

Great Master 231

Chapter 231 The little boat sets sail!

Pendragon's whiskers wafted gently to the edge of the cat bowl.

A touch of joy flashed through Arthur's heart.

Half a month had passed!

At last!

At last, he had gathered the six whiskers needed for the "Orange Cat" ritual!

Do you know how he spent this half a month?

Like walking on thin ice!

Terrified!

Fearing that a minor slip would lead to deadly consequences!

You should know, during this half month, he had to sleep with one eye open every night!

Now it was finally over!

As long as he waited until the full moon to complete the "Orange Cat," he could at least sleep soundly!

The young "Spirit Medium" glanced at the convex moon outside the window, filled with anticipation—

'Three days, just three more days until the full moon!

Then, I'll treat myself to a good meal to celebrate!

For now...

...I need to consider how to complete the "Orange Cat" ritual silently and unnoticed!

As Arthur walked towards Pendragon, he thought quietly to himself.

You should know, ever since he became "famous", around No. 2 Cork Street there had been many eyes, always seemingly there, watching him.

Escaping these peering eyes and completing the "Orange Cat" was no simple task.

So...

'Should I kill them all?'

Facing his first ritual, Arthur was more cautious than ever, extreme ideas springing to his mind but quickly dismissed.

Such 'eyes', kill one batch and another appears.

Moreover, once a move is made, it would only startle the snakes in the grass.

It might even backfire!

Making those people pay even more attention to him, increasing the difficulty of completing the "Orange Cat" ritual unnoticed.

'Do I need to leave South Los temporarily?

Yumir Manor?'

Arthur's thoughts instinctively turned to that manor in Mount Gale Region, far from South Los.

As for Oakwood Manor?

Just thinking about the bizarre, living 'Golden Oak Tree', Arthur instantly rejected the idea.

However, even going to Yumir Manor would require some arrangements.

With thoughts spinning like lightning, over the short distance, the young 'Spirit Medium' had already made his plans—Next, he looked at Pendragon with an indulgent smile, gently brushing the top of the Orange Cat's head with his finger, while subtly pocketing that whisker, and not forgetting to say,

"Pan, if you keep eating like this, you'll be called 'a little kitty'!"

"Meow?"

Facing the sudden slander, just after flaunting his cat food, Pendragon lifted his head, a look of astonishment on his cat face.

Although it couldn't truly understand the meaning behind its master's words, the 'malice' in them was something the little kitty was quite sensitive to.

However, before the little kitty could react, Arthur had already embraced it, signaling the old sheriff to feed the 'Police Chief.'

As the old sheriff started pouring cat food again, Pendragon obviously showed interest again, but tragically, the Orange Cat bound firmly by Arthur could not escape his clutches.

This scene made the old sheriff admire.

"Pan, you really are docile.

Even though you want to eat that cat food so badly, facing your restraint, you neither stretch out your claws nor bite indiscriminately!"

The old sheriff said this, looking at the 'Police Chief' eating the cat food bit by bit, his admiration sounding once again.

"Of course, the same is true for the 'Police Chief'!

In such a dangerous world, having little kitties around is just wonderful!"

As the old sheriff spoke, happiness spread across his face.

"Don't you think there's a chance that... Pan might just be full?"

Arthur's words caused the old sheriff's smile to freeze on his face.

If Arthur had not been his partner, at that moment the old sheriff might have shown this disheartening man why the belts included in police uniforms are so broad and resilient.

"In such a wicked world, can't you allow me a single fantasy?"

The old sheriff watched his partner helplessly.

"Instead of fantasies, let's focus on something practical!"

As he spoke, Arthur placed the canvas bag containing the Golden Cane in front of the old sheriff. In the latter's astonished expression, he whispered—

"Our first ship should be ready to launch now."

"Of course!"

"Arthur, what are your thoughts about our first ship?"

After glancing at the canvas bag with the Golden Cane, Malz immediately asked.

However, the fervor in the old sheriff's eyes surprisingly moved Arthur.

The young 'Spirit Medium' could tell that the eagerness in the old sheriff's eyes was not greed for gold but a longing!

For...

The ship and the sea?

"Malz, do you really like sailing?"

Given the relationship between Arthur and Malz, it was natural to ask directly if there was any doubt.

"Yes, I really do!

If the 'Seven Years' War' hadn't broken out, I would have chosen to board a ship to become a sailor, accumulating experience over time to become the Chief Sailor, First Mate, and eventually own my ship under the name of 'Adventurer', to explore new lands!"

Malz nodded, his face radiating an unprecedented passion, his eyes flickering with light.

That was a longing for freedom.

It was also the old sheriff's former dream.

Even after decades, that dream still stirred the old sheriff's heart.

For Arthur, this was good news.

At least, based on the old sheriff's reaction, the latter was not inexperienced.

Maintaining such passion till now proved that he should always be keeping an eye on the movements of ships and seas—

"So, Captain Malz, what are your suggestions for our first ship?"

Arthur firmly believed that professional tasks should be left to the professionals.

Any amateurish interference would only complicate matters.

"These gold coins, if exchanged for gold notes, would be enough to buy a seven-tenths new Kirk Sailboat and 2 old-fashioned 30-oar ships, forming a small fleet that could allow us to start coastal trade!

Starting from Xisis Port in South Los, purchasing various local specialties here and transporting them along the Inland River to 'Kilg Harbor' in Inner Bay, passing through the territories of the Marquess of Seberlin, Marquess of Ainhars, and Count Bert where we won't need to worry about supplies, so we can enlarge the cargo holds, carry less supplies, and transport more goods.

If needed, we can continue from Kilg Harbor in Inner Bay along the Inland River toward Sidon Fortress.

The area under the management of the Glowgold Family is also quite prosperous.

However, recently I've heard that a 'Pirate General' has appeared in the Western Sea, and although they might not enter the harbor, I think we should still be cautious and focus on running the route from South Los to Inner Bay!

Without unexpected events, we could complete a round trip in a month!

In two years, we could easily break even!"

The old sheriff, without hesitation, professionally blurted this out, which made Arthur clap softly.

"Then it's all yours!"

Uttering those words, Arthur put Pendragon back into the cage and then stood up to take his leave.

"Huh? What do you mean it's all mine? We haven't even discussed the recruitment of sailors, captains, or the provision of weapons yet?"

The old sheriff looked dumbfounded.

"You're the professional!

I trust you!

And me?

I have more important matters to handle!"

Having reached the door of the sheriff's office, Arthur turned back with a smile, then without giving the old sheriff a chance to detain him, he quickly walked out.

This was not shirking responsibility!

It was because he truly had matters to attend to—

Seriously examining and tallying the spoils obtained from Harris, the newly appointed head of the secret Shelter in Rat Tail Alley!

Chapter 232: Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique!

Once the kitchen boiler was filled with kindling wood and charcoal, the temperature inside No. 2 Cork Street swiftly climbed to a level that both Arthur and Pendragon found comfortable.

By the time Arthur had made sure Lady Anna was settled in, Pendragon had already burrowed into his cat's nest.

When Arthur emerged from the kitchen with a hot cup of cocoa, Pendragon was already sound asleep, snoring loudly.

Envyng his Orange Cat, he turned up the kerosene lamp in the Spirit Medium Parlor.

Arthur began to tally the spoils he had gained from Harris.

The spoils were divided into four parts.

The first part, gold.

The second part, notes.

The third part, secret techniques.

The fourth part, props.

The first thing Arthur counted was the gold, not because it was more important than the notes or secret techniques, but because it was more straightforward—neatly stacked in two cases were 400 bars, each weighing 1 pound!

By the standard of 2 grams per gold coin, that amounted to 100,000 gold coins.

In anyone's hands, it was a fortune not to be overlooked.

Moreover, this was already the total after Arthur had set aside 10 bars for the "Exquisite Human Puppet" just in case.

'Harris really had some nerve, to actually hijack Isidore's treasure!

Tsk!

Indeed, in South Los, the Old Lion of Inner Bay is the best scapegoat!'

Although he had expected it, Arthur was still surprised by Harris's audacity upon actually seeing the 400 gold bars.

Without hesitation, Arthur picked up the notebook.

He hoped to find some answers within.

And he was not disappointed.

This notebook, primarily an experimental log, also contained some things that caught Arthur's attention—

My father had actually chosen to cooperate with those guys!

Those guys are wolves!

It won't end well!

I must persuade my father!

...

My father's stubbornness exceeded my expectations. We already possessed power and could live comfortably here; why risk it for grandfather's experiment?

I don't understand!

...

Father has returned, and those wolves have been taken care of.

