

Great Master 321

Chapter 321 Consuming It!

The normal burning of incense and candles is a fairly lengthy process.

But, at this moment, in front of Arthur, the candles were burning bit by bit, as if being...

Devoured!

Yes!

Devoured!

It was as if something invisible was consuming the candles bite by bite.

With narrowed eyes, Arthur first glanced at "Death Intuition" and, seeing no flickering, he cautiously surveyed his surroundings without showing any emotions.

His usual perception detected nothing.

His "Spirituality" perception also detected nothing.

But under the "Breath of Death" sense, he noticed something slightly different—

The smoke from the candle completely dissipated one meter above his head.

There...

the smoke disappeared into thin air.

If the candle in front of him wasn't still burning, Arthur might even doubt the existence of that smoke.

Subconsciously, Arthur's peripheral vision swept over Marinda.

The young Spirit Medium had to confirm whether or not the lady beside him was playing a joke on him.

When he saw the faint curiosity in the lady's eyes, the young Spirit Medium knew that what was happening had nothing to do with her.

'Could this be...

Gone to the "Land of Eternal Slumber"?'

Arthur wondered uncertainly.

The "Mystic Side knowledge" he had come into contact with did not contain similar records.

On the contrary, the current world's "mythical stories" had similar records—after the passing of relatives and friends, the thoughts and blessings of the living will travel with the wind to the "Land of Eternal Sleep," to be perceived by the departed, becoming their most cherished treasure.

Arthur, who had personally experienced many mysteries, would not scoff at such "mythical stories," but without further evidence, he also dared not believe them entirely.

It was just like how he now did not dare to peep at the spot one meter above his head.

Because—

"Three feet above your head there are Divine Spirits."

For some reason, Arthur thought of an old saying from his hometown.

And the moment he remembered this phrase, the wariness in his heart began to rise indefinitely.

He wasn't sure if there really were beings like Divine Spirits there.

Or to say, there was some other kind of presence.

But whatever it was, rash contact was not a wise move.

He knew that what he needed to do now was to gather information.

Only by knowing both oneself and the enemy can one fight a hundred battles without danger of defeat.

Of course, there was another important point: to strengthen his power!

'Young me, I am still too weak!'

the young Spirit Medium thought to himself, silently watching until the candle was completely burnt out, then he stood up and walked out of the cemetery.

A sense of unknown urgency made the young Spirit Medium want to return to No. 2 Cork Street.

He wanted to take the "Glory Potion (Perfect)" in a safe place!

Marinda stepped forward to follow.

Walking alongside the young Spirit Medium, the lady once again put her pipe to her lips.

However, even with the guise of the pipe, it could not completely conceal the lady's smile.

She had finally caught a glimpse of 'Communicate with Spirits'!

She was sure that the ritual she had just witnessed was based on 'Communicate with Spirits'!

To bless the dead!

The rumored 'Cat Faction.Black' was said to possess a similar ability. She had been skeptical, but having seen Arthur now, she believed.

'Blessings that reach directly to the "Land of Eternal Slumber"?

Truly awe-inspiring 'Cat Faction.Black'!

However, the burden of this secret technique seems to be heavier than I imagined. I didn't expect Arthur to be so kind-hearted...'

Marinda, who felt that Arthur's mood seemed to have become much heavier, couldn't help but think.

But the next moment, the lady's brows furrowed slightly.

'That's not right!

How could someone like Arthur possibly be so kind-hearted?

This guy did it to make the 'Swordsmanship Competition'!

He did it to make the rumors of his 'unhealed severe injury' seem more credible!

Participating personally?

Is this what the 'Black Cat' of our times does?

This is frightening!'

With this thought, Marinda's eyes narrowed slightly, and a look of alertness and... excitement emerged in her deep blue eyes.

The lady was very much looking forward to what Arthur's next move would be after the rumors of 'Cat Faction. Black' reappearing were spread by Garcia.

This anticipation mixed with curiosity excited the lady.

Of course, it was also because the lady had come to know of Arthur's reliability.

Marinda was clear that once she knew Arthur's true intentions, as long as she didn't stand on the opposing side of Arthur's goals, he would become the person she trusted the most.

Such validation uplifted the lady's mood once more.

Even the fatigue brought about by not having had a short nap at midnight was dispersed.

However, the lady had only sent Arthur back to No. 2 Cork Street and chose not to stay the night—there were only three days left until the registration for the 'Swordsmanship Competition', and she still had quite a lot of work to do.

"The 'Swordsmanship Competition' registration is only one day—from 9 AM to 5 PM, don't forget, and... good night!"

As Marinda said these words, just like a lady earnestly reminding her lover, she didn't forget to flash a sweet smile at Arthur through the car window and waved her hand.

"Hmm, good night."

Arthur responded with a smile.

In Wuni's field of vision, six people hid on Cork Street, watching this place.

Three of them should still be Mystic Side People.

However, all six were 'very disciplined' and did not approach too closely.

Clearly, as more information about Arthur arrived, these people made the wisest choice, but that didn't prevent Arthur from having Wuni stay on full alert after bidding farewell to Marinda.

At the same time, he also gestured for Kuliqi to guard the door—

"Stay here, and do not allow anyone to enter the room."

Arthur instructed like this.

Kuliqi nodded and then crouched in the shadows behind the door.

Having arranged for the «Death Hound», Arthur picked up his Orange Cat from the Cat's Nest, swayed it from side to side, and in Pendragon's confused expression, he seriously said.

"Raising a cat for a thousand days, using it for a moment!

It's time for you to repay dad, Pan!

Stay here, and don't let anyone in!"

Arthur gestured to Pendragon toward the staircase leading underground.

Meow~

Pendragon gave a languid response.

By the time Arthur put him back, Pendragon yawned and closed his eyes again.

"Pan, you wouldn't want anything to happen to dad, right?"

Pan, you know dad loves you!

Pan, ever since you were little and left your mother, it's been dad who has raised you with blood, sweat, and tears!"

The incessant talk came from the mouth of the young 'Spirit Medium', making Pendragon open his eyes again, and then, he let Arthur move the Cat's Nest along with him to the entrance of the stairs.

But at this point, Arthur didn't immediately head downstairs.

He was waiting.

He would only move from upstairs to the 'Safe House' three levels underground after Fujin, who was keeping an eye on Garcia and Longbain, returned.

This was a secret room specially arranged by Old Charlie, concerned that an accident might happen.

Not only was it stocked with ample food and medicine, but there was also a secret tunnel that led directly out of South Los.

After securing the iron door of the 'Safe House', Arthur took a deep breath and pulled out the «Glory Potion (Perfect)» from Atos's Box.

Meanwhile, at the entrance to the corridor staircase, Pendragon, who had been lazing in the Cat's Nest, stood up. The Orange Cat became vigilant in this moment, attentively watching its surroundings, with its ears pricked up listening for any unusual sounds.

Chapter 322 Death and the Serpent!

...

After lighting the oil lamp in the 'Safe House' and adjusting it to its brightest, Arthur finally settled into the chair, swirling the test tube in his hand.

Gazing at the crystal-clear potion, Arthur uncorked the vial and directly gulped down the "Glory Potion (Perfect)."

It had a slightly viscous consistency, like half-melted jelly, with a faint sweetness that soon turned spicy, as though he had swallowed a strangely textured hot strip.

That was Arthur's assessment before his vision began to blur—

Tender leaves slowly detached from branches, gliding through the humid air and landing on the damp ground.

A palm-sized beetle joyfully devoured this gift from the heavens.

Therefore, it failed to notice a lizard, over a meter long and perfectly camouflaged in the surrounding phantom realm, slowly approaching.

By the time the beetle realized, it was too late—the lizard's tongue shot out, ensnaring the beetle and then began to chew voraciously.

Crack!

Suddenly, the sound of splintering bones drowned out the chewing.

A two-meter-long centipede plunged from the trees, its hundreds of legs instantly slicing the lizard to pieces. Amidst the spray of blood and flesh, a giant foot crushed it into oblivion.

The 12-meter-tall, 7-ton 'King Tyrant Dragon' paid no attention to the sensation underfoot.

It crushed insects like these on a daily basis.

Hardly worth noting.

What it needed was tasty food.

This mature 'King Tyrant Dragon' started to prepare for hunting, but the moment it was about to move, a pair of golden vertical pupils emerged from beneath layers of dead leaves and soil.

The next instant, a colossal serpent, over 15 meters in length, burst from the underground, coiling rapidly around the 'King Tyrant Dragon.'

