

Great Master 291

Chapter 291 Pain and Suffering!

Melvil sprayed the tea in his mouth straight out without swallowing.

But it was not over yet!

The mere thought of the tea he had already ingested made Melvil's face turn extremely unsightly, and at that moment, Arthur, who was sitting cross-legged in his chair, began to deliberately rotate his ankle.

Even though he was wearing boots, this motion immediately reminded Melvil of...

Footskin!

Blech!

The creator of 'Death Mask', the strongest, one of the Earl of South Los's '16th Staff Team', the Grand Duke of the Inner Bay's spy, was hunched over, loudly vomiting.

Sitting opposite him, Arthur deliberately covered his nose and while making a dodging motion backward, he said.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk, you look just like a dog."

Silence.

Melvil, who was loudly vomiting, froze upon hearing these words.

He was reminded once again of that rainy night in South Los ten years ago, just after he had completed a 'hunt', when he encountered that man.

That man from 'Death Poetry Society's Thirty Choir', known as the 'Left Cantor'.

He was directly defeated.

The power he took pride in was utterly useless in front of that man.

Instead, he was manipulated, attacked by that man.

That situation, fury yet despair—

'I'm sorry!

Please, spare me!

I'll never dare to use 'Death's' name again!'

He lay prostrate on the ground, loudly begging for mercy.

And that man indeed spared him.

'You look just like a dog, don't you?'

That man, adhering to the old-school style of 'Death Poetry Society', spared him but also left him with an unforgettable assessment.

From then on, he could never find peace within himself.

'You look just like a dog!'

'You look just like a dog!'

'You look just like a dog!'

While eating, sleeping, meditating, or mixing potions, these words echoed in his head like demonic sounds, and his already slightly problematic 'spirituality' became turbid, sluggish, and then chaotic.

Just when he was on the verge of breaking down, it was the Grand Duke who saved him!

It was the Grand Duke who rescued him!

To repay the Grand Duke, he became a spy!

Yes!

He must repay the Grand Duke!

The rest?

It doesn't matter!

Almost hypnotizing himself, Melvil wiped the corner of his mouth and stood up again, this hunchbacked man glaring ferociously at Arthur.

"You'll never know what kind of price you will pay for those words you said!"

"Oh?"

How about I pour you some tea as an apology?"

Arthur said, picking up the teapot, and poured tea into the cup.

The orange-red crystal-clear tea under the moonlight emitted a faint halo, appearing even more enchanting.

Yet, witnessing this scene, Melvil only felt humiliated!

An unprecedented sense of humiliation overwhelmed the heart of this betrayer!

At this moment, the betrayer was once again reminded of the moment he knelt!

Afterward, the betrayer pulled out a white mask from his bosom.

The mask depicted a human face, entirely in pure white, without any pattern or decoration, leaving only two holes at the eye positions.

"Go to hell!"

The betrayer took a step outward with his left leg and violently spread his arms upward, emitting a throat-ripping roar as he was about to don the mask.

But suddenly, the betrayer's movement stalled—

Ouch!

Testicular pain!

The intense pain that had never been felt before surged from his groin, causing the betrayer to bend forward at the waist, and his roar turned into—

"Oww, oww, oww!"

Immediately after, such screams morphed again.

"Gah, ahh, ahh!"

The protruding buttocks were too tempting, and Arthur couldn't help but use the "Hand of Void" to give the other a jab.

The thick fingers thrust in fully.

The acute pain from the double attack instantly made the betrayer kneel to the ground.

The weeping betrayer on his knees shuddered uncontrollably from head to toe.

The mask in his hand dropped beside him on the ground, then flew into Arthur's hand.

The betrayer tried to stop it, but he had barely raised his hand when he was forced to his knees again.

Pain!

Such pain!

And Arthur, meanwhile, took the mask handed to him by the "Hand of Void"—

[Name: Death Hound]

[Type: Other Item]

[Quality: Epic]

[Attributes: 1, Hound; 2, Frenzied Hunt]

[Requirements: Aura of Death]

[Remarks: After 'Tower of Mist' was destroyed by The Holy Court, 'Black Robe' knew that seeking revenge with just the four of them was not enough. Therefore, he began to seek more like-minded individuals, those persecuted by The Holy Court congregated under his banner. He prepared to wage war, but he failed. Before the war even started, his old friend and partner 'White Robe' betrayed them to The Holy Court—"I don't want war to ravage the land again!" Speaking such words, 'White Robe' stormed their secret meeting place with The Holy Court's Holy Knights, and the high-ranking members of the Rebels' Alliance Army, who were planning their campaign, were caught in one fell swoop. A hundred and forty-seven members of the Rebels' Alliance Army leadership were burned alive, and at least sixty thousand troops were hanged at 'Celtic Fort.' 'Black Robe' survived, but guilt drove him mad; he started to delve into the knowledge he had once sealed away with his own hands—sorry, sorry, it's my fault, hehehe hahaha]]

...

[Hound: A hunting hound constructed from forbidden knowledge lurking in the shadows, not only capable of understanding complex commands but also extremely loyal, immune to betrayal, with a physique as strong as an arcane creature. Balance in attack and defense is superb, tirelessly on the hunt, with a sense of smell unmatched by any other and able to survive without air; resistance to sulfur and flames to some extent, feeding on 'Aura of Death' and can spit 'Deathly Fire,' and in darkness or shadows becomes automatically invisible]

[Frenzied Hunt: The hunting hound summoned through 'hunting' can grow by capturing prey and consuming 'Aura of Death']

(Remark 1: When the hound dies, the item becomes ineffective and cannot be resummoned.)

(Remark 2: The hound can exist in the form of a common dog but will not eat dog food; however, it can drink water.)

(Remark 3: The hound can appear during the day, but it dislikes sunlight.)

(Remark 4: If one opts to wear it instead of summoning the 'hound,' the wearer's consciousness will be subtly influenced by the hound, and their [Spirituality] will become chaotic and violent; ultimately, they will lose control completely.)

...

Looking at the [Death Hound] in his hand, Arthur roughly understood the current state of Melvil.

The other must have seen the mask-shaped [Death Hound] and decided to wear it outright.

Indeed, most people would opt to wear the mask on sight, not realizing it was a summoning item—facing a mad alchemist's creation, who could say anything?

'It's all 'Destiny'!

The young 'Spirit Medium' sighed inwardly as he looked at the disheveled Melvil, unable to help exclaim—

"You really are a dog, aren't you?"

Similar words to those before emanated from Arthur's mouth.

But unlike the previous irritation, this time Melvil's mentality exploded at the pain of being attacked from both sides.

What repayment.

What Grand Duke.

It's not important anymore!

None of it is important!

All he purely wanted was to kill the detestable 'Spirit Medium' before him!

For that, he would do anything!

And at the very moment this thought emerged—

Snap!

The last nerve of the betrayer snapped.

Chapter 292: The Cursed Little Whip, Repeatedly Thrashing

The crisp sound echoed within the mind of the betrayer.

The precarious situation the betrayer had desperately maintained completely collapsed at that moment, as their already agitated spirituality boiled over instantaneously.

In just an instant, the betrayer's flesh swelled several times over.

The originally hunched body, at this moment, became tall and...

Distorted!

Muscles that completely defied common understanding grew in rhombic shapes, with the opponent's hunched back accumulating eighty percent of the body's flesh, making the entire 'person' appear incredibly slender, like they were carrying a giant shell.

A shell formed of tumors.

Huffing, huffing!

Disheveled hair hung down, and heavy panting sounds rose from the mouth of the betrayer, mixed with mumbled, indistinct words.

"Kill you! Kill you!"

The voice was no longer solely Melvil's; it also contained a hint of a woman's voice, and it sounded like a mechanical synthesis.

This voice was extremely sharp, like fingernails scraping across a chalkboard, or like the sound of styrofoam being forcefully rubbed against the ground.

Arthur winced upon hearing it.

The attackers on the cliff, on the other hand, were covering their ears, one by one tumbling down from the cliffs surrounding the manor.

No different from the first group of attackers.

All were blurred flesh and bone, smashed to pieces.

However, the pure Sound of Death brought pleasure to the distorted betrayer, who emitted continuous haha laughter from his mouth.

Then, the corpses visibly withered away at a rapid pace.

"That's right! That's right!

Death! Death!

Death is the ultimate destination!"

The distorted betrayer expanded again.

However, this time's expansion was different from before.

Only the tumors on his back swelled, while the slender body remained unchanged, becoming even more delicate. If before one could describe it as a long and gaunt figure,

Now, it was merely skin and bones.

Even the bones were being sucked dry by the tumors on the back.

But the distorted betrayer seemed utterly oblivious.

It...

No, it glared at Arthur, eyes still filled with ferocity.

But Arthur remained unmoved.

