

Endless 78

Chapter 78: Good Luck and Bad Luck

Stepping out of the cover, a barrage of gunfire erupted, with countless bullets shooting towards Palmer.

Palmer walked as if he were strolling, neither dodging nor blocking.

He strode forward into the rain of bullets, heading towards certain death. Yet, he showed no fear, his face flushed with excitement, and his eyes bloodshot.

His heart was pounding violently, fresh blood pumped fresh oxygen to his entire body. His lungs expanded, breathing deeply and rapidly, his whole body becoming hot, like a fully activated machine running at high speed.

Danger thrilled Palmer, bringing a maddening thrill, akin to surfing on the sea. He almost wanted to laugh out loud.

At the moment he raised his handgun, that eerie, ghostly voice echoed in his mind.

"Palmer Clarks."

In the chaotic and hazy gray-white mist, an unknowable presence reached out countless arms towards him, lifting him until he faced the blazing white multiply-eyed anomaly.

"You are a gambler who takes unconventional paths. No matter the peril, you want to use those meager stakes to beat everyone at the table."

Sharp fingertips caressed his face, bringing stinging pain and deep coldness.

"You like this feeling, the feeling of teetering between life and death, don't you?"

The voice inquired, the fingertips gently pressing, effortlessly piercing the skin, as the sinister roaring sound rumbled through his ear canals.

"With powerful foes, with evil, with the Grim Reaper... with the Devil.

Conspire with us."

The cold and pain grew more and more distinct and intense.

The roaring gunfire was a chaotic symphony, as if Palmer was standing inside a thunderstorm.

The shooters repeatedly pulled their triggers, sweeping one burning bullet after another towards Palmer, like thousands of blazing rockets, ready to shatter Palmer into a bloody mess with just a touch.

The voice in his memory continued whispering.

"Dodging the scythe of death and the cold tide, retreating intact with all your stakes amidst joy and fear.

This is what you desire, and what I shall bestow upon you..."

Faced with the bullets racing towards him, Palmer wore a fervent smile.

He was Palmer Clarks, the reckless gambler.

The sound of bullets hitting resonated continuously, like a downpour baptizing the land, carving pit after pit on the concrete, as the bullets struck, raising plumes of yellow smoke that swallowed the view completely.

Amidst the swirling dust, a hazy silhouette emerged, striding out as gunfire resumed.

It was as if he was protected by some force.

Palmer emerged from the dust, none of the bullets hitting him directly, grazing past the edges of his body, or colliding with other bullets mid-flight, deflecting off course.

Through the baptism of the storm, he evaded all the raindrops.

"What luck!"

Palmer exclaimed loudly, pulling the trigger.

In the rain of bullets, he fired five consecutive shots, expending all his bullets. His marksmanship was superb, each bullet precisely hit the enemy's heads, blooming into mists of blood, the shooters falling one by one.

With the bullets exhausted, Palmer discarded the handgun and began to run. Bullets chased after him, but they were always a step late, only striking Palmer's shadow.

A roll later, he picked up a rifle from a corpse, rolling into cover. Palmer leaned against a support pillar, breathing rapidly, with not a trace of fear but immense excitement on his face.

Outside the cover, using the dust as cover, Bologue advanced rapidly, the folding knife in his hand pulling into a silver blade, like thunder crashing into the crowd, flashes of blazing white light followed by searing hot blood.

Charging into the enemy's ranks, using support pillars as cover, Bologue gained breathing room, swiftly disrupting the enemy's formation amidst chaotic shouts and gunfire.

"Ethereal Amplification" enhanced Bologue's strength and speed, these people unable to keep up with Bologue's pace, often emptying the clip when Bologue was no longer in the sight, and in the next second, the bright blade light enfolded before their eyes, unveiling a red curtain.

"How strong..."

Palmer noticed Bologue's actions out of the corner of his eye; Bologue had not activated the "Alchemy Matrix." Everything happening now was just achieved by relying on his physical abilities, which was truly amazing.

However, Bologue could not avoid all gunfire ultimately, some bullets still hit him, but this didn't slow him down in the slightest.

The dense gunfire stung his eyes, his vision wavering, and Bologue saw something, a pair of burning eyes. Almost the moment Bologue realized this, intense pain blasted through his mind, like a heavy hammer smashing his skull, throwing his body's balance into disarray, and he tumbled towards the ground.

Panic lasted but a moment. Bologue reached out to brace against the ground, controlling his fall, but the severe pain hadn't ceased. Turning back, he saw Eugene amidst countless enemies, fixating his gaze on him. As he moved, Eugene moved too, keeping Bologue always in his line of sight.

The lacerating pain lingered, but thanks to the "Resurrection" power, Bologue was accustomed to death, and the pain it brought.

Despite the acute pain, he maintained his mobility, rolling into the pillar where Palmer was.