Immense, overbearing power silenced the ancient ferocious beast's pained roars, and soon, only the sounds of crunching bones and tearing muscles remained.

The giant serpent had caught its prey.

The giant serpent had devoured its prey.

The giant serpent vigilantly fought against the instinct to slip into a satiated slumber.

It dipped back into the dry leaves and then began to bury its body underground.

Its form swelled once more.

Six months later, it broke through the earth.

A 20-meter-long serpent, thicker than ancient trees, roared towards the sky.

It had become the supreme overlord of this forest.

It had achieved its dream.

The tale should have ended there, but a special power emerged within its body, awakening an instinctual awareness of something different, a perception of some kind of...

Bloodline Resonance?

As the overlord, it began to move towards the source of the Resonance.

The edge of the continent, the ocean.

The edge of the ocean, the glaciers.

When the extreme cold temperatures appeared, the overlord ignored the natural enemies of its species, continuing to devour tirelessly along its path. It had already grown terrifyingly to a length of 30 meters. Some shackles within its body had been completely broken open, and the sense of Bloodline Resonance became even clearer.

It burrowed into a glacier crevice.

From narrow to spacious, the passage grew larger and longer.

And the sense of Bloodline Resonance became more intense.

It kept moving forward. When it arrived at the place where the Resonance was strongest, it discovered a scale, a scale larger than its own body.

It felt the presence of the scale.

It became completely engrossed.

It roamed over the scale.

It closely adhered to the scale.

It chose to sleep there.

It dreamed. It dreamed of a one-eyed man throwing it into the vortex of the deep sea, where it was cast out and feared for its innate abilities.

It dreamed. It dreamed of encircling the world, observing all creatures, only to be eradicated in a flash of thunder.

It feared the thunder, and it woke up.

When it awoke, its body had grown to a hundred meters.

It was over, it told itself.

This was its endpoint.

It knew.

But then...

An overpowering 'Aura of Death' gushed out as though physical.

Its enormous body shattered the ice beneath, and it began to descend frantically.

It had found another resonance with its Bloodline.

It had been granted another opportunity it never contemplated.

Downwards! Downwards!

To the profound Land of Death.

To the resting place of the dead.

Through the Wall of Sighs of the faithless.

Across the river that corrodes all, the Styx.

...

It saw the Land of Death.

It saw the place of eternal rest.

Its huge body had long been eroded away, leaving only a skeleton, and even the skeleton was beginning to decay.

But it had found the resonance with that Bloodline.

The lady was embracing the moon, sound asleep, muttering to herself in her sleep, as drool unconsciously fell from the corner of her mouth.

It mustered its last bit of strength, frantically moving forward.

It waited where the drool was about to fall.

The drool hit the ground...

It saw the ocean.

It was just like the ocean it used to swim in; more so, it was the ocean in its dreams.

Its decaying skeleton began to shine anew, flesh once again growing upon it.

It progressed towards the self in its dreams.

It, in place of its dream self, saw the one-eyed man.

The man, illuminated by candlelight, leaned back in his chair, eyes closed, as if he was asleep.

It inched closer bit by bit.

It knew it had only one chance.

It was careful enough.

But it was still careless.

Because—

The man was not alone.

A shrill cat's screech.

A deep and powerful dog's bark.

A grating and ominous crow's caw.

Awake, the man awoke.

He opened his eyes!

Huh?

Both eyes?!

Why both eyes?!

It was utterly astonished.

In its astonishment, it lost consciousness.

In its astonishment, it turned into nourishment.

It was unwilling, but it was powerless to resist.

The young man woke up, and by the rules, it had failed.

He won.

"Hiss, hiss... cough, cough!"

Arthur came to from his stupor, instinctively trying to speak, but what came out from his throat was a loud snake's hiss, an odd sensation which made Arthur instinctively cough several times.

The odd feeling quickly receded.

"Hey, hey, Grandma Liu went to buy milk from Grandma Niu, and Grandma Niu brought Grandma Liu the milk..."

Clear speech came from his mouth, giving Arthur a sigh of relief, but then the text in front of his eyes made the young 'Spirit Medium' frown slightly—

[Ingesting Glory Potion, Dark Serpent Bloodline completion judgement underway...]

[Judgement passed!]

[Dark Serpent Bloodline completed!]

[Perfect Glory Potion promotion of Dark Serpent Bloodline judgement underway...]

[Judgement passed!]

[Dark Serpent Bloodline promoted to 'Mortal Serpent.Thin.Cripple']

[Talent 'Breath of Death' resonates with Bloodline 'Mortal Serpent.Thin.Cripple', judgement underway...]

[Judgement passed!]

['Mortal Serpent.Thin.Cripple' anomalously promoted—Serpent of Death.Thin.Cripple!]

...

"Thin? Cripple?"

Arthur looked at the suffixes of the Talent, his eyelids twitching involuntarily.

But the feeling of strength from his body provided the young 'Spirit Medium' with enough patience.

Whew!

The young 'Spirit Medium' took a deep breath and continued reading.

Suddenly, his face showed surprise.

Then, it turned to joy.

Even his mouth murmured softly—

"This works too?!"

Chapter 323: Big Underpants, Great Boldness!

Amid Arthur's astonishment, the words before him began to surge wildly—

[Serpent of Death, Thin, Fragmentary: The incomplete 'Dark Serpent's Blood' was not only perfectly completed, but the residual power began to trace the ancient bloodline within your body, which belongs to the serpent encircling the world. Although it's too diluted to truly change you, it still grants you the qualifications to 'ascend the Steps to Divinity'. However, your talent 'Breath of Death' has deeply influenced your bloodline—Death entwines with the serpent, pursuing the tail of the serpent, and as the serpent chases the initiation of death, with repetitive cycles, another special promotion occurred. Regardless of the bloodline's dilution, its uniqueness has caught the attention of the God-born, envied by Ascend Steppers, and feared by dark, deathly beings because they, and They, all know that your non-human talent will eventually complete your bloodline...]

[Effect: 1, Awakening; 2, Shadow Concealment; 3, Serpentine Body; 4, Serpent's Gaze; 5, Serpent Speak; 6, Devour; 7, Serpent's Breath; 8, Serpent Shadow]

[Awakening: You have awakened a special bloodline, and now you find yourself different from others; Physique +3, Spirituality +3]

[Shadow Concealment: When you are in shadows or darkness, you will receive a Stealth +5 modifier]

[Serpentine Body: Not only can your joints and muscles flex and bend like a serpent, but your entire body can also twist and coil similarly. Additionally, when facing swords, firearms, explosions, and blazes, your Defense Level increases by +2, against acid and toxins by +3, and against thunder by +5. With sufficient food, your body will grow rapidly, breaking limits and bestowing a physique, defense, and lifespan to match; you can also freely control the size of your body, but during winter, you will instinctively feel drowsy. If you choose to hibernate, your body will grow faster; if not, the growth rate remains the same]

[Serpent's Gaze: Locking gaze with someone using Serpent's Gaze can instantly plunge those of weaker will into illusions, and it can intimidate those with stronger will. If the intimidated person panics, they too will fall into illusions, and any creature caught in the illusions will be dragged into the realm of death]

[Serpent Speak: You can communicate with serpent-kind through hissing, command ordinary serpents, and even Secret Technique serpents will be intimidated by you. Even if you don't communicate through hissing, serpent-kind still revere and wish to follow you]

[Devour: You can open your mouth to exceed the limits of your body, and you can swallow anything smaller than your mouth, disregarding the toxins, acid rot, Dark Energy, etc., contained in the food. Even stones can be digested and absorbed by your stomach, transforming into the purest nutrition for your body]

[Serpent's Breath: The gas you exhale can turn into virulent miasma at any time, and your saliva will corrode the earth. When you wish, just one hibernation can turn South Los into a miasmic swamp nation, but when you do not desire this, you are like any other person. You can kiss your beloved girl anytime]

[Serpent Shadow: The Resonance between the Breath of Death and your bloodline has completely transformed your shadow, which can turn into 27 stealthy Serpent Shadows to attack anyone in your line of sight. Once the target of the attack dies, the purest 'Aura of Death' will be brought back to you]

(Note 1: The increases in Physique and Spirituality brought by Awakening are absolutely safe and will grow slowly with more food and hibernation)

(Note 2: Rapid running during Shadow Concealment will slightly affect Stealth Level)

(Note 3: The Serpentine Body can currently reach 3 meters, with a natural lifespan of 333 years in a normal human state. The natural Defense Level is +1, and when you release your limits to reach 3 meters, natural Defense Level is +3)

(Note 4: Each Defense Level is approximately equal to the explosive level of a standard hand grenade)

(Note 5: Completing a deep sleep can effectively weaken the state of drowsiness)

(Note 6: Each Serpent Shadow's Attack Level is comparable to the firepower of a heavy firearm's bullet. Serpent Shadow can turn corners and track targets, and each must return to your shadow to replenish

'Aura of Death' after an attack. When all Serpent Shadows are deployed, your shadow will become fainter, but will not disappear)

(Note 7: 'Aura of Death' slowly enriches your bloodline. When you choose to hibernate, this process accelerates, but it cannot complete your bloodline)

(Note 8: The Ritual 'Orange Cat' under your talent harmony complements your bloodline without conflict, and is instead mutually beneficial)

...