Father backstabbed them.

I am greatly shocked; I never imagined father would do such a thing.

I had a big fight with my father and temporarily left home

...

Three years later, I returned home. Father was as he always was and didn't say much about my return. Instead, he took me to the laboratory to participate in the 'Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique' experiment.

Only then did I realize my grandfather's greatness!

...

'Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique' is too strong!

It's stronger than any secret technique I know!

But there's something odd about the way father looks at me, as if he's...

Jealous?

No!

How could my father possibly be jealous of me!

I must have seen it wrong!

...

I have completed the 'Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique' Second Order; I can already simply draw that all-corroding dark energy from the Shadows.

It truly is a perfect blend of offense and defense.

But as for the Third Order, I am clueless.

And my father's gazes are becoming more and more peculiar.

...

Today is my 29th birthday; my father suggested a celebration.

I drank some wine and felt very happy today.

...

The talent of test subject No. 17 far exceeds my imagination.

Such blood must be able to help me.

...

No effect!

Why is there no effect?

I've drunk all his blood!

That's right!

It must be because there's not enough blood!

I need more test subjects!

...

Dammit, are those 'Hunters' mad?

I've already left 'Dudelt,' so why do they keep chasing me incessantly?

It's you who forced me!

...

No, I must stay away from Baron Norvia!

'Death Poetry Society,' that bastard's concoction of 'leprosy' is truly terrifying. I must leave, but those 'Hunters' are sure to die off!

Haha!

...

Oh, South Los!

Enchanting South Los!

There's a surplus of people; a few less won't matter, right?

No good!

I must be careful; that Countess is terrifying.

...

Ha, look what I've found!

Rat Street!

A place that perfectly fits my needs!

This must be heaven!

I will certainly be able to complete the "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique"!

...

Damn it, test subjects No. 18-29 all failed!

Do I still need to find subjects with "Talent"?

...

Test subjects No. 30-47 failed!

...

Roschek seems to have discovered my experiment, huh, if he dares to talk too much, I'll kill him.

...

At last, the Third Order succeeded, I can now freely shuttle through shadows, but the distance is too short, I need to work hard to complete the Fifth Order.

...

Bloodline! Bloodline!

It's the bloodline again!

I need to find a bloodline that reacts to shadows to support it!

However, before that, I need to find a way to restrain uncontrolled emotions!

No!

It's not uncontrolled emotions!

I'm just a bit anxious!

...

Hmm? "Shadow Snake" Ciudik has actually come to Rat Tail Alley.

His bloodline seems to be suitable.

...

The trade with "Shadow Snake" Ciudik was very pleasant.

He's much easier to deal with than the rumors suggest.

His blood also works for the "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique".

...

Damn it, why are the people from Forty-Six Towers investigating me?

...

Ciudik, I'm going to kill you!

...

Everything must be sealed away!

...

Huh, that guy is actually selling this thing?

Could it be a trap?

...

Arthur found Harris's notes exceedingly messy, especially mixed among the numerous experimental records, requiring him to spend much more time to find the information he needed.

'Has this guy also suffered backlash from "Spirituality"?

Or is it from the secret technique called "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique"?'

Arthur glanced at the brightening sky and stretched while guessing in his mind.

The recording method of the other party was all too familiar to him, revealing a style that oozed with the essence of a "toad" like Graham.

Moreover, more frenzied than Graham.

Yet in their two encounters, the other party hadn't shown it.

'Did he find a way to control his emotions?'

Arthur's gaze turned to the booklet recording the secret technique by his side.

More than the means of controlling emotions, he was concerned about the secret technique itself.

The ability to shuttle through shadows displayed by Harris aroused considerable envy in Arthur—if he mastered this technique, his own survival skills would skyrocket.

Plus, he had the "Dark Serpent"!

However, the annotation that "Dark Serpent" was fragmentary made Arthur uneasy.

Thus, when he picked up the secret technique notebook, Arthur was very cautious.

[Discovery of Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique (Fragmentary), assessment in progress...]

[Possesses "Dark Serpent. Cripple" bloodline, assessment passed!]

[Do you wish to spend 300 XP to learn the Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique?]

...

'Lv1 requires 300 XP?

Moreover, it's a bloodline-based secret technique; could it be from the legacy of a core noble lineage that has vanished?

And who is that guy?

Couldn't they just write out the name?'

Arthur pondered, stroking his chin.

At this stage, he certainly couldn't learn "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique. Remnant", but soon, once he completes the "Orange Cat" ritual, everything will be on the agenda.

Thinking thus, Arthur picked up one of the props from among Harris's spoils of war.

An object that resembled a kerosene lamp—

[Name: Vigilance Oil Lamp]

[Type: Other types of items]

[Quality: Secret Technique]

[Attributes: 1. Brightness; 2. Vigilance]

[Remarks: During the Seven Years' War Period, this was one of the favorite items of the Great Nobles on the West Coast during winter battles in North County. It not only brought brightness but also kept the tents warm, serving as a reliable sentinel—when the nobles of the East Coast discovered this item, they immediately made a replica, but unlike the original, the replicas couldn't keep warm or summon the "Lamp Shadow Sentinel".]

...

[Brightness: the basic function of an oil lamp, but it will be brighter than average lamps.]

[Vigilance: Within a 50-meter radius with the oil lamp as the center point, the area will be under a state of vigilance. When a creature enters the area, the person who placed the lamp will detect it and record the appearance of the intruder.]

...

"Not a bad prop!"

Arthur appraised it fairly, even though the "Vigilance Oil Lamp" was incomplete, unable to keep warm or summon the 'Lamp Shadow Sentinel', the basic [Vigilance] was still sufficient.

He immediately activated the [Vigilance] effect of the "Vigilance Oil Lamp".

Subsequently, No. 2 Cork Street became enveloped by it.

The next moment, a dozen faces were transmitted back.

And upon seeing one of them, Arthur's mouth curled up, his heart leaping with joy—

'Finally, he has come!'

Chapter 233 Gunshots Ring Out in Bernice Manor at Dawn!

The early morning on Cork Street maintained its due tranquility and vitality, thanks to the efforts of the Countess's guard.

The cries of the paperboys, like alarm clocks, roused each family from their sleep, as mothers began to prepare breakfast and fathers habitually went out to buy newspapers.

Familiar neighbors greeted each other in the yards.

When Old Charlie was around, he always greeted the surrounding neighbors with an enthusiastic smile.

After Arthur took over, it was the same—although with Arthur's recent rise to fame in the past half month, the neighbors' smiles turned somewhat stiff when they saw him.

Moreover, they would quickly return indoors using various excuses and pretenses.

It was no different this morning—

"Good morning!"

"Morning, morning, sorry, I need to use the bathroom!"

Arthur waved to the neighbor 'Mr. Duer' next door, who, said to work at a trading company and even hold a mid-level management position, stutteringly responded before turning and running into the house—as Arthur remembered, the talkative Mr. Duer always chatted with Old Charlie for at least ten minutes, or even longer.

But not like now.

'Alas, time passes and never returns...'

Arthur sighed, his gaze shifting to Mr. Bernice who was walking to the door with his butler and three bodyguards.

"Good morning!"

Arthur smiled warmly at Mr. Bernice.

This businessman would not flee like Mr. Duer did.

On the contrary, the businessman responded with a smile—

"Did you foresee my arrival?"

Mr. Kledos's abilities truly astonish me!"

Unlike the previous caution and wariness.

With the experience of the previous day, this businessman appeared much more enthusiastic.

Of course, a more important reason was that he had a favor to ask.

Of this, Arthur was well aware.

"If waking up early with a reading habit can be called 'foresight,' then South Los would definitely have several thousand 'prophets'

Arthur joked, gestured to the paperboy, paid him, then invited Mr. Bernice into No. 2 Cork Street.

Of the three bodyguards, only one, carrying a huge box, followed them in, while the other two stayed outside the door. Even this bodyguard didn't truly enter the Spirit Medium Parlor; after setting down the box, he respectfully stepped back outside. Only Arthur, Mr. Bernice, and his butler were left inside the parlor.

"This is the agreed reward from yesterday—20,000 Gold Coins!"

Mr. Bernice pointed at the box and said.

Then he took a small black velvet pouch from his chest, containing a ruby the size of a thumb, and pushed both the stone and the pouch towards Arthur.

"This is my additional thanks to you, and I hope you can understand the concerns of a father."

As he spoke, the businessman's eyes revealed a plea when he looked at Arthur.

Arthur glanced at the ruby without showing any effect and marveled once again at the wealth of the businessman—the size, the brightness, the value of that ruby was definitely no less than that of the box of Gold Coins.

