

Great Master 361

Chapter 361: I'm Just Good at Guessing, and I Never Lie!

Late at night, outside the gates of No. 2 Cork Street.

Lord Lisop's butler stood next to the carriage, looking towards the alley entrance with an anxiety that seemed to materialize before his eyes—

"Young master, you must be safe!

Indeed, those so-called Hidden Guards are not to be trusted!

They've exposed themselves without even realizing it!

Now the young master has to endure such great humiliation!"

Thinking of what had happened in Elta Square, the butler was deeply anxious.

In the butler's view, his young master's plan could not possibly go awry!

Therefore, the fault could only lie with those Hidden Guards who had been recruited.

And every time he thought of his young master being punished for someone else's mistake, the old butler began to pray.

On the carriage, Lisop glanced at his elderly butler, let out a cold laugh in his heart, and then closed his eyes to think quietly.

The failure of Little Lisop had no impact on his plan.

On the contrary, it could make his plan go more smoothly.

"Perhaps this is compensation from the heavens!"

Lisop thought to himself, his body unconsciously twisting with excitement.

He was already impatient.

However, he knew that it was just a bit early yet.

He needed to wait patiently a little longer.

Afterward...

That would be the time for him to truly savor the delicious fruits of his scheme.

"Your Lordship, that gentleman has returned!"

The butler's voice rang in his ear, and Lisop immediately opened his eyes, then pushed open the carriage door and jumped down—even though his age was such that in a common household he would have been a grandfather, his movements were still agile.

Similarly, Arthur noticed the robust old man at first glance.

The ramrod straight posture, the sharp gaze.

The man possessed an even stronger military air than Malz.

And his way of communicating was just as direct—

"Good evening, Lord Kledos.

I've come concerning Little Lisop and the dealings of the South Town iron and coal mines."

The man stated plainly.

Honestly, Arthur was not at all averse to this kind of direct communication.

But the Lord Lisop before him gave him a strange feeling.

It seemed as if...

He was impatient!

"Indeed, a father's concern for his son!"

Arthur recalled the journey back when Marinda had emphasized the fact that Lord Lisop had only one son.

Immediately, a smile appeared on the young 'Spirit Medium's' face.

"Let's talk in my study."

Arthur said so.

And acting as the 'Hostess', Marinda had already entered No. 2 Cork Street ahead of them, lighting the candles in the corridor and Spirit Medium Parlor.

She also added coal to the stove.

By the time Arthur and Lord Lisop entered the Spirit Medium Parlor, Marinda was already bringing in the tea.

"Thank you."

Lisop expressed his gratitude in a somewhat stiff manner.

Clearly, as a traditional Noble, the Lord found it difficult to accept Marinda's hairstyle and attire.

However, as a Noble, he did have the requisite manners.

After a brief Knightly courtesy, the Lord sat in the chair opposite Arthur—back straight, only sitting on a third of the seat, hands instinctively placed on his knees.

It was a military habit.

Part courtesy, part readiness for swift reaction.

Arthur, half-leaning in his own chair, looked at Lord Lisop before him and smiled.

"What are you willing to offer in exchange for Little Lisop?"

The other man was straightforward, so naturally, Arthur was not going to beat around the bush, either.

"The wealth possessed by Miss Caesar is among the top in South Los, and I cannot offer any compensation in terms of wealth.

And you?

Your reputation in the 'Mystic Side' of South Los is esteemed, and I also cannot offer any compensation in terms of secret techniques and props.

However, I have some information that could serve as compensation,"

Lord Lisop said seriously.

Arthur looked at the man unobtrusively.

Without a doubt, the other's words were indeed 'fact.'

At least, the part about Marinda was true.

Yet this kind of truth bestowed a profound compliment upon Arthur.

"Even though he once was a soldier, has he developed considerable 'rhetoric skills' after becoming a Noble?"

Keep in mind that those words were not just flattery.

More importantly, they were 'bargaining chips!'

Lord Lisop cast aside the tangible and instead used "empty news" as a bargaining chip!

Of course, information has value.

But it is all relative.

Moreover...

It has directionality!

As a "Spirit Medium," Arthur knew all too well the dangers of telling "the whole truth" or "half-truths" far exceeded those of lies.

However, Arthur did not object.

Because what he liked most was precisely this manner of telling "the whole truth" and "half-truths."

He, Arthur, the young, kind, upright, and naive "Spirit Medium," never lied.

"Agreed."

As Arthur nodded, Lord Lisop immediately produced a contract.

He began to describe according to the "Principle of Truth" and the "Principle of Immediate Effect."

Then, he signed his own name.

After Arthur verified its correctness, he also wrote down his own name.

Once Lord Lisop likewise confirmed everything was in order, he immediately said,

"I have a piece of information for you. There is a spy of a very special identity within your residence, observing your every move, and currently plotting in secret..."

"Death Poetry Society."

Without waiting for Lord Lisop to finish, Arthur directly interrupted.

Lord Lisop was not particularly surprised.

For this lord, it was not unimaginable for Arthur or Marinda to detect a spy from the Death Poetry Society in their midst.

But he was certain that neither Arthur nor Marinda could possibly know the spy's true identity!