'Rituals and bloodline are mutually beneficial under talent harmony?

Because they can both be consumed?

One cat one serpent, is that really okay?

After all, you are both inside my body, and as the saying goes, the body is like a furnace. If I really were like a furnace, could it be seen as a pot?

Wouldn't that turn into a 'fight between the dragon and the tiger'?

Arthur, sitting in the chair, couldn't help but criticize.

But immediately, Arthur became serious.

He looked at [Note 7]

He knew that as time went on, the [Thin] component of [Serpent of Death. Thin. Fragmentary] in his bloodline would fade away, and he would face another strengthening.

But to truly complete the [Serpent of Death] bloodline...

'Will [Glory Potion (Perfect)] still work?'

Arthur wasn't sure.

To know the answer, he would have to consume [Glory Potion (Perfect)] again.

However, getting a dose of [Glory Potion (Perfect)] from the Earl of South Los is not any easy task.

Not only is it hard to come by such a perfect opportunity, but also because even if there is another chance, asking again for the [Glory Potion (Perfect)] might raise suspicion.

So, should he go through someone else?

Arthur thought to himself, already having a rough plan in mind.

Moreover, Arthur felt a tiny bit more confident when it came to the Earl of South Los.

This stemmed from the description of the "Serpentine Body," which stated, 'During the Thunder, Defense Level +5.' Such a description evidently suggested it was due to the ancient Bloodline defending against thunder.

'Should be able to block a hit from the Countess now, right?'

Arthur thought to himself, his gaze fixed firmly on the "Serpentine Body," with a touch of helplessness in his eyes.

The strength of the "Serpentine Body" was unquestionable.

But before feeling that strength, he needed a pair of underpants that could stretch comfortably.

At least...

He couldn't just go streaking once the limiters were off!

'Is there such a tailor?

No!

An alchemist, perhaps?'

Arthur speculated as he took off the "Ring of Equilibrium Blood" for its true purpose.

The young 'Spirit Medium' looked at the rustic silver ring in his hand and whispered gently.

"Thank you!"

The gratitude was beyond sincere.

The young 'Spirit Medium' was very aware that if not for this "Ring of Equilibrium Blood," he would never have made it this far.

He would have died countless times by now.

His body would likely have been rotting and gnawed on in some dark gutter.

After placing the "Ring of Equilibrium Blood" into "Atos's Box," Arthur retrieved the "Crown of the Rat King" and placed it on his left index finger.

The next moment—

The rats on the whole Cork Street seethed.

They were as if they saw their king, but what they heard was a sound—

Meow~

And...

Sssss!

In the viewpoint of all the rats in the street, they all saw a plump Orange Cat squatting there, watching them, and flicking its hefty tail back and forth.

The shadow on the ground beneath the Orange Cat turned into a proud Serpent, its tongue flickering, slightly bowing its head with a cold, disdainful look in its eyes.

The deepest, most primal fear in their Bloodline and souls erupted at that moment, leaving them trembling and completely limp.

A thought rose in their hearts—

We rats are done for! It's all over for us!

But,

There was still a chance!

Submit, and survive!

A unique contract power emerged in the heart of the rats, and without hesitation, the Rat Swarm prostrated themselves on the ground.

It was at this moment that Arthur heard a crisp sound in his ear—

Ding!

Chapter 324: Snake and Cat!

Arthur's left index finger trembled slightly as the "Crown of the Rat King" emitted a clear and pleasant sound.

The young 'Spirit Medium' looked down, most of the description on the "Crown of the Rat King" remained unchanged, but there were alterations in the "Remarks" and attribute "Natural Enemy" —

[Remarks: One of the twenty-seven props of Hercules, Isidore accidentally discovered it in a relic near South Los. At that time, the box containing the 'Crown of the Rat King' was marked with the number 27, and it also had a picture of a cat playing with a mouse - this was before the end of the Holy Empire, when the 'Black Plague' was rampant, and rats were a catastrophe. Hercules, who had encountered an 'attack' by the rats, woke up from a nap in his camp in the wilderness one morning to find that his breakfast including but not limited to cheese, sausages, and bread had been stolen by the rats. This master of alchemy and potions decided to teach these little creatures a lesson, so he crafted this ring, and added the 'Natural Enemy' attribute - one natural enemy frightens, two scare the soul away, meow~ hiss~, and hehe...]

...

[Natural Enemy: When facing 'Cat Hole', 'Cat Faction', 'Serpent Sect', and using any attribute of the 'Crown of the Rat King', physical strength will be doubled in consumption, but when 'Cat Hole', 'Cat Faction', 'Serpent Sect' possess the 'Crown of the Rat King', the requirement is reduced by half, exhaustion is halved, the 'Rat Swarm' effect does not require food, and the occupancy rate of Spirituality is also halved; When both 'Cat' and 'Snake' appear at the same time, the holder of the 'Crown of the Rat

King' will feel terrified, the attributes of the 'Crown of the Rat King' will be significantly weakened, but when both 'Cat' and 'Snake' who appear hold the 'Crown of the Rat King', the 'Rat Swarm' trait will be significantly enhanced, no longer need to provide food, also doesn't occupy Spirituality, and the obedience of the rat swarm will be higher!]

...

Arthur looked at the new changes and immediately began trying to command the rats of Cork Street.

The rats complied with Arthur's relatively simple commands, but when the commands became complex, the rats became somewhat bewildered.

'Must the commands be straightforward?'

Arthur was not surprised by this.

They were just a group of ordinary rats, and achieving control like Pendragon, Fujin, Wuni, and Kuliqi was impossible.

The latter are arcane creatures, inherently several levels above the former.

Of course, if used properly, the former could be far more powerful than the latter.

Change in quantity always leads to change in quality.

The 'Black Plague' is the best proof of that.

The young 'Spirit Medium' thought to himself, and his gaze swept over the "Remarks" of the "Crown of the Rat King" again.

Emmm...

How should I put it?

It very much fits the style of the master Hercules.

If it were anyone else who created the "Crown of the Rat King" because their breakfast was stolen, Arthur would find it ridiculous, but when it comes to the master Hercules.

Arthur found it perfectly reasonable.

After all, this was a master who invented the "Hand of Void" to lazily free up his hands, the "Stone Bullet Technique" to win marble games against children, and inspired by ice skating on the lake, sought to save more energy, thus inventing the "Gliding Technique".

In a way, there have been too many accidents in the life of this master.

Or perhaps...

They are miracles!

'Truly deserving of the title of 'Master of Alchemy and God of Potions'!'

Arthur marveled inwardly, and after dispersing the rat swarm, he took out 'Cat Claw', one of the core mystical arts of 'Cat Hole', from "Atos's Box".

Master Hercules deserves respect and consideration.

But still, strength needs to be increased.

Life, after all, is one's own.

And to live well, one must be strong.

Learning 'Cat Claw' lv1 requires 100 XP, and Arthur's XP, after accumulating for so many days, had reached 220 again—with many events' aftermath, Arthur passively accumulated a decent amount of XP daily, and he believed that after the news of 'guiding souls to The Eternal Resting Land' spread by dawn, his XP would surge dramatically.

This time even without a newspaper, it would spread quickly.

Arthur trusted the capability of the residents, servants of White Bird Street, and those Peeping Toms—seemingly secret matters tend to spread easily.

Because curiosity is human nature.

When one person passed the message to another and said, "We are good friends, I'm telling only you, you must keep it a secret," it meant that in just half an hour, at least ten people would know about it, and as time went by, the number would grow from ten to a thousand, and from a thousand to tens of thousands.

This rate of spread would be faster than the plague.

'How exciting!'