Giving away 40,000 Gold Coins in one go far exceeded the fortune that Haite had carefully and cautiously amassed over half his life.

This wasn't because Haite wasn't diligent enough, but because the industry that Mr. Bernice was in was too special.

'Cargo ships and land... Truly wealthy!

Truly seizing the era!'

Arthur nodded with a smile.

"Understood!"

"That's good! That's good!"

The businessman repeated, his tone rising uncontrollably with a touch of relief the second time he spoke, after which he assured Arthur further.

"I will definitely discipline Edith well!

I will not let her take a single step outside the Bernice family manor again!"

"There could be nothing better!"

Arthur's smile remained, but inwardly, he scoffed repeatedly.

Not take a single step outside the Bernice family manor?

Such words, he could never believe them.

In the beginning, perhaps it would be so.

What happened next?

With the passage of time, such prohibitions are bound to become nothing but empty shells.

Yesterday, Arthur had decided that Edith mustn't be allowed to live—with her twisted character, combined with the wealth of the Bernice family, as long as she was alive, Arthur felt that he could never sleep soundly.

Not to mention her secret technique of manipulating pigeons.

The 'Pigeon Breeder' had only learned some fundamentals from her, without involving the 'Mystic Side', while Edith's control had already touched upon the 'Mystic Side'.

Whether she learned it unintentionally on her own or was taught by someone, this indicated that she posed a greater threat—and the level of threat was not just about losing sleep, but about making food lose its flavor.

So, just now, Wuni set off with a 'gift' in hand.

At this moment, he could already see the Bernice family manor from a distance.

At the same time, he could make out a person—using his almost superhuman vision.

A familiar face!

Old Charlie, the butler from Camille's house!

The now off-duty Old Charlie was clad in rugged grey-brown clothing, draped with withered branches and leaves, covered in mud all over his body, especially his grizzled hair, which was thoroughly concealed as he lay prone on a hill outside the Bernice manor, holding a long-barreled firearm, aiming at a specific part of the Bernice manor.

That was...

Edith's bedroom!

When Arthur confirmed the room through Wuni's vision, the old butler pulled the trigger.

Bang!

A clearly specially crafted bullet shot out of the barrel, and after covering a distance of 300 meters, it hit the target dead on.

The head of Edith, daughter of the Bernice family, burst like a watermelon dropped from a great height, splattering on impact.

The sound of the body hitting the ground alerted the others in the manor, and two Mystic Side Persons, clearly more than ordinary, rushed into Edith's bedroom.

After that, they charged toward the hill where Old Charlie was.

Old Charlie didn't move an inch, lying there still.

Only when the two were within less than 50 meters of him did he suddenly trigger the machinery he had set up the night before.

Boom!

The explosives roared, and a fireball rolled.

The two Mystic Side Persons were directly obliterated.

Watching this unfold, Old Charlie showed no excitement; he took it as routine, first retreating slowly to a safe distance before standing up with the distinctively shaped firearm in hand.

He just calmly waited there for 10 minutes, a clear disappointment flashing in his eyes.

"Bernice... you too, have grown old," he muttered, lifting his head to look at the crow with the explosives, showing a warm smile before bowing respectfully in a standard greeting.

Afterward, he dove into the woods beside the hill, completely concealing himself as if he had become invisible.

Arthur, witnessing this through Wuni's vision, let out a sigh from the bottom of his heart.

Sharpshooter!

A genuine sharpshooter!

Arthur knew that Ms. Camille's inheritance of the family business was no simple matter, but he had never imagined that her butler would be a sharpshooter. Those who were with the sharpshooter...

'Tch, my grandfather, you've tangled with a formidable lady!'

But if you can cover for me, if you've tangled with such ladies, can I just lay back and relax?

Perhaps, in my old age, I could write a book titled "How I Lived a Rich and Leisurely Life Thanks to My Grandfather's Powerful Abilities"?''

These were the fantasies that Arthur couldn't help but entertain in his mind.

As for Wuni being discovered?

Never underestimate a sharpshooter's eyes, just as one should never underestimate their intuition.

Even Arthur felt that Wuni's discovery of Old Charlie might have been deliberate, a gesture of goodwill.

After all, Old Charlie surely knew about the relationship between Old Charlie and Ms. Camille, and the fact that Old Charlie was still alive was enough to suggest that the butler recognized him.

'Still, how did my grandfather manage to win the recognition of a sharpshooter? Hmm, could it be...'

For some reason, Arthur's mind wandered to the firearms stored in his family's armory.

Suddenly, the young Spirit Medium's heart skipped a beat.

Moreover, the young Spirit Medium didn't conceal his reaction at that moment, and the prominent businessman Bernice immediately noticed the oddity. Without waiting for his inquiry, the young Spirit Medium's expression changed—

"Not good!"

Chapter 234: There's only one place in the world that's bizarre, and that is...

Suddenly, a voice exclaimed "Oh no!" and Arthur furrowed his brows, his face revealing a look of shock and astonishment that made Bernice, sitting opposite to him, freeze.

This wealthy merchant's first instinct was to think it was another "Shaman trick."

However, he immediately shook his head internally.

After all, he had just paid over 40,000 gold coins.

Although human greed knows no bounds, a one-time payment of 40,000+ gold coins is enough to make any shaman cautious—they would worry about losing the substantial amount already received.

Of course, another critical point was that this wealthy merchant did not consider Arthur to be that kind of fraudulent shaman.

Then—

The merchant saw "Ms. Anna" walking out of the Spirit Medium Parlor.

Even though he was somewhat familiar with the rumors about this lady and had encountered Mystic Side Persons before, Bernice still felt uneasy at this moment, and the nearby butler began to sweat profusely.

The wealth and prestige possessed by this wealthy merchant had made Mystic Side Persons who had approached him demonstrate various kinds of magic, but never anything so... bizarre!

Yes!

Bizarre!

Bernice thought for a moment before finding the precise adjective from his mind.

Especially upon seeing the lady whispering near the young "Spirit Medium's" ear, a sense of unease overwhelmed Bernice.

Ever since he acquired astonishing wealth, prestige, and status, Bernice had never felt this nervous.

The last time he felt this anxious was when he had placed his first ship charter.

But, after dealing with two pirates, everything had returned to normal.

And now, he began to feel anxious again.

"Eagle Eye" and "Insight" flickered.

Feeling that the time was right, Arthur proceeded to the next step.

Sitting in the chair, somewhat dazed, Bernice's gaze was scattered, but soon, his pupils began to constrict rapidly.

Because—

Creak!

With a teeth-grating noise, Ms. Anna suddenly turned her head 180 degrees and coldly looked at him.

A glance at her terrifyingly grotesque face was startling enough on a normal day.

This sudden head turn was enough to give someone nightmares.

Not to mention—

Whimper, whimper!

A low sound, like crying or the wind blowing through tree branches, echoed next to Bernice's ear.

This time, even Bernice's forehead began to sweat.

As for the butler?

His face turned pale, and he stepped back in fright.

Even after recovering his senses, he immediately returned to his original position—behind Bernice, but his breathing had become rapid.

And this rapid breathing became the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Feeling the hot breath of the butler above his head, the wealthy merchant felt the lighting inside the small parlor start to dim, followed by distortion of the desk, chairs, and even the Spirit Medium that stood before him, the once normal faces swirling like a vortex, forming an unbearable to witness facade.

An extremely shrill scream emerged next to his ear, uttering indescribable words, as a tremendous pulling force emerged on his body, violently dragging him downward.

It seemed as if he was being pulled into the legendary hell.

He dared not look down.

Because he felt numerous hands firmly gripping his feet, ankles, and calves.

At the same time, more cries and screams emerged next to his ear.

'Captain, captain, why did you push me off the ship?'

'My love, you said you would marry me, why bury me underground!'

'You said, we were the closest partners, why betray me!'

'This land was left to me by my father; I will not sell it to you!'

...

Sound after sound, phrase after phrase, brought up the scenes that Bernice least wanted to recall.

Each scene was bloody.

Each scene was filled with corpses.

Particularly the scene about the land, where a strong smell of char invaded Bernice's nostrils, making him unable to restrain himself any longer—

"Ah!"

A scream erupted from Bernice's mouth.

Six charred bodies of varying sizes had crawled out from the blazing hell, clinging onto his body and kept moving upward, until finally...

They were level with his eyes.

Those pairs of charred hands were prying his eyes open, forcing him to see their forms clearly.

But Bernice absolutely did not want to see; not only did he not open his eyes, but he also shook his head back and forth while swinging his arms as if to push all the charred corpses away.

