

Great Master 261

Chapter 261 Bizarre Coincidence!

...

Three arcane artifacts with confirmed provenance were laid out in front of Arthur, placed neatly on a relatively clean tool cabinet: a belt, a two-finger-sized leather pouch, and a silver brooch—

[Name: Zuo Danlun's Defense]

[Type: Protective Gear]

[Quality: Arcane]

[Attributes: 1. Long-Range Protection; 2. Permanent Trousers]

[Remarks: As a longbowman of the South County Hunter Corps, Zuo Danlun was quite skilled in archery, achieving flawless accuracy and even chain arrows. He once boasted a proud record of striking fifteen men in a battle on the West Coast. But a stray arrow accidentally hit his belt, turning the proud bowman's bright red underwear into a unique spectacle on the battlefield. It also became a relentless nightmare that he could not shake off. To prevent such an error from ever happening again, he sold all his possessions to commission the Master Alchemist 'Dedel' to create this belt—'I will never make the same mistake again!']

...

[Long-Range Protection: Specifically against long-range attacks, ensuring safety even in the face of cannon fire]

[Permanent Trousers: Your belt firmly welds your trousers to your waist, they will never fall unless you wish it]

(Note 1: When a long-range protection is completed, it requires 12 hours of sunlight bathing or gold to recharge)

(Note 2: Although it does not provide close combat defense, the belt itself is extremely tough, and can be used to whip a target, amongst other uses)

...

[Name: Lannister Family's Seasoning Jar]

[Type: Other Types]

[Quality: Arcane]

[Attributes: 1. Delicious; 2. Easy to Digest]

[Remarks: To ensure that every heir eats well and better absorbs the nutrients in food for optimal growth, the head of the Lannister Family asked another gnome alchemist to craft this arcane artifact. However, when it was created, the resulting deliciousness pleasantly surprised the gnome alchemist, so much so that he vanished with the artifact—What's inside? It's...]

...

[Delicious: The seasoning inside makes food more flavorful]

[Easy to Digest: The seasoning makes any food easier to digest]

(Note 1: The seasoning jar contains 20 grams of seasoning, which can be replenished with salt and transformed with 2 hours of sunlight bathing or gold)

(Note 2: The effects of the seasoning will dissipate half an hour after it leaves the jar)

...

[Name: Xin Coco's Brooch]

[Type: Other Types]

[Quality: Arcane]

[Attributes: Underwater Breathing]

[Remarks: During the middle of the Silver Age, Xin Coco was considered one of the 'God Thief' Carmen's heirs. This thief had commendable theft skills, but lacked the heart of a gentleman thief. Particularly when he discovered an underwater relic, murdering three companions in the process, his reputation was utterly ruined. However, he seemed not to care—'I'm ready, are you?']

...

[Underwater Breathing: Allows breathing underwater for six hours]

(Note: After completing a full duration of underwater breathing, it requires 6 hours of moonlight bathing for recharge, or gold for a quick recharge)

...

Looking at the three arcane artifacts, Arthur furrowed his brows tightly.

The three 'Spirit Mediums' who died at Yumir Manor—one with a broken neck, one choked to death on pie, and one drowned in a bathtub.

The deaths were bizarre in themselves.

But if the 'Spirit Medium' with the broken neck owned [Zuo Danlun's Defense], the one who choked owned [Lannister Family's Seasoning Jar], and the one who drowned owned [Xin Coco's Brooch], it was not just bizarre—it was mysterious.

Mysterious to the point of being eerie.

It was as if someone was targeting these three 'Spirit Mediums.'

Moreover, the culprit must be extremely familiar with the three victims to have finished them in such targeted and humiliating manners.

'Could it be the owner of Yumir Manor?'

While Arthur was speculating, he recalled Linda's warning to him.

Undoubtedly, the person would target Old Charlie as well.

Following the murderer's logic in targeting and humiliating Old Charlie, one would have to use...

Women?!

At this thought, Arthur couldn't help rubbing his temples.

...

He was different from old gentlemen like Old Charlie; he wasn't very good at handling such scenes, so if he had to face one, he'd have to be quick about it and hope that "Zuo Danlun's Defense" was sturdy enough.

As the young 'Spirit Medium' thought to himself, the 'Anna' in his arms started to move.

The 'Anna' floating mid-air seemed to disdain the dirty floor of the morgue, casting a dissatisfied glance at the members of the Mount Gale Town Police Department.

The recently calmed Mount Gale Town police members began to tremble once more under 'Anna's' gaze.

"She, he, it..."

Walker, a fourth-level police officer who also served as the coroner, began to shiver again.

Because he always felt that the horror doll seemed to be targeting him specifically.

"Shut up, this lady is 'Anna,' the consultant's assistant."

Simon kicked the fourth-level officer without any courtesy.

Though merely an apprentice policeman, the advantage of coming from South Los meant Simon had no reservations.

Of course, it was more about the disdain he had for the other.

In the eyes of this apprentice policeman, not one of the officers here could compare to his companions, Hunter and Newt.

With Simon's 'hint,' the members of the Mount Gale Town Police Department once again fell silent.

Under their watchful eyes, the young 'Spirit Medium' appeared to listen intently, while 'Anna' narrated something to him.

Unfortunately, their speech was not something the others could hear.

All they could see was the young 'Spirit Medium' nodding repeatedly.

"Is that so?"

"So it's like that."

His brief and enlightening words caught the attention of everyone in the Mount Gale Town Police Department.

And under everyone's eager anticipation, the young 'Spirit Medium' spoke.

"'Anna' has told me that many Undead are wandering inside the police station—there are men, and women, Hunters, Farmers, and merchants as well...

Huh?

This merchant troop?!"

Arthur's speech suddenly paused.

[Bluff] began to flicker.

The young 'Spirit Medium' walked toward Police Chief Westbron.

His serious and earnest demeanor frightened the plump Westbron into breaking out in a cold sweat.

"If you don't want to die, don't move! Be quiet!"

The stern whisper caused Westbron, who had just been about to inquire, to bite his lip hard, standing rigid and not daring to make a sound.

Everyone else watched breathlessly as Arthur walked straight up to Westbron and raised his hand, slowly reaching behind him as if there was something there.

But clearly, there was nothing.

However, Westbron's trousers were already wet.

Because the Police Chief could distinctly feel something that seemed like fingers or perhaps claws, sliding up his spine.

The sensation was all too real!

Not fake!

Especially Arthur's expression made the Police Chief realize that some terrifying entity must have set its sights on him.

Instantly, plea filled the Police Chief's eyes.

The young 'Spirit Medium' saw it, nodded slightly, and mouthed silently—

Crouch down!

Without hesitation, Westbron did just that, squatting down swiftly.

At the same time, the young 'Spirit Medium' grabbed fiercely.

Clang!

A noise as loud as the toll of a bell resonated in everyone's ears, and as everyone felt dizzy from the vibration, the young 'Spirit Medium' slowly asked—

"Tell me, why are you focusing on him?"

Chapter 262: Demonstration Within Flames!

When surprise flashed across Arthur's face, soon turning solemn, Westbron could no longer contain himself.

Because the sheriff of Mount Gale Town faintly felt something like a finger, yet also claw-like, approaching his neck.

"It wasn't me!"

"The disappearance of that caravan has nothing to do with me—I did have some thoughts about them at the time, but by the time I got there with my men, there was no one around!

Walker, Crick can vouch for me!"

With that, the sheriff looked towards the other two fourth-level police officers.

The two officers immediately nodded repeatedly, their eyes also filled with horror.

At this moment, as the Hand of Void was faintly closing in, they finally understood why Police Chief Westbron had wet himself.

Was this the revenant's revenge?

The speculation that surged in their hearts made the two officers promptly say,

"Right, when we arrived, there was no one there.

And the scene was very clean.

There were no signs of a struggle, no bloodstains."

The fourth-level officer who also acted as the coroner, Walker, said.

"Afterwards, I even took people to check around, and we didn't find anything, no drag marks, no footprints—it had just rained heavily, I remember it quite clearly," added Crick, another officer who also served as deputy chief.

Following this, patrol officers also started to speak.

In an exchange of words, they pieced together the 'disappearance' of the caravan three years ago for Arthur.

He observed their expressions closely.

Even without using Eagle Eye or Skillful in Observing, Arthur could confirm that these men weren't lying.

Under the threat of the Revenant's Revenge, these men would divulge even the color of their underwear.

As for everyone at the Mount Gale Town police station being involved in the incident three years ago?

Arthur wasn't surprised at all.

A merchant caravan that didn't stay in town and camped outside was seen as an easy target for everyone, yet this sheep was horned.

A group of 20 people would surely be armed, and wasn't something easily taken down.

And to take down this group, everyone from the Mount Gale Town police station would need to get moving.