As Arthur thought about the reactions of more people from the Mystic Side upon learning about this, a sense of joy from a successful prank surged in his heart—judging by Marinda's reaction, most people would associate it with "Cat Faction. Black," setting the stage for the "reveal" of his true identity.

When his real identity was revealed, everyone would be taken aback.

Even if Garcia was smart enough, he would definitely capitalize on this incident.

Was Garcia smart?

Very smart!

Smarter than most people Arthur had ever met!

So, all he needed to do was wait—

Whew!

Arthur took several deep breaths to fully suppress his thoughts and then began to choose to learn "Cat Claw"—

[Cat Claw Lv1: A cat's best weapon is its own claws. As one of the core mystic techniques of "Cat Hole," "Cat Claw" is essential for all official members of "Cat Hole." It not only trains the fingers but also the toes, making them more beneficial and sharp. However, it must be preceded by the "Cat Hole" ritual, otherwise irreversible mutations will occur.]

[Effect: Sharpness Lv1]

[Sharpness Lv1: Under powerful pinching force, your fingers and toes are as sharp as ordinary knife blades.]

...

As Arthur's familiar knowledge and body began to synchronize, he squinted his eyes and distinctly felt a clear pain coming from the muscles and bones of both his palms and soles.

Then, the muscles in his palms and soles began to tear, and his bones went into a state of micro-fractures.

Next, the blood's extreme speed washed over the muscles to reduce inflammation and speed up recovery, while bone cells repaired the micro-fractures by adding calcium to the outer layer of the bones.

After repeating this cycle for three years, the muscles and bones became tighter, harder, and sharper.

Arthur could almost see himself in a completely sealed chamber, endlessly clawing at the throat and joints of a wooden dummy with both hands and feet.

Each strike made wood shavings fly everywhere.

By the time he stopped, the wooden dummy had already been smashed into pieces of rotting wood.

But this did not satisfy Arthur.

The next moment, Arthur abruptly opened his eyes, his body sprang up, and his hands and feet shot out like snakes, grabbing at the air in front of him at unimaginable angles.

Hisss, hisss, hisss!

Even while wearing gloves and boots, the sound of tearing through the air still gave a sharp sensation.

Especially with the enhancement of "Black Cat Boots" to "Cat Claw," Arthur's feet left shallow traces on the stone ceiling as if they had been slashed by a sword.

This time, Arthur felt satisfied.

The young 'Spirit Medium' murmured to himself—

"Snake-shaped Cat Claw?"

No!

Snake-shaped Cunning Hand is more like it!"

Chuckling at a joke known only to him, the young 'Spirit Medium' looked at the remaining secret techniques with a smile.

Chapter 325

With the study of "Cat Claw," Arthur had 120 XP left from the original 220.

Looking at the remaining 120 XP, Arthur made his plans—

"Wand Combat Technique" upgrade to Lv3, 80 XP.

"Noise Technique" upgrade to Lv4, 40 XP.

Perfect!

As for the "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique," which Arthur had placed at the forefront of the second tier?

Not enough XP!

It could only be learned during the next big surge of XP.

Although the promotion of his bloodline had caused Arthur's spirituality to soar, allowing him to learn secret techniques previously beyond his grasp, among the many techniques available, Arthur still chose "Wand Combat Technique" and "Noise Technique." Apart from not having enough XP, demanding careful calculation, and already having a foundation in both techniques, it was precisely these two techniques that were incredibly covert and convenient.

There's no need to say much about "Noise Technique."

As a young, kind, righteous, and naive 'Spirit Medium,' "Noise Technique" was almost becoming Arthur's signature skill.

The sensation of carrying a BGM that could change at will was something Arthur couldn't get enough of. Apart from "Hand of Void," no other skill could take the place of "Noise Technique" in Arthur's heart.

"Wand Combat Technique" was even more perfectly aligned with the current world. People might be wary of someone carrying swords or firearms, but they would never pay attention to someone with a magic wand in hand.

Because more likely than not, they'd be holding one too.

However, they would never expect that a magic wand could be used like a master combatant in battle—

"Wand Combat Technique Lv3: In the middle of the Silver Age, a master alchemist known as 'Lady Abel' created this secret technique. Initially, its sole purpose was to compensate for her lack of physical strength, ensuring her safety when going out to gather materials. But as time passed, she continuously refined the technique, resulting in its current state: Effect: Consumes some physical strength, uses the Glyphic Language 'Ga' to cast the secret technique, imbuing the magic wand with magical power, turning it into a wand capable of combat for 1 minute."

(Note 1: The caster has and only has one "Magic Wand.")

(Note 2: A "Magic Wand" can be replaced only after it is completely broken.)

(Note 3: The "Magic Wand" cannot leave a 7-meter radius from the caster.)

(Note 4: The combat ability of Lv3 "Magic Wand" is equivalent to a combat expert.)

...

"Ga!"

A soft chant, and the magic wand with a cat's head on one side came to life. Under Arthur's watch, it struck out, parried, and thrust against invisible foes with dexterity and skill. Though not held by human hands, lacking the assistance of another arm and legs, its attack methods were not lacking at all.

On the contrary, precisely because it wasn't held by human hands, the wand's attacks became more bizarre.

Even the most experienced combatants could not predict the footwork or shoulder movements from a magic wand, thus lacking the ability to 'foresee' beforehand.

'In an extremely short time, it could easily deal with 5 to 6 unarmed weapon bearers.

If facing an armored opponent, one could choose to prolong the fight. As long as the 1-minute duration wasn't up or if one didn't encounter a Mystic Side Person, victory was just as assured!'

Arthur silently assessed the speed, power, and skill exhibited by the magic wand.

He was already pleased with the performance of the magic wand.

But what if he truly encountered knights dressed like tin cans or the versatile Mystic Side Person?

Arthur was always well-prepared with firearms and explosives.

Taking the wand back into his hand and caressing the cat's head with his palm, Arthur's gaze shifted to the other recently upgraded secret technique—

"Noise Technique Lv4: Though most people think it's only good for pranks, or chasing away stray cats and dogs, Court Mage 'Xarlico' from the Empire found it not entertaining enough. Thus, after discovering this secret technique, the court mage, who was rejected by his old friend 'Harrington' for a card game

invitation, began refining this technique in his boredom. However, most people were uninterested in the developments; Effect: Based on spirituality and expending a hint of physical strength, muttering the Glyphic Language 'Hei' can create a loud bang or three rustling noises within an 18-meter radius of the caster."

(Note 1: The loud bang is approximately 110 decibels.)

(Note 2: The rustling noises can be the sound of wind blowing through a window, leaves rustling, or it can be footsteps, or the muted crying of men, women, or children, unclear speech, angry wails, or even the sound of ripping trousers, farting, or diarrhea.)

...

Seeing the unique 'diarrhea noise' of "Noise Technique Lv4," Arthur fist-pumped and wanted to commend the master with a 'Well done.'

Although it was not the 'Stomach Cramps Diarrhea Technique' he desired, this type of noise was sufficient in certain respects.

Especially in specific situations.

Such as...

The platform at the "Swordsmanship Competition"!

As soon as this sound rang out, if the person on the other side had any shame, they would be mentally crushed.

Of course, they could also drop their trousers to prove their innocence.

However, to some extent, the latter would cause even more of a mental breakdown than the former.

'Hehehe, you'd better not mess with me!

Otherwise...

I'll make you understand what "worse than death" means!'

The young 'Spirit Medium' chuckled eerily to himself as he looked at the 100 XP points required for Lv5 [Noise Technique].

Clearly, the Lv5 [Noise Technique] had also undergone some extraordinary changes.

Arthur was full of anticipation in his heart.

'What will it be?

Will it be the sound of a shrew's scolding?

Or the enticing moans of pleasure?'

Guessing with the personality of that 'Court Mage Xarlico' in mind, Arthur pondered.

Meanwhile, the young 'Spirit Medium' began to sort through the 'new home gifts' received tonight—

Marinda, a cookbook titled "Exquisite Ingredients and Cooking".

Malz, hmm, also a cookbook, called "Simple Cooking".

Scott, a fountain pen with a water reservoir.

Wiggins, a gold-mounted handgun.

Haywood, changed from a mantel clock to a small gold bar weighing 20 grams.

Linda's gift was the most interesting and extremely exquisite, an orange-colored little cat doll, palm-sized. Winding the tail would coil the spring, and once fully wound, the little cat could walk back and forth on the ground with steady steps and a realistic demeanor, just like a real kitten.

It was clearly the work of a master.

