

Endless 531

Chapter 531: Great Fire Layer Upon Layer

For a field staff who works at high intensity all year round, the worst thing is when you finally take a vacation, only to be involved in a crazy incident, but even worse is this incident happening at your home.

Palmer's mood was like a roller coaster. At first, he thought about joking, saying he forgot something at the Order Bureau, and might as well go back.

But this is the Fortress of the Morning Wind, where Palmer was born and grew up, he couldn't just walk away.

"This is definitely a conspiracy, definitely!"

Palmer threw his luggage aside; at times like this, luggage doesn't matter. He called the few people to head towards the cliff, preparing to confront the suddenly appearing Black Armored Soldiers.

"No wonder Lebius approved my vacation so easily, he absolutely knew about these things!"

Palmer cursed continuously, then his gaze fell on Church.

"Don't look at me, I didn't know the Wind Source Highlands were like this." Church wasn't lying; he truly didn't know.

As an intelligence staff who dances on the razor's edge, Church knew very well what can be joked about and what cannot.

He wouldn't make the foolish mistake of concealing information. In fact, when he saw groups of Wind-Eroded Birds, Church himself was somewhat caught off guard, unable to understand the situation.

The distant Order Bureau was tranquil and peaceful, yet the Wind Source Highlands were ablaze with warfare. More bizarrely, the warfare seemed confined within the Wind Source Highlands with not a hint

of information leaking out. Perhaps the upper echelons of the Order Bureau already knew but saw no necessity to spread it out, lest it causes psychological pressure on the staff.

Yes, if it's only this level of warfare, the Clarks are completely capable of handling it themselves.

After the initial panic, everyone gradually calmed down, entering battle mode.

This world is large, so large that some places have always existed in distant stories, even until the day of your death, you may never reach them.

The vast land is fraught with continuous conflict, if what's happening in front of you is attributed to an ordinary unexpected incident, then it's nothing.

Just like the Sixth Group, now they are in the Narrow Countries, passionately fighting the sects of rotting corruption. Rumor has it they are no longer satisfied with slaughter in the shadows; they are now collaborating with various countries, preparing to mobilize large-scale Alchemy Armament to crush those monstrosities of flesh and blood on the front lines.

These things seem too distant, quick steps towards the cliff, as they neared the cliff, Church waved to the few people, stepping into the shadow.

"I'll leave it to all of you; I'll see if I can find others."

Church wasn't suited to appear on the front line. For his actions, Bologue nodded in approval.

"What... what are you doing?"

Then Bologue noticed Aimou moving stealthily; she suddenly stopped her steps as well, turning towards a sideways cover.

"Changing clothes."

To resist the gusts of the Wind Source Highlands, Aimou donned a beige windcoat, the internal attire was pure black, the contrasting colors made her resemble a porcelain doll.

After looking Bologue up and down, Aimou's eyes carried a hint of disdain, "In this aspect, I'm not like you guys."

Bologue usually wore the uniform of the Order Bureau, and such uniform styles filled his closet, even if he occasionally changed to new clothes due to importance, he completely forgot these in battle.

Blood and rain soaked Bologue's clothes, appearing both helpless and carrying a fierce aura, like a gang member ready for a street fight.

"No, what I mean is, you can stand aside and watch," Bologue perceived the surrounding chaotic ethereal fluctuations, "There aren't overly terrifying enemies right now."

"Alright, we can go now!"

As Bologue spoke, Aimou had already changed clothes... To be precise, she had taken off her coat. Her body transformed into a Steel Body, covered by the Alchemy Armament's Second Skin, resembling a black swimsuit.

In the rain screen stirred by the storm, Aimou looked like a pitch-black silhouette, her clothes and suitcase were placed in a rain-shielded corner, Aimou silently prayed in her heart that she could find them again later.

Aimou's mobility clearly exceeded Bologue's expectations, barefoot, she came beside Bologue, Aimou looked up at Bologue.

Bologue could clearly see the halo in Aimou's bright blue pupils, rotating slowly, the next second Aimou retracted her smile, sinking her shoulders, clenching her fist, and the mechanical tone of an alarm sounded.

"Enter Iron Fist Mode!"

The bright blue pupils turned into glaring gold, luminous tracks of Canyin wandered on the cold metal body, five fingers clenched tightly like iron forged into a cluster, then an increasingly clear humming sound echoed in the body, steam surged out from crevices in the back.

Aimou's damn "Iron Fist Mode" left Bologue somewhat at a loss; after days of absence, had Aimou optimized and updated herself?

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A crisp laugh sounded, Aimou relaxed his stance, as if he had successfully pulled off a prank, "Just kidding, don't be nervous!"

"Don't you think this is pretty cool?"

Aimou said, raising his fists and rapidly punching at the falling raindrops.

Bologue actually pondered seriously for a few seconds and nodded, "Pretty cool, Iron Fist Mode."

These were Bologue's heartfelt words; he thought no man could refuse something so stylish.

"What are you guys doing!"

Just as Bologue was commenting on Aimou's posture, Palmer's accusatory voice came from the front.

Palmer had already reached the cliff, commanding the gale, using the Wind Gun to shoot down one Wind-Eroded Bird after another, and then summoning air currents to whirl those sharp wings, slicing through the black-armored soldiers who had endured the bombardment.

In ordinary Order Bureau work, he could slack off a bit, but this time it was protecting his home, Palmer was going all out, he was slaughtering with great relish, turned his head to see Bologue and Aimou over there... Were they practicing boxing? At a time like this? Seriously?

Bologue strode forward, standing at the edge of the cliff and looking downward; the entire coastline was frozen, the black armored soldiers advanced as if walking on flat ground, even though the artillery left streaks of blood on the ice, they didn't intend to stop, and as more and more black-armored soldiers appeared, Ether was swirling among the group.

This familiar feeling reminded Bologue of the Sixth Group, the Violence Suppression Action Group, completely composed of Condensers from the Origin School. When they united, their Ethereal Skills twisted into a terrifying force.

Now the black-armored soldiers were similar, each possessing a weak Ether reaction; this strength was even weaker than a First Stage Condenser, but as they appeared in groups, Ether reactions gathered together, countless sparks constructing a blazing fire.

Another shell landed, but this time it missed the black-armored soldiers, an invisible barrier formed above their heads, forcibly blocking the bombardment.

Ethereal Barrier.

There were enough black-armored soldiers now, their Ether joined together, constructing a defensive barrier.

Quantity triggered a qualitative change.

Bologue felt a bit of pressure; the black-armored soldiers had already shown enough threat, yet the Fortress of the Morning Wind remained silent.

The towering cliff was a natural city wall, temporarily hindering the black-armored soldiers' advance, but given enough time, climbing up was just a matter of time, even because the Clarks had hollowed out the interior of the cliff to construct defensive facilities, these black-armored soldiers could enter the cliff through bombardment openings.

Bologue nervously looked at the Celestial Vault Tower above the storm; he believed someone must be watching the battlefield, why didn't they move? Or were they plotting something?

"The Clarks are wary of the Angry Sea," Aimou suddenly said.

Bologue hesitated for a moment, then understood the meaning. The Clarks hid at the end of this Wind Source Highlands, adjacent to the Angry Sea. Whether traveler or fleet, few could reach here; it could be said that aside from the disputes in the Extraordinary World, no one would come here with hostility.

Yet the Clarks had built a defense line here, facing the angry sea where life has vanished.

Palmer also sensed the crisis in the situation, plunged into the cliff below, Secret Energy fully released, the battlefield's air pressure soared, every affected black-armored soldier seemed to enter a quagmire, their movements slowed, some even forced to kneel.

Bologue didn't have time to think about such redundant matters, seeing Palmer enter the danger zone, he couldn't remain indifferent.

The Flame of the Cauldron started burning, the cyan flames unimpeded by wind and rain, Bologue took a step forward and leaped.

According to Bologue's original plan, he intended to use the Flame of the Cauldron to command the rocky ground beneath him, smashing heavy falling rocks into the battlefield.

But considering this was Palmer's home, and if command went wrong, he might inadvertently cause a geological disaster leading to the collapse of structures.

Bologue rather disliked this restrained feeling, but still summoned the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, which spread into hundreds of sharp blades as he plunged, slicing through wind and rain, piercing obstructive Wind-Eroded Birds, heading straight for the silent black legion.

"Palmer!"

Bologue called out to Palmer, simultaneously sending out a Silver Hand, it embedded into the side of the cliff, causing his falling speed to start to slow down.

No need for verbal communication, after many brushes with death, the two had developed perfect chemistry, Palmer understood Bologue's intention.

Dense blades embedded into the ground, some hitting black-armored soldiers, slaying them, others bounced off armor, or embedded into the earth.

Fine silvery threads extended from the blade tips like woven webs, finally stretching to Bologue's hand.

Bologue had now also completed the deceleration, landing steadily below the cliff, he pretended to snap his fingers casually, then the cyan flames swept along the threads and ignited true flames along the way.

Red Mercury exploded, illuminating endless flames, then Palmer summoned the gale, blowing through the flames; instantly the Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid transformed into a sea of fire, overwhelmingly pushing towards the Black Armor Legion, as if dragon breath spewing forth, melting the frozen sea together.

Chapter 532: The Battle of Dark Clouds

The storm is approaching the Fortress of the Morning Wind; in contrast, this ancient castle complex appears so small, as if it could be swallowed and destroyed in the next second. Yet, faced with this doomsday scene, the people within the castle reacted quite calmly, even as if it was a common occurrence.

"Those mercenaries are here again, they just won't quit."

The person sat by the window, smelling the cool sea breeze, fiddling with the chess pieces on the board.

This was a person whose gender was somewhat difficult to discern. If you were to say he was a man, he was a bit too handsome, as if he hadn't seen sunlight in a long time, his skin having a sickly pallor, and he looked like a marble statue carved by a master artist, only this exquisite statue's eyes were now open.

But if you were to see her as a woman, she didn't have overly obvious feminine features. Her short hair, full of flair, covered her brow, her pupils hidden with sharp heroism. She appeared slender, yet carried an undeniable commanding presence in every gesture.

This was a very assertive person, whether dealing with people or animals, all deeply understood this point.

"Can't we chase them into the Angry Sea and wipe them out completely? They keep attacking the Fortress of the Morning Wind; even if they're not annoyed, I certainly am."

He complained incessantly. Since these mercenaries first appeared not long ago, they occasionally launched attacks, although never achieving any effective results, they tirelessly left a large number of corpses on the shore.

