

## Endless 64

### Chapter 64: Mask

In the desolate theater, Bologue stood beneath the stage, trying to discern Kedening's features. But Kedening was seated on the stage, turned away from the light, his face obscured by makeup, like a shadowy mask.

"I like this story, the kind where the confusion between identity blends and blurs boundaries, leading to chaos and conflict, a gradual descent into madness in the sharp contradictions... the story,"

Bologue leaned against the stage, expressing his own thoughts about the story.

Kedening was slightly surprised. This audience member was quite familiar, and his words were intriguing. Kedening had heard enough flattering words; such insightful analysis was rare.

This made him more patient with Bologue.

"But I think the best part is Bart's self-remorse,"

Bologue raised an eyebrow, feeling that attending this performance was the best decision he'd made recently.

"Do you mean the part about self-identity?" Kedening said, whispering Bart's lines, "What kind of person am I really?"

"No, no, I'm referring to the earlier part," Bologue corrected him, "We each have three faces."

"One face that exists in the eyes of others, another is the face we think we have, and then there is who we truly are."

Bologue grasped the edge of the stage, gently hopping up to sit beside Kedening.

"I absolutely agree with this statement; it's very well written."

Bologue continued, elaborating on his understanding of these words.

"When you interact with people, your image in others' eyes gradually takes shape, and labels are attached to you, like gentle, fierce, kind, or evil."

Kedening did not interrupt Bologue's words. He could sense this was a somewhat self-centered and narcissistic audience member, but his words indeed caught Kedening's attention.

"But this isn't our true selves; it's the version of us seen by others, the face that exists in their gaze."

Bologue spread his hands, indicating helplessness.

"The way we view ourselves also undergoes subtle changes due to others' gazes... It's like being expected; you don't want to break the image they have in mind, so you gradually conform to what they see, altering yourself beyond recognition."

"Indeed, everyone wears masks, sometimes even unaware of the masks they wear."

Kedening said, touching his face, the mask fitting so closely it almost merged with his flesh, indistinguishable from his features. "This is even more evident in actors; I have a thousand faces, a thousand names."

"Yes, so I can empathize with Bart, his desperate quest to know who he truly is... People must live through some kind of identity, whether as a worker, a thief, or somewhere in between."

Bologue reminisced about the content of the performance.

"And this is the third self, the true self, unaffected by external influences, the initial, most original form."

"The primal self," Kedening whispered, looking towards Bologue.

"The primal self, huh? Nice phrase," Bologue nodded, then spoke with a hint of anticipation.

"This will be a tragedy, won't it? Different identities constrain Bart, the blurred boundaries grow faint, leading him deeper and deeper until his ultimate destruction."

"No, in my vision, it would have a positive ending," Kedening shook his head, imagining the scene at the conclusion, "Life is already tough enough; there should be a nice ending for the audience."

"La... Lazarus, sir." He attempted to pronounce Bologue's name but was interrupted by Bologue.

"Bologue, just call me Bologue."

"So, Bologue, did it resonate with you? Thinking about so much."

"Almost, yes," Bologue said, "I too went through a phase... nearly crushed by different identities."

He continued.

"Everyone harbors untold secrets.

In the eyes of your close ones, you're a kind-hearted, life-loving person, but secretly, you're a villain, with your fists stained by blood every day, the normal life and the mad life begin to overlap... This ruins everything."

Until Adelle passed away, she never knew the nature of Bologue's work.

Actually, Bologue felt Adelle had already guessed, she just didn't mention it, as his very existence was enough to astonish her.

The life of an ordinary person, the duties of a Debtor.

"But there are always those who embrace such complex selves, like my wife." Mentioning his wife brought a faint smile to Kedening's face.

"Acceptance, huh... not bad."

Bologue's heart trembled slightly.

He still remembered his emotions when he saw Adelle upon his release.

He hadn't seen her in a long time, yet he recognized Adelle at once, and Adelle did not fear his experiences but kindly greeted him, walking over.

She chatted with Bologue, noting he hadn't changed much these years except for his paler skin, advising him to get more sun, and other nagging things.

Finally, she gave Bologue a big hug, asking if he needed a place to stay, offering her home but only the sofa.

Bologue hesitated for a few seconds, his lips forming a soft smile similar to Kedening's, but soon that softness vanished, replaced by coldness and ruthlessness.