Apart from Marinda and Malz, the gifts from everyone else seemed to match their own identities.

Wiggins's background led him to have a natural fondness for weapons, and if he had the money, he would naturally adorn them.

Haywood valued money highly, and after failing to attach himself to elegance, he had nothing left but his love for gold.

Linda had Ms. Camille, and naturally, she followed the path of striving for excellence.

All in all, everyone had put their hearts into their gifts.

As for Marinda and Malz?

The former, after giving away a [Glory Potion (Perfect)], [Black Cat Boots], and [Cat Claw], simply couldn't afford to prepare precious gifts, even though these were all promised rewards.

It was just human nature, nothing else.

And Malz?

There was a good chance he thought that Arthur lacked nothing, except maybe a bit in the cooking department.

Or maybe, the old sheriff was afraid he'd go hungry.

Moreover, it seemed that he was concerned Arthur would be discouraged by complex cooking processes and had specifically chosen a simple type.

With this in mind, Arthur chuckled to himself.

'My cooking skills... when I get serious, it'll give you a fright!'

Thinking this, Arthur started to wind the tail of the orange cat doll in his hand again, watching the toy run another lap before shifting his gaze to the last gift.

Brought by Police Chief Kuke from Dort District, he remembered it was also a book.

'It's not another cookbook, is it?'

Arthur wondered to himself and then picked up the book, only to be taken aback—

Huh?

Chapter 326: Swordsman of Death!

The book in his hand was bound in the most common type of paper and consisted of twelve pages in total. Aside from the cover, which didn't have a single word on it, it was pretty much like those two cookbooks, but the content inside was not about cooking, though it was somewhat related to food—

Demon-Repelling Holy Salt: Mix 1 gram of gold with 500 grams of coarse salt, place it under the midday sun for a full 2 hours, and after two consecutive days, on the third day, use 'Spirituality' to draw four overlapping 'Sun patterns' in the coarse salt. Then quickly ignite the active gold to obtain 100 grams of Demon-Repelling Holy Salt (four 'Sun patterns' attached).

Evil-Repelling Brick Powder: Mix 1 gram of silver with 500 grams of flourishing household's red brick powder, place it under the morning sun, and stir well for 1 hour. After two consecutive days, on the third day, use 'Spirituality' to draw four crisscrossing 'Morning Sun patterns' in the brick powder. Then quickly ignite the active silver to obtain 100 grams of Evil-Repelling Brick Powder (four 'Morning Sun patterns' attached).

Hiss!

Arthur quickly flipped through the notebook, unable to help but suck in a breath of cold air.

He had never expected Kuke to bring him such a valuable gift.

He knew Kuke's father was a Bounty Hunter with a wild background, but he hadn't anticipated him being this resourceful—he managed to acquire the 'Demon-Repelling Holy Salt' and 'Evil-Repelling Brick Powder,' which could be made without the related 'Hunter's Ritual.' Rumor had it that during the Holy Empire Era, Hunters once allied with The Holy Court, and it was then that the Religious Tribunal conducted special research into the skills of the Hunters, among which were the ritual-free 'Demon-Repelling Holy Salt' and 'Evil-Repelling Brick Powder,' greatly favored by many tribunal deacons and even at one point surpassing The Holy Court's own Holy Water.

But as the Holy Empire fell, The Holy Court had long turned to ashes, and that branch of research became nothing more than historical dust.

He never imagined a Bounty Hunter would have related data.

'Did he unearth The Holy Court's corresponding relics?

Or...

Did he directly inherit some legacy?'

Arthur pondered.

Regardless of which it was, Arthur knew he had to elevate Kuke's father in his estimation, only then could he communicate further with the father.

'No matter how hard you try or how intelligent you are, nothing beats having a good father!' Arthur sighed to himself.

The young Spirit Medium was very aware that Kuke's father was doing this to carve out a path for his son, a safe and smooth road.

'No wonder Kuke's father chose to retire in his prime years and was content to build a farm on the outskirts of South Los—people speculated it was because of Kuke, but clearly, it's not just because of Kuke, but also this!

Kuke's father must have unearthed corresponding relics; if it were 'inheritance,' it wouldn't be so hasty!

Nor would he worry about encountering unexpected dangers so much that he'd simply retire outright!

Fortunately for Kuke's father, he happened to meet Kuke's mother in South Los.

And after the early death of Kuke's mother, he devoted all his love to his son.

Now?

He naturally wants to pass everything on to his son.

Then...

How much does he really know about the 'Mystic Side'?

Based on some gathered information, Arthur first made a guess and then continued to deduce based on the father's previous behavior.

Clearly, Kuke's father had undoubtedly come into contact with the 'Mystic Side,' and he must have been a Mystic Side Person himself, but definitely not at the 'Arcana' level—if he truly reached the 'Arcana' level, the previous situation where Kuke came under his wing wouldn't have occurred.

Keep in mind that although he had some fame at the time, it wasn't enough to attract the son of an 'Arcana' level Mystic Side Person.

But he clearly knew the 'Arcana' level, the 'Great Arcana' level, and the 'Entrant' level.

It was precisely because he knew this that he brought out this great gift before the news of him being an 'Entrant' was known.

Of course, the most important thing isn't this.

The most important thing is—

He isn't worried that I'll become greedy!

Therefore, he must have a prop, a scroll, or a potion that ensures safety even in the face of an 'Entrant'!

'If that's the case...

Then that would be excellent!'

Arthur would never covet the props, scrolls, or potions in the other party's hands.

After all, the most precious thing of theirs was already in his possession.

Kuke!

As long as Kuke was there, so was Kuke's father.

Even if some problems arose, Kuke's father would take action!

This was also the message Kuke's father wanted to convey.

This was also the reason for Arthur's sigh.

As for Kuke's father realizing that his contract with Kuke was nothing more than a facade?

Arthur wasn't worried.

Or to put it more accurately, once the news of him being an 'Entrant' and the events of the night when he "guided souls to The Eternal Resting Land" spread, he was not worried about these things at all.

No discovery of the contract?

But the one who performed the contract was an 'Entrant' and had the ability to 'guide souls.'

Anyone faced with such circumstances would only think that the contract was too secretive, that it was beyond their discovery, not that the other person was incapable—just like in the case of a serum that's similar to other essence waters but claims to contain some seaweed plant essence and is sold at a price several to hundreds of times higher after concocting a story, ordinary people who use it would definitely feel it's good.

The product doesn't work well?

That must be your problem!

Arthur started out doing the same thing.

Bluff + story-making.

But that was before!

Now, Arthur was moving forward step by step.

He intended to turn the fake into the real!

As long as he eventually reached the heights that others envisioned, then he was genuine!

How could he, a young, righteous, simple, and kind 'Spirit Medium,' possibly deceive people?

Slander!

All slander!

'I am way more reliable than those expensive essence waters!'

With such confidence, Arthur began walking toward the ground, while in the mind of this young 'Spirit Medium,' he was still thinking about the formulas for [Demon-Repelling Holy Salt] and [Evil-Repelling Brick Powder].

It wasn't that he doubted Kuke's father would deceive him.

It was that just now, he had thought of the [Hunter's Sword].

There was no doubt that combining these three things could completely fabricate a 'Hunter' identity.

'I wonder if the corpses controlled by [Control Corpse] can pick up the [Hunter's Sword]?

They should be able to pick it up, right?

I'm not some demon, so why would the corpses I control be demonic?

However, executing the [Slash of Vanquishing Evil] is a bit troublesome. The will of the corpses should have dissipated, right? I wonder if I can control some spirits to stuff them into the corpses as a battery for the [Slash of Vanquishing Evil]?'

This was undeniably a very professional question.

And Arthur, who was contemplating, suddenly paused.

Because—

A most appropriate, and worth inquiring, candidate had just appeared in his mind.

Chapter 327: Deformed Fanatics!

North County, perpetually covered by ice and snow underneath a certain area.

In a hidden tomb, candles as thick as arms brought light to the entire chamber, illuminating the Half Lich whose body was shriveled, with eyeballs and teeth fully exposed.

Anyone who saw this Half Lich would be inexplicably horrified.

It wasn't just the instinctive terror, but also a curiosity that stemmed deep from the soul.

Because—

it was tattooing itself.

Using the burning "Soul Fire" as the source, it scorched its entire body's bones and skin; as its bones began to melt and its skin also started to burn, the Half Lich began to control the "Soul Power" with its mind, tattooing the skin where the burning was most intense.

The complex and mystical patterns consisted of nineteen million nine hundred and sixty-four thousand dots.

