

Great Master 281

Chapter 281: Song of Death. Flower Sky Mad Bone - Sever!

A faint voice, flowers bloomed in all colors.

As Arthur raised his palm, blossoms appeared at his feet, their delicate petals instantly dispersing the bleakness of early autumn, bringing everyone in the caravan back to the sense of spring with their rich fragrance.

But soon, the people in the caravan sensed that something was amiss!

Because—

Bones!

Below these flowers, bones were abundant.

Not a trace of flesh, just ghastly pale bones.

At a glance, there were dozens of them.

Even though the people of the caravan were experienced, they couldn't help but clench their teeth to keep from crying out in alarm.

It wasn't that their minds weren't sturdy enough; the contrast was just too stark.

A moment ago, it had been like a gentle spring breeze with an overflow of floral scents.

The next moment, it was a chilling scene of white bones, filled with death qi.

In an instant, everyone recalled the phrase Arthur had just spoken—

'A swordsmanship filled with pure intent to kill and death!'

At this moment, their understanding of 'death' grew profoundly deeper.

However, the scouts from various powers suffered even more.

First, they were summoned; then, the sudden appearance of flowers baffled them.

The ensuing sight of bones caused many to scream in horror.

Mr. Bernice's butler swept his fierce gaze over those subordinates who were crying out and finally, a hint of helplessness appeared on his face.

For the sake of secrecy, he couldn't employ solely the elite members of the Bernice family; he had to accompany them with some hired ones.

Clearly, those hired had greatly boasted of their abilities.

But when confronted with actual danger, they were utterly useless.

The butler quietly made a hand signal, and immediately five elites from the Bernice family formed a small team to reconnoiter.

The remaining members picked up shields and moved closer to the butler.

Meanwhile, the butler turned around and cast his gaze towards a man in a long robe who had been standing behind him.

"Master, could you please tell us what exactly has happened?"

The butler first bowed, then asked with utmost respect.

"Hmm!"

The man, clearly a Mystic Side Person, nodded his head arrogantly and then began to murmur.

The Bernice family's butler was used to the arrogance of this Mystic Side Person.

This 'Master Bolbinton' was someone his master, Mr. Bernice, had hired with a huge sum of money and under an impossible condition, paying an unimaginable price after something unfortunate had befallen the Bernice family; unlike the previous Mystic Side Persons supported by the family.

This master was a true 'Arcana Level'.

In South Los, he might not be well-known, but in the Nearshore Islands, he was famously known as 'Stormcaller'.

If it weren't for this mission that required secrecy and was extremely important, such a master would never be following him.

Thus, the old butler never once panicked.

Compared to the calm Bernice butler, the current heirs of Coste Commerce and Emmond Commerce, seeing the flowers intermingled with white bones, smelling the intense fragrance, felt their throats dry out and their brains went into shutdown mode.

These two were not the original rightful heirs of their respective commerce companies.

They had taken their positions only after the other heirs had either died or disappeared, having never seen such a scene before.

Behind their masks, their faces had already turned deathly pale, the heir from Emmond Commerce particularly trembling as he shouted.

"R-retreat!"

Nevertheless, no one paid any attention to this heir anymore.

Everyone's eyes turned towards what appeared in front of the 'Stormcaller' Bolbinton—as complex Glyphic Language formed, a round mirror appeared there.

In the mirror, Arthur stood among the flowers, raising his right hand high while slowly saying.

"Song of Death. Flower Sky Mad Bone—"

His voice was steady and his expression indifferent, but witnessing this scene, 'Stormcaller' Bolbinton was sweating profusely.

Because, in Bolbinton's perception, a dense death qi was rising from the field of flowers, surging towards the legendary Arthur Kredos.

No!

Not rising!

It was erupting!

Such intense death qi couldn't be described merely as rising; it was erupting!

Only an eruption, like that of a volcano, could truly depict the amount of death qi he was sensing at that moment!

Vast and dense Death Qi surged into the sky, instantly causing countless flowers to wilt and wither, leaving only yellowed, dried wild grass.

Bleak, desolate, and deathly silent.

It seemed as though the entire world was marching toward death.

Witnessing this scene, the 'Stormcaller,' Bolbinton's eyelids twitched violently.

"Entrant!"

"A true 'Entrant!'"

After crying out in alarm, Bolbinton turned and ran.

Before this, Bolbinton had been doubting the authenticity of the rumors about Arthur Kredos being an 'Entrant,' but at this moment,

no more!

Never again!

Who else, besides an 'Entrant,' could possess such might?

Who else, besides an 'Entrant,' could drive a piece of the world toward death?

Arthur Kredos was not just an 'Entrant,' but perhaps he was infinitely close to the 'God Ascension Steps.'

Even, he might have already touched those 'God Ascension Steps'!

Thinking this, the 'Stormcaller' Bolbinton ran even faster.

Countless life-preserving and escape secret techniques were frantically cast.

Living on the Nearshore Islands, Bolbinton was more straightforward than the Mystic Side Person from South Los. He knew very well, if he did not use them now, by the time Lord Kredos's swordsmanship truly unfolded, there would be no need to use them at all.

As for overdrawing?

It did not matter—surviving first was what counted!

Being alive meant having everything!

Death meant an end to all troubles!

The scouts forming a makeshift army watched agape as their strongest member turned into a gust of wind, closely hugging the ground, fleeing into the distance.

Especially the Bernice family's butler, who was dumbstruck.

This butler watched the scene in disbelief.

He could hardly believe that the 'Stormcaller,' Bolbinton, known for his formidable reputation on the Nearshore Islands, would flee without a fight!

This dishonorable conduct infuriated the butler.

"Bastard, you..."

Angry curses filled the air.

But they came to an abrupt end soon after.

Because Arthur's raised arm fell.

As it descended, the arm did not speed up, nor did it slash down harshly; it merely swept gently across—

Hum!

A forty-meter crescent Sword Qi, carrying boundless sharpness, shot forth over a hundred meters ahead.

Wild grass, dry trees, bizarre rocks.

Longswords, firearms, armor.

At that moment, all were split in two.

The young 'Spirit Medium' slowly lowered his hand, his voice growing softer.

"Sever!"

Uttering that final word, the young 'Spirit Medium' turned away directly.

Behind him, the cleaved wild grass, dry trees, and bizarre rocks fell, and so did the longswords, firearms, and armor.

That naturally included the people wielding longswords and firearms, wearing armor.

The crimson seeped and gathered among the flesh.

Then came—

Puh, puh puh!.

One blood fountain after another burst forth.

In just an instant, crimson filled the world, like vibrant flowers blooming anew in the wilderness, yet devoid of any scent, filled only with countless groans and screams.

Ghastly, yet filled with a bizarre sense of beauty.

It made one's scalp tingle and raised the hairs on one's back.

At this moment, the people in the caravan collectively inhaled a breath of cold air.

Hiss!

Chapter 282: Self-Cultivation of the 'Spirit Medium'!

The intake of breath was filled with astonishment and fear.

Moreover, as Arthur approached, the members of the convoy involuntarily stepped back.

It wasn't that they were cowards—on the contrary, those selected by Edwin to be part of the convoy were no cowards.

They were all veterans who had seen bloodshed.

Each of them could be considered elite if placed in a regular company.

They were also among the earliest to establish the reputation of Lady of the Long Night.

Yet, the sight of Arthur, who had slain over a hundred men with a single sword strike, still unveiled the fear in their hearts, a fundamental instinct of creatures before a mightier being.

Yet, in the next moment, as the members of the convoy came to their senses, they stood still, and the look in their eyes towards Arthur no longer contained any astonishment or fear, but only...

Respect!

When Arthur passed by, the convoy members unconsciously stepped back and then bowed their heads, bending slightly in a gesture of respect.

As Arthur moved forward, their postures subtly adjusted to always face him.

Every member of the convoy did this, none daring to overstep.

Because—

The rule known as 'power,' read as 'those who are powerful,' influenced them.

Even the team leader, Edwin, was no exception.

The coachman Edwin seemed as if he had lost his soul, mumbling to himself.

"Song of Death. Flower Sky Mad Bone. Break?!"

"Is this the Core Mystical Arts of the Kledos Family?!"

And when Arthur walked up to him, the coachman immediately gave a respectful greeting.

"Your might has been an eye-opener..."

I had never imagined that the Kledos Family would have such a legacy!"

As Marinda's coachman, Edwin was well-traveled and informed.

He had witnessed many secret techniques, some of which were truly deemed as 'Heavenly Might,' but those techniques were core mystical arts of major powers and often required a specific bloodline to unleash their true power.

That was precisely why Edwin was the most shocked at this moment.

In the coachman's view, the swordsmanship 'Song of Death. Flower Sky Mad Bone. Break' that Arthur displayed was of that core level reserved for major powers.

