

Great Master 23

Chapter 23 The Smell of Stench ``

Early morning, the washroom.

After washing his hands for the fourth time, Arthur still felt a stench that penetrated his soul, making him suspect that in his dream he had squeezed out all the urine from that toad.

"That toad that came looking for Ciudik must have been the ill-intentioned hirer from the night before last!"

"Interestingly, Ciudik claimed to have deceived Them, while the toad said it wasn't one of Them... These Transcendents and They seem to be in opposition, or is it perhaps a more complex relationship?"

"What exactly is the Mystic Side like?"

"And this smell, shouldn't it have stayed in the dream? Why was it brought out?"

Arthur stood in front of the sink and couldn't help but think.

After he crushed the toad to death, he returned to the bed in the bedroom on the third sub-floor of No. 2 Cork Street, and nothing unexpected happened; just a trance, and he was back.

It was as though he had woken up from a dream.

Of course, it wasn't a good dream.

If anything, it was an absolute nightmare.

If possible, Arthur did not wish to have such nightmares again, so he hoped to know more about the Mystic Side.

Unfortunately, aside from "Them," he knew nothing.

And the two who were in the know, he had gotten rid of.

However, even if those two informants had lived, given the relationship between them, it wouldn't have been possible to get any useful information.

Even if he had been told something, Arthur would not have believed it.

Because it could very well have been a trap, a grave without a body.

"Wouldn't it be nice if there was a kind Mystic Side Person willing to communicate!"

"Or if there were some sort of gathering place for Mystic Side People, to inquire more information, that would be even better!"

"There should be, right?"

"It's just hidden in a place ordinary people don't know about!"

Arthur couldn't help but think.

Subconsciously, he crossed one arm in front of his chest and propped the elbow of his other arm on the back of that hand, tapping his temple lightly with his index finger.

This was a subconscious habit of Arthur's when thinking.

Doing so usually helped him think.

Now?

He smelled that stench again.

Arthur furrowed his brow and once again turned on the tap, picking up the soap—unlike the soft soap made from the fats, oils, and wood ash collected during cooking or exchanged at slaughterhouses that ordinary families used, Arthur's was a higher-quality white soap made from olive oil.

In terms of effect, from his predecessor's memories, Arthur believed they were about the same, but the scent was nicer and lasted longer when coconut oil was added.

Yet for the smell that Arthur could detect at that moment, it was a bit like bringing a bucket of water to a burning cart of hay.

After washing another three times, the odor still lingered, as if it were food burnt to the bottom of a pot that, despite multiple washings, seemed clean but carried the burnt smell nonetheless.

But Arthur had no choice but to walk towards the hall on the first floor.

It was now half past six, soon dispatches would arrive from various apprentice-run shops bringing food and groceries, if not taken on time, apprentices would wrap and leave it at the door in oiled paper, and upon their next delivery, the homeowner would have to pay double the tip.

What if you don't tip?

The homeowner's reputation would suffer considerably.

Not only would they miss out on the convenience of monthly or quarterly settlements but would receive no discounts; worse off, a bad reputation could even affect one's business.

Therefore, all residents 'happily' gave tips on Cork Street.

After all, it was only one Zero, wasn't it?

And it wasn't a daily occurrence.

Most families made purchases every 2-3 days, and apprentices made daily deliveries only because shopkeepers staggered the delivery schedules.

However, every apprentice was more than willing to do so.

Keep in mind that this was one of the few, or even the only, sources of income for them during their apprenticeship.

In general, shop owners would rotate, with the occasional partial owner sending a particular apprentice a few more times.

Just like the bakery apprentice Arthur encountered yesterday, it was the same person who delivered the bread this morning.

"Good morning, sir!"

"Good morning..."

"Alvin, my name is Alvin."

Without needing further hints, the sharp bakery apprentice informed Arthur of his name.

"Good morning, Alvin."

Arthur smiled as he took out a coin, but his heart skipped a beat.

He smelled the stench, but the Alvin in front of him showed no signs of discomfort.

Clearly, either he was the only one who could smell it,

Or last night's incident was related to the young man.

Thinking to himself, Arthur handed over the coins and observed the other party without a word.

"Thank you for your generosity. I've got more deliveries to make, see you the day after tomorrow, sir!"

Just as excited as the day before, there was no annoyance from receiving one Zero less, his silhouette still brimming with vitality.

Arthur watched his retreating figure, his eyes narrowing slightly.

'Alvin must really not be able to smell the stench; last night's matter... should have nothing to do with him.'

