

Great Master 271

Chapter 271 Despicable!

...

The Banyan Tree!

It's still that enormous banyan tree!

Neither the fragmentary 'Book of Death', nor his notes, or even William's notes mentioned this colossal banyan tree.

As for growing naturally?

It's simply impossible.

Not to mention William merging with the massive banyan tree.

Just the "Heart of the Banyan" in Arthur's hand alone informed the young 'Spirit Medium' that this banyan tree was definitely not a natural occurrence.

[Name: Heart of the Banyan]

[Type: Other Types]

[Quality: Hero. Cripple]

[Attributes: 1, Ingestion; 2, Planting]

[Remarks: In the 159th year of the Silver Era, the owner of 'Hilt Tower' approached the end of his life. Though he felt reluctant, he did not cling to 'Undying', for he knew all too well the embarrassment of

desperately seeking 'undying' would be; he certainly did not wish to become one of those creatures with no reason and muddled memories—but the disciples of the 'Hilt Tower' owner could not face their end as calmly as their teacher had. They began secretly studying the notes left by both their teacher and his close friend Atos, hoping to find a way to live forever. And then... they actually found it, though the method for prolonged life was not perfect and was fraught with great risks; yet, they were ecstatic nonetheless]

...

[Ingestion: If a human were to ingest this Heart of the Banyan, there is a fifty percent chance that their lifespan would greatly increase, but they would show some plant-like characteristics. There is also a fifty percent chance of turning straight into a plant while retaining a sliver of human consciousness, which would fade with the passage of time]

[Planting: After smearing it with the blood from one's fingertip and burying it in the soil, one can have a War Tree that fights for them in a year. In ten years, it will grow into a great War Tree, and in a hundred years, an Ancient War Tree would have developed. Once it becomes an Ancient War Tree, it will not only have a certain degree of thinking but also command some secret techniques, and its loyalty to you will never change]

(Note 1: After ingestion, the plant characteristics cannot be removed by any means. If removed, the increased lifespan will disappear.)

(Note 2: The increased lifespan cannot exceed the original tree species' limit.)

(Note 3: Turning into a plant after ingestion accelerates the loss of human consciousness as the plant grows.)

(Note 4: When planting, if the environmental requirements of the tree species are met, the growth of the tree will be beneficial.)

(Note 5: The War Tree will not die as long as its heart remains, but it will need to be replanted.)

...

The moment Arthur saw the "Heart of the Banyan," he subconsciously thought of the bizarre 'Golden Oak Tree' within Oak Manor.

The young 'Spirit Medium' guessed that this so-called 'Golden Oak Tree' might very well be one of the disciples of the 'Hilt Tower' owner who failed to ingest it and turned into a plant.

Of course, it was just a guess.

Specifically, Arthur had yet to confirm it.

But one thing he could be certain of was that the banyan tree did not grow naturally.

Of course, it couldn't have been cultivated by William.

William could at most be considered the planter.

The real cultivator?

Fritz!

The very first Estate Owner who established the manor in the name of his wife, Yumir.

It's only natural that the person should also be a disciple of the 'Hilt Tower' owner, or a disciple's disciple, or maybe someone who accidentally obtained the notes.

In any case, Arthur, who already had suspicions due to the terrain of 'Yumir Manor', was now even more skeptical.

As for the second-generation 'Yumir Manor' Estate Owner?

He was mentioned in William's notes as being useless. When he proposed the idea of selling the manor, he was torn between wanting to sell and fearing that his other relatives would covet his wealth; he also wanted to sell at a high price, which was off-putting because of his indecision—so, William granted him a dignified egress.

Pacing through the hallway, the "Hand of Void" raised the "Vigilance Oil Lamp" to light the way for Arthur.

Soon, Arthur found the passage leading to the basement.

Using two additional "Hands of Void" for scouting, Arthur quickly spotted the sarcophagus where William had lain, and then found a downward passage within the sarcophagus itself.

This passage had twenty steps. By stepping into the sarcophagus and following the steps down, after passing a small platform, one could truly see the secret chamber of 'Yumir Manor'.

The first thing to come into view was a roughly two-hundred square meter space, divided into a bedroom, a study, and a laboratory according to functional areas.

The messy bedding signaled to Arthur that William had lived here.

The enormous bookshelf in the study and the complete array of laboratory vessels caught Arthur's eye.

He needed more 'Mystical Knowledge' and a full set of lab vessels to practice making 'Griffin Physique Potions'.

All of this in front of him met Arthur's requirements.

But Arthur did not rush to examine them.

...

His gaze was fixed on a small door at one side of the bedroom.

Using the "Hand of Void" as a probe.

Squeak!

The small door opened in response.

Arthur carefully peered inside and then saw one after another object covered with tarpaulin, neatly placed behind the door.

Others might be puzzled about what these were, but not Arthur.

He was all too familiar with these items!

Without needing to lift the tarpaulin, he could be sure of what they were!

Little Emperor Cannons!

And beside the Little Emperor Cannons, against the wall, stood a large number of long boxes.

The "Hand of Void" immediately opened one of the long boxes and, after tearing off the oil paper on top, a series of firearms instantly came into view.

Even with his mental preparedness, at that moment, Arthur couldn't help but inhale sharply.

Hiss!

It wasn't that Arthur hadn't seen the world.

But he was still shocked by what he saw before him.

'Twenty Little Emperor Cannons, over a thousand heavy firearms, as well as swords, armor, and helmets – with enough manpower, an army could be raised in an instant!'

By now, Arthur finally understood what Fritz, who had established 'Yumir Manor' under his wife's name, was planning to do.

This fellow intended to 'stir up trouble'!

He wanted to secure a position in the tumultuous 'Seven Years' War'!

Perhaps even to earn the right to be called king.

'King Fritz?

Tsch!'

A sound filled with scorn resonated from Arthur's mouth.

It wasn't that he looked down on such ambition; he simply had no respect for Fritz.

Acting out of ambition under the guise of love...

'Despicable fellow.'

That was Arthur's assessment.

Afterward, he surveyed the entire military arsenal, silently pondering.

He was considering what to do with these spoils of war.

Transport them back to South Los for reserve?

It was certainly a good choice and also in line with his development plans for 'Mr. Wu's Exchange'. Unfortunately, the Mount Gale Region was not located by an Inland River, making transportation to South Los inevitably reliant on horse-drawn carriages and prohibiting any open movements. This meant reducing the team size, resulting in a lengthy and cautious process where the slightest misstep could invite pursuit from the Countess.

But over time, even the most cautious approach could lead to problems.

So, that idea was out.

What about selling them to make money?

That was another good choice.

But just the same, it couldn't be done in South Los, lest discovery still lead to being pursued by the Countess.

She would never allow such a large quantity of military weaponry to enter the market.

Even if these weapons weren't the latest model, it made no difference.

In a world with 'Mystical Knowledge', the advancement of 'gunpowder' was greatly suppressed, yet sensitivity to war led the lords of various lands to constantly innovate, resulting in the creation of Thunder Guns and Light Firearms.

South Los was not an option.

Neither were the other territories.

Those lords had means even more ruthless than a Mother Tigress.

Having dismissed two ideas, Arthur furrowed his brows slightly.

But in the next instant, the young 'Spirit Medium's' eyes lit up—

"Got it!"

Chapter 272: A Match Made In Heaven, If Only The Gender Was Right!

South Los, the midnight chimes had passed.

Marinda, who had dozed off for 15 minutes, opened her eyes—the practice of sleeping for 5-15 minutes at both noon and midnight was not only Marinda's habit but also an ancient secret technique.

It was said to have existed even before the Imperial Age.

Combined with meditation and breathing methods, it could achieve astonishing effects.

However, the meditation method and breathing method had long been lost, but just a short nap at these two specific times could significantly restore one's energy.

Marinda had a deep understanding of this.

To maintain her robust energy, she had received such training since childhood.

One could say it was precisely because of this sleep habit that she was able to effortlessly manage those various complicated matters.

But lately, it had not been enough.

For the first time, this lady felt overwhelmed.

'Damn, Arthur!'

This lady cursed silently to herself as she picked up her pipe—this time, the tobacco was not ordinary, but medicinal herbs.

The kind that could refresh the mind and stimulate alertness.

This lady needed to make herself quickly alert and focus her attention.

Because the spread of messages like "Entrant" and "Blood Descendants" had once again stirred undercurrents in South Los—even though she had anticipated such a situation, the messages told her that she had underestimated the energy generated by two 'Entrants' coming together.

Especially when one of the 'Entrants' might be a 'Blood Descendant,' it naturally necessitated thorough investigation for some people and powers who had participated in the 'Night of Extermination'.

Just these past few days, she had confirmed that scouts from the Marquess of West Berlin and the Marquess of Ainhars had been somewhat active in South Los.

This had never happened before!

Therefore, even if Arthur's proposed plan to increase the rewards for the 'Swordsmanship Competition' was good, the competition was still some time away.

In the meantime, who knew what these powers might stir up in South Los?

