

Menu 451

Chapter 451: I Witness, I Record...

Barnum was walking through a pitch-dark corridor.

At this moment, the electricity in the corridor had been completely cut off following the previous explosion, and the entire hallway become pitch-black, as if one couldn't see their own hand in front of their face.

Barnum's eyes narrowed slightly, relying solely on his ears to listen, inching forward step by step.

Whoosh!

Right when he turned a corner of the hallway, the sound of something cutting through the air suddenly arrived.

Barnum cracked a grin.

With his robust body, he agilely shifted his footing, and the enormous Crooked Blade in his hand lashed upward in a smooth motion.

Thud!

Acidic liquid sprayed everywhere as a complete mouthpart along with its head was split in two.

This giant spider's body trembled, its razor-sharp limbs flailing wildly, smashing countless tiny holes into the hard cement floor, but none of this was Barnum's concern anymore.

He had already charged deeper into the corridor, with the huge Crooked Blade in his hand acting like the Reaper's scythe, swiftly reaping the giant spiders in this area.

Apart from the giant spider that he had killed upon their first encounter, there were still three more giant spiders here.

The spiders' thoraxes and limbs were extremely hard, capable of withstanding bullet shots, but the area near their mouthparts was very fragile. Even so, after Barnum had killed the remaining three giant spiders, he was somewhat out of breath.

Avoiding the spiders' limbs was not easy, and if it weren't for the frequent thrashings he received from Aras, he probably would've been done for by now.

"Thank you, 'Judgment Chief.'"

As Barnum thought this, he held the Crooked Blade in one hand and reached for his lower back with the other, swinging forward swiftly.

The next moment—

Boom!

An explosion erupted, and a flash of fire burst forth.

Several spiders that had rushed over, squeezed into a corridor that was quite narrow for them, were instantly covered by the shrapnel of the grenade.

Listening to the spiders' shrieking, Barnum laughed coldly.

Through the screen, he had not only seen the spiders' way of fighting but also knew that the spiders' bodies would attract more spiders.

"Another wave!"

Barnum leaned in to listen sharply, and then, another grenade was thrown.

Boom!

In the blast of the grenade, several more spiders were killed.

And Barnum began to retreat.

He was no fool!

He came here to temporarily block the spiders' advance, allowing the civilians from Block 4-12 to enter safely.

Now that he had accomplished his mission, it was naturally time to return.

Barnum faced the direction from which the spiders were coming, and began to step back cautiously.

After retreating a few steps, he would stop and listen carefully.

Only after confirming there was no sound would he continue his retreat.

After moving back a hundred meters or so, and with less than a hundred meters left to the shelter behind him, Barnum let out a faint sigh of relief.

But at that moment, a strand of spider silk silently wound around his calf; before Barnum could react, the silk suddenly pulled back.

Thump!

The sudden spider silk and the immense force it carried gave Barnum no time to react, and he was dragged to the ground then pulled into the darkness.

Panic flashed by in an instant.

The next moment, Barnum took the gun from his back and, facing the direction the silk had come from, pulled the trigger.

Ratatat!

Gunfire flickered, bringing light to the dark corridor.

With the aid of this light, Barnum could see the spider that had shot the silk.

If the spiders the size of cars could be considered giant, then the one in front of him, still occupying the entire corridor despite its coiled body and relatively smaller head resembling the front of a train, could only be called colossal in comparison.

Ding, ding, ding!

Bullets sparked as they hit the head of the massive spider, igniting a shower of sparks.

Especially around the mouth and compound eyes, Barnum focused his fire, but to no avail.

This made Barnum's heart sink.

When the bullets in the submachine gun ran out, Barnum didn't reload, but instead gripped the Crooked Blade tightly, and held a grenade in his other hand, his eyes squinting into the darkness ahead as his muscles tensed up.

The distance was closing!

Breathe, breathe!

Barnum waited for the perfect opportunity!

Now!

After another breath, Barnum swung the Crooked Blade at the spider silk and threw the grenade forward.

Snip!

The spider silk was cut into two.

Boom!

The grenade exploded once again.

Barnum rolled backwards; he did not look at the results of the explosion but threw out two more grenades from his hands.

Boom, boom!

These were his last two grenades.

In the moment of the explosions, he got up and ran backward.

But...

Whoosh!

In the middle of the rush of air, a spider web descended from above.

He was bound to the spot just like that.

It wasn't just a strand of silk binding a part of his body this time, the entire body was immobilized, leaving only his head exposed. He barely managed to twist his head to look back, only to see a massive spider still glowing with residual firelight slowly approaching him.

Because the corridor was narrow, its movements were slow.

With every step forward, the creature had to forcibly squeeze through the corridor.

This was not an easy feat for it; the shelter built by 'Hydra' was sturdy enough, and this gave Barnum one last chance—

"Everyone into the shelter!"

"Close the door!"

He yelled out, then, facing the looming giant spider, he gripped the Crooked Blade tightly.

There was still a chance!

There was still a chance!

He reassured himself, as the Crooked Blade was slowly raised, slicing through the web that bound him.

However, this awkward posture meant the slicing was far slower than the giant spider's approach.

Chapter 452: I Witness, I Record... (2)

When Barnum lifted the arm holding the Crooked Blade, the giant spider was already rushing toward him.

His body couldn't move, only one arm.

But he had a knife in his hand!

That was enough!

"So you've come!"

Barnum roared, with the knife tip thrusting forward, he prepared to deliver a deadly blow to the big fellow before him.

Just as the opponent opened its mouthparts!

Squeak!

The giant spider let out a strange screech, charging straight at Barnum.

Watching the opening mouthparts, Barnum's Crooked Blade pierced forward.

But,

It missed!

The giant spider's forward charge paused momentarily, causing the tip of Barnum's knife to stop less than a punch's distance from the creature's mouthparts.

This caused Barnum to frown deeply.

Then, the next moment, he realized something was wrong.

The giant spider did not stop on its own, but...it had been grabbed by someone!

Squeak, squeak squeak!

The cries of the giant spider grew more intense.

Then, Barnum watched with his own eyes as the giant spider retreated swiftly.

No!

It was being pulled back.

And then—

Bang!

Like the report of a gunshot, the sound of a fist tearing through the air and the giant spider was punched apart.

Although darkness still obscured his vision, the instant the sound of the punch filled the air, Barnum's body instinctively trembled, and this instinct told him who the newcomer was.

"Lord Judgment Chief!"

Barnum shouted in surprise.

Then, the tunnel was illuminated by light.

Aras had turned on the flashlight he carried with him.

"How are you?"

A hearty smile appeared on Aras's face, especially dazzling in the light.

"I'm fine."

"I am no foolhardy man."

"Everything is under my control."

Barnum said while starting to cut through the spider web's restraints with his Crooked Blade.

However, Aras clearly felt this was too slow, and with a raise of his hand, he grabbed the back of Barnum's neck.

Then, with a yank.

Rip.

Barnum was directly pulled out.

"Barnum, you are too weak, you need to train more to become strong," Aras said earnestly.

Aras was always sincere with his friends.

Barnum looked at his biceps, which were bigger than ordinary people's thighs, and then at Aras, who seemed to have grown taller again, to the point where he had to look up, and he unconsciously nodded.

"I understand."

"Just now..."

Beep, beep beep.

"Aras! Aras! Can you hear me?"

Barnum was interrupted by the communicator, and Edmund's voice came through.

"I can hear you."

"Aras, provide immediate support to Block 7-1."

"The powerful 'anomaly' I previously marked has appeared there!"

"Understood!"

Without any hesitation, Aras turned and ran outside. Barnum was momentarily stunned as he watched Aras rapidly disappear into the darkness. His gaze then instinctively fell on the huge spider shattered on the ground.

Isn't this considered a powerful 'anomaly'?

Then... what kind of 'anomaly' are the people of the Night Owl Court facing?

With a more solemn expression, Barnum speculated.

He picked up his gun and turned, striding swiftly toward the shelter.

He was well aware that if more powerful anomalies were appearing on the surface, there would be no 'reinforcements' coming his way; they needed to be redeployed.

At the very least, the civilians inside the shelter of this block needed to be evacuated in advance.

Meanwhile, he planned to set up at least three lines of defense, just in case.

The first line would be in front of the alloy gate.

The hall behind the gate would serve as the second line.

The passage leading to the next block would be the third line.

"Captain!"