Feeling the rich Aura of Death, Arthur's heart was completely calm and composed, even if the Aura of Death contained within the flesh lump was ten times higher than outside.

He, Arthur, faced 'Death'...

As nothing more than a slight breeze.

Insignificant.

Conversely, Arthur continuously expended his own Death Qi, forming one Minor Curse Technique after another to enhance the distorted betrayer before him.

The recent experiment had informed Arthur that the Minor Curse Technique was effective.

While it had limited use against a Mystic Side Person with spirituality, continuous layering would bring delightful surprises.

Quantity change will eventually lead to a qualitative change!

Of course, constantly casting the Minor Curse Technique was one aspect.

What's more important was that Arthur wanted to know what it was like when Death Qi went into a rampage in an indiscriminate state of Calamity.

For someone like Arthur, any power must be precisely controlled in his own hands, even a rampage state must have accurate data.

And the consequence of doing so was—

"Ah! Ah! Ah!

Why am I becoming distorted?

How could I possibly become distorted?"

The distorted betrayer, who was originally enjoying the transformation, suddenly became lucid and felt the flesh lump on his back, beginning to shout loudly.

But immediately, that disbelieving shout turned into murmurs of enjoyment.

"Yes! Yes!

It's just like this!

Everything is for the embrace of 'Death'!

I...

Don't want this!"

The murmurs of enjoyment were once again interrupted, and the voice of the distorted betrayer sounded once more, screeching and echoing in the square of Yumir Manor.

The distorted betrayer lowered his head to look at Arthur, eyes full of pleading.

"Save me!"

"I am willing to be your dog!"

"Please, save me!"

Faced with the distorted betrayer's plea, the young 'Spirit Medium' remained entirely indifferent, countering with two more casts of the [Minor Curse Technique].

Arthur would never believe a spy's words.

Just like he wouldn't believe the sob story a lady on the third floor told of a gambling father, a sick mother, and a brother needing to go to school, claiming she was new to the work and not yet skilled.

Indeed, to some extent, the former was even less reliable than the latter.

The latter at least had some professional ethics; they even knew to use protection.

The former?

They were utterly unpredictable.

In fact, that was the case——

"I'll kill you!"

"If I die, you won't live either!"

"Do you have any idea what you will be facing?"

The distorted betrayer threatened Arthur.

Clearly, the [Minor Curse Technique] was taking effect, starting to hinder the betrayer's distortion process, but it also made Arthur sure that there was something inside that lump of flesh, and, seemingly unified, the betrayer now completely prioritized whatever was inside that lump.

Otherwise, at this point, what should have been affected by the [Minor Curse Technique] was the thing inside the lump, not the increasingly lucid distorted betrayer.

To prove his hypothesis, Arthur increased the output of his [Minor Curse Technique].

Instantly, the distorted betrayer changed.

The distorted betrayer again became dazed, clearly affected by the [Minor Curse Technique], which had gained the upper hand.

And after Arthur unleashed another [Minor Curse Technique], the adversary regained clarity once again.

After several back and forths, Arthur confirmed his speculation.

Just then, the distorted betrayer regained consciousness again.

This time, the distorted betrayer finally realized—

"You're experimenting on me?!"

"You cold-blooded monster!"

The distorted betrayer roared.

Then, flipping its hands, it grabbed the lump of flesh on its back and started tearing at it violently.

Clearly, at this moment, the distorted betrayer still hoped to survive.

However, as Arthur cast another [Minor Curse Technique], the adversary, now dazed, had its head crushed by a claw that emerged from the lump of flesh.

Snap!

A crisp sound, but there was no splattering of brain matter.

The shattered head of the distorted betrayer was absorbed by the being inside the lump of flesh, and then its torso and limbs followed.

When everything had been absorbed, the lump of flesh bloomed like a lotus.

And then—

A humanoid creature with a ferocious face, whose limbs had been replaced by sharp claws, appeared there!

But...

There was no overpowering aura.

No cataclysmic backdrop either.

It staggered forward, its human-like face sickly, its eyes revealing an unprecedented exhaustion.

Even its sharp claws seemed dull and lackluster.

Overall, it looked like a programmer who, after a month of overtime, had their bonus withheld.

What happened?

Why did I become like this?

The 'Bizarre' was completely puzzled in its heart.

And at that moment, a hint of pitying sound reached its ears—

"You have finally arrived."

Subconsciously, the 'Bizarre' followed the sound with its gaze.

It saw the young 'Spirit Medium'.

The recently cleared of [Death Qi] young 'Spirit Medium'.

But the instant it saw the young 'Spirit Medium,' the 'Bizarre' shuddered all over.

It screamed—

"You!"

Chapter 293 'Death' Descends, it is the Only One!

...

In the midst of screams, the 'Bizarre' faces that the 'Mystic Side' could not avoid all became distorted.

What had it seen?

It had seen Arthur sitting cross-legged in a chair, his knees raised, his arms resting on them, a lazy look on his face as he gazed at the night sky.

It had seen, emerging behind Arthur, a figure in a pitch-black robe, holding a scythe...

'Death'!

The night wind had already ceased.

No!

To be accurate, the night wind died the instant that figure appeared.

Not just the night wind, but also the night sky, the moon, the stars, the earth, and everything else had died.

Because—

In the place where this figure stood, there was only Death, and there could only be Death.

This was the rule!

A rule above all things!

A rule that could only be countered by another rule!

Unfortunately, there were no other rules here!

Even the 'Bizarre' in front of it did not possess any rules; it was merely utilizing a very special 'Undying' rule.

But such use, in front of 'Death'...

Was futile!

The moment the formless 'Death' appeared again, it crushed that borrowed 'Undying' to pieces.

It was not intentional.

It was not targeted.

It was completely unintentional.

Just as when a ten-thousand-ton vessel passes over the sea, and the waves it raises, who pays heed to the spray?

There was so much of it.

Utterly inconsequential.

"Impossible! Absolutely impossible!"

The 'Bizarre' cried out in alarm and turned to flee.

Its speed was swift, several times faster than arrows shot from a bow, but to that figure, it was still too slow.

No excessive movements.

No swinging of the scythe.

Merely with a gaze, this 'Bizarre' was melted.

Its life, its soul, its destiny, all it ever was, vanished along with the dissipation of its flesh and blood, leaving behind its final wail.

"Monster!

You monster!"

When the wailing ceased, everything turned into nothingness.

In this world, there was no longer anything that could prove this 'Bizarre' had ever existed.

If one wished to prove it?

Then prepare to welcome 'Death'.

A massive 'Aura of Death' poured into Arthur's body, and the previously depleted [Death Qi] surged to 1000 points in a blink. Meanwhile, the figure representing 'Death' began to slowly dissipate. Arthur, who had his head raised as if watching the night sky but was actually observing 'Death,' began to mumble in his heart.

'Is this what it's like when [Death Qi] goes berserk?

Using 'Death' to crush those not favored by destiny?

But this 'Death'...

Why do I feel a sense of kinship with it?'

Arthur raised his hand to rub his temples.

The effects of [Death Qi] going berserk were better than he had imagined; the 'Bizarre' born from the body of a Mutant were incredibly difficult to kill.

On the bookshelves in the underground chamber of Yumir Manor, it was mentioned more than once how a 'Bizarre' on the brink of death could 'Resurrect'.

Moreover, unlike the 'Bizarre' born from a Mutant, those of a higher level could easily 'return.'

'Return' where?

The books did not say.

It must have been written and then hidden, possibly to prevent discovery by some higher level 'Bizarre.' But according to Arthur's guess, it should be a space exclusive to the 'Bizarre.'

Perhaps that place has many names, but in essence, it should just be a similar exclusive space, only connected to the present world for some unknown reason.

As for why it's connected?

It could be the cosmic movements.

Or maybe the aftermath of some secret technique explosion.

In any case, the Mutant 'Bizarre,' incredibly difficult to kill, was effortlessly vanquished by him.

Better still, Arthur knew that to some extent, [Death Qi] could be controlled.

All of this was joyous good news.

Yet the sudden surge of kinship left Arthur confused.

Then a thought emerged from the depths of this young 'Spirit Medium's' heart—

'I couldn't really be a 'Child of Death,' could I?'

But immediately, the young 'Spirit Medium' relaxed his expression.

Because, when he had this thought, his [Spirituality] informed him with an unprecedented strong intuition that it was not so.

...

Arthur let out a sigh of relief and shifted his position to sit more comfortably, his thoughts inadvertently drifting.

"Where does this sense of familiarity come from?

Is it because I've died once before?

Do I count as an acquaintance?"

As Arthur was pondering this, a familiar scent of tobacco wafted to his nose—tinged with a hint of cocoa and speckled with a touch of mint.