Moreover, to some extent, what they eventually stirred up.

If nothing happened, this lady would be even more terrified.

'They must be 'warmed up' a bit!'

This lady thought silently.

As for how to warm them up?

This lady already had a rough idea.

After all, she had a 'conspicuous package' by her side.

However, to get this 'conspicuous package' to exert effort was not so easy; it required presenting real silver and gold directly in front of the person.

And currently, her finances were somewhat strained.

It was not easy to deal with the deeply rooted Bernice family in South Los.

To counter the potential blowback from them, she had to be fully prepared.

That left only secret techniques and props...

The former, she had been scheming all along.

The latter?

Yes!

But none could be moved, for they all had their masters.

And to use her own props?

Unless Marinda went mad, she would not do so.

Marinda was very clear why she held her current status.

So, she had to exchange a few hidden messages, didn't she?

With this in mind, Marinda rode in her carriage to No. 2 Cork Street, where she took out a key—acquired from Arthur.

As Arthur's 'lover,' she held such privileged access.

Especially while Arthur was away on a long trip.

She scanned over the courtyard; it was clean, and the cat grass and catnip were meticulously maintained.

Clearly, the kid named Merlin had been diligent.

As she entered the room, Wuni had already come through the skylight and landed on the table in the Spirit Medium Parlor—

"Good evening, Marinda.

I feel we must have a special fate.

Otherwise, why would we both be so eager to see each other?

Have you anticipated my unexpected discovery at 'Yumir Manor'?"

Arthur, speaking through Wuni's body, greeted her warmly while his words made Marinda roll her eyes.

Given their relationship, her initiative in visiting had already explained everything.

Faced with her proposition, Arthur was always as enthusiastic as this time.

Greedy fellow!

The lady judged inwardly, but her eyes revealed a trace of admiration—because Arthur had honestly shared that he had made some discoveries at "Yumir Manor."

Such a discovery surely required her assistance.

This honesty was, in a way, truly fascinating.

"If only Arthur were a woman."

The lady thought regretfully while her business instinct sparked a thought—that she could let Arthur "warm up" for her for free and still make him pay a little something.

Such opportunities were quite rare.

But immediately, the lady shook her head.

After all, she was a businesswoman, but not purely so.

She had far greater goals.

Or should we say...

Ambition!

This ambition made her realize that such "deceptive" methods were not sustainable, even if she profited this time, she might lose everything next time.

Or because of this wrong approach, she might lose Arthur as a long-term ally.

This was something the lady absolutely did not want to see.

Moreover, given Arthur's intelligence, he must have guessed something already!

That's why he was being so honest now!

Even, everything about "Yumir Manor" must be the other party's subsequent arrangement.

Thinking this, the lady couldn't help but glare at Arthur again.

"Damned man!"

With such a thought in mind, the lady went straight to the point—

"The scouts from the Marquess of Seberlin and Marquess of Ainhars families have been unusually active these past few days, and with the Bernice family's issues, I no longer have the energy to deal with these guys, but I worry that more and more people gathering in South Los will create trouble and affect my business and the celebration of my succession to the peerage.

So, my dear, since you've already made preparations, could you please help me out?"

Marinda asked, smoking a pipe.

If it hadn't been for Wuni's bird's beak, Arthur would definitely have made a scoffing gesture at the lady in front of him.

Testing!

Again, testing!

Everything about his partner was fine except for her overly suspicious nature, taking three steps forward only after testing the ground three times, as if her young, kind-hearted, upright, and naive "spirit medium" was the kind of person who would deceive his allies?

When had he prepared early?

Wasn't it all just coincidence?

He just thought that since the lords of various regions would not allow arms trafficking, he might as well sell the arms directly to the Earl of South Los himself.

It definitely wasn't because he wanted to earn the Countess's money while using her transport fleet for the arms to lure out those who might be testing him, thus killing two birds with one stone.

Absolutely not!

The young "spirit medium," full of grievances and using Wuni's body, softly said—

"I've found a large cache of arms at 'Yumir Manor'!"

"What?"

Marinda immediately stood up from her chair, then the lady said to herself.

"You dare to secretly hoard a large amount of arms, I give you three days to go back to South Los and surrender yourself to the Lord Count, don't think about running away, you think you can avoid the barracks, enter the Mount Gale region then take the secret forest path, avoiding the hidden sentry posts in the forest, enter Marquess of Seberlin's territory following the river down to Inner Bay and be safe! You better not let me see you, I'll kill you in a minute if I do!"

The lady said this as she walked outside.

Arthur's dumbstruck expression was genuinely displayed on Wuni's bird face.

In the bright light, the bewildered crow stared at the lady's receding figure, standing still as if questioning its own existence.

Only when she reached the door did the lady turn around, frowning.

"Was it really an accidental discovery?"

"Heh."

Arthur scoffed, unwilling to respond, and using Wuni's body, he lifted a claw and gave the woman the 'middle finger.'

The lady, however, completely ignored this 'middle finger.' She paced around the Spirit Medium Parlor twice, a smile uncontrollably appearing on her face.

She stared at Arthur and whispered—

"My dear, do you fancy playing a thrilling game?"

Chapter 273 Atos's Gold Box!

"Exciting?"

"Can you handle it?"

Facing Marinda's soft inquiry, Arthur sneered twice.

And the lady immediately snorted in response.

"I have an aversion to men, not birds."

As she spoke, she stared fixedly at Arthur, with an unmistakable let's-try-and-see attitude.

Yet Arthur sneered again.

"It's all the same."

His double entendre hit home the next moment, but before the lady could open her mouth, Arthur continued.

"Moreover...

My feathers are afraid of getting wet."

An even more devastating blow, his extended tone brimming with provocation.

Immediately, Marinda's gaze turned dangerous.

Both of them made unyielding eye contact.

About two seconds later, they simultaneously turned their heads away to one side, spitting out together—

"Ptui!"

"You immature, petty person!"

Marinda even raised her middle finger at Arthur, fully aware that this was Arthur's retaliation for her recent 'probe.'

To this, Marinda didn't care.

At least, she now knew that the arms weren't Arthur's.

That was enough.

Had those arms really belonged to Arthur?

She would have had to reconsider her partnership with him.

South Los would never allow such a dangerous individual to exist.

"Where did those arms come from?"

The lady asked, once more clutching her pipe.

"Ever heard of 'Hilt Tower'?"

Arthur disclosed the information he held, his words concealing the probing unique to a 'Spirit Medium.' Although there were plenty of mystic side knowledge on the secret bookshelves, there was no further information about 'Hilt Tower,' clearly hidden intentionally by that Fritz.

However, Arthur believed Marinda would give him a satisfying answer.

Indeed, it was so—

"'Hilt Tower'?"

In the Silver Age, Hilt Tower was one of the few neutral territories, standing tall upon the land of 'Winter Fortress' with the support of its owner Hilt's formidable power, a place many scholars and ascetics yearned for.

Hilt had inherited a part of the early Empire's 'Druid Hasen School of Thought,' possessed a Noble Bloodline as well, and first became known in the Silver Era year 55, at the age of 19, when he demonstrated 'Great Arcana'-level power, only to choose to forego his Succession Right and venture to the far north for penance.

It wasn't until 20 years later, in Silver Era year 75, that the 39-year-old Hilt reappeared before the eyes of the public, establishing Hilt Tower in 'Winter Fortress' on the threshold between North County and the far north, and for the following decades, he selflessly taught anyone with 'Talent.'

It can be said that Hilt Tower was the shining beacon for all in North County at the time.

Be they commoner or Noble."

Marinda spoke at length, her words revealing unabashed admiration for Hilt.

Idealists possess such charm, after all.

Although dubbed the 'Silver' Age, the darkness of that era was in no way inferior to that of the 'Holy Empire' period—open Slave trading, the overriding philosophy of Nobility, and constant warfare among the Nobles, enough to make anyone from the Pioneer Era pale.

Ordinary people in that age had no rights at all; from birth, they were one of the possessions of the local lord, just like the ordinary people's fathers and grandfathers, and so would their sons and grandsons be.

Ordinary people's wives, the first time belonged to the lord.

The daughter of a commoner, her first time was also the lord's.

Even the mother of a commoner, her first time was still the lord's.

Being a commoner, if one were a farmer, then one would be a farmer for life, never allowed to change; when you wanted to become a blacksmith, the price you had to pay was almost fatal.

Of course, what's most fatal is that commoners have absolutely no understanding of how so-called 'wars' begin.

It might just be a boring hunt between nobles, over the ownership of a wild boar, or a deer.

It could also be a dance to alleviate loneliness, over a lady's returning glance or a smile.

But the most desperate thing is that they cannot fight back.

The gap in power made it so that all commoners could only live numbly.

In short, those times were not good.

Especially compared to the warm South County, most of North County, covered by ice and snow, was almost like hell.

And, naturally, 'Hilt Tower' which could shelter the innocent was something people longed for.

However, such longing was destined to shatter with the passing of Hilt.