The room echoed with low growls, like some beast's roar. He looked up towards the corner, a vaguely visible monster's silhouette in the dim light, unimaginable in form—though lying on the ground, it was still as tall as a person and covered in thick fur.

"Quiet down."

He grumbled with a sulky face, "The mercenaries are coming, and I can't get out either, so what are you complaining about?"

Even though the monster was so tall, upon hearing his admonishment, the monster's voice grew feeble, like a chastised dog, emitting a series of mournful whimpers.

Setting aside the chess pieces, he had planned to go out for a stroll, but the mercenaries' arrival disrupted his plans, causing him great frustration.

Looking out the window, he guessed the familiar scenario was about to play out. Just like always, those Black Armored Soldiers rushed to the cliff, and then the Condensers from the Clarks would be dispatched under the protection of the Celestial Vault Tower, to hunt them down entirely.

If necessary, they would chase a certain distance, but due to caution against their opponents, without a Defender accompanying them, no one would pursue deeply into the thunderstorm-laden Angry Sea.

He waited idly, and suddenly a burst of flame erupted in mid-air, consuming a great many Wind-Eroded Birds.

Hmm? Not bad, at least today's show has some changes.

At this moment, the monster in the corner seemed to have sensed something, suddenly creeping up. When it stood, its body almost reached the ceiling, filling the room.

"Wait! You can't go out yet!"

He raised a hand, about to dissuade it, but the monster suddenly disobeyed his command, bursting through the door, barreling down the stairs.

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A sea of flames washed over, leaving many corpses on the ground, yet the Black Armored Soldiers advanced silently, stepping over stacks of corpses.

They seemed devoid of intelligence, acting only on orders like some kind of walking corpses.

Azure flames swept across the earth, Bologue manipulating sand and dust, weaving through with Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid solidified as Iron Thorns. The Dust Python leapt into the crowd, wantonly devouring the Black Armored Soldiers, sparks flying as metal scraped against armor, igniting the Red Mercury, unleashing a deadly massacre.

Amazingly, Bologue alone temporarily held back the advance of the Black Armored Soldiers. Palmer cooperated by deploying the Wind Gun, like a cannon firing armor-piercing bullets with each shot knocking down large swaths of figures.

Aimou leapt back and forth among the cliffs, belatedly landing on the shore. No sooner had she landed than she sensed something was amiss.

The Ether reactions of these Black Armored Soldiers were too bizarre; weaker than even a normal First Stage Condenser, while their Ether reactions were unnaturally consistent.

Every Condenser's Ether reaction has subtle differences, like the varying sounds when people talk, usually, even if unable to observe each other, one can judge the other's identity by sensing the Ether reaction.

Unless deliberately mimicked, identical Ether reactions almost never appear among Condensers. But these Black Armored Soldiers were different; numbering in the hundreds, their Ether reactions were the same.

With Bologue and Palmer drawing fire, Aimou dragged a corpse, forcefully pulling off its faceplate, revealing a pale bloodstained face.

It was the face of a middle-aged man, eyes wide open, pupils a murky milky white, exuding an eerie aura of death.

Aimou dragged yet another corpse, laboriously prying open its faceplate, and as expected, the two corpses shared the same face.

They possessed the same visage, identical shells.

Aimou felt things getting more complicated. She wanted to warn Bologue about this, but at that moment, the battlefield changed again abruptly.

The Wind-Eroded Birds circling in the sky followed some command, briefly hovering before swooping down, greatly increasing the Black Armored Soldiers' aggressive urges.

Like a portent of disaster, the surrounding light rapidly receded, heavy dark clouds driven by the storm completely covered the Fortress of the Morning Wind, plunging midday into endless night.

The Flame of the Cauldron illuminated the dark battlefield, Bologue watching more Black Armored Soldiers emerge from the storm. He then noticed some unusual Ether reactions mingling among this silent army.

"We summoned the dark clouds, so we can fight in daylight from now on."

For some reason, Bologue recalled Serey's words, the voice so clear, as if Serey was beside him, recounting that distant past.

Bologue had never participated in the Dawn War, yet it felt instinctual, as if he had crossed temporal barriers to that ancient battlefield.

"Beware the Night Race!"

Bologue decisively issued a warning. His guess was correct. Almost as soon as Bologue gave the warning, a crimson hue shone in the darkness, with bloodthirsty murmurs resounding continuously.

They were shadows almost merged with the dark, and if not for those conspicuous crimson eyes, even someone like Bologue would find it hard to notice their presence.

Their speed was swift, weaving among the Black Armored Soldiers, who seemingly cooperated to shield their movements.

The Flame of the Cauldron burned with abandon, raising high walls from flat ground, forming a fan-shaped maze, hindering the enemy's advance and setting traps.

Some Black Armored Soldiers blindly charged into them, only for the walls to collapse instantly, crisscrossing into Stone Spears that claimed their lives. But this did not impede the Night Race, who were different from these foolish Black Armored Soldiers—much faster and with clear strategies.

Most importantly, the opponents were also Undead, hordes of Undead.

Bologue could use the Flame of the Cauldron to sense the opponents' paths, but this was not Bologue's expertise, and there was some delay from the opponents' movement to self-awareness.

Hence, when the high wall before Bologue shattered, and crimson eyes glared ahead, Bologue barely managed to lift the Blade forged from Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid and slash down at the opponent's head.

Cold metal sliced through wind and raindrops, embedding into flesh, shattering firm bones, then continuing to advance until piercing through.

Like painting with paints, Bologue wielded the blade like a brush, drawing a striking bloodstain in the rain, the fracture spreading from the opponent's neck down to their chest, forcefully halting the opponent's advance.

The Night Race's assault halted, standing rigidly before Bologue. As the blade sliced open the body, it began to regenerate.

A frenzied look spread across the pale face, madly licking the blood from their lips, looking at Bologue with fervor.

"The taste of the Lord..."

The murderous intent in the Night Race's eyes vanished, replaced by a voracious obsession with Bologue as if wanting to devour him alive.

"Another lunatic!"

Bologue cursed, raising his sword again, piercing through the opponent's chest.

Chapter 533: Blood Pact

On this bizarre and peculiar battlefield, a Night Race force breaks through and looks at you with excited eyes, greedily craving, as though you are his dream lover... or his enemy.

Anyone encountering such a situation would be deeply shocked, their mind frozen, but fortunately, Bologue had experienced this before. As early as when he met Olivia, that woman had mentioned her own scent to him.

The scent of Serey Villeries.

This originated from a drunken night when Serey slit his wrist, narrating how precious his blood was even as he shoved it into Bologue's mouth, attempting to transform Bologue into a super Undead.

The chaos concluded with Bode's intervention, and afterward, Bologue thoroughly cleansed his body. He thought he had scrubbed away the bloodstains, but after encountering Olivia, Bologue realized the blood of a Night Race Lord isn't easily washed clean.

The blood washes away, but the blood's aura remains.

The Sharp Sword pierced the chest of the Night Race, and the Flame of the Cauldron burned along the metal, seeping into the wound. The Night Race's eyes revealed curiosity, observing the scene before him. In the next moment, the Sharp Sword collapsed, like a seed buried deep into flesh, rooting and sprouting under Bologue's command.

The Iron Thorns tore the Night Race's body to shreds, bloody entrails hanging on Iron Branches, like a cruel work of art.

Despite such heavy damage, the Night Race did not die. After all, he counted as a Debtor burdened with the debt of the Undead. His head twisted and shouted loudly at Bologue.

"Interesting, in this era, someone has actually obtained the Blood Contract of the Lord."

Blood Contract.

Bologue was familiar with this term, akin to "Blood Donation," particular to the Night Race. This bizarre mysterious family has formed its own system within the Extraordinary World.

The blood of the Night Race is extremely unique, it can be used as a kind of Alchemy Material when necessary. If a Night Race grants their blood to a human, and the human willingly accepts the blood, they automatically form a Blood Contract, becoming a member of the Night Race, transformed into an Undead of eternal night, bearing a heavy debt.

Refusal is death.

Blood Donation occurs between High Tier Night Race and Low Tier Night Race, with High Tier Night Race enhancing the blood purity of Low Tier Night Race.

During the temporal chaos events, Bologue accepted a Blood Donation that couldn't quite be called a Blood Donation.

Licking his lips, Bologue vaguely remembered the taste of "Serey's Love," a cup mixed with Serey's blood.

The taste was awful, as if he were drinking laundry detergent, and it was lemon-flavored.

The Blood Donation between Night Race and humans resembles a slave contract, but humans are not always so contemptible in the eyes of the Night Race. Some who are acknowledged by the Night Race will form a "Blood Contract."

In short, a pact made with blood, initiated solely by the Night Race, who smear their blood on the recognized ones, much like animals marking their scent. The recognized ones will carry the aura of that Night Race.

In street terms, Bologue is like Serey's little brother in the eyes of the Night Race, taken care of by the big brother. If any Night Race dares to harm Bologue, they will face the wrath of the Night Race Lord.

Hundreds of years ago, this was considered supreme glory. With Serey's blood, Bologue could walk horizontally within the territory of the Night Race, receiving the highest treatment everywhere.

Unfortunately, times have changed.

The Night Race has long been buried in the graves of history, and the Night Races that appear now are merely the remnants of unfinished historical reckoning.

Luckily, this Blood Contract can only be recognized by the Night Race themselves; otherwise, if Bologue met other organizations' Condensers, once they detected the Blood Contract on Bologue, they would surely see him as a Night Race's minion and strike hard.

This information Bologue consulted after meeting Olivia, besides learning about the history of the Night Race, Bologue discovered another matter.

The Blood Contract itself lacks any Power of Contract, meaning it doesn't bind anyone or anything.

This is not some alliance driven by interest, more like an intimate relationship certification, stemming from the Night Race's own emotions and recognition.

This represents Serey's friendship.

Thinking about this made Bologue feel surprised, never expecting such a delicate emotion behind Serey's absurd demeanor.

But sometimes Bologue wonders, is this just sympathy between the Undead, or is it a momentary whim of Serey's psychopath?

Serey might indeed do such things, given how chaotic his private life is, just the photos with his wife are enough to pile up a whole album, considering those female friends he has met, Bologue thinks Serey could put together a whole group.

Just counting those female friends, Bologue believes he has quite a few blood-contracted friends like himself as well.

But Bologue didn't consider his friendship with Serey to be so cheap, and he was too lazy to speculate about those matters.

Compared to the fleeting thoughts in his mind, Bologue preferred to deal with the Night Race member in front of him first.

