

## Great Master 301

### Chapter 301

The haughty Kalal, without saying a word, perfectly embodied all the negative impressions people had of nobles.

If he had spoken, it would surely have sent shivers down the spines of the commoners, who feared they might carelessly be turned into "Human Tea" by the noble before them.

Although everyone had only heard rumors of "Human Tea," the current "Tea Duel" caused everyone to involuntarily think of it.

And then, their gazes became even more tense as they watched the scene unfold—

"Battling twice in a row is just too troublesome!

You just duel with Jimte!

If he loses, it's the same as if I've lost.

If he wins, it's the same as if I've won."

Kalal arrogantly uttered words that baffled everyone.

Many had already guessed that the two nobles must be on good terms; otherwise, why would one let the other stand in for their victory or defeat?

Yet others turned their worried eyes upon Jimte.

Under normal circumstances, one would never let someone else stand in for their win or loss.

Even among the closest of nobles, it was the same.

Unless...

The victory was certain!

Police Chief Westbron looked towards Arthur with a worried expression.

It wasn't that he was truly that close to Arthur, but he worried that if Arthur lost, it would cause unnecessary complications—after all, the situation with "Yumir Manor" could be seen as either significant or minor, depending on whether someone caught wind of it and decided to make an issue of it. Westbron might not be doomed, but he would definitely suffer a great loss.

"Don't worry, the advisor is sure to win!"

Hunter, who had recently received many favors from Police Chief Westbron, reassured him.

"Ah?"

Police Chief Westbron wore a look of astonishment, not understanding why Hunter was so confident.

"Our advisor is a 'Spirit Medium'!"

Even if that guy has some secret tricks up his sleeve, how could he possibly deceive our advisor?

Not even the dead could do it, let alone the living!"

Newt chimed in from the side.

Police Chief Westbron instinctively glanced at Simon.

As opposed to the apparently useless Hunter and Newt, Simon seemed much more reliable—which is why he had given him the most.

"Trust the advisor!"

The apprentice policeman said succinctly, his gaze fixed firmly on the center of the room.

It was clear that the apprentice policeman was also a bit nervous.

After all, this was a noble.

Under everyone's watchful eyes, Arthur nodded slightly—

"Okay!"

"Haha, Jimte has agreed, quick, bring out your tea leaves!"

Kalal laughed heartily.

This caused Jimte to frown slightly.

Still, he took a small can of tea leaves from his chest.

"Hey, Lord Kledos, you wouldn't know this, would you?"

This is tea from near Lion Peak in Inner Bay—do you know of Lion's Tea?

It isn't the true Lion's Tea, but it's harvested not far from it!

So...

I'm bound to win!"

Kalal spoke like a true villain.

Even though he had agreed on everything the night before, Jimte still couldn't help but admire the man's twisted ways.

A born face of scorn!

Maybe in the future, he should get closer to this man!

Not for any other reason but that standing next to him, he would never have to worry about being the first target!

Jimte thought, and murmured—

"This is tea that I begged from the Marquess of Seberlin overnight.

Just like Kalal said, it isn't Lion's Tea, but it's close enough to it."

As these words rang out, the people nearby immediately began to murmur among themselves.

"It's tea that's close to Lion's Tea!"

"It's over, the 'Spirit Medium' is doomed to lose."

"What a pity!"

...

Lion's Tea, due to the reputation of the Old Lion of Inner Bay, was quite famous in South County, and even some commoners had heard of it. To these commoners, a noble bringing out tea leaves close to Lion's Tea meant the 'Spirit Medium' was sure to lose.

Unless...

The 'Spirit Medium' could produce Lion's Tea.

But how could that be possible?

How could a 'Spirit Medium' possibly possess Lion's Tea!

"It's over, we're done for, that gentleman is going to lose!"

But this might be good news for you, Norma!

When he is down, your appearance will be his salvation!"

The innkeeper's daughter spoke repeatedly, quite pleased to use the term she had heard from a traveler.

Norma paid no attention to her best friend, instead watching the ongoing event with concern.

The son of a hunter family looked dejected by her side.

The blacksmith's son patted his friend's shoulder, then glared at the innkeeper's daughter.

The innkeeper's daughter noticed the blacksmith's son's stare and shot right back at him without any courtesy.

She even kicked at the blacksmith's son's foot.

The blacksmith's son's face turned bright red with anger, but with everyone watching, he dared not retaliate and struggled to contain himself, which only made the innkeeper's daughter more smug.

The minor altercation among the four youths didn't draw the attention of the surrounding people, who were all intently focused on the center—

As Arthur agreed, the two sat opposite each other, spaced three meters apart.

Jimte placed the small can of tea leaves on the tea table and then began to set out a beautiful set of silver tea ware.

Looking at the exquisite teaware, the hearts of those around filled with lament.

Arthur was certain to lose.

Kalal's smile grew even broader.

But in the next moment, that smile stiffened.

People were surprised as they looked at the teaware on the tea table in front of Arthur.

All of them unconsciously widened their eyes.

Because the teaware on Arthur's tea table was...

Porcelain!

The teapot, covered bowl, cups, and lid rest stood like a painting, with their thin bodies and light glaze shining pearly and translucent. They sat there not needing anything else to give off a sense of elegance.

Looking at this set of porcelain, those around almost forgot to breathe.

Even those who knew nothing about teaware thought this set was incredibly beautiful.

No need for any decorative images, the mere shape alone attracted everyone's gaze.

And just as everyone was drawn to this set of teaware, Arthur brought out a box of tea leaves—this box, like the teaware, was also left behind by Marinda.

And as Arthur took out this box of tea leaves and brought out the remaining brew, Kalal's expression changed dramatically, exclaiming.

"Lion's Tea!"

This cry surprised everyone.

Then, the corners of everyone's mouths turned up.

This was the scene everyone wanted to see.

Who would enjoy seeing an overbearing noble win the contest?

It was clearly more appealing when someone, pushed to the brink, played their trump card and turned the tables.

Even if there were some illogical aspects, people loved to watch, and it was also more conducive to ensuring that Kalal "completely disappeared from people's view"—

"Heh, this guy is doomed!

I heard that the 'stake' in this Tea Duel was tax exemption rights!

Now that this guy has lost, the Marquess of Ainhars will certainly not let him off!"

Those in the know started discussing amongst the crowd.

"Will they hang him?"

"What a joke, he's a noble, at worst they'll just strip him of his due honors, and send him off to some manor to live out his days!"

"Living out his days in a manor is a punishment?"

Many in the crowd looked incredulous.

Because that was something they could never achieve in their lifetimes.

Yet such a goal was merely another's punishment.

This disparity was hard for people to accept.

More difficult to accept was that the other party clearly did not want it.



"Is this what it means to be a noble?"

People sighed.

Then, their gaze unconsciously shifted to Arthur's opponent.

Arthur, with Lion's Tea in his possession, was already firmly holding the winning ticket in this 'Tea Duel.'  
What would the noble look like?

Everyone was looking forward to it.

Unexpectedly, though Jimte's face showed surprise, he did not give up, but instead began to boil water and brew tea methodically.

Even those who disliked nobles couldn't say much about his focused demeanor.

Several young girls were even full of praise.

Like the daughter of the innkeeper.

"Not giving up even in dire straits, that is a true noble!"

"Hmm, the one in dire straits just now was that 'Spirit Medium' mister!"

The blacksmith's son started to butt heads with the innkeeper's daughter.

Although he couldn't punch his opponent in the face, the blacksmith's son wouldn't just do nothing.

He had already thought of what to say next, ready to teach this person a harsh lesson.

But after waiting quite a while, the blacksmith's son didn't hear any retort from the innkeeper's daughter. Glancing over unconsciously, he realized she was staring blankly into the arena.

"What's so good about boiling tea..."

His words hadn't finished when the son of the blacksmith stopped abruptly.

Ordinary tea boiling really wasn't anything interesting.

Just like Jimte's, although graceful, his methodical approach couldn't captivate anyone.

But Arthur was different. Before brewing the tea, he directly poured boiling water onto the covered bowl; the lid trembled gently, producing a crisp sound like the strike of metal on stone. After the boiling water had rinsed all the teaware, a crane-mouth scissors cut open the pack of tea, which he then placed into the covered bowl, the warm cups releasing the first scent from the tea leaves.

As Arthur shook the covered bowl like rolling dice, the tea aroma was fully unleashed, and brought to the nose for a sniff.

A smile appeared on the face of the young 'Spirit Medium.'

Those who saw this smile could imagine the delightful aroma within.

His subsequent pouring of water was truly an Eye-Opener.

Because when he rotated the lid to scrape away the tea froth, it actually 'clung' to the edge of the covered bowl.

No!

It was hovering!

Before people could take a closer look, the lid was pressed into the bowl and swiftly agitated; afterwards, the entire bowl moved with his fingers, and in the end, even the saucer followed in the rotation.

As people's eyes followed the saucer's rotation, the covered bowl was quickly lifted, the tea divided into three cups. And as people turned back to the cups, Arthur hooked them with his pinky, flipped the saucers over, and then inclined the bowl on top, with the lid suspended above it at another angle.

For a moment, the saucer, bowl, and lid appeared in an extraordinary posture before everyone's gaze.

Everyone stared blankly at the scene before them.

They had never imagined that tea could be brewed in such a way.

The dazzling movements deeply captivated every person present.

Especially the scene of the lid hanging on the covered bowl was something that left a profound impression.

Many were instantly keen to try it out, but unfortunately, they didn't have the teaware, and even if they did, they wouldn't dare to attempt it.

What if they broke it?

So...

How about trying with a pot and pot lid?

They're both round, after all.

