

Menu 383

Chapter 383: We need layers of 'shells

In the detention room, less than three square meters in size, there was nothing but a toilet, no decorations, no windows, and the only door, made of iron, was shut tight with a meal slot at the bottom that was also firmly closed.

Darkness was the color within the detention room.

Silence accompanied it.

Edmund sat on the floor with handcuffs on.

He was no stranger to this place.

Special D-class personnel about to be executed often ended up here.

However, he had never imagined that he would find himself here one day.

Sigh.

With a slight sigh, one couldn't see Edmund's expression in the darkness.

But the sound of his sigh said it all.

"I couldn't control myself."

"I was supposed to coast until retirement... Why did I act so impulsively?"

"Pity about the twenty-nine years and eleven months left on my mortgage."

Edmund couldn't help feeling a wave of sorrow when he thought about his house being repossessed and auctioned by the bank, rendering his down payment and a month's repayment to nothing.

Especially when he remembered how he had scrimped and saved for nearly a decade to gather the down payment for the house, he couldn't help but let out a sob.

It pained his heart.

Yet, he didn't truly regret it.

Some things are just like that, disdainful in words but deeply rooted in the heart, never to be forgotten.

Edmund knew well that even if he had to do it all over again, he would still make the same choice.

As he aged, his ideals seemed more distant, but... his blood had not yet run cold.

He could feel his heartbeat with every breath.

Each one was strong and powerful.

He also knew what was coming for him.

There's a price to pay for acting rashly.

Such were the rules of this world.

They would not change for him.

"According to 'the facility's' procedures, I probably have 2-3 days left. Should I make a bucket list?"

"Forget it, I can't leave here anyway. It's not like I can actually do it."

"Rest."

"Rest well."

"Then, go where I must."

That's what Edmund told himself.

He shifted from sitting to lying down, had wanted to put his arms under his head, but the handcuffs made this position awkward and uncomfortable. He had to turn to his side, hands placed together beside him.

Edmund intended to get a good night's sleep.

Then, just as he was about to fall asleep—

Clank, clank.

There suddenly came a sound of the iron door opening.

Light shone in, and even with his eyes closed, Edmund could sense a brightness, but he didn't move.

It was only an interrogation; he had nothing to say.

"Senior Edmund!"

Esther's voice rang out.

Edmund quickly rolled over and got up, and when he saw that Esther was standing alone at the door without a weapon in hand, he breathed a sigh of relief.

He had been really worried that his naive junior might do something irrational.

But Esther wasn't aware of this and, full of joy, he rushed to Edmund and unlocked his handcuffs with a key.

"Senior Edmund, you're all right now," Esther said with rapid excitement.

"All right now?" Edmund was startled.

Then, a sense of joy at having narrowly escaped death filled his heart.

But his experience as an old salt told him it wasn't that simple.

After all, he had shot Chuck.

According to 'the facility's' rules, such a severe act wouldn't let him off so easily, even if there were mitigating circumstances. It meant a long detention, followed by a demotion from class C to D, or even to E.

And this direct release...

Am I going to have my memory erased and then be kicked to the curb?

Will I no longer be me?

Won't even know that $1+1=2$?

As a senior C-class member, Edmund was aware of some things.

Thinking of this sent shivers down his spine.

Better to die outright than to live like that.

"Have I been demoted?" Edmund probed.

"No."

"Not only have you not been demoted, but you have also been promoted to C+ class," Esther said, shaking his head and smiling.

"And now, you're the supervisor of Ang City."

"What?" Edmund exclaimed in shock.

"You don't believe it either?"

"I couldn't believe it myself when I got the news."

"But the official document has come down. Senior Edmund, you really are the supervisor of Ang City now, congratulations... Senior, what's wrong?"

Esther was offering his congratulations when he noticed Edmund's face had drastically changed, as if this promotion was something more terrifying than death itself.

"We're in big trouble," Edmund answered with a wry smile.

He knew the modus operandi of 'the facility' all too well.

It was precisely because of this understanding that he knew what the bizarre scene before him implied.

He even had an inkling of who might be behind it.

Without hesitation, Edmund stood up and spoke in a low voice to Esther, "Gather anything valuable, we're leaving Ang City immediately. Don't worry, I have six 'safe routes' planned, and they will certainly focus on all of those as a diversion. Then, we'll change our appearance and take the seventh 'safe route'."