"Since I possess the Night Race Lord's Blood Contract, I doubt he'd have any objections if I kill a Night Race."

Bologue said viciously; being an Undead himself, Bologue knew well how to deal with his own kind.

The spreading Iron Thorns quickly retracted, pulling together the severed limbs and recomposing them into a cross-shaped tombstone, solidified by the deceitful snake scale liquid pouring like molten iron.

Bologue snapped his fingers, and the friction between the iron pieces at his fingertips sparked, igniting the fire line as if it had spontaneously combusted, and then the inferno rose from the tombstone like a witch's pyre during an inquisition.

This was Bologue's first battle with the Night Race. Even though he knew a lot of intelligence about them, in actual combat, Bologue wasn't sure to what extent the enemy could remain "undead," so incapacitating the opponent first was certainly correct.

Sever the limbs, forge them into a monument, and then burn with fierce flames.

All of this was Bologue's impromptu idea; he even felt a sense of pride, thinking he resembled more the violent maniacs in horror films.

Bologue always thought that if he were to act in a movie, he would surely be the kind of actor whose superb skills would make the director applaud with excitement.

Bologue only needed to play himself, but unfortunately, his range of roles was somewhat limited.

The joy of the desire for violence being satisfied didn't last long before Bologue realized another issue—the opponent seemed too young from the "Night Race" perspective.

The Ether strength of this Night Race individual was not high, merely at the First Stage Condenser level. If he had been an Undead for a century, even though the path to promotion is fraught with difficulty, he shouldn't be at this Tier.

A newly transformed Night Race? It's not impossible.

The opponent couldn't escape the burning tombstone for now. Bologue raised his hand, and walls of stone rose from the Flame of the Cauldron, as if he were a battlefield commander constructing his own defense line.

The deceitful snake scale liquid spread out dense Iron Thorns, each connected by nearly invisible threads. This was Bologue's minefield; as soon as the opponent tripped the line, they would suffer Bologue's storm-like counterattack.

But the anticipated situation of being beset on all sides did not happen; this time, Bologue was not alone.

Someone grabbed one of his threads, but it was not an enemy. A familiar Ether reaction came along the threads, and then Aimou leapt over Bologue's head with force.

This time, besides helping Bologue with tasks, Aimou found time to optimize herself; under extreme exertion, Aimou's body seemed to be endowed with Ethereal Amplification.

Aimou's alloyed iron fist descended, crushing a Black Armored Soldier's skull, then twirled a whip-like kick, snapping the enemy's few ribs through the armor.

Under Bologue's combat teaching, Aimou showed significant progress in her Fighting Technique, but clearly, Aimou still had much to learn, such as maintaining constant vigilance.

The darkness behind Aimou began to writhe, a pair of scarlet eyes lit up, lunging directly at Aimou. Just as the strike was about to succeed, Aimou's body eerily shifted slightly, dodging the attack.

Aimou was somewhat bewildered herself; she was launching a forceful punch when she was pulled by the thread, causing her displacement.

Bologue was manipulating the battlefield, assisting Aimou to avoid the strike; Bologue then waved, and an Iron Spear was forged, suspended in the air, then pierced through, hitting the Night Race member and propelling his body to nail the spear into the Black Armored Soldier behind him.

After advancing to become a Prayer Believer, Bologue was somewhat unsatisfied with his Secret Energy·Cauldron Flame, not because it wasn't strong enough—in fact, quite the opposite, it was too powerful and convenient. Many times, before Bologue could enjoy his favored close combat, he could pin his opponents from afar.

It left him with a sense of unfulfilled excitement.

A sharp-edged feather fell from overhead, more bloody feathers fell, Bologue looked up, seeing the sky completely covered by dark clouds, devoid of any light. No matter how hard Bologue tried to see, all he got were blurred and chaotic silhouettes.

Bologue sensed something unusual; an endless amount of Ether was surrounding the battlefield, transforming into a void-like tsunami, raising a destructive gale.

Bologue saw, Ether in vast quantities gathering here, even appearing as tangible as his Cauldron Flame, high-concentration Ether surging out like luminescent silk, with the tumultuous invisible whirlwind revealing its flowing path under the guise of light.

The Clarks' retaliation had begun, and before he knew it, the domain crafted by the Celestial Vault Tower had expanded to the coast, encompassing Bologue and his companions within.

At this moment, the Ether concentration inside the domain was rapidly soaring, with various Ether reactions arising within the defensive lines of the cliff, calling upon the winds which swiftly shattered the Wind-Eroded Bird flock.

Bologue didn't know how the battle above was playing out, but he could clearly see mass after mass of Wind-Eroded Bird carcasses crashing down, their warm blood mixed with the torrential rain, splattering on his body with surges of warmth.

Chapter 534: Pure Blood

The Clarks' retaliation was incredibly swift, with endless cries from the wind-eroded birds overhead, as if they were being devoured by an even more ferocious monster. Besides fleeing, their only remaining choice was death.

The black armored soldiers' assault changed at this moment, they collectively slowed their pace, with Ether converging, forming an Ether barrier to withstand the onslaught of the gusts.

This ethereal storm, with its high concentration of Ether, possessed immense destructive power. Bologue could discern the storm's trajectory from its aurora-like path, where everything covered by the storm seemed to rapidly weather, wither, and shatter, as if time had been fast-forwarded.

Numerous scratches appeared on the sturdy armor, the marks increasing and overlapping, causing the pitch-black metal to show cracks and gaps, as if invisible insects were gnawing at it, the fissures continuously expanding until turning into dust and scattering with the wind...

The Condenser who launched the attack noticed Bologue's presence. He didn't include Bologue within the strike range, but the deadly storm still brushed past Bologue, a gentle breeze across the cheek bringing a prickling pain like needles.

Bologue realized that the Clarks had not remained silent throughout, they were just waiting for the right time to counterattack, and the appearance of several people disrupted their pace.

So, what exactly happened here?

Bologue still couldn't figure it out; a surging Ether reaction came from above, not among the wind-eroded bird flock, but higher, from the sky above, the end of the storm.

Thunder roared down, striking the sea, like a giant raindrop crashing into the water, stirring ripples in the waves.

Relying on the blinding lightning, Bologue vaguely saw the silhouettes interwoven above the dark clouds, they called to each other amidst the wild winds, battling in the sky like birds in high flight.

Decoy attack.

Bologue realized this issue, the black armored soldiers' assault was too flamboyant, too deliberate; with the power they had displayed, it was impossible to conquer the Fortress of the Morning Wind.

They never intended to conquer the Fortress of the Morning Wind; it was more like a decoy attack, drawing the Clarks' forces onto this cliff defensive line.

The Condenser's individual combat capability was extremely strong, and as their Tier increased, this strength would become even more prominent. Even if there were more black armored soldiers, the pressure they brought was still not as great as the appearance of a Defender.

And then... a Defender appeared.

The booming thunder instantaneously took away Bologue's hearing, plunging the world into silence, as if someone had pressed a mute button in a disaster movie, and then Bologue saw the lightning surging, bursting amidst the dark clouds.

The shocking Ether intensity struck Bologue's mind like a Heavy Hammer, exerting immense pressure. If ordinary people were present, they might directly faint from it.

Bologue couldn't see the other's figure, but he could clearly sense their presence. Unlike the Third Seat relying on puppets, this was a true Defender.

A Defender arriving on the battlefield in full glory.

Fortunately, Bologue didn't need to worry about how to deal with the Defender. As Bologue resisted the pressure and looked up to the turbulent lightning above the dark clouds, the Defender's Ether intensity soared to its peak and then plummeted rapidly, as if the power that had just erupted was merely his life-forfeiting strike.

The thunder gradually receded.

The battle above the sky was like an interlude; after the terrifying power dispersed, the people on the ground resumed their slaughter.

A faint cracking sound came through the chaotic din, and when Bologue shifted his attention back from the sky, he saw that the burning tombstone had already shattered, and the broken limbs were piecing themselves back together.

Bologue found it difficult to describe the grotesque scene, as flesh struggled free from the solidified metal piece by piece, the flames blazing, burning the flesh with a sizzling sound of fat scorching.

Jagged bones were covered with a thin layer of flesh and damaged skin, the burns congealing into hideous blood clots, the viscous liquid dripping incessantly, completely unlike the noble, elegant Night Race in Bologue's impression; he emerged through the fire like a monster from a nightmare.

"You are not pure blood."

Bologue deduced the other's Tier from his grotesque visage.

Not all Night Race in the hierarchy bore the surname Veleris; like a family genealogy, only those of direct bloodline from the Night King possessed this noble surname and were considered the rightful pure blood.

From subsequent knowledge Bologue acquired, High Tier Night Race had absolute control over Low Tier Night Race, and their undying nature was much more potent.

Low Tier Night Race would instantly evaporate into ashes under sunlight, while a Night Race Lord like Serey could even endure the burning pain and walk briefly in sunlight.

The Night Race before him resurrected too slowly, ugly beyond comparison.

A whimper full of thirst came from the bloodied throat, the crimson gaze no longer rational, replaced by an insatiable thirst for blood.

Bloodthirsty Syndrome, it is a condition that plagues every member of the Night Race, filling them with a craving for blood. The lower the bloodline, the more evident and maddening the symptoms, making them akin to beasts.

Within the Night Race, they hold this belief that low-tier members do not count as true Night Race. They are merely beasts infused with Undying Power, and these low-tier Night Race lack the ability to transform others into their kind. Their "Blood Donation" only creates equally malformed bloodthirsty monsters.

During the Dawn War, the truly powerful high-tier Night Race were few, but the low-tier Night Race under their command, and the bloodthirsty monsters transformed by them, were as numerous as cattle, putting immense pressure on the allied forces.

Fortunately, sunlight can bring an end to all.

The pitch-black storm clouds collapsed at a corner, and blinding light poured down through the cracks. With the storm clouds defeated, the howling wind once again ruled the battlefield, like a long knife slicing through the sky, severing a corner of the heavens.

Noticing the fall of light, the Night Race scattered across the battlefield retreated one after another, even the frenzied Night Race before Bologue paused for a few seconds. The fear of sunlight easily outweighed their thirst for blood, and they turned to flee.

Bologue would not let them go easily. Walls rose from the ground, blocking the Night Race's path, forming encircling barriers with Bologue standing at the only exit.

This was like an arena, where only by defeating Bologue could they leave alive.

The Night Race understood Bologue's intent. The cracks in the sky grew wider, the light casting upon the ground, drawing a clear dividing line between shadow and illumination.