While many were eager to give it a go, Arthur had already picked up one of the cups of tea, placed it on the coaster, and gestured invitingly—

"Please!"

## Chapter 302

Looking at the tea in front of him, Jimte was taken aback.

Although the noble had claimed last night that there was absolutely no issue with his tea ceremony, actually seeing it still came as a surprise.

That effortlessly flowing tea artistry truly left one in awe.

It's just...

It may have been an illusion, but he invariably felt there was an unexplainable bandit-like aura in the noble's movements.

Suppressing the doubts in his heart, Jimte picked up the teacup.

The moment the tea touched his lips, Jimte's eyes widened.

Sweet upon entry, a sweetness like no other, followed by the unique rich flavor of tea leaves, and incredibly smooth as it went down the throat!

This?!

Jimte was stunned.

As the son of a baron and the son-in-law of a marquis, he had drunk Lion's Tea before. Although it wasn't the kind specially supplied to the Old Lion, Jimte now believed that even that wouldn't compare to what he held in his hands.

'Why is it like this?

Could it be...

That technique just now?'

Jimte began to question his life choices.

Arthur smiled without speaking.

Why was his tea delicious?

Because he had added...

Honey!

A little bit of honey drastically improved the water quality.

This was the ruthless trick he had learned from a certain Old Charlie.

Of course, if this ruthless trick wasn't enough, Old Charlie had taught him another killer move—  
Tastelessness!

Simply put, it meant 'bluff'!

If you can't win, just bluff with your mouth, scam one after the other, staying stubborn and refusing to admit defeat.

Challenge them, and they won't understand the 'Tastelessness'!

But the tea artistry just now was genuine—

[Tea Ceremony (Tea Drinker Version) lv2: You're proficient in the basics of tea ceremony, but for some reason you've strayed off course.]

...

Right after he successfully made tea, this prompt appeared in front of him.

Arthur didn't care.

As for drinking tea, as long as you're happy, that's what matters.

A tea duel?

This skill was good enough.

Even more advanced?

Then I'll have to talk to you about 'Tastelessness'.

As a part-time 'Spirit Medium' and a non-primary 'Tea Artist', his main tactic was shamelessness.

Therefore, Arthur sat there contentedly, savoring his own tea.

Tea with honey added was delicious indeed!

Curious about the taste of the tea, Kalal, who hadn't forgotten his role, refrained from approaching and instead shouted loudly at Jimte: "How is it? Isn't his tea..."

"I admit defeat!

Lord Kredos's tea artistry is unmatched by anyone I have ever seen.

As per our agreement, the West Berlin coastal ports will grant you a tax exemption.

I hope...

We'll see each other at the 'South County Swordsmanship Finals'."

After speaking, a warm smile appeared on Jimte's fair face; he bowed gracefully and then turned to join his team.

The onlookers watched the noble youth's departure, with many showing admiration in their eyes.

They admired Jimte's bearing.

Looking at Kalal, though, they unleashed merciless laughter.

Especially upon seeing Kalal's dispirited demeanor, the crowd grew even more excited.

"The coastal ports of Ainhars will exempt your fleet from taxes!"

Kalal said through gritted teeth.

After speaking, he even made a threat.

"Don't let me catch you at the 'South County Swordsmanship Finals', or I'll make sure you regret it!"

Such graceless remarks provoked a chorus of boos from those around.

Yet when Kalal glowered at them, each person looked down and shut their mouths, their disdain growing louder only after Kalal had moved away.

And this was exactly what Arthur, Jimte, and Kalal had wanted.

During the discussions the night before, Arthur had given Jimte and Kalal different paths to follow.

Jimte, as someone with hopes of inheriting West Berlin Territory, naturally cared more about his reputation.

Kalal, who was known for his overbearing attitude, had a poor reputation and no chance at all; thus, it was better for him to leave the public eye and focus on his own development.

Of course, that wasn't the most important thing.

The most important was the 'South County Swordsmanship Finals'!

You must know, every three years the Swordsmanship Competition is held only once, and the local champion has the chance to go to Inner Bay to participate in the 'South County Swordsmanship Competition', also known as the 'Swordsmanship Finals'. The winner will be received by the Duke of the Inner Bay and even be granted a title.

Arthur wasn't interested in this 'Swordsmanship Finals'.



If possible, he didn't even want to go to Inner Bay.

After all, although he had never met the Grand Duke, their relationship was extremely poor, especially after the matters of Yumir Manor became public, leading to inevitable mutual animosity—not only had he nearly wiped out South Los' spies, but he had also taken out a good number of spies within the South Los Territory.

...

If the Old Lion were still calm, then he wouldn't be the Old Lion.

However, the title of 'Champion of the South Los Swordsmanship Competition' was something he had to get his hands on; he needed that 'Knight' title.

Therefore, the journey to Inner Bay had become essential.

So, he needed to make Jimte and Kalal his 'Alert Line'.

Once the news of this 'Tea Duel' spread, anyone who wanted to deal with him would surely contact the two of them.

Even if it wouldn't be everyone, it could still avoid the majority of troubles.

This was what Arthur valued and was also the reason for the 'encore performance'—'Every encore is for the next show.'

That was what Old Charlie said.

It still made so much sense.

Jimte had left.

Kalal had gone, too.

With the departure of the two lead actors, the good show began to disperse, and the 'extras' hidden in the small town started heading back to their caravans, transporting the Manor's armaments.

Arthur, clinging to Pendragon, boarded the police wagon—not to go ahead, for Arthur would return to South Los with the convoy.

At this time, it was just to catch up on sleep.

But as soon as Arthur climbed aboard, he saw a girl whom he had met once carrying a basket, pushed forward to the carriage by another girl.

Arthur watched with interest as the girl's blushing face and her companion's urging, along with the dejection of one boy not far away and the indignation of another boy.

In almost an instant, a whole hundred-episode melodrama unfolded in Arthur's mind.

However—

"I'm sorry I shouldn't have called you fat that day!

Though you are indeed quite fat!

No, I should say tubby!"

Norma expressed her apologies to Pendragon, then took out something from the basket and placed it in front of Pendragon.

It was a small bag of dried fish.

"This is a gift of apology. If you don't say anything, I'll take it as you accept my apology!"

The skirt-clad girl said to Pendragon.

Pendragon sniffed the dried fish and decided to forgive the girl's irreverence.

Meow~

She's just too cute!

The girl's eyes lit up, and then she raised her hand to pet Pendragon.

For the sake of the dried fish, Pendragon endured it for about five seconds.

When Pendragon became impatient, the skirt-clad girl quickly withdrew her hand and, bowing again to Pendragon, turned her gaze to Arthur—

"You really are a good person!

Thank you for lifting the curse from our town and bringing an unforgettable competition. When my children grow up, I'll be sure to tell him or her about the 'Spirit Medium' named Arthur Kredos who broke the curse and thwarted the nobles' brave deeds!

Thank you for all you've done for Mount Gale Town!"

The skirt-clad girl earnestly gave thanks.

Arthur looked at the skirt-clad girl, deeply surprised.

The scene before him was not what he had expected.

But,

It wasn't bad.

So, Arthur responded with a smile.

Without entanglement, after another curtsy, the girl was about to leave.

But just as she turned around, the skirt-clad girl suddenly asked—

"Have you put on weight in the past two days?"

Suddenly, Arthur's smile froze.

No sooner had she spoken the words I realized I might have made a blunder again, the skirt-clad girl stuck out her tongue and turned to run toward her little friend, grabbing the bewildered hunter's son's hand and pulling him towards the town, laughter spilling from her mouth.

The innkeeper's daughter stomped her foot in frustration, but then chased after them, laughing.

The blacksmith's son laughed the loudest, especially when he realized no one was around and playfully slapped the back of the innkeeper's daughter's head, his laughter full of gusto.

The innkeeper's daughter pursued him angrily.

A game of chase began around the skirt-clad girl and the hunter's son.

The four young people, their laughter ceaseless.

That laughter carried far and wide through the warm afternoon sun.

Life, ah, it's not about the days you lived, but the days you remember.

And the moment before him—

"The little sure joys of life!"

Arthur picked up Pendragon, who had finished the dried fish, and muttered to himself as his gaze drifted to the distant figures of the four youngsters.

There was a touch of envy in Arthur's eyes.

But in the next moment, when Edwin appeared in his field of view, Arthur's expression returned to indifference.

Edwin respectfully handed over a note.

The note was from Marinda.

Arthur was astonished as he looked at the note.

He had just separated from Marinda not long ago.

And moreover, if there was something important, Marinda would surely have said it in person; sending a note seemed very odd.

Confused, Arthur took the note, and upon opening it, he suddenly realized—

So that's what it was!

...

Chapter 303: Crow and Falcon!

...

To make herself look more like a gentleman, Anna not only wore a fake beard but also donned a specially made chest binder—this binder made her breathing uneven and forced her to walk stiffly. Fortunately, with the cover of a loose overcoat, she was not too conspicuous.

'St. Joan of Arc Girls' College.

Cassandra Cremos.

Dark eyes, black hair, dimples when smiling.

Extremely beautiful...'

She was recalling the favor Marinda had 'requested' of her.

She knew her beloved was concerned about that man, so she had asked her to keep an eye on his aunt—that feeling made her quite uncomfortable, but she really could not say no to Marinda.

And when she got into action, a strange excitement thrilled her.

She admitted she was a bit masochistic.

But what's wrong with being masochistic for the one you love?

The tall Anna raised her hand to embrace the void, as if holding Marinda. The friction from the binder made her smile unbearably heated.

Her body trembled with excitement.