Through the swirling smoke, Marinda, wearing a deerstalker cap and puffing on a pipe, emerged from the smoky veil and walked straight out.

The lady's forehead was slightly sweaty, with anxiousness flickering in her deep blue eyes.

However, upon seeing Arthur slumped in his chair, her expression immediately eased.

Without paying much attention to Arthur, she began to inspect 'Yumir Manor.' When she saw the sprinkled coarse salt and red brick powder that had been enchanted, her brow furrowed— it was these barriers made of coarse salt and red brick powder that had blurred her perception and prevented her from pinpointing the location of 'Yumir Manor.'

That was why she was anxious.

Because the other party had come prepared.

On top of that, there were the words Arthur had Edwin pass on.

The 'Lady of the Long Night' almost had to use one of her trump cards.

Luckily, just moments ago, that barrier had disappeared.

Marinda bent down and picked up a small clump of the enchanted coarse salt and red brick powder— both had long since lost their enchantments, and even the materials themselves were lifeless, crumbling to powder at the lightest touch.

After inspecting the mouth of the gorge, Marinda leapt up from the side of the gorge.

She began checking the cliffs surrounding 'Yumir Manor.'

About fifteen minutes later, Marinda returned to face Arthur.

"What, treated as a nuisance and dealt with?"

With a slight upturn in the corner of her mouth, Marinda glanced quickly over the intact 'Daniel's Hope.'

Arthur noticed her gaze and immediately rolled his eyes.

"You're just like the police—

always the last to arrive!"

Unconcerned with the teasing, Marinda replied.

"Do you think the police would dare to get involved in such matters?"

As the lady spoke, she picked up the teapot and, in the face of Arthur's expectant eyes, gave her nose a slight twitch before tossing the pot aside.

"My ship has carried such teas.

You definitely wouldn't want to see how the sailors handle them."

With that, the lady blew a ring of smoke and conjured a delicate silver teapot, a full set of teaware, and a box of tea leaves.

The pot was filled with water.

The teaware was set out.

The box was opened to reveal a layer of paper wrapping.

Marinda picked up a pair of crane-beak scissors and cut open the pouch of tea paper, only then tipping the contents into the silver teapot.

Arthur looked on with complex feelings.

If you say she's knowledgeable about tea, she's boiling high-roast tea directly in the teapot.

If you say she knows nothing about tea, she's still aware of black tea, and her routine appears quite put-together.

"Mediocre stationery at best."

The young 'Spirit Medium' made such a comment.

Marinda, however, was unfazed. When the water boiled, she demonstrated the procedure step by step, and at the end, she did not forget to gesture to Arthur to partake.

Arthur pursed his lips but reached for the tea cup nonetheless.

The Ritual 'Orange Cat' determined the tea to be food, without malice or poison.

Arthur took a small sip first.

EMMM...

The tea was more bitter than his own life.

Yet he had to finish it.

Arthur almost gritted his teeth, raised the tea cup, and downed it in one gulp.

Instantly, the young 'Spirit Medium's' features almost twitched in convulsion.

Yet, that didn't stop him from gripping that tea cup and another tightly in his hands.

Marinda chuckled upon seeing this, picked up the teapot, and filled the only remaining cup on the table—which was hers—and slid it towards Arthur.

"You drink it, I don't like tea!"

Arthur: ...

You're sick, right?!

You don't like tea, yet put on such a full display and even boil it!

Arthur was certain that this woman did it on purpose. He might not have known at the beginning of tea-making, but at least now it was definitely intentional.

"Childish!"

Arthur remarked.

Marinda faced him with a smile, and when Arthur finished his drink and picked up even her teapot, the lady said softly with a laugh,

"I'm giving it to you."

Then, the lady paused for a moment.

It seemed she was considering something.

About four or five seconds later, she asked suddenly—

"When did you realize it?"

Chapter 294: Dark Night, Cool Mint

Marinda's abrupt inquiry caused a sigh to escape from Arthur's heart.

It wasn't that he couldn't guess what Marinda was asking.

But rather, knowing what Marinda was asking was exactly why Arthur sighed.

Undoubtedly, like Melvil, Marinda too believed that the current scheme was to draw out Melvil himself—but in reality?

His departure from the 'Yumir Manor' in South Los was merely to conceal the completion of the ritual "Orange Cat."

Everything that followed?

That was all incidental!

However, Marinda's inquiry now made Arthur reassess the weight Melvil, the uncontrollable "Spirituality" from the 16th Staff Team, held in the heart of the Earl of South Los.

Clearly, he only saw Melvil's uncontrollability and failed to perceive the hidden value within Melvil.

But if Melvil held hidden value, why would the Countess let him 'go'?

Under normal circumstances, tight surveillance would be warranted.

Unless...

The Melvil who was let go had value.

What did the released Melvil do?

Suddenly, the young 'Spirit Medium' thought of something—

The released Melvil had contacted spies hidden outside of South Los, the very attackers from just now.

Ordinarily, finding these people wouldn't be easy; it could only work by relying on an advanced spy like Melvil to gather them and then capture them all at once.

Of course, that was just on the surface.

It was an excuse for the Countess to present to the outside.

In fact, what the Countess wanted was...

To have Melvil eliminate his colleagues!

Melvil's colleagues were from the '16th Staff Team,' '66th Staff Group,' and ordinary 'Staff Groups.'

According to Amiel, the '16th Staff Team' consisted of sixteen individuals from various powers of the Mystic Side, while the '66th Staff Group' was the intelligentsia from all circles of South Los.

As for the 'Staff Groups', they were a mix of all sorts, with all kinds of people.

Such a complex composition of 'Staff,' although seemingly encompassing all aspects of South Los, also, because it did encompass all aspects, made the Earl of South Los feel constrained, especially when

something happened that damaged the interests of the Staff themselves or the powers they represented; that was precisely what the Earl of South Los did not want to see.

But getting rid of these Staff was not an easy task.

The composition of the Staff was deep-rooted, penetrating various aspects of South Los, forming a very special 'interest group.' A slight touch could cause upheaval in South Los.

So, either do nothing.

Or...

If you act, it must be a Thunder Strike!

But directly eliminating these Staff was not realistic.

Doing so would only ruin his own reputation.

The Earl of South Los was well aware of this.

Therefore, he needed a knife.

A knife called Melvil.

By using the excuse of Melvil's uncontrollable "Spirituality," killing off those increasingly uncontrollable Staff and taking control of the situation again was feasible.

Moreover, to ensure the mysterious deaths of these increasingly uncontrollable Staff, the Lord Count would definitely secretly contact one or a few of them with higher status before they set off, instructing them for their mission—'Keep an eye on Melvil, continue the search for the Old Lion's spies outside South Los'!

With such a command, these Staff could set off at ease.

The young 'Spirit Medium' was certain that after Freeman had exposed that decoy 'Guardian Chess Piece' set by Melvil, the Earl of South Los had conceived this idea.

And he had been making arrangements in secret all along.

Simply put, whether that 'Guardian Chess Piece' pointed to Melvil or not, the fate of Melvil and those Staff had already been sealed.

Even without this trip to the "Yumir Manor," there were bound to be other incidents.

"It really is a tiger that does not spit out bones!"

Arthur sighed inwardly. He had never underestimated any noble, yet he was surprised by the tactics of the Mother Tigress— at this moment, Arthur even suspected that the Earl of South Los's so-called "reclusive strategy" was a ploy to lure these individuals into revealing themselves.

However stunned he felt inside, the young Spirit Medium remained composed on the surface.

He said in an indifferent tone—

"At the very beginning."

"Hmph, I knew it!"

Marinda snorted coldly, but she wasn't genuinely angry.

On the contrary, the lady's gaze toward Arthur grew more appreciative.

She picked up her pipe, took a deep drag, and said—

"At the end of the 'Silver Age', the Master Alchemist 'Lady Abel,' wanting to pay tribute to her idol 'Master Hercules,' turned to 'Potion-making,' This master possessed exceptional talent. With the support of the South Los House, she progressed swiftly, not only improving the South Los House's 'Glory Potion' to enhance its effect further but also completed the three magic potion formulas that belonged to the South Los House— 'Cat Faction.Black' must have decided to live in seclusion in South Los after receiving this secret news, right?

Being of an even older bloodline, the 'Kledos Family' naturally understands the importance of bloodlines.

Similarly, the 'Kledos Family' knows well that not every awakened family member can perfectly inherit the bloodline.

Thus, you need the 'Glory Potion'!

And what better choice is there than the 'Glory Potion' perfected by 'Lady Abel' from the South Los House?"

Saying this, Marinda stared straight at Arthur, her face revealing an expression that seemed to see right through him.

Arthur, with a stern face, shook his head.

"Pure speculation!"

The young 'Spirit Medium' responded in this manner.

Watching this scene, the corners of Marinda's mouth curled up.

