

## Menu 461

Chapter 461: Heaven?

The conclusions drawn earlier had once again emerged.

And this time, as opposed to the previous vagueness, they were much clearer.

'It wasn't me who escaped to Ang City.'

'It was you who arranged for me to be in Ang City.'

'Because here, you have the opportunity for a desperate comeback!'

'Because...'

'Ang City itself was your earliest arrangement.'

He said, looking up at 'Lawrence.'

'Lawrence' nodded, without objection.

'Correct.'

'This is my initial layout.'

'So guess, where did I place the opportunity for a turnaround?'

As he spoke, that habitual malice appeared on 'Lawrence's' face.

'In the... 'orphanage'!'

He answered.

The malice on 'Lawrence's' face stiffened a bit.

'It's not hard to guess.'

'You were once a high-ranking member of the 'orphanage'!'

'Thinking about laying out a plan in Ang City, it's natural to involve the 'orphanage'!'

'Then, what could be more suitable than the 'Ang City Orphanage' as a stronghold?'

'The 'Ang City Orphanage,' already underground, could just dig a few more floors down or secretly retain a hidden passageway, an elevator leading there; that's what's most appropriate for you.'

He watched the stiffness slowly leaving 'Lawrence's' face as he spoke.

He paused when he got to that point.

'Is that what you want to hear me say?'

He suddenly asked in return.

'Lawrence' kept the stiffness in his face, his eyes filled with shock, seemingly not understanding what he was talking about.

But he continued speaking.

'You would definitely set up the chance for a turnaround within the base of the 'Ang City Orphanage.'

'But, this opportunity for a comeback would surely not be just one.'

'Given your character, you would surely ensure a backup for the final opportunity!'

He said with certainty.

The stiffness on 'Lawrence's' face, and the shock in his eyes, disappeared.

Then, 'Lawrence' scoffed.

'So what if you know?'

'It's a checkmate move!'

'Even if you know, you can't change anything!'

'Just like the previous two times!'

'Lawrence' emphasized the word 'two times' in his speech, then stared intently at him, hoping to see pain and sorrow on his face.

Unfortunately, at that moment, there were no such emotions in him.

On the contrary, 'Lawrence's' words revealed even more.

'Sure enough...'

'Its appearance was a coincidence.'

'And you were merely making use of that coincidence.'

'It fits your style well.'

He said, then paused again, continuing, "So, will that place make me choose between sacrificing comrades or destroying the entirety of Ang City?"

'Guess!'

That malicious smirk reappeared on 'Lawrence's' face.

Then, 'Lawrence' disappeared.

He returned to a normal state.

Edmund rubbed his temples, subconsciously wiping away a nosebleed before picking up the communicator.

'Esther?'

'It's me, senior.'

'The hidden passage has been found.'

Esther's voice came through the communicator.

'Good, wait for me, I'll be right...'

Before he could finish saying 'there,' Edmund felt a darkness before his eyes and fell to the ground as everything spun around him.

'Chief!'

'Doctor! Doctor!'

The stationed mobile unit members quickly helped Edmund up, shouting towards the side.

'Soldier, report on Edmund's condition.'

Esther's voice in the communicator towards...

'Report, Chief Edmund is unconscious!'

Hearing the mobile unit member's words, Esther, who was at that moment under the 'orphanage' base of Ang City, furrowed his brows, his eyes full of concern, and directly said to Clark and Lites standing beside him, 'Gentlemen, I need you to go back up and look after Edmund while taking command of the entire base.'

'The battle is not over.'

'There needs to be someone with experience in command!'

Seeing that the captain and vice-captain of the mobile unit had more to say, Esther spoke quickly.

Then, he pointed to a recently discovered secret door and said, 'As an investigator, I have more experience in investigation; this is better suited for me.'

Clark and Lites looked at Esther and, in the end, nodded.

'Be careful!'

The two cautioned him.

Then, they issued commands to a nearby ten-person mobile unit team.

'Temporarily follow Mr. Esther's commands, understand?'

'Understood!'

The members of the mobile unit saluted in response.

Esther watched Clark and Lites enter the elevator, taking a deep breath.



Inside, he was extremely anxious.

The calm on his face was just a pretense of composure.

Through the descriptions by senior Edmund, he knew very well what kind of person 'Lawrence' was.

A smart yet mean-spirited fellow who would stop at nothing to achieve his goals.

Would the 'fallback' plan left by such a bastard be simple?

In fact, from the moment senior Edmund confirmed that Ang City's 'orphanage' had the enemy's fallback plans, he had begun his investigation.

A massive deployment of personnel turned the 'orphanage' upside down, only just now discovering the 'hidden passage' left by the adversaries.

A hidden passageway concealed within the orphanage's emergency evacuation routes.

The emergency evacuation route, a facility every city's 'orphanage' possesses, created for contingencies, and the last escape route prepared by the 'orphanage' for its members.

Because of this, under normal circumstances, no one would be here.

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As for activating it?

It was even more impossible.

Because once activated, it signified that something uncontrollable had occurred.

Everything here would be uploaded to headquarters.

Then, the containment breach response plan would be initiated.

Esther had not thought it would be an emergency evacuation passage at first; it was only after nearly turning the entire base upside down without finding it, yet still believing in Edmund's premise, that he directly opened this passage and then discovered a 'secret passage' within it.

Hold headquarters accountable?

At such a time, Esther simply didn't care.

Moreover, he had a legitimate excuse: a massive 'anomaly' attack on Ang City, and they needed to evacuate.

The 'secret passage' was about a hundred meters long and led straight down, equipped with an elevator and backup power.

Click!

The sound of the elevator's motor echoed from below the 'secret passage'.

These were the sounds of Clark and Lites departing on the elevator.

Esther looked once more into the darkness ahead at the entrance to the 'secret passage'.

