

## Endless 541

### Chapter 541: Coward

The dim firelight illuminated the narrow staircase, and a cold breeze wafted up from the deep darkness below, brushing against Bologue's skin and making him feel as if he had returned to the winter days not long ago.

Secret Energy·Wind Source, is the starting point of the Clarks' power and, among the known Secret Energies, the one that can push the Commanding School's power to its limit, with great potential.

This power seems fearsome, but through long work with Palmer, Bologue knew that this seemingly all-encompassing Secret Energy actually had a very fatal flaw.

Even though Palmer was now promoted to a Prayer Believer, and Secret Energy·Wind Source had upgraded to Secret Energy·Furious Wind Pardon, the essence of its operation remained as it was, commanding airflow changes.

Once Palmer was trapped in an enclosed space, the stagnant airflow would severely limit his power, and this limitation would become increasingly deadly as the space grew narrower and more sealed.

Members of the Clarks should belong to the free sky, not bound by anything, but then they couldn't really sleep on the ground and hide inside a castle; the enclosed space made them feel uneasy.

To solve this problem, the entire Fortress of the Morning Wind seemed to be built of sturdy bricks and stones, but to suit the Clarks' Secret Energy·Wind Source, these strong castles concealed many hidden wind tunnels.

When the gale blew over this sprawling castle group, the wind wasn't completely blocked, and much of it would seep into the castles, maintaining the flow of the airflow.

With years of construction added more designs to the Fortress of the Morning Wind, such as opening or closing certain special wind tunnels. Whenever a gale swept by, the airflow within the tunnels would resonate with the structures, producing a strange melody.

Like an omnipresent ghost orchestra, playing that lost movement within the Fortress of the Morning Wind, until this magnificent castle collapsed in the passage of time, turning into brilliant ruins.

As he moved toward the darkness below, the temperature gradually dropped, and the air turned moist.

According to Palmer's introduction, there was a large cave below the Fortress of the Morning Wind, which the Clarks had excavated into a secret port.

Bologue suspected that the damp moisture arose from the secret port, and then a low rumble gradually became clear in his ears.

It sounded like someone's indistinct murmurs, or the dull crash of water against the embankment.

Bologue lifted his hand to press against the wall beside him, feeling the vibrations from within the wall, with a wind tunnel just beyond the bricks, through which the airflow roared, bursting with resonance.

"Can you talk to me about the specific course of the Dawn War?"

Bologue broke the silence of their advance and asked Fuen who was in front, "My clearance level isn't high enough to learn the specifics of the Dawn War."

Fearing his intent wasn't clear, Bologue bluntly asked, "I want to know about the part concerning Serey's betrayal."

Serey Villeries.

In fact, Bologue was quite clear that despite Serey's carefree demeanor, he could be sure Serey was definitely not a good person. This guy carried a debt of mountains of corpses and seas of blood. Now, he was just tired and retired in the Undying Club.

But regardless of everything, Bologue never thought Serey had such a past.

"As the Night Race Lord, they were one step away from building an Eternal Night Empire, yet Serey suddenly abandoned it all, betrayed his father, and destroyed everything... I can't understand."

The more Bologue thought about it, the more confused he became.

"There's nothing hard to understand."

Fuen, in their advance, turned back. Compared in biological age, Fuen would count as a young man in Bologue's eyes, but Fuen looked at Bologue with the gaze used for a child.

"Not everyone pursues eternity blindly."

Bologue whispered, "Are you suggesting that an undead got tired of being immortal?"

Was he tired of immortality? Bologue wasn't sure; the Undying Body was merely a useful tool for him.

Perhaps he was still "young."

Yes, he was still "young."

Wei'Er often told him he was a young undead, still having many desires unmet in his heart, that's why he lived with so much energy; whereas undead like Wei'Er had no desires left, living was merely as a walking dead.

Fuen said, "Tired of immortality? I never heard Serey say such a thing... actually, like you, when I first learned these things, I asked Serey too, but Serey didn't say a word."

"I guess Serey probably gulped down a few drinks and pretended to be drunk to avoid your questions, right?"

Every time Bologue tried to probe those secret pasts, Serey would evade the conversation in that clumsy way, Bologue knew it well and didn't press him too much.

He and Serey were good friends, blood oath kind of friends, and as a good friend, Bologue was willing to maintain a safe distance from Serey, not intruding upon his sensitive boundary.

Fuen was surprised, "Yeah, always pretending to be drunk... wait, after all these years, he's still using that trick?"

"To Serey, 'all these years' and 'a few days' make no difference."

"Hmm, true."

They chatted idly with occasional silence, only Church remained with a serious face, loyally doing his duty.

Bologue asked, "You and Serey are so close, haven't you thought about going back to see him?"

"We sometimes meet, but the time interval is a bit long," Fuen said, "and I'm no longer that free-field staff; I'm the head of the Clarks' now, once I leave the Fortress of the Morning Wind, it will definitely attract other people's gaze."

"Sounds stressful."

"It's just responsibility, can't be helped," Fuen said enviously, "if I could, I'd also like to live like Serey, such a life would be so joyful."

"But I think Serey isn't that happy; he's just wasting his endless life."

Hearing Bologue's answer, Fuen laughed out loud, in this deep spiral staircase, his laughter was so loud.

"That's how it is."

Fuen affirmed, "So sometimes eternity isn't a good thing, at least not for Serey."

The topic returned to the initial question and answer, and Fuen began telling another story.

"I can't quite remember which day it was, anyway, it was another night of drunkenness. Under the intoxication of alcohol, the two of us lay on the table, chatting absentmindedly.

Serey asked me, if one day I were about to die, and he was beside me, would I plead for his mercy, to grant me the Blood of the Night Race, to attain the same Undying Body as him."

Faced with the temptation of an Undying Body before death, even if it was a drunken chat, Bologue could empathize with Fuen's feelings back then.

"To be honest, I was tempted."

Fuen held up the candlelight, the play of light and shadow dividing his face into an ancient sculpture, carrying a sinister meaning.

"But I am from the Clarks' family. If I did that, the old undying ones would kill me themselves, so I stubbornly responded that I wouldn't accept Serey's blood."

Fuen suddenly stopped, and Bologue couldn't halt in time; they were very close, facing each other, and for a moment, Fuen exuded infinite pressure, squeezing Bologue's mind, Bologue could only stubbornly stare at him, facing that scrutinizing gaze.

"I can't recall Serey's expression at that time, but I think he was quite happy then."

Fuen looked at Bologue emotionlessly, repeating what Serey had once said.

"Immortality is a curse, our shells may be eternal, but the inner soul has long rotted in immortality."

An eerie atmosphere lingered between the two, Fuen seemed to be recounting Serey's past, yet it seemed to imply Bologue.

Bologue paid no heed to the undertones but gave his own opinion, "If Serey is tired of immortality, he just has to step out of the Undying Club and bask in the sunlight."

"I mentioned this to Serey back then," Fuen turned and continued leading the way down, "but for my suggestion, he just pretended to be drunk and avoided it."

"Serey is still nostalgic for immortality?"

"No, I think he's just not brave enough to take that step."

Fuen's words paused, a mocking smile lifted at the corner of his mouth, "Just like his father, the Villeries are all a bunch of cowards."

"Cowards..."

Bologue recalled the first time he met Serey, the story Serey had told him.

The coward feared death, and for this, offered his soul and those of his descendants to the Devil, who gladly accepted the proposal, thus the coward died in that long night.

The Night King endures.

Chapter 542: Wind Cellar

"Serey is the Night King's most beloved eldest son. In the distant past, Serey was the most aggressive and violent lord among the Night Race, waging war everywhere, never resting."

Every time Serey toppled a city, he would judge the people: either join the Night Race or die.

Under the threat of death, few could refuse the allure of the Undying Body. Because of this, Serey's legion grew stronger day by day, invincible. In the long and protracted warfare lasting hundreds of years, it could be said that more than half of the Night Race's territory was expanded by Serey."

Fuen added, "These records were obtained from ancient texts, and some from the mouths of fellow Undead. As for Serey himself, he never mentions his years of conquest."

Bologue said, "The Serey of now and the Serey of the past are almost like two different people."

"More than just two people, I am really curious about what Serey went through to become like this.

From a bloodthirsty, violent lord to today's... pole dancer?"

Fuen did not sigh further, but continued to talk about the Serey he knew from the past.

"Although the Night Race possesses the Undying Body and spreads it easily, their own critical weaknesses limit the expansion of the Eternal Night Empire.

During the night, the Night Race would launch attacks recklessly, but when daylight came, they could only cower in the shadows, leaving themselves at our mercy. Because of this, although the Night Race was powerful, for a long time, we were in a stalemate with them. Moreover, when the Night Race expanded to a certain scale, they became dormant."

Fuen seemed to have more to say, but he swallowed his words and began to talk about what everyone knew.

"After many years, with the development of Alchemy Matrix Technology, new conflicts were brewing in the shadows, and then, as we know, the Dawn War broke out. The Night Race expanded at an astonishing speed, annexing various countries. To curb their advance, we united together."

"In the final showdown, the Night Race summoned clouds to turn the day into night, fighting under the protection of shadows. At the moment of despair, the Clarks called upon a storm to disperse the clouds. Brilliant sunlight fell, burning away all evils."

The silent Church spoke at this time, narrating the finale of the war with a poet-like chanting tone.

"This has always been the glory of the Clarks."

Fuen smiled in agreement with this magnificent achievement, but his smile did not last long, becoming cold and stiff.

"But this is just false glory. The storm of the Clarks was not decisive in the direction of the war, only the last straw that broke the back of the Eternal Night Empire."

Bologue curiously asked, "Was the real hero Serey? What exactly did he do during the Dawn War?"

Every Undead, no matter how ridiculous they seem now, hides a story of mountains of corpses and seas of blood behind them, a living, undying legend.

"He didn't do much at all..."