And his breathing became more and more rapid through his mouth and nose.

The butler standing behind Bernice was shocked silly by the sight of his master in the chair, with eyes closed and flailing about.

The panicked butler, completely out of instinct, subconsciously looked towards Arthur, sitting behind the long table.

In fact, at this moment, Arthur was also a bit bewildered.

He had indeed just controlled "Anna" with "Hand of Void" and made everything seem real with "Noise Technique," but the hallucinations afterwards had nothing to do with him.

It was entirely Bernice scaring himself!

Of this, Arthur was certain.

His "Spirituality" had not detected any abnormalities.

Similarly, his "Death Intuition" had not flickered.

The temperature inside the Spirit Medium Parlor had not dropped, nor had there been any noise in his ears; neither the furniture nor the books in the parlor had moved at all.

All these were proving that Bernice was completely scaring himself.

'What heinous deeds has this guy committed?

Just a slight scare and he's like he's plunged into a phantom realm!

If that's the case...'

The young 'Spirit Medium' thought to himself and then stood up from his chair.

Then—

Smack!

A loud slap landed on the face of the businessman.

The tremendous force not only knocked out several of the businessman's teeth but also toppled him from his chair to the ground, yet the businessman showed no anger.

On the contrary, his eyes filled with gratitude as he looked at Arthur.

Panting! Panting!

"Thank, thank you!"

Bernice, drenched in cold sweat, struggled to thank Arthur, then nervously glanced at the chair he was sitting in and at "Anna," who had turned her head away on the table.

"Mr. Kledos..."

"Everything just now had nothing to do with my chair, and even less with Mrs. 'Anna'—in fact, to some extent, Mrs. 'Anna' saved you.

Also—

Misfortune has not ended."

Arthur spoke indistinctly.

Then, without waiting for the businessman to speak again, he walked to the outside of the Spirit Medium Parlor and made a gesture of invitation—the "Hand of Void" at a distance cooperated by opening the door of No. 2 Cork Street.

Immediately, sunlight streamed in.

But facing the warm sunlight, Bernice did not take a step forward.

Instead, he looked at Arthur pleadingly.

The businessman, who had always shown a firm will, was truly frightened.

And this...

Would also be his death!

Chapter 235 Death Approaches!

Before, a question had been troubling Arthur.

That was why Bernice, who could contact the Mystic Side, would not believe in "Spirit Mediums" or "Necromancy"—logically, having contact with the Mystic Side should make one more likely to believe in "Spirit Mediums" and "Necromancy."

After all, Mystic Side Persons themselves firmly believed in "Necromancy."

And the recent scene made Arthur understand.

Bernice didn't disbelieve.

But rather, he dared not believe.

Because once Bernice believed in things like "Spirit Mediums" and "Necromancy," he would have to believe in the existence of ghosts and spirits.

If ghosts and spirits exist, would those he had harmed come to seek vengeance on him?

The answer is yes!

They definitely would come for him!

And they would definitely take their revenge in the most malicious ways!

Even if Mystic Side Persons explained that the formation of ghosts and spirits is extremely stringent, and ordinary people need not worry, it was useless.

Because——

Bernice had secret guilt!

And it was a wickedness that he himself had nurtured to be matchless in evil!

With the slightest rustling of grass, Bernice would be scared half to death.

After numerous such scares, it was highly likely that Bernice would meet his demise.

Especially the things that would normally happen, Bernice would most likely consider them as "bad omen," and if he did not...

Then he would help Bernice see them as such.

"The arrival of 'bad omens' cannot be stopped!

For their resentment has long been unstoppable!

They will affect everyone around you!

They will make those close to you become dangerous, horrifying!

Originally, Clay's innocence and kindness had built a barrier, protecting you and your family, but with Clay's tragic death, this barrier has vanished completely.

As for Edith...

Alas!"

In the face of Bernice's pleas, the young 'Spirit Medium' seemed to sympathize, lowering their voice as they spoke, but when it came to Edith, they simply sighed.

Bernice's fist clenched suddenly.

"I must teach her a lesson!"

The great merchant growled low.

"No!

You must avoid her!

She has brought disaster, she revels in disaster—the twisted Edith, is far more malevolent than you can imagine...with no regard for any familial ties, she has already turned everything that follows into a hunting game!"

Seeing Bernice's demeanor, Arthur immediately added fuel to the fire.

Edith's death by assault would inevitably make Bernice suspicious.

So Arthur multiplied such suspicions countless times.

He wanted Bernice to doubt everything.

After a few frights, Bernice would naturally know what to do.

You must know, once the seed of suspicion is sown, it will surely take root and sprout, and with just a little watering, the tender shoots that break through the soil will surely grow into towering trees.

At this moment, Arthur had just planted the seed.

As for watering, naturally, cooperation from Scott was needed——just a few initial headlines like "The Bernice family's misfortune," "The 'Spirit Medium' Kledos also unwilling to face the innocent victims," and the like would be sufficient.

Then, it was time to start digging deep into Bernice's rise to wealth!

One part truth, nine parts falsehood, ninety parts capturing shadows and chasing the wind, is enough to make everything seem real!

If he were to cooperate by leaving South Los, it would become even more credible!

And this would not harm his reputation; on the contrary, it would earn him considerable praise from the lower classes.

Because the 'innocent victims' he was unwilling to face mostly came from the lower strata!

Arthur swore, he definitely wasn't just doing this as a reasonable excuse to leave South Los, he just felt that "Mr. Wu's Exchange" warehouse could do with some more stock——when something happened to the Bernice family, the other associations in South Los would definitely not ignore it, they would surely pile on and take their share of the spoils.

That's when his opportunity would come.

Deep in his thoughts, the young 'Spirit Medium' sighed once more, making a gesture of invitation again.

This time, Bernice didn't hesitate, quickly walking outside.

The great merchant couldn't wait to return to the manor, and then send Edith away, whether to Inner Bay or even further to Sidon Fortress.

In any case, the great merchant resolved never to see this extremely distorted fellow ever again.

Arthur watched as the Bernice family carriage drove away.

From the beginning to the end, his face was tinged with a faint sadness.

The first to witness this scene was none other than Mr. Duer, the neighbor.

Then, the other neighbors followed suit.

And this time, Arthur was unusually out of character, not smiling or greeting anyone—although all the neighbors kept their distance from the famously rising neighbor.

But it was exactly their avoidance that made them pay even more attention to Arthur's every move.

And, unconsciously, magnify it.

Some nosy neighbors were already planning to go to the newspaper office to provide material.

Like Mr. Duer, for example.

The door at No. 2 Cork Street closed, but the sadness on Arthur's face did not fade; he gazed sincerely at the darkest part of the room—

"You agree with what I did, don't you?"

"If you don't speak up, I'll take it as agreement."

"Thank you."

Pendragon sauntered past his owner without so much as glancing at Arthur, the kitten's instinct telling Pendragon that his owner was deceiving someone again.

Or rather...

Deceiving spirits.

In any case, Pan showed disdain for his owner.

But Arthur didn't intend to let his cat off the hook.

The young 'Spirit Medium' scooped up the passing kitten from behind, lifting it high before settling it in his arms.

"Hehehe, little kitty, take a look at what this is—

Newspaper!

It's a great invention because it records great people!

Like me, for instance!

Look at this report 'The Gambler Murder Case' and this one 'The Deeper Hidden Culprit'; they're both about me!"

Holding the Horn Report and South Los Daily, Arthur imparted this knowledge to his little kitty.

Just then, the XP prompt appeared once more—

[The Horn Report's follow-up on the 'Human Chair' case has shocked everyone, no one can believe that Haite was the deepest hidden one, and he conspired with Fornac and Nack, especially about the hidden details of the 'Sank Family' massacre twenty years ago, astonishing people even more with your abilities; XP +50]

[The South Los Daily reminds citizens to be aware of the dangers of gambling and commends you for your heroic actions amidst last night's accident during the gas lamp pipeline installation at Elta Square, with experts advising caution with gas lamps, XP +50]

[More people are hearing about your name; XP +10]

...

Unlike the meager 10 points from yesterday, today was once again a small harvest.

Of course, it was still 'Christmas Eve' last night.

Nothing happened at all!

Was there something?

Then it was an accident!

Didn't you see that Elta Square was just demolished by the newly laid gas lamp pipelines?

Arthur had started to get used to it.

Looking at the XP he had just earned, the young 'Spirit Medium' introduced the reports from the newspaper to the little kitty with even more enthusiasm.

In his mind, he was thinking about what was necessary for a long journey.

