dealing with Palmer.

"Maybe after looking at it for a long time, it doesn't seem so surprising anymore."

As he spoke, Palmer forcefully poked Church's face with a wine bottle, complaining, "But one thing's for sure, this face of yours is definitely fake, right? Being the No-face person, you bastard are best at deception. Do you think I'd believe you?"

"But as you said, we were partners back then — shouldn't there be some level of trust?"

"I can trust you in other contexts, but I absolutely don't believe this!"

Palmer started yelling, "I should never have shown you the picture of Vasilina. You actually turned into Vasilina to fool me!"

Recalling this, Palmer got angry — on a mundane afternoon, someone appeared in Opus whom he thought was impossible to be there. If not for Church quickly removing the disguise, Palmer almost kissed him.

Church's expression carried some embarrassment — this is one of his few black histories.

Bologue's expression also became a bit awkward. He didn't want to eavesdrop on the duo's past entanglements, but the words still flowed into his ears. Bologue tried to control his laughter, but Aimou had already burst out laughing.

Aimou asked, "Do you guys always have this much fun?"

"During the downtime from work, we don't mind relaxing. One can't be tense all the time," Church smiled.

Through their conversation, Bologue began to slightly change his perception of Church — he didn't seem as stern as when they first met. The cold indifference at first glance might stem from the inherent caution of an intelligence officer.

The festive celebration ended as usual, with idle chatter and watching Serey dance endlessly. Near midnight, Serey dressed up and walked out wobbly.

Although Bologue and the others hadn't left yet, Bode had already grabbed a mop to clean up the bar. Even having witnessed it many times, Church and Hart still looked at Bode with some reverence — after all, having a hulking skeleton chatting and laughing with you is somewhat daunting.

Hart was quite fond of Wei'Er, perhaps due to the fluffy connection. They discussed fur maintenance and grooming throughout the night, and Hart even agreed to bring Wei'Er the bathing products he used next time.

Bologue could never have imagined Hart and Wei'Er having such a heated discussion on this topic.

Then came the break-up; standing at the bar's entrance, Bologue was a healthy person who never indulged in excessive drinking. After a few glasses, he was consistently drinking orange juice; Aimou disliked the taste of alcohol, so she clung to orange juice just like Bologue. Hart and Church had jobs the next day, so they both kept themselves in check, leaving Palmer alone, freely drunk.

They wandered down the street, Hart wrapped himself tightly to avoid drawing others' attention. Glancing at Hart's outfit, Bologue felt suffocated, feeling sorry for Hart.

"We'll be heading back now."

Bologue waved, laboriously stuffing Palmer into the passenger seat.

Hart, Church, Aimou were all staying in the employee dormitory; Church preferred the free housing and utilities, while Aimou went off to the Alchemy Workshop and ended up having to stay next to Belli.

After simple goodbyes, the car drove onto the street, and Bologue grasped the steering wheel, taking in a vibrant, kaleidoscopic night view, dazzling beyond compare.

Chapter 492: Fake Eye

The time after pleasure always becomes somewhat void, and now it's the same. Bologue looked ahead expressionlessly, praying in his heart that no mounted police would check their licenses, as Palmer lay slumped in the passenger seat, reeking of alcohol.

"Speaking of which, it's really surprising that you could recognize Church, you know."

Palmer suddenly lifted his head, drunkenly trying to stir up a conversation; he disliked this silent atmosphere.

"What's wrong?"

Bologue asked, sounding as though recognizing Church was something to be proud of.

Indeed, it was something to be proud of. When Palmer noticed this, he wanted to ask Bologue about it; he just hadn't had the time until now.

"He's a faceless man, literally, very few people can remember what he looks like, and I'm one of them," Palmer said, "After all, I used to be his partner."

"I'm a bit confused... does it have something to do with his Secret Energy?"

The car came to a halt at the red light. Bologue didn't like waiting, so he exchanged idle chatter with Palmer to pass the time.

"Sort of. You can understand it as he can switch to different faces. Although he's not combat-capable, he's cunning enough that you never know when he might replace the one closest to you."

Palmer, drunk, blurted out a jumble of words.

"So how do you tell his identity? It's not intuition or something like that, right?"

"Hmm..."

Bologue thought seriously, his mind recalling things related to Church.

Palmer had told him many stories about Church, like how Church had always had a crush on that flower shop girl named Afeiya. Bologue even met Afeiya in a bar and helped her solve some troubles.

Recollecting Church's face, Bologue remembered that when he first saw him, he appeared ordinary enough that if one didn't pay much attention, they would forget Church's appearance in an instant.

Today's meeting felt the same; Church still had that ordinary look, but Bologue was sure that even ordinary, there was something different from what he remembered.

So mysterious, Bologue still recognized Church at first sight. He pondered this until the red light turned green, and then it dawned on him.

"Probably... his eyes."

"His eyes?" Palmer's face showed a look of surprise, but thinking it was Bologue, he found it reasonable, "Go on."

Bologue said, "His appearance is changing, but his gaze hasn't changed. I recognized his identity from those eyes."

"You're really professional. Indeed, this is the fatal flaw of the faceless man, Church," Palmer said with a hint of regret, "I was the one who discovered this fatal flaw. Sometimes I feel quite guilty about it."

Bologue looked at Palmer with a face full of surprise. It seemed Church's eyes were related to Palmer. Bologue wanted to hear more, but Palmer fell silent, saying nothing.

"Leaving things half-said won't do."

Bologue pursued, not liking things left unspoken.

The colorful lights outside the car window cast intricate colors on Palmer's profile.

"I wanted to introduce Church to you all before, but I never really found a good opportunity," Palmer mumbled hesitantly, "After all, I don't have many friends in the Order Bureau, and Church was one."

Bologue asked, "So what happened between you?"

"The incident when I became a Debtor; Church was there too. From then, we were partners," Palmer squinted, struggling to recall the mess of the past, "The situation was very complicated, enemies all around, and our powers were limited, inevitably soon, we would be overwhelmed by enemies."

Coincidentally, it was also the time of the Sacrifice Ritual of the Corrupted Sect. Countless Holy Spirits on the altar were wailing in pain, while below the altar, a few of us were rampaging.

Maybe I was out of my mind, or maybe it was because we were at a dead end, so why not try every possibility? I shared my plan with Church."

Palmer fell into silence, and Bologue knew what happened next. Palmer rushed to the altar, seizing the Blessing that the Corrupted Sect was to receive after their sacrifice, and directly faced that scarlet chaotic being, forming a Blood Contract, becoming part of the Debtors.

Palmer whispered, "Telling it afterwards always sounds easy..."

"But at the time, the circumstances were dire, only those present could understand a bit."

Bologue followed up on Palmer's words, understanding his meaning. Palmer had asked him before about the Scorched Earth Fury; he was curious about that war that engulfed nations in flames.

If Bologue were to tell it in detail, he could talk for a month, but as he started, he just brushed over it lightly.

"To buy me time, Church blocked the enemy for me and got his eye injured, losing vision in one," Palmer said calmly. "His left eye is an Alchemy Eye, looks just like a real one, but his Secret Energy can't change this fake eye, and since then, the Faceless Man became traceable."

This is why Bologue could recognize Church from his eyes, no matter how much his appearance changed, Church's eyes remained the same.

Bologue said, "It's nothing, if not for those sacrifices, you all would have died at the ritual site."

"I think so too, so I don't feel much guilt, at most I feel a bit sad when I see that fake eye." Palmer said carelessly.

"I always thought your relationship with Church wasn't that good."

"No, that's just how we interact, we talk trash about each other, and if things get heated, he'd start cursing me in Vasilina's manner... damn, I shouldn't have shown him Vasilina's photo."

Palmer suddenly stopped mid-curse and sittenly said, "But sometimes, seeing Vasilina's likeness, I think it's pretty nice."

"Hold on, Palmer, your thoughts are getting weird!"

Bologue slammed the brakes, stopping the car by the road, and shouted at Palmer.

That's not Vasilina, it's just a false illusion, if you miss your fiancée so much, let's set out tomorrow, alright!

Bologue was screaming internally, these weird things seemed absurd but somehow seemed justified when it involved Palmer.

Palmer ignored Bologue's words, he really was drunk and didn't even notice what he'd just said.

"So how did you end up parting ways, was it really just because you were so unlucky?"

After calming the atmosphere,

Bologue continued asking, listening to Palmer talk about these things, he suddenly realized his partner wasn't just a silly goof; he also had his past and those unknown stories.

It's just that this guy's luck is so terrible, it's hard to focus on anything besides his luck.

Palmer said, "Later? Later I proactively applied to part ways."

Bologue said in surprise, "I always thought it was Church who suggested breaking up."

"It wasn't, I was the one who suggested breaking up... Luck is a very vague thing, sometimes you can attribute all good things to good luck, and all bad things to misfortune, but blindly believing in those things is somewhat naive.

After I became a Debtor, at first, our work was still going smoothly, but soon more and more problems started to appear in our work..."

Palmer paused, suddenly turned his head to look at Bologue.

"I always felt my Blessing had a kind of dynamic balance."

"You mean?"

"When I become complacent with good luck, it brings the punishment of misfortune. When I am at the end of my rope, it gives me a glimmer of hope, like terrible water torture.

This doesn't sound bad, even if it messes with your mindset a bit, it indeed ensures my survival, but the people around me are different, they fall into the same risks with me, and they don't have the protection of luck."