Unlike just before, where every five meters had a wall lamp, here it was pitch black ahead.

It seemed to be informing all who entered that there was something different ahead.

Unknown and dangerous.

As if they were all hidden in that darkness.

Esther took a deep breath and turned to look at the people behind him.

"Everyone, we now need to work together with one heart and mind," he said.

With that, Esther's gaze turned toward the additional members of this mission: Bob and Hosea.

These were two men who had been spotted near an 'anomaly,' infamous for their track records, yet had survived.

Naturally, such people could not be separated from the 'shelter' members.

So, the two men gloriously became 'shelter' D-Class personnel.

Not D-Class.

D-, a term for expendable members.

"D-1667, D-1668."

"Begin exploring ahead."

Esther issued the order directly.

Bob's number was D-1667.

Hosea's number was D-1668.

The two were fully equipped at this moment, wearing protective gear, headlamps, portable video equipment, communicators, oxygen tubes, and so on.

However, no weapons.

D-Class personnel do not need weapons.

They are also not allowed to have weapons.

"Yes," Bob and Hosea did not argue with Esther's words, let alone resist. With ten assault rifles aimed at them, as long as they didn't want to be riddled with bullets, the two knew what they should do.

With great reluctance, Bob walked ahead with Hosea following behind, their forehead lights dispelling the surrounding darkness, allowing Esther to see the general shape ahead.

It wasn't much different from the path they had traversed before.

After moving forward about thirty meters, a platform appeared, connected to a staircase that was even darker.

Almost simultaneously, Bob and Hosea stopped in their tracks.

"D-1667, continue forward!"

"D-1668, check the surroundings!"

Esther issued his commands again.

"Why is it always me?" the thin, bespectacled Bob, with a slightly gloomy face, grumbled.

The gray-haired Hosea just smiled.

"The next won't be any better," Hosea remarked.

"May you meet a horrible end!"

Bob flipped Hosea the middle finger before starting towards the stairs.

The two weren't on friendly terms, just incarcerated inmates from separate 'cells,' waiting to complete this mission and gain their release.

In fact, to some extent, their relationship could be considered competitive.

Because in this mission, only one person could be pardoned.

If possible, Bob hoped for Hosea's death.

Hosea?

The feeling was mutual.

So, Hosea, watching Bob's retreating back, spat fiercely onto the ground.

All this Esther did not see, but he heard enough to know what had happened, though he did not intervene.

D-Class personnel, as long as they didn't do anything out of line, were forgivable in his eyes.

After all, they were expendable.

In the time that followed, Esther watched the actions of the two D-Class personnel through the screen.

Hosea conducted a by-the-book search, while Bob encountered something worth paying attention to.

As Bob stepped onto the staircase that continued downwards, the bright headlamp dimmed considerably, and the illuminated area shrank, revealing only a narrow path ahead of him.

And more importantly, the stairs in front of him seemed to be all the same.

Thirteen steps per flight, with a three-meter semicircular platform where one could turn 180 degrees to continue downwards.



Ten flights down, they were all the same.

Esther noticed it.

So did Bob, walking within.

He swallowed hard, but he still kept moving downward.

And just as Bob passed another semicircular platform, he suddenly stopped.

"D-1667, continue forward," Esther commanded.

"Didn't you hear it, sir?"

"There are cries of a child!" Bob reported truthfully.

Cries of a child?

Esther frowned; he hadn't heard the sound Bob mentioned. After adjusting the equipment, he still couldn't hear it.

"Are you sure?"

"Is it still there?" Esther inquired, while switching channels to a mobile squad member's earpiece.

"It's there!"

"Very clear!" Bob answered.

However, the mobile squad member shook his head, confirming he hadn't heard anything.

"D-1667, continue forward," Esther said.

Bob moved on and after passing another platform, Esther heard a faint voice: "please," "save me," "come down."

The squad member beside him confirmed it as well.

"D-1667, can you still hear that sound?"

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Esther asked.

"Yes, Commander!"

Bob gave an affirmative answer.

"Continue forward, and if you encounter any anomalies, please stop."

Esther instructed, as Bob's first-person view continued to move forward on the screen.

The voice of the child in the earpiece remained indistinct, as if it hadn't gotten any closer due to Bob's advancement, while the surrounding darkness seemed to grow even thicker.

Bob's breathing became rapid.

This sound was clearly transmitted into Esther's ears.

"Commander, I feel something's not right."

"Commander, I request to return."

"Commander..."

Bob spoke hurriedly, but before he could finish, the voice abruptly cut off.

"D-1667?"

"D-1667?"

"Please respond!"

"What's the situation?"

Esther asked repeatedly, but there was no response.

On the screen, Bob still appeared to be standing from the first-person angle, without any change in height or any sideward shift; Bob should still have been standing.

Only, this kind of standing, like a statue, motionless.

And just as Esther continued to call out to Bob, a face suddenly pressed against the camera carried by Bob, filling the entire screen with its image.

It was a face similar to that of a human, but 'it' had no mouth, no nostrils, and no pupils, just a face with blank eyes, staring straight out of the screen at Esther.

Esther's heart tightened.

Her breathing slowed a notch.

The members of the mobile unit around her subconsciously raised their guns.

But the next moment, that face disappeared.

Gone along with it was the camera.

The screen went pitch black.

Esther's brow furrowed tightly as she stared at the dark screen. After a second's pause, she said, "D-1667, remove from the roster."

"Commander! Commander!"

"I've made a discovery!"

Just as D-1667's name was being erased from the roster, Hosea, now D-1668, suddenly spoke up, drawing everyone's attention to another screen.

There, on what had been a solid wall, an opening leading down a corridor appeared.

"D-1668, report your situation."

Esther said.

"There's another hidden door here, this must be what we've been looking for, and the staircase before must have been a trap."

Hosea reported truthfully on how he had discovered the hidden door.