"Was that the Judgment Chief just now?"

Seeing Barnum return, all members of Hydra began to inquire.

"Yes."

Upon seeing Barnum nod, a look of envy appeared on the faces of those members.

They too wished to meet the Judgment Chief.

According to rumors, if one could survive a punch from the Judgment Chief, they would become stronger!

Moreover, the Judgment Chief was said to be boldly unmatched, capable of letting one feel the vigor of a true hero!

Indeed... it was something to yearn for!

"Okay, enough!"

"There will be chances in the future!"

"Now, start burying landmines here!"

Looking at the eager gazes of his subordinates, Barnum immediately commanded.

He had decided that after this 'war' was over, he would take all his men to train at the 'JJ Fighting Gym.'
He had previously avoided it because of pride and self-importance.

But now?

He must become stronger.

Otherwise, he wouldn't even be able to protect his own men.

"Yes, Captain."

The men began to take action.

Barnum then looked up toward the top of the passage.

Hope everything goes smoothly!

No!

Don't just hope!

It definitely will!

After all, she's here!

Barnum thought confidently.

The members of Hydra around as well as those in the underground shelter thought the same.

Because they were all friends Aras had made with her fist.

Even the civilians felt the same way.

For they had seen through the screen a tall and strong figure, crossing the entire battlefield—

Euler, Euler, Euler, Euler!

With bold and unparalleled strikes, Aras rushed toward Block 7-1 like an arrow, unimpeded by any 'anomalies.'

Any 'anomaly' in her way was smashed to pieces.

Swarms of spiders, numerous crawling creatures, and even the giant two-headed snakes—all were dispatched with a single punch.

Within a dozen breaths, Aras arrived at the entrance to Block 7-1.

There, she saw a statue.

A statue approximately two meters tall, made entirely of concrete and steel reinforcement, with a surface coated in a yellow-brown hue. The area representing the face had strange spray paint marks, while the rest of the body was adorned with a single shade of blue spray paint. The limbs appeared short, the head was oversized, almost half the size of the torso, and the figure was round and plump, standing there like a peanut.

Chapter 453: I Witness, I Record... (3)

The statue looked somewhat comical, grotesque.

But Aras didn't dare to underestimate it in the slightest.

Edmund had warned that it was an extremely dangerous "anomaly."

One must keep an eye on it at all times, never shifting one's gaze or blinking; otherwise, one's neck would be twisted off.

However, the statue before her wasn't the "anomaly" Edmund had previously identified.

Aras frowned.

Compared to the statue before her, she was undoubtedly more concerned about the "anomaly" that grew stronger as it burned.

If that "anomaly" were left unattended, the whole Ang City would be doomed.

Edmund saw Aras's predicament through the surveillance.

"Aras, wait a moment!"

"I'll send backup immediately!" Edmund said.

Although the statue was dangerous, the way to handle it was very simple: find a team of people to keep an eye on and take shifts resting, then put it into a sturdy containment room.

As long as there were no accidents, the statue at hand could be considered very safe.

"I can't wait!"

"Edmund, do you see that fire?"

Aras looked gravely toward District 7-1, where the flames had already lit up and were spreading uncontrollably.

A blaze was burning wildly along the trees, shrubs, and chairs on either side of the street, growing larger by the moment.

What was more critical, it had set its sights on the gas station.

Without hesitation, Aras charged into the district.

And as Aras brushed past the statue, not lingering her gaze on it, the statue moved.

Crack!

The crisp sound of breaking bone echoed.

"Aras!"

Edmund cried out in shock at the scene, but Aras didn't fall.

"Don't worry!"

"It's just a dislocated bone; dad taught me similar tricks."

"I'm fine!"

With those words, Aras's speed increased even more.

During this talking time, her neck had been twisted no fewer than ten times.

The peanut-shaped statue doggedly followed Aras, repeatedly twisting her neck, and then, seemingly unfazed, Aras kicked open a fire hydrant.

Whoosh!

A jet of water shot up into the air.

The "flame" that had reached the gas station was forced back.

Then, Aras dashed toward the next hydrant.

Bang!

Another kick, and another column of water erupted.

As the water sprayed, the "flame" trembled violently.

It immediately changed direction.

Meanwhile, the statue stopped behind Aras.

It seemed to think for a moment, then changed its twisting action to a tightening grip!

Like a move out of a combat sport, it extended its hands, about to strangle Aras's neck, but almost instinctively Aras seized one of its hands.

Then, a shoulder throw followed.

"Annoying, stop following me!"

Amidst her low growl, the statue was slammed onto the asphalt road, creating a deep pit, and before it could recover, Aras delivered a powerful kick.

Bang!

The peanut-shaped statue spun through the air toward the distance.

Its spray-painted face seemed to undergo a change.

That was a puzzlement of life.

It did not understand what had happened.

Things weren't supposed to be like this.

What's more important was...

A terrifying presence was approaching, an extreme oppression.

A sense of tension arose, causing the spray-paint on the statue's face to fluctuate unpredictably.

It wanted to alter its trajectory in flight.

But it couldn't.

It could only watch helplessly as it got closer and closer to the man soaring through the air, closer and closer.

Then...

It saw the man who was supposed to be human suddenly open his mouth wide.

That mouth opened wider than a shark's.

Its head seemed to be heading straight for that gaping maw.

Then, mid-air, they collided.

Just like an eagle striking a sparrow.

Even though they appeared nearly equal in size by their blurry outlines, that was only the moment before they met; in the next instant—

Crunch, crunch.

The clear sound of chewing arose.

Steel reinforcement, Jason had eaten it before.

But mixed with concrete, it was Jason's first time tasting it.

A bit stuck in his teeth and rather rough on the tongue.

However, the taste was still quite good.

Initially a bit salty, followed by a faint sweetness, reminiscent of soaked goji berries with a lingering aftertaste.

Too bad it was like eating sugarcane, he couldn't swallow it.

Jason opened his mouth and spat out the remnants of the statue.

[Consumed statue 'Little Peanut!']

[Physical Strength and Energy greatly restored!]

[Satiety +33!]

[Satiety: 280]

...

These fragments fell from the sky, landing squarely on a strange "anomaly" composed of fish hooks, fishing lines, needles, scissors, and other sharp objects, forming a rough sphere over 2 meters in radius.

Struck by the statue's fragments, it hurled fishing lines towards Jason, who had leaped from mid-air.

Jason didn't resist, allowing the fishing lines to pull him toward the sphere filled with sharp items.

The piercing fish hooks, needles, and scissors thrust toward Jason.

Then...

They didn't penetrate.

Ding, ding, ding.

Throughout the series of crisp sounds, Jason split his mouth into a grin, showing off his reinforced teeth.

In the soft moonlight, those teeth gleamed with a sharpness akin to blades, especially as Jason's mouth widened further, spreading a terrifying aura.

The sphere that was meant to show its sharpness and drag Jason into it trembled slightly.

It instinctively wanted to flee.

Chapter 454: I Witness, I Record... (4)

But Jason raised his hand and grabbed it, stuffing it directly into his mouth.

Crunch, crunch.

The sound of chewing rose again.

Moments later, residues were spat out once more.

[Consumed Sharpness Spike Cluster!]

[Physical Strength, Jing greatly recovered!]

[Fullness +30!]

[Fullness: 310]

...

At this moment, Jason's fullness had reached an unprecedented peak, a whole 103 lives, significantly increasing his sense of security, a feeling he hadn't experienced in a long time.

Phew!

Jason took a deep breath.

Turning around, he looked at the 'human' who didn't bother to hide their footsteps.

From appearances, the other was at least human.

About thirty years old, black hair, gray pupils, olive skin, with a height similar to Jason's but not as robust. However, the individual was covered in an abundance of mysterious and obscure patterns.

The other's face showed excitement as they looked at Jason.

"A strong one!"

"Let us dance!"

A somewhat indistinct voice came from the other's throat.

The individual seemed to be in a somewhat confused state.

Approaching Jason was simply because they were attracted by Jason's aura.

Jason watched the other, his nostrils flaring continuously.

His eyes, too, revealed a certain excitement.

"All right!"

Jason nodded his head.

As soon as Jason nodded, the man with obscure patterns vanished on the spot and reappeared in front of Jason, now holding a sharp blade in his hand.

He slashed straight at Jason's neck.

Jason raised his arm.

Clang!