But at that moment, the doorbell of No. 2 Cork Street rang again.

It was still that same postman.

As always, a letter from the Mount Gale Region, Yumir Manor.

However, as he read the content of the letter, Arthur's eyes narrowed, and he murmured softly—

"Interesting!"

Chapter 236 'Cat Hole. Nine Lives'!

The errand kids of Dar Alley had brought Arthur five pots of fresh catnip and cat grass (a mixed barley shoots variety), one bag of each type of seed, as well as two bags (300 grams) of dried fish and one bag of cat-specific biscuits (300 grams, chicken biscuits with added catnip) when Marinda arrived.

This lady had clearly gone yet another night without sleep.

At present, she was puffing away at a pipe to keep herself awake.

"Don't tell me you're planning on planting catnip and cat grass in the yard!"

Upon seeing Arthur arranging the five pots of catnip and cat grass near the entrance as if he were placing household plants and then picking up a shovel and hoe, the lady couldn't hold back.

Although she didn't own a cat, the lady still knew the allure of catnip and cat grass for cats.

If truly large amounts of catnip and cat grass were planted in the yard, it would undoubtedly attract numerous cats, and such a sight...

Could only be described as spectacular!

"Of course not!"

"You're planting with me!"

Arthur handed the hoe to Marinda.

The latter was stunned.

But after taking a deep breath, she accepted the short-handled hoe—although the errand kid hadn't exactly informed her what had happened, Marinda was very clear that Arthur didn't invite her just for help with planting catnip and cat grass.

There must be some important matters.

And about this planting...

"Do all 'Spirit Mediums' share your kind of wicked humor?"

Marinda, crouching in the small yard beside No. 2 Cork Street, asked while digging the soil.

"If you had seen some of the scenes just now, you wouldn't call it wicked humor but rather be surprised that I managed to restrain myself from killing the Bernices!"

After shoveling the soil dug up by Marinda to one side, Arthur sighed softly.

"Bernice?!"

Marinda narrowed her eyes.

Arthur didn't wait for Marinda to inquire further but slightly embellished the incidents that had just occurred before narrating them to her.

Of course, he didn't hide the part about Edith either.

After all, such matters could not be concealed from Marinda if she decided to investigate.

"Hah, the Evil Spirit Life-Stealing Curse!

This guy really deserves it!"

Marinda scoffed coldly, uttering a word that felt foreign to Arthur.

'Is there really such a curse?'

The young 'Spirit Medium' wondered internally, while continuing to shovel soil outwardly, maintaining an indifferent demeanor.

Because he couldn't be sure whether Marinda was telling the truth or just bluffing him.

Or to put it precisely, was this another opportunity for probing?

'If uncertain, then wait!

We aren't those so-called omniscient gods!

Don't feel embarrassed or guilty because of this!'

Old Charlie had said something similar, and after reading it in his memories, Arthur had always kept it in mind.

Because he had also heard another similar phrase—

Let the bullets fly for a while!

Indeed, just two or three seconds later, witnessing Arthur's completely unmatching demeanor, Marinda sighed softly.

"As I thought, you do know about this secret curse!

But that's normal!

Even though you're a fake 'Spirit Medium', you must have learned about the deeds of the greatest 'Spirit Medium' Sigmund, even though those deeds made Sigmund a taboo during the Age of the Holy Empire.

However, Master Sigmund's 'Soul School' has always been secretly passed down."

Marinda said this and deliberately paused, checking Arthur's expression.

Upon seeing Arthur still appearing indifferent, the lady finally gave up on probing.

"Alright, I suspected from the beginning that 'Cat Faction.Hei' obtained some of the 'Soul School' knowledge, what I now want to ask you is whether 'Cat Faction.Hei' did get the knowledge of the 'Soul School'?

And exactly which part of the knowledge it was!

Also, whether the Evil Spirit Life-Stealing Curse was performed by you!

Enough, stop pretending!

Make your offer!"

Marinda looked at Arthur with disdain.

The lady thought the young 'Spirit Medium' was once again holding out for a better offer.

But then, Arthur responded definitively—

"I don't know anything about the Spirit Medium Sigmund."

I also don't know about the so-called 'Soul School'."

I know even less about the 'Evil Spirit Life-Stealing Curse.'"

After the young Spirit Medium finished speaking, he began scattering seeds inside the turned soil.

This scene made Marinda increasingly suspicious.

The lady, with a pipe clenched in her teeth, took two quick puffs, and the thick smoke began to drift away. Though her lips did not move, her voice clearly reached Arthur's ears —

"I know a little about 'Cat Hole' Core Mystical Art 'Nine Lives.'"

Cat Hole. Nine Lives!

The rumored core secret of 'Cat Hole.'

It could grant the practitioner nine lives.

It doesn't mean resurrecting directly after death nine times.

It means...

Reincarnating nine times, carrying one's memories and power in each cycle.

Most importantly, during each reincarnation, all previously acquired power could be retained.

One must know that the 'Golden Lion Cat' Aeolia had once shouted at the Pope of the Holy Empire, 'This punch, through nine cycles of reincarnations!'

Afterwards, that contemporary Pope was instantly defeated.

One must realize, that was the Pope in the prime of the Holy Empire, who claimed to be the 'God Among Men.'

It is precisely because of that, everyone believed the rumors about 'Cat Hole' truly having the secret of 'Nine Lives.'

Of course, there were those who scorned it.

"Such incredible information — alas, I cannot afford to trade!"

Thus spoke Arthur as he walked towards No. 2 Cork Street.

He knew Marinda wouldn't deceive him about such things.

But precisely because Marinda wouldn't deceive him, Arthur knew that he could not possibly know any clues about the 'Cat Hole. Nine Lives' — not even a tiny bit.

As for trading secrets from Sigmund's 'Soul School'?

He would have to know them first.

However, Arthur's actions had caused a misunderstanding in Marinda.

The lady gazed at Arthur with suspicion in her eyes.

"You wouldn't have guessed, would you?"

Damn it!

I knew you didn't approach me with good intentions — you bastard!"

The lady muttered under her breath, her gaze becoming angrier as she spoke to Arthur.

Arthur, meanwhile, frowned secretly.

'Guessed? Could it be something or someone nearby...

Or is she testing me again?'

The young Spirit Medium decided that as soon as he had enough XP, he would level up his 'Eagle Eye' and 'Insight' skills.

Otherwise, he really feared falling into Marinda's trap someday.

Of course, that was later!

Now?

Arthur handed the previously received letter to Marinda.

"If you dare come to Yumir Manor, I will kill you!"

The lady read from the letter, cut from newspaper clippings.

Afterward, the lady squinted her eyes, immediately guessing what Arthur intended to do.

"Cooperation?"

The lady asked tentatively.

"Otherwise, why would I have come to you?"

Arthur countered.

"You heartless fellow, you must have had your eye on the Bernice family's property for a long time, and only someone as shrewd as you could guess that the clue to 'Cat Hole. Nine Lives' is..."

Marinda continued with her resentful tone, but at the crucial part, she concealed the word.

Even though full of regret, Arthur still maintained an indifferent face.

But the next moment, the young Spirit Medium's heart stirred.

Could it be that thing?

Chapter 237: A Morning Out!

Arthur thought of the "Phantom Realm Sphere"!

Or more accurately, he thought of the last sentence in the remarks of the "Phantom Realm Sphere": the treasury of Baron Norvia!

Arthur couldn't be sure if the "Gentleman Thief" Carmen had successfully taken what he wanted from Baron Norvia's treasury, but on reflecting upon his interactions with Marinda, other than that treasury seeming to be related to the tiniest clue about 'Cat Hole. Nine Lives', nothing else seemed likely.

It couldn't possibly be related to the egg tarts made by Marinda's cook, Mary, associated with 'Cat Hole. Nine Lives', right?

That would be too far-fetched.

"Baron Norvia?"

Arthur silently recited this name in his heart.

Unlike South Los, Seberlin, Ainhars, Bert, Inner Bay, Rosha, and Sidon, where seven noble families equally divided the "Inland River" and acquired a great amount of tax through coastal trade to develop their territories and arm their armies, ensuring a stable life for the civilians within.

Especially South Los, being the gateway of transoceanic trade, its prosperity made people drool with envy.

But Norvia, Rude, and Catermont were different.

All three were completely landlocked territories, mostly self-sufficient through traditional farming and livestock, but Norvia was particularly special.

Because it was rich in iron ore!

Even though the land was not suitable for crops and lacked any livestock for husbandry, due to the presence of mines, Norvia's territory was still coveted— at least by the previous Baron Norvia.