At the same time, he expressed pity for Bob, hoping Bob was safe—unaware of Bob's fate due to the different channels.

Of course, even if he had known, Hosea wouldn't have cared.

He would have just been grateful for his own survival, and for regaining his freedom.

"Very well, D-1668, please explore the corridor in front of you."

Esther issued a new command.

"Yes, Commander."

Hosea responded, even giving a mock salute.

He was in a great mood.

Because he knew that in this race with Bob, he was the one who had won, again.

He always won.

Luck and experience were on his side.

Just like now, experience told him that since this was the real object of their search, the place should be very safe.

However, Hosea maintained the necessary vigilance.

He moved downwards slowly.

After about 20 meters in, suddenly, from within one of the walls, came the sound of gears turning.

Click, click.

On the two smooth, pitch-black walls, a row of tubes as thick as two fingers appeared, from which a liquid with a distinct smell began to spurt out.

"Hydrochloric acid!"

Hosea instantly recognized the liquid and agilely backed up several steps to avoid the spray, but the discharge of hydrochloric acid didn't stop.

It seemed it was not a trap, but... extraction?



Hosea tentatively speculated.

"D-1668, report."

"Commander, there's a row of tubes here, which seem to be extracting hydrochloric acid. I haven't detected the end of the corridor; I must be at a midpoint. What's inside, I can't ascertain for now."

Hosea reported in detail.

While he was reporting, the amount of hydrochloric acid being withdrawn from an unknown source increased.

Even Hosea, wearing a protective suit, had to retreat to the entrance.

He didn't move far away, because, as he reached the entrance, the accumulated hydrochloric acid, much like a pond being filled, simply vanished.

"There must be a drainage mechanism in the floor that I'm unaware of!"

Hosea guessed.

Then, he prepared to re-enter the corridor.

But just then, from a spot untouched by the beam of his powerful headlamp, a low growl came—

Roar!

Hosea didn't have time to react, and his body was sent flying.

A tremendous force crushed Hosea's body.

It also destroyed all the equipment. Watching the darkened screen, Esther called out without hesitation, "On guard!"

Although she hadn't seen anything, Hosea's fate was enough to inform her that something had 'escaped' from the corridor!

And her instinct told her that it was something terrifying!

Because she felt a sense of danger like never before.

Instinctively, Esther gripped her gun tightly.

It wasn't just Esther feeling this way.

The members of the mobile unit felt the same.

Following Esther's command, they immediately spread out, each nervously watching the dark corridor. One of the members, following the team leader's order, threw a flare down the pitch-dark corridor.

Bang!

Beneath the brilliance of the flare, the darkness was dispelled.

The creature that had escaped finally revealed its true form.

It was...

A giant lizard!

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Hiss!

The moment they saw this lizard, including Esther, everyone gasped in shock.

It wasn't just because the lizard before them was huge and ferocious, but also because they all felt a certain contempt for 'life' and a strong animosity emanating from it.

The mixture of these made the already five-meter-long body of the lizard appear even more colossal, and its scales, which stood erect, carried a sensation of Sharpness, making it look even more formidable.

Esther and the others saw the giant lizard.

The giant lizard saw Esther and the others as well.

It shook its body slightly, as if stretching its muscles and bones.

Then, it raised a claw.

Hiss!

The still-burning flare was extinguished by the swipe of a claw.

Darkness fell over the passageway once again.

Eyes could see nothing.

But the sense of danger was becoming increasingly intense.

"Fire!"

Esther shouted loudly without hesitation and pulled the trigger in his hand.

Bang, bang bang!

Ratatat!

The sound of gunfire merged into a chorus.

But despairingly, the bullets did nothing except produce 'ding ding ding' sounds as they sparked against the giant lizard's body without inflicting any damage.

They neither penetrated the giant lizard's scales nor halted its advance.

Without any hesitation, two members of the mobile unit, who were assigned as grenadiers, threw out their grenades.

Boom, boom!

The roar of the grenade explosions scattered shrapnel in all directions.

Yet even more despairingly, the grenades had no effect!

The giant lizard didn't pause for a moment.

What was more critical was that the giant lizard was now within an arm's reach of them.

Thirty meters was truly nothing to this giant lizard, it seemed.

Everyone was engulfed in despair at that moment.

Esther was no exception.

Bang, bang bang!

His fingers mechanically pulled the trigger, and sparks from the firing bullets seemed to illuminate his brief life.

The rashness of his youthful ignorance.

The ease that came with truly understanding the meaning of being alive.

The guidance of his senior, Edmund.

The teachings from his father upon their long-awaited reunion.

All of these flashed before his eyes.

The gravesite of his mother, his father would surely take good care of it.

Edmund, his senior, would surely be able to handle everything at hand.

I seem...

To have no regrets?

At that moment, Esther suddenly realized he should be content.

If only I'd 'realized' a bit earlier.

That indifferent... no, that tranquil life is what I sought.

If I truly had 'realized' sooner, I could have said: this life was worth it.

But there are no ifs.

I wonder how Miss Jennifer is doing, I heard she's a lawyer, but there's no chance to meet her now, I wonder if she would be disappointed?

In the face of life and death, Esther sighed softly inside.

Then, he chose to face death calmly.



What else could he do if not be calm?

Certainly nobody was going to come back and rescue him?

It's better to die with some dignity rather than in an unsightly way.

With this in mind, Esther did not stop firing, and his other hand reached for the grenade at his waist.

Not just Esther, but the surrounding mobile unit members did the same.

They weren't merely imitating Esther after seeing him; it was their own choice and... the instinct from their training.

We contain!

We secure!

We protect!

Unknown to the average person.

Because, we carry the burden for you.

We swear on our lives and forge humanity's last stronghold with our flesh and blood!

"The explosion will draw attention!"

"Someone will come to take over for us..."

"To stop you!"