Once out of Eugene's sight, the mental anguish lasted less than three seconds before beginning to subside. Bologue quickly shook off the dizzying pain, breathing heavily, noticing Palmer leaning beside him.

"How did you do that?"

Recalling the scene of Palmer gracefully dodging bullets, Bologue was taken aback and asked.

"A bit of luck."

Palmer raised an eyebrow. If luck could explain it, he was practically the embodiment of luck. But how could such a lucky Condenser get captured?

However, Palmer's smile quickly froze, a deep metallic ring echoed, and a blood bloom burst on Palmer's shoulder.

Huh?

Alertly, Bologue looked around them. They were hidden behind cover; how could they be shot?

"It's okay, it's okay," Palmer's face turned ashen, "a ricochet, hit by a ricochet; it's okay, I'm used to this."

"Ah? What did you say?"

Bologue was at a loss for what expression to display.

"A devil's cruel joke."

Palmer took deep breaths.

"A bit of luck lets you escape death," his pale face showing a bad smile, he continued, "and then comes a torrent of bad luck, warning you that the Death God still watches you."

"You... mean 'Blessing'?"

Bologue realized something. Palmer had dodged the rain of bullets, which couldn't have been mere luck, and he hadn't emitted any glow at the time. So, there was only one conclusion.

Blessing.

Palmer Clarks was a Debtor, mentioned by Geoffrey in a phone call.

"You seem to know a lot."

Palmer didn't add more, then heard a subtle pressure sound, as bullets were squeezed out from Bologue's body, while his damaged skin began to heal, leaving only bloodstains on his clothes.

Both of them regarded each other with extremely strange looks.

"Is this Blessing?"

"Yeah."

"Your luck? Is it also Blessing?"

"Yeah."

After a brief pause, Palmer nearly excitedly embraced Bologue.

"Family! No wonder you seem so familiar. Turns out we're both unlucky bastards burdened with debt."

Palmer expressed fervor; if conditions allowed, Bologue guessed he would have even proposed a brotherhood between them.

Bologue nodded in acknowledgment, though not aware of Palmer's exact abilities with Blessing, the current situation showed Palmer wouldn't die easily, which reassured Bologue considerably.

Surprisingly, Palmer shared the same thoughts as Bologue.

"My good luck can only protect myself, but not others. Sometimes when bad luck comes, it might even harm others." Palmer said.

"But you won't die easily. It seems we get along well."

Palmer extended his hand amiably, and Bologue also reached out and shook it.

"Vision, I suspect his Secret Energy's condition for release is vision."

Bologue murmured, recalling the clashes with Norm and conversations with Geoffrey.

It all felt like a deadly handgun, the Condenser's will being the hand pulling the trigger, the "Alchemy Matrix" being the gun, with Secret Energy as bullets activated from the "Alchemy Matrix" by the will.

In that sense, "shooting" requires aiming.

Vision is the crosshair of Secret Energy.

"What do you mean, if he sees you, you'll be struck by Secret Energy, is that it?" Palmer asked, as approaching footsteps echoed around them, leaving little time.

"More or less... the contact was too brief, only guessing, and it's the only explanation for why he kept staring at me."

On the battlefield, Bologue was keen, the fiery eyes staring at him throughout the fight, following his movement. It was upon noticing those eyes that he felt an intense pain in his mind.

"He needs a target to activate Secret Energy, so he requires us to remain in his vision?"

Bologue questioned, pulling apart his tattered clothing, extracting the Flying Knife and folding knife, "I can try to take him out."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure," Bologue replied earnestly, "I'm good at enduring pain, and I have quite a bit of confidence in my willpower."

"Most importantly, I won't die."

This statement Bologue didn't say out loud but affirmed in his mind.

Palmer was silent for a moment or two, holding his rifle in one hand and taking Bologue's Flying Knife with the other, "Give me all the Flying Knives... I'll handle the others, you deal with the Condenser."

"Alright."

Without asking Palmer's plan, Bologue decisively handed over all Flying Knives to Palmer, then stood ready with hammer and knife.

"I can endure pain, but I'm unsure if I can withstand fainting. If hit multiple times, I might start to pass out... I need time."

"Then I'll try my best to buy time for you and the opportunity to assassinate him."

Palmer rarely put away his smile, gripping the Flying Knife tightly, recalling each gun-bearing figure.

Bologue initially thought to ask if he could trust him, given Palmer seemed highly flexible morally, and who knew if he'd flip sides again if Bologue failed.

But Bologue gave up, not out of trust for Palmer but trust in Geoffrey, trust in that damn Special Operations Group, trust in the partners they've chosen for him.

Of course, the main thing is, Bologue won't die.

Like an absurd arcade game, while others only have one chance, Bologue has a mountain of tokens, allowing countless comebacks.

"So... let's begin!"

Bologue shouted, charging out from cover again.