Lacking the protection of powerful forces, those nobles of North County would not miss such an opportunity, surely scavenging Hilt Tower like vultures.

With the added conflicts arising within Hilt Tower, Arthur could perfectly imagine the scene at the time.

Seeing how Marinda stopped and avoided further talk, the image in Arthur's mind became completely clear—probably a certain faction within Hilt Tower had allied with local nobles, cleansing their former friends and partners in even more ruthless ways than the local nobles.

Some people, after all, always show their loyalty in such ways.

It's a pity that the loyalty of a dog is rewarded.

People like that, however, are not.

Because, in the hearts of the local nobles, such people are only seen as a night pot-like tool.

"So, 'Yumir Manor's' first owner, Fritz, was related to 'Hilt Tower'?"

Marinda asked.

"Hmm, he probably wanted to take advantage of the 'Seven Years' War' to rise to power, but he failed before it even began—most likely he was dissuaded by his wife, right?

After all, the manor is named after his wife.

'Yumir Manor', not a bad name."

Arthur nodded as he said this.

But Marinda just curled her lips.

This lady was all too aware of what kind of person Fritz was; it was absolutely impossible for him to give up his plans because of his wife's objections. It was more credible that it was due to illness or assassination.

However, this had nothing to do with her.

What she wanted was how to appropriately utilize the relationship between Fritz and 'Hilt Tower'. Her reverence for 'Hilt Tower' did not mean Marinda wouldn't exploit 'Hilt Tower'.

If Marinda couldn't clearly discern the interests involved, she wouldn't be honored with the title 'Lady of the Long Night'.

The light of the fire in the pipe flickered as Marinda paced within the study.

On her second round, the lady suddenly asked Arthur—

"Do you know about 'Atos', the Master Alchemist?"

With that question, Arthur knew what this lady was planning.

Atos, he was all too familiar with him.

The 'Atos's Box' was in his possession, an indispensable prop for him now, and what made Atos's name a joy to discuss was 'Atos's Gold Box'.

Conveniently, Atos and Hilt were close friends.

The appearance of 'Atos's Gold Box' in 'Yumir Manor' made perfect sense.

Clearly, this woman was prepared to leverage 'Atos's Gold Box' for her agenda.

As he was about to nod in agreement with the lady, the young 'Spirit Medium' had a sudden realization.

He, had remembered a crucial point.

Chapter 274 Arrogance and the Snake!

Since Marinda dared to use "Atos's Gold Box" as bait, it surely meant she knew the whereabouts of "Atos's Gold Box."

Perhaps it was even in her hands.

Otherwise, if someone exposed it, all her efforts would be wasted.

Thinking this, Arthur nodded without a trace.

"Understood!"

"Then we shall use this master's notes as bait, interspersed with some rumors of 'Atos's Gold Box.'

Marinda smiled.

Her eyes gleamed with craftiness, and her smile revealed the pleasure of a successful prank.

Such a smile made Arthur even more certain of his guess.

'Atos's Gold Box' was most likely in her possession.

Moreover, she used smoke as a concealment!

Arthur thought to himself, yet he did not utter another word, just controlling Wuni to stare unblinkingly at Marinda — the plan was set.

It was time to discuss the most crucial thing.

Compensation!

That large batch of arms was quite valuable.

Plus, solving the threat from South Los made it even more valuable.

If he didn't quote a good price, Arthur felt he would be dishonoring his profession as a "Spirit Medium."

Marinda seemed to sense that Arthur was about to ask for a lion's share and immediately emphasized —

"This is mutual benefit!"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"Helping me is helping yourself!"

"Ah, right right right."

"Do you want to know the secret behind the demise of the Bloodline Clan?"

Seeing that Arthur was unfazed, the lady sighed lightly and her expression became serious.

Similarly, Arthur strived to exhibit his seriousness while in the form of Wuni.

Anyone faced with matters concerning the "Bloodline Clan" would not take it lightly.

Even if Arthur was himself a "Blood Descendant," he needed to act like everyone else to avert exposing his identity.

Especially when facing this astute and sharp lady, Arthur was even more focused in his performance.

Even though he was merely controlling Wuni.

As for whether this lady could discern something from the face of a crow?

Who knows?

But being cautious never hurt.

"Your relationship with that 'Blood Descendant' must be good, right?"

I have some information here that is very likely the reason for the downfall of the 'Bloodline Clan.'

I'll exchange it with you, and given your relationship with that 'Blood Descendant', you will surely benefit much more."

Marinda believed that this reward she offered would tempt anyone.

After all, this was concerning the friendship of an "Entrant," even the aspects of gratitude, something even Arthur, who was also an "Entrant," could not ignore.

This lady was quite certain of this.

Thus, after speaking, she calmly watched Arthur, believing he would agree.

Of course, with such a secret as her reward, she naturally harbored an attempt to probe.

She wanted to know what exactly was the relationship between Arthur and that 'Blood Descendant.'

What this lady did not expect was that Arthur simply shook his head.

"Change it!"

Facing Arthur's straightforward rejection, the lady was taken aback.

But Arthur appeared completely unperturbed.

"Your inquisitive look was too obvious just now, do you want to know my real relationship with that guy?"

Rest assured, it's nowhere as close as you imagine.

We just happened to meet in South Los and happened to complete a transaction.

Beyond that?

My relationship with him is nowhere as close as ours."

As Arthur spoke, he shrugged his shoulders, but the gesture appeared incredibly bizarre in Wuni's form, to Marinda it looked as if a crow suddenly twitched a couple of times.

However, the lady was not attracted by such convulsions.

Her gaze towards Arthur was filled with hidden suspicion.

She suspected that Arthur's outright refusal was meant to conceal his connection with the 'Blood Descendants.'

And that was exactly what Arthur wanted!

Arthur knew well that even if he distanced himself from his vest, traces would still be uncovered, leading to some very unfavorable assumptions about him.

Instead, he decided to draw attention by implying that the relationship was extraordinary.

Let everyone guess why he and his vest had an unusual relationship, and if there was some unknown collaboration.

As for the secret of the 'Blood Marquis'?

Don't forget Bern.

The other party was the one who knew the true secrets of the 'Bloodline Clan.'

Arthur believed this youngest member of the 'Bloodline Clan' would spill everything when facing his brother.

And that only needed a 'proper' opportunity.

"What do you want?"

Marinda asked directly, unable to find any clues from Arthur's expression.

Moreover, as if to show her slight irritation, the lady's words became harsh.

Unfortunately for her, Arthur paid no attention.

He was not going to be fooled.

Women always instinctively use their advantages.

Even a woman with 'misandry' is no exception.

"'Glory Potion'!"

"Impossible!"

When Arthur revealed what he wanted as a reward, the lady was startled and almost subconsciously refused; however, after declining, a strange look appeared in her eyes.

She stared at Wuni.

As if trying to see Arthur beneath the Crow's exterior.

"You're actually a noble?

Which branch does the Kledos Family belong to?

In the Silver Age, there were one hundred twenty-one nobles, why have I never heard of the Kledos Family name?

No, that's not right!

If the Kledos Family is part of 'Cat Faction.Black,' it should be older!

During the Holy Empire Era, the Kledos Family existed under a different name until the fall of 'Cat Faction.Black,' and then they chose to conceal themselves with the name 'Kledos'!

So, your family's true name must be...

So that's how it is!"

Marinda abruptly stopped talking.

This made Arthur curse inwardly as he listened.

So what is it like?

What else do you know?

He hated people who spoke in half-truths the most.

Especially when he had to pretend to be unconcerned.

"Don't jump to conclusions, Kledos is just Kledos, nothing else."

Arthur emphasized.

"Heh, the contemporary 'Black Cat,' actually possessing noble bloodline, interesting, interesting!

I think those guys would be quite shocked to hear this."

Marinda did not believe Arthur's words at all and acted as if she had uncovered the truth.

Firing up her pipe once again, the lady said amidst exhaling smoke—

"'Glory Potion'—the Lord Count has it, and she'll consider bringing it out as a reward for the sake of old times, but just that batch of arms won't be enough for this reward!

So, you must bring something else.

Of course, if you're willing to tell the true story about that incident at The Holy Court, that's also an option.

Dear, could you talk about that incident?

About...

'Serpent of Pride' Adam."

Chapter 275: The Stage Built by the Spirit Medium and the Businesswoman!

...

Tell me about "Serpent of Pride" Adam?

I am still "Serpent of Pride" Adam!

Looking at Marinda engulfing clouds of smoke, Arthur couldn't help but feel bemused at the bottom of his heart; he had no idea what this woman had imagined from his brief words that led to her complete change in attitude.

But as for the so-called "Serpent of Pride" Adam, he truly didn't know.

The naked Adam and a serpent, he did know of.

However, these weren't important.

The important thing was the current situation was very unfavorable for him.

Marinda possessed information of which he was completely unaware, had already taken the initiative completely, and continuing the conversation would only allow her to find more flaws.

So—

"What if I say in this plan I need no cooperation, no support, just myself at 'Yumir Manor'?"