In the minds of the mobile squad members, nearly the same thoughts flashed.

Then, they gripped their grenades tightly.

Watching the giant lizard so close at hand, not a single one retreated.

But just as they were about to pull the pins on their grenades, a sudden rush of wind came from behind them—

Whoosh!

The wind was fierce.

Cloaks billowed.

A darkness more profound than the blackness enveloped them appeared before their eyes.

A streak of Cold light flashed suddenly in their sight!

Puff!

Roar!

Along with the sound of a blade cutting, a titanic roar erupted.

Esther and the mobile squad members were stunned.

"Flares!"

Esther shouted loudly.

Bang!

A flare shot into the passageway.

Suddenly, in the glare of the light, they saw the tall figure wielding a broad-bladed, short-handled machete.

One of the giant lizard's eyes had been mangled into a bloody mess, and it was wailing nonstop.

"Lord Jason."

Esther exclaimed in surprise.

Jason did not respond but gestured with his hand for them to move back. His face was somber yet filled with anticipation as he faced the giant lizard.

He sensed an unprecedented scent on this giant lizard.

He also felt a threat from it.

Such a tangible threat.

Similarly, the giant lizard seemed to sense Jason's threat as well.

After its blinded eye started regenerating at a visible rate, it looked straight at Jason, issuing a low, threatening growl from its throat.

At this point, Esther led others to retreat.

Not a complete withdrawal.

He needed to set up a new defense line near the elevators.

And of course, he needed more heavy weaponry.

If grenades weren't effective, time to try rocket launchers.

Truth is always within the range of cannons!

Esther believed this firmly.

If there was no truth?

Then your cannon's caliber is simply not big enough!

Jason didn't look to see what Esther wanted to do, but by listening, he guessed the gist.

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He did not object to that.

No one complains about having more preparation on their side.

However, the giant lizard in front of him certainly didn't think so.

It let out a low growl again.

"Why, why help them?"

In the growl, the common language of this world came through.

Although it was stuttering at first, just after a few words, the speech became smooth, and even Jason sensed a tone of confusion in it.

"You smell just like me!"

"We are the same kind!"

The giant lizard continued to speak.

Jason glanced at the opponent's scaly body, then at its fierce face, and subconsciously shook his head.

"We are not the same."

As he spoke, a thick fog appeared.

Jason's entire body merged into it.

The giant lizard was also enveloped by the mist.

In the darkness, which already conferred a stealth bonus, Jason's stealth check increased by another +1 after activating "Mist Concealment."

Silently, he approached the giant lizard, swinging his Broad Blade Cleaver again and again.

It wasn't just his own strength, but also the "secret technique" of thrusting.>

Using this technique with a mist-covered blade could never be as smooth as with a sword, but Jason did not find it clumsy; on the contrary, it was even more exhilarating.

Chi, chi.

The blade's glow flickered. The giant lizard, already having its vision obscured by the fog, had its eyes damaged once more.

Roar!

The giant lizard let out a pained roar as its thick tail swept forward.

Jason leapt aside, dodging easily, a hint of flame beginning to show in his hand.



The next moment—

A cone-shaped flame burst forth!

The instant the explosive-level power of the flame appeared, it covered the giant lizard's head.

The continuous burning caused immense pain to the giant lizard.

Hum!

Bang!

The thick tail swept forward again. Jason rolled to dodge with ease, avoiding it effortlessly, while the flame in his hand didn't cease at all, continuing to spray relentlessly.

Soon, the scent of roasted meat filled the tunnel.

By now, the giant lizard's head was already scorched black, and its whole body seemed to collapse powerlessly.

But Jason was not careless.

His "Predation" Talent told him that the giant lizard was far from being as seriously injured as it seemed.

And just like Jason anticipated, as he maintained the "Charles Burning Technique," the giant lizard, with its burnt-black head, rose up again.

The charred outer skin directly peeled off.

Revealing... six eyes!

Yes!

Six eyes!

Above its original eyes, four more had grown.

The newly sprouted four eyes, shining with a bright green glow, seemed to ignore the fog entirely.

This was Jason's instinctive guess.

However, the new scales on its head had indeed become immune to the burning at this stage.

In the expert-level "Charles Burning Technique," the newly grown scales were pitch black and lustrous, as if they were carved from ice crystals, with no temperature at all.

"Evolution?"

Jason was surprised inwardly, but his actions didn't stop. Using the walls and ceiling of the tunnel, he executed two quick jumps. Landing atop the giant lizard's head, he took hold of the cleaver with both hands, then rolled from the creature's head all the way to the base of its tail, like a rolling wheel.

Clang, clang, clang!

As if it were the sound of metal striking, sparks flew from the blade of the Broad Blade Cleaver.

Yet, such an attack wasn't sufficient against the bullet-resistant scales. Apart from leaving some marks on them, it didn't truly injure the giant lizard.

But Jason didn't care.

He didn't intend to stop. With a forceful step, he rolled back the way he'd come.

Threads of sharpness appeared around Jason.

That was...

The unique "Wind Blades" of Whirlwind Dance.

Although his posture was unusual, who said that "Whirlwind Dance" must be performed standing up?

If one could do a barrel roll on the ground, why not a whirlwind?

If there's a step, one can spin with fiery wheels!

So why couldn't he "Whirlwind Dance"?

This unconventional "Whirlwind Dance" caused the giant lizard to scream in pain again. The marks on the scales deepened, and as Jason rolled back in his spinning top motion, the deepened marks cracked.

Fine lines began to spread, intersecting.

Finally—

Crack!

With a sharp snap, the scales shattered, flesh flew.

The sliced flesh was immediately caught up in the "Wind Blades," chewed up again, and flung into the air.

A wound about a meter long appeared on the back of the giant lizard.

This caused the roaring giant lizard to immediately flip over and collapse.

It tried to use its weight to overcome Jason.