Palmer sighed as he spoke, this guy was lonely within the Order Bureau, largely due to this lousy luck, Palmer could only protect himself, unable to take care of others.

"In the subsequent work, because of my Blessing, Church suffered unnecessary injuries many times and almost died, I felt it was time to part ways, staying together, I might end up really bringing Church down.

Church was very angry at my request to dissolve the partnership, but the impact of the Blessing was an undeniable reality, then the Crow's Nest also approved my request, since then, my relationship with him became somewhat strained, only recently has it eased quite a bit."

Palmer reclined his seat, lying back completely.

Bologue gazed ahead, the night was deep, the car drove through the empty streets.

Bologue felt a bit surprised, never expected that this carefree guy Palmer, also had such a caring side, perhaps he was always like this, just the usual silly cheerfulness covered too many of his shining points.

Then Palmer slowly raised his hand, giving Bologue a thumbs up.

Just as Bologue was puzzled, Palmer shouted drunkenly.

"The Undead are really awesome! Now I can finally be free!"

Bologue stomped on the brakes, and Palmer crashed headfirst into the windshield.

Chapter 493: Ether Concentration

Getting up to wash face and brush teeth, Bologue got dressed and knocked on Palmer's room door, but there was a rhythmic snoring inside; that guy was still asleep.

Bologue didn't disturb Palmer's sweet dreams. This guy had just been promoted to a Prayer Believer and needed a good rest. Besides, the Field Operations Department had no tasks to assign at the moment, so Bologue left alone.

Upon arriving at the office, Aimou had been waiting there for a long time.

"Let's go."

Aimou said as she took Bologue's arm and led him down the corridor. Bologue only managed to greet Geoffrey on the way.

As the two walked side by side, Bologue occasionally glanced at Aimou, noticing the vitality in her eyes.

After the Time Axis Disorder event ended, Aimou had been depressed for a long time. She lost her familiar home and also Teda.

The love Teda gave her at the last moment was so sudden that it caught Aimou off guard. By the time she picked up that love and was reborn, Teda was already dead. Even if she wanted to say something, she couldn't chase him.

Bologue could understand Aimou's feelings; he had similar experiences. But Bologue and Aimou were different individuals; Bologue could vent his pent-up anger through violence, but he didn't know what might be suitable for Aimou's release.

Thinking it over, Bologue gave up. He was not good at comforting people, and he didn't know how to handle such scenarios. He might even make the situation worse.

Fortunately, Belli stepped up. No one knew what method she used, but after handing Aimou over to her for a while, Aimou seemed to recover quite a bit.

Then it was up to Bologue to handle the job training. During the training, Bologue applied his experience in dealing with Aimou.

Bologue always felt that as long as people stay busy, they wouldn't have time to ponder those troubling matters. As long as they are busy enough, they can numb themselves.

For this reason, Aimou's first week of job training was very grueling. According to Aimou's description, she was lucky to be an Alchemy Puppet; if she were a living person, she would have been trained to death by Bologue!

Aimou liked maintaining her flesh-and-blood state, which allowed her to experience various new sensations. But whenever she went on missions with Bologue, she decisively turned back into Steel Body.

Faced with Aimou's complaints, Bologue merely thought he was fulfilling his responsibilities. As a soldier who had participated in the Scorched Earth Fury, Bologue believed that only sufficient training could increase an individual's survival rate on the battlefield.

And so the days passed, up until now.

Bologue asked, "Is Belli ready for my promotion ceremony?"

Aimou said, "Probably? I'm not quite sure. I only go to the Sublimation Furnace Core on my days off."

Aimou's life is busy; she works at the Special Operations Group on weekdays and is taken away by Belli on her days off. This is a kind of agreement between the Special Operations Group and the Sublimation Furnace Core, traceable back to a day not long after Aimou joined the Special Operations Group.

"Lebius! What's going on!"

It was a calm day, not long after Lebius was discharged from the hospital, when Belli stormed into the Special Operations Group, furious.

"It's Aimou's own choice; I did not interfere,"

Lebius said without lifting his head. He knew very well why Belli was there.

What followed was a round of bickering, and eventually both sides took a step back, leading to the current situation.

"Is that so... I wonder what Belli is up to..."

Bologue rubbed his head. He thought with Aimou around, he could bid farewell to the Sublimation Furnace Core. But since the promotion ceremony concerned himself, Bologue had to personally go once.

Bologue asked, "How's the handling of the Alchemy Workshop's remains?"

Due to the Immortal Heart's out of control, the Alchemy Workshop was engulfed by flesh and subsequently collapsed in battle. The Alchemy Workshop held many of Teda's research materials over the years. During subsequent battlefield cleanup, the Field Operations Department specifically sent people to investigate the ruins and recover some of the materials.

It held many things Aimou was familiar with over the years, so she actively participated in it and managed to recover a lot of Teda's research materials.

Aimou said, "Many materials were lost, but quite a bit were salvaged. Plus, with his previous agreements with the Sublimation Furnace Core, he regularly feeds back his research materials. Overall, the loss isn't much."

"Is that so..."

Bologue thought it was a good outcome.

"Oh right, because of my senior sister, I also got to see a lot of the materials," Aimou's voice lowered, as if sharing a secret.

"Did you see anything interesting in them?"

Bologue smiled as Aimou looked like a cat hiding in the corner.

"Yes, some things that... are hard to describe."

"For example?"

"Bologue, why do you think in recent years, alchemists have made such swift progress in their research on the Secret Source?"

Aimou didn't answer Bologue's question, but rather posed another question.

A thousand years ago, Secret Energy could only achieve the effects of juggling tricks; a hundred years ago, it endowed Condensers with a power beyond mortals; and now, Secret Energy is enough to turn the tide of battle for Condensers.

"As time passes, the progress in alchemists' research, and... war."

Bologue gave his answer.

War.

War has duality; on one hand, it brings endless pain and sorrow to humanity, and on the other, it greatly accelerates technological advancement.

Even aside from Secret Energy, just considering modern technology. A hundred years ago, trains were merely experimental products in academies; now, cold railways have spread across every piece of land humans touch. Once humanity could only look up at the vast blue sky, but during those distant days of scorched earth fury, swarming machines had already swept across the sky.

Human civilization, upon reaching modern times, seemed to press the acceleration button, with new things being born every day, gradually replacing the old.

Bologue feels that Secret Energy is also like this; the scorched earth fury has plunged war into a stalemate, making both the Kagader Empire and the Rhine Alliance need a more efficient means of destroying each other.

Whether driven by war frenzy or fear of the battlefield, both sides directed resources towards the Condensers, causing rapid progress in the research on this Extraordinary Power.

"What's wrong? Why talk about these things?"

Bologue, being personally experienced with war, was very sensitive to it.

"It's related to the teacher's research... at least his former research."

Aimou hesitated a bit, "I want to learn more about his past. Senior Sister has greatly helped me, allowing me to look into his earlier research, one of which involved progress in studying the Secret Source."

Teda has already turned into dust, yet his figure still remains in Aimou's mind; she wants to know more about this sorrowful fellow.

"In the teacher's research, he pointed out that the progress in Secret Source research might not just be due to resource allocation or war catalysis, but also some other crucial factors that have been deliberately obscured."

"Such as?"

Bologue's curiosity was piqued by Aimou's words, he slowed his steps, listening to Aimou's speech.

"For instance, the teacher suspected that a hundred, even a thousand years ago, the ether concentration throughout the human world was far thinner than it is now. Due to the thinness of ether, its connection with the Secret Source was extremely tenuous, preventing research from advancing even a step."

With the development of the era, the ether concentration in the entire world is continuously rising, even allowing the void Secret Source to be glimpsed, and under the full ether environment, increasingly powerful Alchemy Matrixes are being developed."

Bologue stopped in his tracks, staring straight at Aimou. Although he was not an alchemist, he understood the importance presented in Aimou's theory.

"Do you know what that means, Aimou?"

"It means that ether wasn't present initially; it appeared in some unknown way and then gradually proliferated, filling the entire world over time."

Aimou paused briefly before continuing, "This is what the teacher wrote in his research."

Bologue said, "It seems that Teda's research did not receive recognition."

That much Bologue didn't need to guess; if Teda's research were correct, his name would be inscribed in history, and there would be a place for his study in the "Golden Thesis."

"Yes, the main reason being there's no direct evidence to prove the teacher's theory, and humanity being so short-lived; how many people know of things from hundreds or thousands of years ago?"

Bologue hesitated for a moment, he wanted to say that there are quite a few undead in the world.

"Do you think the teacher's theory is right?"

"I'm not sure."

Bologue shook his head; he seldom gave opinions on matters he did not understand.

"According to Senior Sister, the teacher went out afterward to look for evidence to support his research. The subsequent events aren't mentioned in his studies, nor does Senior Sister know. Perhaps the teacher failed to find evidence, which is why his research remains buried."

When Aimou mentioned these things, she was somewhat disheartened, wishing for Teda's research to be recognized by the world.

"Don't dwell on those; Teda already achieved it."

"Achieved what?"

"A perfect work."

Bologue raised his hand and showed Aimou a thumbs-up.

Chapter 494: The Answer to All Mysteries

"Do you understand the specific operation principles of the ascension ritual?"