Similarly, because such an opportunity was rare, it explained the rarity of the incident, so Arthur didn't specifically mention the caravan from three years ago but referred to it generally as a caravan instead.

What if the caravans kept disappearing?

Impossible.

If caravans were disappearing constantly, it wouldn't have been something a Mount Gale Town sheriff could cover up.

Considering how much the Earl of South Los valued tax revenue, he would've sent an 'Imperial Envoy' to investigate the matter long ago.

'The police station's involvement doesn't directly relate to the disappearance of the caravan, which means the disappearance could potentially be linked to Yumir Manor.

Combined with the three Spirit Mediums that died, along with the many years of Curse...

Things are starting to get interesting.'

Arthur thought to himself, yet his expression revealed nothing unusual.

Maintaining his seriousness, he commanded—

"Prepare the Salt Brick Oil Sword for me."

"Huh?"

Westbron looked baffled.

"Coarse salt, brick powder, kerosene, iron sword."

"The brick powder needs to be ground from prosperous red bricks, go quickly."

Arthur explained.

If one is to put on an act, they must do it thoroughly.

Moreover, this was also to buy him a little more time.

"Go stand guard at the entrance to the basement."

Arthur gave instructions to Simon, Hunter, and Newt.

Once everyone had left, Arthur controlled Fujin and flew towards "Yumir Manor" — Yumir Manor was not located in Mount Gale Town but 15 kilometers away from the town, halfway up the mountain, which required passing through a long, narrow ravine to reach.

But with Fujin's wings, naturally, it wasn't so troublesome.

A single flap of the wings, and they soared into the sky, then flew straight across the mountain ridge.

Utilizing Fujin's eyes, Arthur looked at the gap in the ravine, glanced at Yumir Manor halfway up the mountain, and felt secretly astonished.

This terrain was really easy to defend but difficult to attack.

Just ten people stationed at the entrance to this ravine would be enough; even a hundred men couldn't break through.

The ravine was too narrow; no matter how many came, they could only pass through shoulder to shoulder, two or three at a time.

And to cross over the ravine?

Impossible.

The continuous mountains made the surroundings incredibly steep.

Arthur clearly remembered that in the report Marinda had given him, "Yumir Manor" was built by Fritz for his wife, Yumir.

"Shouldn't he have chosen a beautiful environment to build in?

Why does it feel like he was constructing a military fortress?

Was it because of the wars at that time?"

Arthur thought to himself and had Fujin ascend higher.

Afterward, he confirmed his guess.

Looking down from above, aside from the ravine path that led into "Yumir Manor", there were hidden "sentry posts" on the surrounding walls — although camouflaged with moss and stone, they couldn't escape Fujin's sight.

Clearly, this place really was akin to a military fortress in its construction.

Then, Arthur suddenly remembered something —

After the Fritz Yumir couple passed away, since they had no heirs, "Yumir Manor" was inherited by a distant nephew, who met with misfortune while hiking.

"Could it be that the mountains he climbed were those surrounding 'Yumir Manor'?"

At this moment, Arthur began to harbor suspicions.

Fujin had already started circling around "Yumir Manor".

"Yumir Manor" was more dilapidated than expected; the outer wall of the main estate building was overgrown with vegetation, and the gate fence was full of rust. The place where there should have been a fountain was replaced by a large tree — judging from the look, Arthur was sure that there used to be a fountain here, but it broke down due to neglect over the years, and the subsequent owner had not repaired it but planted this large tree instead.

That was roughly the exterior appearance.

What it was like inside, Arthur had no way of knowing.

Moreover, after the incident involving the unexpected deaths of three "Spirit Mediums", he couldn't possibly allow Fujin to take the risk lightly — the fact that they possessed arcane artifacts was evidence

enough that these three "Spirit Mediums" were mystic side persons, and should be somewhat capable, yet they died so strangely within "Yumir Manor", which was an indication of the danger inside.

Arthur, having done a preliminary survey from the outside, began to control Fujin to return to Mount Gale Town.

On the way back, Arthur also saw the four youngsters he had encountered before.

The four young people walked briskly, chatting and laughing as they went.

The two men's bags now bore rabbits and pheasants.

The two women's baskets were also full of wild fruits and vegetables.

Clearly, the four had a decent harvest.

The joy of their haul made the returning group even happier.

With a glance, Arthur withdrew his gaze.

After instructing Fujin to be vigilant, Arthur's consciousness returned to the morgue in the police station's basement; he picked up the kerosene that had been brought earlier, ready to burn the "Cursed Objects" of the three "Spirit Mediums".

The kerosene poured out gurglingly.

When the match fell, the flames shot up instantly.

The flickering glow from the dancing flames made the young "Spirit Medium" squint.

Then, the young "Spirit Medium" thought of something —

Not right!

Not right!

That scene just now was wrong!

Chapter 263: The Unexpected Person!

Tree!

The banyan tree with a canopy so vast it could envelop the entire courtyard!

Arthur wasn't a botanist, but Old Charlie was.

According to the bits and pieces from Old Charlie's memory, even with suitable growing conditions, it would be impossible for a banyan tree to get that big!

Even a century-old banyan tree couldn't possibly reach forty or fifty meters in height!

Moreover, it is very rare for banyan trees to live that long.

One hundred years is the limit for most banyan trees, although there are occasional long-lived banyan trees, even so-called millennium banyan trees, but it is absolutely impossible for one to be within 'Yumir Manor'.

Because Yumir Manor wasn't even that old.

From the existence of a fountain pool, it's evident that this banyan tree was definitely transplanted after the estate was built.

It's very likely that it was planted by the third owner of 'Yumir Manor'.

If it was that distant nephew, even just for the sake of basic decency, he would have carefully repaired the fountain left by his aunt and uncle.

All these anomalies were telling Arthur one fact—

There was 'Mystic Side' power within 'Yumir Manor'!

To this, the young 'Spirit Medium' showed no surprise or panic; rather, the corners of his mouth turned up into a smile.

"Things are getting interesting!"

With that mutter to himself, Arthur fastened his own belt, concealed it with his coat, while his lapel pin was adorned on his vest.

The Seasoning Jar was easy to handle, he simply placed it into Atos's Box.

After completing these preparations, Arthur strode toward the ground floor.

Though these were already his belongings, in consideration of the feelings of the Mount Gale Town Police Chief and others, Arthur thoughtfully made some disguises.

No helping it, since he was a young, upright, innocent, and kind 'Spirit Medium', he had to treat every 'help seeker' gently.

"Consultant!"

At the doorway of the basement, Simon stood there diligently.

Hunter and Newt were both sitting in chairs with their eyes closed.

Upon seeing Arthur come out, both immediately sprang up with sheepish grins—Arthur didn't pay much attention to these details. He wasn't a nitpicker, and most importantly, these two were not his subordinates, nor would they ever become his direct subordinates.

The Mount Gale Town Police Chief burst through the door and came running out of his office.

His corpulent body once again displayed speed that didn't match his build.

"Consultant Sir!"

After a respectful greeting, the Police Chief spoke in hushed tones.

"Is everything resolved?"

"Hmm."

Arthur nodded and the Police Chief immediately sighed with relief—since changing his trousers, the Police Chief had been on tenterhooks, fearing some mishap.

Now all was well!

A smile appeared on the Police Chief's chubby face.

The surrounding officers and patrolmen also wore smiles of relief as if they had survived a catastrophe.

Arthur waited until all these smiles had emerged before he continued.

"However, the issue with the Curse has not been resolved."

Westbron was taken aback.

"What do you mean?"

The Police Chief asked, looking puzzled.

"The reason these Undead have appeared is because of the Curse of 'Yumir Manor.' Although they have gone far away, 'Yumir Manor' is still there!"

Arthur replied softly.

Hearing Arthur's explanation, Westbron's chubby face darkened, and his gaze unconsciously shifted to his two deputies; as their eyes met, a fierce determination appeared in all three.

"Consultant Sir, would Explosives work?"

The Police Chief asked in a low voice.

Facing Arthur, the consultant from South Los Shire District Police Station, who enjoyed first-class officer privileges, appointed by the Countess of South Los, and with paperwork signed by Police Chief Malz, Westbron was initially wary to some extent. However, when Arthur did not refuse to accept the two large gold notes from him, much of that resistance diminished, and the subsequent 'life-saving favor' made the Chief extremely grateful.

Now, facing this professional question, the Police Chief naturally sought earnest advice.

"They work!"

With enough Explosives to level 'Yumir Manor,' they would certainly be effective, but... the person who places the Explosives and lights the fuse, would be undoubtedly doomed!"

Arthur replied half-truthfully, half-falsely.

After the rise of gunpowder, the "Mystic Side" to a certain extent, had faded.

Especially some of the abilities held by those at the bottom of the Mystic Side, were not much more useful than firearms.