It took a good dozen seconds for Anna to regain her composure before she walked out of the alley and approached the entrance to 'St. Joan of Arc Girls' College'—a school with a long history, existing since the end of the Empire Era, originally established to commemorate the girl Joan who fought against the 'Shadows.' Over time, it became an institution teaching girls literacy and etiquette, and during the Holy Era, it transformed into a church-oriented academy where children of lower and middle clergy received education and baptism.

But when the Silver Age began, it was temporarily closed by the Golden Lion Family, until the arrival of the Pioneer Era, when it reopened and became the preferred school for daughters of the middle-class families.

Not just because the education here was outstanding but also because it was a gateway to the 'elite of Inner Bay'—every year during the 'Study Tour Festival,' children of the nobility would participate.

Thus, the school was highly attractive to the daughters of middle-class families.

Who doesn't dream of transforming from a phoenix's tail to its head?

What about Cassandra?

'The Kledos Family' would definitely be different.

There must be a conspiracy!

Given the pretext of hiding in South Los, her coming to Inner Bay was probably another form of concealment.

It's possible that the Golden Lion Family was the target.

It is known that the children of the Old Lion sometimes appear during the 'Study Tour Festival.'

'The dreadful Kledos Family!'

Because of Marinda, Anna paid extra attention to everything in South Los. Moreover, the information she extracted from Marinda—although Marinda was mostly silent, how could she hide anything from clever Anna?

Just the thought of such a family getting close to her love made Anna anxious.

'Should I return to South Los?'

This thought appeared and was immediately tossed out of her mind by Anna.

It wasn't that she didn't want to return.

But she couldn't.

She didn't wish for her own presence to delay Marinda's prospects.

After all, Marinda was to be ennobled.

With this in mind, the lady quickened her pace. Holding the letter of introduction, she smoothly entered the academy—the letter was not forged, but authentic, from a security guard who was supposed to report to the school today. She had merely borrowed it without malice.



Of course, the security guard who had already found new employment and excitedly boarded the ship for Sidon Fortress wouldn't mind.

"Your job is limited to the front yard and the entrance. You are not allowed to enter the school, back yard, or dormitories without permission, especially the dormitories. If you're caught entering without cause... it's not just about being fired!" the leading teacher said.

Anna nodded repeatedly.

She had inquired about the situation before coming.

The last security guard who entered the dormitories without cause is still in Inner Bay's prison—even though he claimed he saw a suspicious person, that excuse had already been used by the previous two guards, and the Inner Bay police had investigated the matter, finding no suspicious persons.

That made the guards who made such claims the most suspicious.

The special nature of the girls' dormitory made everything seem all too reasonable.

After further explaining the job, the teacher leading the way left the security accommodation.

And Anna began to work earnestly.

She planned to stay here for the long term.

Firstly, to closely monitor Cassandra, since she couldn't help but worry about a 'Credos' being near Marinda.

Before she could return to South Los, she needed to be close to someone from the 'Kledos Family' as a counterbalance.

Secondly, the identity she had worked so hard to acquire shouldn't be discarded so easily—it would be a pity.

More importantly, this identity would help her avoid the recent trouble she'd stirred up.

She had absolutely no intention of provoking that so-called Baron.

She was simply attending a salon, who could have guessed he'd be so shameless as to approach her? After enduring it for a long time, she finally delivered a sneaky low kick to him.

Then, she accidentally broke something.

She swore it wasn't deliberate—she couldn't be sure he was a 'dud.'

She was merely defending herself.

But, the trouble was real.

Even if he was a 'Talentless' 'dud,' nobles were still nobles. She was now wanted by the police, and if she didn't want to be watched by Inner Bay's secret police, she had to lay low for a while.

So—

...

"Here comes my academy life!"

Anna told herself.

And with it, the hard work that must be undertaken.

Then, the first thing that happened after she became a security guard—

"You're here to apply for the cook and cleaning lady positions?"

Anna looked at the two girls in front of her in surprise.

It wasn't that she was easily astonished, but even with their simple disguises, the faces of the two girls were still outstanding; one with a slender waist and long legs, her arm muscles visibly well-defined, and the other looked soft and weak, easily bullied.

People like them could live well anywhere. There was simply no need for them to apply as cooks or cleaners.

Especially the latter, who would surely be adored by many men.

Of course, that wasn't the point.

The point was, she detected a "scent of blood" on the former.

That person had killed before, and not just one person.

But, what did that have to do with her?

She was just a small security guard, not some great detective.

After leading the people away, Anna hurried off.

Watching Anna leave, Shara breathed a sigh of relief, clutching Amy's hand tightly.

"Will my cooking skills suffice?"

"Of course!

You're the best cook I've seen!"

Amy wasn't just comforting her friend, she truly believed it.

As for cleaning?

Amy, who had once worked at the "Joel Jock Swordsmanship Club" as a receptionist but occasionally acted as a cleaner, naturally had no issues with it.

"Let's embrace our new life together!"

Amy took Shara's hand and said softly.

Shara nodded vigorously, full of longing for their new life.

...

Meanwhile, in the carriage, Arthur touched his chin as he looked at Marinda's succinct report—

'No wonder this woman didn't show up directly; it seems she's embarrassed by such 'accidents'.

Should I then take advantage of her guilt and squeeze something out of her?'

The young 'Spirit Medium' pondered.

As for his aunt Cassandra?

The young 'Spirit Medium' wasn't worried.

After all, the family's weak spot...

was him.

Moreover, he was certain about one thing—

His aunt, Cassandra was definitely not at 'St. Joan of Arc Girls' College'!

If he hadn't discovered the 'family truth', Arthur wouldn't have been sure, but after finding out, he was certain that his aunt Cassandra going to 'St. Joan of Arc Girls' College' was probably just a ruse.

Of course, for the sake of authenticity.

A 'pseudo' would certainly appear there in her place.

As for the real person's whereabouts?

Who knows.

Maybe she's hiding somewhere, watching everything at 'St. Joan of Arc Girls' College'.

Thinking this, Arthur looked up at the anxious Edwin and gave a smile.

"Let's set off!"

The coachman breathed a sigh of relief; he was well aware of his master's habits, and the appearance of such a message was unusual in itself.

Fortunately, there were no accidents.

He definitely didn't want to become an enemy of Arthur.

Edwin immediately arranged for the convoy to set off.

Caw!

Fujin took to the air, serving as Arthur's eyes, scouting the surroundings.

And far above 'St. Joan of Arc Girls' College', located at Inner Bay, a falcon also took flight, soaring high.

The falcon, quick on the wing, landed on a lady's shoulder after flying out of Inner Bay.

Gently stroking the falcon, Cassandra Credos appeared thoughtful.

Then, the corner of her mouth curled up.

The lady pulled up her hood and merged into the shadows, vanishing from sight.

Chapter 304: Greetings from the Kledos Family!

Inner Bay, somewhere.

In the depths of the night, Faske, who was already balding, removed his glasses and stared at the flickering candle flame, slightly lost in thought.

Another failure!

The operation targeting the 'Spirit Medium' had not only failed but had also cost Melvil his involvement. Including Sinclair, this time the 'Spirit Medium' had uprooted nearly all the South Los Territory's spies belonging to them, just after the enemy had cleared their spies from South Los not long before.

Thinking of this, Faske felt a headache coming on.

The female assistant next to him, upon noticing this, immediately brought over a thick black coffee and the Mint Elixir for Faske.

And most considerately, she opened the Mint Elixir and applied it to Faske's temples.

The movements of this female assistant were gentle and professional.

More importantly, her gaze towards Faske was filled with admiration.

Because this female assistant was well aware of the man's achievements - Faske, as one of the 'Seven Golden Mane Advisors' of the Duke of the Inner Bay, was in charge of all matters related to South Los.

One could say that the Old Lion had put the South Los Family into a breathless state, and aside from the Mother Tigress's youth, a significant part of the credit went to this unassuming man before her.

For twenty years, this man had achieved great feats time and again.

Truly...

A fine target!

The female assistant who was gently massaging Faske's temples suddenly had a fierce look in her eyes, and her fingers on Faske's temple clawed violently inward.

Snap!

The head burst open like a watermelon.

However, it wasn't Faske's.

Instead, it was the female assistant's.

Or rather, to be precise, the substituted female assistant's.

Blood and brain matter hadn't quite splattered in the true sense of the word, as they, along with the body, were pulled into the Shadows by an invisible power without dirtying anything in the office.

"Go see if Rita is okay," Faske said toward the direction of the Shadows while remaining seated.

Afterward, his brow furrowed tightly.

He wasn't concerned about the assassination that had just occurred.

He faced such low-level assassination attempts two or three times a year; he was used to it. The reason he frowned was still because of that 'Spirit Medium'.

"Arthur Kledos!" This Golden Mane Advisor muttered the name.

Facing the 'Spirit Medium' who had suddenly appeared in his sights, he always felt that something was off.

But he had no evidence.

Still, he would never ignore his own intuition.



Therefore, he picked up pen and paper and began to write.

Previously, he had investigated and found out that the other party had an aunt studying at St. Joan of Arc Girls' College—on learning this news, he had people secretly monitor her.

Now?

It was time for contact.

As for capture?

He would never let his subordinates do so until the very last moment.

Of course, based on the 'Spirit Medium's performance, his subordinates were definitely no match for that Cassandra Kledos.

Thinking of this, Faske felt his headache worsen.

He subconsciously raised his hand to touch the little hair he had left.

He knew that if this continued, he would have to say goodbye to the few 'friends' he had left.

This made Faske feel quite helpless.

But there was nothing he could do.

Fortunately, as long as he completed the task at hand, he could retire.

He wouldn't go out to see as DeLong did.

Because he didn't want to lose his life in South Los like DeLong.

He would choose a farm near Inner Bay and live out the rest of his days there.

On this, he was confident the Grand Duke would agree.