In Belli's office, Bologue sat quietly like a student, listening attentively to Belli's painstaking guidance.

"I know the basics."

Bologue thought for a moment and replied.

The ascension ritual is extremely complex. Even though Bologue had read the "Golden Thesis," it only explained it briefly, like a popular science book.

"Well, well..."

Belli knew Bologue would answer like this—it's the typical response from every Condenser undergoing the ascension ritual.

Belli picked up a pre-prepared document and handed it to Bologue, "This is according to the ascension ritual you designed. You can take a simple look."

Bologue opened the document, and the dense words filled his view, instantly overwhelming his cognition with a massive amount of information.

"The essence of the ascension ritual is to strengthen the soul of the Condenser, enlarging its 'capacity' so it can accommodate a more complex Alchemy Matrix, serving as the foundation stone to allow the seed to take root and sprout into tender branches."

The soul is the land that bears power, and power itself is a growing seed. Bologue understood this point; these Alchemists liked to symbolize the Alchemy Matrix with a big tree.

As Bologue listened to Belli's words, he looked at the document in his hand, which marked extremely valuable Alchemy Materials. Without the Order Bureau footing the bill, merely collecting these Alchemy Materials would take Bologue a long time.

"But the risk of the ascension ritual also lies here. Any modification to the soul is accompanied by great danger, not to mention that the soul itself is constant in everyone."

Belli's voice became stern, filled with a warning tone.

"Just like human growth, excessive growth can cause wrinkled growth lines on the skin; the soul is the same way—if overly enlarged, the strengthened soul is filled with cracks.

Just like after the implantation ritual, the soul needs a stabilization period. After the ascension ritual, the Promoter requires a long time for the soul to heal itself and grow, allowing the fractures to close, so the soul returns to a perfect state."

Bologue gently nodded, feeling quite calm. As an Undead, even though the success probability is extremely small, with enough attempts, Bologue would eventually succeed.

"As a Debtor, your soul is already in tatters. To let the soul grow to a level sufficient for the Alchemy Matrix to continue growing, your soul needs to enlarge several times more than ordinary people. Thus, the risk also increases with the multiplier."

If the soul is converted into data, the base value of the soul is ten under normal states. To ascend to Prayer Believers, the soul only needs to increase from ten to fifteen. But Bologue's soul is incomplete. Suppose his soul's value is five; then he needs to increase by ten values to catch up with a normal ascension ritual.

Belli looked seriously at Bologue, who showed no sign of anxiety, instead recalling other matters.

"Is this also why the stronger the Condensers, the more valuable their souls are?"

"What?"

Belli was taken aback by Bologue's question, then realized Bologue hadn't been listening to her words, immersed in his thoughts all along.

"When first born into this world, everyone's soul is constant. In the eyes of the Devil, disregarding their perverse tastes, our value should be uniform. But as we tread the Path of Transcendence and continuously strengthen our own soul, we should also... appreciate in the Devil's eyes?"

Bologue tentatively said.

"What are you trying to express?" Belli asked.

"Nothing, just suddenly thought of it. You continue..."

Bologue crossed his legs, propped his chin on his thigh, showing a contemplative look.

For some reason, Bologue always had a strange feeling... He recalled memories of his "previous life," that dreamy and ethereal past, the normalized world dominated by absolute reason and technology.

Influenced by those null memories, Bologue sometimes felt unreal about the world before him, as if this wasn't reality—the true reality was veiled by some nebulous curtain.

Just like Teda's research... Perhaps Ether originally didn't exist in this world, but under some unknown opportunity, Ether was born and, over time, began filling the world.

Bologue's thoughts were interrupted by Belli, who knocked hard on his head, urging him to focus.

"Focus, don't think you're safe just because you're an Undead." Belli warned Bologue, "When you faced the threefold trials, didn't you encounter that feeling?"

"Do you mean the 'loss'?"

Recalling that chaotic feeling, Bologue shivered instinctively, wary of that unknown, mystical power.

"Be careful. Do you think soul enhancement is easy? You are a Condenser, born from the Secret Source. You might experience 'loss' again, even face the Secret Source directly."

When mentioning these, excitement flashed in Belli's eyes, as Secret Source is the ultimate ideal for these zealous Alchemists.

"Face... Secret Source directly?"

"Currently, there is no direct evidence to prove this, but according to reports from the ascension ritual, many claimed they seemed to approach the Secret Source, even glimpsing a corner of it."

Belli paused and continued, "It's not impossible. As the Condenser ascends, it's sublimating the mundane self. With each lofty step, we continually approach the Secret Source."

"The Secret Source is like a storm sweeping within a world beyond our understanding. If we can withstand that roaring storm, we will eventually glimpse the core of the storm, that place of tranquility."

Bologue suddenly asked, "In that calm place within the storm's eye, what do you think is there?"

"Hmm... Answers."

Belli thought for a moment and gave this answer.

"What answers?"

"Answers to all mysteries."

The two looked at each other, no more conversation continued, but they both sensed what the other was thinking.

Answers to all mysteries.

"Senior! There's a problem!"

The oppressive atmosphere was suddenly shattered when Aimou burst through the door, like opening a valve, letting the cold water that engulfed both of them pour out.

Belli sighed in relief. She hated the oppressive feeling just now and found Bologue to be quite self-centered, gripping the conversation and dragging everyone into his whirlpool.

"What problem?"

Belli rubbed her head. While she was talking with Bologue, she had sent Aimou to handle the agenda. In a few days, the Alchemy Materials required for Bologue's ascension ritual would be ready; next was to pick a good day.

"Hmm..."

Aimou glanced at the notice in her hand, marked with an unfamiliar department; it was her first time seeing it.

"The Scholars' Hall sent a notice saying they wanted to participate in Bologue's ascension ritual."

Belli was stunned for a moment, then her expression began to unravel.

"Damn it! Damn it!"

Bologue watched as Belli became irritable, biting her nails and stomping her feet in place, muttering rebellious words.

"After painstakingly outlasting one old guy, now another group of immortals comes?"

"This time they're participating in the ascension ritual, what's next? Hosting the normal operation of the Sublimation Furnace Core?"

"These immortals definitely have ill intentions; they're clearly here to seize power, right!"

Bologue's expression towards Belli changed a bit. Normally, as the Minister of the Sublimation Furnace Core, shouldn't Belli lead all Alchemists in researching the Secret Source? How did her style become a power struggle drama?

"Or perhaps... it's the meaning from the Decision Room?"

Belli suddenly looked up, as if realizing.

"Is the Decision Room punishing me for embezzling public funds in this manner?"

Bologue felt he heard something he shouldn't have, and then Belli looked at him.

"Damn Lebius!"

"Hold on! If you have a grudge, go to my team leader, okay!"

"Damn Special Operations Group!"

Belli was both tearful and furious; the Special Operations Group not only took her little junior, but now they wanted to grab her already scarce power.

Chapter 495: Deceitful Structure School

The final decision for Bologue's ascension ceremony was set three days later. Upon hearing the date, Bologue felt a bit nervous, just like when he prepared for the implantation ceremony before. He would take another step on the Path of Transcendence.

At the departure, Aimou handed Bologue a guidebook, containing explanations of the nature of various Secret Power Factions, detailing the possible secret energy tendencies that might arise from different school pairings.

Bologue needed this guidebook very much, as after he ascends to a Prayer Believer, he would develop a secondary school branch, allowing his secret energy to mutate and guide towards a stronger direction.

Under the demonstration of Lebius, Bologue abandoned the idea of deriving a secondary school from the Origin School. As an Undead, Bologue had enough time to refine all Ethereal Skills and didn't need to use this precious mutation on the Origin School.

More importantly, with Aimou's help, Bologue could easily raise his control of Ether by a stage, compensating for this shortcoming.

The Secret Source School was also ignored by Bologue. This mysterious school is solely dedicated to the study of the Secret Source with little enhancement in combat, offering no appeal to Bologue, a violent person, and he barely considered the Contract School either.

Next, Bologue was left considering the Illusion Creation School, Void Spirit School, Commanding School, Ascendant Body School, and Deceitful Structure School.

Bologue walked slowly down the corridor, opening the guidebook while recalling his previous conversation with Belli.

"Some schools have very poor compatibility, choosing them as derived secondary schools might not advance your power but cause regression."

Belli calmed her emotions and began to discuss with Bologue the upcoming ascension.

"For example, the Void Spirit School, which is a secret energy school entirely focused on mental intentions, is unsuitable to pair with the Commanding School that focuses on reality distortion.

Additionally, the Ascendant Body School, the reason for not recommending you to derive this school is simple; the Undead are the strongest bodies, and this school is merely a burden to you.

Then there is the Illusion Creation School... The Illusion Creation School can be considered, just like the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, you can create domination objects for control warfare, but it seems somewhat redundant?"

Regarding Bologue, Belli was quite troubled.

"The most peculiar thing about you is that we don't have an exact understanding of Overlord Xilin's power."

Belli explained to Bologue, "Every Secret Energy System possesses an optimized path, just like Palmer, who thought his ascension ceremony would be challenging, but thanks to the effort of generations in the Clarks family, his ascension path had already been optimized to perfection."

Bologue understood this, the Clarks' unique "Path of Wind Fury."

"Such perfect paths exist in the Order Bureau, but you are different; you possess unknown powers... Maybe even Overlord Xilin doesn't understand his own power, right? The most important thing is..."