For example, Flame Arrows.

With gunpowder, such secret techniques looked almost like mere tricks.

But the "Mystic Side" remained the mainstream of this world.

Because those at the top of the "Mystic Side" still possessed absolute power.

Did "Yumir Manor" have such power?

Arthur didn't know.

But that didn't stop Arthur from deceiving the other party.

Moreover, just that mountain stream road, to transport enough explosives up there, it might indeed exhaust someone to death.

Listening to the first half of Arthur's words, the police chief's face lit up, but the second half made the chief tense up, and subconsciously, when the chief looked at his two deputies, both of them immediately turned their heads, and when he looked at the patrolling officers, their gazes were also averted.

"Worthless!"

"When was the cut less for you?"

Those damned fellows!"

Police Chief Westbron was inwardly cursing, already pondering how to deal with these bastards.

However, this did not affect the chief's respect towards Arthur.

"Your Excellency the Advisor, what should we do?"

"Go and get me all the documents related to 'Yumir Manor'—not only of the manor's builders, the Fritz Yumir couple but also of their nephew, the third owner, and the current owner's documents.

Especially the records of frequent occurrences of the curse after their nephew's death.

By the way, Westbron, do you know the third and current owners?"

As everyone got moving, Arthur asked the police chief.

"I know Lato. Twenty years ago, when this merchant came to Mount Gale Town, his generosity left a deep impression on me. I remember he fled from North County to South Los to avoid disaster, and was originally headed to Inner Bay, but when he passed through Mount Gale Town, by chance the second owner of 'Yumir Manor' had an incident, and he bought the manor—it's a person known for his benevolence and generosity, who during the Summer Celebration Day, would spend money to organize floats.

As for Baron?

I had very little contact; aside from the purchase of the manor, I never saw him again after he appeared once."

The police chief shared what he knew.

It wasn't much, but for Arthur, it was enough.

Arthur gestured to the side, and Simon immediately brought over some paper and pencils.

"Could you give me a detailed description of Lato and Baron?"

"Of course!"

Under the chief's description, Arthur sketched portraits of Lato and Baron.

Meanwhile, Wuni, also under Arthur's control, sketched the portraits in front of Malz.

"A person who came to South Los twenty years ago from North County to avoid disaster, such a person would be seen as 'easy prey' by those guys at the docks, especially if they were wealthy. It's impossible that no one remembers them. Take their portraits and ask around."

Wuni's voice echoed with Arthur's voice.

Even though the old sheriff knew of his partner's magic, he was still a bit astonished.

But it wouldn't delay matters.

"Leave it to me!"

The old sheriff said, picking up his long case and exiting the office, signaling Dico, Looney, and Andy to head with some men towards the Docklands.

The more miraculous Arthur was, the more the old sheriff believed in what Arthur said.

Now, even when sleeping at night, the old sheriff would cuddle his long case stuffed with his old buddies.

Of course, along with his 'chief'.

The little guy always made him happy.

Just like now, as the night in the Docklands carried a certain chill, but the little guy in his arms brought him warmth.

The old sheriff adjusted his coat so that 'chief's' head was completely visible, then wrapped up again tightly, ensuring the little guy was comfortable.

Afterward, the old sheriff stood in the chilly night wind, waiting patiently.

Soon enough, Dico came back with news.

This newly promoted officer ran back with Lato's portrait, a peculiar expression on his face—

"Chief, you'll never guess who this guy is!"

Chapter 264: Past Events!

The old sheriff looked at his subordinate surprisedly, knowing that Dico, with his steady and reliable demeanor, must have found an unexpectedly bizarre answer.

Suddenly, a look of curiosity appeared on the old sheriff's face.

"Who?"

"William!"

"Who?!"

Even with some mental preparation, the old sheriff's eyes widened involuntarily upon hearing the name, and he could not help but ask again without thinking.

And his voice even rose a notch.

It was not that the old sheriff was not calm enough, but rather that the name was too special, too familiar.

Just a few days ago, after learning of this name from Haite, the owner of Haite Furniture Store, he had been preoccupied with it.

Unfortunately, twenty years had passed.

With scarcely any information found.

"William!"

"The same William who robbed the 'White Wine Cup Number' twenty years ago, and along with Haite, Fornac, and Nack, massacred the Sank family?"

"I just asked the head of this area—before, when we asked him, he couldn't confirm, but now with this portrait, he directly affirmed, this man is William!"

As Dico spoke, an expression of 'how could this be such a coincidence' crossed his face.

"This is 'Destiny'!"

A faint voice arose from the dark.

"Advisor!"

Hearing this familiar voice, Dico immediately bowed respectfully, but then he realized something was amiss, as the advisor had gone to the Yumir Manor in the Mount Gale Region.

But the voice was unmistakably the advisor's.

Instinctively, the newly promoted officer looked up.

And then, he saw a...

Crow?!

Staring at the crow perched on top of the carriage, the newly promoted officer was stunned.

Then, he saw the crow speaking with the voice of his advisor, interacting with the sheriff until the crow melded into the night. Only then did the newly promoted officer realize—

"Sheriff, just now..."

"Stay calm! Stay calm!"

That was Arthur just now," said the old sheriff, soothing the excited Dico. Then he spoke in a lower voice.

"Haven't you realized, after all this, that the world we live in is far more complex and secretive than what we see and imagine?

On our own, forget about peeping into the truth of it all.

We might not even survive until tomorrow.

So, Dico, are you willing to move forward with me?"

The old sheriff asked Dico.

Bob would be arriving in South Los soon, but to rely on him alone to hold up the 'Daredevil Team' was unrealistic.

So, the old sheriff prepared to find a helper for his old friend.

And among those around him, no one was more suitable than Dico.

"Of course!"

Dico answered without hesitation.

The newly promoted officer clearly understood that everything he had now was because of the old sheriff's promotion.

Raised by his mother to be a grateful person, the newly promoted officer naturally took it all to heart.

And then there was what the old sheriff had said...

The recent events were just too bizarre,

With the string of deaths and those powers beyond the ordinary.

All of it seemed to portend, as if some grievous trouble was approaching, and to ensure the safety of his own family in such trouble, he would need enough power.

And as it happened, there was such a person at his side.

Advisor Arthur Kredos!

Clearly, the sheriff who had a similar premonition had already chosen the advisor.

What about him?

What hesitation could there be?

Watching Dico agree without hesitation, the old sheriff patted his subordinate's shoulder vigorously before his gaze turned towards the direction of the docks.

There, the warehouse belonging to 'Mr. Wu's Exchange' had already been put up for sale.

All,

was falling into place.

...

In the office of the Mount Gale Town police station, Arthur, holding Pendragon, showed a trace of surprise in his eyes.

The young 'Spirit Medium' spoke to others about the so-called 'Destiny', but in his heart, he didn't believe it at all.

Even more, he had started to suspect that the appearance of William might be a trap aimed at him.

Even though current clues yielded no leads, the young 'Spirit Medium' remained on high alert—

'After reaping enough benefits from the annihilation of the Sank family, William didn't dare to stay in South Los and, altering his appearance, rushed straight to Inner Bay.

However, upon reaching Mount Gale Town, he discovered an even more suitable place: 'Yumir Manor'.

Unfortunately, the manor already had an owner.

Yet, this was not a problem for William; he created an accident for that owner and fabricated the tale of a Curse, driving away anyone who might purchase the manor.

Then, as he wished, he acquired 'Yumir Manor' and devoted himself to studying the object he had taken from the Sank family.

Because of his research into this object, more deaths happened in the Mount Gale Region, all of which he attributed to the Curse.

In the end, this created the current situation.

Three years ago, his research bore new breakthroughs, and he chose a caravan to conduct an experiment.

The experiment was successful.

But such success also brought backlash.

His body underwent unspeakable deformities.

Thus, two years ago he 'died' and found a new owner for the manor, 'Baron'.

Sitting in his chair, Arthur flipped through the information about 'Lato' sent by Police Chief Westbron and began speculating about William's experiences after leaving South Los.

After confirming his identity, and combined with previous deeds and a relatively accurate timeline, such speculation was not challenging.

But one thing was especially intriguing to Arthur.

Those two invitation letters!

Clearly, both were the handiwork of that William.

They were intended to lure Old Charlie to 'Yumir Manor'!

'Old Charlie, what did you do to this guy back then? Twenty years have passed, and he still can't let go of you? You didn't swindle the thing he took from the Sank family from him, did you?

No, that's not it!

Given how much he cared about that item, it couldn't have been swindled away that easily, unless it was...

A book?

He perused the book's content under the guise of lifting the 'Curse', then memorized its content.'

With this thought, Arthur couldn't help but rub his temples.

He knew he was getting closer to the truth.