Initially, he was puzzled why his master looked at Arthur differently.

Only now did the coachman understand why his master had seen something special in Arthur.

Because Arthur was worthy.

The Kledos Family must be a powerful entity bound by some rules or rituals that necessitated concealing its true strength.

An heir to such a great power...

Worthy!

With thoughts continuously swirling in his mind, respect naturally shone through Edwin's eyes.

Arthur instantly noted what the coachman was thinking.

The young Spirit Medium naturally wouldn't correct him.

Because, this was the effect he desired.

Moreover...

The identity of the 'Cat Faction' could no longer be hidden.

As the contemporary 'Black Cat,' he certainly needed to lay some groundwork.

As for Edwin's praise?

The young Spirit Medium revealed a faint smile within his heart.

'You never imagined the Kledos Family had such a legacy; that's because you never thought there would be someone who uses "Death Qi Slash" to mow down opponents with special effects as the main focus of their sword technique!'

Yes, just special effects!

The so-called 'Song of Death. Flower Sky Mad Bone. Break' apart from the last strike, was all built upon layers of special effects—when the scent of blood surprised those scouts and made them gather, Arthur took the opportunity to use "Hand of Void" to drag corpses around to set up the scene.

Everyone saw the wild grass moving back and forth.

But, everyone was unaware whether it was the living or the dead that caused the grass to sway.

It was only when Arthur appeared and raised his arm that he first used an Illusion Firework Tube made by the 'Imperial Court Jester' Harrington.

As the flowers began to bloom, the corpses previously dragged by the "Hand of Void" were already being burned by "Deathly Fire," and Arthur even adjusted the color of the flowers produced by the Illusion Firework Tube to serve as a cover.

The distinct fragrance of the illusion flowers further distracted everyone, making it impossible to notice the burning until Arthur used the "Hand of Void" to lift those bones that had already turned white, startling everyone with the sight.

Then, as the illusion flowers' time ended, more skeletons were revealed.

By this point, Arthur had completed all the preliminary preparations.

Next was the main event, the "Death Qi Slash"!

Arthur did not use the Death Qi from the Reservoir of Death Qi; the existing Death Qi and the pure Death Qi transformed from the scouts' flesh were more than enough to create an expansive Death Qi Slash, projecting forty meters forward and extending a hundred meters.

A forty-meter "Death Qi Slash" consumed 400 points of Death Qi.

Projecting forward a hundred meters consumed 100 points of Death Qi.

However, Arthur's Death Qi had not run out; as the "Death Qi Slash" slaughtered more than two hundred people, more Death Qi began to surge into Arthur's body.

Almost instantly, Arthur's Death Qi had once again reached 500.

Unlike XP, which needed to be painstakingly sought.

Death Qi was so endearing, so selfless.

It did not require you to actively seek it out; it would actively find you, stick to you, and merge with you.

When you used it as a stepping-stone to seek more XP, it silently supported you and even strived harder to bring more Death Qi.

Simply a moment of distraction, and the Death Qi incremented by +1.

Watching his Death Qi continuously increase, Arthur released a heartfelt exclamation from deep within.

Meanwhile, on the surface, under the watchful eyes of Edwin and the rest of the caravan, a trace of mild compassion surfaced on Arthur's face.

"I need to let them rest completely."

The young 'Spirit Medium' pointed towards the bodies behind him.

Immediately, everyone treated him with solemn respect.

They had seen many strong individuals capable of killing enemies before.

However, this was the first time they had seen a powerful individual who would tend to the enemies' bodies after slaying them.

What a true gentleman.

Such mercy had only been shown by nobles of the Imperial Age.

This, indeed, embodied the true glory of nobility.

"Lord Kledos, do you need help?"

The coachman asked directly.

"Edwin, we are friends, just continue to call me Arthur—could you help me dig a deep pit here?"

Make it as deep as possible; I do not want them to be disturbed by wild beasts in their rest."

Arthur's words directly stunned Edwin and the other members of the caravan.

They gazed upon Arthur's retreating figure towards the bodies, bowing in unison—

"Yes, Master."

With his back to the crowd, Arthur's expression did not change in the slightest.

He still wore a gentle look of compassion, and even when he glanced at the bodies on the ground, his gaze bore a hint of sorrow.

But in his heart, the young 'Spirit Medium' let out a scornful laugh towards the 'Lady of the Long Night.'

'The Kledos family existed under different names during the Holy Empire Era until the 'Cat Faction.Black' was annihilated, then choosing to hide under the name 'Kledos'?

No, no no!

Marinda, you are shallow.

You should look further ahead!

How do you find the Imperial Age?

If that's not enough, I can push it further for you!

The Golden Age, how about that?

I'll let you truly understand what the 'Golden Spirit' is!

Arthur detested Marinda's habit of speaking half-truths.

Thus, he had to retaliate.

'The true name of the Kledos family, I don't know, how could you know?

Then I'll just let you know even more.

As long as I have enough pseudonyms for the Kledos family, you will never guess correctly!

Hmph!

After scoffing twice with satisfaction in his heart, the young 'Spirit Medium' quickened his steps.

Compared to his 'duel' with Marinda, he still had serious matters to attend to—

The stage performance was still ongoing!

Chapter 283: The second wave of victims... no, extras take the stage!

Under everyone's gaze, Arthur would pause in front of each body, muttering softly to himself.

Although inaudible, everyone believed that Arthur was soothing the fright of these lost souls, allowing them to enter the Eternal Resting Land peacefully.

Meanwhile, in places beyond everyone's view, the Hand of Void, holding Atos's Box, silently cleaned up the battlefield.

When he reached the leader of the scouts, Arthur looked at the face under the mask with slight surprise.

The butler of the Bernice family!

Arthur had met him more than once, and, because of "Mr. Bernice," the memory was still fresh.

What Arthur hadn't expected was that this man would be one of the leaders of the scouts this time.

It wasn't surprising that "Bernice" would act against Marinda—their origins were not too honorable, and only the Countess in South Los had kept them at peace on the surface.

Once they left South Los, it truly became a fight to the death.

As for cooperation?

That was the instinct of a successful businessman.

"It seems that 'Mr. Bernice's' fear of Marinda far exceeds expectations!"

Sending his confidant here already spoke volumes.

As for the corpses of the current heirs of the Coste Commerce and the Emmond Commerce, Arthur only glanced briefly at them.

He did not recognize these two men.

The unfamiliar faces under the mask, the empty embrace—none merited Arthur's concern.

Moreover, compared to these men, Arthur was more concerned about the one referred to as "Master" by Bernice's butler.

The man was clearly a person from the Mystic Side, and his strength might have neared the Arcana Level.

Besides necessary sleep and concocting potions at night, Arthur spent the afternoons not idly but reading—

Reading the books left in Yumir Manor by Fritz and William!

It was because of these books that Arthur's knowledge on the Mystic Side was quickly supplemented.

At least, he now knew what the "Arcana Level" and "Great Arcana Level" were, and he had a rough method of discernment.

Undoubtedly, this intangible knowledge was one of Arthur's greatest gains from this trip.

Even, one might say, there weren't others.

Because these numerous and complex books were exactly what Arthur needed most at this moment.

For this, Arthur once again thanked his family members, who had kept him tightly in the dark.

"Wait and see!

When we meet again, you'll definitely be surprised—

No!

With my reputation spreading, having heard some rumors, you're already filled with doubts now, aren't you?"

Arthur thought to himself, yet his attention quickly refocused, once again concentrating on the "Master."

With Fujin serving as his eyes, the other party certainly couldn't escape his tracking.

However, now was not the time to act.

Compared to a fleeing scout, the young Spirit Medium was more concerned about those still peeping scouts.

And for these scouts, he had prepared a big surprise.

The bodies were carried by the team's personnel into that newly dug pit, during which Edwin saw the bodies of the Bernice family's butler and the current heirs of the Coste Commerce and Emmond Commerce.

The coachman looked surprised, then furrowed his brows.

"These guys really are..."

"In the face of death, all are equal.

They have paid the price of death for their own peace."

The angry voice was interrupted by Arthur's calm voice.

Looking at Arthur, who stood calmly beside him, Edwin immediately nodded in agreement.

Even if Arthur had not spoken, the coachman would not have done anything excessive.

After all, they had been cut in half during their lifetimes.

To do anything further in death would truly be excessive.

The soil was refilled by the crowd.

A large grave mound appeared on the wasteland beside the road.

The people stood in front of the mound, listening to the comforting words that came from Arthur's mouth—

"Subjects of East End, land of sacrifice, where nine sheep perish, flesh and blood spires, forests of white bones...may you rest in eternal peace!"