So, this lord calmly revealed another piece of information.

"This spy from the Death Poetry Society has already aligned with the nearby pirates, planning a significant move..."

"I know, 'Bloody John' has already appeared in the nearby waters."

Once again, the words were interrupted.

This time, Lord Lisop was genuinely taken aback.

The lord began to doubt his earlier conjecture.

Could it be that Arthur and Marinda had already discovered the identity of that Death Poetry Society spy?

Otherwise, how could it be that the news he'd just learned was already well known to the other party?

When Arthur accurately mentioned "Bloody John," the lord checked the contract, and the complete contract was telling the lord that everything Arthur said was true.

Looking at the astonished Lisop, Arthur's expression was filled with calm, but inwardly he mused,

'No wonder when I heard the "Whale Slaying Sword" description, there was always a sense of familiarity; so it was this fellow playing tricks... Collaborating with pirates, he really is aiming to stir up something big!'

Arthur took particular interest in this very special "Death Poetry Society" spy.

After all, since he had arrived in South Los, a great part of his experiences related to this individual.

He didn't know how many of the other's plans he had foiled.

If given the chance, the other party would undoubtedly wish to kill him.

And him?

For self-preservation, he would also need to kill the spy.

The notion of being watched from the shadows, as if a venomous snake was fixated on him, was something Arthur would graciously decline.

Before, Arthur found no way to act.

But now, things were different.

Looking at Lord Lisop before him, Arthur quickly conjectured in his heart.

With the spy being so deeply concealed that even Marinda couldn't find him despite having a general direction, yet before him, Lord Lisop could—what did this imply?

It implied that Lisop shared a quite intimate relationship with the other party.

Only thus could Lisop know about him.

But it was just knowing; with the spy's caution, he would never "expose" himself so easily, and it shouldn't even be possible for Lisop to know, to begin with.

Which means...

'An intermediary!

There must be someone between the two!'

Arthur narrowed his eyes in thought, and an individual instantly leapt to mind.

Meanwhile, Lord Lisop adjusted his emotions and continued,

"This spy from the Death Poetry Society has recently gained tremendous support, the person backing him is..."

"Duke of the Inner Bay."

Words interrupted once more, Lord Lisop's eyes widened as though seeing a ghost, staring at Arthur.

How could you know again?

Mention one thing, and you know it, mention another, and you know it still.

'Could the Death Poetry Society's spy have been turned by you?'

Lisop became rather restless.

The lord realized he might have been kicking an iron board.

And looking at the lord, Arthur simply smiled warmly—

He finally understood what the lord was aiming for!

Chapter 362: Speculator!

The first impression Arthur got from Lord Lisop was that of a straightforward soldier, perhaps with a bit of eloquent speech, but not much.

However, as their conversation went deeper, Arthur gradually saw the true nature of this lord—a speculator!

A speculator masquerading as a soldier.

Undoubtedly, he was extremely successful.

If it weren't for the fact that the information provided by the other party continuously pointed to the Old Lion, Arthur would never have discovered his true face.

'This is because he hit a wall with the Old Lion!

So, he chose to tentatively reach out to the Mother Tigress?

No!

To be precise, Lord Lisop wanted to use the Mother Tigress to pressure the Old Lion!

Such a bold fellow!

Arthur, having discerned the other's intentions, judged inwardly.

This boldness didn't refer to his maneuvering between the Old Lion and the Mother Tigress, but that he was willing to risk his own son!

Lord Lisop couldn't possibly be unaware of Little Lisop's plan.

And knowing it, the lord still let Little Lisop proceed.

Was this confidence in his own son?

Or did he not care about his son's life or death?

Given his behavior, it should be the former.

But Arthur had some doubts.

Because, whether Little Lisop succeeded or failed, it was advantageous for Lord Lisop.

If Little Lisop succeeded, he could leverage more bargaining chips, both proposing a trade to the Mother Tigress and holding out for a better deal with the Old Lion.

If Little Lisop failed, it was just the current situation, using some 'information' to pressure the Old Lion.

But besides success and failure, there was also...

Accidents!

If there was an accident in Little Lisop's plan,

Little Lisop would certainly die.

Did Lord Lisop not know these risks?

He definitely knew them!

And knowing them, still choosing to let his own son undertake such a dangerous task, could he really be a qualified father?

Arthur was perplexed within his heart.

As for Lord Lisop's jumping around, what did he want?

The hereditary title of lordship!

Beyond that, Arthur could think of nothing else.

Even, Arthur could imagine Lord Lisop having offered his 'loyalty' to the Old Lion more than once, only for the Old Lion to brush him off with a laugh.

The Mother Tigress was wary of the Old Lion.

Similarly, the Old Lion was also wary of the Mother Tigress.

In mutual wariness, both parties could engage in clandestine conflicts, but they would absolutely not confront each other openly.

The Old Lion in Inner Bay knew very well, once he accepted Lord Lisop's 'loyalty', it would mean completely breaking face with the Mother Tigress of South Los!

The Old Lion in his youth wouldn't care.

But now?

The Old Lion had to consider more.

The coal and iron mines in South Town were valuable, but starting a war over them was absolutely not worth it!