That was his line of life and death.

"Bothersome creature!"

The Night Race roared and launched an attack at Bologue. He knew Bologue's tier was higher than his own, but after all, he was a Night Race, an Undead; that was his advantage.

In the previous battles, the Night Race realized Bologue's weakness. He always kept his distance from enemies, perhaps indicating he was not adept at close combat. If he could just get close, he might have a chance to kill Bologue.

The glow of Secret Energy surged. As a First Stage Condenser, his Secret Energy was not complex, focusing on the Elevation School, granting him greater strength and speed. Coupled with his Undying Body, even against Prayer Believers, he had room to contest.

Bologue was slightly surprised; despite the Night Race's unhealed wounds, his speed surpassed what it had been. Bologue guessed it was likely due to his Secret Energy.

Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid interlaced forward, but the Night Race swiftly dodged, prompting Bologue to take him more seriously. In the Night Race's eyes, Bologue's figure seemed to enlarge continuously. He opened his hand, aiming a lethal strike at Bologue's throat.

He had won.

That's what he thought. But then he noticed something had appeared in Bologue's hands—a hammer made of Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, rough and mottled, uneven, tightly gripped by Bologue.

This was nothing.

So he believed, and his attack was on the brink of success. It was too late for Bologue to counter or block, but the surge of Ether shattered his thoughts.

A blue glow emanated from Bologue's hand, muscles tensed and twisted, enhanced by Ethereal Amplification. Bologue swung the hammer at a speed far beyond his imagination.

Comparatively, the Night Race's movements seemed slowed down like a film, while Bologue had hit the fast-forward button.

He only heard the wind's whistle screaming by his ear, followed by a heavy impact strike on his head. Before his claw could hit Bologue, the Night Race's head exploded into a burst of scattering blood.

Skull, brain tissue, eyeballs... Scarlet matter scattered into the air, defying gravity, failing to fall. Within the blood and flesh, scarlet threads connected all the matter, waiting for threads to sew them back together.

No more chances.

Due to the inertia of the hammer swing, Bologue still maintained the motion of the blow, but at this moment, a string of urgent footsteps approached. Aimou sped up, accelerating, and delivered a knee strike, caving in the Night Race's chest, then kicked, shakily knocking the battered body to the side.

The Night Race staggered a few steps, fell to the sand, and after a brief delay, the fragmented head restructured. He didn't understand why Bologue didn't pursue him. He clumsily stood up, ready to flee the battlefield, but just as he lifted his head, he saw it.

He hadn't looked directly at such warmth and splendor for a long time. The gentle sunlight fell, softly caressing his cheeks, reminding him of his mother's figure, but that was many years ago.

The warmth dispelled his madness, regaining sanity, he shed hot tears and blood.

In an instant, his eyeballs evaporated into hollow blood cavities, his pale face burned a carbon black, his throat shriveled and collapsed, unable to utter even a scream of terror before death.

The Night Race gradually knelt down, his figure shrinking and desiccating in the sunlight, burning into a pile of dry bones, with only the ashes of lingering fire floating away.

Chapter 535: Leica [Thanks to the alliance leader, Hejian_Skinny Tiger, for the extra update]

All this came and went quickly, like an elusive illusion.

As the dark clouds collapsed, the dazzling sunlight dispelled the piercing cold. The enemies from the sea, stepping on the precarious ice, retreated from the coast, leaving behind a ground strewn with corpses.

The magnificent storm also began to shift. Its speed seemed slow, but in the blink of an eye, it moved beyond the range of the Fortress of the Morning Wind, heading towards the depths of the sea. Large amounts of seawater were sucked up, then thrown into the air, pouring down as icy rain.

The storm was not naturally formed, containing chaotic and violent ether currents. But after the dark clouds collapsed, the ether's intensity also waned, and it seemed that the storm would soon dissipate completely.

Bologue looked towards the cliff behind him, like a desperate situation. Numerous defensive structures were set up on the steep cliff face, shadows emerging behind them. They wore clothes similar to Palmer's to signify their ancient status.

"Does this count as overtime? Is there overtime pay?"

Aimou stood beside Bologue, hands on hips.

Since starting work, Aimou discovered that money was a very important thing in this world, even though he was an alchemy puppet.

Bologue started to discuss seriously with her, "We're on vacation, so probably no overtime pay."

"What?"

Aimou's expression fell, sulking like she was pouting, and she stomped on a not-yet-dead Wind-Eroded Bird out of convenience.

"Where's Palmer?"

Bologue searched for Palmer's figure, and soon spotted him on the cliff. Palmer was hanging there, talking with others, seemingly encountering an acquaintance.

"Really strange, here..."

Bologue glanced around. In such a short time, the storm had already receded to the edge of the horizon, soon to disappear before their eyes.

"It's weird, look at these soldiers."

Aimou removed one faceplate after another, revealing identical faces, "They all have the same face."

Seeing this, Bologue's expression turned serious. He wasn't worried about the Night Race issue, knowing he had a blood pact with a Night Race Lord, who was none other than Serey Villeries, the Night King's offspring.

With Serey's bloodline, if the Night King were to die on that eternal throne, Serey was destined to be the next Night King. But from Serey's usual lifestyle, it was evident he didn't care about power.

Serey might have pursued power, but in his long life, power turned into something boring, no more enjoyable than dancing on a steel pipe for a moment.

There weren't many things Bologue feared; the unknown was one of them.

The Night Race to Bologue was not an unknown existence, so he didn't care. But these Black Armored Soldiers, their bizarreness and mystery made Bologue very cautious.

Bologue patrolled the battlefield, trying to find a few survivors. He was rifling through the bodies, attempting to gather more useful information.

The wind began to rise, and Palmer landed, feeling a bit tired. Extended hovering was quite exhausting for Palmer, but returning to the familiar homeland was always greatly pleasing.

Amidst the corpses, Palmer still wore a carefree smile, the scene having some avant-garde artistic flavor.

Bologue asked, "What on earth is going on?"

"I only asked briefly, and the situation is about the same as Church said..."

Thick and powerful roars interrupted Palmer's explanation.

Turning his head, a lion over two meters tall was dashing madly this way along the coastal edge, its gray-white fur wildly dancing in the wind, and its sharp claws stomping deep into the ground, creating pits.

"Is the fight not over?"

Bologue murmured, summoning the stones under his feet, with deadly serpents awaiting orders.

But before Bologue could act, Palmer unexpectedly charged out ahead of him, surprising Bologue. Knowing when working with Palmer, Palmer usually pushed all the work onto him.

"Since you're a violent maniac, I'll leave my share of the enemies to you."

Palmer said earnestly and gave Bologue a thumbs up, admiring Bologue's fervor for work.

"What the hell..."

Bologue sighed, and then even stranger things happened.

Palmer collided directly with the lion, with no intention of resisting. Aimou was already in a panic, knowing Palmer wasn't adept at close combat, let alone fighting such a massive lion.

The lion struck Palmer down, and the two rolled on the beach, with Palmer's voice vaguely heard... Was that jerk laughing?

"Something's wrong!"

Aimou vigorously shook Bologue's arm. She couldn't make sense of the situation anymore; it was supposed to be a trip, so why were they dragged into a battle? And even if they were, just after it ended, why did Palmer suddenly act crazy and stick his head into a lion's mouth?

After all the incidents, the Special Operations Group hadn't lost anyone, but now they were going to lose one here? How were they supposed to explain this to Lebius!

The thoughts of young people are always strange, especially for someone like Aimou who is theoretically still a minor. Drawing from books she had read, Aimou had already imagined Palmer's tragic life.

In the books Aimou read, someone like Palmer, who appears happy on the outside, might have a very dark heart, constantly troubled by gloom.

Could Palmer have looked at the scene, had a depression attack, and thought that dying in his hometown wouldn't be too bad, thus fulfilling his wish here?

The lion pounced on Palmer, the huge body pressed against Palmer, then it opened its gaping maw and... licked his face full of saliva.

Palmer felt like his delicate face was being sanded with a piece of sandpaper with countless grits, hurting terribly, but he couldn't help laughing, reaching out to rub the lion's chin vigorously.

It seemed... the situation wasn't that bad.

Palmer stood up, gently pushed, and the lion rolled over, exposing its soft belly, leaving it at Palmer's mercy, panting with its tongue out, just like a pleased dog.

Wait a minute... a dog?

Bologue recalled that night when Palmer told him about it, from Palmer's childhood memories, Bologue knew of his dreadful childhood and the origin of the motorcycle's name.

Bologue brought Aimou over to Palmer's side, and Aimou was dumbfounded, completely at a loss as to what was happening in front of her.

Wasn't Palmer supposed to be lion food? How did they look like such good buddies, with some sort of cross-species friendship?

"Palmer, this one is..."

Bologue slowly pointed at the "lion," it still looked at Bologue with excitement, ready to lick him.

"You and it are familiar too," Palmer said with a flamboyant gesture, "We often ride it when we go out."

Bologue had guessed it, but he still found it hard to believe.

"Leica?"

Hearing Bologue call out its name, Leica excitedly licked Bologue's face full of saliva.

...

"Alright, alright, let me sort out the situation,"

Bologue wiped the saliva off his face, trying hard to get his thoughts into expert mode instead of being led astray by Palmer.

"A group of the Night Race, not sure how they managed, broke through the constraints of the 'Dawn Oath' and left the Land of Eternal Night..."

Palmer continued from Bologue's words, "But only a small portion left the Land of Eternal Night, the majority of the Night Race is still trapped inside, so recently they have been repeatedly attacking the Fortress of the Morning Wind, trying to tear up the 'Dawn Oath'."

Bologue said, "Church came to the Wind Source Highlands for this too, under the intact condition of the 'Dawn Oath,' there shouldn't be any missing Night Race."

"Pretty much... Let's go meet my dad, he should know the whole picture,"

Palmer wasn't interested in caring about such matters; he was on vacation, not here to work.

Aimou stood behind Bologue, not listening to their conversation but instead curiously observing Leica.

During the previous conversation, Palmer repeatedly emphasized that Leica belonged to the phylum Chordata, subphylum Vertebrata, class Mammalia, subclass Eutheria, order Carnivora, suborder Feliformia, family Canidae...

Simply called "dog," also known as "dog."

But Bologue still couldn't believe it, even though Palmer explained that Leica had been fed all sorts of messy Alchemy Potions since it was small, which is why it grew this big, Bologue still didn't believe it.

Is it really a dog? By throwing on a layer of Iron Armor, it's simply a monster. This is definitely some sort of alchemical biological weapon from the Clarks!