As for the current Baron Norvia?

During the "Seven Years' War," he recklessly rushed in and lost two thousand of his elite personal troops.

When leprosy broke out in the territory, he let it run its course, resulting in the death of one-fifth of the territory's civilians.

Moreover, he lived extravagantly day-by-day, elevating the taxes to an unprecedented 75% since the "Silver Age," almost reaching the exorbitant 90% "Redemption Tax" of the "Holy Empire" era.

Yet, Norvia's territory remained stable.

Because the baron was strong enough.

Four years ago, a tax conflict within the territory led to the baron's tax officer being hanged; then, the baron himself slaughtered a whole town, killing about 700 people, all of them hanged, without a single survivor.

This added a prefix of tyranny to the Baron Norvia's extravagance.

Even some businessmen were reluctant to go to Baron Norvia's territory.

Recalling everything about this Baron Norvia, Arthur subconsciously touched his chin.

Obviously, due to the existence of the "Mystic Side," the "true nobles" of this world lived much more luxuriously than he had imagined, without the likelihood of being overthrown by the common folk.

"No wonder they so actively pursue power—once awakened, they truly have nothing to worry about!"

Arthur thought to himself.

Then, he subconsciously thought of the Earl of South Los.

Compared to that Baron Norvia's 75% tax, the Mother Tigress's tax of 'half a percent to three and a half percent' according to different professions was practically saint-like.

Whew!

Thick smoke rushed towards him.

Mixed with a faint cocoa scent and a very obvious sweetness.

"Did you change your tobacco?"

Arthur looked surprised as he glanced at Marinda, who sat in the chair with her eyes squinted as if she were dozing off.

Previously, Marinda's smoke was more woody, sometimes even carrying a hint of alcohol, far less sweet than now.

"Not entirely changed, just mixed in a bit of aged White Rib tobacco with Cavendish and Virginia flavoring herbs—can you feel the friendliness I have for you?"

As she spoke, the lady winked at Arthur.

"Hot cocoa and tobacco are two different things!"

Arthur rolled his eyes, not at all appreciating the gesture.

Because he knew that Marinda's 'flattery' was merely due to the "Soul School" of Sigmund.

Clearly, the so-called "Soul School" was extremely important to this woman.

Marinda was a supremely practical woman.

"No profit, no waking early," perfectly described this woman.

However, Arthur did not dislike it.

Because this woman had no unrealistic fantasies but preferred to bind him with interests.

Just as when she found out he was the contemporary 'Black Cat', she didn't directly seek help or promise pie in the sky, but slowly deepened their relationship through mutual benefits—Arthur knew well that only when he truly 'could not part' from her, would this woman make a request.

So, this woman became his partner.

No one would refuse such a 'far-sighted' partner.

Arthur was no exception.

Even, to some extent, Arthur preferred this kind of partner.

It definitely wasn't with the intention of taking advantage.

But rather a true 'mutual benefit'—

"Bernice should be coming to see me soon, before that, I need to leave South Los and head to Yumir Manor in the Mount Gale Region.

After that, it's all up to you."

Arthur said so.

"Hmm, lazy guy!"

Marinda retorted with her words, her eyes sparkling with excitement, having been called out on her 'little schemes'.

Just as Arthur had surmised, this lady was not in a rush.

With her exceptionally good family upbringing, she knew the importance of future matters, but present ones were even more crucial.

Because having the latter allowed the continuation of the former.

"How is the eldest son, Clay?"

Arthur began packing his baggage as he inquired.

"Nowhere near as shrewd as described by the outside world, and quite greedy. With the previous transactions between Bernice and me, we can totally break through from here—compared to this, you need to be more careful with...

the Old Lion of Inner Bay!"

Marinda suddenly lowered her voice.

"Even though I'll be leaving South Los, I am still within the territory of South Los!"

"We must have faith in our Lord Count!"

Arthur said with a smile.

The young 'Spirit Medium' of course understood Marinda's reminder, but it did not stop him from taking the chance to compliment the Mother Tigress of South Los.

Even though she could not hear it.

But, what if?

'Praising someone to their face is a good way to close the distance, but praising behind their back is the correct way!'

Old Charlie's words always greatly benefited Arthur.

"Ha!"

Marinda scoffed coldly.

It wasn't directed at the Earl of South Los.

But at Arthur's shamelessness.

"A guy like you will definitely be safe—because, only someone as shameless as you can live a long life."

Having said that, Marinda stood up and walked outside.

She had already taken a brief rest.

What's next?

Naturally, it was time to work.

Arthur saw the lady out of No. 2 Cork Street, watched as she got into a carriage and left, then waved at the kids from Dar Alley who were eagerly looking this way.

Immediately, a black-haired, skinny, fair-skinned child who ran the fastest approached Arthur.

"Good morning, Lord Kledos!"

"What's your name?"

Arthur looked at the child who had served him several times, asking with a smile.

"Merlin!"

The child from Dar Alley replied, then, seemingly remembering something, he bowed slightly—

"Merlin, at your service!"

Chapter 238: Barny's Selina

When Arthur announced his long journey, his friend Scott rushed to No. 2 Cork Street.

The young journalist, not seen for several days, had disheveled hair and bloodshot eyes, even staggering a bit as he walked.

"Scott, are you sure you are okay?"

Arthur looked at his friend, concern evident on his face.

"I'm fine, Arthur!"

Don't worry!

Now, I'm better than I've ever been!"

Scott emphasized repeatedly, but such emphasis only made the young journalist appear even more exhausted, as if his brain had slowed down.

Malz came over and put an arm around Scott's shoulders, looking at Arthur.

"It's all right, everything will be fine—I have a feeling your journey will grant me and Scott a long vacation.

No shootings, no poisonings, no explosions, and no strange homicides!

The whole of South Los will return to its former peace!

After all, our 'Grim Reaper and the Child of Calamity' will be far from South Los!"

The old sheriff said earnestly.

Arthur, of course, knew the old sheriff was joking, but his serious demeanor always made him think it was true.

"Okay, Malz, I've appreciated your sense of humor!

But remember, next time you joke, try not to be so serious, it impacts the effect!"

Speaking thus, Arthur motioned to Simon beside him to load five pots of fresh mint leaves and catnip onto the carriage—As a Special Consultant for the Shire District Police Station with the privileges of a first-class officer, Lord Arthur Kredos certainly wouldn't embark on the journey alone.

According to the rules and regulations of the Shire District Police Station, a first-class officer on official travel could not only use the police station's coach but also bring along one officer (trainee) and two to three patrol officers, with all expenses fully reimbursed; additionally, depending on the duration of the trip, there would be extra allowances.

With such benefits, Arthur certainly wouldn't refuse.

He was merely traveling, not going on a pilgrimage.

Thus, he immediately chose Simon, Hunter, and Newt for companionship.

Simon was diligent, hardworking, and attentive.

Though Hunter and Newt were full of faults, their presence was sometimes even more useful than Simon's when traveling.

As for strength?

Arthur knew very well that should anything happen on this trip, even bringing along the strongest from the station like Dico, Andy, and Looney would be useless.

Everything still depended on him.

Thus, the 'Blood Descendant' was ready to spring into action.

As long as there was gold, this 'Blood Descendant' was the best bodyguard!

Fortunately, Arthur was not short of gold lately.

Harris's 400 gold bars were enough to make Arthur feel safe.

As for Bernice's compensation?

The money was 'Open and Aboveboard' and free from scrutiny, so Arthur planned to use it to 'buy a haunted house in South Los,' which would save him a great deal of trouble.

Thinking about the potential issues he might face during the trip, Arthur approached Merlin, who was peering around curiously.

"I have a task for you, Merlin."

"I am at your service!"

The child from Dar Alley immediately responded joyfully.

"I am going on a long trip. If it's fast, it will take 10 days, if slow, up to 20 days—during this time I need you to help me water the catnip and cat grass in the courtyard and clean up; if someone visits, inform them of my journey.

How does a daily wage of 5 Zeroes sound?"

"Yes, Lord!"

Merlin immediately nodded.

To the child from Dar Alley, watering the catnips and cleaning the courtyard seemed like play.

Only receiving visitors required caution.

Because these visitors might be important figures.

However, the 'big money' of 5 Zeroes a day significantly boosted Merlin's courage.

He knew, after all, that running errands typically earned him only 1-2 Zeroes.

And there wasn't always work available every day.

Of course, going to dangerous places naturally paid more, but Merlin did not wish to get involved in unsavory affairs—more importantly, not a few children went missing every year in those places.

"I look forward to your performance!"

Arthur said.