Memorizing a book or notes in a short time might be impossible for others, but Old Charlie could definitely do it—In Arthur's memory, Old Charlie's memorization skills were quite exceptional, even if the book or notes were written in secret language, Old Charlie could effortlessly memorize them after reading twice.

For example: Glyphic Language!

Naturally, such ability wasn't purely congenital; it was also due to acquired training.

'As a 'Spirit Medium', memory is key. Do you think I can rattle off the ladies' favorite food, perfumes, clothing, birthdays, the dates we met, and the latest fashion trends they're interested in? None of that is important; it's just incidental.'

Remembering the earnest way Old Charlie had said those words, Arthur smirked.

Just as expected of an old gentle(man) (rogue)'s training method.

'Grandpa, I really thank you!'

Arthur couldn't help but comment, his expression turning serious.

Three years ago, William had an accident because of his experiments.

Three years later, he invited not only Old Charlie but also three other 'Spirit Mediums', certainly not for a trivial pursuit, possibly to use the 'Spirit Mediums' power to resolve his body's deformities, or perhaps to test a new power!

Of course, it was most likely a combination of both.

And considering the death of those three 'Spirit Mediums', William likely succeeded.

This was naturally not good news for him.

However...

Isn't turning the tides precisely what 'Spirit Mediums' are best at?

Chapter 265 The Solution that Young 'Spirit Mediums' Would Like!

Rob of Mount Gale Town left the town with excitement and headed straight for "Yumir Manor".

Several days before, the generous owner of "Yumir Manor", Baron, had found him and paid 30 Suo as deposit for him to keep an eye on the carriages from South Los to see whether there was a "Mr. Kledos".

Moreover, he promised an additional reward of 50 Suo afterwards.

Therefore, when this "unemployed" from Mount Gale Town noticed a South Los carriage entering the town, he immediately started gathering information.

Even a police carriage couldn't deter this "unemployed" man's enthusiasm.

Finally, after some effort, he learned everything he wanted to know from a patrol officer's mouth.

Although it cost him 5 Suo, and the officer spoke ambiguously, he confirmed that Mr. Kledos had arrived in Mount Gale Town.

That was enough!

Rob hurried towards "Yumir Manor" with high spirits.

He knew that an unexpected income was in sight.

50 Suo?

No, no, no!

The identity of "Mr. Kledos" alone was worth 100 Suo!

Or perhaps...

200 Suo?

The heart aflame with greed, Rob quickened his pace, but it was already evening when this "unemployed" man left the town. By the time he crossed the stream and stepped into the land of "Yumir Manor", it was already dark.

Looking at the huge banyan tree, the "unemployed" from Mount Gale Town couldn't help but shrink his neck.

It wasn't his first time at "Yumir Manor".

But this was his first visit at night.

In daylight, the lush banyan tree was one thing; for some reason, it made him feel unsettled at night.

But the reward at hand and the thought of his own "extra reward" quickly pushed these feelings to the back of his mind, and he stood in place as instructed by the estate owner Baron and began to shout loudly—

"Baron? Baron?"

It's me, Rob!

I bring news of Mr. Kledos from South Los!"

His shouts traveled far in the night at "Yumir Manor".

In the "unemployed" man's field of vision, a light appeared in the distance, and then it approached swiftly.

That was Mr. Baron, holding a lantern.

But this Baron looked different from the one he remembered.

The Baron in his memory was always wearing a tall top hat, a suit, shirt, vest, and shiny shoes, and his cane even had a handsome bird's head on it.

He wasn't just well-dressed, but also very elegant in manners, speaking with the emphasis of a wealthy man.

And now this Baron?

Covered in mud, his messy hair draped over his shoulders, his eyes sunken, his face pale, and he was exuding a strange stench, like that of a pigsty.

'Did he fall into a pigsty?'

Rob wondered to himself.

But that didn't prevent the "unemployed" from informing his employer everything—

"Baron, Mr. Kledos has come..."

The "unemployed" man trailed off, expectantly eyeing his employer.

Thump!

The next moment, a pouch of money fell into his hands.

Immediately, the "unemployed" continued with a smile on his face.

"Mr. Kledos is at the town's police station, having arrived in a police carriage with patrol officers following him, clearly a significant figure!

It is not right for you to inquire about such a person.

However, as long as you pay me enough, I will keep my mouth shut."

As he spoke, the "unemployed" offered a grin to Baron before him.

This was Rob's "extra reward" to himself!

Who could refuse an "extra reward"?

No one!

Thump!

Another pouch of money was tossed over.

Rob caught it eagerly, feeling its heft and his face brightened with a smile, both for the coins inside the pouch and for Baron's promptness.

It was also a smile for the potential of more "extra rewards"!

After all, Baron's promptness meant he didn't take the money too seriously.

So asking for more a few times should be acceptable, right?

With that thought, the "unemployed" was about to speak again.

But upon looking up, something was obviously wrong.

Baron's pale face was now marred by bulging blue veins, and his mouth was panting foul-smelling breaths, not to mention his once fair teeth had turned yellow and black, and more importantly, the teeth had become sharp.

"Baron, you look a bit unwell, I'll be leaving now, and I'll visit you another time!"

With those words, the 'unemployed' began to slowly back away.

But it was too late.

Baron pounced on the 'unemployed,' starting to tear and bite frantically.

Amidst the flurry of coins, screams echoed continuously, and fresh blood sprayed in all directions.

By the time the screams subsided, Rob's body was already fragmentary, with even his head reduced to half.

Baron, still seemingly unsatisfied, was bound by the contract within, preventing him from feasting further, and he turned and ran towards 'Yumir Manor.'

It wasn't the run of human feet, but a gallop on all fours, like a wild beast.

He charged into 'Yumir Manor,' heading straight for the basement.

In the manor's basement, a huge stone sarcophagus was placed.

After growling twice in front of the sarcophagus, the lid slowly slid open, and a middle-aged man with a face full of pustules sat up from within.

It was vaguely possible to recognize the original features of William.

But the pustules made the current William countless times more hideous than the portraits.

"Kledos! Kledos!"

William roared.

He still remembered that day, after he had succeeded with the 'Sank family' and had just left Dort District, when a voice rose from behind him.

'Your Excellency, please wait.

You seem to be shrouded by misfortune!'

At that time, for some reason, he actually stopped.

Then...

William couldn't think further.

That experience of being deceived was too shameful!

A complete humiliation to him!

However, soon, he would wash away this humiliation!

William stepped out of the sarcophagus, first placing one side's four legs on the ground, before stepping out the other two legs.

He strode towards the upper floor.

By the time he reached the 'Yumir Manor' hall, more than forty monsters like Baron had already gathered there.

These were the minions he had created through so-called 'hunting' by use of the 'Curse.'

There were old people and children, men and women, hunters and farmers, and even entire merchant caravans.

Now—

It was time for them to take the stage!

"Go to the town and find that fellow called Kledos!

I allow you to feast freely!

I allow you to kill to your heart's content!"

William announced loudly.

If it were before, he would have been more cautious, but as he had completely finished the 'Ritual,' he was no longer the William of old.

The law that was once utterly terrifying to him now seemed like mere paper.

Now, he wanted to declare his coming to the world.

"Roar! Roar! Roar!"

The monsters howled to the sky.

William, with a sinister smile, seemed to hear a different sound and involuntarily looked up.

There was the manor's roof!

All seemed normal, as if nothing was amiss.

But, the next moment—

Boom!

With a dull whoosh, something heavy smashed through the roof, and a huge wooden crate fell in.

The crate shattered upon impact, revealing the explosives and nails inside.

The explosives were bundled together and already lit.

The nails were plentiful and had been coated with poisons.

Upon witnessing this scene, William's sinister smile froze on his face.

He was about to say something, but the fuse had already burnt to its end—

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Chapter 266: He's Not Just Deceiving Humans, but Monsters Too!

In the midst of a giant roar, waves of flame rolled up in all directions, and the violent shockwave, carrying iron nails rusted and soaked with manure, struck the surroundings like arrows fired from a strong bow.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

Thud, thud, thud!

More than forty monsters fell to the ground like wheat harvested by a scythe, one swath after another.

William himself, in the explosion, lost both legs and an eye.

The only remaining eye stared at the crow that seemed to merge with the night sky, filled with hatred and resentment, and his roaring voice echoed in the collapsing great hall of Yumir Manor.

"Ahhh!

I'll kill you!

I'll kill you!"

With every roar, William took a step forward, and with each step, the blood and flesh of the monsters on the ground merged into his body. When the roaring stopped, William had once again become a figure with six legs and a face full of pustules, and he even leapt into the air.

His speed was fast, but Fujin was faster, climbing rapidly to widen the distance between them.

However, a sneer emerged in William's eyes.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

One after another, flesh buds sprouted from William's pustule-ridden face, swelling with the wind like squeezed whiteheads, forming white tentacles that reached for Fujin.