Arthur's words caused Marinda to be taken aback.

"Have you gone mad?

Do you know what you're talking about?

Do you really think you're an 'Entrant'?

Or do you believe that the Marquess of West Berlin and the Marquess of Ainhars, if they act, will be more merciful than that Old Lion?"

The lady's tone rose several decibels.

Even with a slightly frantic demeanor.

Even if there was an element of acting, it still satisfied Arthur.

"Spirit Medium is a dangerous profession, always encountering all sorts of situations, so no matter what you face, the first thing you must do is stay calm, then? Naturally, scare the other party, whether with words or actions, you must remember to scare them first to pull them into your own rhythm." That was Old Charlie's advice, which Arthur took to heart.

And indeed, that's what he was doing.

The effect?

Naturally, it was not bad.

Marinda stopped asking about the so-called "Serpent of Pride" Adam and instead looked at him with a probing gaze once more.

Moreover, different from before!

This time, the probing came with scrutiny!

Without a doubt, the lady's thoughts had taken a wrong turn again.

But this time, Arthur was not troubled.

Because he knew exactly what the lady was misconceiving.

It was nothing more than his hidden identity, strength, and the purpose of his secrecy—these were all things Arthur could control.

So the young Spirit Medium gave a faint smile, he was not worried about exposing more because as a Crow, the laughter he showed was just a strange caw.

Hearing such a bizarre caw, Marinda furiously spewed smoke.

The young Spirit Medium dodged nimbly, and continued to emphasize with the weird cawing laughter—

"How about my proposal?

I think it's quite good.

It benefits us as well."

Phew!

Although Arthur dodged it, the thick smoke once again filled the entire study, with Marinda faintly visible amongst it, her deep blue eyes narrowing almost to slits yet shining more brightly as if they were glowing.

Suddenly, the lady had an eerie beauty about her, yet appeared incredibly dangerous.

The smoke flowed with the lady's breath, and when she spoke, the rich smoke immediately dissipated, though still shrouding the surroundings.

But not a trace was between the two of them.

The lady said in a ghostly tone.

"It seems my luck is always good, the partners I find casually are always full of secrets that I can't help but explore."

Marinda stressed the word 'casually.'

Clearly, she suspected once more that their meeting had been a setup.

Arthur didn't speak, he let her speculate wildly.

And the threat before him?

Arthur ignored it further.

[Death Intuition] hadn't flickered in the slightest.

Clearly, Marinda was just trying to scare him.

Seeing that she hadn't frightened Arthur, the lady pursed her lips and continued.

"If you really can accomplish what you've said, then I think the Lord Count wouldn't be stingy with a 'Glory Potion', even if it's precious. But how could it possibly be more precious than an 'Entrant' able to handle a large number of enemies alone?"

Without a doubt, her words carried a hint of sarcasm.

Arthur certainly picked up on it, so the young Spirit Medium bluntly said—

"That's 'Destiny'!"

Watching the Spirit Medium in Crow form utter 'Destiny,' Marinda felt it was mocking, even sensing that the Crow was laughing at her.

She clenched her fists involuntarily.

In fact...

It was!

However, Arthur would never admit it.

...

"Pleasure doing business with you!"

"Please do not randomly send people to watch over 'Yumir Manor.' They could get involved."

Having achieved his objective, Arthur prepared to leave, but before he departed, the young 'Spirit Medium' reminded Marinda.

"I thank you!"

Marinda snorted coldly, watching as Arthur, who was ready to take flight, suddenly also cautioned her with a reminder.

"If! I mean, if!

You really do what you said!

Then the Kledos Family's efforts to Hide will become meaningless, and your previous efforts at deception will be completely ineffective—Within the Kledos Family, aside from you, it's not possible that everyone has a 'Talent,' right?

They, that is, your family, will become your weakness!"

The lady said softly.

Such words were of course based in reality.

Because, even in the family of the Old Lion of Inner Bay, not everyone could awaken.

But for some reason, as soon as Marinda uttered these words, Arthur hesitated abruptly, and even in the guise of a crow, his inertia was obvious, allowing her to see right through him.

This caused Marinda to feel puzzled.

Had she inadvertently touched on some secret?

The lady immediately recalled the words she had just spoken.

But there was nothing noteworthy, right?

Could it be that he was toying with me?

Thinking this, the lady was about to glare angrily at Arthur, but Arthur had already taken flight, soaring through the smoke into the night sky over South Los.

"Right, in the Kledos Family, it's not possible that everyone, besides me, has a 'Talent'!"

"Right, they will become my weakness!"

"Hehehehehe."

The crow disappeared into the night sky with a series of strange cries.

Meanwhile, inside the study of Number 6 in Swan District, Marinda called for her coachman.

"You personally take people to 'Yumir Manor' and bring back the batch of military goods as quickly as possible.

Also, have our people... no, contact Mr. Garcia, who spread the news before, and have him circulate the message that 'Yumir Manor' is a branch of 'Hilt Tower' and secretly holds 'Atos's Gold Box.'

He is a man worth investing in. Treat him as well as possible."

"Yes, Master."

The coachman, Edwin, hurriedly left.

Marinda then sat in her chair, hesitating.

She was hesitant about whether to really give up the idea of having someone tail 'Yumir Manor.'

In the end, the lady chose to forgo surveillance.

It wasn't that she truly believed Arthur.

Rather, she remembered the look on Arthur's face when he suffered backlash, the atmosphere around him saturated with an Aura of Death, an environment where ordinary people would surely be seeking death.

As for sending stronger ones?

Her people were not up to the task, and too conspicuous.

But those guys seemed like they could be of use.

Just in time for a new round of selection!

Thinking this, the lady picked up a pen and began to write something.

Far away at 'Yumir Manor,' Arthur had stoked a big bonfire in the ruined hall, hugged Pendragon, and was cooking supper—

"Marinda will certainly come up with ways to 'test and select again' or some such excuse to have the Countess's Staff Group come here.

If this Staff Group gets annihilated, that Countess's influence will inevitably be affected.

At that time, Marinda will be the first to be relied upon heavily.

Showing enough strength, I too will be relied upon.

And the chance of my suggestion to make the 'Swordsmanship Competition' champion's reward be a 'Knight' title will increase again."

Just now, Marinda did not mention the 'Swordsmanship Competition.'

If that Earl truly finalizes the champion's reward as a 'Knight' title, with his character, he would not fail to mention it.

So, the Earl must be hesitant.

In that case...

"I will help you make the decision!"

As for that Staff Group?

What's that got to do with him?

It wasn't him who suggested these people come here.

Besides, he had warned them, not to come.

Spirit Mediums as young, upright, pure and kind-hearted as him were a rarity.

Arthur thought to himself, his expression becoming more indifferent as his gaze lightly shifted toward the two cases at his feet—these were what he had discovered while tallying the arsenal.

They were also one of the reasons he dared to face his enemy alone.

Looking at the two cases, the young 'Spirit Medium' couldn't help but think—

"I never expected there would be such a thing."

Chapter 276 Peeping Tom!

Two boxes, both made of long wooden planks.

Yet, the contents of each were different—

[Name: Reservoir of Death Qi]

[Type: Other]

[Quality: Arcane]

[Attributes: Storage]

[Remarks: Possessing extraordinary talent, Old Sank, after acquiring the 'Book of Death,' not only created the 'Pit of Death' to store Death Qi but also encapsulated it through alchemy in the skull of a 'Hedamore Water Monster.' This skull, meticulously polished, was the size of a pigeon's egg, smooth and gleaming like jade. In an inconspicuous spot, a line of text was etched—For my deceased loved ones, I willingly head to hell.]

...

[Storage: Capable of housing approximately 100 units of Death Qi, but requires the 'Pit of Death' for absorption, currently: 100/100]

(Note: This is a single-use item; once fully utilized, it can no longer be filled with Death Qi but can serve as an excellent ornament.)

...

Within the long wooden plank box, divided into three sections, two were empty while only the bottom one still held 10 such [Reservoirs of Death Qi]—Judging from the arrangement of slots, each section originally held 20 [Reservoirs of Death Qi]. Evidently, they had been used by Old Sank or William, the owner of the journal.

Unable to naturally absorb the 'Aura of Death,' they always needed external aid when marshaling the 'Power of Death.'

Old Sank probably used them more.

As a 'Hunter,' Old Sank also had his principles, refusing to let himself become a monster.

As for William?

It was clear he harbored no scruples, transforming himself into a half-human, half-monster to better utilize the 'Power of Death,' hence he neglected these [Reservoirs of Death Qi].

However, Arthur wouldn't disdain them.

Even though he possessed the higher-grade [Breath of Death], for him, who needed a large amount of 'Aura of Death' in a short time, nothing was more suitable than these [Reservoirs of Death Qi].

After all, there were no wars in this era.

Nor could he bring himself to slaughter the innocent.

To be human, even remorsefully, one must maintain some principles, right?

After all, that makes you more human.