Compared to South Los, which lacked coal and iron, Inner Bay wasn't short of these resources!

'Young you, using your own 'life' as a bargaining chip, accomplished three first landings and earned the status of 'knight'!

Then, having tasted the sweetness, you used your life as a chip once more, saved the then-Baron Bolna in a 'Desperate Assault' that turned the entire battle around, and earned the title of lordship from your merits...

No! No!

Arthur, pondering over the life of the lord before him, suddenly frowned internally.

A speculator who has tasted sweetness is hard to stop.

And over more than thirty years after the 'Seven Years' War', it was very strange that there had been little activity from him.

You should know that compared to the period of the 'Seven Years' War', after the war ended, there were even more 'speculative' opportunities; given the other party's pattern of behavior, it wasn't possible to remain indifferent.

Even, if they had pledged allegiance to the young Old Lion at that time, it would have been enough to secure a hereditary title of nobility.

'Was he entangled in some matter that consumed all his energies?

What kind of matter takes thirty years to complete?'

More speculations surged in Arthur's mind, but on the surface, he just smiled, looking at Lord Lisop—

"My lord, we need to be a bit more honest with each other,"

"Hmm!"

Lisop responded affirmatively.

But in the eyes of this lord, there flashed a hint of helplessness.

Clearly, everything before him was somewhat beyond this lord's expectations.

In this lord's estimation, the three pieces of information he had just given should have been enough to secure the return of his son and the iron and coal mines, but now...

Not to mention getting both his son and the iron and coal mines back, it would be good enough just to get his son back alone!

And that would still require more iron and coal mines as chips!

Thinking about the need to use more iron and coal mines to retrieve Little Lisop, a feeling of reluctance filled Lisop's heart.

But this was the only valuable bargaining chip he could offer to the Spirit Medium before him.

Moreover, thinking about the years of arrangements and planning, Lisop secretly gritted his teeth.

"I'll trade the iron and coal mines business to get back Little Lisop!"

The lord declared.

Immediately, Arthur's smile grew even more splendid.

More iron and coal mines business was exactly what Arthur needed most right now—unlike subsequent distributions, the iron and coal mines business he acquired now would be his alone.

As long as the Earl of South Los still cared about his own honor, his family's honor, it was impossible for him to swallow everything.

'Thank the 'rules of nobility'!

Arthur thought to himself silently, then made his offer—

"Thirty percent!"

"Impossible!"

"Absolutely impossible!"

Upon hearing Arthur's offer, Lord Lisop jumped up.

The lord loudly protested.

In the loud cries of despair, the lord's facial expression twisted into what is known as 'anger'.

But Arthur showed no reaction whatsoever and maintained his smile.

With the initiative in his hands, how could Arthur possibly be anxious?

Moreover, the young Spirit Medium had already prepared to pull through a drawn-out negotiation until dawn.

After all, nighttime was precisely when his mind was most active.

However, contrary to Arthur's expectations,

Lord Lisop, who a moment ago had been so angry his face distorted, suddenly calmed down the next moment.

The other party sat back down in his chair, still in that military posture.

After weighing for a few seconds, the other party then said—

"Twenty percent!

That's the most I can give you!"

Arthur was shocked.

You should know, he hadn't only prepared for a tug-of-war, but in Arthur's mind, securing ten percent of the iron and coal mines business would have been a huge victory, and if only half of that could be agreed upon, he would have accepted it.

Who would have thought that the lord would not only skip the negotiation but also be so generous.

'Did I perhaps misjudge this father just now?

Maybe that kind of risky behavior is indeed a family creed of the Lisops!'

Faced with such a generous Lisop, Arthur couldn't help but think to himself.

Subsequently, Arthur stood up and extended his hand—

"Pleasure doing business with you!"

Chapter 363 Can you catch it?

Looking at the outstretched palm of the 'Spirit Medium' before him, Lord Lisop's eyes still showed displeasure, yet he was not rude.

Standing up, this noble shook hands with Arthur, and immediately started to write the details of the trade agreement on the contract that had just been made, marking some specifics.

For example, if the lord violated the contract, he would directly face death, and so on.

Once Arthur had checked for errors, the noble pricked his finger and dripped blood onto the page—unlike the public contract with Little Lisop, such private trade agreements required one party's blood as proof.

Especially the blood of the 'noble' side, which was more important.

Because it was verifiable!

Arthur watched as the other's blood dripped onto the parchment, the crimson intermingling with black ink, glowing for less than a second, after which all the writing on the contract was shrouded in a faint red hue, and the inherent luster of the contract itself became even more intense.

After checking again, Arthur collected the contract and gestured to Lord Lisop to proceed.

The noble immediately stood up and walked outside No. 2 Cork Street.

Under the banyan tree, Little Lisop had been waiting for a long time with Edwin's company.

Seeing his father emerge, the son of the noble immediately lowered his head in shame.

Lord Lisop looked at his son but said nothing, just gently patted his shoulder—

"Let's go, back to South Town."

"Yes, Father."

Lord Lisop left with Little Lisop.

Edwin also returned to the carriage.

Arthur, however, was staring at the noble's carriage.

He always felt that something was amiss.

And as a 'Spirit Medium', Arthur had unshakable trust in his 'intuition'!