Fuen halted his words, with a slight smile, but this gentle tone carried a chilling malice.

"Serey injured his father, killed all his siblings, and almost single-handedly wiped out the 'Pure Blood' class of the Night Race.

As for the final showdown, it was merely a group of oblivious sacrifices, united under Serey's command, recklessly launching a full assault."

Fuen casually recounted the shocking conspiracy and betrayal.



"It was not a full assault or a decisive battle, but a premeditated massacre, a conclusion personally chosen for the Night Race by Serey, this mad executioner.

The plain was the burial ground for all the Night Race. When the clouds dispersed, the sunlight scorched hundreds of Night Race members, setting the entire wilderness ablaze for seven days and nights."

Bologue held his breath unconsciously. No matter what, he never imagined the truth of the Dawn War would be such a scene, not the extreme ferocity of mutual slaughter, but only Serey's extremely cold scheme.

On one side was a ruthless turncoat, a conspirator, and on the other a laughable pole dancer. The overly divided image left Bologue's thoughts sluggish, a bizarre chill constantly traveling through his limbs.

In Bologue's eyes, Serey was like a docile viper.

Serey had retracted his fangs, but this did not change the essence of him being a viper.

"Why... did he do it?" Bologue didn't understand Serey's betrayal, "Did he suddenly come to his senses?"

Fuen half-jokingly said, "As I said earlier, perhaps Serey was just simply tired of being undead.

He may not have the courage to end his undying life, but he had the courage to lend a hand and help other members of the Night Race fulfill their wishes."

This joke isn't funny.

Bologue sighed, "Sounds like a capricious lunatic."

"You just realized that? That's the essence of the Undead. Over the long years, they gradually lose themselves, becoming numb walking corpses, acting only to stimulate their dull senses."

Fuen blessed, "May you remain clear-headed for a long time, Bologue."

"That doesn't sound like a blessing, more like some kind of curse."

Bologue felt a heaviness in his chest, not sure if it was the content of the conversation or the change in surroundings. His breathing became oppressed and weary.

"Hahaha, how could it be a curse? It's just a destined prophecy."

Fuen waved his hand, "Fortunately, our lives are short, and we won't witness the day you descend into madness."

Bologue asked, "Is that supposed to be a good thing?"

Fuen explained, "At least in the eyes of the ones you love, and those who love you, until the moment they die, you'll still be in that perfect flawless state."

No disappointment.

"Not long ago, during a mission, I encountered a member of the Night Race. She seemed to have a deep connection with Serey."

Bologue thought it was time to divulge this piece of information. His voice echoed in the dim stairway.

"Olivia, is it?" Fuen had already known of this information, "When you reported it to the Order Bureau, they had already informed me, after all, the 'Dawn Oath' is within the Clarks."

"She harbors an extreme hatred for Serey... She might be a survivor from the Dawn War," Bologue said, "The recent assaults are likely orchestrated by her."

"Is that so? Let's first take a look at the 'Dawn Oath'," Fuen displayed a helpless smile, "I must admit, though I'm the Patriarch of the Clarks, I've never inspected the 'Dawn Oath' all these years."

Fuen continued speaking.

"We've arrived."

The end of the spiral staircase led to a straight corridor, with dim lights burning silently on both sides. Bologue stepped onto the corridor, and the roaring of the wind came from all directions.

Even though Bologue was already deep inside the castle, raging winds still surrounded this subterranean area, offering an intriguingly novel experience, as if the corridor was built amidst a storm.

Fuen's eyes emitted a faint glow. Under the resonance of the Ether, obstacles along the way shifted one by one. The defense mechanisms here were somewhat similar to a Cultivation Room. With the turning of mechanisms, massive stones moved aside one by one, layer by layer, revealing an iron-cast gate at the end.

"The defenses here don't seem strong," Church inspected the defenses of the Clarks along the way, "A far cry from the Cultivation Room."

"The Cultivation Room is a terrifying Void Realm. Few in this world can compare to it. You comparing it with here makes me feel extremely honored."

After many years working within the Order Bureau, Fuen had a very clear understanding of the strength of the Cultivation Room.

With a gentle wave, the iron-cast gate opened in response.

"The last time this was opened was to send Palmer to work at the Order Bureau."

As Fuen said, this place hadn't been opened in a long time, with metal and stone grinding together, producing ear-piercing friction sounds. Pebbles caught in the crevices were crushed into fine dust.

Ether clung to the metal. A completely enclosed self-circulating space was chiseled out with an opening, and an ancient wind swept through the darkness behind the door. Bologue couldn't help but cough a few times.

The sound entered the darkness, bringing back a distant echo, like the jaws of a giant beast yawning open.

Bologue felt nothing. This guy had ventured to heaven and earth, even having explored the realm after death. Mere unknown darkness couldn't intimidate Bologue. Church, on the other hand, seemed much more tense. He was carrying a responsibility, and involuntarily gripped the briefcase in his hand tighter.

"Where we're headed next is called the 'Wind Cellar'. It's the core area of the Clarks. No matter what you see inside, I hope you can remain silent after leaving."

After Fuen's reminder, he stepped into the darkness beyond the door, and instantly the sounds of wind, rain, thunder, and lightning filled the surroundings, echoing continuously.

#### Chapter 543: The Elders

When Bologue stepped out of the darkness and his vision regained clarity, a strange sense of nausea welled up in his heart, a feeling both familiar and peculiar.

Church beside him shared the same sensation, his face becoming somewhat pale, while only Fuen maintained his usual calm demeanor, with a faint smile on his face.

"Is this a... Curved Path Gate?"

Bologue immediately realized what had just happened. What they had passed through was not an ordinary door, but a Curved Path Gate.

The Key of the Crooked Path can open a door to a fixed location from anywhere, extremely convenient. The Curved Path Gate, being different, is point-to-point fixed; it is much more stable than the Key of the Crooked Path and can operate for a long time.

What was hidden deep within the castle was merely a Curved Path Gate. Only Fuen knew their exact location now. They might still be within the Fortress of the Morning Wind, or they might have long left the castle grounds and been in some unknown region of the Wind Source Highlands.

"Just some simple tricks,"

Fuen's voice was gentle, afraid of waking the ghosts sleeping here.

"According to records, King Solomon's Holy City of Remongedon also had many similar designs. Curved Path Gates mixed with ordinary gates, unknown to those who enter impulsively, would step into an endless, trap-filled maze."

Speaking of the Holy City, Fuen's gaze turned obsessive, "I have been to the Abandoned Land, looked upon the ruins of that city from the Desperate Outpost... what a beautiful stretch of ruins."

"I have always thought the Holy City was a miracle constructed by the Alchemists... no, by the Extraordinary World, and yet it was destroyed just like that."

Fuen made no effort to hide his admiration for King Solomon, and the great creations of his, "One of my life's great regrets is being born too late, yearning to witness that city's existence with my own eyes, even if it's witnessing its destruction by the flames of war."

"I witnessed it with my own eyes," Bologue nodded in agreement, "It was indeed an enchanting city, even when I was on its outskirts and it was already engulfed in flames."

Fuen's gaze was envious, "Oh? Then you really were fortunate."

To this, Bologue said nothing more. That city which fascinated Fuen was the very beginning of Bologue's dark fate.

"Speaking of which, Serey was also there during the Fall of the Holy City."

Suddenly, Fuen's words stirred Bologue's emotions, halting his forward steps, his azure eyes fixed intently on Fuen's back.

"By then, the Dawn War was long over, and Serey had long been residing at the Undying Club, whiling away his extended years; for entertainment, he observed the Fall of the Holy City and witnessed the destruction of the Holy City firsthand."

Fuen raised both hands and gently pushed aside the air, his tone light.

"A flash of light."

A light that shattered the boundary between heaven and earth, summoning sulfur and fire, turning all invaders into pillars of salt standing tall.

Bologue asked further, "And then what?"

"There was nothing after that. Serey never mentioned anything beyond that. I had also investigated related records within the Order Bureau, but just like someone was deliberately concealing them, I found nothing."

Fuen suddenly stopped walking and turned to look at Bologue, "The strangest part is, even after becoming the Patriarch of the Clarks, possessing authority and power, I still have no knowledge of any related information."

"I sound like a rather unsuccessful Patriarch, don't I?"

Fuen said self-mockingly, "There's nothing I can do, being merely a spokesperson of the Clarks. The real decisions still rest with them."

Bologue soon realized who the "them" Fuen mentioned were.

As they delved deeper into the Wind Cellar, the whistling wind behind the walls grew clearer, a sense of fullness surged within Bologue from inside out, even though he hadn't channeled any Secret Energy, his eyes involuntarily glowed with Ether, causing the Alchemy Matrix on his body to light up as well.

It wasn't just him; Church experienced the same.

The bright Alchemy Matrix largely covered Church's entire body, the patterns were not complex, many areas had large blank spaces. Based on the complexity of the Alchemy Matrix, Bologue judged that Church should also be of the Prayer Believer Tier.

As for Fuen, he differed from the two, with Ether submitting to his command, no signs of the Initial Activation Phenomenon on his skin.

Defender? Or Seeker of Glory?

Bologue couldn't ascertain the extent of Fuen's power, but he was sure that Fuen's strength far surpassed that of a Negative Power User.

"The Ether concentration here is somewhat too high."

Church waved his hand, as if stirring the surface of water, ripples of shimmering light appeared out of nowhere, then subsided, and dissipated.

The high concentration of Ether filled the space, causing both Bologue and Church to involuntarily resonate, passively awakening the Alchemy Matrix.

The gentle sound of flowing water echoed, an indented water channel existed on the edge of the bricks, golden liquid Ether flowed through it, disappearing into the darkness, beyond the wind, a constant dripping sound joined in, creating an unending drizzle.

Bologue spoke, "Maintaining such a high Ether environment for a long time must be quite a burden for the Clarks, right?"

"This place is 'natural'."