Each needle prick brought a pain of the soul.

But for William, as long as he could return to his master's side, this little pain was nothing at all.

He lived solely for his master.

Without his master, he might as well have been dead.

Now that his master was waiting for him, why should he hesitate?

After nineteen million nine hundred and sixty-four thousand "needle pricks" on the skin, the burning of the "Soul Fire" continued, and so did the burning of the skin; but under that scorching, the almost-shriveled skin became clean and translucent. As this piece of skin was once again attached to where the "face" belonged, the melting skull started to reshape, revealing the face of a middle-aged man who appeared somewhat thin but exceedingly sharp and capable.

This was not William's original appearance, but a modified one.

William knew clearly that he was returning to his master's side, not to bring trouble to him.

Therefore, changing his appearance was necessary.

Feeling the still slightly stiff visage, William did not rush. He took a deep breath, and a sharper "Soul Power" began to inscribe on the skull.

Unlike the previous tattooing "dots."

This time, it was as if using a knife to "slice."

Slice after slice.

The dark and shriveled bones gradually became as white and smooth as jade, gaining a strange vitality. The attached "facial skin" also began to look vibrant and lifelike.

When the final slice was made, William stopped.

It wasn't because the pain was unbearable, but because the "Soul Power" was too exhausted.

Even though he was an almost Undying Half Lich, transforming the remainder of his body into a Semi-Corpse Demon in a "pure manner" could not be completed in one go.

He needed to do it in stages, bit by bit.

But he didn't find it hard.

Because, during rest, he could think of his master.

Such thoughts would become his endless motivation.

Just like before, William's soul pulsed slowly, starting to recover in the unique way of Liches, but the next moment, the slowly pulsing soul turned into a flutter.

Because—

'William, are you there?'

In the resonance of the soul contract, his master's voice reached clearly into the depths of the Half Lich's soul.

'At your service at all times, Master.'

The Half Lich, originally lying in the Bronze Coffin, stood up straight and bowed in the direction of South Los.

'How have you been recently?'

The gentle and sincere greeting made the Half Lich's eyes brim with tears, even though it had no tears.

'As illuminated by your radiance, I am perfectly fine, and the transformation into a Semi-Corpse Demon is going exceedingly well. I believe it won't be long before I can return to your side.'

The Half Lich answered truthfully.

'That's great!'

The joyous anticipation energized the Half Lich tremendously, making it almost want to start the transformation into a Semi-Corpse Demon right away, but it restrained itself.

This was, after all, the first formal conversation with the master from miles away.

It must be cherished.

'William, how do you view the placing of other souls into a corpse to act as a power source for "Slash of Vanquishing Evil"?'

Facing the young master's inquiry, the Lich was even more delighted.

Being thousands of miles away and still able to troubleshoot for the young master was truly great.

'Young master, you would need to use the "Soul Extraction Technique," "Soul Control Technique," "Soul Absorption Technique," and a few simple "Corpse Refinement Arts"...'.

The Half-Lich started explaining non-stop.

All were mystical arts advanced through the "Power of Death."

For others, each of these advanced mystical arts would require countless hours and careful experimentation, but for Arthur, who possessed a talent like "Breath of Death" which was beyond human, listening once was all it took to learn everything.

"Soul Extraction Technique: When a corpse has been dead for no more than one hour and its soul has not completely dissipated, you can extract the soul of the other party."

"Soul Control Technique: When facing extracted souls or ignorant lost souls who intrude into your territory, you can whip them with 'Aura of Death,' making them experience pain worse than death. When the pain reaches its peak and the opponent's will dissipates, you can control them and have them obey your commands, but you cannot prevent their dissipation after six hours."

"Soul Absorption Technique: Souls about to dissipate emit a unique energy that nourishes the space they occupy. You can effectively use this energy to nurture something you value, but you cannot bring dead things back to life. However, living beings that endure the nourishment of soul power will experience a soul shock."

"Corpse Refinement Art: One of the core mystical arts advanced through 'Aura of Death,' you can choose to arbitrarily assemble corpses that have been dead for no more than six hours, or repair the original corpses. When you infuse them with the energy brought by 'Soul Absorption Technique,' they can briefly 'live' again, showing the posture of a living being, but it will not change the essence of the deceased."

...

Arthur looked at the advanced techniques under "Technique of Death" that belonged to the "Aura of Death," according to William's narration. Except for the "Corpse Refinement Art" which he had accidentally collected, the rest, the "Soul Extraction Technique," "Soul Control Technique," and "Soul Absorption Technique," were all found within the Sank family.

'The Sank family?

Tsk, Hunter Family?

This is purer dark than the Black Wizard Family!'

Arthur roughly guessed what the 'Sank family' was planning just by looking at the three mystical arts.

They were simply coveting the "Book of Death" in Old Sunk's hands.

The 'Sank family' had already thought about killing Old Sunk and then directly extracting his soul for interrogation, but they were too straightforward and got discovered by Old Sunk.

Old Sunk decisively initiated a scorched earth policy.

Actually, if the 'Sank family' had been more patient, they wouldn't have needed to do any of this; they could just wait, and maybe Old Sunk would have handed everything over to them.

Unfortunately...

'Greed, oh greed!'

The young Spirit Medium uttered this exclamation.

Afterward, a certain idea in his mind became even clearer.

However, he was not in a hurry.

Instead, he gently bade William farewell—

'William, I look forward to your return.'

'Yes, young master,'

the Half-Lich said solemnly.

The once flagging 'Soul Power' surged once more at this moment, not only quickly replenishing but also exceeding by a good amount.

Mutants are terrifying.

Fanatics are terrifying.

And mutated fanatics, no one can understand just what they or They might be capable of.

Arthur did not understand either.

But he would patiently wait and appropriately encourage William.

After all, what William believed in was him!

Sensing through the soul contract that William had begun 'imprinting himself' again, Arthur couldn't help but stretch lazily and stand up from the chair.

His subordinate was working so hard.

He, of course, had to do something too.

Chapter 328

After tidying up and closing the "Safe House," Arthur climbed the stairs.

After turning two staircase corners, the young Spirit Medium saw Pendragon, who was pretending to sleep in the Cat's Nest—although Pendragon was quite stealthy, the Ritual "Orange Cat" allowed Arthur to clearly feel how his cat pretended to be disdainful on the surface but was actually very nervous about his surroundings, not missing any little movement or noise.

How to put it?

A hypocritically indifferent little cat is really adorable!

"Hehehe, come here, little kitty, let Daddy hug you!"

With a weird laugh, Arthur picked up Pendragon and vigorously rubbed him.

Pendragon struggled fiercely but was helpless to escape the devil's claws.

In the end, he could only lie helplessly in Arthur's arms with an expression of resigned acceptance on his cat face.

After a good five minutes, Arthur put Pendragon back in the Cat's Nest. He then signaled Kuliqi that he could return, and after Kuliqi took up a watchful stance at the entrance to the parlor, Arthur finally headed for the kitchen—as a result of the influence of his "Serpent of Death. Thin. Cripple" Bloodline, Arthur hoped the room could be warmer. Although the low temperature wouldn't harm him, it would make him uncomfortable.

The neatly chopped wood mixed with coal was placed into the kitchen's stove.

The full combustion inside the stove started to raise the temperature inside No. 2 Cork Street, and thick smoke billowed from the chimney.

Fujin and Wuni, concealed on the roof, were unaffected by the smoke, and their unique eyes of arcane creatures allowed them to continue watching the figures in the Shadows.

...

As the cold night wind blew again, Jorge wrapped his coat tighter around himself. If it wasn't for that big shot standing behind the guy he was following, he definitely wouldn't have taken this sort of job.

Compared to this kind of surveillance, he preferred robbery.

The act of abruptly and decisively plundering others' wealth, seeing the terrified faces and wails of those being robbed, was his favorite thrill.

A whole 5 Suo a day?

Ha, that's a beggar's wage!

He used to make more than that from a single robbery.

However, as a clever man, Jorge knew that robbery wasn't a sustainable strategy. Although he wore a mask every time, if he did it too often, eventually he would catch the attention of those "Blue-Skin Dogs."

Rather than being chased by the "Blue-Skin Dogs" later on, it was better to become the sort of big shot the "Blue-Skin Dogs" wouldn't dare to confront.

So, when "Cripple" Finley approached him, he agreed without hesitation—within their little circle, it was always rumored that a big shot backed "Cripple" Finley, who might even be a Noble.

But now, Jorge was starting to regret it.