An arm capable of withstanding explosive-level defenses blocked such a slash, but as the blade slid down, sparks flew and the edge cut into Jason's forearm.

However, Jason didn't care at all, grabbed the wrist of the knife-wielding man with one hand, and with his other hand wielding a broad-bladed hatchet, he recklessly chopped at the other's neck.

Clang!

Another sharp blade appeared in the man's hand, blocking the broad-bladed hatchet.

Up close, Jason was certain the other had drawn the blade from some kind of 'space.'

An unknown storage space?

Jason thought to himself, with his actions showing no sign of stopping, as he headbutted the other.

The man covered in mysterious patterns clearly had the same idea.

Almost at the same moment, he raised his head and rammed it toward Jason.

Bang!

Without any embellishment, their heads collided, and in the silent noise, both recoiled backward under the reactionary force.

But at this time, Jason's hand was still gripping the other's wrist.

Though it was only a momentary exchange, the other's disappearing speed indicated to Jason that the opponent was faster than him!

If the other used their speed advantage, their battle would inevitably fall into desperation. In such a 'abnormal' battlefield, quick resolution was key to victory.

What about a 1VS1 situation?

Jason chose the same approach.

To engage the enemy where he was weakest when one could use the most direct means to resolve them would seem like a delusional act on Jason's part if he were starved out of his wits.

Leaning back, his legs exerted strength, his calf muscles tensed, and with support from the thighs and waist, like a spring in reflex, Jason used force on his wrist, pulling the other back, as his head rammed into the opponent once more, meanwhile, his hatchet guarded against the other's blade.

The man seemed to adore such combat; his blade didn't attack again, simply colliding with Jason.

Bang!

Once again.

Then came the third time, fourth time, fifth time.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Nothing but such dull thuds remained on the street where they stood.

And the speed was increasing.

At first, one could clearly discern each sound, but soon they became a continuous sequence, like a drumbeat played by several people.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Such sounds lasted for several minutes.

The man's forehead and face had already caved in, and his eyes had long been shattered.

Only the will to fight was keeping him going.

Jason was similarly afflicted, perhaps even more so.

He could no longer feel his nose.

But, Jason didn't care!

He, who possessed extraordinary Talent!

Just after another breath, Jason, having sustained a 'fatal wound,' returned to his original state instantly.

Then came another headbutt.

Splat!

There was no thud this time, only the sound of something like a watermelon shattering.

The head of the man before him had broken apart.

But the body did not fall. Instead, the remains turned to dust at a visible rate.

Jason shook his head.

Fatal wounds could be treated, but a sense of dizziness persisted.

However, this didn't prevent Jason from taking steps in pursuit of the scent of 'food.'

The man had carried such a scent, and Jason stumbled down the alleyway of the street, where he encountered a stone cubic structure.

It looked somewhat like a coffin, carved with unknown patterns.

A chain was wrapped around it, looking both like a restraint and a protection.

Jason didn't hesitate and approached the 'coffin.'

And just as he got close, an odd voice emerged from behind—

"I witness; I record."

Splat!

Following the voice, a metallic palm penetrated Jason's chest.

Chapter 455: The Mad 'Elder Brother'!

Jason, who possessed defense capable of withstanding explosive-level penetration, found himself completely powerless against the puncture of this metal hand.

Skin, muscle, bone—all pierced as easily as if they were tofu.

Crack!

The owner of the metal hand swung his arm, and Jason was flung against the wall, where he finally got a clear look at the man. The man had dark skin and was in his early thirties, taller than average, and sufficiently muscular, with black hair and blue eyes. What caught Jason's attention was that the man's upper and lower limbs, spine, and shoulder blades had been replaced with metal.

Upon seeing the metal, Jason's eyes began to sting as if the light reflected from the metal was already harming his eyes.

Subconsciously, Jason squinted his eyes.

Then, he swung his broad-bladed, short-handled cleaver at the man's neck.

The cleaver struck precisely on the man's neck.

But there was no damage to the man's neck at all.

Not only was there no cut in the skin, but there were also no signs of having been slashed.

It was as if it was completely unharmed.

However, it wasn't that nothing had happened.

Splat!

Jason's neck was nearly snapped in half.

His head drooped to one side of his shoulder, his face wearing an expression of surprise.

Backlash?

That was the remnant of Jason's thought.

The man who had been slashed just paused in his step.

He turned his head to look at Jason, and that gaze, which seemed so foreign to Jason, appeared as if it was directed at someone incredibly familiar.

"My foolish brother!"

The man spoke.

As he did, a very peculiar symbol on his forehead began to flash an odd light.

Under the light, the man's features became blurry, even slightly distorted.

Then, without paying any more attention to Jason, he walked toward the stone cube wrapped in chains, resembling a sarcophagus.

The closer he got, the more dazzling the light from the symbol on his forehead became, and his face grew blurrier.

And Jason, who had 'resurrected,' didn't hesitate to thrust his knife out again.

This time, he aimed for the man's back.

But, just like the previous strike,

This stab not only didn't harm the man, but a horrific wound also appeared on Jason's own chest.

Splat!

As blood sprayed, Jason fell to the ground.

The man glanced back at Jason, his look seemingly one of reminiscence or perhaps savoring the moment, and then, he smiled softly. He bent down, gently stroking Jason's cheek with his hand, and whispered in a drifting voice, "Truly adorable."

Then—

Bang!

The hand turned into a fist.

With a punch, Jason's head burst open like a watermelon.

Edmund, watching through the screen, shuddered when he saw Jason's head shatter.

He knew Jason was immortal, but such a scene was still shockingly impactful.

His breathing became involuntarily erratic.

'They' immediately began to fluctuate.

Calm down!

Calm down!

Quickly realizing this, Edmund immediately calmed himself by adjusting his breathing, and 'they' in his mind also swiftly returned to normal.

However, he searched his mind for information about the human-shaped "anomaly" before him.

And the answer he arrived at was: none!

What he knew.

What he had heard.

There was nothing!

Clearly, this "anomaly" wasn't one that "Sanctuary" had taken from the "Containment" base after their previous attack; it must be an "anomaly" that "Sanctuary" itself had always possessed but never revealed before.

The worst-case scenario had still occurred!

Edmund's brow furrowed.

The "anomalies" taken from "Containment" by "Sanctuary", though bizarre and powerful, were not insurmountable challenges for Edmund, who was well-acquainted with their traits.

The truly terrifying aspect of "anomalies" lies in the unknown!

You simply don't know what abilities they have, what they can do.

Some abilities are a joke.

But a joke can also be deadly.

Not to mention some that are outright "apocalyptic powers".

At this thought, Edmund's frown deepened.

After hesitating for just a second, he picked up the microphone connected to Jason's headset.

"Jason, can you hear me?"

Perhaps due to the punch earlier, Jason's custom headset was slow to respond.

It took a full two seconds before Jason's voice came through.

"I can."

"Hold him off for one minute."

"I'll find a way to counter him!" Edmund immediately said.

"Alright!"

Upon receiving Jason's affirmative response, Edmund scanned the hundreds of large screens in front of him once again. In a flash, he issued several commands, then lapsed into a seemingly dazed state.

His brain began constructing model after model.

Starting with the appearance of the human-shaped "anomaly", he considered Jason's conversation, behavior, style of attack, even the micro-expressions of the opponent, including his bizarre appearance as a foundation.

Bit by bit, detail by detail.

The "hundreds of people's" brainpower began to concentrate in an unprecedented manner at this moment.

Nosebleeds started to flow again.

But Edmund didn't care at all.

Or rather, Edmund in this state couldn't possibly see what was happening to himself.

Meanwhile, down the alley, Jason swung his knife at the man once more.

This time, Jason didn't go for fatal vulnerabilities but aimed for the man's limbs instead.

Clang!

The sound of his wide-bladed short-handled machete clashing with a metallic arm rang out sharply.

Then, a cut appeared on Jason's arm.

While chopping, Jason deliberately held back his strength.

"Smarter than before, but still not enough..."

Whoosh!

The man praised, as it seemed, but before he could finish, Jason simply raised his hand.

Whoosh!

An 8-meter-long conical Flame surged out, reminiscent of an adult dragon's breath. The entire back alley was engulfed in flames, and then...

Jason felt the burning heat and pain of being scorched.

Not only could slashes reflect, but flames could reflect as well!

Jason quickly retreated two steps, staring at the opponent with a solemn expression.