She knew she had guessed correctly.

She had finally caught a trace of the man before her.

Seeing Marinda's smile, Arthur rolled his eyes directly.

"Yeah, right, right!

You're absolutely correct!

'The Kledos Family' has been thinking this way since my grandfather's time; had it not been for my parents' accidental death, the 'Kledos Family' would have started their schemes and strategic planning long ago!"

Arthur complained inwardly.

However, Arthur was somewhat concerned about 'Lady Abel,' whom Marinda mentioned in her speech.

If there were no surprises, this lady was the one who created the "Wand Combat Technique."

There might be others with the same name and surname, but the title 'Master Alchemist' was not a common one.

What was unexpected, though, was that this lady also dabbled in 'Potion-making' and if she paid tribute to Hercules, could there be something hidden in the "Wand Combat Technique" as well?

Arthur pondered.

Watching Arthur deep in thought, Marinda became more convinced of her speculation.

Believing she had found the reason for the 'Kledos Family's' presence in South Los, the lady was in high spirits and took a couple of lively puffs of her pipe.

The minty coolness lingered in the smoke, prompting Arthur to look up just as the lady cheerily said—

"When you return to South Los, the 'Glory Potion' that Lady Abel improved will be yours."

Now...

Can we talk about your subsequent plans?

I don't believe your participation in the 'South Los Swordsmanship Competition' was just for a 'Knight' title!"

Chapter 295 The Competitive Spirit of the Businesswoman!

"I joined the 'South Los Swordsmanship Competition' just for the title of 'Knight'!"

With that 'Knight' title, I can gain access to more exclusive, secret knowledge reserved for the noble circle!"

Arthur emphasized in his heart.

However, he knew that the woman before him wouldn't believe it.

Watching Marinda gaze intently into his eyes, observing the probing light flickering within them, Arthur said lightly,

"I have no ill intentions, nor will I harm your interests.

Don't forget our contract!"

As for what I want to do?

"I could tell you, but you'd need to offer something of equivalent value in exchange... at least two-thirds of your worth!"

Arthur spoke with apparent seriousness, but it was all nonsense.

"Don't you always think I have some ulterior motive?"

"Well, now I really do have a goal!

And it's a huge one, worth two-thirds of your worth!"

"As for what it is?"

"Aren't you good at using your imagination?"

"Then think about it yourself!"

"Anyway, I can't think of it."

Besides, with the contract in place, I won't harm you.

So——

'Marinda, you better think hard!

Might as well think until your hair falls out!' "

Arthur thought to himself, unable to resist glancing at the top of Marinda's hat-adorned head.

The young 'Spirit Medium' maliciously speculated that Marinda's habitual wearing of hats was due to her hair beginning to fall out from staying up late.

Marinda, deep in thought, noticed Arthur's gaze.

Instantly, the lady narrowed her eyes.

"Are you also after that item?"

Then, without waiting for Arthur to speak, the lady continued,

"Although I've tried to overestimate the intelligence capabilities of 'Cat Faction. Hei,' it seems I still underestimated the power of a big force hidden in the shadows.

I also spent a fortune just to learn a tiny bit about it.

Unexpectedly, Arthur, you already have precise information."

Saying this, the lady blinked her eyes.

Her deep blue eyes immediately expressed admiration.

She didn't ask further.

Because, just as Arthur had said, this item required offering up two-thirds of her worth to know precise information.

And she couldn't possibly do that.

Her business and future plans couldn't support such a move.

But this didn't mean she would give up.

The next moment, the lady said—

"Let's compete fairly for that item!

But regardless of who ends up possessing it, we'll need to sign another contract.

We'll have a certain degree of usage rights, and of course, it must not harm either party's interests, and each use must compensate the owner accordingly.

These terms can be written into the contract.

Of course, since you're currently far ahead of me, your compensation percentage will be increased accordingly, and mine will be reduced."

Marinda said earnestly.

Arthur: ...

I was just rambling, and there really is such a thing?

And it's also related to the 'South Los Swordsmanship Competition'?

Arthur was full of surprise inside, but outwardly, he remained composed.

Such a contract was extremely advantageous for him, and Arthur naturally had no reason to refuse. Moreover, he had inadvertently gained a very important piece of information.

He had hit the jackpot.

However, he had also 'leaked' corresponding information, which needed to be compensated for.

Even if Marinda had 'guessed' this herself, without his 'hints,' how could Marinda have figured it out?

'Spirit Medium' money is not to be owed.

So——

"Not enough!"

Arthur said.

Marinda didn't argue.

Because, if it really was that item, it truly wasn't enough.

The lady sighed.

"You nitpicking fellow!"

Alright, I know such news is hard to buy with money.

So, when you return to South Los, I will give you satisfying compensation—that thing is really suitable for you... Wait! Did you hear something again and deliberately bait me into this?

Just to get your hands on this item?

Ha, such a scheming man!

I shouldn't have given you a hint before!"

Marinda was accusing Arthur.

A hint before?

The secret technique of Cat Hole or Cat Faction?

That compensation...

Related props of the Cat Hole or Cat Faction?

Arthur was delighted internally.

If it was as he guessed, then this time, his gains would far exceed his expectations.

However, Arthur sensibly did not show any odd behavior, nor did he pay attention to Marinda at that moment.

'No matter how sensible a woman is, they can become irrational when they think you've deceived them.

At this moment, you must learn to keep quiet.'

Old Charlie's words, Arthur kept them in his heart and practiced them physically.

Arthur raised his hand to throw two pieces of firewood into the fire pit. When the crackling sounds began, Arthur had already slumped back into his chair as before.

Marinda, on the other hand, was so angry that her cheeks puffed up.

This lady had thought of even more at that instant.

For instance: The reason for the Kledos family appearing in South Los that she had just confirmed, was it a trap Arthur set for her?

Arthur knew that with her deeper investigation, the reason for the Kledos family's appearance in South Los could no longer be concealed.

Rather than letting her discover it on her own, it was better to make the most use of it.

Using the joy of her 'accurate guess', smoothly lead her into more 'guesses'.

Then, make her pay the appropriate price.

After all, she was the one who brought it up initially.

Arthur was aware that she would not deny it.

Painful!

So painful!

The joy she felt just now was equal to the pain she felt now.

Marinda felt her chest hurt.

But more than that, she was not willing to admit defeat.

"Hmph, you won this time!

But, next time I will definitely win!"

The competitive lady declared.

"Mm-hmm."

Arthur nodded repeatedly.

His expression was one of affirmation, but the slumped Arthur seemed insincere.

Instantly, Marinda's fists clenched.

However, the lady knew that punching wouldn't solve the problem.

She had already suffered a substantial loss, the first thing to do was to recover it from elsewhere.

Arthur was not an option for now.

So, she had to make those gambling mongrels of South Los bleed.

Therefore, suppressing the urge to punch Arthur in the face, the lady asked,

"I will arrange the external bets for the upcoming Swordmanship Competition, but don't you think it's time to change your odds?"

"Certainly, we need a change.

Facing Melvil the abnormal, and me already experiencing backlash, I'm injured once again.

Right now, I'm hurt upon hurt."

Understanding what Marinda meant, Arthur immediately laughed.

Marinda also smiled in response.

But upon remembering her losses, her smile vanished immediately.

Thus, she decided to avenge herself slightly on Arthur, to feel a bit of comfort—

Whew!

The lady took a deep puff on her pipe and heavily blew the smoke over Arthur. Seeing Arthur's frown, she ran into the smoke with a light laugh, disappearing from sight.

"Childish!"

Arthur raised his hand to wave away the smoke, his gaze then turned towards the entrance of the gorge.

The person he was truly waiting for...

had finally arrived!

Chapter 296: The Foundation of Skeletons, The Crimson Hymn

When Jimte silently crept into the ravine leading to 'Yumir Manor,' Kalal had been waiting for ten minutes.

Looking at this nephew of the Marquess of Ainhars, who had always shown himself to be arrogantly self-important, a warm smile involuntarily spread across Jimte's face.

Although after a brief discussion earlier, the other party had confirmed his true identity, and there was no need for such pleasantries, this son of a Baron, son-in-law of the Marquis, still maintained his habit.

"Pseudo fellow!"

Kalal, looking at the warm smile on Jimte's face, couldn't help but make a comment.

"Pot calling the kettle black,"

Jimte, far from being annoyed, responded with a smile on his face.

Following that, neither man immediately walked toward 'Yumir Manor'; instead, they both stood in place, waiting for the other to move forward.

A full two minutes passed, and neither of them had moved a step.

"If we keep waiting like this, Lord Kledos might start getting anxious,"

Kalal frowned, pretending to be in a hurry.

"Hmm, so why don't you go first?"

Jimte still wore a smiling expression, even gesturing inward with his hand.