"Don't believe it, try this?"

Palmer said, picking up a broken arm from the beach. It was the severed limb of a Black Armored Soldier; if it were from the Night Race, it would have already been burned clean.

Bologue took the broken limb, waved it in front of Leica, then threw it with full force to the side. In the next second, Leica shot out like the wind, grabbed the broken limb in its mouth, and swayed back, depositing it in front of Bologue, its large tail swaying back and forth, sounding like a whip whooshing.

"See!"

Palmer spread his hands open, his gaze filled with the words "this is a dog."

Bologue gave up arguing with him, reached out to rub the big dog's head, and praised, "Good doggy."

Chapter 536: Traitor of the Eternal Night

Right now, Bologue is sitting in the dining room within the Celestial Dome Castle, a table full of local delicacies, the aroma is enticing, but Bologue shows no intention of tasting them.

Seated beside the long table are Aimou, Church, and Palmer, along with a few others Bologue doesn't recognize. Altogether, compared to the spacious dining room, it still feels somewhat lonely with just these few people.

Of course, it's visually lonely; the atmosphere in the dining room is actually quite lively. Church wears a serious expression, unlike the others who are there for sightseeing; he has a task to maintain a serious work attitude.

Aimou is very interested in Leica. It's normal for children to like furry things. When she tastes something delicious, she calls Leica, hiding in the corner, to secretly come over, and feeds it a bit.

Through the bribery of food, Aimou, the new friend, has already gained almost full favor in Leica's eyes.

Palmer appears somewhat reserved; clearly, he has returned to his own home, he should be relaxed, but this guy is currently filled with tension... Bologue doesn't think this tension stems from the castle's owner. The castle owner doesn't even pay attention to Palmer.

"You must be the famous Bologue Lazarus!"

The castle owner, Palmer's father, now the Patriarch of the Clarks—bearing numerous respected titles—the man is smiling as he toasts to Bologue.

Bologue can't refuse and drinks with him. The man looks very young, probably due to his youthful mindset, only showing slight wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, indicating the passage of time.

The other lets out a hearty drinking sound, laughing wildly as he pats Bologue on the shoulder, complimenting him, saying that Bologue is indeed worthy of being an Undead, with a remarkable build.

Bologue, in turn, puts on a false smile, echoing the man's words.

Having worked for so long, Bologue always thought he wouldn't encounter "sales" type of work, but now he feels he very much resembles a salesman, singing and dancing with clients at a drinking party.

Bologue can no longer understand whether this is a tour or work, and he can't even tell when he stepped into such a bizarre quagmire.

Clearly, he's arrived in the Wind Source Highlands for only a few hours, but he feels as if he's spent several weeks here, his sense of time being infinitely stretched.

The castle owner beside him is still slinging an arm around his shoulder. From a certain angle, he and Palmer truly are a father and son, Bologue feels he's facing a middle-aged version of Palmer.

Then Bologue profoundly realizes one thing: the construction of an individual's personality is intricately linked to their growth environment.

Bologue's past experiences are full of hardships, facing too many cruel things, thus sculpting Bologue into a cold, efficient expert figure, while Aimou believes in Teda's crazy fantasies, becoming somewhat stubborn. Luckily, Aimou is still a child and has time to reshape, whereas Palmer...

No wonder Palmer is like this; this cannot be blamed on him. After all, anyone with this kind of father would have a hard time growing up healthy.

With his gaze lowered, staring at the swaying wine glass, Bologue recalls the first meeting with the castle owner a few hours earlier.

Given Bologue's current vocabulary, it's hard to evaluate the scene of their first meeting. If he must make a comparison, it's only safe to say it was very Palmer-like, or rather, very Clarks family style.

After petting Leica, the group prepares to enter the Fortress of the Morning Wind to ask someone about things, when the castle owner descends from the sky on a gust of wind.

Like Palmer, he's dressed in luxurious traditional clothing but much more flamboyant than Palmer, with a golden ribbon trailing behind him, like the King of the Wind.

The castle owner elegantly lands, his gaze sweeping across the faces of the few, finally pausing on Palmer's face.

Bologue was still unclear about the other's identity at the time, but from the resemblance in facial features, Bologue could recognize the similarity with Palmer.

Bologue held his breath, remembering Palmer's terrible relationship with his family. If the castle owner were to hit Palmer next, Bologue wouldn't be able to stop it, but then something odd happened.

It's as if the world's storyline took a detour. Even Bologue finds it hard to comprehend the ensuing conversation.

"Hmm... Young man, you look quite decent."

First, the castle owner makes a remark about Palmer's appearance.

"Speaking of which, my son looks quite similar to you."

Next, the castle owner pats Palmer on the shoulder, showing appreciation.

"Right, what's your name? Let's give you two a chance to meet."

Finally, the castle owner extends a hand, as a gesture of goodwill.

Palmer extends his hand, managing to keep a straight face, but Bologue believes he's nearly biting through his molars.

"Palmer Clarks."

Palmer reports his name.

In an instant, the castle owner, like a seasoned actor, shifts his expression from gentle friendliness to surprise, with a hint of panic mixed in, but fortunately, he quickly comes up with a solution, his face brimming with a kindly smile, joy about to overflow.

The expression change was fantastic, without the slightest delay. Bologue really wishes he had a camera to record the whole thing.

"Palmer!"

The castle owner seizes Palmer's hand, vigorously slapping the back, raising an eyebrow as he defends, "How's that for a joke?"

The meeting between the castle owner and Palmer is just like a philanderer in a bar encountering his grown-up illegitimate child.

Before Palmer can respond, the castle owner opens an embrace of love, treating him like a child several years of age.

"Come to Papa."

Bologue guessed that Palmer must be missing Oubos in Oath City right now, even though they had only left less than an hour ago.

...

After this disastrous meeting, an awkward atmosphere emerged between Palmer and the castle's master, causing Bologue to attract unwanted attention for Palmer during the welcoming banquet.

"How is it being Palmer's partner?"

"Do you encounter any difficulties in your usual work?"

"Oh? You two are roomies too, is anyone good at cooking?"

Stripped of their lofty identities, the castle's master was no different than a regular parent, and the questions he asked were things heard countless times before.

Bologue answered patiently, noticing that the more powerful these people were, the less pretentious they seemed, whether it was Nesanel, Serey, or the man in front of him.

And yes... also those Devils.

"By the way, how is Serey doing? You're a member of the Undying Club, right?"

Suddenly, the castle's master asked Bologue an unexpected question.

Bologue wondered if he heard it wrong, "Serey?"

"Don't be nervous, Serey Villeries, I know him."

Mentioning Serey, the castle's master grew excited, "I worked at the Order Bureau when I was younger, and I often went to the Undying Club to drink Serey's wine for free."

You should have seen that display case, right? Third shelf, there's a disposable paper cup that's mine. If you turn the cup upside down, you'll see my signature."

Bologue was stunned, his expression uncontrollably shocked, "So it was you!"

"Yes, it's me!"

My goodness, everything connected.

"Ah... Serey helped me a lot back then, during the time I worked at the Order Bureau, I used to hang out and revel with those people at the Undying Club," the castle's master reminisced, "How is Sai Zong? Still a dog?"

"No, Sai Zong left the Undying Club not long ago and hasn't returned."

As Sai Zong was mentioned, Bologue's expression became serious once more. In his exchanges with Serey, Bologue faintly sensed something strange about Sai Zong.

He is the oldest member of the Undying Club, though Serey didn't speak directly, Bologue could infer the underlying meaning of Serey's words.

Serey suspected Sai Zong to be the founder of the Undying Club. Even if not the founder, he must be intricately connected with that mysterious founder.

"Is that so?"

Upon hearing these words, the castle's master revealed a meaningful expression.

"But... since you know Serey," Bologue couldn't help but say, "weren't both parties quite disappointed with each other?"

The mighty Night Race Lord, in such a manner?

The famous Clarks heir, just like that?

Bologue could already envision the inner thoughts of both individuals during their meeting many years ago.

The castle's master fully understood Bologue's point, bursting into laughter, "Disappointed? It's more like meeting late!"

As expected!

Bologue tried hard to forget this absurdity, his mind still troubled. Ever since coming to Wind Source Highlands, knowing the events occurring here, and "Dawn Oath", this question had incessantly lingered in his heart.

"Historically, the Clarks should be mortal enemies with the Night Race, so why would you be friendly with a Night Race Lord?"

The castle's master replied with a smile, "Not all Night Race members are enemies, like Serey."

Bologue's confusion remained unresolved, and the castle's master also realized the problem, he chuckled while touching his head.

"Sorry, I forgot this matter hasn't been publicly disclosed."

Collecting his composure, the castle's master instantly seemed to transform into Fuen Clarks, radiating some essence of the Clarks' Patriarch.

"Serey Villeries is our absolutely trusted ally, yet he is also a sinner of the Villeries, a rebel Lord of the Eternal Night Empire, a son both hated and cherished by the Night King.

It was him who personally ended the Dawn War."

Chapter 537: Silent Legion

Maybe the information received today was too much; Fuen's words froze Bologue's thoughts for a moment, like paddle blades entangled by fishing lines.

Serey? Traitor of the Eternal Night? Ending the Dawn War? Burying the Eternal Night Empire in the grave?

Fuen's brief words revealed too much information, weaving a story from a century ago, filled with blood and sacrifice, betrayal and glory, and those unspeakable, evil, dark secrets.

Bologue knew Serey too well, understood Serey's carefree manner, his clumsy posture while pole dancing, and his soaking wet gentlemanly demeanor when drunk...

"Hard to believe, isn't it? Pretty much like my reaction back then."

Fuen was extremely satisfied with Bologue's reaction, then continued to ask Bologue about Serey as if nothing had happened.

"Has he learned anything new recently? This guy entertains himself by becoming a jack of all trades."

"He... he recently got into board games and learned pole dancing."

Bologue answered in a daze, and Fuen responded with hearty laughter.

"Pole dancing? Is he serious?"

Fuen couldn't stop laughing; it was wonderful, every new piece of information about Serey added some color to his boring life.

While Fuen was delighted, Bologue felt pained, still pondering Serey's contrasting identity.

So that's how it is.

That's why Serey could escape the reckoning of the Dawn Judgment and wasn't bound by the Dawn Oath. While other Night Race members were imprisoned in the Land of Eternal Night, this guy was indulging in the brilliant nightlife of Opus, enjoying his delightful life.