But instantly, the giant lizard regretted its combat strategy.

As the lizard flipped over, Jason leapt high into the air. The "Whirlwind Dance," not yet fully formed, disintegrated in that moment, sending "Wind Blades" flying in every direction, slicing up the concrete walls, floor, and ceiling, as well as leaving shallow cuts across the scales of the lizard's underbelly. However, the true damage still came from Jason.

Leaping up, Jason twisted his body in the air with powerful core strength and pushed off the ceiling of the tunnel once again.

He charged at the giant lizard once more.

Just like a repeat of before.

Jason began a rapid, dense barrage of cuts, intermixed with "Whirlwind Dance" moves.

This time, it took only one pass back and forth for the scales on the lizard's underbelly to shatter.

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Amid the blood and gore, the lizard with a fresh meter-long wound on its belly decisively flipped over again.

However, this time it wasn't just rolling over; it was continually tumbling back and forth.

Boom, boom, boom!

To ordinary people, it was merely an average corridor, but as the giant lizard rolled, debris flew and dust billowed.

Soon, the dust filled the entire pitch-black tunnel.

"Flares!"

Esther, who had been attentively watching, shouted.

Bang, bang!

Two flares were shot into the tunnel.

Once again, darkness was dispelled, but the tumbling dust continued to swirl without any sign of dissipating.

The giant lizard's figure had already disappeared.

Jason had vanished as well.

If not for the various traces left in the tunnel, Esther would have thought she was hallucinating.

The two members of the mobile squad at Esther's side vigilantly surveyed the tunnel.

They were searching for traces of the giant lizard.

They firmly believed the lizard was still nearby.

Such a large body couldn't simply vanish without a trace.

Tap, tap.

Amid the soft footsteps, a humanoid silhouette appeared in the drifting dust, slowly walking towards them.

Seeing that it was a humanoid figure, the two mobile squad members slightly relaxed, but Esther's eyes widened, her pupils constricted.

That figure... had a tail!

Bang, bang bang!



Esther pulled the trigger.

The gunshot roused the squad members, who also prepared to fire, but it was too late.

The figure with the tail charged forward, its swift motion causing a gust that cleared the floating dust, revealing its true identity.

Scales, a fierce demeanor.

Apart from being much smaller and walking upright, it was the giant lizard.

The two squad members could confidently assert this, especially when the six eyes on its face became visible.

Hiss!

It was like the tearing of a plastic bag as the humanoid lizard opened its mouth wide.

It seemed ready to bite off their heads in one gulp, and amidst the gaping maw, the expressions of Esther and her companions froze.

Not only an evolution but also transformation?

What kind of "anomaly" was this?

Doubt surfaced in the minds of Esther and the others as the humanoid lizard, without any pause, was hit and sent flying by Jason.

Bang!

In the dimly lit, dust-filled tunnel, Jason moved as if he were invisible.

He left no trace of his coming and going and not the slightest sound.

The humanoid lizard was hit and sent flying without any chance to defend itself.

Although it had been on guard all along.

Or rather, it had lashed out at the humans to draw out this "traitor."

Unfortunately, it underestimated the "stealth and concealment" effects of the [War Pattern: Prus: Griffin: Shadow Stealth Body Forging Technique].

As a result, it was knocked to the ground.

Having lost its huge size, it was further dominated by Jason, who pinned it beneath him.

Jason straddled it, hammering down fists towards the lizard's head.

Huge strength and incredible speed caused Jason's fists to create layer upon layer of afterimages.

Bang bang bang!

The punch after punch landed on flesh, driving Jason to instinctively change his breathing pattern.

A heroic energy began to emanate from his chest.

The next moment—

"Ora Ora Ora Ora!"

Bang bang bang bang!

With such cries, the punches became faster, fiercer, and more powerful.

In an instant, the humanoid lizard was stunned by the barrage of punches.

More importantly, a sense of humiliation!

It had never been treated this way since it had memories!

Just a few seconds of being dazed, and then an angry roar erupted from its throat.

"Useless useless useless useless!"

Despite being pummeled into the ground and his legs trembling as they lifted, the humanoid lizard roared loudly and incessantly.

As if by doing so, it didn't feel the beating at all.

Of course, the struggle never ceased.

Seizing a brief pause in Jason's breathing, it suddenly raised its upper body with force, interrupting Jason's swinging fists, then lunged forward with an open mouth and a roar.

Roar!

The roar was resounding.

Especially that massive mouth, filled with sharp fangs, looked extremely fierce.

It was ready to counterattack.

It aimed to bite off the "traitor's" head right before it.

That was the lizard's intent, and so it acted.

But in the next moment—

Roar!

A roar even more ferocious than the lizard's erupted.

Having his attack interrupted, Jason roared at the lizard that attempted to bite him.

He, unable to suppress his "hunger," opened his mouth even wider.

This mouth opened even larger, its teeth glinting with a cold light, what was more terrifying was the aura of the apex predator that burst forth as Jason's mouth opened.

Then, he lunged forward with a bite—

Crack!

Crunch!

Chapter 467: Let me take a bite...

With a crisp sound, the large lizard's head that Jason had bitten off was directly chewed to pieces in that sharp mouth.

It was like an unseeded sweet melon.

The outer skin was crisp, the flesh was sweet, but inside it was a bit sour.

But the taste was not bad at all.

More importantly, there was a prompt about satiety in front of him.

[You have devoured part of the monster lizard!]

[Physical Strength, energy, and injuries have greatly recovered!]

[Satiety +20!]

[Satiety: 380]

...

Twenty satiety in one bite!

Jason's eyes lit up, and he opened his mouth to take another bite of the large lizard, but the headless body of the lizard that had been bitten off was wriggling back and forth like a snake, not only breaking free from Jason's grasp but also putting distance between them once again.

A full 10 meters away, the large lizard stopped, and then... its bitten-off head 'grew' back.