Kalal immediately shook his head repeatedly in refusal.

"You first!"

The two exchanged glances, neither intending to take a step.

Another minute passed, and Jimte sighed.

"How about together?"

"Together!"

Kalal nodded in agreement.

Yet, they still didn't move.

Left with no choice, both men stood shoulder to shoulder and stepped out in sync—both lifting their legs high and stepping down in the same spot.

Seeing this spectacle, Jimte and Kalal looked at each other, neither feeling embarrassed or ashamed.

After all, they had both sensed the sudden eruption of the 'Aura of Death' inside 'Yumir Manor' just now.

Although they didn't know what was happening inside, the heart-pounding sensation brought on by the Aura of Death was undeniably clear.

The sudden sense of oppression was almost suffocating.

More importantly, as living beings, the innate fear of 'Death' made it clear to them that if they didn't want to die, they had to be cautious.

So, at this moment, both men were even more cautious than usual.

"Together?"

Kalal asked once more.

"Together!"

Jimte immediately nodded.

The two nobles once again moved in unison, this time not merely marking time, but both showing a forward-moving stance.

Then—

1 centimeter!

Compared to their original positions, their boots had moved forward by 1 centimeter!

Their steps and the distance were measured as precisely as if with a ruler.

Seeing this scene, the warm smile on Jimte's face grew even brighter, while the pride in Kalal's eyes became even more overbearing.

"I have a proposal!"

Jimte spoke up once more.

"Speak!"

Kalal immediately said.

"Let's sign a contract, otherwise we might be stuck here for a lifetime—the cost of the contract to be split between us, it can also serve as a testament to our alliance,"

Jimte sighed softly.

Kalal did not object.

He didn't trust Jimte, just as Jimte didn't trust him.

Beyond a contract, he could think of no other way.

Even though the contract was costly, at this time, other concerns had to be set aside.

Suddenly—

Both men almost simultaneously pulled out a contract, their mouths moving one after the other as they said.

"Use mine!"

Watching each other's actions, listening to the identical phrases, they both sighed deeply at the bottom of their hearts.

'Couldn't fool him after all!'

Then, both men again simultaneously took out a second contract from their chests.

They looked at each other for three more seconds, then exchanged one contract for another.

This contract was naturally also unusable.

Suddenly, Jimte and Kalal stared at each other in bewilderment.

"What do we do?"

"Shall we call out?"

"Although it's rather rude, it's better than lingering here!"

Jimte proposed once again.

"Right, let's call out together!"

Kalal agreed once again.

Moreover, this time the two of them did not delay—

"Lord Kledos, good evening."

The moment their greeting sounded, Kalal vanished on the spot, blending into the cliffs of the ravine—the nephew of the Marquess of Ainhars had waited ten minutes obviously to hold a card in reserve.

"Despicable fellow!"

Jimte muttered such words, but he too disappeared from his spot, and reappeared at the entrance of the ravine—the son of the baron, the marquess's son-in-law, had also been late for ten minutes, obviously to hold a card in reserve.

The night wind blew through the ravine, carrying a unique whistling sound.

Arthur, using Fujin's eyes to take in everything, couldn't help but nod slightly.

He confirmed that he was different from them.

Both were not cautious or careful enough.

If it had been him, he would have certainly buried explosives in the ravine and ignited them if something seemed amiss while fleeing.

As for the rest?

First, cut off the opponent's retreat before anything else.

After all, facing a 'lion,' it doesn't matter if I cannot outrun the lion as long as I can outrun my opponents.

Watching Jimte and Kalal reappear and about to fall into a vicious cycle again, Arthur sighed softly and slightly raised his hand.

Instantly, a Labrador that had been crawling in Arthur's shadow unnoticed by anyone, stood up from the shadows.

"Kuliqi, go invite my guests."

With its tongue out, as if smiling, the cream-colored Labrador immediately nodded and ran towards the ravine.

Its speed was like an arrow, all the while completely silent.

Even when the Labrador appeared in front of Jimte and Kalal, the two men realized it only then.

Simultaneously, both men moved back.

But immediately, they stopped their retreat.

For they noticed that the Labrador in front of them was looking at them as if they were fools.

That gaze was almost human-like...

'Arcane creature!'

Both thought at the same time.

Then, they began to ponder again.

'Is this Lord Kledos's hound?

Or someone else's?'

While pondering, the two didn't move even as they saw Kuliqi raising its paw, indicating for them to follow, they still did not move.

This annoyed Kuliqi, who directly spewed 'Deathly Fire' at the two nobles' offspring.

Not at them, just to scare them.

And when the pale blue flames burned at their feet, Kuliqi's intention was achieved—both noble offspring were startled and retreated continuously, their faces showing undisguised horror.

For they recognized Kuliqi's 'breed'—

'Death Hound'!

At the same time, the two men gathered more thoughts from Kuliqi's 'breed'.

And when they saw the words burnt out by the 'Deathly Fire' reading, 'Come with me, meet my master, Kledos!' they hesitated no more.

If that intense Aura of Death emanating was indeed orchestrated by Lord Kledos...

This was indeed a transaction to look forward to!

Fresh calculations began brewing in their minds!

Unlike their previous hesitation, mutual probing, and reluctance to advance, this time Jimte and Kalal rushed toward 'Yumir Manor' vying with each other.

They burst out of the ravine with unparalleled speed, and just as the words of praise long fermenting in their minds were about to spill out, they ground to a halt.

They stared aghast at the peak formed entirely of skeletons.

How many skeletons were there?

One hundred? Two hundred? Or three hundred?

Layer upon layer, densely packed, one stacked upon another, completely uncountable.

But they could clearly see the large seat atop these skeletons—a broad, old chair wrapped in numerous broken longswords from the back to the arms, from the arms to the legs, each part bearing the rugged edge filled with crimson rust.

Yet, in the eyes of Jimte and Kalal, what they saw was fresh blood!

Countless streams of blood formed a tumultuous giant wave, surging and thunderously roaring.

Between heaven and earth, only crimson remained.

Infinite and unending.

But when a streak of black appeared, the crimson giant wave composed of blood immediately receded, and that surging, presumptuous roaring changed into a song of praise for its master.

They welcomed the arrival of their master.

They acclaimed—

The name of Arthur Kredos!

Chapter 297: The Proud One's Redemption!

The calls were as vast as mountains and seas, and Arthur sat atop Skull Summit.

When the young 'Spirit Medium' looked down, Jimte and Kalal at the base of the skeletons unconsciously bowed their heads—in that moment, the cunning plans that had just begun to rise in the hearts of the two noblemen were utterly crushed.

"Greetings, Lord Kledos."

The two greeted Arthur.

The young 'Spirit Medium' did not respond immediately, but instead raised his hand to lightly stroke Kuliqi's forehead.

He was giving his dog the praise it deserved.

The Death Hound, with its Labrador appearance, immediately showed its unique smile as its thick tail wagged nonstop.

And when Arthur lightly tapped its head, the clever Kuliqi immediately lay down within the shadows at Arthur's feet, vanishing from sight.

However, it kept its gaze firmly locked on Jimte and Kalal.

The two scions of nobility distinctly felt the Death Hound's piercing gaze, instinctively causing the hairs on their backs to stand on end.

But compared to the pressure of the Death Hound, the silent Arthur put even more pressure on them, that palpable sense of dread...

It was still there!

'The effect is good!'

Arthur, who had been observing them closely, thought to himself.

Having confirmed that the two were wearing the appropriate masks, Arthur had been contemplating how to take control of the conversation—considering the identities of the two, their cautious personalities, and the cunning fostered by their environments, Arthur decided to give them a bit of 'psychological counseling.'

He intended to use the 'Spirit Medium's' most adept skills to comfort them.

Therefore, the skeletons within the manor were collected.

Six Hands of Void built a 'stage' with unparalleled speed, using the skeletons' broken weapons as 'stage decorations.'

Of course, there was also that chair.

Arthur genuinely liked this spacious chair—not because he instinctively felt he could comfortably lie in it even if he got fat.

Definitely not!

As for Ritual "Orange Cat," it might have side effects, but as long as one keeps up with the training, surely a balance can be found.

Arthur believed this to be true.

Just as he was convinced that the 'stage' he set up, combined with the Noise Technique and the Minor Curse Technique, could definitely create the psychological pressure he wanted to impose on Jimte and Kalal.

In fact, the effect was even better than imagined.

With the previous commotion that arose during his fight with Melvil, the two were already biased, and the 'stage' brought an initial visual shock.

The Minor Curse Technique, designed for those with 'Talent,' easily confused their senses, creating the most crucial point—reality!

Jimte and Kalal could only feel discomfort from everything they witnessed.

Then, when the disruptive sounds of the Noise Technique rang out,

everything was set in stone.