He had chosen Merlin among the group of children from Dar Alley not just because he recognized him, but because each time, this child had managed to complete his assigned tasks properly.

He believed this time would be no exception.

However, Arthur didn't hand the money directly to Merlin, but asked for Merlin's guardian to come.

The prepaid five Zeroes might not have been much, but it still posed a danger for a child from Dar Alley to hold it.

To Arthur's surprise, Merlin's guardian was not his parents, but an uncle with graying hair, slightly balding, with chubby cheeks, a portly figure, but agile and well-mannered.

"I am Merlin's uncle, Gaius.

Thank you for your trust in Merlin, I will make sure he does everything he should."

Gaius, along with Merlin, bowed again.

Arthur immediately responded with a smile.

Not far away, Malz and Scott watched the scene worriedly, continuously exchanging glances—

'It won't go wrong, will it?'

'It shouldn't, as long as Arthur leaves quickly enough, the Grim Reaper won't visit.'

'Really hope it doesn't go wrong, I don't want anything to happen to the uncle and nephew, especially since we've been working overtime for ten days straight!'

'Me too!'

'After Arthur leaves, how about we go for a drink?'

'I know a great club!'

Upon mentioning the club, both men immediately shared a knowing grin.

"What are you two talking about? Why do you look so smug?"

Arthur had returned after arranging everything.

"We were talking about having everyone go to No. 44 White Bird Street for a salon after you get back— with no blessing from friends, that house won't truly be yours!"

Malz said earnestly.

Scott nodded in agreement just as earnestly.

"Right, wait for me to come back!"

Arthur nodded in agreement and then climbed into the carriage.

The carriage was driven by Simon, with Hunter and Newt riding alongside on horses.

The group quickly left Cork Street, took West Mok Avenue, and exited South Los.

...

Just as Arthur was leaving South Los, Yevna Camille finally arrived in Barny—Ms. Camille went straight to a farm in Barny without looking elsewhere.

Ms. Camille didn't know where Old Charlie might be elsewhere, but in Barny, she knew exactly where the old fellow would be.

Selina's farm!

Standing in front of Ms. Camille's carriage was the towering and fierce-looking 'farmhand boss' Desa, his cold eyes staring at the old man 'Fent' on the carriage.

"I thought it would be 'Oer' that old codger coming!"

Desa grinned menacingly.

"Big Oer didn't come, but I did, want to try me?"

Fent let go of the reins and gripped his Firearm.

At the same time, in the dark corners of the farm, a series of chilly gazes started to closely watch the carriage.

With a sneer from Fent, shadows suddenly shifted around the carriage.

Both parties stood off, neither willing to give an inch.

"Desa!"

"Fent!"

As the cries rang out in unison, the tension dissipated, people from the shadows and dark spots started to retreat, leaving only the standoff between the two ladies.

A lady, none less striking than Ms. Camille, yet filled with a wild aura, came out from the farm, wearing overalls and a burlap shirt, her muscular build was undeniable.

With each step she took forward, her body whipped up gusts of wind, the howling semblance of tiger and wolf roars, terrifying to hear.

And the wildness on her face made it hard to guess her age.

"Ha, savage girl, long time no see."

Ms. Camille greeted.

"Long time no see, you silly nurse."

Miss Selina replied.

Then, simultaneously, both asked—

"Where's Charlie?"

Chapter 239: Cunning, Crafty, and Scheming Old Charlie

Ms. Camille and Miss Selina were both momentarily stunned, then exclaimed in unison.

"He didn't come with you?"

"Isn't he with you?"

After speaking, the two ladies exchanged glances.

Once they confirmed that the woman across from them was not lying, both women inwardly cursed, "Damn."

This was out of character for Old Charlie.

Although Old Charlie was a man who spared his affections, he was extremely serious about every relationship and was not the type to simply use someone and leave.

So, if Old Charlie had come to Barny, he would have certainly looked for Selina.

Even knowing that Camille was looking for him, he would definitely not hide; even if it meant being severely punished, he would not flee.

Even if it cost him his life, it would be the same.

Years ago, when facing the accusations of Baron Norvia's daughter, Old Charlie preferred to let Baron Norvia stab him three times rather than dodge.

One should know that one of the stabbings had reached his heart.

It was the same when he faced the trial by the twins from the Glowgold Family of Sidon Fortress.

When the twins held daggers to his throat and asked Old Charlie to choose between them, Old Charlie honestly declared he couldn't abandon either and promptly drew his own sword across his neck.

If Baron Norvia's daughter hadn't happened to pass by at that moment, Old Charlie would have indeed died; but because of this, Old Charlie lost his voice for six months, stayed in Norvia Territory for six months, and then was stabbed three times by Baron Norvia and expelled from the territory, with a warning that if he dared enter Norvia Territory again, Baron would break Old Charlie's legs.

However, once his injuries had nearly healed, Old Charlie deliberately broke his own legs, climbed up to Baron Novita's daughter's window, and crawled in.

Camille and Selina knew Old Charlie's character well.

But precisely because of this, the two ladies were deeply worried.

For there was only one reason that could make Old Charlie avoid them—

Old Charlie had encountered danger and did not want to involve them.

"This old bastard is already 72 years old, what is there left that's worth him risking his life!

He really lets no one..."

Selina cursed angrily, but she stopped midway through her words.

Because Old Charlie, that damn fellow, indeed had people worth risking his life for.

For example: them!

Old Charlie could risk his life for any one of them.

And then there was...

His family!

At this thought, Selina could no longer restrain herself and lifted her right hand, blowing a sharp whistle.

Half a minute later, the farm was swarming with over a hundred fierce and fully armed farmhands.

"Go find Old Charlie!

If he's in Barny, find him and bring him back safely!"

"Yes, miss!"

Desa addressed Selina in the old familiar style.

Subsequently, the farmhands, organized in groups of ten as per the traditional old noble manner, dispersed into twelve teams and rushed into Barny to search for Old Charlie.

Watching this scene, Camille slightly frowned.

"Don't bring more trouble to Old Charlie!"

"Heh, Barny has always been my home; it was in the past, it still is now, and it will be in the future."

Selina chuckled coldly, clearly unconcerned.

Time swiftly passed, and one cavalry squad after another returned to the farm—all the first eleven squads brought back no news of Old Charlie.

And when Desa's squad returned with the same news, Selina became increasingly impatient; she paced around the room, and with every step, the sounds of fierce and aggressive howling followed.

"Inform the others!

Old Charlie has probably really encountered a massive problem—he told his grandson he was in Barny, which was probably to ensure Arthur would come straight to Barny should he run into trouble; after all, once Arthur was in Barny, you would definitely find Arthur and ensure his safety.

Unfortunately, that old bastard couldn't have anticipated that Arthur had awakened the 'Spirit Medium Bloodline' and is now thriving in South Los; he will probably be summoned by the Mother Tigress soon."

Speaking of this, Ms. Camille's tone slightly soured.

Although those uncles of hers were impressive, was it Selina who Old Charlie trusted more?

While Ms. Camille felt sour, Miss Selina laughed heartily.

"Little Arthur?

That kid, when he was two years old, I held him. I wonder if he remembers me—Desa should take the 'Barny Family's secret technique' to Arthur, it should help him..."

"Ha, with no noble title, yet possessing Noble Secrets, do you want Arthur to be targeted by all the nobles of South County?"

Ms. Camille snorted coldly, interrupting Miss Selina's speech.

"Barny can have a new heir!"

Miss Selina stiffened her neck, and her towering height of 2.2 meters immediately pressured Ms. Camille.

But Ms. Camille was used to it.

The lady spoke lightly—

"You yourself have lost your baronetcy and nominal territory. Arthur shouldn't be dragged into the mire of the Barny House, and if you do this, do you believe the Glowgold Family twins and the madman from the Norvia Family wouldn't step in to declare Arthur as having their family's Bloodline and immediately announce him with first rights to succession.

What we need to do now is facilitate relations with the Mother Tigress so that Arthur can rightfully receive the 'Knight' title from South Los, then acquire a piece of legitimate land and get promoted to a 'Lord', and only then we can connive against the little Mother Tigress with Sidon Fortress, the Barny, the Norvia families, among others."

As she mentioned others, Ms. Camille pursed her lips, looking somewhat helpless and displeased.

Miss Selina was also fuming, her grip tightening around the iron sword on her waist. In the crackling sound, several finger prints emerged on the handle, looking at the ruined hilt, the lady simply pulled out the Longsword, and like kneading dough, she squeezed the entire Longsword into an iron ball.

"Hmph, if it weren't for those guys, how could Charlie have been gotten by that woman!"