The man completely stopped in his tracks, turned around, and regarded Jason with a gaze that said 'interesting' and 'fun'.

"When did you start using 'Flame'?"

"Was it while herding?"

"To drive away 'wolves' ..."

"I see."

The man stared at Jason, muttering to himself.

Then, a look of extreme disgust appeared in his eyes.

"You're still trying to please Him!"

"That really is ignorance!"

"No wonder He favors you so much!"

"That really makes me... want to kill you again!"

As the man spoke, he acted accordingly.

As the last words fell, the man's arm once again pierced through Jason's chest, watching Jason's eyes rapidly dim, the man laughed, a somewhat pathological grin.

"The fat of the sheep, tasty?"

"Favoured by Him?"

"Then continue to show off that favor!"

The man whispered lowly into Jason's ear.

He withdrew his palm, wanting to watch Jason collapse powerlessly before him.

However, the moment his palm withdrew, Jason's eyes once again burst with vitality.

Seeing this intense vitality.

The man's dislike and hatred grew even more bitter, the symbol on his forehead began to flicker, and his face started to distort.

He raised his hand to stab Jason again.

Jason's arm appeared in front of the man's metallic palm; although, the next moment, that arm was severed, for Jason, it was enough.

Yi!

The force field of [Protection Against Evil] directly enveloped the man's body.

The man was taken aback.

His twisted face seemed to freeze.

The next moment—

Hiss hiss hiss!

Like cold water poured into heated fat, sizzling sounds arose as the man's body emitted billows of green smoke, starting to stagger backwards.

Effective!

The force field of [Protection Against Evil] was not reflected!

Jason's eyes brightened, unhesitatingly gesturing the two signs of [Protection Against Evil], pointing them at the man.

SI oT Yn!

'i!

The force field of [Protection Against Evil] engulfed the man again.

And Jason's physical strength began to fall sharply, but this did not stop Jason from casting [Protection Against Evil] again.

After two more consecutive strikes of [Protection Against Evil], Jason's vitality faded once more.

The staggering man saw this and first froze in shock, then laughed out loud.

"That's the cost of being favored!"

"My foolish brother!"

"You never understand, what you've received has already been marked with a price in the shadows—just as what I encountered when I first killed you, and what I went through."

"Look at what He does?"

"He exiled me, and then..."

"Gave you a coffin?"

The man nearly roared.

Rage completely twisted his face and soul, the symbol on his forehead shining with an unprecedented glow.

Under the light, another face emerged on the man's distorted visage.

Pale complexion, sharp fangs, and eyes that were bloodthirsty and ruthless.

However, this appearance was fleeting.

But even with that brief flash, the man's wounds instantly healed.

Then, as he looked towards the rocky cube resembling a coffin, that face disappeared, leaving only mockery, ridicule, and a profound schadenfreude.

"Look at this coffin."

"Guess, why do you think its chains are there?"

"My foolish brother!"

The man spoke again and then completely turned his body to face the coffin.

And behind him, Jason, resurrected once more, raised his hand and cast another [Protection Against Evil].

The force field emerged, enveloping the man.

Jason's breath faded again.

"Ah!"

In painful screams, the man felt like he was being fooled by Jason.

No!

He was fooled by Him!

"Do you think I would submit like this?"

"I'll tear him into pieces."

"Let's see how you revive him then!"

The man roared, charging at Jason.

Then, the resurrected Jason repelled him with another [Protection Against Evil].

When the force field of [Protection Against Evil] dissipated, and the man charged at Jason again, Jason was resurrected once more, casting another [Protection Against Evil].

After repeating this cycle over ten times, the look in the man's eyes was no longer that of dislike or hatred, but of loathing and murderous intent.

"Why are you so highly favored by Him!"

"Why is it you!"

"Not me!"

The man yelled wildly, charging at Jason once again.

It seemed the man was willing to abandon all just to kill Jason.

But when the force field of [Protection Against Evil] emerged, the man retreated in pain once more.

Despite [Protection Against Evil] being capable of pushing him back, it couldn't cause fatal injuries; it was merely superficial damage, which healed as the man breathed.

If once isn't enough, then ten times!

If ten times aren't enough, then a hundred times!

Jason persisted in his belief.

After all, at this time, he was 'Jason of a Hundred Lives'.

And at this moment, Edmund's voice, broken and intermittent, rang out—

"Weakness found."

"It's..."

"The coffin!"

Chapter 456: Crime and Punishment and Honey!

A coffin?

Jason frowned, his mind filled with various speculations.

And Edmund's voice resonated in his ears—

"From the moment he appeared, his gaze has been fixed on this coffin!"

"Even when you counterattacked, he didn't shift his peripheral vision!"

"Or rather, he looks at the coffin with longing, but more so fear... It's a fear even he hasn't realized, existing only in his instincts."

"Now, Jason, what you need to do is toss him into the coffin!"

Listening to Edmund's voice, Jason slightly shifted his body.

Then, faced with the charging man, he cast [Protection Against Evil] once more.

The opponent retreated again.

With roars of rage.

Once the opponent calmed down, Jason revived once again.

But unlike before, this time Jason took a step forward.

A very small step, and then, another cast of [Protection Against Evil].

After repeating this several times, Jason was only about two meters away from the rock cube resembling a coffin, but these two meters had become extremely challenging.

Because these two meters were Jason's 'safe distance'!

You see, even Jason's 'revival' needs time!

Albeit brief, this time does exist.

Simply put, the time it takes for the man to endure the damage from [Protection Against Evil]'s force field and charge at Jason for two meters is the time Jason needs to 'revive.'

That is to say, if Jason steps into this 'two-meter' range, he cannot guarantee he'll 'revive' just in time.

If he dies close to the opponent, not only would his previous efforts be in vain, but the 'revival' time would also extend, and such an extension would affect the consumption of satiety.

There's a high probability of falling into a vicious cycle!

Jason thought to himself and hit the man with another [Protection Against Evil].

Sl oT Yn!

'i!

After several upgrades, the variant expert-level [Protection Against Evil] not only boasts the attack power of a war vehicle but can also strike any creature or object within a 10-meter radius of where Jason stands.

And now, his position was almost at the end of the alley.

Right behind the rock cube was the end of the alley: a tall, thick wall.

The rock cube, resembling a coffin, leaned against the wall, and the man was leaning against one side of the rock cube.

The two were only two meters apart.

The man could nearly touch the rock cube with a lift of his hand.

Jason, however, had to take at least one step forward to touch it.

More importantly, there were chains on the rock cube; opening it would require first unlocking these chains.

And Jason was certain that the opponent would definitely not allow him to do so.

Hiss, hiss!

The sound of corrosion accompanied by wailing once again arose from the man.

When the force field of [Protection Against Evil] faded, the opponent charged straight at Jason.

This time, the man made it right in front of Jason.

Then, was pushed back by [Protection Against Evil] once again.

"I will kill you!"

"I must truly kill you!"

"You bastard who acts recklessly with His favoritism!"

The man shouted loudly.

Jason ignored the shouting, considering how to respond.

Then, an idea suddenly emerged in his heart.

The moment the idea appeared, Jason immediately took action.

He strode towards the rock cube.

In one step, Jason was in front of the rock cube, and then, his hand pressed on it.

At the same time, his body was pierced through.

Then, cruelly cut.

"Die! Die!"

"Go die for me!"

The man cut through Jason while frantically yelling.

In nearly two breaths, Jason was completely chopped to pieces.

And it seemed that was not enough to satisfy the man, who repeatedly stomped on Jason's flesh several times before he stopped.

After that, Jason revived once again.

This revival cost Jason 6 points of satiety.

Twice as much as a normal revival.

But Jason felt sincerely grateful that the man who cut him did so quickly.

Otherwise, that number would undoubtedly have doubled.

For the first time, Jason was thankful for an enemy's strength, so with a faint smile, he cast [Protection Against Evil] at the man again.

The man who had been grinding Jason into the ground just a moment ago was once again sizzling against the wall.

Jason repeated his previous actions.

After five rounds, Jason once again stood on the edge of the two-meter 'range.' This time, he didn't release [Protection Against Evil] but charged at the rock cube again, his palm touching it once more.

In just an instant, Jason died again.

The man once again completely cut through Jason.

But Jason revived promptly and repeated his previous actions.