That's right!

It grew back!

Jason watched this scene, the light in his eyes almost turning substantial.

He once had a dream.

To have an endless supply of 'food'!

Not grand, but very down-to-earth.

Yet hard to achieve.



Because Jason knew very well his own appetite.

Ever since he awakened his 'Talent', he has never felt 'full'.

His stomach seemed to be connected to another dimension, an endless pit.

But now!

The large lizard in front of him reminded Jason once again of his dream.

He stretched his enhanced mouth, corners reaching up to his ears, a mouthful of sharp teeth gleaming coldly in the dark, the crimson tongue sticking out, licking his upper and lower lips, stringing together fine threads of sticky saliva.

He tore off the tattered cloak from his body and tossed it aside.

"This is my battlefield!"

"Everyone, fall back!"

He spoke word by word.

Esther and two mobile squad members retreated without hesitation.

The situation with the transformed large lizard had informed them that the battlefield in front of them was definitely not something they could intervene in, even being onlookers would be a hindrance.

Given this premise, Esther and the two mobile squad members naturally did not insist.

Tap, tap-tap.

The footsteps receded.

The anthropomorphic large lizard paid them no mind at all.

It was intently watching the powerful creature of its own kind in front of it.

In its heart, confusion grew even more.

Why would such a powerful creature of its own kind protect those insect-like beings?

"We are kin!"

"Why betray us?"

"Why protect those humans?"

"Why?"

The voice of the large lizard rumbled from its throat.

"Kin?"

"No!"

"You, you are just food!"

"And I?"

"Am the predator!"

Jason swallowed the saliva that kept secreting and once again activated the Mist Concealment secret technique.

A mist with a radius of 45 meters instantly filled the entire passage, obscuring the figures of both parties.

The large lizard, having suffered a loss once before, instantly activated 'multi-eye' mode. On its forehead and cheeks, two more pairs of eyes appeared.

Especially the pair of eyes on its forehead which once more shone with a gleaming green light, piercing directly through the mist in front of it.

But...

It was of no use!

The mist was just a simple concealment.

For Jason, the essence of this attack was stealth and hiding.

With the enhancement of [War Pattern. Prus. Griffin. Shadow Concealment Body Forging Technique], Jason normally had a 'stealth, hide' level adjustment of +4, and at night, with the activation of [Embrace of the Night], he obtained an additional temporary 'stealth, hide' level adjustment of +2.

The same Mist Concealment had a 'stealth, hide' level +1 temporary adjustment as well.

From basic, to beginner, to proficient, then to master, expert, master.

Ultimately, Jason's 'stealth, hide' level reached beyond that of master level: Unmatched!

Even though the 'Unmatched' level of 'stealth, hide' didn't have a specific textual representation, Jason, while sneaking and hiding his form, could feel that realm of moving as he wished.

The darkness was no longer an unknown to be feared.

It was his shelter.

It was as familiar to him as... breathing.

With every breath, as if by instinct.

He approached the large lizard without making a sound.

The lizard's six eyes scanned back and forth.

It saw through the mist.

But it couldn't see Jason's figure.

Where?

Where?

The lizard searched, and then, it sensed a cold breeze coming from behind its head.

On reflex, it turned around, and saw that familiar mouth full of sharp teeth.

The head of the large lizard was bitten off by Jason again. He chewed greedily, the crunch, the crunching sound continuous, and the taste of melon appeared once more.

Moreover, this time Jason heeded the lesson from before. After chewing twice, he opened his mouth again and bit off the upper half of the lizard's body.

But the lizard still escaped.

If before it was like a snake, this time it truly became one.

As Jason bit into the upper half of the lizard's body, the lower half transformed into a strange-looking snake and swiftly slithered away into the depths of the passage.

Jason didn't pursue.

At that moment, his mouth was stuffed with food, his mouth along with his cheeks swelling immensely, resembling a bobblehead, and he was incapable of moving as usual. He could only chew, swallow, then act.

This didn't hinder Jason's taste buds from discerning the 'food.'

If the head of the large lizard tasted like sweet melon, then the upper half of the body was somewhat like crispy-skinned ham.

One just needed to apply a slight force with the teeth to break open the outer layer, and inside was the meat, full of springy texture.

Chapter 468: Let me take a bite...

[Part of the nefarious lizard consumed!]

[Physical strength, energy, and injuries greatly restored!]

[Satiety +35!]

[Satiety: 415]

...

"It's a pity it can't be roasted,"

"If it could be roasted..."

Jason thought, his gaze once again fixed on the large lizard that had returned to its original state.

At this time, the large lizard wasn't just restored to its original state; more eyes had appeared on its body, its back, and its tail—crowding every available space.



Especially on its forehead, one huge eye was staring fixedly at him.

Even when Jason had swallowed his food and again concealed his body, it remained the same.

Clearly, this eye was special.

It was more advanced than the pair that glowed with a faint green light before.

But Jason, whose body had been locked onto, felt no tension at all.

He silently mouthed in a whisper—

Bi!

Accompanied by the deep tones of the Dufol Language.

Six with the left hand, seven with the right.

Two hand signs were completed in an instant, and a blinding light burst forth in Jason's hands.

Everything within a 25-meter radius was engulfed by the intense light.

The large lizard was within this enveloped area.

"Ahhh!"

With a cry of pain, the large lizard covered the gigantic eye on its forehead, while the rest of its eyes completely closed, beginning to tear up.

However, the next instant, such screams abruptly stopped.

Jason's figure swooshed past the large lizard.

In his right hand he held a broad-bladed, short-handled machete, and in his left, half of the large lizard's body, which was ablaze with leaping flames.

The expert-level flames of the Charles Burning Technique, with their explosive-level intensity, almost instantly gave off the aroma of roasted meat from the large portion of the body.

With one bite, Jason tossed the 'food' into his mouth.