At the mention of that woman, even Ms. Camille couldn't maintain her composure completely, her breathing grew much more rapid.

"She is a thing of the past.

Just a mere...

We really don't need to be wary of her, and moreover, what we need to do now is find out what exactly happened to Charlie, this old bastard.

Only then will we be able to help him!"

Ms. Camille reminded Miss. Selina.

Afterward, inside the farm, both ladies quickly wrote letters heading to Norvia Territory and Sidon Fortress, but the remaining nine letters made the two ladies hesitant.

However, they eventually wrote them.

Soon, eleven pigeons, each with unique Bloodline traits, carried the eleven confidential letters, flying to different parts of the world—three to South County, three to North County, a secret location on the East Coast got one, and three pigeons flew directly towards the West Coast.

Even, one pigeon flew towards the deep sea.

But all these pigeons were 'intercepted'.

In a land filled with Shadows, a tall elderly man with silver hair, wearing monocle glasses and smiling with squinty eyes like a fox, suddenly became aware while striding forward.

"May you be safe."

As he said this, he simply waved his hand.

Separated by thousands of miles and hindered by special spaces and dimensions, yet unable to block this power, these unique Bloodline pigeons were immediately 'bewitched'.

This would be inconceivable to any being.

But it wasn't difficult for the elderly man.

After all, he was the one who had bred these pigeons.

Yet a certain being did not know this.

The white warhorse pulled a pure white carriage amidst the low chanting of Lost Souls, slowly appearing before the elderly man.

The carriage door was gently opened, and an elderly gentleman in a black suit with slicked-back hair, meticulous in appearance, stepped down.

The old gentleman leaned on a Crowned Scepter, his right ring finger adorned with a pure silver ring embedded with white bone.

Shapeless winds stirred the Shadows around.

The Shadows, filled with vitality at that moment, also turned into withered leaves and rapidly withered away.

The old gentleman looked at the elderly man, handed over his scepter to his left hand, extended his right hand, and spoke with a smile—

"Long time no see, cunning, sly, and full of schemes, Charlie.

You swindled eighteen hundred years of life from me, isn't it time you paid it back?"

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Facing the creditor's demands, Charlie Kredos showed no trace of panic, instead gazing at the elderly gentleman before him with an unexpectedly intense look.

"Sir, please do not use the word 'deceit'!

It might lead others to misunderstand the integrity of my profession as a 'Spirit Medium'!

We merely made a bet.

Alas, you merely lost,"

Old Charlie emphasized.

"Ha, lost?"

Facing your sophistry of 'Your death will come right before mine,' I do not consider that I lost!"

The elderly gentleman clenched his cane, the veins on the back of his hands bulging.

Anger filled the elderly gentleman's heart.

Immediately, the devastating Power of Death began to resonate.

Vast expanses of shadows began to die.

They appeared unknowingly and perished just as unknowingly.

The cycle, seemingly by chance, cleared a vast area.

But no light appeared; there was only more shadows, surging like a tide, with the power of erosion, with the hatred that corrodes the mind, almost like a calamity.

This made the already angry elderly gentleman even more infuriated.

"Begone!"

Return to where you belong!"

A low roar queued a skull to appear within the elderly gentleman's composed features.

It was not the skull of the deceased.

Rather, it represented the Power of Death.

Or rather...

It represented the god of Death.

The surging shadows, faced with unprecedented terror, receded even faster, going back to where they rightfully belonged.

In this area, only deathly silence remained.

Pure, white deathly silence.

Assessing the surrounding silence, Old Charlie showed an expression of awe and flattery.

"Your majesty truly inspires awe, even the mindless 'Shadows' fear you."

But witnessing this scene made the elderly gentleman even angrier, He, being Death, actually began to breathe heavily.

Because, He not only knew that Old Charlie did not hold any awe for Him, but He also knew that he had been deceived by him once again.

Just now, He had sensed it.

For the second time!

This was the second time he had been tricked!

A growing sense of humiliation made the elderly gentleman want to smash Old Charlie's head in with his cane.

Alas, He couldn't do it.

Unless...

He desired to return to Death itself.

"Do you think you have already won?"

the elderly gentleman murmured.

"No no no!

You have misunderstood me from the beginning, just as you sought me out from the start—

Firstly, I did not provoke anyone or anything.

Secondly, during the 301 years of your interrogation... uh, that should be the correct time in our reckoning, sorry, since achieving a lifespan almost like yours, I am still not accustomed to your timing. It's merely three days for you, yet for us, it has been over three hundred years, but it doesn't truly reflect the time I am familiar with.

This blurs my perception, even making me feel like I could live until the world perishes.

Aft

er all, at some point, both you and I exist in eternity.

I am truly sorry, did I make you misunderstand again?

Please do not be angry, we can talk about this.

Just as when we first met, I still remember your courteous and graceful demeanor,"

the Old Spirit Medium spoke slowly and deliberately.

And with each sentence, he hammered away at the elderly gentleman's sanity.

At the final sentence, the elderly gentleman really swung his cane.

However, he stopped at the last moment.

The old gentleman furrowed his brow lightly, pondering something.

Suddenly, his brow relaxed, and a smile appeared on his face.

"From the moment I discovered you, you have been trying to provoke me—no, you let me discover you on purpose, because..."

"...you had exhausted the power you 'cheated' from me by pulling your beloved grandson back from the Land of Reincarnation."

But the people you care about are not just him.

His parents, your son and daughter-in-law, you are still looking for them, aren't you?"

Faced with the old gentleman's questioning, the old 'Spirit Medium' did not deny it, but still emphasized.

"It wasn't 'cheating'; rather, during 301 years of torment, I unconsciously mastered some of the power you possessed and wielded."

As he spoke, the elderly Spirit Medium with silvery hair took off his monocle and took out a handkerchief to gently wipe it.

But the old gentleman was not angered this time.

Believing he had grasped the crux of the matter, he maintained his smile.

"Hmm, hmm, you have a Talent that even I admire."

However, you still underestimated my power!

Although you successfully pulled him back from his next life's cycle, you initially failed to notice that your grandson had acquired a trace of the Aroma of Death."

"Now he is like the Child of Death... No, even more favored by Death than the Child of Death, any person not favored by Destiny who appears near him will be watched over by 'Death and Calamity'."

By the time you realized something was wrong, your power was already insufficient to resolve this problem.

So, you chose to expose yourself again, to 'trick' me into coming here!"

Seeing the hand of the old 'Spirit Medium' wiping the glasses pause with steadiness, the old gentleman, thinking he had discovered another point, immediately became more cheerful.

"So, my lord, shall we make a bet..."

"Shut up!"

Upon hearing the word 'bet,' the old gentleman directly chastised, but then softened his tone as he looked at the old 'Spirit Medium' and again asked the original question—

"How did you manage to escape the restrictions?"

"What?"

What are you talking about?

I don't understand."

The old 'Spirit Medium' looked puzzled.

"Very well!

You have renounced my last shred of mercy—you cheated a lifespan of eighteen hundred years from me the first time, deceived the Land of Reincarnation with my power the second time, and now, you want to deceive me a third time!

Detestable 'Spirit Medium'!

I curse all Spirit Mediums outside the Kledos Family, may they not die a good death!"

The old gentleman intoned lowly.

Suddenly, the pure white desolate land was struck with black lightning.

Amid the continuous black lightning, the figure of the old gentleman grew immensely, resembling a giant standing tall between heaven and earth, as he issued the curse using the 'Name of Death'.

Cursing all 'Spirit Mediums' beyond the Kledos Family!

This was misdirected anger!

Unable to strike at the elderly Spirit Medium in front of him, nor at the loved ones of the Spirit Medium, he targeted the profession of the old 'Spirit Medium'.

Of course, he still excluded the old 'Spirit Medium' and his family.

After all, he was intimately linked with him.

"You have displayed your arrogance once again.

Such an attitude will lead you into great trouble in the future.

You will most likely regret your actions today."

The old 'Spirit Medium' sighed, seemingly peering into the future.

The old gentleman, however, was disdainful.

He boarded his carriage, resumed his seat, and didn't entangle further with the old 'Spirit Medium' because he had discovered a way to make the old 'Spirit Medium' submit.

He would proceed with careful caution.

He wouldn't let the old Spirit Medium become aware.

And this would surely be a long-lasting effort, but what he was never short of was time.

The white horses pulled the white carriage, carrying the old gentleman away, leaving only the old 'Spirit Medium' exhaling a sigh—

"We merely made a bet; I never deceived you.

And besides, we only bet once; how could I possibly beat you three times?"