"One day, I'll personally slaughter Serey, expose him to the sun from dawn to dusk, cycling through seven days and nights."

Olivia's words filled with hatred echoed in Bologue's ear, and the sight of Serey's panicked evasive expression when hearing Olivia's name appeared before him.

So that's how it is...

Bologue mechanically picked up a wine glass, poured himself some alcohol to cool down his brain.

The Wind Source Highlands is a miraculous place; ever since arriving, a massive flow of information filled Bologue's mind, some extremely important, while others were junk information.

Bologue couldn't filter out this junk information and could only mix it with the important intel, pondering laboriously.

If it wasn't inconvenient to return to the Wind Source Highlands, Bologue would have used the Key of the Crooked Path to go to the Undying Club and ask Serey a few questions.

Damn it, how much more is this bastard hiding from me!

Bologue collected his thoughts and continued the conversation, "So... what about this group of attacking Night Race? Where do they come from?"

"We don't know either," Fuen explained to Bologue, "since the end of the Dawn War, it's been a long time since the Night Race appeared on this continent."

"This group of Night Race appeared a week ago, active in the dangerous Angry Sea, summoning storms from there as cover, hiring the Silent Legion, and then launched an attack on the Fortress of the Morning Wind. Their intent is evident; they are here for the Dawn Oath."

"You must know that the Fortress of the Morning Wind hasn't encountered warfare in many years; the fortifications here were established during the Dawn War, back when the Night Race excelled at stirring storms from the Angry Sea to launch attacks from the coast."

This recent turmoil gave Fuen a peculiar feeling, as if he broke through historical constraints, returning to that distant battlefield.

"These guys are cunning; despite their overwhelming presence, most of their actions are feints. Every time we pursue them, they hide in the Angry Sea. If it weren't for some Defenders among them, this damned conflict would have ended long ago."

Bologue nodded, "If it's the Angry Sea, then there's nothing much that can be done."

The Angry Sea is an extremely dangerous sea area, known for its perpetual storms, but Bologue knew its peculiarities originated from an Ether whirlpool.

Ether exists in every corner of the world; some regions have such low ether density that they become ether vacuums, like the Abandoned Land under the Great Rift, while others have extremely high ether density, causing the manifest ether to trigger various phenomena.

According to the Order Bureau's observations, the Angry Sea is a sea area with extremely high ether concentration, where excessive ether forms terrifying whirlpools, disrupting the material world's operation, causing never-ending storms.

The Order Bureau's official records regard the Angry Sea as a kind of Extraordinary Disaster, where high-concentration ether whirlpools trigger various extraordinary phenomena.

Luckily, the Angry Sea's peculiarity is far from the human world and near the Wind Source Highlands, within the Clarks' observational range, allowing it to eternally stand over the ocean.

Entering the Angry Sea recklessly might mean being swallowed by the surging storms before even encountering the enemy, putting the Clarks in a passive state.

"Forget it, I've already reported these matters to the Order Bureau; you all are here for a holiday, no need to take the work upon yourselves."

Fuen stopped the topic, not continuing to involve Bologue in the Night Race's conflicts, acknowledging his mistake of dragging the Order Bureau's guests into it.

Bologue asked, "I still have some curiosity."

"Like what?"

Bologue asked, "The Silent Legion... refers to those Black Armored Soldiers?"

Fuen smiled, "Oh? You noticed their peculiarity, didn't you?"

"It's hard not to notice."

Those uniform faces carried an eerie feeling, hard for Bologue to forget even if he tried.

"They are the Silent Legion, a Condenser mercenary force with uniform attire, uniform faces, uniform Secret Energy... They are extremely mysterious, never speaking, even the name 'Silent Legion' was given by us."

Fuen shared the related intelligence.

Bologue asked, "What exactly are they?"

"The details are unclear; we only know they are a mercenary corps, fighting for the highest bidder, as they've always done since ancient times."

"Even during the Dawn War, they were hired by the Night Race to oppose us, but after the Dawn War, they accepted our employment to fight the Kagader Empire."

Fuen waved his hand, "These individuals have no allegiance; whoever pays the most, they serve."

Bologue muttered, "What a peculiar group."

"Speaking of which, there's a theory," Fuen said, "some suspect the Silent Legion is actually an Undead Legion."

"Undead?"

"Yes, only the Undead can live that long, right? Just their undying nature is quite special."

Fuen's tone became deliberately mysterious, "For example, their individuals can be killed, but as long as there's one left, they can endlessly reproduce, like a replicating legion..."

Bologique said, "That sounds a bit concerning. Given that, why not outbid them? Since they have no allegiance, anyway."

"That brings us to the Silent Legion's professionalism. Before completing a contract, they maintain absolute loyalty to their employer. Once a contract ends, they're more than willing to take a payment and stab their former employer."

The severity of the backstab depends entirely on the new employer's payment."

Bologue expressed some surprise, "From that perspective, they aren't entirely without allegiance."

"For employers, it's a boon; for us, it's quite a headache. They execute feigned attacks and leave plenty of corpses, though we suffer no casualties, the damage to defensive works is significant, and there's the battlefield cleanup..."

Fuen revealed recent frustrations; although the Night Race couldn't breach the Fortress of the Morning Wind, the endless harassment was indeed irritating.

"But the skirmishes only affect the Fortress of the Morning Wind; other regions of the Wind Source Highlands are still quite safe. You can take some time to explore."

Fuen, like a tour guide, recommended nearby attractions to Bologue, and Bologue was getting used to dealing with Fuen.

Hmm... the middle-aged version of Palmer, that's fine.

Mentioning Palmer, Bologue glanced towards his direction and noticed a man appearing next to Palmer when he wasn't looking.

This man was unbelievably handsome, and Palmer seemed terrified of him. Under the man's gaze, Palmer appeared extremely tense.

The man, however, seemed oblivious to Palmer's unease, wrapping an arm around him with a cheerful demeanor, as if enjoying a pleasant conversation.

Chapter 538: Vasilina

"Yo, Palmer, long time no see!"

The handsome man looked at Palmer with a face full of joy, wrapping his arm around Palmer's neck, looking like a pair of close-knit brothers.

"Say something... don't you have anything you want to say to me?"

He reached out and poked Palmer's cheek. Palmer didn't respond; he didn't even look at this handsome man, his eyes staring directly at the food on the plate, eating mechanically as if the guy beside him didn't exist at all.

"Breathe deeply, Palmer, breathe deeply," Palmer repeated to himself in his mind, "You've prepared for this, haven't you?"

Palmer tried hard to adopt the mindset of a field staff, maintaining calm even when the mountains collapse before him, and having peace of mind despite the tsunami behind him.

And then... and then...

The handsome man raised an eyebrow, "Palmer, are your hands numb?"

Palmer feigned calmness, but his hands wouldn't stop shaking. The fork kept rubbing against the porcelain plate, making a piercing sound.

"It's... it's fine. Maybe I strained a muscle during combat today."

God, even Palmer doesn't believe this lie, but just like a stubborn mule, he had no choice.

"Oh?"

The handsome man squinted his eyes, gently smoothing his short hair, revealing clear eyes like emeralds.

He leaned down, his breath brushing past Palmer's ear, like someone tickling his ear with a blade of foxtail grass, unbearably itchy.

"Do you need me to feed you then?"

Palmer clenched his fists, and the poor fork bent into the shape of a worm.

The handsome man curled his lips in a silent smile. Seeing his initial victory, he didn't continue to press his attack but instead let Palmer go in a manner of feigned retreat.

Palmer felt as if he had climbed back to shore from the water, his chest rising and falling in ragged breaths.

"Still the same, no improvement at all?"

The handsome man mocked, for a moment looking just like a charming girl, yet also like an effeminate man.

He shared some resemblance with Church, as nobody had ever figured out Church's true appearance, nor could anyone instantly discern the handsome man's gender. He carried a mysterious and cold aura.

Seeing Palmer not react, the handsome man couldn't be bothered to continue dealing with him. After all, Palmer's vacation was still long, and he had plenty of time to torment Palmer afterward.

Looking at Leica, who was constantly interacting with Aimou, he coughed a few times, his clear voice echoing in the room. The large dog instantly froze in place as if being caught by a predator.

"Huh? You don't like this?"

Aimou noticed the dog's change. Leica, as if being scolded, lowered its head. Aimou rubbed its head, but it didn't react.

A clear snap of fingers was heard. The handsome man shifted his chair, crossed his slender legs, and smiled, yet the smile was hard to warm anyone.

He beckoned, and Leica, with its head lowered, came over shakily, obediently sitting in front of him like a solid mountain of meat.

He questioned, "First of all, when I call you back, why didn't you return?"

"Eek..."

A series of mournful cries could be heard.

"Oh? You smelt Palmer and got so happy you forgot, right?"

The handsome man pinched his chin, posing in a thoughtful manner, "Alright, I won't pursue this matter."

Leica happily lifted its head, panting with its tongue out, then the handsome man continued, "Haven't I told you before, you need a healthy diet."

The dog's smile disappeared, there is no excuse for added guilt!

Leica skillfully moved its bulky body, cozily leaning against the handsome man, nudging the chair a few inches.

It knew the handsome man disliked its licking, it made everything slobbery and troublesome to clean, so it lowered its head, rubbing forcefully to express friendliness.

Suddenly, Leica felt breathing a bit difficult; the handsome man had his hand clasped around Leica's neck, maintaining his smile.

"Don't play cute with me, don't you know how old you are? At your age, pretending to be cute is not suitable anymore."

Leica let out another mournful cry, its dark eyes looking at Palmer, hard to imagine a dog's eyes can reveal so many emotions.

Joy from the master's return, fear from the current situation, and the pleading desire for the master to save it...

"Aren't you going to say anything?"

The handsome man nudged Palmer with his elbow, "Leica is screaming for help at you."

Palmer turned his head away, pretending not to see.

"Hmm!"

Seeing Palmer like this, Leica was so anxious it looked as if it might start talking.

Fortunately, the handsome man didn't excessively trouble Leica, he was just signaling Palmer that during his absence, many necessary emotions could only be vented on this unfortunate dog.

Releasing Leica, it ran miserably to the corner. Aimou didn't understand what had happened, but no matter how she called, Leica wouldn't come over, pressing its head into the corner as if facing the wall in remorse.

"So, Palmer, you..."

The handsome man turned around, just about to inflict a new round of torture on Palmer, but found that Palmer beside him had disappeared.

Looking to the other side, Palmer was trying hard to maintain a calm expression, but his brisk steps undoubtedly betrayed his mood.