Therefore, in the next moment, Fujin on the roof of No. 2 Cork Street took flight, blending into the night.

Simultaneously, Arthur couldn't help but ask Marinda, standing by his side—

"Does Lord Lisop really have no Bastards? Only the one son, Little Lisop?"

The lives of the nobility were quite dissolute.

Most nobles had not just one, but several illegitimate sons and daughters.

Some traditional noble families could even form a whole family guard with their bastards.

This was not an exaggeration.

For some traditional nobles, openly acknowledging the bastards, signing contracts with them, and bringing them into the family for work was a cost-effective method—not only did it spare worries about succession rights, but it also maintained bloodline bonds.

Even better if one or two of them awakened their bloodline.

And many new nobility who followed tradition were also adopting this practice.

What about Lisop?

He happened to be a new noble who followed tradition.

"Lord Lisop only has the one son, Little Lisop!

At least, according to the information I have collected!" Marinda emphasized.

No one could provide a one hundred percent accurate answer.

But this lady was obviously shocked by Lisop's actions—trading twenty percent of coal and iron mine business to get his son back. If this news got out, it was likely that a crowd, including noble scions, would come to be Lisop's sons.

You see, that twenty percent stake was astronomical!

Because it was an ongoing, yearly dividend!

If those twenty percent stakes in the coal and iron mines were hers, she wouldn't need three years to organise a new ocean-going trade fleet.

And after that?

It would snowball!

As long as the mineral resources didn't exhaust within ten years, she was confident she could embed her influence across South County, and even expand her business territory to North County.

Unfortunately...

The twenty percent profits were not hers.

They were Arthur's!

Although Arthur was her partner, knowing well of Arthur's 'greed', she was very aware that to utilize these resources, she had to pay a substantial price.

'What should I trade with?'

The lady started pondering.

Unconsciously, she furrowed her brows.

Because she really couldn't think of what she could trade.

Bowing her head in thought, Marinda followed behind Arthur, walking past the Death Serpent Banyan towards No. 2 Cork Street, and as they reached the corridor, Arthur suddenly asked—

"Marinda, do you think the Lord Count would agree if I used one-tenth of my shares in the South Town iron and coal business to exchange for South Town?"

"Though South Town itself isn't worth much, it's still a town with a population of twenty thousand!

So, ten percent won't be enough!

Fifteen to twenty percent would be more reliable!"

After evaluating, Marinda said this.

Then, the lady glanced at Arthur, who was lost in thought, and directly reminded him.

"Murdering a noble is a grave sin!"

To obtain South Town from the Earl of South Los, it was necessary for South Town to return to the Earl's hands first.

And for South Town to return to the Earl, the current owner Lord Lisop must die.

However, it was well known that Lord Lisop was in good health.

Not just robust but also agile.

With that constitution, he could easily live another twenty years without any trouble.

Of course, accidents always happen.

No one knows what might occur tomorrow.

But,

Marinda didn't hope that Arthur would be the one to act.

After all, nobles not only have plenty of means to protect themselves but also possess numerous 'methods to pursue murderers'.

If willing to invest resources, these nobles could always find out who killed one of their peers.

Marinda didn't want her partner to lose his future.

She and Arthur were still young and had plenty of time to wait.

Of course, apart from advising as a partner, the lady also harbored a slight private grievance.

After all, on the previous day, Arthur had asked her about her thoughts on South Town.

And she had expressed her interest quite openly.

But now?

Arthur was already scheming to acquire South Town for himself.

'Hmph, a man who forgets favors at the sight of profits!

When I first easily heard about 'Bloody John,' confirming that you were putting yourself in danger to lure the other party out and chase after the whereabouts of the 'White Crow', I felt apologetic and thought I needed to compensate you.

Now?

Humph!

Gone!

This message that I heard by chance will serve as your compensation to me!'

Marinda hmphed several times in her heart, took up her pipe again, and puffed forcefully twice until her cheeks were puffed out. Then she exhaled the thick smoke towards Arthur.

The lady was showing her disdain for Arthur in her way.

Almost instantly, the smoke enveloped Arthur.

The young 'Spirit Medium' waved his hands to disperse the smoke while continuing to walk forward and said—

"How could I possibly murder a noble?

I have no grievances with Lord Lisop!

Besides, I have just completed a pleasant transaction with him."

"I never said it was Lord Lisop; you're obviously guilty with a thief's conscience!"

Marinda rolled her eyes at Arthur as she spoke.

"People with dirty hearts see everything as dirty!"

Arthur retorted.

"Heh, my heart is as pure as a virgin's compared to yours," scoffed Marinda, spewing out another cloud of smoke at Arthur.

Having reached the door of the Spirit Medium Parlor, Arthur stopped in the face of such a 'smoke attack,' turned around to look at Marinda, who had an indignant expression, and revealed a smile.

"What are you trying to do?"

Marinda became alert.

But the young 'Spirit Medium' shook his head, turned, and continued into the Spirit Medium Parlor, taking out the contract he had just signed with Lisop.

Without stopping, he tossed it backward, whispering—

"Catch."

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Marinda raised her hand, and the contract scroll fell directly into it.