"The most important thing is, you can't determine the affiliation of this power, can you?" Bologue interrupted Belli.

"You mean?"

Bologue slowly raised his hand, as the Alchemy Matrix started, blue tracks spread across Bologue's palm, radiating blue light.

"I talked to Teda before, he said I'm too unique for a member of the Commanding School."

Bologue pressed his hand on Belli's desk, and the blue light instantly covered it.

"The Commanding School uses Ether as a medium to distort reality, but I'm different; I break through the limits of the Alchemy Matrix, spread it onto matter, and assimilate them, making them part of my body, controlling them."

As Bologue narrated, fine cracks spread across Belli's desk, and under Bologue's command, the hard wood gradually crumbled into fine dust starting from the table edge and extending inwards.

"I am not destroying it, I'm making myself, part of me, disappear."

Eyes gleaming with blue light looked at Belli, Bologue recounted his previous conversation with Teda.

"Teda said I might not be from the Commanding School; it's just that my secret energy's initial manifestation categorized me into the Commanding School..."

"You mean you could likely be an undiscovered Condenser from the Deceitful Structure School?"

Belli understood what Bologue implied, and then she felt troubled, "If you are a Condenser from the Deceitful Structure School, then you are in trouble."

"Why?"

"The Deceitful Structure School is unique due to its complex and elusive nature that is difficult to categorize, making the selection of derived secondary schools for ascension very challenging."

Belli extended her hand, tapping Bologue's chest.

"You first need to know who you are before you can walk your own path, but currently, you're unclear about what you are, let alone make decisions for what comes next."

"If that's the case... How do other Condensers from the Deceitful Structure School choose?" Bologue pressed for an answer.

"Do you really want to know the answer?"

"I do."

"The answer is... Let them grow wildly."

Belli shrugged, "The Deceitful Structure School is essentially chaotic by nature, unsuitable for any rules or restraints. Our advice for ascension is to follow your heart, basically, do as you please."

Listening to Belli's straightforward response, Bologue lightly held his head, "Seems difficult?"

"Yes, indeed difficult."

Belli showed a thoughtful expression, then looked at Aimou standing silently at the side, "The people from the Scholars' Hall also need to be involved, right?"

"Yes." Aimou nodded.

"Tell them, involvement is welcomed but requires a price."

Bologue's expression showed surprise; although Aimou didn't understand the Scholars' Hall, Bologue did. He remembered it as a branch within the Sublimation Furnace Core, filled with Alchemy Masters.

Not a wonder it's Belli? Even daring to extort a thing or two from these Alchemy Masters.

"A price... Even though I don't have the power to mobilize that directly, those old Undead surely have a way."

"What are you going to do?"

Bologue paid extra attention to Belli, feeling she was about to do something outrageous.

"It's nothing; you're quite unfortunate. The power you bear is too peculiar, too mysterious. But fortunately, you're not the only unlucky one; another unlucky person has already paved the way for you."

In Belli's description, Bologue instinctively thought of that Celestial God-like sleeping figure.

"Maybe we can find answers on Overlord Xilin... Even if not, a reference would be great." Belli murmured.

Bologue's gaze momentarily lost focus before he withdrew the secret energy, continuously recalling all this. But such contemplation didn't last long; the blue glow faded, and with a faint sound of cracking, the shaky desk collapsed into a pile of powder, with various items and documents piled in the dust.

Belli and Bologue exchanged glances, Aimou expressed panic, extending his hands, preparing to do something...

Time returned to now, Bologue moved his arm, wondering if Aimou was like a cat, while Belli was more like a leopard—no wonder being a master of transformed metals she developed such muscular build, always wielding the Iron Hammer on metals, unknowingly developing such strong sinewy arms, hurting if she grabbed him.

"Overlord Xilin..."

Bologue muttered, this already deceased man pervaded every corner of Bologue's life like a shadow.

Knocking on the door, Bologue looked at the busy Lebius and asked.

"I want to ask you something."

"Go ahead."

Lebius remained unchanged, not lifting his head.

"You... Do you know about Overlord Xilin?"

Lebius's busyness paused, his suspended arm fell, he lifted his head to look at Bologue, showing no anger, nor questions, he just spoke calmly.

"That would be quite a long story."

Bologue closed the office door and sat on a nearby sofa.

"I don't have much on my schedule today, plenty of time."

Chapter 496: Win Again and Again

"About Overlord Xilin..."

Lebius's gaze grew deep, as all memories related to Overlord Xilin in his mind carried the painful marks of blood and fire.

"Why don't you start by talking about how much you know about Overlord Xilin?" Lebius handed the conversation over to Bologue.

Bologue's knowledge of Overlord Xilin stemmed from the data available publicly from the Order Bureau, and secondly from his past interactions with Teda.

Overlord Xilin's past, the tragic childhood shrouded in the Scarlet Night.

An escapee.

This is how Teda referred to Overlord Xilin, his entire life spent trying to escape the Pillar of Royal Authority that sought to imprison him. Eventually, he succeeded, distancing himself from the monarchy's influence, growing continuously in the King's Secret Sword until he mastered it.

Everyone believed that Overlord Xilin fled the throne to one day return and challenge the King of Slaughter who sat upon it.

But no one expected the final outcome, as Overlord Xilin died so easily in the secret war, his body preserved by the Order Bureau as though it were a trophy.

"Xilin Kagader... his life is filled with many enigmas, the greatest of which, I believe you have already seen."

Lebius gazed at Bologue, his words calm yet with a hint of suppression.

Bologue didn't quite grasp it at first, but then he understood what Lebius was referring to.

"You mean... the Alchemy Matrix I have?"

Bologue had a feeling he couldn't quite describe. He originally sought Lebius's help to uncover the mysteries of the Alchemy Matrix. Yet, without him saying anything, Lebius had redirected the matter back to his own Alchemy Matrix.

"Jeffrey must have mentioned to you about the gap between the Order Bureau and the King's Secret Sword in Secret Source research."

Bologue nodded. Before becoming a Condenser, he had heard Jeffrey speak of these things.

Because the King's Secret Sword led the Order Bureau in researching the Secret Source, it enabled them to create powerful Alchemy Matrices, influencing the balance of wars.

Lebius asked again, "Do you know when we first noticed this gap between the two sides?"

Bologue shook his head.

"It was the secret war, the extraordinary war that erupted in the shadows, and Overlord Xilin's power that easily broke through the Cultivation Room..."

With simple words, Lebius conjured a vision of times engulfed in war, his spirit involuntarily tense.

"Overlord Xilin's power surpassed our understanding, from which we could perceive how far ahead the King's Secret Sword was in Secret Source research.

Even at the beginning of the secret war, although we killed Overlord Xilin in the Cultivation Room, despair still lingered in everyone's hearts. No one felt we could win against the King's Secret Sword, given how far ahead they were.

But what happened later confused us; aside from Overlord Xilin, the Secret Energy strength of other Secret Swords was within a range we could contend with... We suspected Overlord Xilin was an exception among the King's Secret Swords, uniting all their research into one 'experimental' power that was never fully displayed before we struck him down."

Lebius's words relieved Bologue a bit, and he said, "Looks like our old adversaries aren't that hard to handle."

"It seems so, but no one can say whether another Overlord Xilin might rise among them."

Lebius paused, gazing intently at Bologue, then said with a hint of admiration, "And before their next Overlord Xilin is born, we already have an undead overlord."

"You mean me? That truly sounds daunting."

Bologue clenched his fist, not feeling elated by Lebius's praise. Instead, he sensed the unknowable future held more potential crises.

"And then there's another point. Since you know the Scarlet Night's story and Overlord Xilin's life as an escapee, have you thought about how he grew into a terrifying Seeker of Glory under the Pillar of Royal Authority's control?"

Bologue felt a sense of oppression. After the Scarlet Night, Overlord Xilin was closely guarded by the Pillar of Royal Authority. But until one day, he escaped like a caged bird released, soaring higher and higher until he fell in the secret war.

"This timing is interesting," Lebius analyzed, "not only did he gain freedom, but he also obtained such a terrifying Alchemy Matrix..."

We don't yet know the King of Slaughter's purpose for the Scarlet Night, nor his intentions for controlling his young son. But it's certain that when the King's Secret Sword fully pledged loyalty to the King of Slaughter, he defied his brutal father, choosing the Path of Transcendence, ultimately becoming such an esteemed Seeker of Glory.

My God, Overlord Xilin seemed to have been blessed in some way, his tragic fate reversing overnight..."

Lebius did not continue, only silently watching Bologue, their eyes locking in a complex gaze.

They were both smart enough to understand things without them needing to be blatantly stated. Bologue had already figured it out in his heart.

Teda had once mentioned a similar conspiracy theory, suspecting another force within the King's Secret Sword supporting Overlord Xilin, one capable of not only shielding him but also opposing the King of Slaughter.

Lebius proposed an idea similar to Teda's yet went a step further in specifying that elusive presence.

Contemplating such a possibility, even someone as composed as Bologue began to breathe quickly, feeling as if a giant web of shadows enveloped him, its edges unseen despite his efforts to discern them.

"Perhaps," Lebius intoned softly, "the King's Secret Sword never truly outpaced us; this summoning power of all things was merely a fleeting phenomenon."

He then let out a serene smile.