Seeing his partner's flustered look, Bologue was slightly surprised. Even when he was called by Lebius for a private conversation, Palmer didn't act like this.

"Bologue!"

Palmer directly interrupted the conversation between Bologue and Fuen, he didn't even glance at his old man, speaking to Bologue somewhat like a plea for help.

"As expected! I'm still not ready! This is terrible!"

Bologue was a bit confused, "Huh? What are you talking about?"

Palmer suddenly grabbed Bologue's hand, looking at him nervously, "How about we go back!"

"Go back? Go where?" Fuen said at this time, "This is your home after all."

Palmer couldn't be bothered with his bastard father, seeing no reaction from Bologue, Palmer directly reached for Bologue's pocket.

Bologue swiftly took a step back, preventing Palmer from succeeding, "What do you want?"

"Keys! The keys to the Undying Club!"

Palmer was already talking nonsense, "I suddenly remembered, I made plans with Serey to play board games tonight!"

The sound of a chair scraping against the floor came from behind. Palmer didn't need to turn around to know that the handsome man had moved the chair and leisurely stood up.

"How about this, Bologue, I'll take you guys for a stroll, how about that? Wind Source Highlands is quite big!"

Unknowingly, nervous sweat had already covered Palmer's face, as if he had taken an excessive amount of stimulants.

Fuen added fuel to the fire, "Son, your expression looks a bit awful."

"You... damn it, Bologue, I can still barely take you flying for a bit, you haven't experienced flying, have you? It feels amazing!"

Palmer looked hysterical.

The sound of hard soles hitting the marble floor brought crisp footsteps, the other party approached unhurriedly, like a leisurely advancing cat, or a stalking lion.

"Bologue!"

This time, Palmer just called out Bologue's name, his voice carrying countless words, his eyes hiding nearly a thousand-word essay, crashing together with Bologue's gaze.

Bologue hesitated for a moment, then broke into a smile.

Seeing Bologue's expression, Palmer seemed to grasp at a lifeline, "We are good brothers, right?"

"Of course, we're good brothers, good partners."

Bologue nodded in agreement, pulled a key from his pocket, and placed it into Palmer's palm.

In an instant, Palmer was on the verge of tears, this time genuinely experiencing the brilliance of humanity in Bologue.

Grabbing the key, Palmer bypassed Bologue, with no intention to even put up a facade, he quickly dashed away.

Rushing to the dining room door, Palmer trembled as he inserted the key into the lock, reminiscent of scenes in horror movies where protagonists struggle to fit a key into the lock.

Back then, Palmer had mocked them for shaking like Parkinson's patients, yet now Palmer's hand trembled even more than theirs.

Fortunately, at the final moment, Palmer finally managed to insert the key into the lock, his tense face relaxing, like finally reaching the bathroom after holding it in all day, revealing a sense of serenity akin to stepping into the Celestial Kingdom.

Palmer decided that once back at the Undying Club, he would give Serey a big hug, and if necessary, even slyly kiss Serey, having never missed this Night Race Lord so much.

Twisting the key, he opened the door, the bright corridor unfolded before his eyes.

Palmer took a deep breath, closed the door, and opened it again, behind the door was not the writhing darkness of Curved Path Shuttling, but only a familiar and bright corridor.

He glanced at the key, it was the key to their home security door.

"Bologue! You tricked me!"

Palmer screamed.

No time to reprimand Bologue for this damned act, Palmer was about to flee the scene, but before he could step, a strong, cold hand grasped his nape, effortlessly lifting Palmer like a young animal.

The screeching sound of his soles against the floor signaled Palmer's final attempt at resistance.

"Just returned and you're already leaving? Is your work that busy?"

The familiar voice sounded behind him, accompanied by warm breath on his neck, Palmer felt a bitter chill extending from his spine throughout his body.

The other party taunted Palmer with interest, "Huh? Why not greet me, didn't we have lots of fun on the phone?"

Palmer stiffly turned his head, trying hard to force a smile, then gathered all his strength.

"Va-si-lina-!"

His voice was filled with fear and tremble.

Vasilina pressed Palmer's head, kissed him on the cheek, then mimicked Palmer's tone in response, with a playful echo in her voice.

"Pa-Imer-!"

Chapter 539: Male Concubine

One day, at the Undying Club.

Everything was as usual, music filled every corner of the bar, Serey was wearing the floral dress with a slit up to her navel, mixing drinks while swaying her body, Bode hummed a song as he wiped the tables and chairs, Wei'Er found a cozy spot and curled up; she usually could sleep for an entire day.

By the way, at that time, Sai Zong hadn't left yet. He bounced around by Bode's side endlessly, hoping Bode would play a fetching game with him.

Bologue downed his glass of orange juice in one go and asked the tipsy Palmer beside him.

"Speaking of it, Palmer, you always mention your fiancée, but you've never talked about her."

Palmer asked, "What do you mean?"

"What kind of person is she?"

Bologue was very curious about what kind of person could actually be liked by Palmer, this oddball, and what kind of person could accept Palmer's affection.

Palmer was silent for a few seconds, stared at his reflection in the wine glass, and managed to say a single sentence after a while.

"An amazing person," he then emphasized, "truly amazing!"

"That's how you describe everything you like," Bologue said, "Be more specific."

Bologue usually wouldn't ask Palmer such personal questions, but he suddenly thought of it today, and this urge for knowledge grew stronger and stronger.

Among the many people Bologue knew, Palmer was considered extremely interesting and unique, which made Bologue even more curious about Vasilina.

For a long time, Bologue always felt that the so-called "fiancée" was just Palmer's stubborn excuse to not admit his life's failures.

Palmer would call his fiancée at a fixed time every week, Bologue never heard what they specifically talked about, but after the call ended, no matter how desolate Palmer looked before, he would be revitalized, like a car filled up with gas.

As time went by, the image of "fiancée" in Palmer's words grew more real in Bologue's mind. He felt that with Palmer's brain, it was unlikely he could round out a lie so perfectly, leaving only one possibility.

This guy really does have a fiancée.

Bologue couldn't help but marvel at what kind of extraordinary woman could subdue this freak Palmer.

"Vasilina, huh..."

Palmer hesitated, not knowing where to start.

Bologue guided Palmer, "How did you two meet?"

"Our encounter was simple, there was family interaction, she lived in Wind Source Highlands, so we knew each other since childhood."

"And then?"

"Then... actually, at first, I always treated her as a good buddy."

"Why a good buddy?"

Palmer was slightly drunk, "Because she really looked and acted like a good buddy!"

"Give an example?"

Bologue was intrigued, he felt Palmer and Vasilina's story must be more interesting than he imagined.

"For instance, she has a peculiar hobby, likes combat, boxing, wrestling, and all kinds of martial arts, of course, this probably relates to her family tradition, but for it all to fall on a little girl, it's still too strange."

Palmer mentioned this and suddenly shuddered, seemingly recalling some unpleasant memories.

"Initially, I met her through fighting thanks to this damn hobby of hers, as one might expect, I got beaten."

Palmer slammed the bar top, causing the wine glasses to emit a sharp ringing sound.

"Who was I then, the heir of the Clarks! Except for my parents, who dared to beat me like that!

But because I was the heir, calling others to help me fight was just too lame, so I started training myself, hoping one day to win!"

Bologue asked, "And what happened?"

Palmer's ignited spirit deflated, "Lost... never won."

Bologue struggled to manage his expression, trying hard not to break into a smile.

"Since I couldn't beat her, I couldn't escape either... after that, my relationship with Vasilina became very awkward, but living in the same place, we often bumped into each other," Palmer said, "Even though I couldn't hit her, I was really quick on my feet, Vasilina couldn't catch up with me."

"Despite being good in fighting, her endurance was quite poor, she'd need a break and to catch her breath after running a few steps," Palmer reminisced about that joyful yet not-so-joyful childhood, "I found a way to handle Vasilina which was to punch and run; she couldn't catch me and could only stand there seething with rage."

Love born from fights, that very much suited Palmer's style, Bologue continued to listen.

"But this tactic didn't always work, sometimes if I ran too slow, I'd be caught by Vasilina's coat and slammed to the ground, or blocked and endured a beating.

That's how it went, fighting since childhood, gradually the hostility lessened, and we'd play together, even spar occasionally."

Palmer recalled various childhood experiences, still sleeping when Vasilina banged the door violently to wake him, excitedly telling him she learned a new wrestling move.

At these times, Palmer would give nonchalant praise, followed by Vasilina grabbing him to let Palmer experience the new wrestling move firsthand.

"Love born from hate?"

"Can't really say that," Palmer pondered carefully, "For a long time, I never really regarded Vasilina as the opposite sex."

"Why?"

"Have you ever seen a little girl who mastered dozens of wrestling techniques, laughing as she wrestles you?" Palmer's hand started trembling uncontrollably as he added out of the blue, "I rarely cry."

"Oh, and she dresses really androgynously, with short hair, and she's tall," Palmer described, drawing a line across his chest, "and she's quite flat-chested too."

Bologue nodded. His indifferent expression was already losing control, with the corners of his mouth twitching occasionally. He could only clench his fists to make himself continue listening and not burst into laughter.

"So when did the change begin between you two? I mean, when did you start seeing her as the opposite sex and develop feelings for her?"

"Well, the reason is something I've already told you. I have a big dog named Leica, and I used to ride it around for fun. One day Leica got injured, and the doctor said that it's already quite old. If I keep doing this, it might age even faster.

I was extremely upset then, feeling that my selfishness hastened Leica's aging. Since then, I stopped riding Leica. To make it up to it, I even secretly sneaked food from the kitchen for it."

Palmer took the motorcycle keys out of his pocket and waved them in front of Bologue. That sidecar motorcycle named Leica was Palmer's dearest possession.

"Seeing me in such a slump, my dad got me a motorcycle. Though I was still a kid and found it hard to handle, it didn't stop me from endlessly riding around Wind Source Highlands.

But then one day the motorcycle broke down, and I didn't know how to fix it. My dad didn't care either since he was already annoyed by my daily riding. He thought I should spend my time studying. It was not

long after my coming-of-age ceremony, and I should've started learning all kinds of Extraordinary knowledge instead of running around wildly.

Vasilina said she knew how to fix it. I didn't know why she knew about such things, but since it was broken anyway, I let her try. Later... I almost forgot about the whole thing.

One day I realized that I hadn't seen Vasilina for a long time, so I went to look for her..."