Looking at the contract scroll in her hand, the lady's face was filled with astonishment.

A feeling of unfamiliarity she had never known before rose from the bottom of her heart.

It was akin to the sensation of suddenly ascending from a low valley to the clouds, not just simple physical pleasure, but a more gentle feeling.

It was as if a continuous warm flow filled her empty soul.

She felt an unusual sense of security.

This unfamiliar feeling stunned the lady.

She stared blankly at Arthur's back. Under the candlelight of No. 2 Cork Street, his figure seemed to have gained an extra 'light.'

The appearance of this light made Arthur dazzling.

Marinda, with a cigarette holder in her mouth, couldn't help but murmur softly—

"Is this for me?"

Arthur, who was walking ahead, immediately paused upon hearing this.

Then, when the young 'Spirit Medium' turned around, he saw the lady with a look of terror and panic, beginning to step back.

The young 'Spirit Medium' raised an eyebrow.

He felt this woman hadn't held her fart properly.

In fact, that was the case.

The next moment—

"I thought we were friends, and you actually want to sleep with me?!"

Without hesitation, Arthur raised a middle finger.

"When I am with you, who exactly is sleeping with whom?"

As Arthur spoke, his face wore an expression that said, don't think you can take advantage of me.

Then, he emphasized more strongly—

"How could it be for you!

Exchange!

I am offering two-tenths of the iron and coal mining business in South Town in exchange for any resources related to Cat Faction and Cat Hole, secret techniques, props, and so on, that you can find."

Arthur stressed.

He wasn't Old Charlie; how could he risk his life just to hit on a woman?

Choosing Marinda as the exchange partner was naturally due to the pleasant cooperation they'd had all along.

Although Marinda has various shortcomings, there is one virtue that Arthur, as a partner, appreciates the most: intelligence!

This woman isn't ungreedy, crafty, or ruthless.

But when facing a true collaborator, the clever Marinda would offer enough fairness.

That's precisely what Arthur needed!

It was also because of this that their cooperation became increasingly enjoyable.

At least, Arthur could be sure that he would exchange for something of equal value and not be shortchanged.

And the business of two-tenths of iron and coal mining in South Town...

'Perhaps it could be exchanged for an Entry-level Atlas to Cat Faction or Cat Hole!'

Arthur thought to himself.

If possible, he would like to seek what he wanted from Marinda rather than trade with the Countess of South Los.

Although the latter had a higher chance of finding it, the risk involved would also skyrocket.

One wrong move could expose unnecessary flaws.

'Ah, still too weak.'

Arthur sighed inwardly.

Then he watched as Marinda raised both hands, retaliating with two middle fingers.

"You scared me to death!

In the future, you must say such things in advance; otherwise, I would think you were a pervert!"

Marinda let out a breath of relief.

"You are the pervert, your whole family is perverted!"

Arthur's mouth twitched.

"Humph, how did you know?"

"Though, parting with two-tenths of the iron and coal mining business for South Town does feel a bit reluctant. Suddenly, I feel that Bern Manor might be more appropriate—but I really want those two-tenths. However, the Cat Faction and Cat Hole secret techniques, rituals, and props I've collected so far are nowhere near enough to match them, they're completely unequal.

So, let's consider those two-tenths of the business to be co-managed by us, and as for the rest...

I'll write you an IOU!

The kind that calculates interest!

Once I find suitable resources from the Cat Faction or Cat Hole, we will correct it in one fell swoop!"

Marinda looked proud, but she steered the conversation back on topic.

As Arthur watched the woman seriously calculating the deal, the corner of his mouth lifted.

Look, this is why he was willing to cooperate with this woman.

Clever Marinda always brought fairness.

Afterward, the two of them walked side by side, each with a smile on their face.

They walked past crimson paintings, under the fierce deer heads, around the battered armors and hanging meat hooks, entering the Spirit Medium Parlor under the watchful gaze of the seated 'Ms. Anna.'

Neither of them spoke.

Moreover, no one could guess what they were thinking.

People like Arthur and Marinda simply couldn't be conjectured with ordinary reasoning.

When they wanted to speak, no one could stop them.

When they wanted to hide, no one could peek into their thoughts.

Perhaps, only when they were face to face could they guess a bit of each other's thoughts.

So...

They chose to walk side by side.

"Would you like some tea?"

Upon entering the Spirit Medium Parlor, Marinda asked.

Then, without waiting for Arthur to refuse, the lady went straight into an adjacent kitchen to boil water.

"No need for tea!

Do you have any pastries?"

Remembering the taste of the tea Marinda made last time, Arthur's taste buds started to turn bitter.

The young 'Spirit Medium' asked while picking up Pendragon.

Marinda didn't answer.

However, when she returned with the boiled water, the table had a new plate of pastries on it.

"Hmm?"

Arthur cautiously sipped the tea this time.

It was completely different from before.

Delicious!

It wasn't the kind of 'honey water tea' he'd brew himself, harsh and heavy, but a pure skilled method to fully bring out the advantages of the tea leaves.

Arthur was certain.

This woman had tricked him last time.

Facing Arthur's glaring eyes, Marinda remained calm.

"This is the second time I made tea for someone—the first was last time."