The young 'Spirit Medium' sighed softly, learned the [Pit of Death], and categorized it under [Technique of Death]—

[Pit of Death: Generates a small amount of 'Aura of Death,' mixed with vitality to attract and gather more 'Aura of Death,' can manipulate props that use the 'Pit of Death' as a base material for secret techniques]

...

No need for XP, no need for exertion; he learned it at a glance.

'Aura of Death mixed with vitality?'

Arthur considered the remark thoughtfully.

He vaguely felt that the [Pit of Death] might have other applications, but it required long-term experiments to know for sure.

For now, he didn't have the time.

After placing the 10 [Reservoirs of Death Qi] into [Atos's Box], Arthur's gaze moved to the other long wooden plank box—

[Name: Hunter's Sword]

[Type: Sword]

[Quality: Heroic]

[Attributes: 1, Sharpness; 2, Demon Expelling; 3, Slash of Vanquishing Evil]

[Requirements: 1, Not a member of the Sank family; 2, Not a demon]

[Remarks: Old Sank's longsword was forged by the best local blacksmith his father could find, incorporating silver powder and a small amount of the extremely precious 'Mora Metal.' The latter endowed the sword with significant growth potential. Throughout Old Sank's nearly 40-year career as a Hunter, the sword killed countless monsters and became increasingly sharp, turning into an indispensable aid for Old Sank—Originally, Old Sank hoped to pass it down within the Sank family, but the family's betrayal ensured he would never allow his sword to fall into the hands of those traitors. In his final strength, he set restrictions on the sword.]

...

[Sharpness: Can easily cut through weapons not of Arcane Level, slicing through ordinary armor as if cutting through paper.]

[Demon Expelling: Can effectively repel various kinds of negative energy attacks.]

[Slash of Vanquishing Evil: Infuses the wielder's will, consuming a significant amount of physical strength, to deliver a lethal strike to beings of negative energy.]

(Remark 1: Mora Metal still has room for growth)

(Remark 2: The counterweight can hold salve, but cannot be enhanced by "Mora Metal")

...

A standard hand-and-a-half sword, its blade Sharpness, with a semi-hollow sphere as the counterweight, the hilt wrapped in leather mixed with hemp rope, when Arthur held this [Hunter's Sword], he could distinctly feel the [Breath of Death] being affected. Teaming up with [Daniel's Hope], Arthur always felt that he was 'normal' now.

There shouldn't be accidents like before, where people would die just because he stepped out of the house... right?

Arthur guessed uncertainly.

This unseen, intangible 'curse' that even influenced his instincts was different from the tangible act of betrayal committed by that father in the Sank family.

The young 'Spirit Medium' felt helpless.

He could do no more.

He could only restrain himself as much as possible.

After placing the [Hunter's Sword] back into [Atos's Box], Arthur picked up his supper from the campfire — a porridge made from military ration biscuits.

The others had the same meal.

Simon didn't mind.

Hunter, Newt, and Police Chief Westbron uniformly declared it something not even a dog would eat, but under Arthur's gaze, they all ate it anyway.

Arthur still added a bit of white sugar to his biscuit porridge.

Hu! Hu!

After gently blowing on it a couple of times, Arthur took his wooden spoon and began his supper.

While resting on the side, Police Chief Westbron approached Arthur just as he was finishing his supper, respectfully inquired,

"Your excellence, about tonight's events?"

His voice elongated, his tone full of inquiry.

Under normal circumstances, the Police Chief would surely choose to not report.

It's not that he didn't want to perform his duties, but it's too costly when the higher-ups send someone down.

However, in situations like this, when the higher-up is present, there's no need to worry about that, everything depends on the higher-up's orders.

"What's happening here is none of your concern anymore.

All that's left is for you to continue cleaning this place up.

Especially that banyan tree, it needs careful handling."

Arthur instructed seriously.

The huge banyan tree, now the War Tree even without the [Heart of the Banyan], remained an extraordinary lumber much beyond ordinary imagination, perfect for things like ship keels. Conveniently, his ocean fleet was in the planning stages.

This banyan tree could be a great help.

Thus, once Marinda sent people over, he planned to transport this tree back and find reliable shipwrights to work on it.

And what about those ghoul-like creature corpses?

Arthur stood up and walked over.

"End of the East, land of sacrifice, where nine sheep die to leave one, flesh and bone obelisks, forests of white bones... rest in eternal peace!"

He muttered and sang softly, raising his right hand, a handful of deep blue flames dancing on his fingertips, which he then flung out.

The stacked corpses were immediately enveloped by [Deathly Fire].

The dark, ambiguous flames flowed like water.

In a few short breaths, only a pile of bones remained.

However, this time, the deep blue flames did not disappear.

Instead...

They struck toward the Shadows nearby.

Chapter 277 'Extraordinary Talent'!

The Yumir Manor was abruptly rocked by explosions and burst into flames in the dead of night, attracting the peepers, which didn't surprise Arthur in the slightest.

Even because of the plans that followed, he was quite welcoming of these Peeping Toms.

Whether they were from the nobility or from some secret societies.

All these Peeping Toms would be the 'loyal audience' or 'cameo extras' a few days later.

However, when Death Intuition flickered slightly, Arthur would not ignore it—

Whoosh!

The deep blue flames surged with the wind.

The dark and indistinct flames immediately dispelled the darkness within the shadows.

A figure let out a miserable howl.

At the same time, a deathly white began to emerge from the person's hands.

'Death Poetry Society'?

Surprise flashed in Arthur's eyes.

Not surprised that they appeared here, because their appearance here must be linked with that so-called 'Death Poetry Society. Thirty Choir' Morielk.

Only, they were supposed to be more into assisting or logistics.

That's why they stayed in Mount Gale Town.

What surprised Arthur was precisely this point; according to logic, the person should have left after Morielk's death, yet they chose to stay?

Did the 'Death Poetry Society' have some sort of punishment like 'collective responsibility' for incomplete tasks?

Arthur speculated in his heart, but the Deathly Fire raged on, burning fiercely.

Confronted with the Aura of Death in the hands of the Death Poetry Society member, the Deathly Fire pounced like a hungry tiger, swallowing the person who wielded the Aura of Death along with it.

"Aaaah!"

The Death Poetry Society member let out a final wail.

When the noise subsided, another 30 points of Aura of Death were added to Arthur's tally.

This was on top of the 80 points of Aura of Death added from those monsters before.

Suddenly, Arthur's Aura of Death reached 413.1.

Moreover, even if Arthur did not actively create death, the Aura of Death continued to increase slowly—looking at the slowly increasing Aura of Death, Arthur sighed slightly. This scene should have brought joy to someone longing for power, but the thought of 'side effects' made it hard for him to feel truly happy.

The only consolation was that those peepers wisely took their leave.

However, Arthur knew this was only a temporary departure.

As the news fermented, they would surely come back.

Bringing even more people with them, they would climb onto the stage that he and Marinda had set up.

Clatter!

The skeleton of the Death Poetry Society member fell to the ground, and Police Chief Westbron beside it shuddered, sweating profusely—The Police Chief, who had just been relieved by Arthur's recent promises, was scared once again by the scene before him.

Suddenly, the Police Chief could no longer concern himself with so much.

The Police Chief almost crawled on the ground as he spoke—

"Thank you for your grace.

Please leave the rest to me.

I assure you of your satisfaction."

The two officers and numerous patrolmen beside him nodded in agreement.

Police Chief Westbron was scared.

They, too, were scared.

Killing many monsters, even the fall of the War Tree, did not frighten them as much as seeing a living person turned into a skeletal frame.

People always feel sorrow and fear because of the death of others.

Even if that other person is a stranger, it's the same.

Yet they can also ignore the death of their own kin.

Maybe this is what's called a transient bond.

Maybe this is...

Human nature?

Arthur did not know the answer to this complex and perplexing question, but he knew what the Police Chief and the rest of the officers and patrolmen in Mount Gale Town were afraid of.

However, Arthur did not offer an explanation.

Because he knew that would be more advantageous to him.

Fear sometimes really does motivate people more.

And in the following days, he really did need to rely on them.

After all, for the sake of Pendragon, he needed to devote himself fully to the study of Potion-making... fundamentals.

'Potion-making is difficult, but the basics shouldn't be hard, right?

With my talent, maybe I'll succeed on the first try!'

With such thoughts, Arthur headed towards the main building of Yumir Manor.

And while Arthur immersed himself in Potion-making, somewhere hidden in Inner Bay.

Skulls were piled up into a triangle, with eye sockets and teeth all facing inward, one skull lying on top of another, until the topmost skull lay flat.

A candle was inserted in the forehead of a skull, its burning wax dripping down and moistening the skeleton beneath.

It gave the skull an appearance akin to jade.

A gaunt palm gently caressed the wax on the skull, incessantly mumbling to itself.

"Why? Why?

Could this be the 'Miracle of Death's Birth' mentioned in the prophecy?

But hasn't the 'Child of Prophecy' already appeared?

Could there be two 'Children of Prophecy'?"