In an instant, it enveloped Fujin like a net.

William's eyes already showed intense cruelty.

He wanted to tear this crow to shreds!

No!

Better to grind it to dust!

Bit by bit, to crush every muscle, bone, and organ, then swallow it all in one gulp.

Otherwise, how could he quench his deep-seated hatred?

The minions he just lost were the result of over a decade of accumulation, all destroyed by a chest of explosives and iron nails.

Even he nearly got injured.

The angrier William became, the more inhuman howls came from his mouth.

This sound, no longer human, had become beastly.

But a faint voice pierced through his howling—

"Sectumsempra!"

In that indifferent voice, a sharpness crossed William's neck.

Splash!

Thick, dark fresh blood sprayed out, and William's severed head saw a figure approaching him through the air.

The figure was unhurried, moving with the ease of a night breeze over a field, his expression indifferent, his black eyes carrying a hint of compassion.

That face!

Those eyes!

Especially that aura!

Familiar! All too familiar!

"Kledos!"

William's head roared the name of the man who had deceived him.

Although the man before him was not that man, he must be related to him.

"My grandfather once told me he gave a man a chance to start anew—because that man had exceptional Talent and a stubborn streak of kindness in his heart...

But I think he would be disappointed by what he sees now?"

Arthur, performing the secret technique "Silent Successive Steps" on the "Hand of Void" to execute a levitating traversal, spoke slowly in a detached tone.

"Bluff" flickered wildly, and the resignation and regret that suffused his words stunned the head of William as it fell to the ground.

Immediately, William roared again.

"Your grandfather was nothing but a..."

His words abruptly ceased as the invisible and silent "Tyr's Caress," wielded with a wave of the "Hand of Void," achieved the true meaning of 'Sectumsempra.'

It easily swept past the head, and William's head was split in two from the brow.

But William did not die.

Under Arthur's gaze, the severed head and body fused back together again.

Though the process was swift, Arthur did not intervene, his face showing even more compassion, causing the recovering William to grow uncertain.

Could it be that I was wrong back then?

Did he deceive me to give me a chance?

If not, he could have continued to attack, so why did he stop?

Could it be that he can't attack while in the air?

Impossible!

The unheard-of secret technique 'Sectumsempra' left him utterly defenseless.

So...

Is he admonishing me?

Watching Arthur descend from the sky, bathed in the night breeze, godlike, William retreated again and again, his eyes filled with pus and doubt.

However, this did not prevent William from running towards the giant banyan tree.

This banyan tree was his trump card!

It was his real ace in the hole!

As William ran, he looked back.

Arthur stood there watching him, motionless, and the pity in his eyes deepened.

Could I really be mistaken?

Suddenly, such a thought appeared in the depths of William's heart.

Originally, he had reluctantly boarded the pirate ship due to the aftermath of the "Seven Years' War," a mere innkeeper's son with an untarnished reputation, whose biggest dream was to own his restaurant in a major city. But why had he become what he was later on?

William could no longer remember.

The dual backlash from arcane rituals and secret techniques had long since twisted and scattered his consciousness.

Such memories were immediately diluted by his brutal impulses!

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

William roared as he charged into the tree hollow beneath the banyan tree—a hollow only he could open.

The next moment—

Thunderous booms!

The earth shook and the mountains trembled!

The banyan tree, fifty meters tall, rose from the ground, its canopy swinging as leaves and branches flew off, transforming into huge arms. A face that bore a striking resemblance to William appeared on the trunk.

"Awoo!"

Neither human nor beast, that unique howl echoed as the treant William swung an arm as thick as a carriage towards Arthur.

Even before the massive arm truly fell, the wind it kicked up billowed Arthur's coat and hair.

The double-breasted black coat rustled loudly.

Yet beneath strands of hair, his eyes were undisturbed and calm.

Only the right hand of the young "Spirit Medium" was painting in the air, his mouth lightly chanting—

"Towers of endless night crisscross, flesh and bones curl backward in defiance, radiant glory reigns over the earth, cease steps with faded colors, ashes burn and sear!!"

The rhythmic chant ignited a spark.

A blaze arrow shot out from the young "Spirit Medium's" fingertips.

The gigantic banyan treant, sensing the meager power above, let out a scoff unique to itself, even though the rationality of its human past warned it that something was amiss.

But the treant in front of him paid it no heed.

Its massive body brought terrifying strength.

Such power once again inflated William's distorted pride.

He had successfully transformed from him into it.

"Awoo!"

Another howl, it swung down harder, but the flame arrow touched its body first; as expected, not even scratching it.

However, the splattering sparks ignited...

Oil!

And explosives!

The next moment—

Boom!

The huge banyan tree was instantly engulfed in flames, followed by a series of explosions.

The fireworks-like reflection was mirrored in the calm, black eyes, casting a shining brilliance in them.

The great tree fell.

Collapsing faster than it had risen.

Countless burning branches and leaves brushed past the young "Spirit Medium" as he stepped by.

A distance away, Simon, Hunter, Newt, and Westbron watched the scene in stunned silence.

They etched this moment deep into their hearts, never to forget how a young "Spirit Medium" with a gesture extinguished a mountainous beast.

But where they could not see, an invisible hand had already picked up an iron box.

All they saw was the young "Spirit Medium" walking up to the core of the treant, where the scorched figure of William lay, pausing in place for a good three to four seconds before he sighed and asked—

"Do you still remember your original dream?"

The struggling William froze.

A dream?

My original dream?

My original dream was to own my restaurant in a big city!

But, why did it turn out like this?

What have I done?

The collision between his twisted, scattered will and his original memories had only one outcome...

Collapse!

A double collapse of soul and body.

In his final moments, William trembled as he asked.

"Master, do you think there's still a chance for me?"

Chapter 267: I, Whom You Regard as a Deity, Cooperate Smoothly!

Power is precious.

Power is dangerous.

This phrase, which originated from the Empire and spread within the "Mystic Side," was universally acknowledged by all "Mystic Side Persons," especially those who had experienced backlash, who understood it deeply.

Unlike physical damage to the body, the harm done by "Mystic Side" power often begins with the distortion of the spirit and will, and from there, the body warps.

And the end?

It is naturally death.

The only difference lies in the extent of pain experienced at the time of death.

Spirituality, rituals, secret techniques—any error in these could lead to such consequences.

Arthur was not sure where William had gone wrong.

But Arthur was sure that William had suffered extreme backlash, his spirit and will already twisted, even his memories showing discrepancies!

However, following the distortion, the vast 'Aura of Death' that William contained gave Arthur some new ideas.

So, from the very first glance, the young 'Spirit Medium' had a complete plan in mind, slightly modified—built upon his understanding of William, the deliberate leak of Mount Gale Town patrol's movements, and the original two 'Strong Attacks.'

Effect?

It was naturally not bad.

Looking at William who was trembling and inquiring of him.

Arthur maintained a faint look of pity.

Having acted up to this point, of course, he would play out the whole set—

The young 'Spirit Medium' first shook his head, then nodded slightly.

Then, he lifted his left hand and raised his index finger towards William.

No words were spoken.

Yet, it said more than a thousand words could.

William, who was exhaling more than he was inhaling, revealed a look of helplessness and despair in his eyes upon seeing the young 'Spirit Medium' shake his head, but the subsequent nod made him hesitate, and when the young 'Spirit Medium' raised his finger, William's eyes filled with ecstatic joy.

He had only one chance!

No!

He still had one chance!

Sure enough, twenty years ago, Lord Charlie, who had glimpsed the pages of the 'Book of Death,' had already foreseen everything that was happening today.

That's why his descendant appeared before him now.

"Master, may I ask your name?"

With death approaching, the pustules on William's face began to vanish, revealing a slightly aged but ordinary visage.

At this moment, although William's complexion turned ghostly pale, his words became coherent, and he struggled to his feet, tidying his ragged clothes and combing back his disheveled hair with his hands.

This would be the last moment of his life.

Knowing this, William wished to present himself with as much dignity as possible.

After doing all this, William looked once more at the young 'Spirit Medium.'

"Arthur Kredos."

The young 'Spirit Medium' divulged his name to the other party.

Standing there, William muttered the name softly, then knelt on one knee before the young 'Spirit Medium,' loudly proclaiming—

"I pledge my allegiance to you with my soul, your desires are my thoughts, your gaze determines the purpose of my life."

Specks representing spirituality sparkled like fireflies emerging from William's head.

Along with them came a dense, black 'Aura of Death'—different from the purity of the 'Death Poetry Society,' William's 'Aura of Death' was more complex, but also more substantial.

The blackness was only the size of a fist when it first appeared.

Quickly, in a single breath, it grew to the size of a house.

It soon surpassed the width of the original banyan tree canopy.

Then, it enveloped the entire manor overhead, like a lid covering the entire hillside.