When Jason was about to place his hand on the rock cube for the third time, the man stood in front of it, and Jason's palm touched the man's metallic arm instead.

"Is this your secret?"

"Reviving with the coffin fashioned by Him?"

"He really favors you!"

The man's face twisted as he looked at Jason.

Jason remained silent, even desperate to bypass the opponent to touch the rock cube.

But he was thwarted as his arm was twisted and broken by the man, who then threw him out, slamming him hard about seven or eight meters away.

Chapter 457: Punishment and Honey! (2)

Watching Jason struggling to rise from the ground, a twisted smile emerged on the man's distorted face.

"Foolish brother, your intent is far too obvious," he said.

"You're just like before, utterly clueless about concealing yourself."

"Now!"

"Let's see what your secret is!"

The man spoke in a tone of extreme contempt, as if he were looking down from a great height, then he reached out towards the cubic rock.

The opponent was very cautious, touching it not with his entire palm but with a single finger.

As the man's finger made contact with the surface of the cubic rock, he clearly felt discomfort, but—

"Ah!"

Jason cried out in agony and fell to the ground.

Since the battle began, no matter how many times he died, no matter how many times Jason was sliced apart, he hadn't cried out in pain.

But at the moment the man's finger touched the cubic rock, Jason instantaneously let out a scream of agony and involuntarily fell to the ground.

This glint in the man's eye lit up, and a malicious smile spread across his twisted face.

He withdrew his fingertip and began to forcefully scrape the cubic rock with a metal finger.

Though this caused him discomfort, the sight of Jason's howls was exceedingly pleasurable to him.

"My dear brother, where are your nobility and courage now?"

"Why do you have nothing left but cries of pain?"

"Indeed, you're nothing but a petty schemer."

As the man said this, his finger pressed down harder.

Then, he went from one finger to two, then three.

Until his whole palm covered it, and with just a little pressure, Jason began convulsing uncontrollably.

Malice spread across the man's face.

He hadn't felt such enjoyment in a long time.

He liked this state of affairs.

But soon he frowned slightly.

Jason seemed to be adapting to the stimulus, slowly standing up again.

The outside won't do it, must it be from inside?

With this thought in mind, the man yanked the chain directly.

With a clatter, the chain came off, and he opened the cubic rock.

Just like the exterior, the inside of the cubic rock was all unknown patterns, amplifying the man's discomfort—a sense of compression, even, as if compelling him to leave.

But he didn't care and thrust a finger inside forcefully.

At the instant his finger touched the inner wall of the rock, Jason, who had been continuously wailing, suddenly charged at him.

"Can't you bear it anymore?"

"My dear brother."

"The night is long, and we're just getting started."

With one hand, he sent Jason flying and, watching him roll on the ground, burst out in a cruel laugh.

Then, he saw Jason rise once more.

Just as he thought Jason would attack him again, he was shocked to find Jason unexpectedly ramming his head into a nearby wall.

Boom!

A tremendous force made Jason collapse the wall.

As the leaning building began to collapse, Jason was buried underneath.

Dust flew around, and astonishment that couldn't be concealed surfaced on the man's twisted face.

Is this... suicide?

After being stunned for a full two seconds, the man finally came to his senses.

"Hahaha!"

"That's so you!"

"Foolish, never knowing your true self!"

The man burst into uproarious laughter.

It was an unprecedented belly laugh.

In the man's memory, he had never been as happy as he was today.

What could be more joyful than seeing the person favored by Him die?

Of course, it's their death by his hand.

From within the dust, Jason was resurrected once again. He heard the elated laughter and stood up silently, catching the bricks falling from his body one by one and placing them gently on the ground.

Taking advantage of the dust, he quietly approached the man.

Relying on the special effect of the "Battle Mark. Prus. Griffin. Shadow Hidden Body Forging Technique" and the blessing of "Embrace of the Night," at that moment, Jason was like a true master assassin, inching closer to the man.

The man, oblivious, continued to stand in front of the opened cubic rock, laughing.

Jason silently measured the distance.

Then—

He lashed out with a kick!

Whoosh!

The sound of the air being split echoed as the man's laughter came to an abrupt halt, but the smile remained on his face.

He looked at Jason's incoming kick and lifted his right hand to his ear.

"Did you really think I couldn't hear that guy's voice?"

"I was just playing along with your performance,"

"And incidentally watching a monkey show."

With that mocking tone, the man shifted slightly to the side.

Facing the man who had dodged in advance, Jason's kick was doomed to fail.

However, Jason showed no sign of disappointment.

On the contrary, his eyes revealed a hint of delight.

A hint of triumphant delight.

And then, he suddenly accelerated, heading straight for the inside of the cubic rock!

The man saw such delight and also saw Jason's Acceleration.

Suddenly, an idea occurred to him.

Could the previous sounds have been fake?

They intentionally made me think that this foolish guy was going to confine me inside this coffin, but in actuality, it was for... himself to enter it?

Almost subconsciously, the man thought of how Jason had recklessly touched the stone cube before.

And Jason's pain when he touched the stone cube earlier.

Maybe that wasn't fake!

It was real!

This foolish guy, once again with his trickery, was about to turn the tables!

With that thought, the man moved.

He raised his hand to grab Jason.

Then, he caught hold of Jason's shoulder.

At that moment, Jason was only one step away from the stone cube.

"Such a pity!"

"My foolish brother."

"The same trick won't work on me a second time!"

The man proudly declared, even as Jason had grabbed his hand, he believed it was Jason's attempt to break free from him, trying to rush into the stone cube.

But, in the next moment—

Jason held onto the hand with both of his, shifted his left leg back to disrupt the man's balance, then with a twist of his waist, he yanked his hands forward fiercely.

Likened to Riding Clouds and Mist, the man was thrown into the stone cube.

In an instant, a peculiar Strength suppressed his body.

His eyes widened as he saw Jason straightening up.

"Have I been tricked?"

"Was all of that just to deceive me?"

"They really intended to confine me here?"

The man pondered in his heart, ultimately unable to restrain himself from questioning loudly.

Jason, without saying a word, raised his hand to close the door.

Bang!

The stone cube was shut tightly, its dull sound reverberating in the alley.

Edmund, watching all this through the screen, breathed a sigh of relief.

He knew the man would hear it before he informed Jason, but it was the only way to deal with the man, and besides, he trusted Jason would handle it properly.

Indeed, Jason had not let him down.

"Well done, Jason."

Edmund said through the microphone.

His voice was a little weak.

The previous calculations had drained too much of his energy and Physical Strength.

Now, he wanted nothing more than to fall asleep immediately.

However, the fight wasn't over yet.

He picked up a cup of high-calorie hot cocoa, which he had prepared in advance, sensing what he might endure.

But right after Edmund took a sip, he spat out the hot cocoa in his mouth.

What did he see?

Jason was actually sticking out his tongue to lick the stone cube!

What was he doing?

Could Jason be planning to eat the stone cube?

"Jason, you can't eat stones!"

"Plus, that guy's inside there!"

Edmund said swiftly.

"It's digesting that guy."

"Then, I will digest it."

Jason's calm voice came through.

Edmund heard the unwavering determination in his voice, leaving him speechless.

"Are you sure?"

"We still have big troubles to deal with afterward."

Edmund asked.

"Sure."

"Don't worry, it'll be quick!"

Jason provided a firm response.

Just as Jason had said, the stone cube's digestion speed was almost on par with his; the peculiar entity inside was gone without a trace in less than three minutes.

On the contrary, the stone cube became increasingly delicious.

Gulp!

Jason swallowed his saliva.

However, he didn't open his mouth right away but instead took out a case of strong liquor from inside a nearby building and began to rinse with it.

After the rinse with the strong liquor came the rinse with clear water.

After completing all that, Jason cautiously took out a leather pouch from the lining of his clothes.

Pop!

The cork was pulled, and a sweet smell began to spread.

The mouth of the leather pouch was turned downward.

Thick honey started pouring onto the stone cube.

Under the moonlight, the stone cube immediately looked as if it had been gilded, a shimmering golden layer of radiance.

Jason could no longer resist, his mouth opened wide.

Ah-woo!

Chapter 458: Unremarkable Avent!

Although Jason's mouth was open as wide as it could go, it was unrealistic to swallow the entire rock cube in one bite.

He had to swallow the whole rock cube in three bites.

Crunch, crunch.