"Oh, you've improved quite impressively then," Arthur replied with disbelief, finishing the tea and then picking up a pastry.

In the eyes of someone like Arthur, who pretended to enjoy tea,

No matter how tasty the tea,

It was never as good as the pastries.

Especially since Marinda's cook, Lady Mary, had skills truly worthy of recognition—

"If possible, please have Lady Mary transcribe a copy of her pastry recipes for me; I think I might expand my culinary horizons."

Arthur said, enjoying the flaky crust and sweet, chewy filling of an egg tart, a contented smile on his face.

Sweets always made people happy.

Particularly for someone like Arthur, whose heart was full of darkness, sweets were indeed one of the few forms of redemption.

Marinda?

It was the same.

The lady listened to Arthur's words with a disdainful look.

"Tsk."

A single word, simple yet revealing endless mistrust.

Marinda never believed Arthur understood cuisine, just as she firmly thought Arthur was a bad egg.

Copy a recipe, indeed!

Clearly, he was plotting to poach her cook!

Did she really seem unaware?

As Marinda was ready to further mock Arthur's delusional hopes, she suddenly noticed something off about him.

Surprise and astonishment appeared on Arthur's face.

Marinda knew well that a bad egg like Arthur always maintained a calm or falsely smiling facade and rarely showed his true feelings like this.

Unless he truly encountered something incredible.

Immediately, the lady's curiosity was piqued.

She promptly asked—

"What happened?"

Chapter 365: Father and Son!

Late at night, a carriage sped out of South Los.

The coachman shouted, and the wheels rumbled on.

Inside the carriage, however, the atmosphere was heavy and solemn.

Just moments ago, Lisop had told his son that it was with an exchange of twenty percent of the South Town Iron and Coal Mine's profits that he had been able to return safely.

Lisop could see that upon hearing this news, his son felt even more guilty.

But,

That was not what he wanted.

He did not want to see such guilt.

Therefore, the Lord spoke again—

"It's not your fault, my son!

I was careless..."

"No, Father!

It's all my fault!

It was my arrogance and carelessness that caused shame and loss to our family!"

Little Lisop interrupted Lisop's words.

The son of the Lord looked at his father, his fists clenched so tightly that his fingernails dug into his flesh, and fresh blood trickled slowly down his palms.

The old butler beside him immediately took out a handkerchief to bandage the young master.

There was a look of heartache in the eyes of the old butler.

And guilt filled his words.

"It's all my fault, if only my investigation could have been more thorough, this wouldn't have happened!"

"You're not at fault!

The fault is mine!

And it's because of that guy, if it weren't for him..."

Smack!

Facing his family butler's comfort, Little Lisop forced out an ugly smile, then became gritting his teeth, his eyes filled with intense hatred, but in the next moment, that hatred was replaced by astonishment. The son of the Lord covered his face, looking at his father in surprise.

He did not understand why his own father would hit him.

"Don't blame your mistakes on the strength of your enemy—when you choose someone as your enemy, you should be prepared for their strength!

If you can't face even this fact...

I will not hand South Town over to you!"

Lisop said in a deep voice.

Caught in shock and confusion, Little Lisop immediately nodded upon hearing his father's words.

He thought his father was right.

He should not make excuses for himself.

The old butler thought the same.

However, what appeared in their eyes at this moment was more of surprise.

"Did His Highness agree?"

Little Lisop asked in pursuit.

The old butler also looked expectantly at his master.

Both were well aware of what Lisop had been recently trying to do—seeking the Grand Duke's help to make the title of Lordship hereditary.

But previously, the matter had been at a standstill.

Even though the Lisop family had already offered many benefits, the Old Lion was still vague and unclear.

However, Lisop's recent mention of "handing over South Town to you" seemed to suggest that there had been a major breakthrough.

"Yes!

When you became a vassal of the 'Spirit Medium' in the public eye, His Highness contacted me—he was worried that I would completely side with Lord Count because of you.

So, he agreed."

Lisop nodded with a complex expression on his face.

Little Lisop and the old butler felt the same way.

A sense of 'destiny' immediately plunged the carriage into a brief silence once again.

After three or four seconds, it was Little Lisop who broke the silence.

"What must we give up?"

After confirming that he could be the future master of South Town, Little Lisop, who had been receiving noble education since he was young, quickly grasped the key issue.

"Fifty percent of the iron and coal mine's profits!"

Lisop replied.

Even if he knew they would pay a heavy price, upon hearing his father's words, he still felt heartache.

Together with the agreement given to the 'Spirit Medium,' the Lisop family was now left with just twenty percent of the profits from the South Town Iron and Coal Mine.

Although a twenty percent yield was already not meager, enough to make any Noble of South Los envious,

it was an astronomical figure for common folks.

But clearly, he could have inherited even more.

Unwilling!

Angry!

Wave after wave of emotion surged in Little Lisop's heart.

Even with the education from his father, at this moment, Little Lisop still found it difficult to restrain himself.

Almost involuntarily, the son of the lord began to contemplate how to take revenge on Arthur—of course, not in an open and aboveboard manner.

It had to be covert, unknown to others.

'Perhaps I can tamper with the earnings from the iron and coal mines?