Deep and dark.

Death Qi spread throughout.

Stars and the moon were all shielded away, leaving only the mournful howl and serene quietude that belonged solely to death.

The moment this contradictory sensation appeared, Simon, who had been struggling against the "Aura of Death," could hold on no longer and fell straight to the ground.

Hunter and Newt, who had collapsed to the ground the instant the "Aura of Death" manifested, turned deathly pale and trembled all over.

An uncontrollable trembling.

It stemmed from a creature's innate defiance of death.

As for the party of Police Chief Westbron of Mount Gale Town?

They lay limp on the ground, long since having soiled themselves.

It wasn't that they didn't wish to faint.

But that they couldn't faint.

The despair woven from wails and tranquility was about to torture them in the most cruel way imaginable.

Those who had fallen to the ground could clearly see above their heads, that the pitch-blackness which seemed ready to devour everything began to churn as if it were clouds on the cusp of a storm. Yet, there was no sound of wind nor flash of lightning; everything happened in silence. By the time they realized it, a massive black skeleton had already reached out from the cloud cover that was like dark clouds.

Whoosh!

The skeleton's bony right hand was inserted around William, its risen back and five fingers forming a cage, binding William within. The skeleton's bony left hand was raised high, stirring the cloud of deathly qi, while its slightly parted jaws seemed to issue a silent mockery to all living beings there. From deep within its eye sockets, streams of "Aura of Death" spilled out, devouring the life force of everything around it.

But this was an unconscious act. When the giant black skeleton, which was half-protruding with the size of a hundred meters, twisted its neck, the "Aura of Death" from deep in its eye sockets fell like a waterfall, crashing brutally to the ground.

At once, everyone's eyes went wide.

Simon did too.

However, it wasn't out of worry; the apprentice policeman was confident in his advisor.

But the scene that unfolded the next moment left the apprentice policeman utterly stunned.

The "Aura of Death" vanished.

Like a waterfall being cut off, the "Aura of Death" disappeared into thin air.

Only Arthur stood there, composed, not moving an inch.

'Truly worthy of an advisor!'

Though the apprentice policeman was confident in his own advisor, he had not expected such a scene and immediately looked at his advisor with nothing but admiration in his eyes.

The rest were all in disbelief.

And Arthur, the focus of everyone's attention, was a bit perplexed.

Not about the appearance of the "Aura of Death."

He had anticipated that.

The moment he saw William, he sensed it.

What baffled him was William's "contract."

What had he done?

Hadn't he just been simply bluffing the other party, how come the other party was now willing to pledge himself fully to him?

Hadn't he just shaken his head, then nodded, and also raised a finger?

Did that have any meaning?

No significance at all!

Hadn't he just gone along with the other party?

How could the other party have derived some insight from it?

His mind raced, but Arthur, who had the professional demeanor of a Spirit Medium, didn't show the slightest hint on his face. He quietly raised his head to look at the gigantic black skeleton and let out a faint sigh.

Yet the black skeleton roared.

In its silent roar, the black skeleton pulled out its left hand that stirred the cloud of Death Qi and smashed fiercely towards Arthur.

It wanted to make this being understand the majesty of death.

It wanted to make this being understand the pain of death.

It wanted to make this being understand the despair of death.

And then...

It disappeared.

Chapter 268: The Mutant's Distorted Faith!

The vast black skeleton vanished the moment it touched Arthur, disappearing without a trace with its unique Aura of Death.

The whole process was as if it had been reduced to ashes and smoke.

It left everyone watching dumbfounded.

They could not understand why this was so.

Just as they could not understand why people are born different from one another.

Or perhaps...

The gap between people is even greater than that between a person and a dog.

And death and death?

There are indeed ranks that cannot be crossed.

If the difference between a person and a dog is still within this world, then crossing these ranks is a difference on a world scale—only by entering this world can one understand how it differs from the original world.

But none of that mattered anymore.

The cloud formed by the Aura of Death had dispersed.

The unique oppressive power of death had completely disappeared.

Simon, Hunter, and Newt all stood up again, looking at Arthur with faces full of reverence.

The Police Chief from the Mount Gale Region, Westbron, shook his moist pants but felt no embarrassment.

After all, if everyone familiar urinated, it was as if no one had.

And having lost the restraint of the Aura of Death, the four extra legs on William dropped from his body, turning into decayed bones and then vanishing without a trace.

At this moment, William on his knees had completely turned into a person.

At least, that was how it appeared on the surface.

But Arthur knew that the distorted William had not recovered; on the contrary, his level of distortion had deepened.

The danger of the Mystic Side lies precisely in this.

Once a mutant appears, there is no healing.

Any so-called healing will only deepen the mutation.

Even if they look normal on the outside, their insides have long become "different from others"!

More importantly, the distorted people never realize this. They only think they are normal and it is those around them who are not.

Just like William at this moment.

He looked at Arthur with a face full of devotion, as if looking at a god of his faith, his Spiritual Light prostrating at Arthur's feet.

Arthur only needed a light touch to gain a free and useful slave.

But Arthur did not do so; he just looked at William with pity.

William was moved to tears by Arthur's kindness and benevolence. He knew Arthur did not want to strip away his freedom, but what else could he offer Arthur in return?

Furthermore, only with Arthur could he find redemption.

Only by acting on Arthur's will could he feel at peace.

William bowed his head earnestly and said—

"Young master, you are the unchanging faith of my life!"

The kindness of Old Charlie before him made William choose to address Arthur respectfully as the young master.

Arthur did not care about such a title.

You cannot reason with a madman.

Similarly, you cannot understand the heart of a mutant.

Upon confirming the purity of the Spirituality, without any trickery, Arthur leaned over and lightly touched the Spiritual Light that belonged to William. The moment the depths of his heart bore all that belonged to William, even deciding life and death in an instant, Arthur raised his hand and helped William up.

William immediately burst into tears.

Such a merciful young master.

Such a kind young master.

To follow such a merciful and kind young master, what virtues and abilities do I have?

Such a me is so humble and unfortunate!

Such a me can only bring trouble to the young master!

Moreover, the young master also said that I still have one more chance!

I must cherish this opportunity!

Thinking this, William no longer hesitated.

He stood in front of Arthur and said solemnly—

"Young Master, please wait for me a bit; I will come to you after I complete the 'Lich Rebirth' ritual!"

Amid his words, William knelt on one knee again, feeling guilty for leaving Arthur's side, but the greater his guilt, the more urgent he became, and the more urgent he became, the more persistent he became; and the more persistent, the purer his intention became.

When his purity reached its peak, William incredibly ignited the 'Soul Fire'.

The white flames consumed William's body.

To William, the immense pain that ordinary people couldn't bear was trivial.

Could any pain compare to the agony of being away from his young master?

"Consider this a consolation for our parting!"

Thinking this, William looked at Arthur for the last time.

When he saw his young master looking at him with concern and full of encouragement, in that moment, everything seemed worthwhile.

Whoosh!

The 'Soul Fire' burned even more vigorously.

"Please wait for me!"

After William spoke for the last time, his entire being disappeared without a trace in the burning 'Soul Fire'.

Meanwhile, far in the constantly snow-covered area of North County, in a certain tomb, anomalies began to occur.

A radiant light spilled from the bronze coffin.

It was dazzling but not blinding.

Just like the 'Soul Fire'.

The burning continued for a full ten minutes, and when the 'Soul Fire' vanished, someone pushed open the bronze coffin from the inside, and William sat up from the coffin.

Without any hesitation, William leapt up.

He wanted to return to South County, to South Los, to be by his master's side.

But as soon as he steadied himself, he suddenly realized something was wrong.

He found he couldn't speak, and his skin was incredibly shriveled. The next moment, he picked up the mirror arranged for the burial and immediately saw a horrifying face with exposed eyeballs.

This?! William was shocked.

Upon further examination, his 'Lich Rebirth' ritual was successful, but not entirely. Lacking the 'Aura of Death' he had gathered for twenty years, he was now only a Half Lich.

But William held no resentment toward Arthur.

Because he knew very well, if it weren't for his young master's help in dispelling that Death Qi, he wouldn't have been able to conduct the 'Lich Rebirth' ritual at all.

Let alone discussing success or failure.

Being successful by half, as he was now, was already a tremendous achievement.

But making a Half Lich like himself appear normal was troublesome.

Yet, for the sake of standing proudly beside his young master, what were these troubles really?

'Methods to restore a Half Lich's body... Transform the remaining half into a Corpse Ghoul!'

William's brain quickly settled on a method.

It wasn't the most convenient of all methods, nor the quickest.

It was even the most troublesome.

But it was also the most powerful.

As a follower of the young master, being powerful was essential.

Moreover, the young master's kindness and compassion would surely not wish to see him choose any bloody paths.

"Young Master, please wait a little longer for me!"