There, of course, could not be two 'Children of Prophecy', even ordinary Mystic Side Persons know this, let alone the 'Right Pastor' of the Death Poetry Society!

But both of these individuals completely match the characteristics of the 'Child of Prophecy'.

Faced with this situation, even the divination-famed 'Right Pastor' found it hard to decide.

After pondering for a moment, he finally decided to call upon 'Death's Attendant' to subject the newly emerged 'Child of Prophecy' to more tests.

At the same time, he reduced the help offered to the original 'Child of Prophecy'.

Death is fair.

Even for the 'Child of Prophecy'.

The 'Right Pastor', a believer in this principle, was convinced that fairness could lead the Death Poetry Society out of trouble.

"Is this not too cruel for them?"

A deep voice arose from the shadows.

To his old friend's query, the 'Right Pastor' shook his head.

He was well aware that his friend's question was not about this.

He did not know since when his pure friend had become so complicated, but that did not prevent him from providing a direct answer.

"The 'Child of Prophecy' is our hope.

And the schemes in Inner Bay could only be icing on the cake.

Do not trust the words of the Nobles...

Nobles can never be trusted!"

The 'Right Pastor' emphasized.

"I know, so I think we should be more conservative—maybe the 'Old Lion' is also a good choice?"

The voice in the shadows inquired.

"Heh, him?"

The 'Right Pastor' chuckled and closed his eyes slightly, no longer responding.

And in the shadows, the 'Left Cantor' furrowed his brow.

Seeing his old friend close his eyes, he knew the conversation was over.

He did not know since when his pure friend had become so proud, but that did not prevent him from bringing more options to the Death Poetry Society.

With this thought, the 'Left Cantor' turned and left.

Behind him, the 'Right Pastor' slightly opened his eyes, then closed them once more.

It seemed as if he had glimpsed the future, or perhaps he had seen nothing at all.

...

Two days quickly passed.

Everything proceeded in an orderly manner, according to Arthur and Marinda's arrangements.

Except...

Potion-making!

Crack!

After the twenty-seventh failure, Arthur crushed the test tube in his hand.

The young 'Spirit Medium' stood in front of the manor's basement workbench, looking as worn out as a student who had just finished a math exam, not only weary but also filled with all sorts of life-doubting emotions—

How could the answer possibly be one after calculating two pages of scratch paper?

The length of the formula is almost as long as my lifespan!

Who's the sadist that said solving math problems is a pleasure?

Ha, fake!

All fake!

False mathematics, false Potion-making, false world!

The murmurs at the bottom of his heart made the young 'Spirit Medium' sit down in the chair and begin to ponder where exactly he had gone wrong.

But no matter how much he thought, he felt he had done nothing wrong.

Could it be the Talent?

Thinking this, the young 'Spirit Medium' immediately shook his head—

"Impossible!

Absolutely impossible!

My Extraordinary Talent can't be wrong, so there must be something amiss...huh?!"

Chapter 278: Plump Cheeks!

Arthur, struck by a thought, rose and pulled a book titled "The Basics of Potion-making: How It's Done" from a nearby shelf—this was an introductory text from 'Hilt Tower', compiled specifically for novices in potion-making, with the chief compiler being the master of the tower, Hilt.

This book wasn't thick, containing only about thirty pages.

The potions recorded in it were only the most basic: the 'Mint Elixir', 'Digestive Pills', and 'Wild Horse Yulan Oil'.

Although these were just the basic potions, they covered the three main types of potions: liquid, pills, and oils.

Arthur opened the book and looked at the most classic and easiest introductory potion, the 'Mint Elixir'—

'Choose fresh mint leaves, licorice, and honey as the main ingredients. Chop the mint leaves and licorice and fully integrate them with the honey. Then, under the moonlight, maintain the activity fully, start stirring at a low temperature, until it reaches a full boil to complete the concoction. It can effectively treat headaches, colds, and if the licorice is replaced with dried tangerine peel or peach leaf, it can also treat indigestion.

Fully maintaining the activity?

Activity?

If potions also have activity...

Arthur muttered this term and subconsciously glanced at his "Breath of Death".

No wonder he had felt that the 'death qi' had been increasing slightly faster these past few days. He had originally thought that 'Yumir Manor' was a geomantic treasure spot.

He had not expected that concocting 'magic potions' had also played a role.

Then, he tightened his grip on "Zuo Danlun's Defense" and took out "Hunter's Sword" from "Atos's Box" and hung it on his belt.

Following that, the young 'Spirit Medium' began another session of potion concoction.

With twenty-seven previous failures as his foundation, Arthur was almost adept at the initial chopping and integrating process.

When it came to stirring at a low temperature under the moonlight, Arthur's gaze carried a trace of nervousness.

The previous twenty-seven attempts had all failed at this stage.

The 'Mint Elixir' had turned directly into spoiled wastewater.

But this time was different—

Under the moonlight, the slightly golden color of the Mint Elixir gradually deepened; Arthur could distinctly feel the potion absorbing the essence of the moonlight.

Moreover, his "Spirituality" also became unusually active at this moment.

When the potion boiled, a bright flash passed over it.

[Successfully concocted Mint Elixir!]

[Mint Elixir: One of the entry-level magic potions, effective at treating headaches and colds and fevers. It is the most chosen entry-level magic potion by the 'Gifted Ones'. It allows the concocter's 'Spirituality' to coordinate more fully with the moonlight and the base materials of the potion.]

...

[Acquired auxiliary skill: Potion-making Basics Lv0: Lv0 (0/40)]

...

Looking at the successfully concocted [Mint Elixir], Arthur's lips curled into a smile.

He knew there must have been a problem somewhere.

His talent?

The 'Kledos' surname had already explained it all.

After all, the 'Kledos Family' didn't have a single non-magic person.

Glancing at the XP points needed for [Potion-making Basics], Arthur hesitated no longer and chose to allocate points—not that practice couldn't achieve the same effect, but allocating points was more cost-effective.

[Potion-making Basics Lv1: You have grasped the basics of potion-making, but it's still just the basics. You know how to use flasks, alcohol lamps, test tubes, and pill grinders, etc. You also have a bit of understanding about 'Spirituality', moonlight, and the resonance with potion base materials, but that's your current limit. You have no more experience or recipes.]

...

[Spirituality +0.1]

...

As the points were added, the synchronization of knowledge and body began.

Arthur's mind was filled with more experiences of concocting [Mint Elixir], as if he had been practicing a particular magic potion all year long.

So much so that his muscles had formed a memory of it.

When Arthur opened his eyes again, it was not an exaggeration to say that he could prepare [Mint Elixir] even with his eyes closed.

Of course, the potion Arthur wanted to concoct was not the [Mint Elixir], but the [Griffin Physique Potion].

'100 points?'

Looking at the skyrocketing [Potion-making Basics] XP value, Arthur was not surprised.

It is well known, in the 'Mystic Side', that the most money-consuming are [Potion-making] and [Alchemy], especially [Potion-making]. The corresponding potion recipes have long been the closely guarded secrets of various nobles.

Those are the kinds that, if an outsider sees them, it's to the death with no exceptions.

The simplest example is the [Golden Lion Potion] from the Old Lion of Inner Bay's family, a potion that can significantly enhance one's physique and safely increase spirituality.

It is also the core of what made the Old Lion's family thrive.

Any person daring to pry into such magic potions would be brutally killed by the Old Lion, with no second possibility.

What about the [Glory Potion] that can supplement bloodlines?

Because it is circulated among nobles on a small scale, rules are somewhat relaxed.

But that's still only among nobles.

Commoners aspiring for it still face sure death.

Arthur glanced at the recent XP gains—

[The hidden nature of 'Yumir Manor' astonishes Mystic Side Person; XP+50]

[The appearance of 'Hilt Tower' has attracted more attention from Mystic Side Person: XP+50]

[More people have heard of your name; XP+10]

[More people have heard of your name; XP+10]

...

The information was still fermenting, the XP steadily accruing, just enough for "Potion-making. Basic," Arthur did not hesitate to choose to improve it.

XP was gone, but he could always accumulate more.

But if that Sunflower were gone, Arthur really wouldn't know where else to try his luck.

[Consume XP100!]

[Potion-making. Basic Lv2: You have advanced further in the basics of potion-making. Although still basic, you now surpass most 'Potion Practitioners.' Not only do you know how to use flasks, alcohol lamps, test tubes, pill mills, etc., but your understanding of 'Spirituality,' Moonlight, and the resonance with magic potion base materials has deepened. You seem to have discovered the joy of crafting magic potions, yet you still have no more recipes.]

...

[Spirituality +0.1]

...

Once again a synchronization of knowledge and body.

This time, the crafting experience for [Digestive Pills], [Wild Horse Yulan Oil], and [Griffin Physique Potion] also emerged.

Like the [Mint Elixir], it was as if he had experienced years of study.

Feeling that he could easily concoct the [Griffin Physique Potion], Arthur felt the 100 XP was well spent.

As for the accumulated increase of 0.2 in spirituality?