For this, Arthur sincerely thanked the deceased Melvil.

Had it not been for his practice against Melvil, he could not have so precisely gauged the threshold for frightening yet not harming those with 'Talent' with the Minor Curse Technique.

As for Jimte and Kalal not noticing this place, unable to discover his previous fight with Melvil?

Impossible!

Their personalities and behavior patterns had already doomed them to closely watch this place, but before the dust settled, they would not truly approach.

And this gave Arthur the space to operate.

The young 'Spirit Medium' silently stared at Jimte and Kalal for two seconds, and to complement his gaze, he discreetly cast another Minor Curse Technique.

The sense of dread appeared once more!

Jimte and Kalal's foreheads began to sweat.

Entrants!

Arthur Kredos, truly an Entrant!

Only an Entrant could exert such pressure on them!

Realizing this, the two extremely nervous noblemen simultaneously felt a surge of helplessness deep within.

Despite their various disguises, the essence of their characters was rather arrogant—with a sense of superiority from the success of their guises and confidence in their own strength.

The two firmly believed their Talents were among the most excellent in the world.

But after they encountered Arthur Kredos, their confidence was shaken.

While the two were still searching for the direction of the 'Great Arcana Level,' someone their age had already become an 'Entrant,' and the fact that their confidence was not crushed demonstrated the strength within them.

Still, the impact was unavoidable.

And this was exactly what Arthur wanted.

'It should be about time!'

Estimating the effect, Arthur finally spoke—

"Winter is coming, what can you bring me?"

Winter is coming?!

Jimte and Kalal's bodies shuddered.

They then looked up at Arthur on Skull Summit.

Arthur's calmness only intensified their trepidation.

They believed that the 'winter' mentioned in Arthur's words was definitely not referring to the coldest season, but surely represented something else!

What could it be?

A war?

Or a disaster?

The two speculated and subconsciously began to contemplate what they could offer as a price to secure a chip in Arthur's game.

Tax exemption for the coastal ports within the West Berlin Territory and the Marquis of Ainhars Territory?

What a joke!

What Arthur wanted was certainly not just these trivial matters!

It had to be something deeper!

Money, treasures, secret techniques...

One by one, Jimte and Kalal eliminated various chips from their options, until in the end, there was only one guess left in their minds—

'He has come for me!'

Yes!

Why else would Arthur Kredos use the pretext of port tax exemption?

Because, Arthur Kredos has approached me using this excuse!

Arthur Kredos has come for me!

Aside from myself, what else could be worthy enough for a person like Arthur Kredos to scheme so carefully for?

Nothing!

It could only be me!

The instant this guess surfaced, the two immensely proud individuals affirmed it in their hearts.

But almost immediately, they began to feel conflicted.

To swear allegiance?

Or to flee?

Arthur, looking down at the two, slightly smiled within—when seeking to 'cooperate' with habitual mask-wearers like Jimte and Kalal, one must never act first. It is imperative to let these two take the initiative.

Otherwise, it would only backfire.

Of course, the premise for all this is to 'suppress' the two individuals in question.

If you let them take the initiative carelessly, then prepare to be thoroughly exploited and buried in the earth, or tossed into the sea, or even shattered to pieces.

Arthur would never doubt their ruthlessness, just as he would never doubt their pride.

So, even if he truly wanted the tax exemption for the ports, he had to make them offer it voluntarily.

And, considering their personalities, they might even throw in something extra.

'It's not in vain that I've put in so much effort to set this up!'

Just as the young 'Spirit Medium' was guessing what unexpected gains he might acquire, his heart suddenly skipped a beat.

Because—

Down below, Jimte and Kalal suddenly knelt on one knee.

Chapter 298: In front of a cat, everything makes perfect sense!

Arthur did know of Jimte and Kalal's pride.

But when he saw Jimte and Kalal kneel on one knee, he realized he had still underestimated their pride.

Impossible! Impossible!

You two couldn't possibly think that I came here just for the two of you, right?

And to go through such an elaborate setup just for you two?

Arthur grumbled inwardly, but outwardly he remained calm.

It seemed as if he had anticipated everything.

Jimte and Kalal did not see it clearly, but they vaguely sensed—before the elevated Arthur, the two knelt on one knee, their heads bowed, right fists placed over their hearts.

"I, Jimte Norvia, hereby swear by 'my own name' and take my bloodline as my glory, to the person before me, Arthur Kredos, I vow to be loyal and fearless, to fight until death—glory is my life!"

"I, Kalal Einhaus, hereby swear by the 'Dual Sword Banner' and take my bloodline as my honor, to the person before me, Arthur Kredos, I vow to be loyal and fearless, to fight until death—glory is my life!"

Compared to Wiggins's nondescript 'Lionheart Ceremony.'

The nobly born Jimte and Kalal, both of them were incredibly formal and complete.

Because—

The words of their oath were uttered in the Glyphic Language.

Immediately, their spirituality trembled.

The Spiritual Light representing the two appeared before Arthur.

Arthur did not straighten his body.

"I look forward to it!"

As the young 'Spirit Medium' spoke these words, two longswords flew out of Atos's Box—during the battle at Moon Street, Arthur had collected quite a few weapons, and these two longswords were among the better ones, perfectly suited for the situation at hand.

A knight follows.

A lord bestows rewards.

The contract is established.

It is only natural.

Since Jimte and Kalal had sworn their oaths, he was bound to respond.

The two longswords tapped on the shoulders of Jimte and Kalal, and the hilts were flipped around.

The moment the two noble scions grasped the hilts, the Spiritual Light representing them merged into Arthur's body.

With this, the ceremony was complete.

Jimte and Kalal solemnly held the 'Ceremonial Swords.'

Although they were not arcane artifacts, the existence of 'Ceremonial Swords' in some ways far surpassed ordinary arcane artifacts.

Because this was the proof of the 'Lionheart Ceremony.'

It was also part of the ritual.

As they campaigned alongside their lord, and as the lord achieved greater accomplishments and the knight established greater meritorious service, the 'Ceremonial Swords' could continuously be promoted, but this only applied to 'Ceremonial Swords' that were not arcane artifacts.

Therefore, during the 'Lionheart Ceremony,' one should choose swords as good as possible but not arcane artifacts as the base material.

The longswords in their hands were of exceptionally fine material, clearly chosen with care.

'He really did come for me!

Otherwise, why would he have prepared such fine longswords in advance!'

Jimte and Kalal thought in unison.

Especially Kalal, the young noble stripped away his mask of arrogance and impudence, touching the longsword in his hands with earnest and fervent eyes.

To this, Jimte was not surprised.

Because this was the bloodline of the Marquess of Ainhars.

A 'Ceremonial Sword' that could grow was indeed a rare treasure for a member of the Ainhars Family.

Unlike him...

Even at the time of swearing, he could not use the 'name of the Norvia Family,' only his own name—although his aunt would not mind, his pride would not allow it.

He, would establish his meritorious service in 'his own name.'

Subconsciously, Jimte looked towards Arthur.

Kalal, a beat slower in his reaction, immediately sheathed his 'Ceremonial Sword' and bowed apologetically.

Arthur waved his hand with a smile.

He was always lenient towards his own people.

However, there were some things that still needed to be said—

"'Cat Faction. Black,' welcome to the fold.

"You will follow me as members of the 'Black Cat Faction.'"

Arthur's words were calm, but to Jimte and Kalal, they sounded like thunderclaps.

The two looked up abruptly, staring blankly at their lord.

Then, both of their faces showed sudden realization and relief.

During the battle with 'Cat Faction.Black' and the subsequent division of power, the families of the Marquess of Seberlin and the Marquess of Ainhars did not participate.

It was precisely because of this that their lord sought them out first.

Otherwise, with their lord's strength, he could have easily killed them already.

Of course, it's also fortunate they agreed.

Otherwise, they would probably be dead by now.

Hadn't they chosen to swear allegiance just now because they feared the lord would kill to silence them?

Now it seemed they had indeed made the right choice.

Their lord was actually the 'Black Cat' of this era!

All the trump cards they held would have been useless against him!

Lucky! So lucky!

Both men felt deeply relieved at the bottom of their hearts.

And then Jimte thought of even more.

If the lord was the current 'Black Cat,' then the lord's grandfather, Mr. Charlie... Wait! Could it be that Mr. Charlie actually harbored feelings for their aunt?

Yes!

Only if he truly loved their aunt would he lay down his 'Black Cat' duties and completely abandon his own glory.

Only such a sacrifice could make their aunt love so deeply that she still waited for this gentleman to this day.

'So that's how it is!'

All along, Jimte hadn't quite understood his aunt's love for Mr. Charlie until now when he seemed to suddenly grasp some understanding.

A man who sacrificed everything, and a woman who did everything possible to gain more for this man's legacy...

If that isn't love, then what is?