Fuen explained, "Just like the Angry Sea, this is also an Ether Vortex Point, discovered many years ago by the Clarks, and transformed into its current state. With a simple overlay of an Alchemy Matrix, it can self-sustain indefinitely, with its lifespan calculated in millennia."

Like a vortex on a water surface, numerous natural vortex points exist in this world, vast amounts of Ether gather independently, forming supernatural phenomena similar to the Angry Sea.

"I hope the following scenes won't frighten you."

Fuen spoke as he pushed open another door, revealing the heart of the Clarks' house to the two of them.

Canyn light showered from above, the Ether concentration here reached its peak, golden droplets continuously precipitated from the air, floating like dust, converging into raindrops that fell, creating a perpetual cycle, raising an eternal rain in this enclosed space.

The raindrops reacted with nothing, even falling on the towering layers of bookshelves without soaking the books, sliding off as if in contact with a smooth mirror.

This place appeared to be a massive collection room, with layered bookshelves on the outer rim, while below lay numerous collectibles, most of them Alchemy Armaments, with metallic surfaces glowing faintly. Many priceless artworks filled the gaps between heaps of coins; if Bologue wasn't mistaken, they were Mammon Coins.

Yet Bologue was not drawn away by this wealth; his gaze settled on the true treasures in the Wind Cellar, the multitude of books sealed on the shelves, which dissected history into countless fragments, assembled here once more.



It seemed the Wind Cellar was aware of the visitors, as the stacked bookshelves rapidly extended, encircling like the tiers of an arena.

This was a Void Realm, with its space rapidly expanding, revealing its true appearance before them.

As the space fully unfolded, Bologue noticed amidst the bookshelves, many chairs placed sporadically, each occupied by a figure. They wore Golden Masks, with crimson robes draped over their bodies, outlining their silhouettes.

They were withered and desiccated corpses, like mummies decayed over time, they should be dead, but in this high Ether environment, their flesh had broken free from the mortal coil, visible from the exposed slender arms.

Their fragile skin resembled alabaster, devoid of any blood hue, with only flowing golden brilliance beneath. Over the long years, their bodies had undergone extensive Etherealization, transforming into pure energy, and their current forms were merely manifestations of Ether.

Through this almost cheating method, they escaped Death God's scythe, lingering in the shadows of time, yet merely lingering, unable to fully Etherealize, retaining mortal portions within their bodies.

The Etherealized parts were unaffected by time, but the mortal fragments would eventually wither and die, marking their end. Fortunately, this high Ether environment could indefinitely delay that demise.

Fuen stood with hands crossed in front, positioned before Church and Bologue, patiently waiting. Minutes later, Ether's glow ignited under the Golden Masks, the withered bodies slowly lifted their heads, gaze emanating from all directions, focusing on Fuen.

"Elders..."

Fuen softly spoke, the sound touching Ether, reverberating like thunder.

The Elders nodded with slight inclination, their chests and throats showing no movement, yet an ancient voice emerged from thin air.

"Good..."

The Void Realm of the Wind Cellar began to contract, and the expanded, stacked bookshelves consolidated once again, along with the vanishing silhouettes of the Elders.

Everything dissipated like a waking illusion, but after the hallucination, a bright light shone from a corner of the bookshelf, as if guiding everyone.

Fuen stepped forward, retrieving the heavy book from the shelves, placing it on the old table, wiping off the dust on its surface. The words "Dawn Oath" appeared before their eyes.

#### Chapter 544: Oath Document

"Dawn Oath."

Witnessed by the Condenser of the Contract School, bound by the Devil's Power of Contract, shackling all those who leave their names here.

"This thing has always been guarded by the Elders, unless necessary, very few people delve into this past history."

Fuen gently stroked the book's cover, shrouded in some unknown black substance, traced with patterns in gold, with a latch at its center, chains extending to firmly seal the book.

After a crisp sound, a sharp spike sprang from the latch, and Fuen pressed his fingertip upon it, fresh blood slowly flowing, seeping into the lock core.

In the silence, Bologue could clearly hear the sound of sucking coming from within the latch, as if it were some living creature, hungrily licking Fuen's blood.

The blood satisfied the seal, the latch sprang open, and the chains broke apart, liberating the book; it flipped pages autonomously, requiring no external force.

Fuen took a deep breath; even he couldn't help but feel a surge of emotion.

This is the witness to the Dawn War, the end of the Eternal Night Empire's collapse.

As the book opened, the pages seemed to possess a magical power momentarily, devouring the surrounding Ether, an invisible whirlwind brushing the pages, causing them to flip rapidly, and then the scattered pages flew out like birds, circling around.

The flipping of the pages stopped, countless pages suspended in mid-air, pieced together to form a grand tapestry.

At the top of the tapestry, the words "Dawn Oath" were inscribed, below flowed complex oath contents, numerous additional clauses extending around like lush branches.

Then there's a list constructed of countless names, positioned like a cornerstone at the bottom of the oath book; Bologue vaguely saw the surnames Villeries and Clarks in this list, along with many familiar yet strange surnames representing the founding families of the Order Bureau.

"This feeling... is it sunlight?"

Church felt the warm light emanating between the pages, warming his body, but for the Night Race, this warm glow was the deadliest poison.

"To prevent the Night Race from contacting the oath, we found a way to integrate sunlight within it," Fuen said casually, "It never hurts to be more prepared."

"And now to confirm whether there's an issue with the oath."

Fuen said as he began to read it, "Unless necessary, no one disturbs the Elders to review this stuff."

The Wind Cellar holds countless precious collections, accumulated wealth of the Clarks over endless years; any other Patriarch would meticulously peruse these treasures, rejoicing in the gold, but clearly, Fuen wasn't a typical Patriarch; for him, non-essential matters could be directly ignored.

The Elders often lambasted Fuen's various behaviors, claiming they were blind to entrust such a responsibility to him, yet when confronting Palmer, they smiled broadly, albeit Palmer being worse than his father, the Elders merely laughed, saying Palmer was still young and would mature eventually.

Church opened the briefcase, inside lay another book; as Fuen read, Church flipped through the book in his hand, its pages fluttering, attaching to the pages of the "Dawn Oath."

The Book of Rubbing, an Alchemy Armament made specifically for duplicating oaths, yet the duplicated oaths held no power, merely for reading by others.

Facing Fuen's puzzled gaze, Church explained, "I need to make a copy and deliver it to the Decision Room."

Fuen said nothing more, continuing to peruse the contents of the "Dawn Oath," explaining its contents to the two as he read.

"As expected, it's about the distribution of spoils and the disposition towards the Night Race..."

These contents weren't important; Fuen merely glanced over them, but as reading deepened, his brow gradually furrowed.

Bologue asked, "Discovered something?"

"It detailed the handling of the remaining Night Race but did not mention the Night King's fate."

Fuen realized, from various books and from Serey's accounts, he learned of the Dawn War's progress, yet the Night King's fate remained a mystery, seemingly assumed by everyone that the Night King fell during the war.

Why isn't the Night King's fate mentioned in the oath?

Fuen continued reading, finding no specific explanation for this part in the oath, but from other clauses, it seemed the drafters did not consider the Night King's part significant when drafting the oath initially.

They must have dealt with the Night King, but the handling did not involve the oath.

As Fuen pondered, his gaze flicker among the bookshelves, he believed the Elders must know the inner workings, as most participated in the Dawn War, many are centuries old, deteriorated beyond recognition, only able to survive in the Wind Cellar.

"What's this part about?"

Bologue suddenly found a clause in the oath blackened, the original writing was indiscernible, only left with black lines.

"Someone modified the oath? That's impossible, only when both witness and contractor are present can the oath be modified," Fuen said, suddenly understanding, "This isn't the original oath!"

Continuing down, the oath modifications weren't many; besides this part, Bologue found another altered spot.

It was a list concerning the Villeries Pure Blood members; after the Dawn War and Serey's betrayal, few Pure Bloods remained, thus there weren't many names on the list, but one name was also blackened, removed from the oath.

At the end of the oath, signatories' names were visible; representing the coalition were signatures of the heads of several major families at the time, on the Night Race side were signatures of the few remaining Pure Bloods.

Serey Villeries.

Among the signatures was Serey's name; he participated in the signing of the Dawn Oath back then.

Bologue wasn't surprised by this, even deemed it natural; under Fuen's recounting, Bologue's understanding of Serey changed drastically tonight, unsure how to face Serey upon returning to the Undying Club.

Should he draw a long knife, rest it against Serey's neck, making him reveal the events of that year? Or respect Serey's wishes, act as if nothing happened, continuing singing and dancing with him?

Bologue ceased pondering, another name caught his attention.

"Wolfgang Gold."

This unfamiliar name signed at the witness's position, a century ago, the "Dawn Oath" was penned by Wolfgang Gold.

For some reason, Bologue was certain it was his first time seeing this name, yet felt an indescribable familiarity, as if in years past he knew and was familiar with its owner.

This eerie illusion prompted Bologue to ask Fuen, "Do you know this name?"

Fuen shook his head, "Not at all."

Then Fuen supplemented, "To be a witness to the 'Dawn Oath', surely a significant figure in those times."

To write the "Dawn Oath," the required Power of Contract, could not be easily borne by ordinary Condensers of the Contract School.

Bologue secretly committed the name to memory, Fuen furrowed his brow as he put away the "Dawn Oath," they found a clue, yet this clue pointed to no direction.

The Decision Room might know something; for that mysterious supreme ruling entity, everyone held a blind trust.

Around them flickered dim yellow light, the Elders hidden in confined spaces, indulging in long slumbers, but among this silent flock, lay a restless black sheep, slowly opening its eyes.

#### Chapter 545: Strange Relationship

Palmer strolled out of the room and sat on the recliner on the terrace. The Wind Source Highlands were quite cold in the early morning, with a thin mist spreading across the fields like a pale white spider web covering the ground.