The rock cube, smeared with honey, was extremely sweet the moment it entered his mouth, followed by a hint of creamy flavor. If the taste of cream was unforgettable, then creamy flavor with a touch of 'sweet' was filled with joy. Jason chewed vigorously, but unfortunately, he couldn't swallow it. Though his stomach was incredibly strong, it still couldn't digest things like rocks and steel rods.

After chewing more than a dozen times, Jason spat out the residue.

Joy from eating delicious food appeared on his face.

[Sin and Punishment, Ark (Remnants) consumed!]

[Physical Strength, Energy, and Excessive Injury Recovery!]

[Satiation +200!]

[Satiation: 360]

[Excitement of Feast +3]

[Excitement of Feast: 7]

...

"Did I just die 50 times?"

Jason realized suddenly. He had been dying so quickly and so many times that he couldn't keep track.

But he could clearly see the increase from 310 points of satiation before to 360 points after adding the 200 points.

Jason felt again that if he had a tombstone for every death, by now he surely would have made a big step towards circling the globe.

Then, Jason's attention was drawn by [Excitement of Feast].

3 points!

This number was one point more than Jason had anticipated.

According to his initial estimate, the strange mad man was worth one point, and the rock cube another point.

Now it was three points.

Was it because the latter digested the former and underwent some marvelous reaction?

Or were the two added together naturally equating to three points?

If it was the former, there was nothing much to say, but if it was the latter...

"Save up 'food' and then swallow it all in one go?" Jason frowned.

For Jason's present stage, restraining 'hunger' was no longer a difficult task.

But that was only for most ordinary food. For truly meaningful 'food,' it was still quite hard.

Not to mention saving up 'food.'

Just thinking about that taste made Jason feel exceptionally tormented.

Nevertheless, this did not deter Jason from preparing to do it.

Because Jason knew this was also a necessary process in conquering his 'hunger.'

Perhaps...

I can make some jerky now?

Jason thought quietly to himself, gazing at the total number of [Excitement of Feast].

7 points!

To enhance [Protection Against Evil], he needed 8 points!

Just one point short!

With just one more point of [Excitement of Feast], he would be able to raise [Protection Against Evil] to a Master level!

Master level!

Just from the prefix alone, Jason had some guesses.

It must be a level that brings about a qualitative change!

Now he was only one point away from that level!

The goal was within reach!

Even Jason couldn't help but show a smile. He stood up, dusting off his body, but he didn't leave immediately. Instead, he entered a nearby house to search for clothes he could wear.

In the recent battle, most of his clothes were already damaged. Only a few remnants protected his modesty and several leather pockets, barely covering the essentials, but he still felt a chill as he walked.

The towering, robust figure of Jason made it difficult for him to find clothes that fit, leaving him with limited options to choose from.

Eventually, he found a pair of roomy overalls in a butcher's shop, but no matter how hard he searched, he could not find a suitable top and had to settle for a leather apron the butchers wore while cutting meat.

After rinsing it with water, Jason slipped the apron over his head, frowned at the old blood stains and filth on it, and hoped to wash it again, but time did not allow it!

Hum!

In the outskirts northwest of Ang City, a sharp Sword Intent soared into the sky.

"Has it started?"

Feeling such sharpness, Jason took a deep breath and slowly put on his mask.

Not the 'Night Owl'!

But his own ice hockey mask.

The Sword Intent of Avent was not just about combat; it was also signaling to them: The plan is going smoothly, proceed to the next step!

After a slight adjustment, the ice hockey mask quickly calmed Jason down. He lifted his hand to draw a broad-bladed short-handled machete, whose sharp edge reflected the masked figure in the moonlight.

In the moonlight, the ice hockey mask appeared cold and distant, and Jason's eyes were even colder.

He looked towards the location where the Sword Intent soared.

He sensed the twisted struggle that continued under that sharp Sword Intent.

From behind the mask came detached, murderous words—

"The world is dirty again."

...

The clergy's attendant looked up subconsciously upon hearing footsteps.

When he saw the figure wearing a black cloak and a Night Owl mask, he was immediately startled.

Then, he raised his voice to halt the figure.

"Halt!"

"You blasphemer!"

As he spoke, a white glow tinged with blood appeared in his hand, which condensed into a long sword within moments.

The tip of the sword pointed directly at the 'Night Owl' before him.

The sanctified glow enveloped the 'Night Owl,' and the immense pressure descended like a mountain from the heavens.

However, for the 'Night Owl,' such pressure seemed non-existent.

He continued to step forward.

"Halt!"

The clergy's attendant shouted again, followed by a swift slash of his sword.

Though they were more than ten meters apart, when he made this slash, a crimson glow shot from the white sword, now slightly stained with blood. The glow looked like Sword Qi but also like a secret technique.

And it was incredibly fast.

In the blink of an eye, it reached the 'Night Owl.'

The 'Night Owl,' eyeing this attack that resembled Sword Qi as much as it did a secret technique, narrowed his eyes slightly behind the mask.

Crack!

The scarlet glow shattered like porcelain hitting the ground.

A faint smell of blood began to fill the air.

"Relying too much on external forces, your sword... is not sincere enough," Avent said slowly.

"A sword that kills you is a good sword!"

"You can block one, but what about a hundred?"

The clergy's attendant growled, and his sword lashed out once more.

Just as he said, with each swing of his sword, rich in the smell of blood, hundreds of scarlet glows appeared. Within those glows, distorted faces flickered in and out of existence.

They stared at Avent.

Their eyes filled with resentment, hatred, and the intent to kill.

Mere mortals would feel chilled to the bone just by their gaze.

Avent, on the other hand, stood unaffected.

Moreover, he even had the leisure to observe these scarlet glows.

A moment later, the 'Sword Saint' nodded slightly.

"So that's how it is."

"Sacrificed their lives, twisted their souls... Indeed, it's a consistent practice of the 'Sanctuary.'

Avent said.

"What does it matter if you've discovered it?"

"You are now surrounded by hundreds of 'Silence' techniques!"

The Pope's close minister sneered coldly.

Sweat streamed down his forehead; clearly, using hundreds of 'Silence' attacks was a considerable burden on him.

"'Silence'?"

Avent was stunned after hearing the name, then shook his head.

Without saying a word, his gaze conveyed his thoughts.

Unworthy!

The attacks before him, a mix of Sword Qi and secret techniques, didn't deserve the name 'Silence.'

"Hmph!"

The Pope's close minister snorted coldly and fell silent.

The hundreds of Sword Qi assaults he considered 'Silence' charged at Avent with a series of sharp wails from vengeful spirits.

The invisible wails spread out, and birds startled into flight in the distance fell to the ground, lifeless; even the insects hidden underground grew stiff.

An aura akin to plunder appeared on the 'Silence.'

Their crimson light became increasingly blinding.

And the Pope's close minister was within this aura's range.

What initially looked like a full face visibly withered at a speed visible to the naked eye.

But he paid it no heed.

He wanted to see Avent die!

A hundred 'Silence' attacks would surely kill Avent!

The Pope's close minister was very confident.

Then—

Crack crack crack!

The hundred 'Silence' assaults that reached Avent shattered one after another.

The sound of them breaking sounded like slaps across the Pope's close minister's face.

It was not only painful, but it also left him incredulous.

"Impossible!"

"The Pope himself said it!"

"With a hundred 'Silence' attacks, you would surely be killed!"

The Pope's close minister bellowed.

"He's not wrong."

"A hundred 'Silence' attacks could indeed have killed me, but that was the me of the past."

"Me now?"

"There's still a bit lacking."

"However..."

Avent continued in an unchanging tone, but before he finished speaking, he stopped.

He slightly adjusted his stance and looked at the Pope's close minister before him.

The one who was just moments ago overwhelmed with emotion had now become silent, his aura more obscure, a sense of distortion not of this world creeping onto his being.

Crack!

The ground beneath where he stood shattered.

It wasn't shattered in the traditional sense.

It resembled the way a mirror shatters, with cracks trailing across it.

Or rather...

Space itself was breaking.

"Hey, not a bad sacrifice."

"I can taste you... very delicious."

The Pope's close minister spoke.

That voice was neither male nor female, neither holy nor filthy.

Only distorted.

Standing on that broken ground, this hint of distortion quickly grew, as if intending to infect the entire world.

Watching this scene, Avent did not skimp on his praise.

"So this is the case."

"You actually managed to accomplish the 'descend of god' with these conditions at hand!"