'Damn it, it's too cold!

I should have asked for more details!

What if "Cripple" Finley is just bluffing other people?'

The night wind, carrying the dampness of seawater, penetrated his clothes and made Jorge shiver uncontrollably, especially when he saw the thick smoke rising from the chimney of the target house. Imagining the warmth of the room in question, Jorge felt even colder.

'I'm going to find a place out of the wind to stay for a bit, that should be okay, right?'

Thinking this to himself, Jorge moved deeper into the alley, recalling that there was a corner there that was perfect for sheltering from the wind.

Just as Jorge neared the corner he remembered, suddenly a force appeared behind him, pushing him right into it.

Before he could even scream, an invisible hand had already sealed his mouth.

...

"Cripple" Finley sat in a chair, rolling his tobacco, with a lively fire burning in the fireplace—there wasn't a tiny bit of cold in the room.

Listening to the crackling sounds from the fireplace and puffing on his smoke, Finley's thoughts began to drift.

He used to be one of Lord Lisop's attendants.

But after an accident that broke his leg,

just as he thought he would be unceremoniously expelled from South Town, that benevolent lord gave him a new job—collecting intelligence in South Los.

For this, he was immensely grateful.

And so, for ten years, he always fulfilled his duties with all his heart and soul.

This time was no exception.

Although he didn't know why his lord was interested in a Spirit Medium, he immediately set to work upon receiving the command.

First, he rented a place near the target's location on Cork Street.

Then, he hired Jorge and another person to follow the target.

Finley knew exactly what these two wanted to do.

All he wanted was to use him to climb onto the high branches of Lordship.

Finley didn't mind this in the slightest.

His own mission, aside from gathering intelligence, included finding suitable candidates to recommend to his Lord.

In the past ten years, he had recommended no less than a hundred people like Jorge to his Lord.

Adding Jorge now wasn't worth mentioning at all.

Moreover, Lord Lisop had already promised him that, upon completion of this mission, he could retire back to South Town—he would own a house of his very own, his children would receive the best education, and his wife would live a happy life with him in their home.

As long as he completed this mission, that would be enough.

Thinking this, Finley let out one last smoke ring.

He had to check on those two fellows working for Jorge—he knew their kind all too well, they were ruthlessly efficient but exceedingly lazy.

If he didn't keep a close eye on them, they were sure to screw up.

After putting on his coat, Finley opened the door.

But then, the scout for Lord Lisop was stunned.

For some reason, there was a person standing outside his door.

The individual was wearing a tattered hooded cape, and the garment was exceedingly dirty, caked with mud, as though they had been pulled out from the earth, with two fist-sized pouches at their waist but equally old.

'A vagrant?' Finley thought, intending subconsciously to chase the person away.

But as the person lifted their head, Finley was scared out of his wits.

As a scout for Lord Lisop in South Los, Finley had killed more than once over the past ten years, and he considered himself to be quite brave, but he was startled nonetheless when he saw the person's face before him—

Bandages!

A face wrapped entirely in bandages, with just one bulging eye exposed, and on the stranger's exposed palms and soles, there were also bandages.

White mix with mud.

Only then did Finley notice that the stranger wasn't wearing any shoes.

And the stranger's longsword, starting from the hilt, was also wrapped in bandages.

Sword?

"Wait!"

'Cripple' Finley shouted.

However, the Bandage Swordsman opposite him seemed unresponsive.

The sword in his hand swept across Finley's neck like the wind.

Thud!

The fresh blood sprayed and stained the Bandage Swordsman.

The rolling head fell into the interior of the room, making a muted thud.

The Bandage Swordsman didn't even look back and left right after.

This scene was witnessed by the remaining three mystic side stalkers.

The three individuals belonging to different forces began to convey messages in their own ways amidst their shock and uncertainty.

Soon, new stalkers were following the Bandage Swordsman, toward Mule Street in the Dort District.

The Bandage Swordsman's steps did not cease, continuing further into Mule Street.

Immediately, the three stalkers hidden in the shadows were puzzled.

They knew that place.

It was where a family annihilation case had occurred twenty years ago.

The dead were of the Sank family.

It was one of the cases solved by the Spirit Medium, Arthur Kredos.

What was this bandage-wrapped swordsman doing here?

Curiosity arose within the three stalkers, but the next moment, their pupils dilated sharply, and their faces were overcome with endless horror.

Chapter 329: The Avenger Crawling Back from Hell!

The Bandage Swordsman wandered through the desolate back alley ruins of Mule Street.

Even though the case of the Sank family had closed, the residents of Mule Street still firmly believed the rumors that the area was haunted and concealed a 'Calamity'.

It wasn't just that the rumors had deeply ingrained in their hearts.

It was also because...

The ones who announced the closure were the always loathed and feared 'Blue-Skin Dog'.

In the eyes of Mule Street's residents, these 'Blue-Skin Dog' besides extorting, only ever fooled the higher-ups with various methods.

After all, as long as the bigwigs were appeased, these 'Blue-Skin Dog' could continue to live carefree lives.

As for common folk like them?

Who would care?

The 'Blue-Skin Dog' wouldn't care.

Nor would the high-ups.

Even those bigwigs were aware of some of the things the 'Blue-Skin Dog' did.

And then?

Naturally, they silently permitted it — armed with such a preconception, Mule Street's residents simply didn't believe the back alley ruins' situation was resolved.

In their speculation, not only was the ruin's issue unresolved, but it had also become more perilous due to the incompetence of these 'Blue-Skin Dog'.

Maybe, a few people had to die each year.

And whoever entered the back alley of Mule Street first, would be the scapegoat.

With such a thought, Mule Street's residents had long since become terrified of this place, and even chose to keep their distance.

Thus, it was even more desolate than before.

And in such desolate ruins, the Bandage Swordsman drifted like a ghost, dragging his longsword behind him.

Whoo!

The late autumn night wind stirred his lapels, and after the muddy, blood-stained duffle coat gathered deep stains that emitted a faint unusual smell when moved, exposing those bandages — originally white bandages, now dirtier with each stain.

Naturally, this dirtiness also adhered specks of fresh blood.

Although not much, it added a fierce aura.

Especially under that exposed solitary eye, it made people shudder even more.

Thus, the three stalkers trailing behind the Bandage Swordsman kept a considerable distance; they watched as this swordsman wandered around the ruins, occasionally stopping as if searching for something or pondering something.

After several times, when the Bandage Swordsman reached the door of the original Sank family house, he suddenly raised his hand to his head, his body staggered, enveloped by an invisible pain.

Hissss, Hushhhh!

Deep, strange noises resounded around.

It was uncertain where this sound came from, but it was certain that it was not a sound a human could make.

The three stalkers immediately went on alert.

They glanced at each other and maintained their distance; one of them took out a scroll, while the other two drew a firearm and a dagger—on the way here, they had discovered each other and had speculated about each other's identities.

And now, without any spoken agreement...

They retreated together!

Having encountered the 'Mystic Side,' they had already understood how dangerous the seemingly magnificent and brilliant 'Mystic Side' truly was.

Magnificent, because it was built upon heaps of bones.

Brilliant, because it was constructed with endless fresh blood.

Just like seeing a beautiful gem hiding a venomous snake underneath, anyone who reached out had to take the risk of being bitten to death by the snake.

They had encountered it, but were unwilling to bear the ensuing risks.

Therefore, they had become Scouts.

For this, they did not regret.

Even, they felt fortunate.

Just like at this moment—

Silently, eerie blue flames appeared.

They did not know what these flames signified, but their emergence made them feel a trembling of the soul.

Suddenly, they witnessed the most incredible scene in their lives.

The Bandage Swordsman raised his longsword high and struck down forcefully.

A dazzling white brilliance appeared with the slash.

The desolate ruins were instantly illuminated.

Then, they were swallowed in that searing, Sharp slash.

Weeds and stones flew all around.

The eerie blue flames extinguished instantly.

But these were not enough to dumbfound the three scouts. What truly dumbfounded them was the Bandage Swordsman himself—the searing, Sharp slash seemed to have impacted the Bandage Swordsman himself, his face's bandages directly burst open, revealing a face with flesh turned inside out...

Face of the dead!

Not an adjective!

But the face only the truly dead could possess!

Looking at that completely bloodless, ash-white complexion, the three scouts felt as if witnessing the descent of a deity.

The dead, had used the "Slash of Vanquishing Evil"?

How was this possible?

How could it be?

Though they had not furthered their journey on the Mystic Side, their backing allowed them significant insight.