The air was fresh and moist, with a hint of chill. Palmer wrapped the blanket tightly around himself, relaxing on the recliner, savoring the moment of peace.

Palmer always felt that Wind Source Highlands was a great place for retirement, unlike the highly industrialized Oubos in Oath City, where the old atmosphere still remained, and each breath tasted of nature, while in Oubos, he was often choked by the industrial fumes.

When he first arrived in Oubos, it was a truly tough day for Palmer, but fortunately, every day brought extremely novel things that gradually allowed him to forget these awful aspects.

"It feels good to be home..."

Palmer murmured to himself, like a dog who had wandered for many years, returning to its beloved little den. It might be very simple and dirty, but here you can let go of all defenses and feel inner peace.

"Hmm? You woke up really early, Palmer."

A familiar voice came from the bedroom behind him, shattering the peace and tranquility on Palmer's face instantly, and he became uncomfortable and tense.

Palmer was always curious about how Vasilina did it; every time she stepped forward, her footsteps were incredibly light, like a hunter advancing cautiously.

Vasilina came onto the terrace, stretched her body, and the color of her skin faintly showed under the loose pajamas, like a lazy wild cat.

Due to just waking up, Vasilina's eyes were a bit blurry, and the cold demeanor on her body had softened somewhat.

"Move over."

Vasilina reached out and patted Palmer's head. Despite his reluctance, Palmer shifted sideways on the recliner, and Vasilina squeezed in with effort, snatching Palmer's blanket to cover herself, then casually wrapped her arm around Palmer's head, making it unclear whether she was about to kiss Palmer or perform a friendly sleeper hold.

Sleeper hold?

Palmer's body involuntarily shivered, and certain bad memories uncontrollably surfaced in his mind.

The last image from the memory of last night was Vasilina hugging him kindly and incidentally choking him unconscious.

Due to the obstruction of his neck and throat, Palmer fell into a brief suffocation, coupled with insufficient blood supply to the brain, he was somewhat in shock.

Palmer couldn't quite remember what happened next; he seemed like a corpse being dragged back and forth in the hallway, while Vasilina seemed to be saying something to him, probably some angry words.

Thinking about it, although Palmer and Vasilina always kept in touch over the phone, he rarely mentioned meeting in person; like pen pals who had never met, Palmer could speak freely on the phone, but upon meeting, he became extremely flustered, not daring to look into Vasilina's eyes.

Why is it like this?



Palmer was a bit puzzled, clearly everything was so wonderful when he left the Wind Source Highlands; he was off to explore new territories and even got a girlfriend, even though Vasilina was the one who took the initiative on that.

Palmer was a bit sleepy and couldn't understand these things. As he continued to ponder along the path of memories, he seemed to vaguely hear Vasilina's mischievous laughter in his mind.

Ah, Palmer's memory gradually became clear.

All along, Palmer found himself at a disadvantage when facing Vasilina; whether it was physical confrontation or mental gambits, it always proved so.

For a long time, Palmer consoled himself by thinking that as the heir of the Clarks, he needed to observe the noble etiquette to let Vasilina prevail, to excuse his failures in the conflicts.

Vasilina was a very perceptive person; she mocked Palmer for his hypocritical noble etiquette.

"Just an excuse for your justification."

During childhood, Vasilina said this as she stuffed Palmer's head into the mud.

Palmer shouted, "You're a girl; how can you be so rough! Etiquette! Etiquette!"

"I'm a barbarian, shut up!"

Like Palmer, Vasilina was also very adept at utilizing her identity to engage in verbal battle.

Every time Palmer tried to educate Vasilina with civilization, Vasilina would resort to her barbarian lineage, although she's not a real barbarian, some things are carved into the bloodline, hard to change.

The clash between civilization and barbarism often concluded with the latter achieving overwhelming victory, but there was no helping it.

No matter what Palmer said, Vasilina always acted as if she couldn't understand because she's a barbarian, particularly involving physical competition where Palmer stood no chance.

Palmer slowly turned his head; there was Vasilina, so casually squeezing herself next to him, unlike the aloof demeanor others usually observed, she seemed more like a cat snuggling on your lap, though this cat was a tad too large.

How strange...

Palmer remembered playing with other kids, and Vasilina also sported that indifferent demeanor, but when she saw him, she'd laugh and joyfully wrestle with him. Palmer often wondered if there was some unknown grudge between him and Vasilina.

Vasilina was watching the distance, where amidst the mist, the mountains rose like a snow-white canvas. When the first ray of morning light hit the peak, it appeared as if made of gold, glowing with a vibrant shine.

Palmer knew Vasilina was gazing toward her never-visited hometown.

Vasilina noticed Palmer's gaze and looked at him puzzled, "What are you doing?"

"I'm wondering what madness possessed me to fall in love with you."

Palmer was unexpectedly frank, speaking without much thought.

Palmer frequently pondered these matters. He understood that telling Bologue "a girl who can fix motorcycles is utterly cool" was just a trigger, an emotional catalyst. He had already fallen in love with Vasilina long before this trigger, but how did it all start? Palmer couldn't quite figure it out.

Vasilina asked, "Have you figured it out yet?"

"No," Palmer shook his head, "so I'm still thinking."

Palmer felt his mind was a bit sluggish, possibly because he hadn't fully recovered from last night's wrestling; he remembered Vasilina saying something while dragging him.

"Same as always, the more you think, the less you understand," Vasilina advised, "sometimes it's unnecessary to think so clear-headedly, trust your instincts!"

This response very much matched the barbarian mentality.

Palmer understood Vasilina's point. During his coming-of-age ceremony, he saw the elders in the Wind Cellar, who were like mummified figures. Their low, aged voices echoed around him, telling Palmer of the responsibilities he would have to fulfill...

Palmer was nearly crushed by the pressure of that distant future.

"You can run, Palmer, when a Hunter encounters prey that's too strong, we choose to avoid it."

Vasilina used a hunting analogy to comfort Palmer.

Palmer shook his head, "No, I am the heir of the Clarks' family, it's my duty."

Vasilina looked at the crouching Palmer. He was dispirited, yet kept talking about duty; Vasilina grabbed his collar and pulled him up.

"Firstly, duty isn't something decreed by fate. If you want to reject it, running away isn't shameful."

Vasilina was more of an action person than a philosopher; perhaps this was the nature of a barbarian, even if she had lived in the Wind Source Highlands and had never lived a single day of a barbaric life.

After saying these words, Vasilina turned and left. Palmer thought that his cowardice might have angered Vasilina, like jam stuck to a wall, he slumped down again.

Thinking of it, Vasilina lived like a true warrior. After learning her background, despite her poor health, she insisted on training, saying one day she would conquer those high mountains.

Palmer was somewhat timid and afraid of death, which laid a solid foundation for his future tendency to defect at any time.

Soon, Vasilina came back, carrying large bags.

"You carry these things."

Vasilina was panting heavily. She was skilled in techniques and possessed strength, but her stamina was terribly poor.

Palmer asked, "What are these?"

"Tents, hunting tools, medicine, and so on. With these, we can live outdoors for a long time, and if we're lucky, we'll have meat to eat every meal."

Vasilina was serious, she was really planning to take Palmer to escape, she had even mapped out the route.

"I'm torn about whether to bring Leica, it would speed up our movement a lot but this guy eats a lot, its food would be a problem."

Vasilina thought carefully, "Let's bring Leica after all; in case of an emergency, it can be reserve meat."

"Hey!"

Palmer perked up immediately upon hearing Vasilina might take action against Leica.

What answered Palmer was Vasilina's laughter; she was joking. She kicked away those large bags and reached out to rub Palmer's head.

"Besides running away, Hunters actually have other choices."

"What?"

"Call on more Hunters for help!"

Vasilina encouraged Palmer, reaching out to pull him up, whispering softly by his ear.

"I'll always stand by you."

The morning light rose from the horizon's edge; thin mist, like scattered dust, gained a visible shape under sunlight, drifting and dispersing.

Palmer tried to turn his body; a faint pain arose, piercing his nerves like needles, bringing forth more disturbing memories.

Palmer suddenly realized a question: Why did he wake up here? Why was Vasilina by his side when he awoke...

Like a rusted machine poured with a whole bottle of lubricant and rust remover, following a brief period of dry friction, the machine roared to life. His sluggish thoughts were now racing; Palmer's listless face became vibrant and colorful.

Palmer remembered the final story from last night, using his Prayer Believers' body strength, Palmer managed a brief respite, chaotically dashing through the corridor.

Unfortunately, he didn't escape in the end; Vasilina's shoulder throw completely knocked Palmer out, then she kissed him.

Palmer's memory ended here, in the aftertaste of his recollection, he was like a startled horse caught by a Hunter, with its throat bitten through, then gutted open.

#### Chapter 546: Wind Source Highlands

Regarding Vasilina and his own mindset, Palmer thought about it all morning and came to a preliminary conclusion.

In short, the whole responsibility still lies with that damned engagement banquet.

In Palmer's view, he and Vasilina merely had a long period of interaction, initially establishing a relationship, then he went off to work, and only returned today.

From a social and emotional relationship perspective, Palmer felt that his and Vasilina's status was that of boyfriend and girlfriend.

But Vasilina didn't think so; in her view, they had already skipped over all the ambiguous, mutual adjustment, and other bothersome stages, directly leaping to engagement.

From a social and emotional relationship perspective, Vasilina felt they were already considered a couple, only Palmer was always nervous and jumpy.

The cognitive gap between the two led to different behaviors, Vasilina could face Palmer with great composure, while Palmer was in a state of shock as if he had been abducted.

"It's clearly something to be happy about, so why can't I feel happy?"

Palmer sat in the endless wilderness, with towering castles behind him casting shadows that concealed his figure.

Regarding his instinctive panic in the face of Vasilina, Palmer still couldn't understand. When he scrambled out of the room early this morning, disheveled and embarrassed, he was almost executed on the spot by the passing guards.