"Truly remarkable!"

There was admiration, yet no great surprise.

From the moment he had arrived here, Avent had a rough idea of what he would face, not to mention Edmund's reminder.

The cooperation between Lawrence and the 'Sanctuary' has to be a win-win!

Only with 'win-win' would the 'Sanctuary' make a move!

So please, be careful!

Because...

They may well have prepared a real trump card.

Recalling Edmund's words in his mind, Avent slowly took a breath, just as leisurely as his tone of voice before.

Then, he stepped toward the 'god' before him.

His voice became clearer.

"The gods have already met their twilight."

"Dawn belongs to mortals."

Watching Avent approach, the so-called 'god' laughed.

"How could mortals survive the long night without the guidance of the gods?"

"Come forth!"

"Come forth!"

"Return to our embrace!"

"Let us guide you to the true 'sanctuary.'

With that, It, borrowing the body of the Pope's close minister, opened Its arms wide, as if welcoming Avent.

Avent laughed as well.

"Therefore, the 'Owls' have arisen!"

"The 'Owls' spread their wings in the night!"

"Under the 'Owls' wings... lies the protection of all mortals!"

Clang!

As soon as he finished speaking, Avent's sword left its scabbard.

There were no Sword Qi streaks, no earth-shattering force.

Just a very ordinary Horizontal Slash.

Then, he sheathed his sword again.

An average swordsman could accomplish it after a year's practice, and when sheathing his sword, he might even twirl it beautifully to the applause of an audience.

The so-called 'Deity' could devour thousands of such swordsmen in an instant.

But now, It could only lower Its head.

Looking at Its shattered form.

The ground healed.

It shattered.

"What swordsmanship is this?"

It questioned, hesitant, astonished.

Avent, calm, slowly uttered the name of the move he firmly believed in, the one that was destined to happen—

"Horizontal Slash."

Chapter 459: The Great Pontiff's Constant Back and Forth!

Horizontal Slash?!

He was startled at first, then his face filled with astonishment and anger.

You deceive a deity!

How could such a sword strike be merely a Horizontal Slash!

But he couldn't utter more words, for the form he had 'descended' in was already thoroughly shattered and no longer sufficient to sustain his existence.

However, before returning, he glared at Avent.

I will come back!

Wait for me!

His gaze carried such a message.

It wasn't a threat.

It was that he really would do so.

Avent, wearing a mask, calmly met the other's gaze.

Snap!

Amid the sound of shattering porcelain, the papal retainer's body was completely pulverized, scattering not blood but rather powder-like crystals all over the place.

The sanctified white disappeared outright.

Droplets of crimson once more settled into the skeletons on the ground.

Only a slight twisted aura began to rise slowly.

Avent 'looked' at this twisted aura, once again took a slow breath, as slow as before.

Then...

The long sword was drawn from its sheath!

Clang!

A flash of sword light.

The long sword returned to its sheath.

That little twist of aura instantly dissipated.

He had threatened him.

How could he let his adversary leave easily.

"Mortal!"

"You dare to slay a deity!"

"Do you have any idea what you've done?"

Within the dissipating aura, a voice boomed like thunder, echoing in Avent's mind, while simultaneously, a towering figure began to manifest in Avent's mental space.

He looked down upon Avent.

"You had a chance to live."

"But now?"

"You truly are on a path to your own death!"

With that, the giant reached out his hand and grabbed for Avent.

That palm covered the sky in Avent's sight, a destructive aura pressing down on him.

"Do you really think you can slay a god?"

"We have long become beings beyond your understanding."

"In our eyes... you are less than ants."

Boom!

With such pronouncement, the giant's hand fiercely pressed down.

The earth shook, one might even say heaven and earth were crumbling.

Avent was gone.

The giant could confirm this.

Therefore, he was all the more disdainful.

"Although I lost a little, obtaining such a powerful body is quite good. It's much stronger than the previous 'vessel.' Next, it will be time to collect more sacrifices..."

The giant muttered to himself.

But his voice abruptly stopped.

For a sharp presence was concentrating before him.

In the next moment, Avent appeared.

Avent, without the owl mask, looked as though he had an epiphany.

"This is your power?"

"Interesting."

He said so, raising his right hand, his middle and index fingers straight, his ring and pinky fingers tucked inward, his thumb pressed against the first joint of his ring finger before he thrust it straight out.

It didn't seem special.

The giant felt no threat.

Then, the giant shattered once again.

Just as the previous Horizontal Slash.

This time it was—

"Straight thrust?"

He faltered as he asked.

"No."

Avent shook his head, curiosity appeared on his face, waiting for Avent's response, but Avent spoke unhurriedly, "This is: Swordfinger. Straight Thrust."

The giant's eyes widened in anger as he looked at Avent.

He felt insulted.

He instinctively wanted to roar in fury.

But then...

Snap!

He shattered.

Unlike the previous shattering, this time everything he had entered this place with had shattered.

"Deity'?"

"How are you different from those who let greed blind them?"

"Even more so..."

"Pathetic."

With those words, Avent's consciousness returned to his body.

There was no joy or excitement behind his mask.

Seemingly, slaying a deity was commonplace for him.

In fact, it was indeed.

He believed his sword could slay mortals, and he believed his sword could slay deities.

Because, in Avent's eyes, that deity really was not much different from a mortal.

Apart from being stronger, there was no difference.

Moreover, internally even more twisted.

In his inner space, he could clearly feel it, and to confirm this, he even took a hit from his opponent.

Such a strike was enough for Avent to understand what sort of being he was opposing.

Greed to the point of distortion.

No reason, seemingly lucid but actually... a madman.

Completely driven by instinct.

Such beings were indeed terrifying.

Especially when they were in a group.

Involuntarily, Avent lifted his head and looked up at the sky.

There, there were many more of such creatures.

Should he exterminate these creatures once and for all?

If not, being watched by these creatures always felt uncomfortable.

He himself was fine.

But what if they set their sights on Esther? What if Esther and Ms. Jennifer got married and had eleven or twelve children, and they were also targeted? What if they shamelessly disrupted Sizhuo's peace?

Unacceptable!

I cannot afford such a loss!

I'm not afraid of revenge, but my loved ones cannot manage!

They are too fragile!

So...

I must completely eradicate them!

Otherwise, I won't be able to sleep or eat in peace!

Thinking this, the face behind Avent's mask turned serious, his gaze turning sharper, a surge of Sword Intent rising to the sky.

The Sword Intent didn't dissipate but kept consolidating!

Under the moonlight, this Sword Intent was like a real sword, piercing straight into the sky.

Ah, ah ah!

Screams reverberated beyond the sky.

To ordinary ears, however, this sounded like thunderous rolls.

Several indescribable shadows rapidly vanished beyond the sky.

Avent furrowed his brow.

His sword strike was effective, but it hadn't achieved the expected result because... someone had obstructed it.

Avent turned to look at the nearby woods.

An elderly man, hunched over, with graying hair, wearing a white robe, appeared. The man's steps were very slow, much slower than his youthful appearance would suggest.

Cough, cough.

After taking only a few steps, the man could no longer suppress it and began coughing, bringing forth specks of crimson on his chest.

Then, with a thud, the man fell to the ground.

Even in such a state, he still looked devoutly towards the sky.

"One must not be irreverent to 'Deity'."

"All that we possess is bestowed upon us by 'Deity'."

"We should be grateful."

As he spoke, the man knelt towards the night sky with great reverence.

"Hoson!"

Avent's voice grew cold.

Hoson, the High Priest of the 'Sanctuary'.

The evaluation of this High Priest by various forces was quite high.

Because most people acknowledged the fact that he had preserved the 'Sanctuary,' allowing it to continue to exist.

Even, from some perspectives, without Hoson, the 'Sanctuary' of the new century would not exist.

And Avent had an even more unique understanding of the Hoson before him.

He wouldn't believe that Hoson was someone who could truly have faith.

Even if he did...

It wouldn't be in a deity.

And this posture?

It was nothing more than a facade all along.

He had taken a sword strike from him.

His body was already on the verge of shattering.

As for why he would do such a thing?

Avent looked again at the now tranquil night sky, and the sneer on his lips grew even sharper.

"Your appearance, it truly nauseates me," Avent said indifferently.

"Just this makes you nauseous?"

"You haven't seen the truly nauseating appearance yet."

"Avent, do you want to see it?" Hoson asked with a laugh in response.