Of course, he had to handle the current situation well first—

"That troublesome 'Kledos Family,' I hope you won't..."

Pfft!

Faske's speech came to an abrupt halt.

A longsword had been thrust into the body of the Golden Mane Advisor from behind his head, the tip protruding out of his mouth, as fresh blood dripped down onto the just-written note, completely drenching the surname 'Kredos' in red.

At death's door, Faske tried to see who the person was, but under the special binding of the longsword, he was utterly immobilized.

Quickly, Faske lost all signs of life.

The entire office was then engulfed in flames.

To the outside world, this was just an ordinary fire, not worth fussing over.

Internally, however, it caused a huge uproar.

Faske, one of the Grand Duke's Seven Golden Mane Advisors, had been killed so easily in his office, leaving the remaining advisors terrified.

It was also sufficient to enrage the Grand Duke.

In no time, the Inner Bay became a place of turbulent undercurrents, with countless secret police rushing back and forth, searching for the killer.

Meanwhile, on the high tower of the Inner Bay Bell Tower, where no one was paying attention, Cassandra looked out at the now choppy waters of the Inner Bay and murmured—

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Prince Severus, the Kledos Family sends their regards!"

As her words fell, Cassandra leaped forth, her body vanishing like the wind without touching the ground.

And the very moment Cassandra disappeared, several figures appeared at that spot, showing confusion in their eyes after a thorough check.

They then hurried to the next location.

...

Arthur's journey back to South Los was very smooth.

There were no disturbances, nor any accidents.

All the troubles that used to crop up had vanished at this moment.

Because of this, Arthur looked at his gloves and sword with a tender gaze—the young Spirit Medium believed this was the merit of these two props.

It was because of "Daniel's Hope" and the "Hunter's Longsword" that his luck had improved.

They had freed him from the troubles brought about by bad luck.

However, missing the 'Harvest Festival' was a regret for the young Spirit Medium.

He had been looking forward to this first major festival in the new world.

But there was nothing he could do.

Following behind the convoy, it took them a week and a half to return to South Los.

The munitions, especially the Little Emperor Cannon, were just too heavy.

Even the finest horses had trouble dragging them for long periods.

They had to divide the task into four batches each day to ensure the horses shouldering the main transportation had ample rest, and the next day, these horses had to be assigned to less strenuous tasks.

Otherwise, the horses would never make it back to South Los; they'd die en route.

But the long journey ended as the convoy entered South Los Territory.

Arthur watched as Simon set off with Hunter and Newt.

Just a moment ago, the three had moved the books and containers they had brought back from Yumir Manor—these were not important; the important things, Arthur always carried with him.

After checking the growth of the catnip and cat grass,

And ensuring that Merlin had done his job well, Arthur, carrying the still-sleeping Pendragon who had just taken the last 1 milliliter of Griffin Physique Potion, entered No. 2 Cork Street.

"Kuliqi, this is our home now.

The upstairs is full of machinery traps, so you'll need to be careful.

Downstairs, aside from the secret chamber and Grandpa's, Uncle's, and Aunt's rooms, you can go anywhere."

As Arthur placed Pendragon in the oversized cat's nest in the Spirit Medium Parlor, he introduced his hound to the layout of No. 2 Cork Street.

The six Hands of Void had already neatly arranged the less important books and experimental containers inside the Spirit Medium Parlor.

As for the rest?

Arthur planned to put them in his bedroom.

Having grown used to sleeping in the Spirit Medium Parlor, he decided to convert his original bedroom into a laboratory and library.

And this wasn't difficult, just some simple moving and arranging.

In less than half an hour, the young Spirit Medium had finished everything and stretched lazily, preparing to catch up on some sleep—within six hours, that is.

Having returned to South Los this morning, he hadn't had a proper sleep.

But just as the young Spirit Medium settled in, he abruptly opened his eyes in surprise and looked at his cat—

Huh??!

Chapter 305: The Familiar South Los Again!

A faint aura, only perceivable by those with "Spirituality," emerged around Pendragon.

Arthur was not surprised by this.

In fact, what caught Arthur's attention was how late it appeared—a warhorse, having ingested a full dose of the "Griffin Physique Potion," could become an Arcane Creature. By comparison, considering their size, cats should require far less potion.

Yet, it took an entire bottle of the "Griffin Physique Potion" for Pendragon to attain his promotion.

If someone else were in this situation, they would surely be filled with doubts, hesitate, and feel reluctant.

But not for Arthur.

All he needed was for Pendragon to have the ability to protect himself.

As for anything else?

Not to mention the "Griffin Physique Potion," if there were a "Griffin Spirit Potion" or even a "Griffin Gale Potion" available, Arthur would not hesitate to administer it to Pendragon.

At this moment, what surprised Arthur were the words before him—

[Name: Pendragon]

[Type: Pet]

[Quality: Arcane]

[Attributes: 1, Robust Orange Cat; 2, Baptism; 3, Griffin Physique. Cripple]

[Remarks: Pendragon's mother is the prettiest Calico cat around, and his father was a strong stray Orange Cat who, after reproduction, irresponsibly wandered off to another district. Pendragon has two brothers and a sister. He was the last born, but he had the best constitution, raised by his mother's side until he could fend for himself. Relying on the Orange Cat's natural talent, he quickly became the king of the street cats. He should have, like his father, survived on his natural instincts, until he encountered something beyond ordinary understanding. More fortunately, he met you. He truly likes you, even if he shows it with much reserve, he really likes you—meow~ meow meow~]

...

[Robust Orange Cat: Orange Cats naturally have a talent for becoming strong quickly as long as there is plenty of food.]

[Baptism: The lingering effects of the "Orange Cat" ritual you performed have made Pendragon smarter and stronger.]

[Griffin Physique. Cripple: A complete dose of the magic potion has transformed Pendragon, granting him the legendary 'Griffin Physique.' Even though it's incomplete, the griffin's power, speed, endurance, and agility manifested in him would still surprise anyone because his fur can resist knives, arrows, bullets, and deflect flames, acid, poison, and more. He moves more silently, his jumping ability has

greatly increased, even to the extent of short glides, and his eyes can see through darkness and even supernatural shadows, making it hard for stealth or invisible creatures to avoid his gaze. Most importantly, his claws can easily tear through half-plate armor.]

(Remark 1: Lacking the "Griffin Spirit Potion," Pendragon's state is not complete; he cannot use the Griffin Secret Art.)

(Remark 2: Even the incomplete "Griffin Physique" has increased Pendragon's need for food, preferring meat, but he can choose vegetarian options; however, the latter affects his mood and makes this little cat irritable.)

(Remark 3: After taking the Griffin Potion, and with the residual effects of the 'Orange Cat' ritual, you can communicate unobstructedly with Pendragon; although he understands, it doesn't mean he will comply.)

(Remark 4: Pendragon's promotion, having bathed in your 'Orange Cat' ritual, has provided you feedback, enhancing the special effects of your 'Orange Cat' ritual.)

(Remark 5: After gaining the Griffin Physique, Pendragon's lifespan has significantly extended; without accidents, he can easily live for several centuries.)

...

Everything up front was normal, but [Remark 4] took Arthur by surprise.

Through the "Orange Cat" ritual, he and Pendragon were of one heart. Naturally, he knew Pendragon benefited from the "Orange Cat" ritual—Arthur guessed it might be due to his six whiskers.

But the idea of Pendragon reciprocating effects to the "Orange Cat" ritual was something Arthur had not anticipated.

Arthur clearly felt the exuberant sensation of the "Orange Cat" ritual.



No!

More precisely, it was a feeling of fulfillment.

The sensation of having a full stomach.

This feeling lasted for a little over a minute before fading slowly.

Arthur immediately went to check the attributes of the "Orange Cat."

The [Ordination] hadn't changed.

[Feast], [Self-healing], and [Adaptive State] had all improved differently.

However, the most noticeable was [Golden Thread].

Its harmony with spirituality had changed to 3.5.

This was an unexpected surprise, prompting Arthur, who was already planning to search for the "Griffin Spirit Potion" and "Griffin Storm Potion," to move these plans up his schedule.

The "Orange Cat," although it could improve over time, Arthur favored such instantaneous upgrades!

After lifting a drowsy Pendragon into his arms, Arthur leaned back on the pillow and softly said—

"Pendragon, do you know?

With great power comes great responsibility!

So—"

From today onward, you must learn...

To take care of me!"

The drowsy Orange Cat suddenly woke up.

He looked incredulously at his master. He simply couldn't understand how his master, with a mouth warm at thirty-seven degrees, could say such cold-hearted words.

He was just a cat!

The next moment, Pendragon pretended not to understand, turned his head away, lay on Arthur's stomach, and started breathing evenly.

"I heard some Arcane Creatures can transform into humans. What if I get you the 'Griffin Spirit Potion,' could you turn into a cat lady?

No, wait!

You're a male cat!

So, could you become a cat man?"

Hmm...

"If you have cat ears, wearing a skirt would be the same, right?"

Arthur chattered away, and Pendragon, who had originally turned his head away, showed no signs of turning back but secretly bared his teeth.

Do you even hear what you're saying?

I'm just an ordinary little kitten!

Pendragon began to secretly vow that if his master continued to be unaware, he would have to teach him a lesson.

But the next moment, his head dipped, and the warm palm made him comfortably squint his eyes.

"I'm happy you can live more safely.

Today really is a day worth celebrating.

Oh right, there's also the salon at No. 44 White Bird Street, new houses should have their pots seasoned..."

Soft words, totally unlike something that shameless master would say, but the voice was indeed his.

Pendragon turned his head and saw that his master had somehow fallen deep asleep.

The cat's face twisted into a grimace.

