

Endless 69

Chapter 69: Cold-Blooded Declaration

Kedening ascended the stairs, unlocked the door, and returned to his home.

For the convenience of working at the theater, he lived very close to it, merely a street away. It only took a few minutes to walk there, though this convenience came at the cost of exorbitant rent. Renting a place in the Agreement District was no easy task.

Some suggested that Kedening should live in another district. Such arrangements were common as many lived on the outskirts and took the tram into the city center for work, saving a considerable amount of money.

However, those familiar with Kedening knew that he lived so close mainly to take care of his wife. Very few had seen her, but it was said that she was frail and needed to stay home and recuperate.

Even without having seen Kedening's wife, everyone knew her name.

Jini.

That was the name of the theater, named after his wife.

Many thought of Kedening as a good husband, and everyone envied the woman named Jini.

"I'm back."

Opening the door, Kedening called out to himself. The room was unlit, shrouded in darkness, filled with a choking incense, but Kedening was long accustomed to it and showed no signs of discomfort.

He closed the door, stood at the entrance, took off his shoes and coat, placed a newspaper-wrapped object beside him and, while tidying himself, said.

"Today's performance was a success. Another batch of journalists came to interview me. I guess in a few days, our theater will appear in the 'Opus Daily'.

After hanging up his coat, Kedening glanced around the living room. The room had very little furniture, it was utterly minimalist, with no trace of a lived-in feel.

He checked the doors and windows; they were either nailed shut or secured with iron locks. The entire room was airtight, with the entrance being the only way in or out.

Seeing everything was intact with no signs of being opened, Kedening picked up the item from the sofa and headed to the bedroom, continuing to speak.

"'Wandering Rat' is nearing its conclusion. It's my first work, and yet it's my finest so far... To be honest, I'm thrilled. I can already imagine the audience cheering."

His voice was tinged with joy. As a creator, no compliment was more rewarding than that.

Reaching the innermost part of the room, Kedening stood before the bedroom door, pausing briefly rather than going in immediately.

The bedroom door was slightly ajar, revealing an unknown darkness within. From there came the sound of steady breathing, suggesting someone was sleeping deeply inside.

It seemed as if Kedening was preparing for something. He took a deep breath, then grabbed the newspaper-wrapped item, tore off the outer paper, revealing fresh flowers, a bright bouquet emitting a strong fragrance.

Pushing the door open, Kedening walked in.

The room was dim, with a double bed placed centrally. Kedening sat on the edge of the bed, gently patting the comforter. The sleeping woman was awakened, slightly opened her eyes, turned to look at Kedening, and then immediately embraced him.

"Good morning, Jini."

With a smile on his face, Kedening was rarely seen like this by others. In most people's eyes, he was a serious performer, but in front of the woman, he was like an innocent child.

The woman named Jini disregarded the flowers, embracing Kedening, with a dreamy gaze, her body weak with no strength, affectionately kissing Kedening's neck, revealing slightly sharp fang tips scraping against the skin.

"Hahaha, stop it, it's too ticklish."

Kedening laughed heartily, then gently pushed the woman away and quietly asked.

"Are you hungry?"

The woman did not respond. She struggled to crawl closer but was stopped by the sound of clashing metal, unable to get even a step closer.

Kedening said nothing and sat at a workbench, turned on the desk lamp, which cast the room's only light.

The light wasn't strong, barely illuminating the workbench and surrounding darkness, bringing the outlines of objects into view.

The woman's pale, sickly skin, visible blue veins, and the sight of handcuffs and shackles binding her limbs, holding her firmly to the bed were apparent.

"Wait a moment, Jini, it will be ready soon."

Kedening opened a drawer, revealing rows of dark red potions he called "Liquid Spirit."

"Norm has gone missing, along with the goods... I suspect we've been targeted. We must ration these potions."

Kedening counted, and only four or five Liquid Spirit Potions remained in the drawer, not enough to last many days.

A shadow passed through his eyes, but swiftly vanished, replaced with genuine warmth.

"But don't worry, nothing will happen. David has gone to handle it. He's a very reliable person."

Kedening approached with a Liquid Spirit Potion. Jini's eyes flashed with greed as she once again threw herself into Kedening's arms, gnawing at his neck, this time with a noticeable exertion of strength, causing a slight pain in his neck.

Fortunately, he was long accustomed to it, whether it was Jini's bites or the stench on her body that incense couldn't mask.