"However, no matter where this power comes from, it is certain that Overlord Xilin is dead, and you are its successor, dominating this power."

Bologue sighed deeply, a helpless smile on his face, "Sounds quite good, but who knows whether this power is a blessing or a curse?"

"Anyway, you are an Undead, even if it is a curse, you can easily dissolve it, right?"

"You also know the Undying Club, don't think being undead is such a good thing."

Bologue tried to lighten the mood, but in his mind, those twisted and mad figures kept flashing, along with the indelible words of the Third Seat in the chaos of the timeline.

"They won again and again."

Bologue rubbed his head forcefully, a faint pain surfacing deep in his thoughts.

Lebius had seen through Bologue's troubles from the beginning, "Are you now troubled by your promotion ceremony, aren't you?"

"Yes, I had many thoughts before, and after talking carefully with Belli, I couldn't quite figure out whether I belong to the Commanding School or the Deceitful Structure School... One must recognize oneself to decide the path ahead."

But have I really recognized myself?

Bologue questioned himself like this, his life was filled with too many mysteries. Even if Bologue felt that he had touched the edge of these mysteries, finding all the answers would require an unknown amount of time and cost.

Lebius said, "Do you want to hear my advice?"

"Please, go ahead."

"Rather than wavering between derivative sub-schools, why not continue to refine this path and walk the Path of Polarization."

"Path of Polarization?"

Bologue had a slight impression of this term, but he couldn't remember where he had heard it.

"Simply put, the Path of Polarization means not choosing any derivative sub-school, but focusing on your original Secret Energy school, advancing the Secret Energy to its extreme limits, so you don't have to struggle over who you are, as long as you keep doing well yourself.

Just like choosing between bluntness and Narrow and Sharp, you always have to choose one."

Lebius was a little tired, he took a sip of coffee.

"The classical route Teda took is the so-called Path of Polarization, forsaking all the side branches, specializing in the one and only path, leaving only pure Illusion Creation."

Seeing that Bologue still didn't quite understand, Lebius talked about the history of the Condensers.

"A hundred years ago, the Path of Polarization was common, because at that time the research on the Secret Source was not as advanced as it is now, so there weren't so many cumbersome branches. But with time and the progress of research, this old route is seldom used anymore, people usually choose complicated branches to make their Secret Energy more bizarre."

Bologue thought seriously, nodding his head.

"Of course, it's just a suggestion," Lebius activated his auxiliary arm, "Is there anything else?"

"No... nothing."

Bologue hesitated for a moment, then his voice became firm, "Then I'll leave first."

Walking into the empty corridor, with few people in the Field Operations Department, plus the Special Operations Group office was relatively remote, usually only Bologue and a few others would come here.

Bologue stepped slowly, looking down at the reflection on the shiny stone floor.

He wasn't thinking about his promotion, but kept recalling the Celestial God-like figure and the conversation with Lebius.

On one dreary day of Overlord Xilin's life, he suddenly gained the power to change destiny.

This is a power like a Mechanical God, saying it out loud would only sound like a wild fantasy, but Bologue knew well, and Lebius understood too, that such an existence could accomplish all of this, it was almost effortless for them.

Devil.

Yet this was not the end of Bologue's thoughts, what concerned him was not that Overlord Xilin might have made a deal with a Devil, but Overlord Xilin's actions during the secret war.

A Seeker of Glory making such illogical actions in such a crucial war, recklessly advancing deep into the Order Bureau.

Was he intending to overthrow the Order Bureau in one stroke, or... seeking death?

Was it a momentary lapse, or seeking death for some purpose, or being directed by some will?

Only with his death could certain evil plans be put into action.

For example...

Bologue felt his blood cool down, turned around and looked at the shiny wall, in the blurred white bricks, Bologue saw the silhouette of the Third Seat, yelling at him.

Win again and again.

Chapter 497: Peeping

Bologue left, and with the door shutting tight, the assistant arms that pretended to be busy all halted in mid-air. Then, Lebius's gaze shifted from the door and fell upon the door beside his desk.

Behind this door was Lebius's bedroom. Being a workaholic, he had always lived in the office, and typically, the room behind the door was inhabited only by him.

But now, with Bologue's departure, the door handle was gently twisted open, and a tall figure walked out from Lebius's bedroom.

"You could very well craft a direct promotion path for Bologue instead of guiding him through subtle hints like this."

Lebius gazed into those golden eyes, his tone unchanged, devoid of any inflection.

"That won't do. You've said it yourself; he's a sharp guy. Too much interference would only raise his alertness."

The man pulled over a chair, sitting in front of Lebius. His tall stature was a poor fit for the chair, more like being forcibly wedged into it.

"What kind of reaction does a person have when they realize their entire life has been lived according to a pre-written script?" the man continued to ask.

"Anger, madness, hysteria?" Lebius answered coldly.

The man asked again, "Hmm... if it's Bologue, what do you think he'd do?"

This time, Lebius was silent, stumped by the man's question. Lebius tried hard to envision that scenario happening, but his impoverished imagination couldn't sketch such a scene, nor could he judge Bologue's behavior.

Lebius shook his head, "I can't think of anything."

"Indeed, I can't think of anything either. Such unknowns, prone to losing control, we should avoid as much as possible," the man smiled, "let him realize these things a little later, if possible."

"..."

Lebius responded in silence.

"Don't be like this, Lebius, I don't want this either," the man said helplessly, "We're all just pieces on the board, mere players in the grand script."

Lebius said, "Are you saying you don't know the full story either?"

"More or less."

The man thought for a moment, "The person who knows the full picture should only be the director, as for his thoughts? I've been unable to fathom them for many years."

Feeling the man's casual nature, Lebius sighed, remembering being summoned by the Decision Room and then roped into this mysterious, extraordinarily long-term operation.

Meanwhile, the man before him was appearing more frequently in his view.

The man noticed Lebius's disdainful gaze and deliberately expressed a bit of unwarranted sadness, "You seem to dislike me quite a lot, Lebius."

"No... I just can't stand the smell of smoke on you, Minister, you reek like a box of burning cheap cigarettes, even an old smoker would choke from it. I feel like my lungs are aging faster."

Lebius fanned the air near his nose; he was quite an exquisite, clean person, and had always struggled to get along with Nesanel's casual nature.

Nesanel nonchalantly replied, "How could it be? You're a Negative Power User, your body beginning to undergo Etherealization, so no ordinary disease will come upon you; the only possible cause would be organ aging."

Sometimes Lebius felt Nesanel was quite similar to Palmer; in some ways, both were exceedingly unconventional, indifferent to others' opinions.

Lebius said, "You came here, not just to chat about these things with me, right?"

"Certainly, mainly to help you avoid his gaze."

Nesanel's eyes glimmered with light. A peculiar power had always interfered with reality, distorting the forces surging within the Cultivation Room.

"He cares a lot about Bologue, repeatedly applying to us, eager to share Bologue's perspective," Nesanel looked at the floor and the hotel deeply buried beneath, filled with daylight, "We refused, but he won't take it lying down."

The glow once again fell on Lebius, and he continued, "I came here to shield his prying eyes, to conceal the conversation between you, me, and Bologue.

No matter how honest, friendly, or non-threatening he seems, it doesn't change the essence of him being the Devil."

Lebius nodded silently, agreeing with Nesanel's words. If possible, Lebius wished never to be entangled again with the existence of the House of the Rising Sun, yet that was merely a fanciful illusion, as the shackles were fixed on each other's bodies from the start, to be broken only by death.

"I've never been able to understand why the Tyrant was housed within the Great Rift, but as for him? Letting him lurk in the depths of the Cultivation Room is like a bomb planted on our hearts."

Thinking about sharing a room with a Devil, Lebius felt chilling disgust.

"He's merely our disguise."

Nesanel offered no further explanation and continued discussing other topics.

"Tell Bologue to be careful afterward; this guy may only like to nest within the House of the Rising Sun, but you're aware of his obsession with 'sight'."

"What do you think..."

"He can't catch Bologue's attention, but he can have others watch him... he has a lot of followers, even though he never actively responds to their calls."

Hearing this, Lebius gave a slight bitter smile. The Devil of the House of the Rising Sun has always been lazy, so lazy that he doesn't even care about his followers. Yet, the more indifferent he is, the more frenzied and passionate those chaotic, distorted folks become.

"Alright, I understand."

"Oh, and there's one more thing."

Just as the conversation was about to end, Nesanel changed the topic and continued talking with Lebius.

"What is it?"

Lebius looked at Nesanel expressionlessly, trying hard to ignore the awful smoke smell emanating from him.

"I personally ventured deep into the Great Rift in search of the King's Shield Guard," Nesanel nonchalantly revealed the startling news.

"Although I couldn't find their trace, I did discover some details..."

Nesanel thought for a moment and then revealed a cunning smile.

"I think I know who the Shadow King is."

...

On his way home, Bologue kept pondering over what Lebius had said to him. There was no need for him to trouble himself with irrelevant matters; he just needed to focus on his own power and push the potential of the Summoning Hand to its limit.

This brought significant inspiration to Bologue. He sat on the sofa, picked up a metal ornament, and with the infusion of Ether, randomly shaped and twisted it.

In the past, Bologue used Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid for shaping to pass the time, but during the Time Axis Disorder event, the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid was completely consumed by the Immortal Heart, leaving Bologue without this powerful Alchemy Armament.

