

Menu 371

Chapter 371: Life Changes Too Fast

The plea for mercy, tremulous with emotion, was saturated with earnest feeling.

Esther, kneeling on the ground, effortlessly achieved the "three quavers in one plea" that Edmund spoke of.

Why was it so effortless?

Of course, it was for the sake of living!

He wanted to survive!

He didn't want to die!

Esther looked at the orange Fragment in Jason's hand, his mind whirring swiftly, while his mouth kept talking without pause.

"Lord Jason, are you not satisfied with this gift?"

"No matter, I can mobilize similar items."

"Of course, it will take a little time."

As he spoke, Esther stole glances at Jason's expression.

When he saw Jason's anger subside, he immediately continued.

"Three days!"

"At most three days!"

"I can bring you a new, similar item!"

Esther assured him.

Jason looked at Esther kneeling before him, and the emotions that the Hunger had affected were now completely settled.

Undoubtedly, the person before him must be someone from outside the 'Shelter.'

And such a person appearing within the 'Shelter' naturally couldn't have come with peaceful and friendly intentions.

A mole!

Jason's first thought was the identity of the other party.

For the 'Shelter,' with which Jason had only made preliminary contact, he still remained vigilant.

At this time, the appearance of an organization opposing the 'Shelter'... wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Moreover, the other party could bring him 'food'!

Suddenly, Jason made a decision.

"Three days!"

"You have only three days!"

With that, Jason stepped forward and pointed a finger at Esther's forehead.

Then, he turned and walked away.

Watching Jason's retreating figure, Esther collapsed onto the ground.

Huffing and puffing.

Esther breathed heavily.

The sudden appearance of Jason had left him utterly unguarded, while the shattered orange plate in his hand delivered a tremendous shock.

As the one who had taken over this 'anomalous item,' he was all too aware of the power of the orange plate.

It could kill imperceptibly.

No creature could resist the food placed within it.

And once consumed!

Death would come!

But now...

The orange plate was shattered!

The organization had tested that the orange plate couldn't be shattered by external forces, which meant it could not have been broken, but the orange plate in Jason's hand was indeed just Fragments.

Esther couldn't precisely conjecture the whole process.

But combining the recent truck incident and Jason's anger,

He had a rough guess in his heart.

The orange plate 'couldn't bear the burden' and shattered.

"The terrifying 'Masked Man'!"

Esther murmured in his heart as he struggled to get up, falling twice more in the process.

The pressure Jason had placed on Esther was simply too great.

It was only after he returned to the vehicle that Esther finally came back to his senses.

Immediately, he remembered his promise to Jason.

To provide a similar 'anomalous item' in three days!

Damn it!

I've just applied for an 'anomalous item,' and to apply again in three days is simply impossible!

Should I just defect and go back to the 'organization'?

No sooner had this thought surfaced in his heart than Esther couldn't suppress it any longer.

But that was only for a moment; then Esther's face suddenly turned pale.

He recalled the gesture of Jason's finger touching his forehead as he left.

Subconsciously, the 'organization's records about the 'Masked Man' came to mind.

'The ageless 'Masked Man,' through the long years, must have learned much knowledge and skills!
Those are beyond our current understanding, enigmatic and unfathomable!'

Thinking about these records, some unpleasant terms started to surface in Esther's mind.

Binding?

Evil Curse?

Or possibly...

It was indeed a curse!

Subconsciously, Esther raised his hand to touch his forehead, exactly where Jason had pointed.

He felt something odd there.

A tingling sensation, which carried a faint pain when pressed hard.

Fear appeared in Esther's eyes.

"Why didn't he ask me which 'organization' I came from?"

"Why was he able to turn and walk away without saying a word?"

"Because he doesn't need to know."

"Indeed, how would an immortal monster think in the way ordinary people do? He has his own way of dealing with the world."

"And me?"

"I was too reckless."

With waves of sighs, Esther curled up in the driver's seat.

He felt like a pitiful, insignificant, and helpless man sitting in a canoe, facing the stormy sea.

Any wave could overwhelm him, never to recover.

No!

I can't just die like this!

There has to be a way!

Esther thought.

His gaze unconsciously shifted to the unconscious Edmund beside him.

His experience was extensive, perhaps he could... No, that won't do!

How could Esther, an elite, stoop to asking someone who just got by day by day?

But it was a matter of life and death...

Between the pride of being elite and survival, Esther ultimately chose to compromise with survival.

And in that moment of compromise—

Crack!