Goodness, a strange man running out of Vasilina's room, the future mistress of the Clarks!

Out of loyalty to the Clarks and a love for gossip, the guards really didn't hold back at first, and only when they recognized Palmer did they fall into confusion.

This is your own home, and yet you're running away like this.

Palmer didn't bother to explain much, leaving without looking back. He knew Vasilina wouldn't be angry; sometimes she understood him better than he understood himself. She probably already knew the answers to these issues troubling him, but she liked teasing him, enjoying his flustered state.

As he dashed out, Vasilina was still mocking him, "Are you shy or something, Palmer?"

Palmer slowly hugged his head, curling up into a ball.

"Too damned..." he muttered.

"What's 'too damned'?"

Hearing a man's voice, Palmer was startled like a carp leaping out of water, standing up directly, and only relaxed when he recognized the visitor.

"Bologue—couldn't you make some noise when you come over?"

Palmer clutched his chest, taking deep breaths.

Bologue said, "I called you from far away, but you were so dazed you didn't hear it."

Behind Bologue stood Church and Aimou, all looking at Palmer with concern.

Last night, when Vasilina took Palmer away, Bologue and Church were checking the "Dawn Oath," leaving Aimou to wander alone inside the Fortress of the Morning Wind.

Now the light in Aimou's alchemy puppet eyes was several degrees brighter than usual, indicating her excitement.

From her creation until now, Aimou had never left Oath City, Opus. Now being a thousand miles away in the Wind Source Highlands, every moment was an incredibly novel experience for her.

"What are you dazing out for?"

Bologue lifted Palmer up with one hand, "Did you forget the purpose of our return?"

"What purpose?"

Palmer's mind was like mush; he was about to give up thinking.

Bologue shook Palmer vigorously, hoping it would clear his head somewhat, "Vacation! Tourism! As a local, you wouldn't want us just wandering around randomly, right?"

Palmer felt a severe headache, very painful.

...

The ensuing itinerary was much simpler, as Palmer tried hard to cast aside his chaotic thoughts, leading the group in strolling and pausing within the Wind Source Highlands, witnessing nature's miraculous craftsmanship.



"The location of the Fortress of the Morning Wind is quite nice."

Standing on the high walls, Palmer pointed a finger at the endless wilderness ahead, and the group nodded in agreement. Compared to Oath City, Opus, this place was as beautiful as the Celestial Kingdom.

The Wind Source Highlands maintained an ancient mystique, with the power of industry merely serving as embellishments here. Along the way, Bologue saw many elegantly dressed Condensers and Knights in Iron Armor, as if they had traveled a hundred years back in time.

On the other side of the high walls lay the vast sea. Due to its proximity to the Angry Sea and its location within the Clarks' dominion, hardly any ships, except for the Clarks' supply vessels, approached here, preserving the natural environment exceptionally well.

Sea water stretched to the horizon, seemingly blending with the sky, making it hard to distinguish where one ended and the other began.

Palmer said, "On a clear day, you can even see the lightning and thunder of the Angry Sea from here."

He then directed the group's attention towards the direction of the border mountains.

"Similarly, you can also see the border mountains."

The border mountains lie further north from the Wind Source Highlands, their distances vastly wide apart, yet due to their towering, continuous presence, even from here, one could barely glimpse a vague corner.

The border mountains are considered a life-forbidden zone, perennially snow-covered, with an extremely harsh natural environment. At the same time, they are also an extraordinarily splendid earthly place, the Rhine River that flows through many countries originates from within these border mountains.

Curiosity drove some to wonder what's beyond the border mountains. After negotiation with the Philrads, they provided an answer.

Beyond the mountains, it's still just mountains. At the end of these endless mountain ranges lies a colossal cliff cut out like a giant axe, separating mountains from the sea, representing the end of the land.

The mountains are merely earthly borders; thus, people refer to them as the border mountains. Apart from adventurers battling nature, virtually no one ventures here.

"Many years ago, people believed there was an ideal place beyond the mountains and tried to cross them, but later we discovered there was nothing beyond," Palmer lamented, "It's somewhat disappointing, yet understandable."

Church spoke up, "The world is big, but not infinite, like a mine; it will eventually be exhausted one day."

"Alright, then... if you're lucky, perhaps at night you'll see the Ethereal Radiance shrouded over the Wind Source Highlands."

Bologue corrected, "Shouldn't it be the aurora?"

There's also a peculiar phenomenon within the Wind Source Highlands — the frequent appearance of the aurora. Auroras are not unfamiliar to humans, but what puzzles geographers is why auroras appear given the Wind Source Highlands' geographic position.

"That's just the Wind Source Highlands' outward facade information. Those 'auroras' are the Ethereal Radiance emitted after high ether concentration aggregation. As I mentioned, we are near the Angry Sea, which is an Ethereal Vortex Point. A large amount of ether accumulates there, influencing the surrounding region."

Palmer explained, "This is also why there are always fierce winds crossing the Wind Source Highlands. It can be considered an anomaly of ether."

Bologue suddenly remembered something, and his gaze flickered over Aimou's face. He pursued Palmer with the question, "In the Clarks' records, has the anomaly intensity of the Angry Sea always been like this, or is it increasing year by year?"

Bologue caught Palmer in a tough spot, making him look troubled. After carefully pondering for a while, he gave a hazy answer.

"Maybe..."

Palmer remembered the elders who resembled mummies; some of them had joined in recent years. They watched Palmer grow and even recounted past stories to him.

It was from the elders' mouths that young Palmer first learned about the existence of the Dawn War and also touched the fierce, terrible scars on their withered bodies.

"When I was a child, the elders once said this," Palmer stated, "In their youth, the winds of the Wind Source Highlands weren't so terrifying, but now increasingly violent storms frequently appear."

"Fortunately, as the storms grew formidable, human alchemy matrix technology also advanced year by year, even catching up with the storm changes. Once, we could only hide inside the Fortress of the Morning Wind, awaiting the storm's departure, but now, if we want, we can easily overcome it."

Palmer's words didn't cheer up Bologue much; he kept recalling Teda's research. If Teda's idea proves right, with time the ether concentration of the entire world increases steadily.

Leaving aside human progress in alchemy matrix, supernatural phenomena like those of the Angry Sea would also grow increasingly terrifying and frequent annually.

What kind of world would that be by then?

#### Chapter 547: The Curse of Childhood

Bologue lay among the verdant wild grasses, feeling the damp dew between the green leaves and the soft soil beneath him... Everything here is so relaxing.

The Wind Source Highlands weren't always so isolated. It's sparsely populated simply because it lies within the core territory of the Clarks family. In this era of information, to avoid unnecessary trouble, the Clarks family has exercised control over the core area.

But outside the core region, there are traces of human activity. Some towns even exist, mostly under the management of the Clarks family, bringing enormous wealth to the family each year.

Palmer mentioned that in recent years, due to industrialization and the beautiful environment of the Wind Source Highlands, more and more people have moved there to retire, leading the Clarks family to earn significantly from selling houses.

Palmer said if it weren't for his own duties, he considered opening a resort in the Wind Source Highlands to be quite appealing.

Aimou acted like a child... to be precise, she was a child. She laid beside Bologue to feel the continuous tranquility of life. With her boundless energy, she ran wildly across the fields, encountering Leica who crawled out of its nest, and rode Leica as they recklessly charged forward.

Leica seemed quite happy too, having a strong fondness for this guest who secretly fed it delicious food against a healthy diet.

Only Palmer felt a bit uncomfortable, worrying about the aged body of Leica as it ran around.

Like the Wind-Eroded Bird, Leica is an alchemical creature, a Wind Chasing Dog born from the foundation of canine species augmented by alchemy technology.

The difference between them is, Wind-Eroded Birds are considered degraded as alchemical creatures, lacking any intelligence, relying solely on biological instincts to fight, and exceedingly bloodthirsty, essentially serving as biochemical weapons.

As a Wind Chasing Dog, Leica possesses a degree of intelligence, with loyal characteristics, and through years of nurturing, can execute relatively complex tactics.

During the Clarks family's long development before the age of industrialization, to control the vast territory of Wind Source Highlands, they created the Wind Chasing Dog as an alchemical creature.

Unlike the leisurely and indulging Leica of today, historically, Wind Chasing Dogs wore iron armor, relying on their speed and strength to crush enemy skulls into fragments.

Their figures even appeared in the Dawn War a century ago. Due to the backward alchemy matrix technology, the coalition relied heavily on these alchemical creatures as auxiliary troops.

With the gradual excavation of the Secret Source and advancement in alchemy matrix technology in recent years, these expensive and high-maintenance alchemical creatures have gradually retreated from the historical stage.

Solid railways and roaring internal combustion engines replaced Wind Chasing Dogs, leading to a decline in their breeding over the years. Today, only a few are still bred within the Fortress of the Morning Wind, serving as witnesses to history.

From then on, Leica shed its duties as a combat unit, turning into Palmer's companion, running and frolicking with him.

Now accompanying Aimou running around, it's essentially returning to Leica's old trade.

Palmer sat down next to Bologue, who suddenly spoke, "Actually, I always thought Leica had already passed away."

"Huh?"

"Isn't it so? Only something that's dead needs to be commemorated with a name."

"You really are..." Palmer didn't know what to say for a moment, but looked at Leica again, his gaze turning sorrowful, "Actually, I'm pretty surprised that Leica could live this long."

"According to the books, the average lifespan of Wind Chasing Dogs is around fifteen years, and Leica was my birthday gift when I was six," Palmer calculated simply, "It's already a total grandfather."

Bologue keenly noticed Palmer's hidden emotions, "Leica is still alive, so why are you so sad?"

Palmer replied irritably, "Seeing it still alive makes me very happy, but thinking about its impending death makes me very sad... Is this hard to understand?"

"It's really surprising," Bologue bluntly commented, "I didn't expect your emotions to be so sensitive and delicate."