According to Geoffrey, the lost Alchemy Armament would be replenished by the Sublimation Furnace Core, but even after such a long time, the replacement had not arrived yet.

With Aimou around, Bologue didn't think Belli would skimp on it, and he even felt a subtle sense of anticipation, like awaiting his own promotion ceremony.

"Xilin Kagader..."

Bologue lay horizontally on the sofa, contemplating this deceased individual.

He tried to imagine the life of Xilin, born into a royal family, destined for a brilliant life, yet during his childhood, he fell victim to the Blood Red Night. He should have lived a puppet-like life under the dominion of his father, the King of Slaughter, but on an unclear date, he gained the power to change his destiny.

From the hands of the Devil.

Now, with the death of Overlord Xilin in battle, this power, through time's transformation, fell into Bologue's hands, merging with his soul.

"Could this be part of some grand conspiracy? Or merely a coincidence of fate?"

Bologue whispered, unable to come up with an answer.

The one who could decipher this for him would probably have been Overlord Xilin, who knew everything, but he already died many years ago.

As Bologue was pondering this, he suddenly sensed a cold gaze upon him. He quickly sprang from the sofa, clutching a fruit knife, and stood alertly.

As an employee of the Order Bureau, residing outside the Cultivation Room had another major drawback: the difficulty in ensuring personal safety.

Within the Order Bureau, such cases were frequent, where an employee's residence would be exposed and then attacked by enemies.

Bologue had worried about such occurrences, but he soon realized that his main concern should be not damaging the furniture because, as an Undead, he would give all uninvited guests a crushing welcome.

Clenching the fruit knife, Bologue followed the unsettling sensation in his heart, slowly moving towards the door, his muscles tensed, eyes seemingly able to pierce through steel, staring into the layers of obstacles and the shadows beyond.

Lowering his breath, Bologue understood the importance of gaining the initiative, which is why he didn't release Ether, simply waiting for the opportune moment.

In the moment when everything fell silent, Ether surged forth.

In an instant, intricate light trails covered Bologue's arm, extending onto the fruit knife. Under the rapid Ethereal Amplification, Bologue easily pierced the knife through the door panel, and then the slender metal extended further in his hand, like a continually elongating spike, penetrating everything in its way.

Stepping forward, the security door split open on both sides, clearing a path for Bologue. He expected formidable enemies outside, yet all that awaited him was an empty corridor.

The extended spike embedded into the ground, raising a slight cloud of dust, as if it was Bologue's illusion, finding no one outside.

Bologue hesitated for a moment, as his always-prided intuition seemed to have failed, but he didn't let his guard down. He thoroughly surveyed to ensure no threats were present before returning to his house and restoring the security door.

After Bologue left, the shadows in the corner began to writhe and boil, with excited yet fearful breaths echoing continuously.

Chapter 498: New Book

"Did I sleep the whole day?"

Sitting at the dining table, Palmer glanced at the pitch-black night outside the window and rubbed his drowsy eyes vigorously.

"Seems like it, maybe it's a hangover, or perhaps the fatigue after the promotion ceremony..."

Bologue served bread and sausages, piling them haphazardly on the table, making it look quite sumptuous.

After sharing a place, they had to think about eating and drinking. After a brief discussion, Bologue took on the responsibility of cooking. It's not that Bologue knows how to cook, rather he's afraid that with Palmer's luck, the kitchen would explode.

They had just moved in not long ago, and Bologue certainly didn't want to move to a new place so soon.

Bologue seemed organized, but when it came to food, he was always the sort of person who made do, having lived through the madness of 'Scorched Earth Fury,' Bologue was easily satisfied with food—so long as it filled his belly.

For this reason, Bologue's cooking was very basic, mostly fast-food items that just needed a little heating.

Palmer picked up a fork and started eating bite by bite. Having done nothing, he clearly couldn't complain about anything.

"Next time we could consider inviting Aimou," Palmer said, mouth full, his words muffled, "she seems to be researching culinary skills or something."

"Do you think it's reasonable to have someone over to cook for us for no reason?"

Bologue spread jam on his bread and bit off a corner.

Palmer paused and scrutinized Bologue carefully, his eyes filled with unspoken words. Unfortunately, Bologue was too lazy to sync his thoughts with Palmer, unwilling to guess his intentions.

"I encountered something strange today." Bologue swallowed his bread.

"What is it?"

"I keep feeling like someone is watching me."

"Watching? You mean like a stalker or something?" Palmer was surprised, "Who would be so reckless as to dare to stalk you?"

"No...it's hard to describe, just like someone is watching me from somewhere."

Bologue pondered for a while and gave a vague answer.

"Is that so?" Palmer replied earnestly, "I don't quite understand."

"Forget it, it'd be an issue if you did understand."

Bologue waved his hand, not interested in continuing the discussion with Palmer, wondering whether he was being overly sensitive, or if guessing Overlord Xilin's past today had made him suspicious.

Through the clean floor-to-ceiling window, an endless cluster of buildings stood on the ground, in the colorful lights and shadows, in the dark corners, a pair of eyes was observing Bologue from afar.

This was beyond the limits of human vision, yet he could clearly see Bologue's every move, even discern his words from Bologue's lip movements.

A crazed laugh echoed in his throat, a palm pressed against the wall, fingers slowly converged, nails deeply embedded, scraping off large pieces of dust.

"I saw him! I saw him!"

The man's voice was joyfully suppressed, and in response, a surge of satisfaction released within his body, the feeling was so delightful that this tired, weary flesh felt somewhat relaxed.

In the man's wildly crazed eyes, seemingly connecting to another world, tiny details were continuously magnified, densely packed chairs began to unfold.

"Bologue... Bologue Lazarus..."

The wickedly frenetic presence reclined on a chair as always, watching the huge screen before him, able to clearly see Bologue's actions at this moment, shared through the man's vision.

As the image continued to enlarge, the screen began to split, Bologue's various angles revealed before him as if numerous invisible cameras were observing Bologue.

Hands clasped together, squeezing forcefully, even the joints turned slightly pale. He struggled to control his joyful emotions, the constant vibrations resonating from the depths of darkness, as if some colossal entity rejoiced exuberantly.

"Please present the perfect story to me."

He whispered, preparing to further observe Bologue's actions when he suddenly recalled something else. He pressed the remote, and the image began to switch, a familiar figure appeared before him.

The figure wore a ridiculous mascot costume, with a dog headpiece, ears drooping down. At the moment he observed the figure, the figure detected him as well. Sai Zong slowly raised his head, a hoarse voice sounded.

"Get lost, observer."

The moment the words reached the observer's ears, the image shattered, withering like a mirror. Vaguely, the man's painful cries and wails were heard, followed by the sound of liquid being compressed and splattered, along with the teeth-grinding sound of bones being crushed...

The observer's smile froze slightly on his face, he muttered to himself, "Your temper is still so volatile."

Luckily, he was well aware of Sai Zong's temper. He pressed the remote again, the image began to shift, transitioning to an endless expanse of wilderness, lush green grass filled every corner of his view, and then came the distant sound of a train whistle.

The observer saw the train speeding by, flashing past on the cold tracks, a faint echo of merriment emanating from it, as if an endless celebration was ongoing.

...

Having tidied up the dining table, Bologue and Palmer gathered together, sitting in front of the sofa watching the videotape. Neither spoke, focused on the content of the film.

Bologue enjoys this kind of atmosphere. He'd wanted to set up a home cinema here long ago, and without realizing it, all those small desires have been realized one by one.

Thinking back to the scene when he got out of prison and looking at the present, Bologue sometimes can't help but sigh — live long enough, and some wishes will definitely come true.

The piercing music matched with the bloody scenes, while the violent protagonist cut open the security door with a chainsaw, and amidst the screams, turned his enemies into a pile of minced meat.

Palmer pointed at the film, "This guy should have sawed the legs first, that way he could incapacitate them."

Bologue retorted, "But he doesn't need any captives, so sawing anywhere is the same."

"That's true..."

It was a strange image. Two people, from a professional perspective, watched the film while commenting on its professionalism.

Near midnight, the film ended. It was a low-budget violent film, basically just a few necessary lines of dialogue mixed with various actions and gore... If there were more cold jokes, Bologue thought this film would resemble a true record of his daily work.

With this thought, Bologue suddenly asked Palmer, "Do you want to make a film?"

"What?"

Palmer turned on the lights and tidied up the videotape; he hadn't heard Bologue's words clearly.

"Nothing."

Bologue waved his hand - making a film requires strong expertise, something far out of reach for an amateur like him. Yet, it's one of Bologue's unfulfilled dreams.

Serey had told him that as an Undead, Bologue should wish for more things, so his long remaining days would have things to do, instead of being like Serey, wasting endless time in alcohol.

Playing with the radio, Bologue adjusted the channels, searching for Dudel's broadcast.

On non-working days, Bologue's life was very routine. He would routinely listen to Dudel's radio every night, making him and Dudel the most familiar strangers there could be.

Accompanied by the screeching electric noise, the lines he had heard countless times echoed.

"Hello listeners! I'm Dudel, your loyal friend broadcasting twice a day, welcome to our program!"

For some reason, every time Bologue heard Dudel's opening line, he was tempted to laugh.

On the other side, Palmer poked his head out. He often listened to Dudel's radio show, shouting to Bologue, "Turn it up!"