Palmer's voice softened, squinting his eyes as if the scenes of the past were right before him. Although he recounted being beaten black and blue by Vasilina, he couldn't help but smile at the moment.

"I clearly remember it was a beautiful afternoon. The sky was cloudless, and the glorious sunlight fell unrestrained. The breeze carried the fragrance of the grassland, cooling and comforting as it brushed against the skin.

Vasilina sat in the shadow of a wall, wearing a black tank top and loose cargo pants. Her gloves were stained with black oil, some of which had smeared onto her face, mixed with sweat.

She was fiddling with those parts, forcefully turning a wrench, with the muscles on her exposed arms clear and defined—a perfect blend of strength and finesse.

At that moment, I didn't feel like I was watching Vasilina but observing a leopard tearing at its prey..."

Palmer paused, a perplexed emotion emerging in his eyes. Even after all these years, he still couldn't understand the origin of his emotions. Luckily, it didn't bother Palmer much; he was a rather simple guy who didn't bother figuring everything out.

"I felt that all my emotions towards Vasilina were released at that moment, collapsing like a bridge in a controlled demolition, one section after another, unstoppable.

I fell helplessly in love with Vasilina."

Palmer downed his drink in one go and slammed the glass on the table forcefully, ending his heartfelt narrative. With a sense of pride and a need for affirmation, he shouted at Bologue.

"A girl who can fix motorcycles is so damn cool, don't you think?"

Bologue nodded emphatically, clinking glasses with Palmer. Serey, who had been listening to the story, also cheered.

"To this damn love story!"

Serey slammed his foot on the bar and shook the bottle vigorously, spilling frothy foam everywhere.

After the revelry, on the way home, Bologue stumbled along with his arm around Palmer's shoulder.

"Did Vasilina ever fix the motorcycle in the end?"

Because of his quirky way of thinking, Bologue was still concerned about the fate of the motorcycle.

Palmer hiccupped and complained, "She can't fix a damn motorcycle. She just thought it would be fun to take it apart."

Back to the present.

Vasilina wrapped an arm around Palmer's neck, holding him tightly like a chick, forcing him to snuggle up against her.

Perhaps because it had been too long since they last met, Palmer blushed with excitement, gently patting Vasilina's arm, his body trembling continuously.

"Ah, you must be Bologue Lazarus, right? Palmer often mentions you over the phone."

Vasilina smiled and extended her hand toward Bologue.

"Vasilina Philrad."

Bologue responded kindly.

"Hello, I've heard Palmer mention you often as well."

After taking a closer look at Vasilina, at first, Bologue just thought she was an overly handsome man. After confirming Vasilina's gender, an indescribable aura surrounded her.

Cold, elegant, composed, and a hint of... dominance? Like an ice-cold queen.

In comparison, Bologue didn't feel that Palmer was a match for this queen, seeming more like her cherished male companion.

Oh, speaking of Palmer.

Bologue glanced at Palmer under Vasilina's arm and found the guy had rolled his eyes from being too excited, falling into a blissful faint.

"You're much more special than I imagined," Bologue added, "Good thing I'm starting to get used to this kind of unexpected specialness."

Realizing profoundly that nothing in Wind Source Highlands can be viewed through the lens of common sense.

"Haha, you're really funny."

Vasilina raised her hand, slightly covering her mouth like a graceful lady.

Chapter 540: Mountain Ridge

After Fuen's warm hospitality, Bologue watched as Vasilina dragged Palmer away like a trophy, to the end of the corridor, disappearing from sight.

"Palmer's in trouble now," Fuen came over and said with a grin, "As soon as this guy left, it was like a wild dog throwing off its collar, returning to the freedom of the wild."

Bologue followed the traces in his memory and said, "I remember this is the first time they've met since the engagement?"

Palmer and Vasilina's emotional entanglement is far more complicated than Palmer described.

"Yeah, Palmer left his Vasilina hanging in the Wind Source Highlands for so long, Vasilina probably wants to tear him apart."

Even though the one deeply in trouble was his own son, Fuen couldn't help but laugh.

Bologue couldn't help but wonder if Palmer was really Fuen's biological child, but then, thinking of Fuen's darn personality, perhaps when Palmer was born, Fuen might not have felt much joy of having a son, more like having a new toy.

Bologue asked again, "Palmer seems very afraid of Vasilina, why is he scared? Isn't Palmer supposed to like Vasilina a lot?"

"Hmm... maybe it's nervousness, being at a loss."

Surprisingly, this time Fuen actually thought carefully for a moment and gave a somewhat reasonable response.

"He might not be used to it yet."

"Used to having a fiancée?"

"Sort of, think about it, before leaving, she was just your girlfriend, but after only a few days of work, she suddenly became your fiancée."

Fuen spoke of his own past, "When I went through this, I was also in a panic, both joyful and fearful, my life was about to start a new Chapter, but this Chapter was full of the unknown."

"In the past, I only needed to take care of myself, but now I am no longer alone, I have attachments, no longer invincible."

Bologue shook his head, "I don't understand."

War, slaughter, death... Bologue has experienced many terrifying events that a normal person may never encounter in their lifetime; for Bologue, all this has long been taken for granted, but as a price, he has also never had the chance to experience a normal person's life.

Growth, learning, falling in love, starting a family...

All those extremely ordinary words, for Bologue, are extremely distant and unattainable.

Fuen said meaningfully, "There will come a day when you'll understand."

"Vasilina Philrad... Philrad, I've heard that surname before," Bologue said, "Is it what I think?"

"If you mean the founder secret societies of the Order Bureau, then you're probably right," Fuen confirmed Bologue's guess, "Compared to Philrad, I think you're more familiar with another name..."

"Mountain Ridge."

Bologue stated, as Palmer's fiancée, Vasilina's background was not simple.

Just as people often use Wind Source Highlands to refer to the Clarks, Mountain Ridge represents the Philrad family, which, like the Clarks, is one of the founders of the Order Bureau.

Mountain Ridge is located deep within the Rhine Alliance, at the snowy ends of the border mountains, and the most massive and towering peak there is Mountain Ridge itself, like a giant beast crouching on the earth, its arched spine supporting the gaps between heaven and earth.

Unlike the frequently appearing Clarks in the eyes of the world, due to the perilous and unique geographical environment of Mountain Ridge, the Philrad family is truly a Hidden Clan, with few members walking in the mortal world; most of them are like ascetics, feeling the resonance with the Ether in those snow-capped mountains.

Fuen stepped out of the dining room and onto the terrace, pointing in the direction, Bologue could see the vague mountains standing at the edge of the horizon.

"Vasilina is the third daughter of the Philrad family patriarch," Fuen said, "If the weather is good and visibility is clear, you can barely see a corner of the border mountains from here."

"Vasilina was meant for Palmer, wasn't she?"

Realizing Vasilina's identity, Bologue felt that the engagement between Vasilina and Palmer was not as nonsensical as Palmer had described.

"Not really, our Clark family advocates free love, as for Vasilina... Palmer just happened to find someone we all like as a fiancée."

Fuen, like an old fox, spoke with slippery words.

"Hasn't Palmer ever suspected this? The mysterious Philrad family member right by his side, growing up with him, and even becoming his fiancée..."

Bologue's words were interrupted by Fuen, "You're too suspicious, Bologue."

"I just care about my partner."

Bologue admitted honestly, he wasn't lying; Palmer was already a jinx, and Bologue hoped he wouldn't be unlucky again in such a lifelong matter.

"If I tell you there is no conspiracy at all, it's purely their own doing, would you believe it?"

Fuen expressed enough patience towards Bologue, possibly due to Bologue being Palmer's partner, or perhaps because Bologue's intention was to care for Palmer.

"The Philrad family, who represent the Secret Power Faction, focus on self-enhancement and the Ascending Body School; you could say every one of them is a humanoid monster, and only such humanoid monsters can survive in the extremely harsh natural environment of Mountain Ridge."

Fuen sighed softly, "But not everyone is suited for such power, even though many deficiencies can be compensated for later, inherent deficiencies are hard to remedy."

Bologue didn't continue, "So Vasilina didn't grow up in Mountain Ridge, but lived in the Wind Source Highlands..."

"There were no twisted stories, and no tragic fate, Vasilina was simply of a frail constitution, not suitable for living in Mountain Ridge; even after being promoted to a Condenser, she can somewhat adapt to that harsh environment, but she was only a child then, might not survive until the implantation ritual day in that accursed place."

Fuen waved helplessly, "The Philrad family, rather than being a real Hidden Clan, are more like a primitive tribe living deep in the forest, a bunch of real savages advocating absolute force and survival of the fittest."

In their eyes, only those who survive in Mountain Ridge until the implantation ritual and become Condensers are considered real Philrad family members."

"Then Vasilina..."

"She doesn't count as a true Philrad family member," Fuen complained, "because of the total free-range education by those savages, even though I brought Vasilina out, she still has hard-to-eradicate injuries and illnesses since childhood."

Bologue said, "Sounds like they're tough to deal with."

"No need to worry about that; normally, an average Condenser might not even meet those savages once in their lifetime," Fuen immediately added, "Of course, if all those savages came out of the mountains, that would indeed be a big problem."

Bologue sorted through his thoughts, the six Hidden Clans shrouded in fog gradually surfaced, giving Bologue further understanding of this complex Extraordinary World.

"Savages, huh..."

Bologue whispered, in this light, at first glance, Vasilina indeed exudes a sense of wild strength, a power derived from her bloodline, even if raised in Wind Source Highlands, the Clark family's education only served to veil that wildness slightly.

Church approached Fuen, and their eyes met for a moment, they both knew the welcoming banquet was over, and now it was time to move on to the next stage.

"Care to join us, Bologue?" Church invited Bologue.

Bologue knew what was about to happen next, but he did not immediately respond. Instead, he first instructed Aimou, "You go back first... you can play with Leica for a while."

No matter how mature Aimou seemed, it couldn't change the essence of her being a child; she almost always enjoyed cuddling and playing with Leica.

"Oh, okay."

Aimou nodded, accepting Bologue's arrangement as usual.

"We can go now."

Fuen gestured with a "please," and then led the way. Bologue and Church followed behind, whispering to each other.

Bologue whispered, "This is your task, is it really okay for me to be here?"

"There's nothing wrong with it," Church also whispered in response, "I saw the curiosity in your eyes; you also want to know what happened in the past, don't you?"

Since Church had put it that way, Bologue did not refuse and responded with a smile.

Under Fuen's lead, they proceeded along a spiral staircase deep into the castle, where the vow binding the Night Race was sealed in that dark place.