In his gentle chant, a faint light emerged from the tips of Arthur's fingers.

With a light touch, the light merged with the grave mound as one.

This was the "Pit of Death"!

More precisely, an advanced version of the "Pit of Death," uniquely Arthur's.

"Pit of Death: With a slight 'Aura of Death' produced by yourself, mixed with vitality to attract and gather more 'Aura of Death,' and capable of controlling props for secret techniques using 'Pit of Death' as a base. For you, who possess the 'Breath of Death' Talent, it is far too simple. Thus, you made slight modifications, allowing the 'Pit of Death' not only to absorb 'Aura of Death' but also to store 'Deathly Fire,' 'Death Qi Slash,' 'Control Corpse,' and 'Minor Curse Technique,' achieving a complementary level!"

...

During a break in reading, to relax his mind, Arthur slightly improved the "Pit of Death" to make it better suited for himself.

Such improvements would be incredibly challenging for others, but with Arthur's 'Death' Talent, it was extremely simple.

After only a few attempts, he achieved the level he wanted.

Of course, he still had some ideas that, due to time constraints, Arthur did not attempt.

But the newly modified "Pit of Death" was sufficient.

It would at least leave a profound impression on those Peeping Toms.

"Next year, this place will surely be teeming with life."

Leaving behind these words, Arthur turned and walked towards the caravan.

The people in the caravan looked at each other in confusion, not understanding what Arthur meant by his words; with so many corpses as fertilizer, the barren grass here would grow more lush not just next year, but for many years to come.

Only Edwin, who was leading the team, seemed thoughtful.

'Arthur is reminding me of the potential dangers we may encounter on the way back, but within such dangers, there still lies the promise of life!

Just as life is hidden within death!'

At this thought, Edwin, who had always been anxious, breathed a long sigh of relief.

"Organize the caravan, let's depart!"

Edwin called out again.

His hearty voice immediately made the others in the caravan sense a difference.

Subsequently, the team members found that their leader had once again become the fearless leader they revered in their hearts, which comforted everyone.

And many of them thought that this must be related to Arthur's earlier words.

Yet, they racked their brains and still could not grasp the key point.

Arthur naturally sat in Edwin's vehicle.

No longer the luxurious coach, but a flatbed better suited for hauling goods.

Edwin drove the wagon, and Arthur sat cross-legged at the back.

"Thank you."

Edwin suddenly spoke a sentence that baffled Arthur, but as a proficient 'Spirit Medium,' Arthur immediately revealed a warm smile.

"Everything is 'Destiny.'"

With that, he closed his eyes.

He wouldn't rashly respond without understanding the situation clearly.

Could it be because of his recent lamentation?

It was merely a lamentation!

What had Edwin thought of?

'Truly a successor to Marinda's coachman, cut from the same cloth indeed!'

Arthur exclaimed in his heart.

Then, the young 'Spirit Medium' slightly curled his lips.

Because...

Someone took the bait!

Chapter 287: 284

The caravan from South Los had long departed, leaving behind only the leveled patch of wilderness by the road and a large expanse of fresh blood, which seemed to recount the recent event of a "Spirit Medium" cleaving a hundred people in half with a single sword strike.

A figure stealthily emerged from the brush at the side of the road.

Even behind a mask, just by seeing the eyes one could understand the shock they expressed.

As a 'Mystic Side Person' watching over the legacy of 'Hilt Tower,' he had been following these scouts all along — planning in his heart to reap the rewards of their efforts.

This 'Mystic Side Person' could see that these scouts were definitely not simple or honest.

And indeed, they were not.

However...

Arthur suddenly appeared on the scene.

Though he had been quite distant initially, the 'Mystic Side Person' clearly saw the terrifying power of that single sword strike, and standing on the leveled field itself gave him a personal realization.

'Song of Death. Flower Sky Mad Bone. Break...

Terrifying swordsmanship!

Looking at the blood-soaked soil and imagining himself in the scouts' shoes made this 'Mystic Side Person' break out in sweat.

There was no escape!

Absolutely no escape!

A single sword strike and certain death!

It was impossible to directly confront Arthur Kredos!

Even if one were to face him, one should never allow this 'Spirit Medium' to draw his sword!

This was the thought emerging in the heart of the 'Mystic Side Person.'

Simultaneously, such thoughts also emerged in the minds of the remaining peeping toms.

Just like this 'Mystic Side Person,' each one placed themselves in the scouts' shoes and quickly reached the same conclusion.

Each of the peeping toms shook their heads in admiration.

Every one of them subconsciously shifted their gaze to that burial mound.

They acknowledged Arthur's strength.

But it was precisely this acknowledgment that shifted their focus from the 'Hilt Tower' legacy to Arthur himself.

Why did they seek the clues to 'Hilt Tower'? For power!

So, if they could decipher the secret of Arthur's strength, it would serve the same purpose!

Even more, it would be more convenient and safe!

Because, they wouldn't need to face Arthur!

Thus, the peeping toms focused intently on that burial mound.

Maybe those corpses held more clues?

Maybe I could decipher something from them?

If I can decipher even a bit, I could become as powerful as that 'Spirit Medium'!

Nearly every one of the peeping toms thought this way.

They had boundless confidence.

They always thought they were special.

Even among these peeping toms, some were already fantasizing that if they could uncover the secret of Arthur's power, they could defeat him and conveniently seize the 'Hilt Tower' legacy!

Prideful and foolishly blind.

These emerged peeping toms eyed each other and slowly moved towards the burial mound; as the first one began to dig, the others became even more desperate to do so.

Each one dug with all their might, some using swords, others using daggers, and some barehanded.

Huff, huff!

Intense breathing merged into a continuous sound.

Not from exhaustion, but from excitement.

A dense aura of vitality gathered in such breathing, quickly reaching the threshold set by Arthur's 'Pit of Death'—

Hidden within the mound, two 'Pits of Death' on a particular corpse were almost simultaneously activated.

One 'Pit of Death' released 'Deathly Fire' that incinerated the corpses within the mound, feeding all the death qi to another 'Pit of Death' containing 'Death Qi Slash'!

Whizz!

In the clear ringing of a sword, dense death qi spread all around.

The peeping toms who were digging immediately realized something was wrong.

They wanted to retreat at once.

But, it was too late.

They were fast.

But the sword qi was faster.

An arc of pure white Sword Qi shot out from the mound, instantly sweeping across the bodies of these people.

Thud, thud thud!

It was almost a replay of the scene where they had been bisected at the waist.

These Peeping Toms no longer possessed their previous greed and confidence; all that was left were their wails.

Then, a scroll rolled down from the mound.

The unsecured scroll unfurled as it tumbled.

In blood-red lettering, it read—

Disturb the peace of the dead, and die!

The words were written by finger.

Within the crimson, each character was tinged with an indescribable ominousness, making anyone who saw them feel uneasy, especially the word "die," which seemed cursed in itself.

Or more accurately...

It was indeed a curse!

Seeing this word, those Peeping Toms who were better hidden and had not revealed themselves quickly retreated.

Fujin observed this scene closely.

A few minutes later, Arthur reappeared at the site.

The young 'Spirit Medium' looked at the corpses on the ground with a look of helpless compassion in his eyes.

"Greed is a poison; it corrupts your soul and leads you astray in your pursuit of power."

In a soft sigh, the young 'Spirit Medium' began once more to soothe the souls of the deceased—

Compared to merely acquiring some money before.

This time, the gains were much more substantial.

Fifteen scrolls, even if they were all low-level ones like "Flame Arrows" and "Ice Arrows," just sharing a small portion of them was far more valuable than the total of the previous monetary gains.

Six bottles of low-level Healing Potions, Arthur accepted them without rejection.

The only regret for Arthur was the lack of Arcane Artifacts.

Clearly, these Peeping Toms were still insignificant.

Immediately, Arthur looked forward with anticipation.

He was looking forward to the next actors to take the stage.

Thus, he gratefully allowed these 'Mystic Side Persons' a peaceful rest in the earth, again writing the words "Disturb the peace of the dead, and die," and adding a "Minor Curse Technique" from the "Pit of Death."

Unlike before when he had used "Hand of Void" to secretly insert it into the mound.

This time, Arthur wrote it openly and placed it into a new, small mound.

Then, Arthur stood in front of the two mounds, large and small, softly blessing the deceased.

After all, if you're going to play a part, you need to play it fully!

Washing feet, of course, one must reach the third floor!

Arthur did not know if anyone would be watching this place, but what he intended was that even if someone did, they would only see a young, straightforward, simple, and kind 'Spirit Medium' with a compassionate heart.

By the time Arthur returned to the caravan, the caravan had already neared 'Yumir Manor.'

"Has someone really disturbed the eternal rest of the dead?"