Or maybe cause a mining disaster?

Make them pay more?' Little Lisop pondered.

Isn't that just human nature?

Greed has long been seared into our bones.

With rationality as a restraint, the demon known as 'greed' is suppressed in the depths of the heart, but once that restraint is loosened, all that remains is madness.

Lisop certainly knew what his son was thinking.

The Lord immediately spoke,

"Do not resort to those sneaky tricks!

Whether it's His Highness or the 'Spirit Medium', both are exceedingly astute individuals.

Especially that 'Spirit Medium', who possesses eyes that can see into a person's heart!

So, Little Lisop, do not do anything unnecessary hereafter, just cooperate.

And now?

We have more pressing troubles to deal with!"

Having said that, the Lord sighed deeply, his eyes falling upon his old butler with a hint of apology.

Little Lisop immediately understood what his father meant.

The 'mistake' at the Swordsmanship Competition must have someone to take the blame.

Otherwise, it would seriously affect the 'honor' of the Lisop Family, even causing unrest among the people, and impacting future developments.

Therefore, someone must step forward to take responsibility.

It could not be him, nor could it be his father.

That left only their family's old butler.

The butler's status was just right.

He had a certain standing and authority, a plausible explanation for outsiders.

Even if it could not withstand careful scrutiny, as long as it was plausible, that was enough.

Moreover, his father had hinted to him in the past that the old butler knew too much.

With this thought, Little Lisop looked towards his father, and understanding everything when he saw his father looking down in silence,

Without hesitation, he raised his right hand to cover the old butler's mouth beside him, flipped his left hand to reveal the dagger hidden in his sleeve, and plunged it directly into the old butler's heart.

Thud!

In the sound of metal slicing through flesh, the old butler's eyes bulged wide.

But in his eyes, there was no surprise, no disbelief.

Just resignation and a deep regret.

This look took Little Lisop aback.

What surprised the young lord even more was that even in his final moments, the old butler's raised hand was not struggling.

Instead, it simply came to rest on his hand.

There was no strength.

It was more like...

A caress.

Startled, Little Lisop instinctively withdrew his hand, and his whole body leaned back against the carriage.

But the Lisop across from him just laughed.

He laughed heartily.

Laughing so hard that he leaned forwards and backwards.

Excited and delighted—

"Hehehe hahaha haha haha haha! Hill, how does it feel to be killed by your own son?"

Lisop stared at the butler whose breath was fading, and asked with a fierce expression.

Chapter 366: The Distorted Avenger!

Boom!

It was as if a thunderclap had exploded in Little Lisop's mind.

He sat there, stunned, completely at a loss.

And the old butler, still with the dagger embedded in his chest, looked at Lisop with eyes full of pleading.

"Pl... Please..."

"You have the nerve to ask me for anything?"

Do you know why I chose to enlist in the army?

Do you know what sustained me through battle after battle, certain to die?

The family!

I wanted to build a family that future generations could be proud of!"

Lisop cut off the old butler's words, his voice involuntarily rising, and by the end, he pointed at the old butler and shouted.

"But because of you!

You worthless piece of trash!

You destroyed everything!

Just when I was striving to further the Lisop Family, you and that whore Jenny had the audacity to get together!

Hah, do you know?

Before I strangled her to death, she begged me to spare you and this bastard!"

With that, Lisop turned his gaze to Little Lisop across from him and swung a punch at his face.

Bang!

The punch was heavy.

It landed squarely on the chin.

Little Lisop seated there was lifted from his seat, his head striking the carriage above.

"Looking at that face makes me sick!

But for the sake of revenge, I endured it for twenty years!

Do you know what these twenty years have been like for me?

Every day, I told myself to be patient! To restrain myself! Not to show anything out of place!"

Lisop spat a mouthful of thick phlegm right onto Little Lisop's face.

Afterward, the Lord looked at his butler again.

"I was patient! I restrained myself!

Even for this, I gave up the life I had planned, became conservative—as everyone thought I had become content after acquiring the land, finding iron and coal mines, no longer ambitious!

But only I knew what I wanted to do!

Revenge!

To have my revenge on you, and that whore Jenny!

I wanted you to suffer the most painful death—I wanted your son to kill you with his own hands!

Only this way, could I be rid of this hatred haunting my heart!"

Lisop's face twisted to the extreme, his words filled with ice-cold malice.

The old butler could only beg.

He didn't even have the strength to speak.

He could only look at Lisop.

Then, a smugness suddenly crept into Lisop's voice.

"Don't worry, I won't let this little bastard off, I will have my son personally rid of him!"

Lisop elongated his tone.

The old butler suddenly seemed to grasp some realization, becoming agitated all at once.

Watching this, Lisop laughed again.

"Haha, yes!

Exactly as you're thinking!

Your so-called son, is my son—my son from raping your wife, my son!

I will have my son, chop up your son piece by piece!"

Lisop bent down to the old butler, saying each word deliberately.

The old butler reached out and clutched at Lisop's collar.

But it was useless.

The robust Lisop quickly shrugged off the grip, and even grabbed the old butler's hand in return.

"Take a good look at your son!

In a little while, he's going to be chopped to pieces!"