"No."

Avent shook his head resolutely.

"You see, you always reject me like this."

"It was that way before."

"It is so now."

"Just... I hope you won't regret it in the future."

The current High Priest of the 'Sanctuary' sat on the ground, looking at Avent with a smile on his aged face, as relaxed as if chatting with a friend, his tone light but with an eager edge.

"The future?"

"Are you sure you can see my future?"

"Are you sure that you will still be your true self?"

Avent said with a touch of irony.

"Of course!"

"I'm absolutely positive!"

"Otherwise, why do you think I agreed to Lawrence's proposal?"

"He wants to take revenge on Edmund."

"And what does that have to do with me?"

"To annihilate Ang City filled with 'heretics'?"

"Hahaha!"

"Stop joking!"

"Ang City is one of the better cities I have seen, and it was the city I once most aspired to live in, 'heretics'?"

"Absurd."

Hoson, the current High Priest, said, uttering words that could overturn the 'Sanctuary.'

His laughter was full of mockery, tinged with scorn.

After about ten seconds, Hoson laughed till he was gasping for air, and only then did the laughter stop.

He touched the soil by his feet, his face carrying a hint of reminiscence.

"He chose to live in seclusion here."

"This soil attracted him."

"Yet in my hands, this soil seems so ordinary."

"Why do you think that is?" Hoson asked Avent.

Avent watched him, and after a few seconds, he revealed a look of contempt.

"You'll never understand."

"When you sent part of yourself there, you could never understand."

"You just become one of them."

"And then, you become twisted."

Avent declared coldly and firmly.

"There?"

"What's so bad about it?"

Hoson pointed towards the night sky, then raised his palm a bit higher, making it clear that he was referring to a higher place.

The current High Priest continued to speak.

"I was once devout, believing that a deity is omnipotent, omniscient."

"Until..."

"He appeared!"

"With one punch, he 'ended' the old age."

"With one punch, he ushered in a new age."

"As the mushroom cloud rose to the heavens, I knew what I had to do."

"He became my goal!"

"But, my Talent was too poor, so poor that I couldn't even see his silhouette, so... I chose the way that suited me."

"How could I, that me, possibly make such a minor mistake?"

"I've been prepared for a long time."

The current High Priest said, standing up.

He leisurely dusted the dirt off his body, then clapped his hands.

Clap, clap.

Amid the crisp sound, a set of walnut furniture appeared.

It consisted of three pieces: a table, a high-backed chair, and an ornately styled office chair.

Hoson sat down in the high-backed chair with practiced ease, picked up the quill pen on the table, and began writing something on what appeared to be parchment.

"Are you sure?"

A distorted, twisted voice came from the office chair.

Hoson laughed.

"Of course."

"Why else would I have rebuilt the 'Sanctuary'?"

"Isn't it for the sake of a transaction like this?"

"Sacrificing everything I've created for the 'Sanctuary,' which does not include any aspect of 'meto ensure that the 'me' in that place remains myself!"

Hoson articulated clearly.

"Transaction complete!"

The twisted, distorted voice fell silent.

The entire set of furniture disappeared.

Exhausted, Hoson promptly fell to the ground once again.

He looked up at Avent.

Then, in a lowered voice,

He said in a volume only they could hear—

"How about we make a deal?"

"Uh, as the young people say nowadays, do you need an..."

"Agent?"

Chapter 460: Heaven?

Special Agent?

Avent lowered his head to look at Hoson, who had fallen to the ground, his eyes filled with undisguised disdain.

It wasn't disdain for special agents.

It was simply disdain for Hoson himself.

Avent understood very well that what Hoson wanted to become was not just what was so-called a special agent.

It was...

A chip!

A chip that could keep the other party alive, and even better, in that place.

Because there had been too long a disconnection between that place and here, they needed a 'person' who knew about the affairs here.

Facing the disdain in Avent's eyes, Hoson laughed.

"Rest assured, when I inform them about the situation here, I will certainly hold some things back, and then, when the opportunity arises, I will tell you some of the affairs from there, of course, for safety, I will also keep some to myself."

"You see, isn't that fair?"

As he spoke, Hoson sat cross-legged, trying to appear less awkward.

"Fair?"

"If it wasn't now that killing you was no longer useful, you would have been dead countless times over."

Avent said coldly.

"Of course, of course!"

"I believe you can't wait to kill me."

"But cooperation is the best option for us now."

Hoson waved his hands, a simple gesture that made him gasp for breath.

Then, the Grand Pontiff, who had just sacrificed most of the 'Sanctuary', turned his head towards Ang City.

"Where is 'he' now?"

"Exploring the world... I have already explored every place that can be explored."

"Where could he be?"

Hoson asked himself rhetorically.

Following that, Hoson laughed again.

"To show my sincerity, I will tell you a piece of news first."

"Lawrence has planted a 'bomb' in Ang City!"

After speaking, Hoson deliberately paused to look at Avent.

Seeing that Avent's eyes remained calm, without any ripples, Hoson was slightly taken aback.

Then, the Grand Pontiff immediately realized something.

"Edmund?"

"That Edmund whom Lawrence considers his greatest enemy?"

"What an excellent man."

"Too bad there's no chance to meet him now."

With those words, Hoson did not look at Avent again; he gazed into the night sky, then once more towards Ang City, his eyes fixed on the city shimmering with lights and flames in the night, murmuring to himself:

"If one place drives me out, another welcomes me."

"Avent, we..."

"See you in heaven!"

As he finished speaking, the breath of the Grand Pontiff ceased completely, and his body visibly turned to ashes at a speed discernible to the naked eye.

Avent watched the pile of ashes and, after a moment of silence, he raised his head to scan the night sky.

Or rather, somewhere even further than the night sky.

However, he did not feel an ounce of envy, intrigue, or curiosity.

What he wanted now was for his son to get married quickly and have eleven or twelve healthy babies with Ms. Jennifer, for them to build a farmhouse on the outskirts of the city, to farm, to herd, to fish, and if any of them could inherit his swordsmanship, that would be more than he could ask for.

As for heaven?

Nonsense!

It was worthless in his eyes.

Yet, what needed to be annihilated still had to be annihilated.

Otherwise...

He would never have peace of mind.

Avent scanned the night sky again, his eyes frosting over.

Did they really think his Sword Intent was so easy to resist?

With a flick of his cloak, in the unique rustling sound of the fabric, Avent turned and disappeared into the darkness.

He took note of the matters concerning heaven.

Later, he would deal with them one by one.

But right now?

The affairs of Ang City were more important.

Especially with his son undertaking a critical mission.

...

Edmund looked at the screen, where the battle was turning in their favor due to the contributions of Aras, Dibala, Siba, and Aio. Kite, and he let out a slight sigh of relief.

"Give me a hot cocoa."

Edmund said.

Immediately, a member of the reserves brought over the hot cocoa that had been prepared in advance to Edmund.

Thick and loaded with a large amount of protein powder, the hot cocoa was difficult for the average person to swallow.

But for Edmund, it was far from enough.

"Another cup."

After downing three cups in succession, Edmund began to feel the stabbing pain in his brain subside a little.

He rubbed his temples, continuing to ease the pain.

About two minutes later, the 'others' in his mind took a temporary rest.

But one did not.

One that completely mimicked 'Lauren.'

'Have I reached my limit?'

'How disappointing.'

'To think I saw you as a great adversary, laying out trap after trap.'

The 'Lauren' looked at him with scorn.

'Thank you.'

'I just want to live a life as lazy as a salted fish.'

'Lying there, doing nothing, that sounds pretty good to me!'

'I've already tried my best to lower my presence, why do you still force me?'

He questioned back.

'Because...'

'As long as you live, I can't sleep or eat in peace!'

The 'Lauren' said, staring at him malevolently.

'You didn't become one of my people.'

'And you repeatedly rejected my invitations.'

'Yet you display such exceptional Talent and that laughable sense of justice.'

'How could I possibly not destroy someone like you?'

'Unfortunately, not only are you exceptionally gifted, but also extremely lucky, eluding my schemes time after time. Shaun's assassination attempt was a joke, only making you alert, letting you escape to Ang City.'

'It's truly a pity.'

'Lauren' said coldly, with a hint of regret on his face.

He remained silent.

At this moment, with his absolute rationality, stripped of human emotions, he was merely analyzing and summarizing, non-stop.