Something inside Esther very decisively shattered.

Then, gone with the wind.

It was self-respect, as well as pride.

It could also be referred to as: the bottom line!

As an elite of the 'Organization,' infiltrating the 'Asylum' successfully, his self-respect, pride, and bottom line shattered.

What remained was an Esther fighting to survive.

There should have been sorrow.

Yet, Esther felt relief instead.

Everything seemed to have become simpler.

"Esther! Esther!"

"How could you think like that?"

"That's not right!"

"You're just stalling for time!"

"Remember, it's only temporary!"

Esther subconsciously warned herself, then, after several deep breaths, woke Edmund up.

Coming to, Edmund rubbed his sore neck, but instead of immediately questioning his young colleague, instinctively surveyed his surroundings, then, his gaze settled on the youth.

There were tear stains at the corners of his eyes.

There were stains on his knees.

Elbows and arms bore marks of dirt.

Almost the instant he saw his young colleague, visions of Esther kneeling on the ground, weeping bitterly, his voice trembling, and then unsuccessfully trying to stand up in fear but falling, resorting to support from his arms and elbows, flashed through Edmund's mind.

And what could have made his young, outstanding colleague do this.

In this vicinity... there was only one possibility.

"Was it the 'Masked Man' just now?"

Edmund asked.

Esther looked at Edmund in surprise.

He knew?

How could he know?

Should I kill him to silence him?

Dammit!

If Edmund dies like this, I'll be completely exposed!

As Esther hesitated, Edmund continued:

"Don't be so surprised."

"I do know how to deduce, after all."

"But, why did the 'Masked Man' come back?"

"Did he make any demands?"

Edmund inquired.

Such a questioning allowed Esther to breathe a sigh of relief.

Edmund didn't know.

It was just a wild guess.

"Hmm."

"He made some demands."

"I can't say now; I need to see the director."

Esther nodded, gathering his thoughts, then, a bold idea took shape in his mind.

Jason needed a similar 'anomalous item,' but he didn't specify whose.

The 'Organization' couldn't apply for it at the moment, but the 'Asylum' could.

I'm a C-grade elite of the 'Asylum'!

I naturally have the credentials to apply!

First, apply with the 'Asylum,' then the 'Organization,' looping back and forth should buy me quite a bit of time. In this period, I'd be able to demonstrate my worth. 'Masked Man' surely wouldn't want to lose me just like that; maybe I'd even be favored and become one of his subordinates. And with that status, I could prove my value to the 'Asylum' and 'Organization' again, ensuring continuous favor, possibly advancing to B-grade. As a B-grade, I'd also be promoted within the 'Organization'!

The increasingly clear train of thought made him eager to ask Edmund:

"Senior, could you explain in detail how I should correctly confront the 'anomalies'?"

Stalling for time?

What stalling for time?

I'm about to reach the peak of my life!

Perhaps I could even...

Suddenly, Esther's eyes blazed with fervor.

And faced with such an ardent gaze, Edmund immediately became serious.

"Survive!"

"The best way to face an 'anomaly' is to survive."

"Even if it means kneeling, weeping, begging, you must survive."

The experienced C-grade staff began to teach.

The newly appointed C-grade, who had previously been scornful, was now listening intently.

...

Jason returned to the gym through the window.

Aras was still training.

"Resolved?"

Aras, carrying a 200 Kg barbell at a swift run, asked.

"Yeah."

Jason nodded.

The situation was easier than he had thought, and he trusted that Esther would have a deep understanding of the finger he had placed on the other's forehead.

No need for further words.

No need for threats either.

A smart person like that would naturally draw their own conclusions.

And that was enough.

After all, people are best at scaring themselves.

"This encounter should afford me some stable time," Jason thought to himself.

Whether it's the 'Asylum' or the 'Organization,' after this 'normal contact,' they wouldn't come looking for him again shortly if nothing unexpected happened.

And that's what Jason needed.

He needed to use this time to further enhance his strength.

Glancing at the satiety level that had increased to 118 points after 'eating' the orange plate, Jason felt even more secure.

39.3 lives.

Enough to deal with some accidents.

Enough to let his Talent shine once more.

But before that, Jason took the huge book he'd obtained from the estate and propped it up on the fighting ring.

To quickly increase one's strength in this world,

It's essential to have a deeper understanding of it.

And the book in his hand, originating from the 'anomalous,' was naturally the most important link.

Perhaps...

It might even lead to some unexpected gains!