The driver, Edwin, noticing the mud-stained outer coat on Arthur, furrowed his brows, a flash of anger in his eyes.

"They have received their due punishment—

In front of death, everyone is equal."

Arthur sighed softly.

As for him having destroyed the mound and set a trap using the corpses inside?

That was different!

He did it for protection!

With different intentions, naturally, it doesn't count, does it?

"May they rest in peace!"

Edwin immediately guessed the fate of those fellows, and the driver had no further reactions; the journey afterward was extremely smooth.

When the caravan reached the entrance to 'Yumir Manor' ravine, Edwin began to direct the caravan to camp temporarily.

A single-person carriage could still barely make it into the ravine, but the freight wagons certainly could not.

Therefore, they had to unload the large cache of munitions out and re-load them onto the wagons.

And this would take at least a day's labor.

After all, it included twenty Little Emperor Cannons—these cannons were of utmost importance and the most laborious task.

Edwin began arranging for the transportation of munitions, purchase of Food, and setting up night watch.

Just then, as Edwin, who was directing his subordinates, and the squad leaders in the caravan were getting organized, they suddenly heard the young 'Spirit Medium' say—

"They're here!"

Chapter 285: Confrontation!

Hearing Arthur's words, Edwin made a hand gesture to one of his squad leaders.

Immediately, the squad leader jumped onto a cart prepared for this very purpose—the horse had already been unbridled, and the cart, balanced on a wooden box underneath, was similarly stacked with wooden boxes in a bottom-three, middle-two, top-one arrangement.

A temporary watchtower was thus formed.

And the squad leader's eyesight was sufficiently sharp; in just a few seconds of looking, he made everything out clearly.

"It's the nobles, those bastards from the houses of West Berlin and Ainhars!"

The squad leader reported in a low voice.

Arthur clearly heard the squad leader's reference to the Marquess of West Berlin and the Marquess of Ainhars—bereft of any honorifics or titles, and with a tone rich in disdain and insult.

Although the nobility's authority had greatly diminished since the 'Pioneer Era', such a reference was still incredibly bold—in public settings, including in South Los, nobles were still to be addressed with respect as prescribed by the new laws, with violators subject to flogging.

Of course, most of the time, people's references to nobles were no longer so rigid, a mere formality.

But as for such irreverence as exhibited by this squad leader, most people did not dare.

After all, a whipping would be painful.

And the squad leader's disregard naturally stemmed from the so-called 'Lady of the Long Night'.

Arthur could easily imagine how Marinda, who had recently been harassed by the West Berlin and Ainhars families, must have been cursing them in private.

Unfortunately, he hadn't witnessed it.

Otherwise, he would certainly take the opportunity to tease her a bit and give Marinda's nerves a little jolt.

Just pure banter between friends, surely not because Marinda had stated that the 'Kledos Family' couldn't possibly be without their muggles and certainly had their weaknesses.

He, Arthur Kledos, as a young, upright, naive, and kind 'Spirit Medium', how could he ever be so petty?

It was all misconception, pure misconception.

Arthur thought this with absolute certainty, and at the same time, began to adjust himself.

Compared to the light appetizers that had come before, the group arriving now was the main course.

He needed to muster all of his energy to face them.

Perhaps, the nobility were annoying.

But, they were also powerful.

With their Bloodline Talents and years of accumulated knowledge and wealth, whether others acknowledged it or not, these people were the high-rankers of the current world.

Even with the advent of gunpowder in the 'Pioneer Era', it was still the same.

Moreover, this status quo would persist for a long time to come.

The rise of gunpowder?

With the presence of the 'Mystic Side', it was destined to be suppressed.

Unless...

A war swept the world, leaving all the nobles exhausted and forced to enlist more commoners.

Only then would gunpowder truly rise and unleash a power so unexpected to those nobles.

Now?

One must play by the rules.

Standing before the mountain stream, Arthur watched the two groups of cavalry, moving in parallel yet starkly distinct from each other—each group comprised thirty-one horsemen, with the leading rider in each bearing a Swallowtail Flag.

The blue Swallowtail Flag depicted a spread-winged eagle, its eyes sharp as knives.

The red Swallowtail Flag displayed two crossed Longswords, their edges manifest and formidable.

The former represented the Marquess of West Berlin.

The latter represented the Marquess of Ainhars.

Clop clop clop!

The uniform beat of horseshoes and the friction of armor created a unique rhythm; under the slanted sunlight, the armor reflected a blinding brilliance.

The radiance shone upon everyone present.

Except for myself, within the armor.

Edwin, one step behind, took his place behind Arthur. The coachman squinted his eyes to observe the two squads of cavalry with a clearer gaze while his right hand, hidden behind his back, continuously gestured.

Immediately, aside from the twenty people who had left to purchase provisions and supplies, the remaining one hundred and thirty swiftly sprang into action.

The one hundred and thirty people pushed the carts to form two parallel rows, less than two meters apart, after which fifty of them began to mount their horses.

The remaining eighty stood in left, center, and right formations.

The thirty in the middle, with twenty-five on each side, led by their respective captains, knelt in the front row, half-knelt in the second, and stood upright in the last, uniformly raising the firearms in their hands.

Among those who mounted their horses from the fifty members of the caravan, five elites had already charged out.

Not to break the formation.

But for reconnaissance.

Their mission was to scout the surroundings for any ambush or traps.

If there were any, they would report back.

If not, they would send out a signal, and the following cavalry would then make a detour to encircle from behind or cut in at an angle.

As the caravan members formed a barricade with their carts, the cavalry of the Marquesses of Seberlin and Ainhars continued to advance.

When the caravan members arranged a line of battle formation, the cavalry of the Marquesses of Seberlin and Ainhars slowed their advance.

As the caravan's cavalry dispatched scout riders, the cavalry of the Marquesses of Seberlin and Ainhars halted their march.

It wasn't out of fear!

We did not come for war!

Kalal, the envoy of the Marquess of Ainhars, assured himself, but his gaze, fixed on the 'Lady of the Long Night's' caravan, was that of a wild beast ready to pick its prey.

Kalal swore on his noble honor that the so-called merchant escort in front of him was an army!

Moreover, it was an army consisting of veterans who had trained exclusively in the elite military fashion and participated in more than one battle!

Look at their skilled horsemanship, the composure they show in the face of approaching cavalry, and the way the commander responds; they've already surpassed the private armies of most nobles.

"Damn it!

What does she want to do?

She's raised an army!"

Unable to contain himself, Kalal cursed without regard for decorum.

Jimte, on the other hand, watched this 'army' with great interest. To his knowledge, the 'Lady of the Long Night' had nearly a thousand people guarding her caravan. Of course, it was declared outwardly to protect the growing business of the caravan. If all thousand of them were the level of veterans seen here, it would be enough to give any local lord a headache.

Right, this lady also owns four private islands near the Nearshore Islands of South Los.

She claims they are for cultivating sugarcane.

While sugarcane is indeed produced there, it does not impede the likelihood that similar escort teams exist on the islands.

More importantly, this lady has the 'Long Night' as her flagship, made up of three fleets with thirty-seven large vessels each.

This three-fleet venture probably staffs about five thousand people...

As he pondered the secret intel passed within his family, Jimte couldn't help but click his tongue and mutter.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk, what a terrifying woman!

South Los is truly a fearsome place!

One Mother Tigress was already daunting enough, and now here comes another...

It's truly perilous!"

While Jimte said this, his gaze passed over the members of the caravan, focusing on the conspicuous black figure in the crowd, his eyes lightening with excitement—

'Arthur, huh?

I've finally seen you!'

Chapter 286 Since I was young, I've had one goal!

Arthur immediately noticed Jimte's gaze.

Instantly, Arthur frowned in secret.

Because the other's gaze was so strange.

Such excitement was definitely not what one should feel upon seeing a stranger!

But Arthur was certain he had never met the person before!

As Arthur was still puzzled, Jimte had already dismounted, the emissary of the Marquess of Seberlin walked briskly to the front of the mountain stream, removed his wide-brimmed hat decorated with a bunch of white feathers, raised his hands, and revealed his chest wrapped in blue uniform.

As Jimte dismounted, the muzzles of the convoy members' firearms were vaguely aimed at the noble emissary.

And at this moment, Jimte opened his arms, almost as if he were welcoming the muzzles.

"I come on behalf of the Marquess of Seberlin!

I have no ill intent!

Only to visit Lord Arthur Kredos!"

Jimte stood there, saying loudly with a smile on his face.

A face with no sharp angles inherently carried a charm, and coupled with his pale skin and the current smile, it was very easy to gain the favor of strangers.

However, Arthur and Edwin remained on guard.

A smile was not a big deal.