"What's so surprising? I'm very concerned about anything I invest personal emotions into, okay?"

"But when working with me, I haven't seen you like this."

Bologue recalled their work experiences, where he was either implicated by Palmer's misfortune or doing all the work himself while Palmer zoned out beside him.

Only two answers remain: either Palmer is lying, or he doesn't care about Bologue as a partner at all.

"You are the Undead!"

Palmer emphasized, "You're the guy who's absolutely never going to die."

"So?"

"So I don't need to worry about your death," Palmer reiterated, "You are eternal, you won't die, I don't need to fear losing you, it's so relaxing."

Talking about immortality, Palmer's expression was immensely relaxed, though he was the Undead, his expression made Bologue feel as if he were the Undead.

"Don't be fooled by his demeanor; this guy's personality is very sensitive."

Church sat down beside him, as Palmer's former partner, he had a lot to say about this.

"After I got injured, this guy tried to compensate me, treating me every day, to the extent he couldn't pay the rent... For a while, he spent his nights on the sofa in the lounge."

Church pointed to his own eye as he spoke; it was an Alchemy Eye, and it was the weakness of Church's Secret Energy·Faceless Man.

Palmer glared at Church, the feeling of having his inner thoughts exposed was terrible, but upon seeing Church's eye, his momentum faltered somewhat.

Church seemed no longer angry about the past; he might have never cared, simply finding Palmer's reaction amusing.

Bologue lay completely relaxed on the grass, Palmer hugged his knees, gazing into the distance, while Church supported himself with one arm on the ground, the other resting on his propped-up knee.

The three sat together, watching Aimou scampering with Leica in the distance—on the verdant fields, the lovable dog and adorable girl made them all feel that nothing could be better than this.

"I just..."

Palmer began to think, following the line of thought from the morning, pondering his desires, his relationship with Vasilina, and many other perplexing issues.

Gradually, Palmer realized one thing: living in Oubos of Oath City, although filled with conspiracies and fights, all these things could be solved with violence.

As a field staff, Palmer was adept at violence, not to mention he had a partner who was extremely violent.

There was almost no worry in his work life to speak of, and after work, there was the endless drinking party at the Undying Club...

Palmer discovered that his life in Oubos within Oath City made no psychological progress at all; now, psychologically, he was no different from when he first entered the workforce.

Work served as a great excuse for Palmer to avoid numerous worries and the curse that bothered him since childhood.

"I'm just... so afraid of losing."

The gentle breeze caressed his tender heart, perhaps making Palmer incredibly relaxed in the scene, so much so that he inadvertently brought up the thought he had hidden away.

"Every time I think about Leica, my longtime companion, dying, I feel very sad."

Palmer glanced at Church as he spoke, "It's the same with you. Just thinking about how we almost died in that ritual fills me with panic."

Church's fake eye not only reminded Palmer of that crazy past but also constantly warned him how close he came to losing his partner.

Church said, "As a member of the Order Bureau, you should be indifferent to death."

"No, I can be indifferent to my own death, really, I feel like death means nothing to me," Palmer shook his head, "but I can't accept the death of others, the destruction of things I care about, that's what I can't endure."



"I can tell," Bologue nodded, "When you told me about your conception of the afterlife, I could sense it."

"Why?"

Palmer didn't understand; in his eyes, Bologue was a complete oddball, sometimes painfully oblivious, sometimes startlingly perceptive, leaving one unsure if he genuinely didn't understand anything or just pretended not to.

"At first, I couldn't quite grasp it, but ever since we got the company car, I suddenly realized."

Bologue couldn't recall what day it was, just another night after work when Palmer happily hummed along with the radio, occasionally slapping the steering wheel, cursing the cars cutting in front.

This guy was extremely happy, and the scene Palmer envisioned for the afterworld was so similar to now.

"Riding in a car with friends, traveling an endless highway... eternal joy, eternal friends, eternal companionship, eternal parties."

Bologue assessed this, "That was too easy to guess."

Palmer was left speechless by Bologue's words; in truth, Palmer had never thought about these things, but following Bologue's line, he felt Bologue was absolutely right.

Palmer loved this feeling, being with friends, the idea of happy times never ending, like right now, this felt great.

But the sad thing is, Aimou will tire of playing, Leica will get exhausted, the sun will set, night will fall, and the three of them cannot stay here forever...

Everything has its end, just as even the weightiest tome has its final page.

"I think I know why I am so afraid of Vasilina."

Palmer murmured as something dawned on him.

#### Chapter 548: Stupidity

As night fell, a few people were graciously hosted by Fuen, but in the end, it was just a repeat of the first night's banquet.

Scattered figures sat around the long table, and there weren't many attendants in the room either. By comparison, it seemed somewhat empty, and their conversations echoed endlessly.

Bologue noticed these issues on the first day. As the core of the Clarks, there were too few people here; besides the guards, it was still just guards, looking like a heavily fortified military stronghold.

According to Fuen, it usually wasn't like this. Many Clarks family members and employees lived here, but due to the ongoing disturbances from the Night Race, the Fortress of the Morning Wind had entered a state of war. To avoid accidents, many non-combatants had already been evacuated.

"How are you all enjoying yourselves?"

At the end of the long table, Fuen asked with concern.

"Not bad, the Wind Source Highlands is a great place," said Bologue. "If I had the chance to retire, I would definitely choose this place."

Fuen burst into laughter; he enjoyed Bologue's humor.

A retired Undead? Fuen couldn't imagine a reason for it.

Fuen didn't participate much in the conversation; he knew that no matter how composed and friendly he was, he would ultimately bring some pressure to the group, especially to Palmer.

Palmer was extremely fed up with his hypocritical father; sometimes Palmer felt like he wasn't the product of his father's love but just a toy born along his life path.

After a few polite exchanges, Fuen left the dining room to the young people, which was a setting he had intentionally created for them.

"Apologies, everyone, the introduction was too rushed yesterday."

Vasilina raised her glass towards the group, her expression extremely restrained, hovering between a slight smile and indifference, with a cold quality to it.

Unlike Bologue's cold demeanor reminiscent of a psychopathic killer, Vasilina exuded a more noble, untouchable aura.

"Vasilina Philrad."

Vasilina reintroduced herself.

During the day's leisure stroll, Vasilina did not appear. It wasn't until the banquet that she showed up again; for this reason, her time with the group wasn't long, aside from her appearance, Bologue and the others didn't get to know her any better than before.

Palmer kept his head down, like a scolded child, mechanically eating.

During his daytime conversation with Bologue, Palmer gradually came to understand his own strange feelings and ridiculous thoughts.

Unfortunately, a wide gap existed between understanding and acceptance; even though Palmer understood everything, he still appeared extremely weak when facing Vasilina.

"Actually, we can be considered old friends."

Vasilina spoke openly to the group, her gaze flitting across their faces. "I've heard about your stories from Palmer."

Bologue replied, "So have we."

Relying on Palmer as a medium, their stories lingered in each other's minds. For Vasilina, she didn't even need Palmer's introduction to recognize who they were easily — they were like the most familiar strangers.

The cold-faced, debt-collector attitude, unfocused eyes belonged to Bologue, Palmer's current partner. The ordinary-looking, forgettable figure was Church, Palmer's previous partner. As for the one with a halo in their eyes, no need to guess, it must be the Alchemy Puppet Aimou.

Vasilina was curious about Palmer's life in Oubos of Oath City, perhaps wanting to cross-check whether Palmer had lied to her over the phone.

"Um... you guys continue, I'm feeling a bit tired."

Just as the conversation was about to delve into off-duty leisure activities, Palmer suddenly stood up.

Without waiting for the others to respond, Palmer turned and left immediately, walking quickly down the hallway. As he rounded the corner, he broke into a run.

It's over, it's all over.

In conversations with Vasilina, Palmer portrayed a remarkably healthy daily life; what Undying Club? What hangovers? Palmer had no idea! Right?

But now it was different; Vasilina suddenly put him on the spot, not giving Palmer a chance to align his stories, and besides escaping, he could think of no other way.

He hid all the way back to his room, locking the door for fear Vasilina would burst in; he even moved the cabinet in front.

It wasn't until this moment that Palmer relaxed, lying on the bed, his mind a chaotic mess.

Upon returning to the Wind Source Highlands, many issues he'd put aside came flooding back, leaving Palmer extremely restless. On the one hand, he was delighted to reunite with Vasilina, but on the other hand, he desperately wanted to return to the Order Bureau and shelve these problems again.

In a state of disarray, Palmer curled up on the bed and fell into a deep sleep.

The banquet turned into a night chat; they discussed Palmer amidst the candlelight. Even though Vasilina maintained her smile throughout, upon hearing about Palmer's revelries and relentless hangovers at the Undying Club, even her controlled expression showed a slight crack.

After Palmer, Church was the next to leave.

"I have to go back to handle some work; tomorrow I will first return to the Order Bureau."

Church had work to do; he should have returned to the Order Bureau immediately after acquiring a copy of the "Dawn Oath," but he delayed for another day at Fuen's invitation.

After Church departed, the night chat wound down too; everyone returned to their respective rooms. Since it was on the way, Vasilina walked off with Aimou, while Bologue strolled alone in the Fortress of the Morning Wind.

It was not just incidental, as Vasilina had an intense curiosity about Aimou; after all, such an alchemical being was rare.

Aimou could sense Vasilina's curiosity because, at one moment, Aimou felt Vasilina's gaze resembled Belli's but much more restrained.

"So your true form is still an Alchemy Puppet?"

Vasilina squeezed Aimou's arm while speaking. It was soft flesh, not cold metal.

Aimou nodded, "Yes."

"The state of flesh and blood then is more like a reflection of a Steel Body," Vasilina's eyes sparkled. It was rare to see such new phenomena as Aimou in the Wind Source Highlands. "If the flesh suffers a wound, will the injury also reflect?"

"That's right."

Vasilina gasped in amazement, "Wow... that's fascinating."