"I know a plastic surgeon; his skills are good enough to get us through more trouble," he continued.

"I've already prepared new identities for us, legitimate ones, not fakes, complete with everything from birth certificates to school records to work history, even dental records."

Having said that, Edmund led the way out.

After taking two steps, Edmund, realizing that Esther had not followed, looked back subconsciously.

He saw Esther looking at him with an expression of admiration.

In fact, at that moment, Esther's adoration for Edmund had reached yet another level.

Indeed, the senior Edmund was well-prepared!

Even in the worst-case scenario, under the guidance of senior Edmund, we would definitely be safe!

Phew!

Esther took a deep breath.

He walked up to Edmund.

"Senior Edmund, there are things I must tell you. Can we find a quiet place?"

Esther said softly.

"Is it about your 'Holy Serpent Society' identity?"

"You don't need to say it, I already know."

Edmund said.

Esther looked at Edmund, his eyes filled with shock.

He couldn't believe that senior Edmund already knew about his hidden identity.

"When did you find out?"

"Five days after you became a C-level member and moved next to me, I guessed it."

"Let's go."

"Everyone has a past they cannot speak of, you and I both."

"What's most important is how we face the future."

Edmund said, gesturing to Esther once again.

"The future?"

Muttering the word to himself, Esther smiled, and a certain brilliance appeared on his face as he spoke with unprecedented confidence, "That's also what I wanted to talk to you about."

Half an hour later, at a coffee shop five minutes on foot from the Ang City 'shelter', opposite to the direction Esther often went, Edmund sat with a stunned expression as he faced Esther.

"Taotie Society?"

"Hydra?"

He asked blankly.

"Yes."

"Hydra is a part of the Taotie Society, the Taotie Society controls everything, and Hydra obeys its orders."

"We need a power to protect us."

"That's why Hydra was established."

"And the Taotie Society will be our ultimate safeguard."

Esther nodded seriously as he articulated his philosophy.

Edmund stared at his junior, at a loss for words at this moment.

He had never thought that his junior would stir up such a major event in less than a day.

Although the current 'Hydra' was no more than an empty shell without even a semblance of its final form, with the 'Masked Man' as a top-tier combatant, it was only a matter of time until Hydra developed and took shape.

"Do we really have to do this?"

Edmund took a deep breath and asked.

"We must do this!"

"Your kindness and integrity make you hesitate, but your wisdom tells you what is right."

"Your kindness and integrity guide me, and it's exactly your kindness and integrity that convince me of what I must do."

Esther replied with certainty.

Yet Esther's words made Edmund feel embarrassed.

Kindness, integrity?

I... just want to coast through life.

However, Esther's proposal seemed, perhaps, possibly, might allow me to coast through life even better?

Thinking this, Edmund pondered.

But he still hesitated slightly.

Because he was not sure whether this was the right thing to do.

Whether it would bring trouble to the people around him.

Should he stop Esther?

Or should he just go with the flow?

"Please don't forget those innocent victims—Lord Jason has given a term to describe them."

Looking at Edmund, who raised his head to meet his gaze, Esther crisply uttered the word.

"Pitiful."

"Pitiful?"

Edmund murmured to himself.

Dying on the battlefield, though regrettable, was an honorable death.

To die in a conspiracy, no matter how grand, was merely a fig leaf.

With this thought, he nodded.

"Alright, I'm in."

He didn't want similar events to happen again.

Some things are enough to occur just once.

"Welcome back, Leader."

Esther said excitedly.

With the return of Senior Edmund, armed with his wisdom and Lord Jason's prowess, Hydra would surely rise rapidly, and he could live a long life.

"Leader?"

Edmund looked at Esther with confusion.

"Hydra was founded by me; as a senior, you are naturally the Leader."

"However, Hydra is a secret organization; we should keep ourselves hidden as much as possible."

"But there are still some matters that require public handling, so I'm considering we need an organization with a semi-public nature to serve as a 'shell', one that will primarily focus on protection, to prevent the likes of today's incident."

After explaining, Esther spoke earnestly.

"Protection?"

"May I have the right to name it?"

Edmund asked.

"Of course!"

Esther nodded.

Edmund picked up his coffee, gazing out at the sunny streets of Ang City at noon, remembering those six friends, and slowly uttered the name he had conceived—

"'The Brotherhood'!"