But a person who could still smile in the face of hundreds of aimed firearms was definitely no ordinary person.

Especially his consistently calm demeanor, which was enough to suggest he was confident of victory.

Edwin casually glanced at Arthur.

Arthur's demeanor remained calm as he nodded slightly.

Strange as the other's gaze was, the scene before him was nonetheless a step in his plan, and naturally, it would not change.

Following Arthur's nod, Edwin waved his hand.

The convoy members standing in the middle immediately lowered their firearms and made way.

Jimte stepped forward without hesitation.

But the emissary of the Marquess of Ainhars following behind him wore a look of disdain.

It was disdain both for Jimte's loss of dignity when treating commoners as a noble and for Arthur's easy trust in others.

If it were him?

He would definitely give the order to fire.

Noble Honor?

Isn't slaying enemies on the battlefield also noble honor?

Arthur keenly sensed the hostility in the eyes of the Marquess of Ainhars' envoy.

The young 'Spirit Medium' naturally guessed what the other was thinking.

Nobles are not to be trusted!

That phrase was not simply said in jest.

However, Arthur was more concerned with Jimte, who had now approached him.

Compared to his previous composure, the excitement in Jimte's eyes became even more apparent as he got closer —

"Arthur, I've finally met you!"

Jimte spoke in a lowered voice.

Arthur became even more perplexed.

"Eagle Eye," "Insight" flickered repeatedly, but all he saw was sincerity, no deceit, which meant the other person seemed probably, perhaps, truly recognized him?

"May I have the honor of visiting your manor?"

While Arthur was puzzled, Jimte asked aloud.

Clearly, there were some things not convenient to discuss in front of everyone.

Arthur, with curiosity in his heart, naturally wouldn't refuse.

"Of course!"

Arthur nodded and turned, entering the mountain stream, with Jimte quickly following.

And in the moment they entered the mountain stream, the special envoy from the Marquess of Seberlin could not hold back any longer —

"Arthur, I am Jimte Norvia!

You must be familiar with the surname Norvia, right?"

Norvia?

Baron Norvia?

The Baron Norvia who slaughtered the entire town alone after the tax collector was hanged, killing probably more than 700 people?

Seeing the look in Arthur's eyes, Jimte came up with a wry smile.

"Yes, that Norvia—however, it was my grandfather's doing. My father, having inherited the title last year, has already lowered the taxes.

But none of that matters!

The important thing is, I've finally met you, Arthur!

Do you know how much I've been looking forward to this day?

Ever since I heard the deeds of Mr. Charlie from my aunt, I had always imagined how outstanding the descendants of such an excellent person, Mr. Charlie, would be!

Of course, I couldn't compare to his sons, just as I couldn't reach the heights of Mr. Charlie himself—after the 'Awakening,' the gap in age had already put an unsurpassable distance between us, but Mr. Charlie also had a grandson who was about the same age as me.

We should be evenly matched!

That was what I thought before you killed those men with one strike of your sword!

But when I saw that sword of yours filled with Death Qi, I realized how ludicrously wrong I had been; your Talent had already surpassed your young age!

Worthy of being Mr. Charlie's descendant!"

Jimte babbled on relentlessly.

Moreover, his tone grew increasingly more excited.

Even, he started to gesticulate with exuberance.

And Arthur was keenly aware of the word "aunt."

"Heh, no way, did you, an old gentleman, actually involve yourself with the Baron Norvia's hot-tempered daughter?

Weren't you afraid that the baron would run you through with his sword, leaving you cold-hearted?"

With Ms. Camille as a prelude, Arthur instantly guessed what was happening.

But precisely because he guessed it, the young 'Spirit Medium' was unwilling to believe that his grandfather could possess such charm, enough to enchant the Baron Norvia's daughter.

How did Old Charlie manage that?

No matter how Arthur thought about it, he couldn't figure it out.

"Arthur, do you know?"

Initially, my grandfather stabbed Mr. Charlie three times, and Mr. Charlie had no intention of dodging at all. One of the stabs even wounded his heart.

Then, my grandfather also threw down harsh words, saying if he saw Mr. Charlie again, he would break his legs. But after Mr. Charlie healed, he broke his own legs and crawled back, going straight through the window into my aunt's room!

How passionately daring that was!"

Jimte said as he swung his fist with force.

'Old Den, you really went all out to woo a girl, huh!'

As Arthur listened, he couldn't stop sneering.

Truly. Risking his life for love!

Arthur silently gave a thumbs-up from the bottom of his heart.

Of course, as for climbing through windows, that kind of ruffian behavior, Arthur was full of disdain.

He would never do such a thing.

What about Jimte, who admired Old Charlie?

Well, just a ruffian, that's all.

That was Arthur's inward verdict.

And Jimte's monologue continued—

"Seeing Mr. Charlie once again, and watching him break his own legs, my aunt was already deeply moved.

She completely let go of the constraints of her status, hoping that Mr. Charlie would stay the night, but Mr. Charlie refused.

'I am here just to tell you I love you, not to win you over with my actions. I am willing to give you everything, but I wouldn't want you to suffer the slightest for my sake!'

What a gentleman Mr. Charlie was!

He was verily a true knight!

My aunt said, the luckiest thing in her life was meeting Mr. Charlie, she hoped I would take him as my goal and become a true knight as well!"

Jimte spoke with a clenched fist, his eyes sparkling with light.

'Hey, hey, you have a father, shouldn't you take your father as your goal?

And Old Charlie...

Rhetoric!

It was definitely rhetoric!

They definitely watched the sunrise the next day!'

Arthur sneered to himself.

Perhaps Arthur's expression was too obvious at the moment, and Jimte noticed it right away.

The son of the baron then said—

"My father, whom my aunt overthrew with a single sword, isn't worthy of being my goal. He is just a lucky guy who got the title because my aunt didn't want to inherit it."

'Has your father heard this kind of comment from you? He would be heartbroken!'

Arthur couldn't help sneering again.

"He's used to it.

In fact, all the major and minor matters within the Norvia Territory are controlled by my aunt, he is just a puppet."

Jimte spoke with calm indifference.

This time, Arthur didn't want to sneer anymore.

The young 'Spirit Medium' was at a complete loss for words.

He felt that the round-faced young man before him had probably been brainwashed by that aunt from a young age.

There was nothing worth saying to such a person.

After all, a distorted worldview is not so easily corrected.

Let's talk about the matter at hand instead!

"Did you come to 'Yumir Manor' this time for the inheritance of 'Hilt Tower'?"

Passing through the mountain stream and arriving in the manor courtyard, Arthur stopped and asked.

"That's right!

Following my aunt's instructions and leaving the Norvia Territory, I am now engaged to the Marquess of Seberlin's second daughter. As a knight, it is my duty to relieve my fiancée of her worries.

So, I am here.

But as for swordsmanship, I am far behind you, Arthur, so let's compete in this!"

Jimte raised his hand and pointed toward something in the courtyard.

'Following your aunt's instructions to leave the Norvia Territory? Buddy, come to your senses, are you sure your aunt isn't trying to get rid of unnecessary trouble and monopolize the power of Norvia Territory by sending you away?

Perhaps, the brainwashing since childhood was all part of her scheming!

Your aunt is an outright Ambitious Person!'

Arthur sneered to himself again.

However, his gaze still followed the direction of Jimte's pointing hand.

But when Arthur clearly saw that object, he was taken aback.

Huh?

Chapter 287: The Battle of the Youth!

Jimte pointed to a tea canister placed by the fire pit, on a makeshift shelf — upon learning that Arthur would be having tea and reading in the afternoon, Westbron, the police chief of Mount Gale Town, had "bought" all the tea from the general store in town.

Then, he sent it over.

There were five blocks of whole bricks of tea and more than two kilograms of loose tea.

Arthur had placed the tea bricks into the Atos's Box.

As for the loose tea, he found a huge pottery jar to store it.

Tea is light, and a small jar can usually hold about a tael, but with two kilograms of tea, the temporary shelf could not support it, so it had to be placed aside.

Looking at where Jimte pointed, Arthur looked puzzled.

He was somewhat uncertain whether Jimte was really proposing a tea competition.

In the world before him, because the "God of Potions," Hercules, favored drinking tea, this beverage had seen considerable development.

There were not only different kinds, but there were also corresponding teaware.

Of course, most of the time, people still preferred to brew tea.

It was like the tea bought by Police Chief Westbron, which was the dark tea very suitable for steaming and boiling, also the mainstream tea in this world, while some less common teas served as luxury goods — the "Lion's Tea" that the Old Lion of Inner Bay had recently favored had a saying, "One Tael of Tea for Ten Taels of Gold".

As goes the leader, so goes the pack, and in Inner Bay, tea tasting and tea duels had become trendy in recent years.