Bologue turned up the volume. This floor had only their household, so they didn't have to worry about disturbing neighbors.

"Before we begin our music appreciation segment today, I have a major announcement to share with our listeners."

Palmer came over, plopped onto the sofa and joined Bologue in listening.

"A few days ago, on behalf of the 'Gray Mist, Industry, and Delicious Shrimp Crackers' radio show, I interviewed Mr. Gab Jay."

Gab Jay?

The name sounded somewhat familiar to Bologue, while Palmer expressed slight surprise. He seemed to understand the meaning behind the name.

Bologue asked, "Who is Gab Jay?"

"You don't even know who Gab Jay is?" Palmer was amazed, "Then you really are quite ignorant."

"Cut the crap."

"Gab Jay is a very famous author, he wrote 'Night Hunter.'"

Upon hearing this, Bologue realized where the sense of familiarity came from. It turned out that 'Night Hunter' was sitting on his desktop, just a few pages read.

Bologue found the story quite interesting. He wanted to find time to finish the series.

"But Gab Jay hasn't written a new book in almost ten years, many people thought he was dead. It's normal if you're unaware..."

Palmer continued, but before he could finish, Dudel interrupted him, thoroughly shocking Palmer.

"During the interview, Mr. Gab Jay revealed that he has been working on a new book for the past decade, which will be published soon."

Dudel's voice was very calm, like a news broadcaster, as if he was announcing an extremely ordinary message.

Palmer was stunned on the spot.

Bologue patted Palmer, "Are you alright?"

After a brief delay, Palmer sprang up from the sofa, like a monkey, spinning and jumping, and excitedly grabbed Bologue's shoulders and shook him vigorously.

"Gab Jay! New book!"

He was excited like a monkey winning a banana.

Chapter 499: Close-Up Shots

At first, Bologue didn't understand what the charm of Blue Jay's new book was that made Palmer so excited. It wasn't until Bologue got up the next morning that he deeply realized what kind of influence Blue Jay had.

The headlines in all the newspapers on the street were news about Blue Jay's new book, and the entrance to the bookstore was crowded with people. Everyone was asking about Blue Jay's new book, paying to pre-order the book, which didn't even have a title yet.

"Is Blue Jay really that famous?"

Bologue stood by the roadside, watching the crowd and sighing.

Palmer said, "Of course, he's considered a pioneer in the fantasy novel genre."

"Before Blue Jay, everyone wrote cold, hard reality. But Blue Jay's stories are full of romantic fantasies, like his most famous work, Night Hunter.

His appearance made people realize that stories don't just have to depict absolute reality; they can also imagine the ethereal unknown."

"Is that so..."

Bologue pondered for a moment and felt that all this made sense.

Hundreds of years ago, the world had no tall buildings but castles standing in the wilderness. There were no novels or movies, only the songs sung by travelers.

It's only in recent years that these artistic themes have been unleashed so rapidly... thinking about it, movies have only been around for just a century.

Human history is like a rugged curve, and with the advent of modern civilization, the curve rose like waves, leaving the past behind.

Palmer asked, "I really look forward to it. What kind of story do you think it will be?"

"Didn't Dudel make it clear on the radio?" Bologue replied, "An autobiographical fantasy novel."

"Autobiography and fantasy?"

Palmer spoke softly, and then he laughed, "It's curious, Blue Jay's works are well-known, but the man himself remains a complete mystery."

"As a highly praised author, when you think about it seriously, you'll realize that people know nothing about everything about Blue Jay."

"Nothing at all?"

"Yes, to this day, people don't know what Blue Jay's real name is. It's said that only the editors at the publisher know it, because only by knowing his real name can they deposit his manuscript fee into his account.

Aside from these, Blue Jay's past, his experiences, everything about him is an unsolved mystery."

Palmer chuckled again, "And there's also his Daisy Castle. That's Blue Jay's residence, but he lives alone in that enormous ancient castle. He doesn't allow anyone to approach him, reclusive and eccentric beyond measure."

I guess now Daisy Castle must be surrounded by a throng of people, with reporters everywhere trying to pry the new book's news from his mouth, even going so far as to steal his manuscripts."

Bologue raised his hand, catching the drifting newspaper in the wind.

"He's no longer at Daisy Castle," Bologue said as he handed the newspaper to Palmer, "He knew the news of the new book would cause a stir, so Blue Jay has gone traveling."

"Traveling, huh..."

Palmer tossed the newspaper back into the wind and brought up another mystery to Bologue.

"Do you know about the woman with the fire opal eyes?"

"Who is she?"

"A character frequently appearing in Blue Jay's books, like a mascot. No matter the story, she always makes an appearance."

Listening to Palmer, Bologue sketched a ghostly figure in his mind. She traverses various stories, unbound by plots, almost eternally present.

"And then?"

"There's nothing more to it. Blue Jay is so secretive that he barely appears in public beyond his works," Palmer said with eyes full of anticipation, "I mention it because Blue Jay's new book will explain everything about this woman."

Bologue shook his head, showing no interest in this. He didn't know much about Blue Jay, and he hadn't even finished reading the only work he knew, Night Hunter. He found Palmer's enthusiasm hard to comprehend.

As the two continued to move forward, that cold sensation of being watched suddenly rose in Bologue's heart again. He quickly turned around, looking back at the bustling crowd, only for the eerie feeling to vanish.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Bologue shook his head, though his eyes still held caution, "Let's go."

In the dense crowd, a man hid in the shadow of an alley, gasping for breath. Bologue's alertness far exceeded his expectations. After the tension, he felt a thrill that came with narrowly avoiding danger.

He let out a sinister laugh, murmuring repeatedly, "I saw him, I saw him."

The man seemed to be speaking with another person, someone who's everywhere, observing this conversation.

Soon, a deep sense of satisfaction rose from within. His eyes rolled white under the immense pleasure; he knew he had successfully pleased that presence.

Beside the man was another small figure. He hadn't seen Bologue and therefore couldn't receive that presence's reward.

An irrepressible fatigue tormented his mind as he enviously looked at the man in enjoyment, scratching at his own face repeatedly. Soon he thought of something.

Drawing out the short knife, as the man enjoyed the peak of pleasure, the cold metal slit his throat.

The man widened his eyes, staring at the slender figure, clutching his throat, eyes full of anger and fear. He then saw the slender figure's gaze, one full of enjoyment.

To die at the moment of joy, what a drama that is.

The slender figure enjoyed his creation, feeling he presented a perfect picture for that presence.

As a result, that beautiful grace descended upon his heart, granting him a brief respite from pain and torment.

Looking at the satisfied expression of the other, the man understood something. He lowered his head, blood splattered everywhere, pooling into a bloody mirror, reflecting his tragic side.

The man was about to die, would die in endless sorrow, and then he thought that presence would probably enjoy such a scene.

Yes, he would enjoy such a scene.

The man tore his throat open with his hand, a blurred and sinister voice emerged from the wound.

"Did you see it?"

The man used his life to please that presence, and at the moment of death, he faintly heard the sound of applause. Then a large sense of satisfaction filled his mind, and he fell bit by bit, dying with indescribable joy and satisfaction.

The small slender figure also immersed in satisfaction, but seeing the man dying in such fulfillment stirred envy and anger within him.

This man is always like this, adept at pleasing that presence, even in death.

But it's okay, he's already dead, but I'm still alive.

He scratched his ears and cheek as he thought, how should he continue pleasing that presence? Should he keep tracking Bologue? Yes, as long as he sees Bologue, that presence will descend with grace.

Thinking thus, as he was about to exit the alley, some fragments fell from above, hitting him, he looked up, a pitch-black figure stood at the edge of a tall building.

"I saw him."

He said joyfully, heedless of the crisis he was in, the next moment the shadow leaped down, a sharp folding knife flicked out, extending.

At the moment Bologue intersected with this short man, a narrow line of blood spread, expanding, collapsing.

The folding knife easily severed the man's arm. Before he could howl in pain, Bologue reversed the folding knife, pressed the blade's back against his throat, stifling his scream.

"Who are you?"

Bologue questioned, meanwhile a breeze swept through, a layer of twisted barrier enveloped the area, blocking out all sounds.

Palmer stood at the alley's entrance, with eyes emitting a faint light.

After ascending as a Prayer Believer, Palmer's Secret Energy-Wind Source was elevated, advancing further along the Path of Wind Fury.

The enhanced Secret Energy enabled Palmer to further master the airflow, and now he can easily command a vacuum area within the affected range, even construct a vacuum barrier to cut off all sound wave transmission.

Bologue looked confusedly at the man smiling foolishly before him, he couldn't figure out why the man wanted to peep at him, nor why the man wanted to kill another man.

Everything that had just happened did not escape Bologue's gaze, he stood at the edge of the rooftop, watching the two mutually slaughter each other.

Honestly, that scene made Bologue's heart shiver slightly, without any warning, the two seemed to kill each other and commit suicide as if for amusement...

Looking at the man before him, Bologue noticed his oddity, the man's eyes were incomparably dark, with a layer of gloss on the dark surface, as if...

Like a camera lens.

Bologue felt puzzled by this strange analogy, then the man became agitated, excitedly looking at Bologue, struggled fiercely even being cut by the folding knife incessantly.

"Close-up!"

He stretched his neck, straining to look at Bologue, in his dying struggle, he actually twisted free of Bologue's restraints, the bleeding severed arm pressed against Bologue's chest, face-to-face with Bologue, eyes colliding with eyes.