Then, the Orange Cat nestled bit by bit into the nape of Arthur's neck, raised its paw to embrace Arthur, and then squinted its eyes, sinking into a deep sleep.

In the shadows, Kuliqi cocked his head watching this scene.

Instinctively, the Hound also wanted to come closer, but the already sleeping Orange Cat suddenly opened one eye, and its icy glare made Kuliqi wisely lie down at Arthur's feet.

By the time Kuliqi surreptitiously looked over, the Orange Cat's breathing had already evened out.

But Kuliqi did not move again.

Not because it could sense that the Orange Cat was feigning sleep, but because it had detected a strange scent passing by outside.

Kulik was very curious.

Yet, without his master's command, it remained quiet.

But Fujin and Wuni, responsible for guarding, were firmly watching.

A Crow silently followed.

Meanwhile, Malz, having heard that Arthur had returned from 'Yumir Manor', hurriedly left the office—he hadn't forgotten about the salon at No. 44 White Bird Street.

In fact, it had been his suggestion.

As Arthur's friend, it was only right and proper that he prepare a gift.

It should have been prepared earlier, but he had been delayed dealing with some trivial matters with Scott.

It was definitely not because he had been overly indulging in the company of the ladies at the club.

Panting! Panting!

When he arrived at 'Patrick's Old Bookstore', the old sheriff felt a series of aches in his lower back, and after leaning against a wall, he began to breathe heavily.

"Malz! Malz! How could you become so degenerate?"

Can't you see your haggard appearance?

You have been wounded by indulgence and alcohol!

From today onwards, abstain from drinking!"

While saying this, the old sheriff straightened his back, ready to enter the bookstore.

The gift he had thought of for Arthur was already decided.

A cookbook!

Yes, a traditional South Los cookbook!

In the old sheriff's view, nothing was as practical a gift as a cookbook, because really, Arthur lacked nothing.

Moreover, during the New House Salon, a cookbook that could add a scent of food to the new house was just perfect.

It was certainly not because he had been loitering in the club with Scott for over half a month, and his savings were nearly spent, leaving him with no money.

It was definitely not!

The old sheriff emphasized this in his mind as he stepped into the old bookstore.

But immediately, the old sheriff was stunned.

Because—

A scent of blood hit him full in the face.

A body with its throat slit was lying behind the bar.

Looking at the body stained with fresh blood, everything felt so familiar.

It had been over half a month, and this was the first murder case in South Los, giving the old sheriff an utterly surreal feeling.

'Is my happy holiday over just like this?'

The old sheriff thought to himself, a look of deep resignation on his face.

Eventually, the old sheriff sighed softly and said—

"Welcome home, Arthur."

Chapter 306: The Dead Return!

Malz was full of astonishment inside, but he acted quickly and shouted to the patrolling police officers on the street—

"You two, one of you block off the scene, the other go back and call for more people."

Patrick Bookstore, located in a side alley off West Mok Avenue, was not as bustling as the main street of West Mok Avenue, but it was still within the patrol range of the police officers.

And Malz's position was sufficient to command these officers.

"Yes, Police Chief!"

The two officers responded in unison.

Malz's gaze returned once more to the body inside the bookstore.

'Ambushed from behind, a throat slit with one strike!

Clean and decisive, no hesitation...

Definitely a veteran!'

Malz looked at the neatly cut wound on the neck of the body and the uninterrupted blood spatter on the floor and walls, frowning.

Compared to an amateur, a veteran was undoubtedly more troublesome.

It wasn't their first murder, their calmness and meticulous nature meant they rarely left behind any clues, and some left none at all. It was such that in Shire District and even in the whole of South Los, solving cases often depended on sheer luck—you might think you apprehended a thief, but he turns out to be a murderer, or you inadvertently interrogate a fraudster, and he ends up giving you a clue about a murderer.

However, everything changed with the arrival of Arthur.

Though Arthur was always 'favored by the Grim Reaper', no case could remain unresolved when he was involved.

Almost subconsciously, Malz thought to seek out Arthur.

But remembering that Arthur had just returned to South Los, fatigued from his journey and certainly in need of rest, Malz immediately shook his head—Arthur can't be relied upon for everything; I am capable too!

The old sheriff reassured himself.

One minute later...

'Maybe I should still consult Arthur?'

It wasn't that Malz didn't find solving cases satisfying himself, but that Arthur solved them much faster.

Having enjoyed the sensation of being whisked through investigations with Arthur, the old sheriff found it hard to go back to the old ways.

Still, the old sheriff continued to gather as much information as possible—

The cash register in the bookstore hadn't been touched.

The items in the shop were all in order, neatly arranged.

He immediately ruled out robbery murder.

That left only crimes of passion or revenge.



As for random killings?

Possible, but highly unlikely.

After all, South Los wasn't a frightening place filled with such lunatics.

Of course, if it turned out to be such a case, Malz would definitely give up struggling and choose to seek help from Arthur—acknowledging his own limitations was certainly one of his few strengths.

"Looney, take a team and inquire nearby for anyone suspicious.

Andy, you take two officers and find out more about the shop owner's personal relationships."

Malz gave his usual instructions.

"Yes, Police Chief."

The two apprentice policemen immediately sprang into action.

Seeing his subordinates dutifully carry out his orders, Malz's face softened considerably—a dependable team always added a hopeful dimension to an investigation.

If it was still the previous situation?

Malz would have chosen to give up right away.

While Looney and Andy were moving, Malz continued his thorough re-examination around the bookstore.

This time, his inspection was more thorough than before.

Then, under a bookshelf, Malz made a discovery—

A large gold coin.

Unlike normal gold coins which are 2 grams, large gold coins are 3 grams. Before the Pioneer Era began, while ordinary gold coins circulated in the market, large gold coins circulated internally in the military.

Or more accurately, they were often used among the nobility.

To distinguish themselves from commoners, the nobility had their gold coins made larger.

During the Seven Years' War, Malz, serving as a heavy musketeer, was awarded these coins more than once, so he was very familiar with them.

Like the large gold coin in his hand, it belonged to Count Bert's family from South County.

The symbols 'star, moon, ship' are really easy to recognize.

The ship represents Count Bert's family's pride in their sailing and shipbuilding skills.

To the public, the star and moon also relate to sailing, but rumors lean more toward the Mystic Side.

If Malz had been considering these before, he now tended directly toward the latter.

'Could this case involve Count Bert?' he wondered.

The old sheriff furrowed his brows.

If a murder crafted by an expert was merely troublesome, involving a noble made it enormously so.

For the privileges held by nobles always led matters into an uncontrollable abyss.

The old sheriff quietly secured the large gold coin.

It wasn't out of greed.

He simply didn't want to cause a commotion.

Just as the old sheriff was about to rise—

Smack!

A book fell from the shelf.

It landed right in front of the old sheriff.

'After the War: Affordable Commoner Recipes.' Just looking at the title, the old sheriff knew it was at least thirty years old—dating back to the end of the Seven Years' War when even the affluent nobles had to ration resources, not to mention the commoners.

To survive, people had to consume things they normally wouldn't look at, including but not limited to elm leaves.

To prevent poisoning, nobles across the regions had these types of books printed and had literate persons read them aloud amongst the population.

Of course, the effect was poor.

Desperate people mostly chose to eat first and deal with consequences later.

In the inland areas, some even turned to eating soil.

That period was also rife with pirates; people starving for food would take desperate measures.

Malz's memories of that period were anything but pleasant.

Because he had experienced more and witnessed even grimmer situations.

Picking up the cookbook, Malz intended to put it back, as he didn't want to look at recipes he could recite by heart due to those painful memories.

But perhaps due to his anxiousness, as he slid the book back, the old sheriff ended up bending the book's cover, causing a crease on the title page.

Forced to handle it again, the old sheriff took the book out, preparing to close it and smooth the crease when he noticed that there was writing on the title page.

As the old sheriff read the words, his body trembled, his eyes wide with disbelief.

Almost subconsciously, the old sheriff touched the words—

Cotton:

I received the book, but I'll bet you didn't even look inside—it's a cookbook!

Not a book!

Also, remember not to eat wood ear mushrooms that have been soaked for too long! Fresh daylily flowers are also out! And definitely throw out spoiled ginger!

I'm writing this because...

I don't trust you to remember (smiley face)

Stay safe and come back soon.

Loving you: Nicole

...

There was no exact date, but the name on the signature was one Malz would never forget.

Cotton was the comrade sitting by the campfire, who had shared plans of marrying his fiancée after the war, only to be shot dead by the captain.

The name of Cotton's fiancée was Nicole, a name Malz had heard him mention more than once.

Moreover, Malz had heard about Cotton sending a book as a gift to his fiancée Nicole—meaning this cookbook was what his comrade Cotton sent to his fiancée Nicole!

Combined with that large gold coin, the old sheriff's expression immediately grew solemn as he looked toward the body—

because the last place he and Cotton served was Count Bert's domain.

And both he and Cotton had received large gold coins as rewards.

Subconsciously, the old sheriff murmured—

"Cotton came back?"

Chapter 307: The Spirit Medium's Note!

Muttering to himself, Malz's gaze at the corpse turned fierce.

If Cotton had come back, what for?

Vengeance!

The dead return either to call out or to seek vengeance.

And clearly, this was not a call.

So...

That only left vengeance!

Was Cotton's death related to the current bookstore owner?

Were the deaths of his other 118 comrades related to this person?

This time, Malz no longer hesitated.

He turned to leave the bookstore, heading for No. 2 Cork Street, but before the old sheriff could step out of the alleyway, a patrol officer came running up quickly.

"Police Chief! Police Chief!

There's trouble at the Horn Report!"

The patrol officer's words took Malz by surprise.