However, that was only in Inner Bay.

Other places had not yet popularized it.

This is why Arthur was puzzled.

"Tea!"

"Let's have a tea competition!"

"My aunt loves tea, and Mr. Charlie is also very good at it, I am sure that apart from swordsmanship, Arthur, you must have also inherited Mr. Charlie's tea expertise."

Jimte fixed a piercing gaze on Arthur.

'Heh, heh, right, right, your aunt likes tea, so Old Charlie is good at tea! Do you believe if your aunt liked eating, Old Charlie would excel in cooking, or if she liked astrology, Old Charlie would be the best astrologer?

This handsome (fraud) man!"

Arthur internally ridiculed Old Charlie wildly, but on the surface, he remained composed.

"Tea expertise, you say?"

I have some understanding."

Arthur nodded slightly.

Tea, he really didn't know much; he didn't even know what terms like skimming the foam, rolling the tea, shaking the aroma, the diving, butterfly dance, spreading the tea, and butterflies returning meant.

He didn't understand what was meant by "spring water autumn fragrance," nor did he comprehend the premium picked before the spring rains or just randomly enjoying tea that was sufficiently roasted or seeking the elusive sublime fragrance.

What could he understand about tea?

It was merely about thickening his skin and mooching off others everywhere.

But...

'Jimte, if you want a tea duel, then I guess I have to show you some tough moves!'

With a decision made in his heart, Arthur kept watching this current Baron Norvia's son, Marquess of West Berlin's son-in-law, waiting for the crucial part.

A competition would naturally involve stakes.

Even if it was about tea, it was the same.

There were unsaid rules among nobles.

"I've set the contest, the stakes will be proclaimed by you, Arthur."

Jimte's round face wore a warm smile, looking just like the older boy from next door who would take his younger siblings to buy candy, the kind that immediately endears himself to everyone.

"If I may say so, how about..."

When my fleet passes through the Marquess of West Berlin's territory's ports in the future, let them be tax-exempt."

Arthur revealed a slightly embarrassed smile and shyly scratched his head, just like the naughty little boy from the neighborhood, caught in his mischief.

"Sure!

As long as you can beat me, Arthur, I promise that your fleet will be tax-exempt whenever it passes through the ports in the Marquess of West Berlin's territory."

Jimte nodded honestly, then continued.

"It's my turn again; how about tomorrow afternoon for the time?"

Tea tastes more delicious in the afternoon!"

"Great, the location can be right here, how about it?"

"No problem."

Between their questions and answers, the so-called tea duel was agreed upon.

Afterward, the son of the baron, the marquess' son-in-law, bid farewell to Arthur and turned to walk into the ravine.

Shadows instantly enveloped the other's departing figure.

Watching his retreating figure, Arthur's face kept the same smile—

Was the other person one of those noble offspring who had been brainwashed by his aunt since childhood, whose worldview had been twisted, and who yearned for a romantic knight's life?

It was only when he had grown up that he discovered his aunt had already seized great power within the Inner Bay territory. To avoid being forced into suicide, he reluctantly "followed" his aunt's suggestion to leave the territory and develop elsewhere, preparing to one day reclaim all that belonged to him as a noble scion.

It was not important.

It didn't matter which Jimte it was.

After all, the Norvia Territory would not be left to him.

What he needed to focus on was how Jimte's 'Tea Duel' brought changes to his original plan.

In his original plan, he was to engage with the nobles amicably before launching into battle, then strike with the sword move 'Song of Death. Flower Sky Mad Bone. Severance'. His condition had not recovered, yet he would achieve a Pyrrhic victory—by this means attracting more people to the cause.

But with Jimte's appearance...

Things naturally had to change.

For example, Jimte, who had admired Old Charlie since childhood, realized after executing 'that sword strike' that his body had not yet recovered, and voluntarily gave up the duel, instead proposing a 'Tea Duel'.

Even more so, to allow him more time to recover, he rescheduled it for the next afternoon.

It was definitely not to signal to the outside world 'he needs time to recover after executing that sword strike', prompting the envoy of the Marquis of Ainhars to attack him, to witness his strength firsthand.

No, definitely not.

How could someone with such a warm smile be so sinister?

So, Arthur hastened to follow him.

As Jimte was about to step out of the gully, Arthur swiftly hooked his shoulder, clearly feeling Jimte's body stiffen abruptly.

But then, this son of a baron and son-in-law of a marquis did not struggle; instead, he took two steps forward, walking out of the gully.

The moment they stepped out of the gully, the two seemed to read each other's minds, one withdrawing his arm, and the other stepping sideways.

Under the evening sunset, the two once again became distant companions walking side by side.

But that was enough!

For everyone had seen that, in the gully, they were arm in arm.

At this moment, everyone was convinced that Arthur and Jimte shared a special relationship, especially the envoy of the Marquis of Eshas, Kalal, who clenched his reins tighter still.

As the nephew of the Marquis of Eshas, Kalal knew some of Jimte's foolish affairs.

The latter had boasted more than once in private salons about a commoner named 'Charlie Credos', to the point that he had become a laughingstock in the young noble circle of West Berlin. Kalal wondered what the Marquess of West Berlin was thinking, agreeing to his second daughter's engagement with such a fool.

"Even eagles have moments of dim sight!"

Kalal spoke thus.

The envoy of the Marquis of Ainhars did not conceal his voice; those around heard such a comment.

Then, as he directly spurred his horse to confront Arthur and Jimte, just as he was about to speak, he saw Arthur suddenly frown—

"Shadows of death are enveloping you. Be cautious."

These sudden words startled Kalal, and then the envoy of the marquis became furious, instinctively about to rebuke Arthur.

But before he could speak, Jimte intervened.

"Arthur's 'Spirit Medium' Bloodline comes from Mr. Charlie, you must be cautious, Kalal."

This explanation did not calm Kalal.

On the contrary, it added fuel to the fire.

"Enough, Jimte!

You who tarnish your own Noble Bloodline!

I don't want to say another word to you!"

Kalal shouted at Jimte.

Immediately, a look of grievance surged on the face of this son of a baron and son-in-law of a marquis.

Arthur saw it and immediately stood in front of Jimte.

He looked at Kalal and softly said—

"If your lordship cannot understand the maxims of destiny, then I, too, am somewhat skilled in swordsmanship."

"Somewhat skilled in swordsmanship?

Humph, who do you think I am?

Don't think such tricks can deceive me!"

Speaking thus, Kalal had already dismounted his warhorse, striding towards Arthur.

"Draw your sword!"

The envoy of the Marquis of Ainhars drew his twin swords, muttering as he rapidly moved his feet, apparently preparing some formidable sword technique.

But, only Arthur could clearly see that the envoy of the Marquis of Ainhars rushing at him...

Quickly blinked an eye.

Immediately, Arthur understood.

Without delay, the young 'Spirit Medium' softly said—

"Wait."

Chapter 288: Three Foxes!

A voice halted, "Wait," and the envoy from the Marquess of Ainhars ceased his advance.

"Is this a competition, or a duel?"

Arthur asked with a smile on his face.

"It's certainly a competition—we have no deadly feud, and a duel would only harm my nobility's honor."

Kalal replied as though it were obvious.

"Hmm, since it's a competition, what's your stake?"

Just now, Jimte brought out the stake of 'letting my fleet pass through Seberlin Port tax-free.' Surely you can offer something similar?"

Arthur nodded slightly, speaking in a soft, gentle voice, but his words caused the envoy's face to change.

"Of course not!

However, this is a matter of great importance; I need to consider it carefully!"

Having said this, the envoy from the Marquess of Ainhars sheathed his sword and turned to mount his horse again.

Everyone saw the noble's embarrassment and inner timidity.

In everyone's eyes, a hint of mockery and scorn appeared.

But Jimte was different.

Maintaining a smile, Jimte's eyes flickered with surprise.

The scene before him was different from his plan.

In his plan, by this time, Kalal would have already been drawn into a duel with Arthur out of anger, and he would be able to start the next step of his plan—if Kalal won, he would protect the rest of the convoy and thus connect with the Earl of South Los; if Arthur won, he would continue displaying the 'Knight Image' he had shown earlier to uphold the Marquess of Ainhars' face.

Simply put, no matter who won, he would benefit appropriately.

Just...

Jimte, looking at Arthur's smiling face and then at Kalal who was mounting his horse to leave, pondered over Arthur's recent words and suddenly had a revelation.

The son of a baron, son-in-law to a marquess, had guessed what Arthur intended to do.

Suddenly, Jimte's face broke into a smile once more.

It was a smile even brighter than before.

The man walked up to Arthur.

"Arthur, I won't disturb you today.

Tomorrow afternoon, I will arrive on time for our appointment."