Crunch, crunch.

Amidst the crispy sounds, Jason narrowed his eyes.

"Indeed, I still prefer cooked food,"

"However... the fire wasn't evenly distributed, the meat wasn't thoroughly cooked,"

Jason thought silently to himself.

The prompt for gaining satiety appeared again before his eyes.

[Part of the nefarious lizard consumed!]

[Physical strength, energy, and injuries greatly restored!]

[Satiety +35!]

[Satiety: 450]

...

An increase in satiety with each bite.

After three bites, the satiety increased by 90 points, and the 'food' seemed to have not diminished at all—Jason was truly pleased.

However, such pleasure did not affect Jason's judgment.

"Able to change shape based on the environment, need, and to evolve some special abilities,"

"But the change in shape affects its own basic abilities,"

"When it's in its massive form, its defenses are quite impressive, but when it becomes humanoid, its defenses drop sharply."

Jason was thinking quietly, continuing to maintain his stealth with the "Mist Concealment" secret technique.

With such "food" that could be bitten at any time, Jason had no worries about the consumption of Physical Strength.

But at that moment, the great lizard was issuing one furious roar after another.

It had never suffered such humiliation!

It was always the one doing the eating.

When had it ever been eaten!

And three times at that!

The last time, it was even roasted alive!

"Unforgivable!"

The great lizard was roaring.

Its body swelled up again.

However, it didn't return to its original colossal lizard form but became even more robust; its muscles grew like inflated balloons, its claws became sharper, its tail sprouted one sharp spike after another, looking ferocious, and its scales turned dark and dense. Over its eyes, an additional layer of dark mucus had formed.

Clearly, the great lizard was again adapting to the current fight.

This time, the great lizard didn't wait for Jason to make a move; it took the initiative to attack.

Thud, thud, thud!

With legs as thick as marble pillars, the great lizard charged at Jason furiously.

Without any hesitation, Jason activated the secret technique "Charge"!

Thud, thud!

In the midst of his heart's violent pounding, he collided with the great lizard with even more resolute determination.

Seeing Jason charging at it, the cunning glint flickered behind the great lizard's eyes, now obscured by the mucus.

As it rushed forward, the lizard's tail swept sideways.

Not only was the strength explosive, but the tail lengthened abruptly as well.

Whoosh!

Like a swinging Wolf Fang Club, the tail swept directly towards Jason.

Jason's hair was blown about, but he showed no intention of dodging. Using the inertia of his run, he suddenly knelt forward and laid back.

Hiss!

With a sound of friction, his tall, robust body nearly skimmed the ground as it moved forward.

The thick spiked tail swept past in front of Jason.

The friction from the inertia continued, Jason pushed off with his toes, his calves, his thighs all working in tandem as he stood up again, one step away from the great lizard.

Once more, Jason opened his mouth.

Seeing those familiar sharp teeth and fangs, the great lizard panted heavily. Its Sharp claws stabbed straight at Jason.

It didn't believe Jason would not dodge.

As long as Jason dodged, it could use the retreating tail to knock Jason to the ground.

Spurt!

The great lizard's claws, slightly impeded, then fiercely pierced Jason's chest.

He didn't dodge?

The great lizard was stunned.

Then, its sight went dark.



When it regained consciousness, it smelled that familiar scent again.

That was... the smell of it being roasted.

When it opened its eyes, it saw Jason, who should have been impaled by its body, chewing on its flesh with the Flames still in his hand.

Roar!

A crimson red filled all the eyes of the great lizard.

Chapter 469: Let me take a bite...

Strands of blood burst into view.

The next moment, the large lizard crazily charged toward Jason.

This madness was true madness.

No longer a facade.

It was an instinctive response after losing its reason.

And Jason?

Just like before.

He would not dodge.

He intended to bite the opponent in the most direct way possible.

As long as he bit once, even if it meant dying once, it would be worth it.

3 points of satiation or 30 points, Jason knew well how to choose.

Pft!

Pft, pft, pft!

Crunch!

Crunch! Crunch!

The sound of flesh being torn, accompanied by crisp chewing noises, kept ringing out.

Jason's arms were torn off, but his mouth still clamped on a chunk of the lizard's flesh.

Jason's head flew off, but his mouth still clamped on a chunk of the lizard's flesh.

Jason's chest was flattened, but his mouth still clamped on a chunk of the lizard's flesh.

Jason was bisected at the waist, but his mouth still clamped on a chunk of the lizard's flesh.

The more the lizard fought, the more frustrated it became, and its rage grew.

"Roar!"

It couldn't help but roar again.

Along with this roar, a strong acid sprayed from its mouth, splashing onto Jason.

Sizzle, sizzle!

Corrosion akin to that of aqua regia occurred.

Jason instantly turned into a puddle of sludge-like viscous substance.

Huff, huff!

The large lizard was panting heavily, looking at the pile of viscous substance with joy in its eyes.

But the next moment, that joy congealed.

Jason appeared again.

Rising unscathed from the viscous substance, he opened his mouth wide, lunging at it.

"Back off, monster!"

"Will you get away from me!"

"You beast!"

The lizard roared, but couldn't shake off Jason's biting.

However, the lizard's resistance didn't cease.

As Jason chewed on the lizard's flesh, his complexion suddenly changed, and a purplish-black color appeared on his face.

Poison!

Poison far beyond what most people could imagine was in the lizard's flesh.

Although Jason's digestive organs had undergone Poison Resistance Enhancement, it was only for the faint, secondary toxicity in food. For such fierce toxicity, it completely exceeded the current stage of Poison Resistance Enhancement.

Jason's internal organs failed instantly.

Death descended once more.

"Damn beast!"

The lizard cursed in a low voice, raising its foot intending to crush Jason's head.

But immediately, its leg was gone.

Jason came back to life again.

And bit off its leg.