Almost reflexively, the old sheriff thought of his good friend and regular patron, Scott, and immediately asked—

"What's happened?

Is Scott alright?"

...

The hangover made Scott's temples throb, especially the soreness in his lower back, which was making it impossible for the young man, newly promoted to editor-in-chief of the Horn Report, to sit comfortably at his desk and work.

Fortunately, thanks to consecutive reports about his good friend Arthur, the circumstances at the Horn Report had greatly improved. Not only had he been promoted to editor-in-chief, but he also now had a separate office, allowing him to rest in a more comfortable position instead of being cramped in the hall with all the other editors.

This office wasn't the original editor-in-chief's office, but a separate office set aside.

As for the original editor-in-chief's office?

It was still being used by him.

That editor-in-chief had been diligently serving at the Horn Report for forty years, almost as long as the paper itself.

Such an editor-in-chief was not going to be dismissed.

Nobody else would allow it to happen.

It wasn't just because of the integrity of that editor-in-chief; if someone so upright could be dismissed, what would stop them from being next?

Knock, knock-knock!

With a very rhythmic knock on the door, Scott immediately sat up straight.

"Come in!"

As the words were spoken, the office door was pushed open.

Seeing the elder at the door, Scott promptly stood up and respectfully said.

"Editor-in-chief Comms!"

Comms was the editor-in-chief who was as established as the Horn Report itself.

This editor, now over sixty with white-haired and slightly stooped, still had a good spirit. Leaning on his cane, he walked briskly.

"Editor-in-chief Scott!"

In the face of Scott's respect, the old editor-in-chief also reciprocated with the same deference.

To this, Scott felt quite helpless.



Even though he had repeatedly said that it wasn't necessary, and that he was just a junior, the old editor-in-chief always insisted on it.

In fact, the old editor-in-chief's by-the-book style had been longstanding for many years.

"I'd like to treat everyone at the newspaper to a meal—as a goodbye gesture."

"A goodbye gesture?"

Didn't the chief say that you shouldn't worry about that, and that the Horn Report would provide for your retirement?

Is it because of me?"

Scott was taken aback, looking at the old editor-in-chief with incomprehension.

When he was promoted to editor-in-chief, that chief editor had publicly declared that they would care for the former editor-in-chief during his retirement.

Such publicly declared promises could not be reneged on.

The old editor-in-chief, seeing Scott's anxiety, immediately waved his hand.

"It has nothing to do with the chief; he's been quite kind and never abandoned me during the toughest times!

And it has nothing to do with you; it's you who brought new vitality to the Horn Report. You've done very well!"

"I chose to leave because I've reached the age of retirement and, moreover, I have enough pension to spend my remaining years in peace on a farmstead just outside South Los!"

"If you want to see me, you can come anytime!"

The old editor said, revealing a rare smile.

"Of course, I'll definitely come visit you often—so which restaurant are we going to eat at?"

Seeing the old editor's smile, Scott nodded repeatedly, making a promise.

The young editor wouldn't forget that when he first joined the newspaper, it was this old editor who had guided him step by step towards professionalism.

"A restaurant?"

Am I just a poor old man about to retire, and you have the heart to let them exploit my pension at a restaurant?

I ordered food from 'Grandma Andor's Kitchen', we'll eat right here at the newspaper office."

The old editor, growing rarer still, began to joke with Scott.

Then, the old editor bowed slightly and went to personally inform the others.

He placed great importance on the 'farewell ceremony'.

Of course, it was still important to save where possible.

However, Grandma Andor's culinary skills were still as reassuring as ever.

The midday meal consisted of a 'Common Superior Recipe' with beef and lamb as the main dishes—an expression that came about after the Seven Years' War.

Along with it emerged 'Intermediate Recipe', 'Economical Recipe', and so on.

For a significant period, 'Superior Recipe' and 'Intermediate Recipe' were allowed only during festivities.

For instance, an 'Intermediate Recipe' that included offal was to be consumed only on Sundays.

And the 'Superior Recipe' was reserved strictly for the Harvest Festival, Cold Winter Festival, Spring Planting Festival, Summer Celebration Day, and Peace Festival—only to be used on those five celebration days.

Even though time had passed and South Los had become affluent much faster than imagined, a meal of 'Common Superior Recipe' was still something to be proud of.

Especially when it was the supersized version—

Roast beef (four servings, each 600g), beef stew with potatoes (one pot, at least 5000g), grilled lamb chops (twelve servings, each 120g), stir-fried lamb with coriander (one pot, at least 3000g), hearty lamb broth (one pot, at least 5000g), lamb fat baked apples (twelve), vegetable egg salad (twelve servings, each 200g), white bread (5000g), and various condiments (including 20g each of butter, honey, and black pepper).

Food for 12 people, delivered by two apprentice chefs from Grandma Andor's.

Which did not include wine.

The wine was provided by the editor-in-chief.

And just after one drink, the old editor's eyes became misty and he started to talk more.

In the end, halfway through the meal, the old editor was completely drunk, leaving Scott no choice but to support him back to his own office.

As he settled the man in his chair, Scott could see that the old editor wanted to say something, but in the end, he said nothing at all.

And there was no chance to say it anymore.

After lunch, a newly hired trainee editor was assigned to take care of the old editor, but just as she pushed the door open, the rookie female editor was so frightened that she fell to the ground—

"Aaahhh!"

The scream drew everyone's attention.

Looking at the old editor with his throat slashed, everyone except Scott was petrified.

"Call the police!"

Scott shouted loudly.

Then, his eyes fixated on a large gold coin on the floor, his brows involuntarily furrowing.

He could be sure that this large gold coin had not been there before.

The old editor had the habit of using paper money and did not usually use coins.

'Left by the killer?

What does it mean?'

As the young editor pondered this, he suddenly saw a familiar boy run into the newspaper office.

The kid was from Dar Alley, often running errands for his good friend Arthur.

Just as he was thinking this, the boy approached Scott and handed him a note.

At the same time, Wuni landed in front of Malz with another note.

Malz and Scott nearly simultaneously opened the notes.

Surprise flickered in their eyes.

Even though they were somewhat prepared, they still found it incredible.

Because the note read—

Want to know what happened?

At 8 o'clock tonight, come to No. 44 White Bird Street, and I will tell you everything at the salon!

Chapter 308: 7 PM!

Marinda arrived at No. 44 White Bird Street in a carriage at exactly seven o'clock — although it was entirely feasible to walk from No. 6 White Bird Street to No. 44, she had to take the carriage to avoid any 'rumors.'

This was the 'dignity' that nobles pursued.

It annoyed Marinda to no end, yet she had no choice but to comply.

The day she was to inherit the title of Baron Kemir was fast approaching, and at such a time, she would not permit any complications.

But...

It really was uncomfortable.

'A false world made up of false people, and the most terrifying part is that I am one of them!'

The lady began to use self-deprecation to distract herself from her depression.

Of course, there was also her favorite—

Whew!

A strong mix of mint and peach smoke was heavily exhaled onto Arthur by the lady.

Seeing Arthur frown, Marinda's mouth quirked up, and then, without waiting for Arthur to speak, she handed him a rectangular wicker box — it contained the gifts suitable for a 'first visit' and the items promised in a previous deal.

Immediately, Arthur's attention was captured.

There were four items inside.

They were a Glory Potion, a scroll, a pair of boots, and a book—

Name: Glory Potion (Perfect)

Type: Magic Potion

Quality: Hero

Attributes: Perfect Bloodline

Remarks: When Master Alchemist 'Lady Abel' turned to potion-making, everyone was skeptical of her—there was too much evidence that there was only one genius like Master Hercules. However, when she presented the improved Glory Potion, everyone chose to close their mouths. This potion in your hand is the crystallization of talent and luck, accidentally concocted, with only thirteen made in total. This is one of them, well-preserved, and of exceptional quality.

...

Perfect Bloodline: If you possess a Bloodline, it will help you perfectly repair it.

(Note: This is a standard 20 ml test tube filled with potion liquid.)

...

After examining the Glory Potion (Perfect), Arthur did not immediately consume it.

His Bloodline was Dark Serpent, and who knew what sort of reaction might occur during the repair.

Even the slightest observation by Marinda might give away his secrets.

Therefore, he had to take it alone.

He put the Glory Potion (Perfect) back into its individual brocade box, then back into the wicker box, and Arthur picked up the scroll—

Discovery of the Secret Technique 'Cat Claw,' undergoing ritual assessment...

Assessment passed!

Spirituality assessment ongoing...

Assessment passed!

Yes/No: Spend 100 XP to learn this secret technique?

...

'Cat Claw?'

'The Cat Claw from the Cat Cave?'

Looking at the text prompt, Arthur quickly unrolled the scroll to inspect it, his eyes gleaming with joy.

Previously, when Marinda mentioned a secret technique possibly from the Cat Cave or the Cat Faction, Arthur instinctively thought it was from the 'Cat Faction.'

He had not expected it to actually be from 'Cat Cave'!

Similarly, Arthur carefully placed the secret technique back into the wicker box.

Just like the Glory Potion.

This technique, too, needed to be studied alone.



Not because he feared being discovered, but because he wanted to create the illusion for Marinda that 'I have already mastered it'—it definitely wasn't to swindle more from Marinda, but purely to maintain the 'modern Black Cat's' aura of mystery and power.

Yes, that was precisely it!

With this resolute thought, Arthur's gaze then fell on the pair of boots.

...

Name: Black Cat Boots

Type: Armor

Quality: Epic

Attributes: 1, Silence; 2, Lightness; 3, Stealth; 4, Black Cat's Warmth

Remarks: These were the boots of the last 'Black Cat,' who died in battle. After his death, the boots ended up in the hands of an unknown individual, and after numerous transfers, were acquired by Marinda and handed to you—I care about what I have, and I cannot lose them, even if... it means I must die!