Using spirituality, assisted by a contract, William began to take rapid action.

Arthur received the message instantly.

'Lich Rebirth', 'Corpse Ghoul Rebirth'... What exactly did William receive from the 'Sank family' back then!'

Arthur thought to himself but didn't immediately take out the iron box he had gotten from William on the battlefield from 'Atos's Box'.

Instead, using the 'Hand of Void', he placed the core of the Banyan Giant, a fist-sized core, into 'Atos's Box' and motioned for Simon and the others to start cleaning the estate courtyard battlefield. Only then did he walk into the largely collapsed estate main building and let the 'Hand of Void' take out that iron box.

The iron box wasn't locked, but had a clasp.

After verifying there were no issues, he continued to let the 'Hand of Void' lift the clasp.

Immediately, a visibly damaged book caught his eye, and clear on its cover, written in 'Glyphic Language', were four large characters—

Book of Death!

Chapter 269: Notes and Books!

The match scraped across the sandpaper.

Hiss!

Ignited by the heat from the friction with the sandpaper, the match burst fully into flame. Arthur, holding the match, lit the Vigilance Oil Lamp, its range of illumination brighter than that of a standard lamp, allowing him to better discern the books within the iron box.

'Book of Death', two notebooks.

One of the 'Book of Death' was fragmentary—just five pages when including the cover with no signs of tearing. Just five pages!

Arthur was certain that this incomplete 'Book of Death' was transcribed—upon first sighting the words 'Book of Death', his innate sense from 'Spirituality' and 'Breath of Death' told him that the 'Book of Death' was not supposed to be like this.

Then, Arthur examined the paper and ink.

The yellowing paper and dim ink all indicated to Arthur that they were old, but definitely not fifty years old nor to mention a century.

If it really had been from that era, the paper made from a mix of mulberry bark and jute would have been extremely brittle, crumbling to the touch.

Of course, the ultimate confirmation of transcription was the handwriting inside the 'Book of Death' itself.

Messy!

Exceptionally messy!

And trembling at the beginning!

Just by looking at such handwriting, Arthur felt as if he could see someone hurriedly copying it.

Moreover, in a manner...

Not meant to see the light of day!

Arthur quickly confirmed his conjecture through the other two notebooks.

Two notebooks—one was William's own, the other came from an elder of the Sank family—

I know I shouldn't do this!

But this is the legendary 'Book of Death'!

The rumored 'Book of Death' which could complete the 'God Ascension Steps'!

By ascending the ten steps and becoming 'Death', all those dead friends and family members can be resurrected!

...

I, Langfellow, and Gilbert all made the same choice.

I won't blame them.

Nor will they blame me.

Our relationship has grown closer.

...

The 'Book of Death' is truly magnificent!

By borrowing just a fraction of its power, I saw my deceased father. Yet he was very silent. I know he was angry, believing I'd dishonored the 'Hunter' heritage, but I just wanted to see him. What's wrong with that?

I am not wrong!

I am the one in the right!

...

Langfellow saw his mother.

Gilbert saw his master.

That night, we drank ourselves into oblivion.

...

A brief reunion is not enough; we needed to bring our loved ones back to our side forever.

There are such techniques in the 'Book of Death'—quite profound techniques, but...

Why is it missing the most fundamental and crucial part?

It lacks the initial 'Ritual'!

Without the 'Aura of Death', we simply cannot mobilize the 'Power of Death' to perform such secret techniques. Is this some kind of joke from 'Death'?

...

I, Langfellow, and Gilbert talked it over all night.

Ultimately, we decided to join the ranks of the Witch Hunters.

Without the initial 'Ritual', we took it upon ourselves to hunt for the 'Aura of Death', to harness the 'Power of Death'!

...

Coming from 'Hunter' families, the three of us quickly made a name for ourselves in a series of witch hunting operations.

Warlock after warlock, witch, and vile creature were sent to the burning stake by us.

Being able to collect 'Aura of Death' and hunt down these vile beings was truly satisfying.

Using my knowledge as a 'Hunter' combined with the knowledge from the 'Book of Death', I created a small secret technique 'Pit of Death' to store the collected Death Qi.

Langfellow and Gilbert were amazed at my talent.

I played it off as nothing, but deep down felt somewhat proud.

...

We received news.

The remnants of the 'Tower of Mist' were active in 'Andrzej Town'.

The three of us packed and set off.

...

Damn!

It was a trap; we were betrayed by the nobles of North County.

I killed that bastard noble and his entourage.

The target was also taken care of, but Langfellow died, and Gilbert lost his right hand.

I got away unscathed, but something was off with my mental state. While resting at the camp—before my eyes kept appearing the chief of the 'Tower of Mist' from 'Andrzej Town', ceaselessly screaming at us.

She called us 'thieves'.

Saying we stole the 'Sacred Relic' of the 'Tower of Mist'.

...

Gilbert and I used the collected 'Aura of Death' to invoke the 'Power of Death' and resurrected Langfellow with the resurrection secret technique.

However, probably due to the impurity of the 'Power of Death', Langfellow was a bit dull.

Still, we tested him with 'Salt Brick Oil Sword' and confirmed that Langfellow was truly himself.

A few days later, Langfellow returned to normal.

Gilbert fitted his right hand with a hook, and we teased him together for looking like a pirate.

...

That minor noble's death was discovered by the remaining nobles of North County, and we were wanted, but 'Hunter' companions helped us safely arrive in South County. Here, the 'Hunter' friends warmly welcomed us.

But Langfellow began to fall ill.

He became so weak that he could not even lift a longsword, needing support to walk.

Gilbert and I treated him with a continuous stream of 'Aura of Death', and though he improved, the condition could only be maintained for a week before requiring even more 'Aura of Death'.

We continued to hunt down evil entities.

At the same time, we sought help from the local 'Hunters'.

...

A month later, 'Hunter' companions brought us news, 'Cat Faction.Black' should be able to help us.

With Langfellow in tow, we headed to 'Mountain of Cats' to seek out the current 'Black Cat'.

...

Tch, are all cats this aloof?

But their strength is truly formidable.

...

Can cats also see through lies?

Alright, I admit I was wrong.

...

I recounted everything to Gilbert and promised to lend the Book of Death for their perusal.

Then, that cat proudly rejected the Book of Death.

"Cats, do not need such inconvenient objects!"

To this day, I still remember how that guy crossed his arms and stood with an air of arrogance.

Although I really wanted to hit him, I truly couldn't beat him—how could a person be so powerful?

...

That guy treated Langfellow, dispelling the mixed feelings within the Aura of Death, but Langfellow was still very weak. That guy suggested we go to the Valley of Cats to find the current Orange Cat.

We set out again, driving away evil creatures as we went on our way.

But the Valley of Cats was already deserted.

The Cliff of Cats, the Forest of Cats—there were no traces of any Cat Faction Member anywhere.

Could it be that they have returned to the legendary Cave of Cats?

...

While we were puzzled, we heard rumors that that guy was being surrounded and attacked by a coalition of noble forces from both South County and North County.

We sped on horseback towards the Mountain of Cats.

There he stood.

There were already seventy-four corpses on the ground, yet there were even more people around.

I tried to use the power of the Book of Death to take that guy away.

But he refused.

"Cats, do not walk in embarrassment."

Carrying his last words, that cat charged into the enemy, swinging its Cat Claws, dodging and leaping, killing hundreds with one against many.

I had to do something.

Those bastards, I had to do something.

...

Hah, the Blood Marquis?

Blood and death are meant to dance together, so let you experience the erosion of the Aura of Death.

I chose to strike at the most conspicuous person among the attackers.

They were eroded by the overwhelming Aura of Death.

And we revealed our whereabouts.

But we didn't care.

A bunch of scum.

...

After being chased for four months, we finally shook off our pursuers. We've been very silent in the past few days; none of us spoke, but we all reminisced about that guy.

The evil beings we hunted, were they really evil?

If they were really evil, why would that guy be hunted down?

That guy was only arrogant but kind-hearted.

...

We began to investigate the truth of the matter.

...

Hah, the truth is so cruel.

...

Langfellow chose death.

Gilbert went to sea.

And I chose to guard this Book of Death.

The initial purpose?

It doesn't matter anymore.

...

Hah, Sank from the Sank family?

Good for him, turns out I'm his uncle.

In the end, after refusing to make copies, that blade was really ruthless.

Just a replica of The First Blade had caused me such an injury?

Truly terrifying!

Maybe this is the retribution for my misuse of the Book of Death.

I hope that guy didn't transcribe too much.

I can no longer stop it.

The only consolation is that the Book of Death won't fall into others' hands with my death, at least temporarily.

...

The notes ended abruptly there, and Arthur, stroking his chin, had roughly reconstructed the circumstances—Sank from the Sank family must have learned from somewhere that the owner of the notes had the Book of Death and wanted to make copies.