After the [Orange Cat] ritual, the safe range for [Spirituality] is 3; currently, he was at 1.2, still plenty of room to maneuver.

There was no need to rush.

Right now, what mattered most was concocting the [Griffin Physique Potion]!

He needed to make Pendragon a bit safer.

That was his promise to Pan.

Watching the flames burning in the pistil of the 'Sunflower,' Arthur picked up the mortar and began forcefully grinding it, he had all the remaining auxiliary materials including the Golden Acorn.

And the resonance with [Spirituality] was 'a well-trodden path.'

Therefore, the [Griffin Physique Potion] was made without any accidents.

[Griffin Physique Potion: The Griffin Knight Order once was the most elite force of the Empire, fearless against any enemy. But the growth of griffins required a long time. To address this problem, 'Court Wizard' Xarlico, with the help of his old friend 'court jester' Harrington and 'White Robed Wizard' Georgiord, completed this potion. However, it was this very potion that led to the complete extinction of the griffins—as even the fastest-growing griffins could not withstand the constant wear of war, leaving 'White Robed Wizard' Georgiord guilt-ridden; he left the center of the Empire to search for the Druid Master in 'Forest Sea' to help the griffins recover, but to no avail. Meanwhile, watching this potion that matched the griffins well, the 'Court Wizard' began adjustments to make its use more widespread; the potion you now hold is such a modified version]

...

Holding a 10 ml test tube, looking at the potion inside that seemed like flames, Arthur waved to Pendragon—

"For a horse, it's 1:10, for a cat, let's start from a safety dose of 1:300."

Arthur said, using a rubber bulb pipette to draw out 1 milliliter of [Griffin Physique Potion] and inject it into a 300 milliliter large syringe.

Then, he filled a syringe full of water.

Originally Pendragon was lazily walking over, but seeing the syringe thicker than a child's arm, he froze in place, even his forelegs did not touch down, just stayed motionless.

Almost instinctively, Pendragon turned to run.

But in the next moment, he was embraced by Arthur, and placed in his arms.

The young 'Spirit Medium' inserted the needleless syringe into the Orange Cat's mouth, pushing and laughing as he did—

"Hehehe, little kitty, come on, daddy's going to feed you something good!"

Pendragon initially struggled.

But amid the struggle, the taste in his mouth made him start to suckle.

Biological instinct told him, this was good stuff.

300 milliliters of [Griffin Physique Potion] mixture was thus consumed by Pendragon.

Then, the little kitty, as if drunk, staggered towards the Cat's Nest, and the moment he entered, he flopped down and began to snore loudly.

Meanwhile, Fujin, who had been standing as a guard, also transmitted a longing emotion to Arthur.

'Next time, it will definitely be yours.'

Arthur responded while petting Pendragon's head, then stretched lazily, as it was almost dawn and he needed to sleep too.

Six hours of necessary sleep, the young 'Spirit Medium' remembered it well.

The young 'Spirit Medium's' bed was right next to the Cat's Nest.

As for William's bed?

Just the thought of William's six-legged form made Arthur respectfully decline.

Almost the instant he lay in bed, the young 'Spirit Medium' let out a long breath.

This breathing echoed in the sealed room.

But it did not cover up another weaker breathing sound.

One strong and one weak breath seemed to resonate with each other.

In his sleep, Pendragon unconsciously climbed onto Arthur's abdomen, the whole process without even opening his eyes, as if sleepwalking.

And Arthur, as if feeling no weight from Pendragon, continued to sleep soundly.

One cat and one person, closely leaning on each other.

The breathing was not just resonating but gradually getting in sync.

The cat's body emitted an unusual heat, some subtle changes had begun.

And the person?

No changes could yet be seen on the body, but that face—

Had unconsciously become plumper.

Chapter 279 Scout!

When the six-hour sleep period was over, Arthur awoke with a start.

The first thing the young 'Spirit Medium' felt was a sense of suffocation.

The next moment, Arthur skilfully scooped Pendragon from his stomach and hugged him into his arms.

Then, he closed his eyes again.

Who says you have to get up just because you're awake?

It wasn't as if he was at home, let alone living with his parents.

Most importantly...

He didn't have to go to work!

On such a day worth celebrating, going back to sleep after waking up was, without a doubt, the right choice.

Don't talk about how the plan for the day is in the morning, with six out of seven days a week spent toiling from dawn till dusk; what was wrong with resting on the remaining day?

People need to know how to rest.

Just like Arthur.

While holding his cat, he hummed his own adaptation, 'A pinch of belly, a roll of love, a slide, a crispen, a spread, please eat the zongzi...'

This melody inexplicably made Arthur crave barbecue and rice dumplings.

The crunchiness of well-roasted meat, dipped in cumin and chili powder, bursting with oil in one bite, followed by a bite of a date-filled zongzi—soft, sweet, and immediately enhancing the taste of the meat, especially after biting into the date and its unique aroma blended in the mouth. The most enjoyable part was teasing off the bits of date from the pit with the tip of his tongue and spitting it out afterward.

Looking at the shiny date pit brought such a sense of satisfaction that Arthur could eat two more zongzi.

He inadvertently swallowed.

Arthur remembered that in South Los, there were a few farms that produced glutinous rice.

As for zongzi leaves?

Reed leaves were quite common in South Los, abundant near many farms and manors along the rivers.

So, craving for them wasn't a difficult wish to fulfill.

However, foodstuff like glutinous rice, produced by only a few farms, still had to be ordered directly from the farms themselves and couldn't simply be bought in markets or shops.

Unless you were prepared to come back empty-handed.

After all, if it's food, it will be loved.

Some people might not like it, but others may love it deep in their hearts.

'I'll order some glutinous rice from those farms when I get back.'

Arthur thought as he started getting up from bed.

The young 'Spirit Medium' still smelled the fragrance of 'breakfast', even though it was already noon—with a compulsory six-hour sleep period and no longer needing to buy newspapers in the morning, Arthur's recent routine had become sleeping before dawn, waking up at noon for the first meal, having the second in the afternoon, the third in the evening, and one or two more as midnight snacks, depending on circumstances.

He didn't feel uncomfortable with this schedule at all.

On the contrary, eating midnight snacks brought Arthur immense happiness.

Is there anything that makes life feel more beautiful than food late at night?

Eating twice!

After washing up and changing out of his pajamas into everyday clothes, Arthur stepped out of the stone coffin, while a drowsy Pendragon continued to snooze on Arthur's bed.

At this, the corners of Arthur's mouth lifted.

According to the records, this was a normal reaction to digesting the 'Griffin Physique Potion'—horses in North County would sleep for 2-3 days after consuming it.

Although Pendragon drank less, considering his size, a 2-3 day sleep period was unavoidable.

After the sleep period, Pendragon would enter a phase of frantic eating to replenish energy and gain strength.

Meanwhile, the remaining 'Griffin Physique Potion' could be resumed and even increased in dosage.

When a whole vial of 'Griffin Physique Potion' was finished?

There was a high probability that Pendragon would ascend to a magical creature.

Of course, if he didn't ascend, it wouldn't matter.

The young 'Spirit Medium' would do his best to find 'Sunflowers' and then prepare more 'Griffin Physique Potion' for Pendragon to consume. Arthur firmly believed that as long as he took enough of the potion, Pendragon would eventually become a magical creature—amongst the 'Griffin Cavalry' of North County, there had been a noble commander who spared no expense to allow his warhorse to consume an entire vial of 'Griffin Physique Potion', fully ascending it to a magical creature.

And the regular warhorses?

Most of the time, they received just 1 milliliter of the 'Griffin Physique Potion'.

Consuming another milliliter would qualify them for the 'Griffin Cavalry's' 'Guard Troop'.

Only those promoted to 'Old Guards' would possibly receive a third milliliter dose.

They were also North County's elite forces.

Arthur didn't need Pendragon to become part of any elite forces; he just needed Pendragon to have enough power to defend himself.

'The advancement of the 'Griffin Physique Potion' is the 'Griffin Spirit Potion' and the ultimate 'Griffin Gale Potion'... These two potions are precisely what the 'Griffin Training Method' lacks, and if I get the chance, I can ask Marinda to look for them.'

Arthur thought to himself but didn't hold out much hope.

Given North County's emphasis on the "Griffon Cavalry," mobilizing countless people hadn't found the last two potions; relying solely on Marinda's power was clearly insufficient.

Unless her luck was truly against all odds.

Moreover, even if the Potion Formula was found.

The base materials required for the magic potion were likely elusive, and some might even have been extinct long ago.

In any case, it would be a matter of great luck.

The young 'Spirit Medium' didn't insist.

"Good afternoon, advisor!"

"Morning, Simon!"

Arthur greeted back, taking his 'breakfast'—a substantial serving of fried porkchop, at least 2 pounds, along with corn kernels, green peas, mashed potatoes, and an equally hefty portion of white bread. For the drink, he chose black tea, one of the options from teas.

These supplies, of course, were sent by Police Chief Westbron.