"So, if properly maintained, you could keep running forever? For hundreds, or even thousands of years?"

Vasilina suddenly realized this aspect; from the mechanical perspective, Aimou could be considered a unique type of Undead.

"I'm not sure about that; from the time I was created to acquiring the Blessing-Doppelganger, only a few years have passed."

Aimou shook her head; her "experimental records" were pathetically sparse; after Teda's death, she had to explore herself, and her understanding of her peculiarities was limited.

"Marvelous, truly eternal."

Vasilina remarked meaningfully.

Aimou didn't grasp the emotions laced in Vasilina's words, but she had a long-pondered question she wanted to ask Vasilina at this moment.

"May I ask you something?"

"Hmm? What is it?"

"How did you fall in love with Palmer?"

Aimou admitted Palmer was quite nice, despite being rather unfortunate, sometimes neurotic, and often lazy at work... but honestly, he's a good person. Discovering he had a fiancée surprised Aimou, sparking curiosity about Vasilina.

Additionally, hearing Palmer's love story from Bologue, Aimou always thought Vasilina was just as wacky, decked out in masks, shouting nonsense about robberies during fun times.

In reality, however, Vasilina and Palmer were complete opposites; casual chat revealed Vasilina was responsible for the logistics operation of the Fortress of the Morning Wind, proving her work capabilities were exceptional. She was dignified, composed, and the absolute opposite of Palmer.

Is this what people call complementarity?

Hearing Aimou's query, Vasilina chuckled lightly, covering her mouth to hide her amusement.

"Well..."

After calming herself, Vasilina spoke with a hint of mystery.

"You probably won't believe this."

"I will!"

Thinking for a moment, Vasilina whispered.

"It's because Palmer is so silly."

#### Chapter 549: Chekov's Gun

The night enveloped the Fortress of the Morning Wind, with a high concentration of ether filling the land. Against the backdrop of darkness, the magnificent arc light rippled, accompanied by the gentle touch of the breeze, drawing out strands of colorful silk.

The glow of ether is always changing, presenting itself within the human visible spectrum. For condensers, it is also considered a characteristic of themselves, such as Bologue's azure light, and the golden radiance of Aimou, Geoffrey, and others.

In the natural state of ether, it is uncontrolled by any condenser, its brilliance diverse and romantic.

Bologue stood by the window, observing this aurora-like beauty, and once again marveled at the vastness of the world and its colorful diversity.

At times like this, Bologue would feel the blessing of fate, which burdened him with debt but also allowed him to survive, giving him the chance to witness sights he had never touched before.

Drawing his gaze back, Bologue continued to wander in the Fortress of the Morning Wind, like a night-patrolling guard. He was not yet tired and did not wish to sleep early; such opportunities were rare, and he wanted to learn more about these ancient castles within Fuen's allowed scope.

Outside the Fortress of the Morning Wind, the bright moonlight was gradually covered by dark clouds. The sea illuminated by moonlight also became gradually dim and unknowing. In the deep darkness, only the sound of waves crashing against the shore, washing over rocks, could be heard.

People had long been accustomed to such melodies, but tonight was different as there was a discordant noise in the natural tune.



In the deep ocean, strange creatures twisted their repulsive figures, climbing onto the wet beach with the push of the waves.

They struggled to suppress their desire for flesh and blood, waving wet arms, crawling up the steep cliffs, while in the thick dark clouds, the hungry Wind-Eroded Birds also restrained their nature, making no sound, resembling a pack of wolves scenting blood, encircling the Fortress of the Morning Wind.

They were waiting for something, and soon, what they awaited arrived.

From the Angry Sea came deadly breezes carrying dust-like substances. As they approached the Fortress of the Morning Wind, they collided with some invisible entity, and sparks drew out a hazy arc-shaped barrier.

Under intense reaction, the Void Realm defense line constructed by the Fortress of the Morning Wind began to fill with cracks, shattering. The dust corroded the ether-forged barrier and opened a safe passage within this stringent guard line.

The wind carried the command to attack. The monsters climbed the cliffs, and the Wind-Eroded Birds circled between the dark clouds, ready to swoop down at any moment.

In the depths of darkness, pairs of crimson eyes opened, staring at this high wall they had never crossed.

The coagulated blood aura accompanied the moist sea breeze, gradually spreading like a dark red mist, permeating onto the Fortress of the Morning Wind. And on the highest Celestial Vault Tower, Fuen calmly observed it all, his face no longer carrying the usual kind smile but absolute indifference, like metal.

Fuen calmly spoke, "So... this is your true job? Everything before was just a facade?"

Reflecting on the brief contact time, Fuen's heart was slightly chilled. Perhaps being too comfortable in the Wind Source Highlands had led him to forget the true nature of the Order Bureau as a violent organ.

The counterpart hidden in darkness stated calmly, "This is just the necessary intelligence work — deceiving one's own people."

"Then how did you obtain such intelligence?" Fuen felt doubt rise within him, "Even I don't know these things, yet you, far away from me, seem to understand more about what happens on this land."

"Not to mention such core, secret matters."

Many years ago, the Order Bureau was controlled by six founding families. However, as time passed and technology progressed, people were shocked to discover that what they once firmly controlled, the Order Bureau, now controlled them.

The leadership of this massive group underwent replacement, and by the time they realized it, the intricate, sprawling entity had already become unrecognizable, difficult to discern.

At this moment, Fuen had an even deeper understanding of this feeling, realizing that the Order Bureau's knowledge of the Wind Source Highlands was even deeper than his own as the Patriarch of the Clarks, as if the Fortress of the Morning Wind were transparent to the Order Bureau.

"These are directives from the Decision Room."

The counterpart maintained a calm and indifferent attitude, mechanically answering whatever Fuen asked.

Decision Room.

Fuen took a deep breath, his cold lips easily drawing a smile, "Why do I find it so easy to accept when it's an order from the Decision Room?"

This feeling was strange; since his youth working within the Order Bureau, Fuen had vaguely sensed it.

The Decision Room is all-powerful.

Nobody ever told Fuen this directly, yet this thought curiously emerged in his heart.

The Decision Room is all-powerful.

Fuen had once suspected whether this was some mental influence. Upon returning to the Wind Source Highlands, he underwent extensive testing, finding no abnormalities. But more oddly, as his work deepened and age grew, the concept of the Decision Room being all-powerful did not collapse in his mind but grew stronger.

Until today, the Decision Room strengthened this belief within Fuen's mind once more.

The Decision Room is all-powerful.

Fuen sighed lightly, "It's almost omniscient and omnipotent..."

He knew very well that there was no such thing as omniscience and omnipotence in this world, yet Fuen couldn't help but associate the Decision Room with it, even though it wasn't achievable, it was infinitely close.

In the darkness, the other person opened the briefcase and took out a modestly shaped flintlock gun, holding it in hand, feeling the warmth from its wooden grip.

Fuen examined the flintlock gun, clearly drawn from the briefcase, yet it presented a fired state.

The flint and fire steel collided together, the powder pan cover opened, the metal at the muzzle slightly reddened, enveloped in a faint smokiness.

It seemed it had already fired within the briefcase, but there was no gunshot, no bullet, and no trace of firing, this flintlock gun was filled with an eerie sensation.

Fuen recognized this weapon, his gaze grew solemn, but luckily he was quite knowledgeable, calming down immediately.

"They handed this weapon to you? Truly crazy."

"Nothing much, it's just a replica of the 'Gun of Destiny', and its usage conditions are very harsh, giving it to me is just for insurance, after all the target is suspected..."

The other person did not continue, inspected the flintlock gun, he too noticed the fired state of the flintlock gun, his tone riddled with regret.

"Sorry, Chekov's Gun has been fired."

The bullet has already left the barrel, now we just need to find whose heart it is in.

Fuen did not think there was anything to apologize for, during his work at the Order Bureau, he had also encountered this eerie alchemy armament, using it to pierce through the hearts of a few people.

On the frontline battlefield, it might not be as advantageous as a short knife, but due to its strange nature, no one could underestimate its existence.

This is an alchemy armament exclusively for assassins.

Like Palmer's Blessing, that mysterious luck, many times it may not attract attention, but you cannot ignore its presence and at some inadvertent moment, it becomes the key to reversing the situation.

Fuen stopped thinking about these matters, instructing.

"I'll handle those troublesome guys, and you... go find that bullet that has been fired."

...

Based on the scale of construction alone, the Fortress of the Morning Wind is too immense, Bologue thought that given a few more days, he might not be able to finish exploring it, let alone those restricted areas similar to the Wind Cellar.

Just this place is so magnificent, Bologue couldn't help but wonder what kind of splendor the long-buried Holy City of Remongedon might hold.

Curiosity is so gripping, leading Bologue to fantasize whimsically, if possible, Bologue would like to explore the Abandoned Land once more, but this matter requires approvals from various parties due to the calamity sealed under the Abandoned Land.

Just for the sake of curiosity, Bologue felt he couldn't even pass the Lebius part, let alone the Desperate Outpost section.

Any ether-bearing, flesh-and-blood being stepping into the Abandoned Land would pose risks to the stability of the calamity's seal, something the Abyss Watchers could not accept.

Thoughts didn't linger long in Bologue's mind, breezes wafted through the open windows, the moist sea breeze brushing Bologue's nose, the odd scent in the coolness instantly interrupted all of Bologue's thoughts.

Like a shark smelling blood in the water, Bologue's muscles instinctively tensed up, clenched fists, preparing for combat.

Bologue at first didn't even realize why he was so alert, then he distinguished the familiar, soul-corrupting scent within the sea breeze.

Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid extended from the cuff, forged into a sharp long knife in Bologue's hand, Bologue stood by the open window, his gaze sweeping the eerie, uninhabited corridor.

This scene was reminiscent of a horror film plot, the victim terrified, wandering within the corridor, avoiding the monsters that could emerge from anywhere. The audience held their breath, anticipating the brutal scene.