...

Silence: When you wear these boots, your footsteps will make no sound.

Lightness: When walking, running, or jumping, your body is extraordinarily agile, much like a real cat, allowing you to effortlessly perform acrobatic flips and leaps mid-air.

Stealth: When moving through shadows or darkness, you automatically receive a stealth bonus.

Black Cat's Warmth: When you master a secret technique such as 'Cat Claw,' wearing these boots allows you to incorporate the 'Cat Claw' effect into your kicks, and other secret techniques such as 'Silent Successive Steps' will be enhanced.

(Note 1: Silence, Lightness, and Stealth can stack with other secret techniques and Bloodlines.)

(Note 2: Black Cat's Warmth can only enhance 'Cat Claw,' 'Silent Successive Steps,' and other Cat Faction/Cat Cave secret techniques.)

(Note 3: Black Cat's Warmth can boost other leg-based secret techniques from the Cat Faction.)

(Note 4: Black Cat's Warmth supports other reasonably attachable props on oneself.)

...

Upon seeing the Black Cat Boots, Arthur did not hesitate at all— he took off his shoes and put on the Black Cat Boots.

Of course, Arthur did not forget the Lannister's Height-Increasing Insoles.

He solemnly placed them inside the Black Cat Boots.

Watching this scene, contempt flickered in Marinda's eyes.

"Such a vain man!" she exclaimed.

She wondered why Arthur suddenly looked 1 centimeter taller—it turned out he had inserted height-increasing insoles.

Only...

Those insoles were likely secret technique items.

'Do they have other unknown effects?' she pondered.

"Is this the essence of the 'Cat Faction. Black'?"

Marinda thought, her heart slightly chilled.

Then, as this lady examined the last item Arthur was looking at, she surveyed No. 44 White Bird Street like a hostess and gave her appraisal.

"For your first salon, won't you add a little extra decoration?"

At the very least, you should hang the oil painting of your grandfather at the entrance, as the eldest of the Kledos Family, it is the proper tribute. Upon entering the hall, you should display the crest of the Kledos Family, and at the dining table, you shouldn't use table cloths for an evening salon but rather choose plain-colored table flags.

And these candles, why not use the classic high-standing trident?"

Facing the empty No. 44 White Bird Street, Marinda voiced her opinions.

Arthur, on the other hand, looked puzzled at the 'menu' in his hand.

Yes!

It was indeed a menu!

Who sends a menu when moving into a new house?

After flipping through it twice, confirming it was just an ordinary menu, Arthur raised his head to look at Marinda, who was continuously talking.

Seeing her smile, the young 'Spirit Medium' nodded repeatedly, appearing genuinely receptive—

"Ah, right, right!

You are absolutely correct!

So, my dear, the decoration here is all yours—please don't skimp on your gold coins. After all, as a member of the Kledos family, arranging grandpa's portrait and crafting the family crest is naturally part of your obligation, isn't it?"

Having said this, Arthur returned to the sofa in the hall, continuing to yawn with Pendragon in his arms.

Though he wanted to catch up on sleep, Arthur, who actually hadn't slept much, maintained a groggy state.

He definitely wouldn't be hosting the salon this evening if not for the worry that something unexpected might occur.

In fact, he was quite taken aback by that incident.

Arthur truly hadn't expected that an accidental tracking could uncover such a matter.

How should I put it?

EMMM...

'Typical of South Los!'

Arthur made an apt summary and then planned to take a short nap before the salon started, but the next moment, the young 'Spirit Medium' had to open his eyes to look toward the other side.

Marinda sat opposite him, puffing away at her smoke. Seeing Arthur open his eyes, the lady immediately asked with a smile—

"Aunt Cassandra is in Inner Bay, right?"

Arthur instantly became alert.

He knew Marinda's personality well; she definitely wouldn't ask without reason.

Since she asked, it must mean that something significant happened in Inner Bay and it was related to the Kledos Family.

With this alarming realization, Arthur, keeping his composure, half-laid there and lazily replied.

"She isn't."

"Oh, but I received news that Faske, one of the 'One of the Seven Great Golden Manes' responsible for South Los, was assassinated last night while reviewing messages about the Kledos Family.

Some suspect it was your family's doing!"

Marinda elongated her tone.

Arthur immediately rolled his eyes.

The young 'Spirit Medium' said—

"Would anyone believe such a far-fetched accusation?

My aunt is a well-read, gentle, and kind lady; how could she possibly commit an assassination?

If it really was my aunt's doing, then my uncle Drake in Sidon Fortress wouldn't be a noble Knight, but that newly emerged Western Sea Pirate General!

Moreover, for the safety of the Kledos Family, with my uncle's temper, he would definitely try to secretly lead a fleet into Inner Bay and bombard Lion Palace to thoroughly intimidate the Golden Lion Family from setting their sights on the Kledos Family.

But see, such a thing never happened.

Thus, someone must be shifting attention and framing our family."

Arthur stated emphatically.

Marinda stared intently at Arthur, trying to spot any flaws on his face.

But there were none; Arthur's expression was genuine.

Both his eyes and the expressions on his face showed it.

'Indeed, I was overthinking!

'The Kledos Family, though noteworthy, could not have done such a thing—it's more likely someone else framed them!

Oh, discovering that the Old Lion intends to move against the Kledos Family, someone preemptively framed the Kledos Family... such tactics are awfully familiar!

Who would be so eager to test the Old Lion?'

Marinda thought to herself, feeling increasingly pleased.

For her, it was a tremendous good fortune.

With the Old Lion's personality, he would definitely find the real culprit.

Before that, his attention wouldn't focus on South Los.

As for making a move against the Kledos Family?

The Old Lion would absolutely not withstand being labeled 'senile' unless there were conclusive evidence!

But the assassin who dared do this was obviously very confident.

He must have set up more than one trap.

So—

It's time to watch the show unfold!

Just probing Arthur was merely her instinctive reaction.

If there were gains, that was good.

If not?

It was to be expected.

Without additional gains, but unable to hide her good mood, Marinda took out her specialty tobacco, preparing to take a puff, her gaze suddenly caught on Grandma Andor and others busy in the kitchen, and the lady was momentarily stunned.

Grandma Andor, she knew her.

To some extent, very well.

Because Grandma Andor had been the cook of Baron Kemir before she was to inherit his title.

The next moment, the lady looked at Arthur with a skeptical gaze and whispered—

"Have you discovered something remarkable again?"

Chapter 309: That Thing!

Facing Marinda's inquiry, Arthur, who was slumped down, responded with an extremely perfunctory attitude.

"Yes, that's right, I've discovered a huge secret again.

Want to hear it?

Bring out the right chips, and I'll tell you."



The young 'Spirit Medium' said this, then closed his eyes again, appearing as though he was about to fall asleep.

"Humph, trying to trick me again!"

While Marinda spoke those words, her gaze towards Arthur became more suspicious.

This lady always felt that Arthur was hiding something from her.

And just at that moment, Arthur, who seemed about to fall asleep, suddenly opened his eyes and stared unblinkingly at Marinda, startling the lady so much that her hand, holding a pipe, trembled.

"What, what's the matter?"

"Anna."

Arthur uttered that name.

At the same time, the young 'Spirit Medium' was certain that this woman must be hiding something from him.

Was it the matter he had bamboozled her over by guessing on his own due to the 'Swordsmanship Competition'?

Or could it be about inheriting the title of Baron Kemir?

Arthur moved his ankles slightly, feeling the softness of the "Black Cat Boots," and tended toward the former—but he didn't press further.

Being able to deceive Marinda once was already fortunate enough.

To try such a thing again would definitely lead to discovery.

Unless he had enough information.

And such information definitely couldn't be asked from Marinda.

Thus, Arthur seemingly casually changed the topic.

"Alright, this was my mistake—the fellow always acts on his own initiative."

Marinda sighed helplessly.

Of course, the lady knew which Anna Arthur was referring to.

It wasn't the 'Ms. Anna' sitting quietly on the sofa nearby.

It was her passionate admirer, Ms. Anna.

Just thinking of the latter approaching Cassandra Cremos on her own made this lady's temples throb, because she knew Anna meant well.

But Anna didn't understand the dangers of the Kledos Family.

Nor did she grasp the complexity of the current situation.

With the Old Lion aging, the entire South County was in a delicate balance, and everyone could feel the prelude to a storm, but no one knew who would disrupt this delicate balance—perhaps, like the recent assassination attempt on one of the Seven Great Golden Manes, Faske, it was a test directed at the Old Lion.

Everyone was waiting for the Old Lion's response.

And in such waiting, everyone, as before, was garnering as much strength and influence as possible, and that was her reason for engaging Arthur.

The still hidden 'Kledos Family' was no different!

To be able to reappear openly and aboveboard in the sunlight, Marinda could fully imagine how much preparation and effort the 'Kledos Family' had made.

The moment Cassandra Credos appeared in Inner Bay, it definitely wasn't for schooling but most likely in preparation for seizing the opportunity to rise.

She would likely build her needed forces in Inner Bay.

Therefore, at such a time, any interference with their plans could only lead to a dead end.

So—

"As a condition for the 'Kledos Family' to spare Anna, I can compensate you."

Stand straight when you're hit, face punishment when you err.

Perhaps Marinda hadn't heard such sayings, but similar words were well known to her, and likewise, that was also how she acted.

And that was why Arthur liked working with her and was willing to further their collaboration.

"Griffin Spirit Potion and Griffin Gale Potion!"

Arthur blurted out his demands.

Marinda, however, responded with a cold laugh.

"Do you know what you are talking about?