"I saw you."

A deep hoarse voice sounded, for a brief moment, Bologue had a strange illusion, as if it wasn't the man in front speaking to him, but another chaotic, blurred presence conversing with him using his body.

Under the dark lens, Bologue seemed able to see that figure, he sat in the audience seat, holding popcorn, laughing at him heartily.

Suddenly blood welled up on Bologue's face, not Bologue's blood, but the man's blood before him. He seemed squashed by some force, body began twisting, deforming, but he did not feel pain, instead erupted into ecstatic laughter.

"He watched me!"

In the midst of the mad murmurs, the man's body twisted, collapsed, turning into a pile of blood sludge.

Leaving just Bologue standing there dazed, he wiped his face, looking at the blood-covered hands, with cold expression words barely bridged with laughter, "Now I can't go out like this."

Palmer nodded in agreement, he didn't understand what had occurred, but Bologue at this moment indeed shouldn't just appear on the street.

Now Bologue looked like he just walked out of a slaughterhouse.

Chapter 500: Circus

In the bathroom, Bologue leaned his head against the showerhead, letting the warm water wash over his body. On the bed in the bedroom lay some new clothes.

Due to frequently encountering similar incidents, Bologue stuffed a lot of his own clothes into the room at the Undying Club.

Thanks to the convenience of the Key of the Crooked Path, Bologue found a door in the alley and arrived here; otherwise, walking onto the street covered in blood would have caused widespread panic.

After cleaning himself, Bologue picked up a towel and meticulously dried himself before putting on clothes and heading to the bar on the first floor.

"Hell, did you go out killing people first thing in the morning?" Serey glanced at the clothes piled in the corner and screamed, "Dismemberment? Or beheading? Why is there so much blood!"

Bologue couldn't be bothered to waste words with Serey, "I encountered not one, but two demons."

After the battle ended, Bologue didn't leave immediately but carefully examined the corpses. From their flesh, he smelled an unmistakable stench.

The reason Bologue was able to spot them in the crowd was precisely because of the demonic stench they carried.

Serey said, "Well, that's really unfortunate for those two demons to have bumped into you."

"No, they came looking for me, just like they were stalking me."

As Bologue spoke, he walked to the pile of clothes. Something seemed wrapped inside the black coat, and then Bologue took it out and tossed it in front of Serey.

After a night of drinking, Serey's mind was a bit blurry, and his vision wasn't very clear. At first glance, he couldn't make out what the thing was but still held it in his hands.

It was heavy, slightly damp, and carried a sticky, fishy smell.

Serey lowered his head—a blood-stained human head was cradled in his arms.

"Do you have some kind of fetish?"

No wonder he was the Night Race Lord who had seen much turbulence—Serey remained calm yet slightly repulsed, placing the head on the bar and picking up a tissue to wipe his hands.

"No, I just wanted to ask if you've seen such strange eyes."

Bologue came over and pried open the tightly shut eyelids, exposing the man's pupils.

Serey took a look and said, "What's this? Isn't it quite normal?"

"Normal?"

Bologue turned the man's head around. The eerie black pupils disappeared, and now the man's eyes were no different from an ordinary person's.

Serey asked, "Is there something wrong with his eyes?"

"His eyes..." Bologue paused, "were completely black with a sheen, like a surveillance camera."

"Really?"

Serey crossed his arms, thought for a moment, and shook his head, "I really have no impression of such eyes."

"But why are you so concerned about these things?"

"I've been feeling lately like someone is watching me, and today I encountered these guys. Before they died, they kept saying 'saw it,' as if... as if someone was observing me through their eyes."

When mentioning these things, Bologue couldn't help but clench his fist. He preferred to fight his enemies openly, rather than do sneaky things in the shadows.

"Oh... is it unsettling?"

Serey spoke straightforwardly, nodding in complete agreement, "I've experienced this too. I couldn't stand those lunatics' incessant harassment, so I hid in the Undying Club."

Bologue felt he had heard some crucial information, but Serey had no intention of explaining further and continued with the topic at hand.

"Based on your description, I really can't think of anything. Maybe it appeared after I moved into the Undying Club. Why not ask the Order Bureau? You guys are in charge of these things, right?"

"I'm planning to ask, but since you're awake, I thought I'd ask you too."

Bologue wrapped the head up again with the coat. He felt there was no need to keep this head. With the man's death, the sinister power he carried vanished, and now it was just a cold corpse.

"But being targeted feels really bad, and we don't even know why they're targeting us." Palmer, sitting nearby, spoke up, feeling uncomfortable after this experience.

The downside of living outside the Cultivation Room is that you always have to be wary of potential crises.

"They seem to be using their actions to please someone, and that action is observing me," Bologue recalled a movie from last night. "This sounds odd, but they seemed to be... filming me."

Bologue felt he had grasped a clue. He carefully recalled standing on a rooftop, watching the two of them fighting each other for amusement.

If their purpose was observing him, why fight each other? And when they were fighting, Bologue didn't sense any anger, only a bit of joy, as if it was some release.

Saw it...

Thoughts sparked through Bologue's mind as he tentatively said, "I suspect they're doing all this for someone to see, like actors on a stage, striving to perform and please the audience below."

Serey said, "That sounds quite strange."

Palmer agreed, "I find it strange too, just like a live broadcast on TV... no matter how you think about it, it's weird."

"Filming? That reminds me of something from a few hundred years ago."

Serey squinted his eyes, thinking hard. Fortunately, he was the undead; if he were a normal human, under such a terrible schedule and alcohol's influence, he would have become an idiot long ago.

Palmer corrected, "Filming? A few hundred years ago? The concept of movies has only been around for a few decades."

Sometimes it's hard to imagine that these deeply ingrained concepts, when compared to the grand history of humanity, are but a fleeting moment.

"No, I meant similar concepts," Serey said, "Movies, novels, poetry, they're all vessels for storytelling in themselves."

"Go on."

Bologue raised his hand, signaling Palmer to shut up. Even after becoming a Prayer Believer, Palmer's habit of talking nonsense hadn't changed.

"I met a group of lunatics like that many years ago."

Serey began to recount the past. As an undead, he had lived a long life with plenty of stories worth telling.

"How should I put it? I think they had extremely severe psychological issues; everything they did was illogical, but if you have to say there was logic to it, maybe it was... looking for fun?"

When he mentioned this, Serey was momentarily dazed. He mused aloud, "That does seem a bit like us."

Bologue rubbed his forehead slightly. So these undead were self-aware of their own nature?

Bologue still remembered not long ago, an extremely terrible speeding incident happened on the streets of Opus. Some damned guys were racing at midnight, completely ignoring the traffic laws.

Actually, they didn't have any accidents since there was a professional racer in the car, but the noise from the engine made the city hall's complaint hotline blow up.

"It was all Serey's idea, nothing to do with me, I was just driving."

When Geoffrey stopped the car at a crossroad, Palmer, who was in the driver's seat, rambled nonsense, while Serey in the passenger seat excitedly handed Geoffrey a bottle of alcohol, praising Palmer as a good driver.

Bologue thought that, if there was a chance, he should let Serey ride in a car he drove himself.

"Those people were like a pack of frenzied bandits, plundering villages and castles, burning fields, toppling high walls, holding wild banquets in front of the blazing fires.

Sometimes they would treat villagers with extreme cruelty, staging all sorts of twisted and crazy bizarre performances."

Mentioning these things, Serey's expression twisted. Even a well-experienced Night Race Lord would find those lunatics intolerable.

"I followed them for quite a while," Serey explained for himself, "I was pretty bored at the time, so I just wanted to see what more they could do.

Sometimes they would capture a group, give them a script, and make them perform plays or something. Occasionally, when attacking some castles, they would shout strange lines and do things that made no sense.

Like... like..."

Bologue said, "Like a battle turned into a live performance?"

"Exactly, that's it!"

Serey clapped his hands vigorously, giving Bologue a thumbs up.

Palmer said, "Sounds crazy enough..."

"The weirdest part is, they left large amounts of gold untouched, choosing instead to loot libraries, sometimes capturing minstrels on the road and forcing them to recite the poetry they sung, which they'd then record.

What's hard to understand is, they pillaged and plundered, yet never harmed the poets.

In the cruel raids, sometimes they'd let the villagers go just for telling a joke."

"A joke?"

Bologue was shocked by the incongruity of the story.

"Yes, a joke. If it was funny enough, they were even willing to pay for it."

Serey reminisced with longing and sighing. Even to a well-experienced Night Race Lord, that period remained incredibly peculiar in his long life.

"Wait a minute! Serey, how do you know all this so precisely?"

Palmer realized something was amiss. The way Serey narrated was so detailed, as if he had been one of the plunderers.

"Ah? That, well, I was quite bored, so I hid my identity and worked in a circus, and then I ran into that group of lunatics. They thought the circus performances were quite interesting, so they took us along. Everything I described is what I witnessed and heard along the way."

Serey nostalgically said, "To talk about it, back then my performances were particularly popular in the circus."

Bologue asked, "What did you perform?"

"Catching flintlock bullets with my head."

Bologue and Palmer were dumbfounded, only to hear Serey saying with a smile, "Because I could revive each time, my performance was flawless, they even called me the Undead... though I was already one, hahaha."