Luckily this was not a movie, but reality, and Bologue was not a helpless victim; on the contrary, he felt if this were a movie, his role and that of the monsters should be reversed.

The rustling sound of rain came from outside the window, the fine rain pounding the castle.

The Wind Source Highlands were always accompanied by wind and rain, a sudden downpour was normal, followed by a crackling thunder tearing the sky, the rumbling echo drowned out the wailing.

Blood splattered, covering the carpet.

#### Chapter 550: The Iron Embrace

Blood flowed along the grooves of the metal, gathering at the end of the hilt, dripping down in large drops, seeping into the carpet, above the blade, a creature barely resembling a human was nailed to the ceiling.

The moment the blade hit it, it erupted into dense Iron Thorns, tearing through every inch of its flesh, shredding all its bones, its skin still maintained its shape, but inside it had already transformed into a mess of mud and dirty blood.

Bologue, reflecting on his experiences from the past few days, had already guessed what the creature was, but he still carefully observed to confirm.

The familiar pale skin, the loss of sanity, leaving only frenzied scarlet eyes, a strong ability to resurrect, but under Bologue's fatal attack, even this meager resurrection ability was rendered useless, and it completely died.

Bologue whispered, "Bloodthirsty."

Within the Night Race, different classes are differentiated based on the purity of bloodline; the nobler the bloodline, the greater the ability to convey one's power to the next class through "Blood Donation," for example, if Serey were to donate blood to a mortal, that mortal would directly ascend to the Pure Blood class within the Night Race.

But through layers of transmission, even the purest bloodline gradually deteriorates, and the power of the Night Race continuously weakens, the most evident manifestation being this class known as the "Bloodthirsty."

The Bloodthirsty are the lowest class within the many classes of the Night Race; their bloodline has undergone multiple deteriorations, they suffer severely from Bloodthirsty Syndrome year-round, and they are essentially devoid of rationality, driven purely by a desire for blood.

The weaknesses of the Night Race also deteriorate continually, concentrated upon the Bloodthirsty, with their susceptibility to silverware greatly increasing, and they burn to ashes the instant they touch sunlight. As for the pride of the Night Race, the Undying Body, it is reflected in the Bloodthirsty merely as enhanced recovery power.

Upon suffering a fatal blow, they die truly like mortals, just like the one slain by Bologue now.

"After continuous deterioration of the bloodline, even their Blood Contract gradually distorts," Serey had once commented on the existence of the Bloodthirsty, "If the Pure Blood class is blessed as debtors, then the Bloodthirsty are nothing but a unique kind of demon."

Objectively speaking, the Bloodthirsty are still debtors, but under the continuous deterioration of the Night Race's power, they have become akin to demons that have lost their sanity and crave souls.

Bologue walked to the window, looking out at the Fortress of the Morning Wind, accompanied by flashes of lightning, he saw countless bloodthirsty figures arriving with the tide, without any sign or warning, the offensive of the Night Race descended once more, and this time they actually crossed the coastal defense, invading the Fortress of the Morning Wind.

How could this be? Is the core hinterland of the Clarks so vulnerable?

Before Bologue could come up with an answer, a hoarse voice came with the wind and rain, sharp claws slicing from all directions, like ropes ready for execution.

A turquoise glow rose suddenly, the area where Bologue was, all bricks touched by the Flame of the Cauldron instantly transformed into sharp spikes, thrusting outwards.

Those Bloodthirsty hanging on the castle's exterior wall, preparing for an ambush, were all penetrated, their flesh pierced into a mess of mud, then thrown onto the dark earth.

On the smooth castle exterior, numerous stone spikes grew now; Bologue stood among the spikes, his eyes rolling with the glow of Ether.

Sharp bird calls came from within the dark clouds, followed by more piercing cries gathering together, in the backdrop of lightning, Bologue saw the flock of birds falling from the dark clouds, resembling limbs extended by the dark clouds caressing the earth.

The Wind-Eroded Birds swooped down towards the Fortress of the Morning Wind.

The first Wind-Eroded Bird crashed head-on into the sturdy wall, seemingly suicidal, leaving vibrant bloodstains on the wall.

Torrential rain washed over the wall, yet the blood appeared viscous and unmoved, after a brief delay, the blood boiled and ignited, like fierce gunpowder, then exploded.

Fierce flames rose on the exterior wall, the explosion shook the structure, vibrations reached all the way to Bologue, and this was just the beginning; countless Wind-Eroded Birds continuously crashed into the walls, the igniting blood causing a constant series of explosions.

In an instant, the Fortress of the Morning Wind seemed trapped in an ancient siege warfare, relentless artillery fire intertwined continuously.

These Wind-Eroded Birds were different from those Bologue first encountered; these alchemical creatures had undergone deep modifications, their blood akin to Red Mercury, transforming into biological bombs.



The sharp cries of the birds continued, they had discovered Bologue, several Wind-Eroded Birds swooped towards him.

"Damn it!"

Bologue summoned Deceitful Snake Scale Liquid, dense scale armor forming into a Round Shield, Bologue hoisted the Round Shield and ran towards the other end of the corridor, followed by explosions from the exterior wall.

Fierce flames easily pierced through the windows, rolling fire spreading into the building like tide, rushing through the corridors.

Bologue's figure was also propelled by the fierce explosion, smashing heavily against a side wall, thankfully the Round Shield blocked most of the impact, Bologue deftly got up, and the Flame of the Cauldron spread outwards.

The bricks began to overlap and shift, and Bologue quickly filled the exploded, collapsed spots, but his speed of filling was far outpaced by the suicidal attacks of the Wind-Eroded Birds.

The violent vibrations surrounded the Fortress of the Morning Wind, all the glass shattered in an instant, scattering debris everywhere. The carpet caught fire, and in the blaze of the flames, the strong outer wall began to collapse. Ultimately, the Wind-Eroded Bird tore a giant gap in the robust outer wall.

Sea breeze mixed with smoke flooded into the building unimpeded, and hordes of Bloodthirsty creatures climbed into the Fortress of the Morning Wind through the gap, with a chaotic battle imminent.

Bologue stood up awkwardly, and after the smoke and dust dispersed, numerous Bloodthirsty creatures appeared in the almost-ruined corridor where he was, wearing sturdy Iron Armor and fitted with some complex alchemy devices on their backs, injecting complex potions into their bodies, accompanied by their heavy, bloodthirsty breathing.

Bologue sighed, "What a despicable status..."

The Night Race had transformed these Bloodthirsty into something akin to alchemical creatures, significantly enhancing their combat power with potions and armor.

In the Fortress of the Morning Wind, numerous Ether reactions arose as the Condensers of the Clarks had already launched their counterattack. However, the counterattack was somewhat too late, as the opponent had already invaded the Fortress of the Morning Wind. Regardless of the outcome, this was considered a grave defeat for the Clarks family.

The hungry roars suddenly rose, and the Bloodthirsty creatures roared as they charged at Bologue, equipped with sharp claws on their arms, tearing the ground easily during the sprint, raising dust.

Bologue watched them without changing his expression, mumbling to himself, "Since it's come to this, tearing things apart a bit more wouldn't matter, would it? Palmer."

In an instant, the Flame of the Cauldron spread across the whole corridor, engulfing several Bloodthirsty creatures within it.

Raising his hand, Bologue slowly clenched his fist, grasping the Scepter of Command.

"Obey... my command."

The azure flames seemed to endow these mortal materials with souls, granting them will, and now they obeyed Bologue's command.

The ground began to twist, the walls started to writhe, and the sturdy bricks surged like rolling waves, gradually collapsing and engulfing the Bloodthirsty creatures, akin to sealed coffins.

Bologue could hear the abhorrent wailing, and as the bricks stacked up, they would all turn into ruins, displayed before Bologue's eyes.

The raised hand smashed down sharply, abandoning this abhorrent entity. The collapsing, sealed bricks immediately bore the pressure more intensely, further collapsing. Those Bloodthirsty creatures yet alive were crushed into a mess of mud, as if placed under a hydraulic press.

This was a skill Bologue learned from Palmer. After witnessing the effect of air pressure on enemies, Bologue thought he could also use materials to enclose and compress opponents, grinding them into delicate filthy blood.

Like the Iron Maiden torture instrument from a century ago, but Bologue preferred to call this move the Iron Embrace.

Blood seeped through the gaps, a faint Ether reaction rose from the ruins, and the calm blood boiled under the call of Ether. Scorching flames were about to unleash, but this time it was under Bologue's control.

With Ether surging, Bologue exerted all his might to impose command, and blinding flames emerged from the cracks of the bricks. They then broke through a sealed side, releasing roaring streams of fire to relieve the immense pressure.

Not only did the Wind-Eroded Birds explode, but these Bloodthirsty creatures did too, compared to the feigned attacks over recent days, tonight's assault was the Night Race's true offensive.

The noise of thunder and rain mixed with continuous explosions; these pesky monsters plunged many into tough battles. Fortunately, after enduring battles for a while, the Fortress of the Morning Wind quickly rebuilt its defenses following a moment of panic, and the grand echoes of Ether resounded endlessly.

Numerous Condensers mobilized the power of Ether, and under this dim night sky, many auras of Ether shimmered, spanning the battlefield like auroras.

Amidst chaos and disorder, Bologue detected clues in this bloody mire, cautiously looking towards the other end of the ruins.

Others in such a situation might find it hard to locate the true enemy, but Bologue was different. He had a profound connection with the Devil, capable of sensing those sinister fluctuations and seeking out fellow Debtors' presence.

In this vast darkness, relying solely on vague instincts, Bologue locked his gaze on the collapse below, seemingly able to glimpse a sinister figure through it.

Toxic mist spread and filled the air, corroding everything nearby, whether life or Ether, it was all corrupted and tormented.

"Why am I not surprised?"

Bologue murmured to himself, not knowing when he began to get used to his holidays turning into overtime work.