Having said this, Jimte gave a knightly salute and also turned to leave.

The two groups of noble cavalry departed as neatly and uniformly as they had arrived, but such orderliness won no praise from anyone in the convoy; many simply curled their lips in disdain.

Edwin spoke up directly—

"Heh, all for show."

This appraisal was immediately accepted by everyone in the convoy.

They had all watched the performance of the envoy from the Marquess of Ainhars.

It perfectly matched their consistent perception of nobility.

As for the envoy from Seberlin?

It seemed he had a good relationship with Arthur.

He was almost considered one of their own now.

Arthur scanned the convoy silently, inwardly sighing.

Without a doubt, Jimte and Kalal were successful.

One used his inferior status to disguise himself, making everyone think he was a fool.

The other utilized the world's stereotype to conceal his true self, using an arrogant facade to deceive the people.

But in reality?

Cunning as foxes!

Watching the two men leave one after another, Arthur felt as though he was seeing two foxes departing, especially as Kalal in front deliberately slowed down while Jimte behind sped up intentionally.

'A new round of mutual testing is starting!

Too bad, I can't witness it with my own eyes.'

Arthur squinted his eyes, sighing softly to himself.

As for the content of the young nobles' mutual testing?

It wasn't hard to guess.

For the sake of facilitating conversation, it would inevitably start with him as the subject, then delve deeper into the "Hilt Tower" inheritance hidden within "Yumir Manor," but they would definitely not waste too much time on this—they would come back to him again. It wasn't that Arthur was being self-important, but he believed that Jimte was smart enough to understand why he had been so "honest" just now.

Similarly, he also believed that Kalal would make the right choice.

For—

Benefit!

His existence was of greater benefit to both of them!

The "Hilt Tower" inheritance within "Yumir Manor," even if it existed, was not something Jimte or Kalal could touch.

Any gains they made, they would have to hand over to the Marquess of West Berlin and the Marquess of Ainhars standing behind them.

But his case was different!

With Jimte and Kalal's cover, the Marquess of West Berlin and the Marquess of Ainhars wouldn't really "notice" him, only chastising the two for their defeat. Although this would make the two lose some favor to some extent, they would obtain tangible benefits that belonged solely to them—

A tax-exempt fleet, who wouldn't want a share of that?

Especially under the premise that the trading route coast along from Xisis Port in South Los to Kilg Harbor of the Old Lion of Inner Bay were territories owned only by the Marquess of West Berlin, the Marquess of Ainhars, and Count Bert.

When two of the houses are tax-exempt—

Could the remaining one be far behind?

He believed that if the houses of the Marquess of West Berlin and the Marquess of Ainhars had guys like Jimte and Kalal, then the next stop on the route, Count Bert's family, would definitely have similar guys with succession rights but insufficiently high ranking—who, if unable to inherit their titles, would need to seek other paths.

Such people, upon learning about the tax-exempt fleet, would definitely join eagerly.

Even willing to pay a corresponding price.

And when the ports of the three territories they passed through were all tax-exempt for his fleet, he would have enough leverage to pull more people into the fray.

A tax exemption meant no inspections.

No inspections meant more room for maneuver.

Selling the arms from "Yumir Manor" "at a low price" to the Earl of South Los was something that, once in a lifetime, was enough.

Arthur swore, he certainly wasn't doing it just because he felt sorry.

He just...

Didn't want to be hindered by others.

He wanted to leave himself more options.

That was also the fundamental reason he didn't take direct action when he noticed something off about Jimte. For the current Arthur, he needed a few allies outside of South Los.

They couldn't be too powerful nor too weak.

They just needed to hold up appearances.

Otherwise, it would be aiming too high.

'With Jimte and Kalal's "sponsorship," what was originally one fleet could quickly become three, or even more—when fleets flying my flag appear every day in South Los, the first step of "Mr. Wu's Exchange" would be considered completed.'

What's now lacking is "Miss Qiu's Security Company"!

Malz, where is your friend?' asked Arthur, growing increasingly eager for that friend of Malz skilled in training the Daredevil Team—he needed him to train elites.

Similarly, he needed an "eye-catching" ordinary team.

Under the guise of "Merchant Ship Escort."

In the outskirts of South Los, a manor could be set up specifically to train this team.

Of course, it would be best to find two uninhabited islands to amass a large number of soldiers...no, long-range merchant ship escorts, as those would be harbors belonging solely to the Kledos Family.

As long as he acquired the "Knight" title, he would have enough space to manipulate all this.

'Is the wind blowing?

Am I afraid of the wind?

The greater the storm, the pricier the fish!' said Arthur as his eyes narrowed slightly, a gleam shining in his dark pupils, and his lips unconsciously curved into a smile.

However, the moment he turned around, everything returned to normal.

The young "Spirit Medium" was very clear that was a matter for later.

Now?

He had a very crucial task to accomplish!

Chapter 289: The evening breeze is brisk, and the killing intent is urgent!

The two cavalry detachments belonging to the Marquess of West Berlin and the Marquess of Ainhars had left, and the Lady of the Long Night's convoy immediately resumed normal operations.

Apart from the necessary vigilance, the rest began preparing to continue setting up the encampment.

It was at this time that Edwin saw Arthur secretly signaling to him.

Immediately, Marinda's coachman followed Arthur briskly out of the encampment.

"Edwin, you must take people to Mount Gale Town right now.

Remember, you must stay inside Mount Gale Town!

Do not return before tomorrow morning!"

The young Spirit Medium said in a low voice while discreetly raising his hand to point at the ground.

Edwin did not look down but glanced at the ground with the corner of his eye—

Confirm safety, single line of contact.

A phrase that seemed disconnected, yet the coachman understood instantly.

Arthur needed him to contact his master Marinda using a single line of contact only after ensuring absolute safety.

What had happened?

The coachman wondered.

But he did not hesitate at all.

"Understood!"

Having said that, the coachman headed towards the encampment.

Moments later, the convoy inside the encampment set off again.

This time, they were heading to a town 15 kilometers away.

Arthur watched as the convoy left.

His words to Edwin were not a bluff.

With the appearance of Jimte and Kalal, his original 'Pyrrhic victory' plan had already changed, but the people who were peeping at the inheritance of the Hilt Tower inside Yumir Manor would not change—they were still lurking in the dark, still watching this place.

Among them, the Staff Group of the Countess of South Los was what Arthur was most concerned about.

The Staff Group, made up of three ranks, had been confirmed to have a traitor within, thanks to Freeman's testimony, but who the traitor was remained unconfirmed.

However, as time passed, the suspects were gradually being narrowed down.

And Marinda did not mind speeding up this process.

Especially since they were unable to intervene, using his hand for a screening was more than welcome.

Arthur was well aware of this.

And he had made corresponding countermeasures, originally planning to directly eliminate the dispatched Staff Group and the remaining peepers in a Death Qi rampage, thereby maintaining the image of 'Pyrrhic victory' and then taking advantage of the situation to enter the South Los Swordsmanship Competition, drawing out more people with malicious intent.

But that was before, and although the grand direction and outcome would not change, the details now must be altered.

He needed the traitor within the Staff Group to take the initiative and come forward; he needed to show his 'loyal service' to the Countess of South Los.

Only in this way could he better 'conceal' the relationship between Jimte, Kalal, and himself.

No!

He had no relationship with Jimte and Kalal.

All he was doing was merely attempting to draw out the Staff Group's traitor.

That was the focal point!

That was what everyone should pay attention to!

The skirmish between him, Jimte, and Kalal, along with the trifles due to the skirmish, would all be overshadowed by this matter.

As for whether the traitor would appear or not?

It was not important!

If they appear, all the better.

If not, no matter.

As long as he took action, as long as the Countess of South Los 'saw' it, it was enough!

For this reason, he had Edwin take people away and report to Marinda.

After erasing the words on the ground with his foot, Arthur returned to Yumir Manor.

The fire pit was lit.

Simon, Hunter, and Newt had prepared enough firewood and food.

As soon as he placed the iron pot above the fire pit, Arthur subconsciously wanted to pick up Pendragon. But when he lowered his head in search of the Orange Cat, he suddenly realized that, for safety, he had Simon look after the Orange Cat instead.

"Tsk, what a pitiful day that even Pan and I were separated!"

Arthur's heart was filled with emotion.

So, he ate an extra pot of food for dinner.

Turn sorrow into an appetite?

Yes, and no.

The Ritual of the Orange Cat was subtly taking effect.

Arthur was very aware of this.

Therefore, he did not stop it.

However, deep down, he had already made a plan to intensify his training after returning to No. 2 Cork Street—his rounding face, he could clearly feel it.

The rounding of his body was also on the agenda, thanks to the power of the Orange Cat's Ritual.