In an instant, the traces of anger and sorrow in Jimte's heart began to dissipate.

And Arthur, who had been observing their expressions closely, smiled inwardly.

After their oaths of allegiance, Arthur knew he had to make their 'guesses' seem reasonable—which would be incredibly difficult for others.

But for Arthur, it was all too simple.

He had the most appropriate and logical 'identity' to present to them.

The 'Black Cat' of this age!

You see, during the fall of 'Cat Faction.Black,' the families of the Marquess of Seberlin and the Marquess of Ainhars were among the rare few who did not participate.

Therefore, it was only natural for him to appear here.

"From the fleet's profits, you shall hold a ten percent share—this is the capital for you to develop your own power, and equally, it's your reward.

If you provide ships to join the fleet, that share will increase to thirty percent.

I will arrange suitable sailors and captains.

And you?

Enhance your strength,"

Arthur said indifferently.

There was no room for negotiation, as the existence of the 'Lionheart Ceremony' had long determined the inequality of the conversation.

Jinte and Kalal harbored no dissatisfaction with this.

In their minds, they had originally thought that they would need to invest in the fleet to get a share, yet the lord unexpectedly granted them a ten percent reward.

"We thank you for your generosity."

Jimte and Kalal expressed their gratitude again with a bow.

This time, their thanks were even more heartfelt.

And that was exactly the effect Arthur wanted.

The 'Lionheart Ceremony' was reliable, but tying interests together was even more so.

While loyalty was assured by the former, it was the latter that was most important for motivation.

In fact, the next moment, Arthur saw the results.

Almost in unison, Jimte and Kalal spoke up—

"My lord, I have a proposal!"

Chapter 299: Two Problem Children!

The simultaneous remarks startled Jimte and Kalal.

Then, both narrowed their eyes—

"You don't mean Count Bert's nephew, do you?"

Jimte asked with a smile.

"You don't mean to say you're unaware Count Bert's nephew has a mistress, do you?"

Kalal countered with a smile as well.

"You don't mean to say you're unaware that the mistress is just bait, do you?"

Jimte's smile grew even warmer.

"You don't mean to say you're unaware the mistress has another identity as the Old Lion's spy, do you?"

Kalal's smile became even more radiant.

"You don't mean to say you're unaware she has already confessed her identity to him, do you?"

Jimte's smile began to fade.

"You don't mean to say you're unaware he had actually known the mistress's identity all along and approached her purposely, do you?"

Kalal's smile also appeared strained.

Then, both stopped smiling altogether and fell silent.

Neither had anticipated that the other had also noted that fellow before and conducted such a thorough investigation.

Suddenly, they eyed each other with narrowed eyes.

Unlike any previous scrutiny, this time, they regarded each other with utter seriousness.

And there was an implicit clash!

Both being loyal to Arthur had predetermined these two proud individuals would subtly compete.

It was not intentional, but instinctual.

Just as placing two gems side by side inevitably brings about comparison.

In fact, it's not just with gems.

Even with two plain rocks, people would still compare.

It's just that—

'Can that guy you two are watching even sleep peacefully?'

Seated atop Skull Summit, Arthur inwardly sighed.

In his 'coastal transport' plan, it was essential to link West Berlin, Ainhars, and Bert's territories together.

He had initially intended to pick a suitable candidate in Count Bert's territory.

But now, it seemed completely unnecessary.

Jimte and Kalal had already made their choice.

What is called professionalism?

This is called professionalism!

Arthur would not inquire why the two understood so much about Count Bert's nephew—given their natures, they naturally had respective ambitions.

Thus, such understanding was logical and reasonable.

Arthur did not dislike such ambition.

On the contrary, he admired it.

Because—

he was absolutely confident in his ability to control such people.

The more ambitious you are, the more you must demonstrate your capability.

Otherwise, I'll make mincemeat out of you all!

Thinking this, Arthur's gaze toward Jimte and Kalal became increasingly serene.

He patiently waited for their 'second round of communication' to end.

In fact, Arthur didn't need to hurry them, as the two young nobles quickly noticed Arthur's gaze and the unmistakable admiration it contained.

Feeling this admiration, Kalal felt a slight tremor in his heart.

It was the first time he had seen such admiration.

From his earliest memories, the looks he received were envious.

His nominal elder brother praised his swordsmanship talent while attempting to sever his fingers, his nominal sister marveled at his early awakening of the bloodline while instructing the cook to poison his dinner, his nominal younger brother sweetly called him 'older brother' while telling their father and uncle that he had strangled his beloved kitten to death.

Distorted envy turned into jealousy.

Extreme jealousy turned into loathing.

He had grown up in such an environment.

He had kept his true self hidden to survive in such an environment, knowing any display would only bring greater danger.

But now...

He saw admiration.

The elder recognized his worth.

A unique emotion, previously unfelt, filled Kalal's heart—at this moment, he felt as if his world had suddenly brightened.

Unlike choosing the Lionheart Ceremony to survive,

that had been out of sheer necessity, just to stay alive.

To live alone in the darkness.

To die alone in the darkness.

But now, a beam of light had pierced this darkness.

Kalal was so excited his whole body trembled slightly.

Jimte saw this and couldn't help but smirk, letting out a light laugh.

"Heh."

Indifference shone in Jimte's eyes, but his hand, hidden in his sleeve, was already clenched tight.

Like Kalal, Jimte's upbringing had not been pleasant; he could feel his biological father's jealousy toward him.

It was a resentment that said, 'If I had your talents, I wouldn't have ended up in this situation.'

It was full of excuses.

If not for his aunt, he might have died already.

Possibly at the hands of his own father.

Therefore, he didn't hate his aunt. It was the weak father he loathed.

So, he left the Norvia Territory and headed for West Berlin.

He wanted to obtain everything he desired with his Talent.

He did, and the Marquess of West Berlin valued his Talent, engaging him to his second daughter, but that kind of value was fraught with unusual greed. It was an investment between businessmen, similar to his aunt's and even less pure than hers. However, Arthur was different.

Such composure, such purity.

Jimte deeply felt this feeling that he had never experienced before.

Sitting aloft, Arthur, with his "Eagle Eye" and "Insight," kept flashing.

'Eh, are they both lacking in love then?'

No wonder they are so cautious.'

Thinking to himself, the appreciation in Arthur's eyes became even more evident.

Having a good relationship with one's subordinates made everything easier.

So, whatever you lack, I, Arthur, will provide.

And it was at this moment—

"Milord, do you need a fiancée?

I think the Marquess of West Berlin's third and fourth daughters are not bad.

They are a pair of twins, much beloved by the Marquess of West Berlin. If you choose to get engaged to them, West Berlin Territory will be yours—the Marquess has no heirs, and those nephews can all be killed. The eldest daughter is engaged, but she became a widow long ago and doesn't concern herself much with the affairs of the territory. She can serve you in court, and afterwards, we could stage an accident to dispatch the Marquess of West Berlin...

From there, your journey could begin."

Jimte asked, bowing down.

'Hey hey, are you listening to what you're saying? Am I that kind of person?'

Arthur looked at Jimte, unable to help but complain internally.

Kalal sneered coldly beside them.

"The Marquess of West Berlin is no fool!

His strength is also beyond doubt, so if we are going to do it, we must act with the swiftness of Thunder. We should kill him first, absolutely without letting him have any suspicions—we could arrange for you and your fiancée to encounter danger on your travels, drawing him to the scene, and then ambush him.

Then, we gather all the Bloodline of the West Berlin Family at the Marquess of West Berlin's funeral... and kill them all!

Only then can you, having married two daughters of the Marquess of West Berlin, seamlessly take over the West Berlin Territory."

Having said this, Kalal also looked towards Arthur.

As he looked into their keen eyes focused on him, Arthur sighed helplessly within.

He had just seriously considered it.

If he had become the current 'Black Cat' earlier, having numerous 'Black Cat Faction' members and family support, he wouldn't mind proceeding.

However, when he became the current 'Black Cat,' the rules of the 'Cat Faction. Black' had already changed—everything needed to start over. He not only needed to gather his own 'Black Cat Faction,' but his family would not support him in this matter.

Shortly, he would write this rule into the 'Cat Faction. Black's program.

After all, he was the current 'Black Cat,' and he could write it however he wanted.

And now?

Arthur shook his head slightly, without having spoken a word, when love had already welled up in the eyes of the young 'Spirit Medium,' and the corners of his mouth slightly rose.

His voice was even more tender than before—

"I already have a love that will last until death, her name is Marinda. Perhaps you've heard of her.

She is very tolerant towards me (sarcastically teasing each other).

She has been a great help to me (she's very generous).

We already cannot part from each other (properties are already heavily tied together)."

Arthur interpreted his relationship with Marinda in terms that everyone could understand.