If I had the Griffin Spirit Potion and the Griffin Gale Potion, I would definitely breed a true griffin for myself!

If I had the formulas for the Griffin Spirit Potion and Griffin Gale Potion, not only the Old Lion of Inner Bay but also the Dukes of Northern County and Yan Fort would reward me generously. Even the nobles on the West Coast wouldn't be stingy, opening their treasuries for me to choose from!

If you want the Griffin Spirit Potion and Griffin Gale Potion, you should try your luck with professional relic hunters and adventurers, not ask me!

I just wanted to compensate you, not trouble myself. Change your demand!"

The lady waited impatiently for the young 'Spirit Medium.'

Marinda thought Arthur did it on purpose.

With the power Arthur held, he couldn't possibly be ignorant of the special nature of the Griffin Spirit Potion and Griffin Gale Potion—the current, former, and even the previous commanders of the Griffin Cavalry of Northern County were all griffin enthusiasts. To own a real griffin as a mount, they would trade all their possessions for the Griffin Spirit Potion and Griffin Gale Potion. If that wasn't enough? The Duke of Northern County would offer half of his wealth to support them, and if still insufficient? The remaining nobles of Northern County would be willing to donate generously.

Forming a true 'Griffin Knight Order' to revive the Empire's glory has always been the dream of the people of Northern County.

Besides, for the people of Northern County, there's nothing more romantic than having a griffin as a mount, just as the Grand Duke of the West Coast, who owns the 'Dragon Rider Corps,' dreams of having a true dragon.

And Arthur genuinely did not know about this.

Having confirmed another piece of information from Marinda's mouth, Arthur internally admired his partner's 'generosity' before changing his request to what he truly desired—

"Ships!

I need a lot of ships, ready to be deployed immediately!"

If it were just the original volume, Malz stepping in would have been enough, but with the unexpected inclusion of Jimte and Kalal, that magnitude of resources would be a waste.

Although Jimte and Kalal would provide as many ships as possible, for the sake of secrecy, such ships would inevitably be few and the cycle to join the fleet exceedingly slow—the Marquess of Seberlin and the Marquess of Ainhars weren't fools. Although they agreed to the tax exemption for the sake of appearances, they would definitely keep a close watch on his ships for a considerable time to come.

Therefore, if he wanted to grow quickly, he needed to be open and aboveboard.

And what could be more open and aboveboard than partnering with Marinda?

Nothing!

After all, they were soulmates, undying lovers!

When Marinda heard Arthur's new condition, she didn't feel relieved—although it was something she wanted to be involved in and was certain she could be.

Though coastal trade wasn't as profitable as overseas trade, the tax exemption was tempting enough.

However, successfully joining wouldn't be easy.

Marinda had originally planned to find an opportunity to talk properly with Arthur.

But to her surprise, Arthur took the initiative.

This...

Did not fit Arthur's style.

In Marinda's view, Arthur was never so generous—every seemingly straightforward deal he made was always laden with various probes and secrets unknown to others.

This time was no exception.

And this time, it was even more obvious.

After all, Arthur had already disclosed the most important thing.

Thinking of this, Marinda laughed coldly again—

"Are you trying to probe how much I know about 'that thing'?"

Hmph, I will definitely not tell you!"

Hearing this, Arthur laughed.

The young 'Spirit Medium' had finally gotten a rough idea about 'that thing.'"

Chapter 310 Display!

Ship!

The "thing" was a ship!

And when Arthur came to this conclusion, the range had significantly narrowed—for after all, ships as valuable as two-thirds of Marinda's price tag weren't plentiful in this world.

Arthur rifled through the memories in his mind and could only think of four.

The first was naturally the "Hercules' Airship," created by the revered "God of Alchemy," "God of Potions," Hercules.

A vessel capable of uplifting a duchy, its value was utterly incalculable.

But that airship was absolutely impossible.

Because as long as Hercules was alive, that airship would not possibly fall into anyone else's hands.

And discarding that airship, there remained three—

The Emperor's flagship of the Empire, the "Golden Dragon"!

The Pope's flagship of the Holy Empire, the "Thorn"!

And then there was...

The Pirate King of the Silver Age's "White Crow"!

Among them, the "Golden Dragon" had sunk during the "Fog War," so it was ruled out.

And the "Thorn"?

At the fall of the Holy Empire, there were rumors that the "Thorn," carrying The Holy Court's legacy, wealth, and secrets, vanished into the vast sea.

Numerous professional adventurers had set sail just to find this immensely wealthy ship, but up to now, all efforts had been in vain.

As for the "White Crow"?

It was another flying ship!

Moreover, it was an exceptionally powerful flying ship, and it was precisely because of this ship that Edward, amidst the nobles' relentless pursuit, consistently performed miracles and became the universally recognized Pirate King of that age.

So, "that thing" must be either the "Thorn" or the "White Crow"!

As for which one it was?

Arthur would not pry.

It was already fortunate enough to incidentally obtain further information from Marinda's lips.

"Thank the lovely asymmetry of information!"



"Thank Marinda for her imaginations!"

Arthur thought to himself, though his expression showed a clear sign of resignation.

"You always think of me so opportunistic, so if that's the case, I feel I should meet your expectations—give me thirty brand-new Kirk Sailboats, and I'll share ten percent of the profits with you!"

As Arthur spoke, he deliberately spread his hands, making it look as though this wasn't his intention, but rather that she'd forced his hand.

Phew!

Marinda exhaled a thick cloud of smoke onto Arthur.

"Have you gone completely mad with poverty?"

Do you have any idea how much it costs to build a brand-new Kirk Sailboat, 25,000 Gold Coins? Thirty boats would be 750,000 Gold Coins, enough to fill up the entirety of No. 44 White Bird Street!"

The lady said indignantly.

But Arthur was undeterred.

Because he could see that Marinda wasn't really angry.

Simply put, it was just her bargaining tactic.

So, with a smile, Arthur said,

"But not enough to fill the emptiness inside me."

"I've never heard anyone describe greed so calmly—ten ships, thirty percent of the profits."

Marinda began to quote her price.

"That's because you've never seen the truly greedy me. Compared to that out-of-control version, I'm already quite rational now, so—thirty ships, fifteen percent profit is a fair price."

Arthur began to concede.

The profits could be negotiated, but definitely not the ships.

Because only a sufficient number of ships could create enough profit to offset the 'losses' from the deal with Marinda.

Marinda clearly noticed Arthur's intention.

"What a greedy fellow!"

The lady remarked before commencing the 'negotiation' for their collaboration this time.

The two let not a single gold coin slip by that could enter their pockets.

They competed for almost every tiny bit.

And naturally, such competition was fierce.

Therefore, when the first guest, Haywood, arrived with a gift, what he encountered were Marinda with a sweat on her forehead and flushed cheeks, and Arthur with his eyes closed, leaning on the sofa with his chest heaving up and down.

Instantly, Haywood subconsciously thought of something.

He immediately wished he could slap himself.

Eight o'clock!

The agreement was eight o'clock!

Why had he fancied himself clever and arrived early?

And even if he arrived early, why didn't he wait outside? Why did he insist on coming in?

At once, this former unscrupulous landlord, now in charge of Arthur's 'South Los Real Estate Project,' felt his hands trembling while holding the gift — because Haywood saw the displeasure in Arthur's eyes.

His boss was angry.

"Get a different gift and come back."

That's what Arthur said.

Huh?

A different gift?

Haywood, puzzled, looked down at the clock in his hands — he had spent a good deal of money on it. Was there something wrong with it?

New House Salon, there's no problem with gifting a clock, right?

The baffled Haywood left No. 44 White Bird Street and brushed past the Dort District's new Police Chief, Kuke — this Third-Class Officer had smoothly become the new chief following the disappearance of Chief James and the death of his rival, and with guidance from his father and uncles, he not only consolidated his power in Dort District but also recruited some young men from the farms into the Dort District Police Station, ensuring he had people at his disposal.

Of course, he didn't forget his role, nor did he dare.

So, when Kuke received Arthur's invitation, he made a special trip back to the farm and brought the gift his father had prepared long ago.

"Good evening, my lord."

Kuke greeted respectfully, causing Marinda by the side to glance over.

Being aware of the new chief of the Dort District, Marinda naturally knew of him, but she hadn't expected that he would have thrown in his lot with Arthur.

As she watched Arthur smiling while receiving the gift, Marinda also temporarily put down her pipe and stood next to Arthur with a smile — given their known identities to the outside world, this was a necessity. If she just sat there indifferently, it would be incredibly rude and make people think less of Arthur.

As Kuke moved towards the reception area, Marinda was surprised but didn't think much of it. However, as Malz, Scott, and Wiggins arrived, the lady's brows furrowed deeper.

Kuke, Malz, Scott, Wiggins.

The police chiefs of two districts in South Los, a chief editor of the Horn Report, a gang leader.

Taken individually, perhaps it meant little, but when these people gathered together, especially under one person's command, it was enough to raise alarm.

'Luckily, they don't have enough money...

Umm, was the first guy who came in charge of the money?'

While pondering, Marinda suddenly thought of Haywood, who went to exchange the gift.

Immediately, the lady's look towards Arthur changed.

Arthur felt it.

But he didn't care.

Since he had invited Marinda, it showed that these people he wouldn't hide, indeed couldn't hide — given Marinda's influence in South Los, investigating these people was far too easy.

Better to show them off openly.

And Arthur believed that Marinda, faced with such candid display, would surely be suspicious.

And to give Marinda even more scope for speculation, to make himself 'more valuable,' Arthur had invited a special guest as well.

Tap, tap-tap!

In the midst of clear footsteps, the corners of Arthur's mouth lifted —

The special guest had arrived.