He had to find a balance!

If it were a peaceful world, Arthur wouldn't care.

After all, everyone's the same. Lay on a sofa, grab a phone, swipe through girls, happy water, and snacking on Xuan Xuan.

Fat?

That doesn't exist.

You're just seeing a new generation of youth through a biased lens.

But in this world full of dangers, it's a different story!

Arthur definitely did not want his increasing girth affecting his agility and speed!

Because such an effect could be extremely fatal at a certain moment!

Just the thought of possibly being too slow to dodge an incoming arrow or secret technique and thus losing his life, made Arthur shake his head repeatedly.

He definitely didn't want an epitaph like 'He died because he was fat' on his tombstone—Drake, with his 'nasty' character, would absolutely do it.

As for the increased strength?

With the augmentation of the Orange Cat and Cat's Grace. Orange, once he truly started training, his strength would only increase further.

"Maybe one day I can reach the level of the Golden Lion Cat."

The thought of that being who single-handedly hammered the entire Holy Court made Arthur take a deep breath to drive away the 'laziness' from the Ritual and first cleaned the iron pot he used to cook the military porridge.

"Why do you have to wash the pot after eating?

This is simply torture!"

The young 'Spirit Medium' muttered to himself as he turned up the light of the Vigilance Oil Lamp, then he placed the kettle on the hearth.

When steam began to surge, Arthur grabbed a handful of loose tea from the jar and threw it in.

Suddenly, the rich aroma of tea wafted around...

Just like that killing intent!

Atop the hollow in Yumir Manor, one figure after another appeared, some with crossbows, others with firearms.

Arrows and gun barrels were aimed at Arthur.

There was no command.

When the first arrow shot out, what followed was a volley of arrows and bullets.

Like rain, they engulfed Arthur.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Bang bang bang!

The whistling of arrows.

The firing noises from gun barrels.

One sound after another, each one louder than the last.

The young 'Spirit Medium' yawned lazily as he sat in the chair.

He found this chair in the manor. Not only was it old-fashioned and severely chipped, but it was also spacious enough for Arthur to sit in completely. His left leg curled up and his right leg bent on that slightly worn-out chair, his hand holding the teapot rested on his raised right knee, pouring the tea effortlessly.

The dark red and murky tea flowed into the cup, like fresh blood dripping onto soil—

Disquieting night, light like beans, tea like blood.

The young 'Spirit Medium' looked at the suspended leaves in his cup and sighed lightly.

"Ah, I forgot to rinse the tea!"

Saying this, he looked regretful, picked up the cup, and flung it upward.

Chapter 290: Night Tea Strong as Liquor!

The tea shot upward, immediately forming a perfect arc of a water curtain above Arthur's head, each droplet still dark red and translucent, competing with the bright moon hanging high above.

Dark red as blood.

Bright as frost.

For a moment, they resonated with each other.

Even if arrows fell like rain and bullets like snow, they would seem dim in comparison.

The lethality of arrows and bullets vanished into thin air within a breath.

Only one thing remained...

Death Qi!

The Death Qi that enveloped the entire manor seemed to grip the attackers' necks with countless hands, robbing them of their last vestiges of vitality.

One body after another tumbled down from the steep cliffs.

By the time they hit the ground, they were already shattered to pieces.

With each sound of flesh and bones breaking, more people appeared atop the cliffs, recklessly scattering the Coarse Salt they held in their hands.

The hissing sound was incessant.

The similarly blessed Red Brick Powder was even poured down from the cliffs right beneath their feet.

Soon, these Red Brick Powders connected end to end, forming a 'circle'.

A 'circle' that trapped the young Spirit Medium.

Within the remaining, and final, 'gap'—

Step, step-step!

The clear sound of footsteps echoed non-stop in the mountain trail.

A somewhat hunched middle-aged man with graying temples emerged from it.

The middle-aged man walked slowly.

Because every step he took left a trail of Red Brick Powder.

Ten steps meant ten lines.

A hundred steps meant a hundred lines.

By the time the middle-aged man walked out of the gully, the original 'gap' had already become the most fortified point.

Not just because of the barriers formed by the Red Brick Powder.

But because of the middle-aged man himself.

"Good evening, Lord Kledos,"

the other party greeted the young Spirit Medium warmly.

The young Spirit Medium rubbed the tear at the corner of his eye due to a yawn, and instead of lowering his leg, he leaned back in his chair, slouching as if boneless.

"I'm glad you could come here.

But I don't like the tone of your voice."

Listening to Arthur's words, the middle-aged man looked surprised.

"You know me?"

he asked.

He then proceeded to mutter to himself without waiting for Arthur's answer.

"Of course you should know me!

If you didn't know who I was, why would you bother setting up this arrangement?

There's no 'Hilt Tower' inheritance inside Yumir Manor, right?

What you're doing is simply aiming to draw me out."

The middle-aged man stated confidently.

'What an ego!'

Arthur thought to himself, but outwardly he merely shrugged nonchalantly.

"Once Freeman informed the Lord Count, I knew I would be found soon—even though I had set up an Alert Line in the 66th Staff Group.

He could only buy me time.

But...

That was enough."

While talking to himself, the middle-aged man pulled over an empty chair and sat directly across from Arthur, with the light from the Vigilance Oil Lamp revealing his features more clearly.

A gaunt face and deeply pronounced laugh lines made his cheekbones stand out, creating the impression of a mean, difficult person.

Especially those eyes that seemed as if they could bore into your flesh and dig out your internal organs.

Yet, his sitting posture was perfectly proper; his back straight without leaning against the chair, his hands rested on his thighs, and he continued speaking.

However, this time it wasn't a monologue, but a query.

"Lord Kledos, could you guess what I was doing while he was buying time for me?"

[Insight], [Eagle Eye] flashed rapidly.

Arthur saw smugness and pride.

He saw a trace of pleasure too.

Immediately, Arthur guessed it.

"How are the other members of the 'Staff Group' doing?"

"Of course they're fine!

The people of the '16th Staff Team' and '66th Staff Group' that accompanied me are all in good order—regrettably, not everyone is here, otherwise, I would definitely laugh out loud!

Those bastards, who do they think they are?

If it weren't for His Highness's order, how could I possibly work with such foolish people?

Really, do they think that I, Melvil, would join the '16th Staff Team' because I feared the 'Death Poetry Society'?

They think too highly of themselves."

A smile appeared on the middle-aged man's face.

"Otherwise?"

Arthur retorted.

Immediately, the smile on the middle-aged man's face stiffened.

"I, Melvil, once the leader of 'Death Mask', not only founded 'Death Mask', but was also the strongest in 'Death Mask'!"

The middle-aged man's voice raised slightly.

"Ah, right right right!"

Arthur curled the corner of his mouth.

He had clearly decided the other was only choosing to join the Countess of South Los due to fear of the 'Death Poetry Society'.

Of course, Arthur had never heard of this name until just now.

Before, he had never heard this name.

He had not heard of 'Death Mask' either.

But that did not prevent him from provoking the man.

Under the effects of [Bluff], Arthur's words and expressions were perfectly timed; at least when Melvil heard the 'Ah, right right right,' uncontrollable anger surged from the depths of his heart, and when he saw Arthur's mouth curling, he was even less able to control it.

"I did not fear the 'Death Poetry Society'!"

I have fought them several times!

They even acknowledged my strength!

Though those battles were only named 'death,' it is by my strength that I earned their respect!"

Speaking, Melvil raised his head proudly.

Then, ignoring Arthur, he started to pick up the teacup on the table and pour the brewed tea into his own cup.

Seeing the other's demeanor, Arthur felt puzzled at heart.

'Does the [Minor Curse Technique] affect the mind as well? Personality?'

The moment the man appeared, Arthur began to gather Death Qi and cast the [Minor Curse Technique] at him.

Although the effect of the curse had not yet shown, one thing was certain, the man's [Spirituality] was affected.

Usually, there probably wouldn't be any issue, but once it touched on a truth that the man did not want to face, even a single word would make him irritable.

Otherwise, he would not be showing this demeanor.

'Another one like Toad, Harris?'

Arthur thought internally as he slowly said aloud.

"Don't just drink tea from others."

"Oh?"

"Don't tell me you've poisoned the tea!"

Melvil looked at Arthur with great interest, confident to drink the tea as he was certain that there was nothing in it.

Besides, it was quite full-bodied and tasted good.

Arthur stared at him, and his body, slumped in the chair, straightened up.

The young 'Spirit Medium' stated deliberately—

"No, I wouldn't poison the tea!

I just wanted to remind you that in such compost-fermented teas, if they are not carefully selected, there might be hair, boogers, fingernails, stones, insects, and yes, possibly even...

foot skin!"

Pfft!