To appease Arthur, the Police Chief was willing to empty Mount Gale Town's grocery store, bakery, butcher shop, and cheese shop.

And that was after Arthur had explicitly turned down alcoholic beverages.

Otherwise, several barrels of wine would have been added to 'Yumir Manor' at the moment.

Even so, the supplies in the 'temporary kitchen' set up by Simon, Hunter, and Newt on the side still amazed all the housewives.

The substantial 'breakfast' made Arthur chew with great bites.

This sight brought a joyful smile to Simon, the part-time cook, while Hunter and Newt looked at each other, puzzled.

The two patrolmen began to doubt their lives.

Is it really that delicious?

Why don't they find it anything special?

Could it be that they missed the essence of its taste?

With these thoughts, the two patrolmen couldn't help but look again at the lunch on their plates, putting a piece of porkchop into their mouths, still finding it overcooked, dry, and lacking any juice, even when paired with black pepper, it couldn't hide the gamey taste.

It was quite average, wasn't it?

If Simon wasn't the cook, this kind of food would have provoked Hunter and Newt to violence a long time ago.

While Simon was delighted, and Hunter and Newt were perplexed, Arthur, who had finished his meal, picked up his tea cup and said softly—

"It's about time."

Suddenly, the three of them got serious.

Two days ago, Arthur had made it clear to the three that the following matter was not something they could take part in.

Hunter and Newt began to pack up their things.

Simon, on the other hand, took over the still-sleeping Pendragon.

"Meet me in Mount Gale Town."

As the three departed, Arthur reminded them again and 'saw' them off safely into Mount Gale Town. Fujin ascended, and soon he saw the approaching convoy and the exaggerated number of...

Scouts!

The convoy sent by Marinda was large in number, with over a hundred horses and carriages.

Such a large-scale convoy was naturally impossible to hide.

In fact, Marinda hadn't ordered Edwin to hide it; rather, they came to the Mount Gale Region in such an open and aboveboard manner—As soon as they left South Los, the convoy attracted attention from many.

With the spread of news about 'Yumir Manor' having a legacy from 'Hilt Tower,' more people were drawn to the convoy.

From Fujin's high vantage point, the convoy appeared to have about one hundred and fifty people.

As for the scouts...

Three hundred!

Double the number of the convoy!

Clearly, his and Marinda's initial plans were successful; they attracted enough people.

But not people of sufficient importance!

The copious number of scouts were just thrown out to test his attitude.

The real big fish were all hidden in the shadows.

Arthur was not surprised by this.

Moreover, he had already planned for it.

After rechecking his equipment, he took Atos's Box, and the young 'Spirit Medium' disappeared into the shadows of the ravine.

Chapter 280 This Sword!

Aiduke led his three subordinates and followed from a distance the convoy of the "Lady of the Long Night."

As for the so-called "Lady of the Long Night," Aiduke had always scoffed at her, previously deeming the mercenary lucky to be selected and used by some influential figure as a mere pawn, and the latest rampant rumors further proved his conjecture.

"Humph, just a 'plaything' after all!"

The mercenary leader sneered inwardly.

Subsequently, he let out bursts of cold laughter.

This time he was hired by "Mr. Bernice" to keep an eye on this "Lady of the Long Night"—merely to watch and report back.

To Aiduke, this was simply money being handed to him.

And a substantial amount at that.

Because "Mr. Bernice" was generous enough.

But who would mind earning a little extra?

Looking at the convoy, greed flickered in Aiduke's eyes.

Now, the convoy was still empty.

But soon, it would return full.

And that would be his opportunity.

Thinking of this, he gestured to one of his subordinates to come closer and spoke in a hushed tone—the situation was different this time, to gain sufficient profit, they needed enough manpower.

It wasn't just that the convoy had many people; there were also many others like him.

However, he had an advantage.

Because, as far as he knew, "Mr. Bernice" had hired not just their team but at least three teams. If he could unite these teams, then he would have a say.

Exactly!

A say!

Aiduke understood that to attack a convoy so numerous and well-armed, those nearby would inevitably form a temporary alliance to act together.

And to secure ample spoils, a say was indispensable.

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

The contemplating mercenary leader's thoughts were interrupted by a mosquito flying before his eyes.

The mercenary leader raised his hand and gave a fierce slap, the crisp sound startling the subordinate behind him.

This subordinate, who held a crossbow, shuddered violently and accidentally pulled the trigger.

Whiz!

Thud!

The arrow pierced precisely through the mercenary leader's neck.

Feeling the pain, Aiduke's face was filled with disbelief. Without looking down, the mercenary leader saw the protruding arrow.

Bright red stained the sharpness, reflecting the afternoon sun in a strangely eerie light.

What happened?

Until his death, Aiduke pondered this question.

What the mercenary leader didn't see was that, upon witnessing his death, his two subordinates were about to scream when an invisible hand covered their mouths, and then an invisible longsword swept across their throats.

Thump, thump!

Two bodies fell to the ground shortly thereafter, motionless.

This squad of mercenaries was entirely annihilated.

As for the mercenary sent to make contact?

He was the first to die in this squad.

And the killing continued.

An invisible Grim Reaper harvested lives in the wilderness near Mount Gale Region, the scent of blood gradually intensifying, beginning to slowly drift to the surroundings—

"I want fifty percent!"

The steward of the Bernice family, his face concealed by a bandana, spoke in a shrill voice to the leaders of two scouts surrounding him.

Just like Aiduke had thought, facing the "Lady of the Long Night's" numerous and fully armed convoy, the stalkers began to unite.

However, they hadn't invited him.

Similarly, what "Mr. Bernice" desired was not just to gather information.

"Ha!

You take fifty percent?

What's left for us then?"

The current leaders of "Coste Commerce" and "Emmond Commerce" emitted cold laughter in unison, wearing bandanas and disguising their voices like the steward of the Bernice family.

For the two trying to rebuild their commerce, letting a stranger take away fifty percent was utterly unacceptable.

They would offer no more than twenty percent.

They themselves only take twenty percent, while the remaining two were to take forty percent each?

Mr. Bernice's butler, unless insane, would never agree to such terms.

Everyone had exerted effort, why should he only receive half?

This butler, without consideration for his prior willingness to offer only half to the other two, began to argue his case vehemently.

The current heads of both 'Coste Commerce' and 'Emmond Commerce' were unyielding.

The three of them argued until their faces turned red and their ears grew hot.

It wasn't until a faint scent of blood drifted over that all their expressions changed.

"Gather everyone here!"

The butler of the Bernice family shouted into the brush that stood over a meter high behind him.

Although it was unclear what was happening, gathering everyone close was never the wrong move.

Clearly, not only the Bernice family's butler thought so; the heads of 'Coste Commerce' and 'Emmond Commerce' shared the same thought.

For a moment, the sounds of whistles and bird calls were incessant.

The brush shook incessantly to the left and right.

Edwin saw this scene.

He also heard those signals that were clearly for communication.

He smelled the faint scent of blood as well.

'Internal strife has erupted!'

Edwin thought subconsciously and signaled his men around him to be on alert—He, of course, wished that those bastards who had been following them since they left South Los would all drop dead, but internal strife among them could implicate 'innocent bystanders.'

Moreover, the cause of their internal strife was likely due to the uneven division of spoils from the caravan he was leading.

Thus, once the internal strife was over, it would be time for these bastards to jump out.

And that would surely usher in a tough battle.

As for all these bastards fighting each other to death?

Edwin of course hoped for such a scene.

But unless those bastards were cursed, it simply wouldn't happen.

Once a few more of them died, these bastards would cool down and remember why they were here.

The caravan members quickly took action—

The caravan split in two, the front half continued slowly forward but not directly, instead veering to one side of the road.

The back half sped up, veering to the other side of the road.

Then, the front and back wagons blocked both ends respectively.

Suddenly, a defensive fortification based on the wagons rapidly took shape.

Inside the formation, each person in the caravan began to load their firearms.

Everyone held their breath and focused, their eyes scanning the surroundings.

Then—

Step, step-step!

When clear footsteps reached everyone's ears, it immediately drew everyone's attention.

A dark figure walked from the end of the road.

"Arthur?!"

Seeing this figure, Edwin couldn't help but be stunned.

The young 'Spirit Medium' smiled, nodded slightly, and tapped his cane on the ground while clutching a terrifying puppet, continuing forward.

"Be careful, there's danger!"

Although Edwin didn't know why Arthur was there, instinctively, the coachman warned.

While calculating angles and distances in his mind, Arthur asked the coachman.

"Do you know the Core Mystical Arts of the Kledos Family?"

Edwin was a bit dazed and bewildered, merely shaking his head unconsciously.

"Swordsmanship!"

"A swordsmanship filled with pure killing intent and death!"

Arthur spoke softly.

A chill ran down Edwin's spine.

The people in the caravan, upon hearing this, opened their eyes wide.

At that moment, everyone's full attention was on Arthur.

They watched as the young 'Spirit Medium' slowly raised his right hand, listening to that faint voice—

"Watch closely!"