Alvin looked normal, and there was no sign of injury on his body, but Arthur was not completely reassured.

Having experienced the peculiar occurrences of the previous night, Arthur's alertness had already reached its peak.

In fact, after waking up from that nightmare, Arthur not only checked No. 2 Cork Street but also the surrounding area.

Still, there was nothing to be found.

Despite having had no contact with the Mystic Side, and much of his predecessor's knowledge about it was only hearsay, there was one thing Arthur was certain about.

That was—

There must be contact for anything to happen!

Things can't just appear out of nowhere!

If it were indeed possible to pull him into a nightmare without following the rules, in Arthur's understanding, that wouldn't just be the work of a mere Transcendent; it would be the domain of Divine Spirits.

Against such power, there would have been no possibility for him to resist.

Not to mention that he had apparently crushed the adversary with his own hands.

Therefore, there must have been some contact.

And from yesterday to today, there were only a few people with whom he had had contact.

Among them, the most suspicious were naturally Miss Caesar and that beggar.

No need to mention Miss Caesar; she was the one Arthur had been most wary of from the start.

As for the beggar?

A vague sense of unease kept bothering him.

But Arthur was suspicious of the others remaining as well.

All he could do was to keep excluding possibilities in the old-fashioned way over the next days.

That was undoubtedly a huge project.

Moreover, the Mystic Side possessed too many powers unknown to him.

For example: as for the toad that seemed to have been crushed by him, Arthur wasn't certain whether it was really dead, injured, or if a prop was used in its place.

And then there was this smell that appeared to be detectable only to him.

Moreover, the scent led Arthur to another thought—

Could this smell be something like a marker?

If it were, could it draw more people here?

This thought made Arthur feel a sense of urgency.

But such urgency did not hinder Arthur's predetermined plan in the slightest: to increase his own strength!

Because he knew, only by becoming more powerful could he deal with any unexpected situations.

So, right now, Arthur was very much looking forward to seeing what sort of swordsmanship he could acquire at the 'Swordsmanship Club.'

But before that, Arthur turned and entered the kitchen.

'Man is iron, food is steel.'

This old saying from his hometown was something Arthur always upheld.

There were no complicated procedures, just the simplest and most convenient breakfast of milk, fried eggs, and bread.

Enduring the leftover nauseating smell, Arthur finished his breakfast, thankfully interrupted now and then by the cries of 'Extra, extra!' that brought him a small comfort.

[Once again, you've made the papers, and people are curious about your growth and life; your biography has attracted quite a readership; XP+10]

[The play 'Revenge of the Evil Spirit' has amazed the people of South Los, and the coming days will surely be filled with talk, earning you more fame: XP+10]

...

20 XP credited!

This time Arthur did not immediately allocate his points, because with [Basic Swordsmanship] leveled up to the top at Lv5, there were no options left for allocation.

Though he had ideas for the remaining auxiliary skills, Arthur still wanted to try his luck at the 'Swordsmanship Club.'

If he could learn more advanced swordsmanship, those 20 XP would be an excellent path to promotion.

It wasn't that Arthur lacked confidence in his own talent.

On the contrary, he was quite confident in it.

Wasn't [Omnivorous] his talent?

Hadn't he elevated [Basic Swordsmanship] to its highest level in just one day, thanks to his talent and effort?

Especially the latter, which was of the utmost importance.

If anyone asked in the future, he would be able to say with pride: I did it all through my own hard work!

'With continued coverage, my name should now be familiar to some of the people of South Los, and as time goes on, I should be receiving more XP on a regular basis!'

Arthur was certain of this.

The literate in South Los were in the minority.

Those who knew his name yesterday and today were literate.

Those who were illiterate could only learn of his name over time, from the mouths of the literate, a process sure to be exceedingly slow but advantageous for its persistence.

Arthur already anticipated that, for a considerable time ahead, he would occasionally receive notifications of 'XP+1.'

'Should I hire a Bard to spread my fame?'

The moment this idea emerged, Arthur shook his head and dismissed it.

He was only just beginning, and to do so would appear too deliberate; holding onto that could backfire.

When the time was right, he would surely harvest a wave of XP with the help of Bards!

Arthur, pondering this, put on his coat and picked up the Spirit Medium Box, now containing two extra bundles of explosives hidden in a secret compartment—the insertion of the explosives didn't take up more space in the Spirit Medium Box, as Old Charlie had designed it with enough room to spare.

The addition of these two bundles of explosives gave Arthur a sense of security.

However, just as he was about to step out the door, something suddenly occurred to him.