Skillfully, he injected the Liquid Spirit Potion into Jini. The abundant spirit was carried by the blood throughout her body, briefly filling the emptiness of hunger, alleviating the restlessness of bulimia nervosa.

Jini's movements gradually softened, like losing her target. She slowly fell back, lying once more on the bed, her eyes vacant, staring at the dim ceiling.

"By the way, Jini, I met someone... very interesting today."

Recalling Bologue's appearance, Kedening said hesitantly.

"Actually, I don't really know what kind of person he is. He's like a mystery. It's been a long time since I've felt such an unknown feeling about someone else."

Gently stroking Jini's forehead, he couldn't feel the warmth of flesh and blood, only the coldness of a corpse.

Kedening felt a bit sad, and he continued speaking.

"I had quite a pleasant conversation with him, and this person's ideas are rather interesting. He seems very calm and rational, yet the stories he writes are full of agitation and obsession..."

Kedening picked up a syringe, opened the drawer on the other side, and inside were many sedatives. After satisfying Jini's hunger, he needed to use this to make her drowsy and keep her quiet.

This is the Agreement District, the most heavily guarded place in Opus. If Jini is exposed, people from the Order Bureau will arrive within minutes.

Kedening knows it's dangerous, but he can't trust Jini being too far from him. David also suggested that he could perhaps settle Jini at the Wandering Rat. As long as there is money, she should be well cared for, but Kedening has always had a strong aversion to that dark and dirty place.

He still yearned for a bit of decency, a sense of human decency... even if he wasn't that noble himself.

After injecting Jini with the sedative, she became noticeably quieter, lying on the bed without a sound, as if asleep.

Kedening also sat on the bed, like a child, leaning beside her, reaching out to straighten her hair.

"David and I are researching evacuation plans. No matter if our speculation is correct or not, Opus cannot stay any longer. The conflict between the Order Bureau and 'them' will only become more intense."

His eyes dimmed a little, and he sighed.

"But I can't bear to leave our theater. We sacrificed so much and gave so much just to have a foothold here..."

The woman showed a bit of response, as if she had come to consciousness. A soft gaze came from the darkness; she lifted her weary hand to stroke Kedening's face.

Kedening was slightly stunned, then he moved closer to the woman, holding her tightly, his head buried in her embrace, his voice muffled.

"It's okay, as long as we're still together, the theater will be revived again."

A glimmer of light rose in Kedening's eyes, like flickering flames.

"Maybe we can't stay here forever, but I will complete my final performance. I will make everyone remember our act..."

"Jini and Kedening, they will remember us."

Kedening said stubbornly.

"They definitely will."

...

A giant curtain stood not far away, with the images on it rippling like water under the breeze.

"Friend, do you believe in religion?" In the movie, the killer held a gun, looking at the man lying before him, speaking with an indifferent tone.

"I don't believe in religion, but I like to say a sentence or two filled with sacred faith when I kill my target, like a declaration of my cold-blooded execution."

The killer slowly crouched down, their gazes meeting.

"But after making such declarations many times, I began to think about the meaning of them. God said He granted the angels burning Fire Swords to maintain justice and deliver divine punishment to evildoers.

I am not a good person, just like you, a villain and a desperate outlaw."

The killer pondered, having read very few books, clumsily reflecting on God's words.

"But when I am executing you, perhaps I become the angel of God's word, and this gun full of ammunition in my hand is that burning Fire Sword, maintaining justice... although this is just mutual slaughter between villains."

After finishing speaking, the frame was frozen for a long time, then a gunshot sounded.

Bologue held a bucket of popcorn, eating while watching the movie.

This was a parking lot cinema, beneath the giant curtain were scattered cars, and Bologue sat on the raised steps at the back, watching the movie's conclusion.

The killer killed the man and walked into the vast wilderness until he disappeared.

The movie ended. Some people drove away, and Bologue lazily stood up, tossed the popcorn bucket into the trash, and walked along the street swept by the biting wind.

After watching "Wandering Rat," Bologue suddenly wanted to watch a movie. He missed that feeling of immersing himself in a story. After aimlessly wandering, he arrived at this parking lot cinema and wasted all his remaining time there.

It's time to go home. There weren't many figures on the street, and even fewer vehicles. Unknowingly, within the vastness and darkness, only Bologue remained.

He moved forward, and in the silent darkness, a sudden ringing sounded.

Bologue stopped and looked at a corner of the street. It was a red telephone booth, with its public phone buzzing noisily.