Poison reemerged, and Jason died once more.

But this time, the lizard hopped far away on one leg, and just as the bitten leg began to regenerate, it saw Jason resurrect once more, and even swallowed the poison-laced flesh in his mouth.

Death, of course, occurred again.

But...

Resurrection followed like a shadow.

"What kind of monster are you?!"

The lizard roared in fury.

It had never encountered such a terrifying creature.

It had never even heard of such a terrifying creature.

According to its understanding, such an existence should not appear in this world.

Jason wiped the corner of his mouth and got back on his feet.

He looked at the lizard and replied earnestly.

"I am human."

Jason said word by word.

"Not only do you eat my flesh, but you also insult my intelligence!"

"I'll make it so you have nowhere to rest in death!"

After the lizard finished speaking, a dark glow appeared over its body.

Then, the lizard disappeared.

Jason looked up, his nostrils flaring.

In an instant, he pinpointed the lizard's location.

Inside.

In the depths of that secret chamber.

And at that moment, from the distant elevator area, came Edmund's calling—

"Stop it, Jason!"



"That place is..."

Chapter 470: Dawn!

Edmund awoke half an hour later.

He confirmed this through the two clocks on the wall, the watch on his wrist, and a small electronic watch hidden at the hem of his garment.

These were habits he had formed in the past.

And clearly, once a habit is formed, it becomes difficult to change.

Rubbing his swollen temples, he casually reached for the communicator.

"Esther? Esther?"

Edmund called out directly.

"Senior Edmund, you're awake?"

Esther's surprised voice came from the communicator, which eased Edmund just a bit.

If Esther was unharmed, it meant there was a substantial chance for rectification.

Edmund knew Lawrence well.

If the other party's contingency plans had been truly activated, those closest to them, like Esther, wouldn't stand a chance at survival.

"Please inform me of everything that has happened below."

Edmund pulled out the intravenous tube and, as he rose from the bed, rebuffed the doctor's examination.

He was quite aware of the condition of his body.

Weak, but only from exhaustion.

No actual injuries.

Still, after standing up, he staggered several times.

At this, Edmund gave a wry smile.

It had been too long since he had been in such a state, and the feeling now was truly awful.

A sense of helplessness filled Edmund's heart.

And Esther, hearing the sound through the communicator, anxiously asked:

"Senior Edmund, are you alright?"

"I'm fine."

"Tell me, what transpired after I lost consciousness."

"Yes, after you passed out, there was..."

Esther spoke rapidly yet succinctly, outlining the recent events in detail.

Including the misfortunes of two D-class personnel.

The traps set due to a miscalculation, then the posted guards...

It was all typical of Lawrence's style.

When Edmund heard that the large lizard-like creature seemed to be capable of continuous evolution and adaptation, he frowned.

The stronger the guard, the more important the guarded object must be.

Moreover, knowing Lawrence's modus operandi, that thing or being was certainly in a state of restraint, yet capable of precisely countering the guard!

If the guard were to leave,

That thing or being would utterly unleash a true disaster.

However, with Lawrence's malicious nature, it would not be so simple.

What he wanted was for them, after painstakingly dealing with the guard, to find that they had erred, that killing the guard had released the true 'devil' the despair of such realization.

What could that thing or being be?

Able to evade the notice of the 'Sanctuary' headquarters, it could not be too large, and in its normal state, it also should not exhibit any oddities.

With the 'guardian's' choice and the construction of the underground, this already narrowed the possibilities.

Under normal circumstances, it must be something that could be commonly seen.

But once it erupted, it would become exceedingly horrific.

Yet...

Could such a scheme truly be orchestrated by Lawrence alone?

Edmund knew Lawrence well.

The latter was cunning and held a significant position within headquarters.

But that was just 'significant.'

Not truly all-powerful.

After all, he had not even entered the council of the organization.

And more importantly!

Why specifically 'Ang City'?

Why did it just so happen that these preparations were made here, and then, just so happened that this 'war' erupted?

Isn't that too coincidental?

What else don't I know about?

Could it be...

At this thought, Edmund's gaze sharpened.

He did not want to admit it, but when so many doubts surfaced, only one answer could explain it all,

However, Edmund did not share more with Esther.

"I'm on my way."

He simply said.

Some things are not better known in greater detail,

Especially under the strong possibility of being under surveillance.

As Edmund walked out, he glanced at the communicator at his waist.

Then, he used the communicator to dial headquarters.

This was not his first time calling.

Before the 'war' broke out, he had contacted them.

Firstly, to report that the situation had exceeded their expectations,

And secondly, to request reinforcements.

"This is Wayne."

A stern female voice came through, and just hearing it, one would involuntarily envision a cold, stern, high-positioned woman with sharp eyes, hair pulled back, wearing glasses.

"This is Edmund."

"The battle has escalated beyond our projections, 'Sanctuary's' offensive was rebuffed by the 'Night Owl Court'."

"Moreover, 'Hydra' has opened the underground shelters to provide refuge for civilians."

Edmund recounted the events truthfully.



"Hmm."

"What else?"

The person on the other end of the communicator seemed to ask routinely.

But to Edmund at that moment, it sent a chill through his spine.

What else...

Certainly, headquarters must know, mustn't they?

Also, from the time it took to connect the communicator, it was almost instantaneous... Wayne was waiting for my message!

Making a quick judgment, Edmund's gaze narrowed slightly.

Was Wayne representing an opposing force to Lawrence?

Or was it a power struggle within the same faction?

Edmund had seen more than his fair share of internal conflicts within the same faction.

The 'Sanctuary' was no exception.

Of course, this 'internal strife' might be different.

Because it involved some other entities.

Entities that cause a chain reaction: the old man who had forged a new era with a single 'peaceful' punch.

Aras's grandfather!

The information about him in Ang City, the 'Sanctuary' headquarters should have known.