As Jimte and Kalal saw Arthur's deeply affectionate expression and listened to his tender words, regretful expressions crossed their faces.

For them, usurping one's place was the fastest method.

It's not as if others didn't want to do the same.

They simply lacked the power.

Neither the lord's power and wisdom nor support from the 'Cat Faction. Black' or family was within their reach.

Nor could they win the favor of the two ladies.

Especially the latter, Jimte firmly believed that the lord, possessing Mr. Charlie's Bloodline, could just make his move, and those two ladies could definitely become virtuous helpers like his aunt.

Unfortunately, it seemed the lord loved only one person!

Jimte thought regretfully, his gaze filling with even more respect.

'Faced with such immense temptation, yet preferring to give up rather than abandon a loved one... What kind of love is this?

Only someone who has this kind of love could discover me and the others around him are abnormal, and far from being disgusted, he was delighted to the brink of madness, willingly concocting plans to shelter us.

Such a lord is truly worth following.

As for the lord's emotional weakness?

As the lord's Knight, it is naturally my duty to help the lord alleviate his worries!'

With these thoughts, Jimte once again kneeled down in a bow.

Kalal did the same.

'Indeed, only personally filled with love, like the lord, could accept me and the abnormalities around him.

It's just that the lord places too much value on emotions, which can be quite disadvantageous.

If that's the case, then please leave all those dark affairs to me.'

Kalal thought quietly to himself.

Arthur, observing the subtle expressions of the two subordinates, smirked inwardly.

He guessed what these two rascals were thinking at the moment.

'Indeed this is a pair of problem children!

I will have to train them slowly in time!'

Arthur thought to himself, his body already leaving the chair.

He slowly rose and walked straight forward.

It was as if numerous invisible steps existed in mid-air.

The young 'Spirit Medium' just like that stepped through the air, step by step.

Unhurriedly, gracefully.

And when Arthur stood before Jimte and Kalal, Skull Summit and Throne of the Remnants behind him silently shattered, as if cut by hundreds of blades, turning into powder and quietly falling.

But the next moment, this fine sifting sound was concealed.

Within the courtyard, only Arthur's faint voice remained—

"Compared to the West Berlin Territory, right now...

we have a much more important task to undertake!"

Chapter 300: The Small Town Girl

In the afternoon, Mount Gale Town was exceptionally lively.

Swarms of people headed towards the rumored "Yumir Manor"—that morning, Police Chief Westbron announced that the curse of Yumir Manor had been lifted by a "Spirit Medium" from South Los named Arthur Kredos.

Everyone was surprised by the news.

Apart from a small handful of well-informed individuals, the name "Spirit Medium" Arthur Kredos was unknown to the townspeople.

But as Police Chief Westbron made the announcement, the name quickly spread throughout the town.

Of course, compared to the curse that was lifted.

People were more curious about the "Tea Duel" involving the Spirit Medium and two nobles.

This was also the reason everyone was now heading to Yumir Manor.

The "Tea Duel" was not private.

Police Chief Westbron said it was open to the public.

As a result, most townsfolk, driven by curiosity, went to witness the event at Yumir Manor.

The rest, some because they were too busy to leave.

And a very few others insisted that Yumir Manor was still under a curse, and that Police Chief Westbron had been tempted by the curse, using the townspeople as sacrifice.

However, Norma and her group weren't part of the latter.

The girl in a cloth dress carrying a basket walked along with her three friends, following the crowd—

"Norma, do you know?

We missed an opportunity!

The big Orange Cat you saw that day must have belonged to the 'Spirit Medium'!

If we could have made connections with that 'Spirit Medium', we could have struck it rich!"

The innkeeper's daughter chattered nonstop, her face filled with regret.

"Make connections?

With what could we make connections?

And besides, he's just a 'Spirit Medium'!"

The son of a hunter, toting a longbow, immediately retorted while looking at Norma with concern.

One could tell what was on his mind just by his expression.

The blacksmith's son, understanding his friend's thoughts, quickly chimed in.

"Yeah, he's just a 'Spirit Medium', of no use!"

"Just a 'Spirit Medium'? Of no use?"

Humph!

You don't know about his other identity—

Consultant to the South Los Police Department, with a rank even higher than Westbron's!"

The innkeeper's daughter, under the curious gazes of her three little friends, deliberately prolonged her tone, then bragged with news she gathered from her parents.

Although her parents were among those well-informed in town, they still couldn't provide precise details about Arthur, leaving her with vague information.

However, to impress her friends, the information she had was sufficient.

Seeing her friends' eyes widen, the innkeeper's daughter was extremely pleased.

After all, she had the same reaction when she first got the news.

Police Chief Westbron, now that's a big shot in the town.

Someone out of their league.

Thinking back on the brief encounter with that young man who seemed to be even more influential than such an important person, the innkeeper's daughter immediately grabbed Norma's arm.

"Norma, you have to seize the opportunity!

The gentleman didn't blame you that day; maybe he took a liking to you—you don't want to spend every day gathering wild vegetables and fruits, feeding pigs, and cleaning the house, do you?

Just think of the dances, salons, and prosperity of South Los.

Beautiful clothes, delicious food, they have it all!

That's what's worth pursuing."

The innkeeper's daughter, holding onto her best friend's arm, sped up as if she could grasp everything she described with her mouth.

The hunter's son watched this scene in a hurry and, along with the blacksmith's son, began to chase quickly.

Only Norma was somewhat bewildered.

Was that man a big shot?

Unconsciously, the girl tightened her grip on the basket handle, following along as her best friend pulled her.

But soon, their pace slowed down—

"Everyone come this way!

Enter in an orderly fashion!"

Police Chief Westbron, along with the officers and patrolmen of Mount Gale Town, maintained public order and directed the residents to their 'seats'.

The higher and lower seats were made out of long boxes.

There were no sunshades, no service from servants, and even the long boxes were not very clean.

Yet, not a single resident complained.

To them, this was already good enough.

After all, they had thought they would need to stand.

"Look, it's that gentleman!"

No sooner had they sat down than the innkeeper's daughter spotted Arthur's figure.

Sitting behind a long tea table in the space enclosed by long boxes, Arthur was easy to notice, not to mention he was holding a big orange cat in his arms.

Under everyone's gaze, Arthur calmly stroked Pendragon.

Though having been separated for less than a day, the young 'Spirit Medium' couldn't help missing his cat.

As for Pendragon?

Considering it had been fifteen hours since their last meeting, the cat reluctantly purred.

But soon, Pendragon stared with a shocked cat face at Kuliqi, who had suddenly appeared before him, sniffing non-stop.

"This is Kuliqi, a very excellent Hound. You two need to get along well."

Arthur introduced the dog to the orange cat.

Pan paid no attention, the orange cat just stared at Arthur with incredulity—

You got a dog!

I leave for a bit, and you already got a dog!

Immediately, the cat became unhappy and started to struggle forcefully in Arthur's arms.

And he hissed at Kuliqi, who kept coming closer.

Kuliqi looked at Arthur with an innocent dog face.

Arthur raised his hand to comfort Kuliqi, but the hand was immediately claimed by an orange cat—Pendragon in his own way was blocking Arthur.

Many people witnessed this scene.

Most of them smiled knowingly.

"This gentleman seems to have a lot of love!

That dog really seems very gentle, it must be the type that doesn't hurt people at all.

Indeed, dogs can also be pets in South Los."

The innkeeper's daughter kept saying.

The hunter's son frowned, wanting to argue.

He always felt that the dog was extraordinary, without any particular reason, it was just an intuition or perhaps an instinct—when he saw the dog, his palms began to sweat.

The last time he experienced this was when he encountered a pack of wolves alone.

But before the hunter's son could speak, the sound of hooves interrupted the conversation.

Swallowtail Flags fluttering in the wind.

Uniform and orderly steps.

Bright and sturdy armor.

A cavalry unit of sixty-two men completely captured the gaze of the townspeople of Mount Gale, especially the two young nobles leading them—Jimte and Kalal, unlike the cavalrymen behind them, were not wearing armor today but had chosen the attire of noble hunting apparel.

This convenient yet lavish clothing shone with a soft light under the sun.

"Silk!"

Those who knew their stuff couldn't stop exclaiming.

And upon hearing such exclamations, the innkeeper's daughter's eyes sparkled with envy.

"An outfit like that could probably buy our inn!"

So, Norma, you must seize the opportunity!"

The innkeeper's daughter whispered softly.

Norma responded vaguely, her eyes, like those around her, firmly fixated on the center—

Those two nobles had already reached the 'Spirit Medium's' opposite side.

The 'Tea Duel' was about to begin.

Everyone was thinking this.

But just at that moment, the noble with a proud face suddenly spoke out.

"Wait!"

Instantly, everyone felt a tightness in their chests.

They all had a bad premonition.