That dazzling light, the hot and Sharpness of the strike, was the famous "Slash of Vanquishing Evil" known to be mastered by the Hunters against all evils!

But...

Why could a dead man use the "Slash of Vanquishing Evil"?

Since when was a resurrected dead not considered evil?

What kind of joke was this?!

The three stalkers felt their worldviews shattering.

However, they soon had no time to ponder these questions.

Because—

The Bandage Swordsman turned towards them.

With just one glance, the three felt a chill rise from the depths of their hearts.

They didn't know what kind of monster this Bandage Swordsman was, but they knew they were no match for him.

Without hesitation, the stalker holding the Firearm shot at the stalker holding the Dagger.

Bang!

The stalker holding the Dagger fell to the ground.

The other looked in astonishment at the stalker who had fired the gun.

"Sorry, I think it's best for one of us to stay behind and cover," said the stalker who had fired.

Then, a "Flame Arrow" pierced through his calf.

"That's right!

I think so too!

I'm not fast, but I just need to be faster than you!"

The stalker holding the scroll agreed, already running ten meters away, his speed definitely beyond normal, yet still no match for the longsword of the Bandage Swordsman.

Thrust!

The Bandage Swordsman decapitated with one sword stroke, then turned and walked back towards the stalker with the injured calf.

"Your highness, wait, I am..."

Thrust!

Another sword strike ended the stalker's words, decapitating him.

The only remaining stalker already chose to close his eyes and await death.

Upon becoming a scout, he had prepared for such an end, but he had never imagined it would be like this.

Sudden, and completely unforeseen.

'Perhaps this is what death is like?' Eli thought.

But the expected pain did not come.

Opening his eyes, Eli realized that the terrifying Bandage Swordsman was merely looking at him, yet had made no move.

The Bandage Swordsman didn't move, and Eli certainly didn't dare to either.

However, as the unwavering gaze continued, Eli felt the need to say something when the Bandage Swordsman began writing on the ground with his sword—

You too were betrayed.

Seeing the words on the ground, Eli's mind raced with the story of the Bandage Swordsman who, filled with resentment, had climbed out of hell to seek revenge after being betrayed and killed.

Was it a vendetta against the Sank family?

Or...

As Eli speculated, the stalker suddenly thought of something and instantly stiffened—

Wait a minute! That's not right!

It should be...

Chapter 330: The Shape of Survival!

Could it be related to that 'Spirit Medium'?

As this thought sprang from the bottom of Eli's heart, it grew uncontrollably like wild grass—an instinctual image formed in this Scout's mind of the 'Spirit Medium guiding Lost Souls to The Eternal Resting Land.'

The noise from that fireworks show was simply too great.

Anyone who wasn't blind or deaf would know what had happened.

And those with well-informed sources knew even more about what happened afterward.

Being a Scout, Eli naturally counted as someone with well-informed sources.

Therefore, the first guess immediately followed—

The 'Bandage Swordsman' in front of him couldn't have just slipped out during that 'Spirit Medium guiding Lost Souls to The Eternal Resting Land,' could he?

But immediately, a second guess closely pursued—

The 'Bandage Swordsman' appeared amidst the ruins of the back alleys of Mule Street, his recent demeanor clearly one of searching, remembering something—probably related to the Sank family.

Conveniently, this 'Spirit Medium' had solved the 20-year-old case of the murder of the Sank family.

Was there any connection between these two matters?

No!

There must be some connection between these two matters!

Eli hesitated for less than a second before becoming utterly certain.

Then, this Scout began to hesitate again.

This time, the hesitation was not about overturning his previous guesses.

It was about considering how to benefit from this situation.

However, ultimately, until the 'Bandage Swordsman' was gone, Eli said nothing, having a slight sense of gratitude towards the 'Bandage Swordsman.'

More so because...

He didn't dare!

He truly didn't dare!

Eli wasn't some wildly brave guy.

Otherwise, he would not have chosen to stay put upon facing the dangers of the Mystic Side, becoming a Scout for 'Count Bert.'

Without being sure of the 'Bandage Swordsman's' circumstances, Eli definitely wouldn't take the risk—his becoming 'Count Bert's' Scout wasn't about truly serving Lord Count.

It was simply because Lord Count offered a high enough price.

Loyalty?

It was nonexistent.

And even if it did exist, what did it matter compared to staying alive?

Alas!

Eli let out a sigh filled with all sorts of emotions.

He knew he might have just missed another opportunity.

However, as long as he was still alive, this Scout was content.

What's more, the news of the 'Bandage Swordsman' was sufficient for him to collect a hefty reward.

'One share for Count Bert.

Sell one share to the Cloak Society.

The Nobles of South Los would probably be very interested as well.

If this happens a few more times, maybe I can consider retiring early!'

With a slight calculation of his gains, this Scout immediately broke into a smile.

Afterward, the Scout turned and left straightaway.

But...

Just after leaving the back alleys of Mule Street, the Scout stopped in his tracks, hiding in the shadows on the side, his gaze returning to the debris behind him.

For a good ten minutes, after confirming there was no one around, the scout finally let out a slight sigh of relief.

"It seems I was overthinking it!

There can't be that many schemes and tricks!"

As the scout spoke, he shook his trousers, and a pellet fell from his 'leg', along with a bladder filled with red liquid falling out from his trouser leg.

This liquid, based on pig's blood and mixed with some herbs, looked very much like human blood.

When trailing with two other scouts and having caught sight of the 'Bandage Swordsman', Eli instantly envisioned several possible scenarios and made ample preparations—he knew all too well the character of their kind of scouts. His practice of playing all sides was already considered a model of integrity.

Most of them would double-cross and stab in the back at the first opportunity.

Eli had been stabbed in the abdomen by a so-called comrade during his first mission as a scout.

If his screams hadn't attracted the attention of their target at that time, giving his so-called comrade a gunshot, he would have been dead long ago.

So, upon noticing the other two scouts, Eli deliberately gave up the scroll and arm crossbow he carried and instead drew his dagger.

What he needed to do was to remove himself from the 'game' first.

However, the Bandage Swordsman's quick response was beyond his expectations.

But none of that mattered anymore.

What he wanted now was the bounty.

With such a thought at the bottom of his heart and greed surfacing on his face, Eli walked away briskly.

But a few minutes later, the scout sneaked back again.

The other party confirmed the surroundings once more.

Only after confirming that nothing had changed did the scout leave again.

And this time, Eli truly left.

In the shadows, Arthur observed the departing figure with a hint of appreciation in his eyes—a simple admiration from one cautious person to another.

Arthur hadn't expected that just a 'small setup' would encounter a scout as cautious and talented at acting as Eli.

But the appearance of Eli did not make Arthur anxious.

Arthur wasn't worried that his little setup would fail.

On the contrary, Eli's appearance made it clear to Arthur that the success rate of his scheme was even higher.

Because, Arthur believed that a cautious person like Eli would bring news that more people would trust—Eli's behavior pattern destined the scout to have considerable reputation within his 'circle'.

Simply put, as long as he could deceive Eli!

Then...

Under the inertia of thinking, the reputation that the other party had built up over time would become a force that couldn't be ignored!

As for how to deceive Eli?

It's simple.

Just be more cautious and a better actor than Eli.

Fortunately, Arthur possessed all of these qualities.

Glancing back at the corpses of the two scouts in the ruins behind Mule Street, a trace of pity flashed in Arthur's eyes. The 'Bandage Swordsman' had successfully performed the 'Slash of Vanquishing Evil', but it had scorched the Bandage Swordsman's palm.

Of course, this certainly didn't mean he was any sort of demon.

It also had nothing to do with the 'Bandage Swordsman' or William.

It must be an issue with the Corpse Refinement Art itself.

'Who would have thought that the Corpse Refinement Art was evil? Then it should be even more appropriate for me, a young, upright, innocent, and kind Spirit Medium, to use it!

Let me, the user, spread love and justice across the world with you!'

Thinking this way, Arthur quickened his steps and returned to No. 2 Cork Street.

An hour after Arthur returned to No. 2 Cork Street, three pieces of news began to spread wildly—'Arthur Kredos can guide souls to The Eternal Resting Land', 'Arthur Kredos was injured while guiding souls to The Eternal Resting Land', and 'Arthur has released an Evil Spirit from The Eternal Resting Land'.

Arthur, who had Wuni keep an eye on Garcia, lightly rubbed Pendragon's cat head, with a slight smile curling up the corners of his mouth—

'Next, it's just the final piece!'