After being refused, he immediately took action.

He killed the owner of the notes with his trump card.

Then, Sank found that as the note's owner died, the Book of Death also began to disappear, leaving him only enough time to hurriedly transcribe, including the cover, only five pages.

Afterward?

That was when Sank, with the Sank family, fled North County, and on the ship, encountered William.

Of course, there were details Arthur didn't know, just as he couldn't guess there was any interaction between the note's owner and 'Cat Faction.Black.'

Furthermore, he even launched a surprise attack on the Blood Marquis for 'Cat Faction.Black.'

This also caused Bern's misunderstanding. With his bloodline and having been tainted with the true Aura of the Book of Death, the youngest member of the Blood Clan took the Sank family as an enemy.

"Destiny," Arthur muttered under his breath, but deep inside, he was filled with even greater doubts.

What truth did the three 'Hunters' ultimately investigate?

Why did it shatter the convictions of the three 'Hunters'?

"Could it be related to the Book of Death?

Or was it all a 'trick' from the beginning?

It should have nothing to do with Old Charlie, who during the 'witch hunting,' the Seven Years' War, to be safe, was tailoring for the ladies in Inner Bay.

Only after the Seven Years' War did he move to South Los.

He then acted under the title of 'Spirit Medium' again. With Old Charlie's caution, it probably took ten years... hiss, it can't be that his first job upon reopening was with William?"

Thinking of this made Arthur gasp.

He no longer knew whether to say William was lucky or unlucky.

But as a 'Spirit Medium,' his luck should not be bad.

Arthur picked up the transcribed Book of Death and William's notes, flipped briefly through William's notes to confirm that it was just research on the Book of Death, which had many mistakes and omissions, then Arthur abandoned these notes and began to prepare to focus on reading the Book of Death.

However, just as he was about to open the cover, he suddenly thought of something.

In an instant, the young 'Spirit Medium's' complexion turned ugly, and he muttered softly to himself—

"No way?"

Chapter 270: Technique of Death!

The orange light shone on the old pages, creating an extremely gentle sensation that comforted the soul of those who saw it.

Yet, as Arthur stared at the messy, hastily written handwriting, his brows were tightly furrowed.

Because the young 'Spirit Medium' had thought of a crucial matter.

That was...

Did Old Charlie understand Glyphic Language?

Having bluffed the fragment of the 'Book of Death' from William, it wouldn't have been difficult to bluff that notebook from him too. Considering the contents of the notebook, could Old Charlie remain indifferent?

He would not.

In Arthur's memory, Old Charlie had always been an elderly man with insatiable curiosity, his daily schedule extremely tight and reasonable, as if he never tired.

Moreover, even if to maintain the demeanor of a 'Spirit Medium', Old Charlie hadn't bluffed the notebook from William, the particularity of Glyphic Language and its lack of impact on Old Charlie over the years were telling enough.

Thus, from the current situation, it seemed that Old Charlie probably understood Glyphic Language!

Good, it was now almost certain that Old Charlie knew the Glyphic Language.

Then...

Did Drake know?

Did Cassandra know?

Did the missing Winters know?

Did his deceased parents know?

Thinking about the gravity Marinda unintentionally mentioned regarding the so-called 'Demon lurking at Beck farm', the family should probably understand, shouldn't they?

'So, is it truly just me who is a muggle in the family?

And moreover, the whole family has been playing me!

Fine, fine, fine, so this is how you play, huh?'

Having come to this conclusion, Arthur couldn't help but rub his swelling temples.

However, the young 'Spirit Medium', although sarcastic, bore no resentment— the affairs of the 'Blood Marquis' family were still clear in his mind, and Arthur understood Old Charlie and the others' concerns quite well.

Even the powerful 'Bloodline Clan' couldn't escape their fate, let alone the modest Kledos family.

Logically, even if Old Charlie exhausted all his efforts to help him, it would probably still be difficult for him to touch the 'Mystery'.

Of course, that was under normal circumstances.

But now?

Seeing what he had become, Old Charlie would most likely be dumbfounded; Arthur was now a bona fide 'Mystic Side Person' and had even been rumored to be an 'Entrant'.

'Hey, just you wait!

I'll give you a fright when we meet!'

Just thinking about Old Charlie's shocked and incredulous expression filled Arthur with anticipation.

Of course, Arthur was never worried that Old Charlie would detect something off about him.

Not to mention he possessed the complete memories of his former life, the Level 6 "Bluff" alone gave him confidence – if Level 6 wasn't enough, then escalate to Level 7.

Still not enough?

Then just level up a couple more times.

And as for Drake and Cassandra?

'Hmph, I must show you that I'm the finest lad in the Kledos family!'

Arthur thought to himself, sitting in the corner.

Subsequently, the young Spirit Medium took a deep breath and opened the fragmentary 'Book of Death'.

This incomplete 'Book of Death,' including its cover, which was only five pages long, was remarkably complicated and mystical—its owner, William had mentioned it to varying extents in his notes, hence Arthur was prepared for a meticulous and slow deciphering process.

However, while looking at the copied Glyphic Language, Arthur felt no difficulty whatsoever.

On the contrary, not only could he read through it effortlessly, he could also easily understand its meaning—

Page one, Deathly Fire.

Page two, Death Qi Slash.

Page three, Control Corpse.

Page four, Minor Curse Technique.

By the time Arthur had finished flipping through, the text in front of him flickered even more.

[Technique of Death: You've come in contact with some applications of "Death Qi", and the "Power of Death" it constructs is far too simple for you, who possesses the "Breath of Death" talent. It's as if these skills are innate to you, as simple as eating and drinking—death, to you, has never been worth fearing.]

[Deathly Fire: A special flame formed by outlining pure "Power of Death" with "Death Qi", which can't be extinguished by water, sand, and the like. Once it contaminates a living being, it will rapidly consume the flesh and blood of the creature, turning it into the purest Death Qi to nourish you.]

[Death Qi Slash: "Power of Death" is not a single entity, it can be a curse, or even a sword. With "Death Qi", a sharp "Power of Death" forms a strike that slashes through the air.]

[Control Corpse: Awaken a corpse with "Death Qi", and control its movements with "Power of Death".]

[Minor Curse Technique: With "Death Qi", trace complex "Power of Death" to bring continuous misfortune to any creature under your gaze.]

(Note 1: The power of Deathly Fire, Death Qi Slash, Control Corpse, and Minor Curse Technique depends on the amount of Death Qi invested, the minimum being 0.1, up to all.)

(Note 2: You, who possess the "Breath of Death" talent, will not be backfired by an excessive output of "Death Qi".)

(Note 3: When controlling corpses, the corpse must be a relatively intact humanoid creature, and cannot be a Spiritualist.)

(Note 4: The effect of the Minor Curse Technique is unpredictable; when targeting a Spiritualist creature, a greater amount of Death Qi must be used, the specific amount depending on the power of the Spiritualist.)

...

Without spending a single XP.

Nor did it require any energy expenditure.

Upon seeing, Arthur learned instantly, just as described in [Technique of Death]. These skills seemed innate to him, as simple as eating and drinking.

Arthur raised his right hand, and the obscure [Deathly Fire] immediately danced at his fingertips, the flame radiating a deep blue glow, yet having a unique sound akin to flowing water.

As Arthur's thoughts shifted, the handful of [Deathly Fire] leapt like a living thing onto the corpse of a creature resembling a ghoul beside him.

Soundlessly, within a breath, the creature turned into a pile of bones.

The flesh and blood turned into the purest Death Qi, nourishing Arthur back from an initial expenditure of 0.1 Death Qi to [303.1] after increasing to [301.1].

Subsequently, Arthur flicked his finger.

Buzz!

A pure white Death Qi-laden slash, like a thin crescent moon the size of a bowl, swept across the pile of bones.

Instantly, the bones turned into a pile of dust.

Arthur's eyelid twitched.

Such a strike was already not inferior to any ordinary offensive secret technique, and its power had even exceeded expectations, considering he had just controlled the output of Death Qi.

Just 1!

What would it be like if it were 10?

Or 100?

Or even 1000?

With speculation, Arthur's gaze shifted to a relatively intact humanoid creature's corpse, whose stiff fingers began to tremble.

However, Arthur did not let the creature stand up again.

Simon and the others were still cleaning up the battlefield in the courtyard, no need to create such unnecessary panic.

As for [Minor Curse Technique]?

Similarly, there was no suitable target.

But with [Deathly Fire] and [Death Qi Slash] as references, Arthur believed that [Minor Curse Technique] wouldn't be far off in effect.

Sigh!

Arthur breathed out a breath of stale air, stood up, and picked up the [Vigilance Oil Lamp].

He didn't walk far, but toward the basement of the main building.

He still had one thing to confirm.