Lisop whispered into the old butler's ear.

The old butler struggled to lift his hand, seemingly trying to push Little Lisop out of the carriage, urging his son to flee for his life, but his hand only lifted halfway before falling heavily.

The old butler breathed no more.

Lisop released the old butler's body somewhat reluctantly.

So many years!

He had waited so many years!

This retribution is nowhere near enough!

Everything is just beginning!

Lisop glared at that bastard and punched him viciously again, knocking him unconscious before jumping off the now-stopped carriage—Lisop hadn't bothered with any disguise, so of course, the coachman had overheard plenty of secrets.

This was something Lisop simply could not allow.

It pertained to his plans for the future!

Did they really think two-tenths of his iron and coal mine's profits were so easy to take?

He would surely give that 'Spirit Medium' quite the shock!

Therefore, he could not allow anyone to detect even a hint of what was to come!

And this ensured the coachman's death.

Even as the frantic coachman ran for his life with all his might, he was quickly overtaken by the nimble Lisop.

Then, amidst pleas for mercy, the coachman had his neck twisted and broken by Lisop.

Carrying the body back, Lisop surveyed the surroundings to ensure no one had seen, then he tossed the corpse into the carriage and took the coachman's seat himself, driving towards South Town.

And all the while, the Lord remained completely unaware that atop a branch, there blended into the night, sat a Crow.

...

When Little Lisop woke from his faint, he found himself in a cellar.

He was first stunned, then began trembling uncontrollably.

He remembered everything that had just happened.

Lisop was only his father in name.

Raising him had been nothing but a scheme to use him for revenge against his biological father.

Butler Hill was his real father.

And he had killed his own father.

"No!

This isn't real!

It's fake!

All of it is fake!"

Little Lisop howled in anguish, the once well-dressed young man now banging his head against the ground, utterly unable to accept reality.

Watching all this from the shadows, Lisop let out a laugh.

"Yes! That's right! That's right!"

"Feel the pain!

Savor the pain!"

Lisop emerged from a corner.

How could he possibly leave this mongrel alone in the cellar? If he committed suicide, all his efforts would have been in vain.

He had just wanted to appreciate the look on the other's face a bit longer.

And now?

Iron chains and shackles appeared in the hands of the nobleman.

"Father..."

Bang!

Before Little Lisop could even speak, he was kicked hard in the stomach by Lisop.

"Shut your mouth, you bastard! If you dare insult me with that word again, I'll rip out your tongue!"

Lisop shackled the mongrel before him, and then, as if tethering a dog, he tied the boy to a stake he'd prepared in the cellar—secured there, he couldn't bang his head against the walls.

As for biting his tongue to commit suicide? A dirty rag sufficed to gag him.

"Just wait!

The most thrilling part meant for you is about to start!"

Looking at Little Lisop tied there, the nobleman sneered and then turned to leave.

Step, step, step!

The sound of footsteps faded, leaving the tightly bound Little Lisop consumed by resentment, confusion, pain, and terror.

Negative emotions tangled in the depths of the young man's heart.

In the end...

Ashen despair.

Perhaps, for him, death would be a release.

The young man finally gave up struggling and slumped there, defeated.

But at that moment, a mysterious hand suddenly appeared over the young man's head.

The warmth of the palm sent a shiver through him.

Then, a voice of sorrow yet gentleness rose—

"Are you certain?"

Chapter 367 Kind Father!

Are you sure?

A familiar voice pulled Little Lisop's thoughts back to an earlier time, a time when he was asked the same question, a time when he saw pity on the face of the voice's owner.

Back then, he did not understand where this pity came from.

Now he...

understood.

His destiny had been sealed at that time.

And the Master who saw his destiny was trying... trying to stop him!

Yes!

That kind Master was trying to stop him.

But he did not listen!

He regretted it!

Little Lisop cried.

A loud cry under regret!

Self-healing after the breakdown!

"Cry, after you've cried—tell me how you decide to choose."

In a gentle voice, Arthur sat down beside the bound Little Lisop, allowing Little Lisop to cry loudly while leaning on his knees.

In the middle of crying, Arthur's palm gently caressed Little Lisop's head and back.

"Bluff" sparkled to its peak at this moment.

Like a light in the darkness, it lit up the cellar.

At least to Little Lisop, who had fallen into an extreme state after his breakdown, it appeared so.

At first, he leaned on Arthur's knees.

Latter, he lay prostrate before Arthur.

And Arthur's expression remained gentle, his eyes filled with pity.

After three or four minutes, the crying subsided.

Little Lisop raised his head and looked up at Arthur in front of him.

"Master, what should I do?"

Little Lisop asked respectfully.

"It all depends on you.

If you choose Death, I will guide your soul to the Land of the Dead.

If you choose to live, I will go through the difficulties with you."

Arthur lowered his head and watched Little Lisop, the smile on his lips growing gentler.

Such a smile seemed to contain endless power, giving the present Little Lisop a sense of... backup.

He had backup.

He was not alone.

He had someone to confide in.

He had someone to seek refuge with.

How could a heart, as if dead, choose Death after having all this?

"I want to live, Master!"

Little Lisop said so.

However, the moment the words left his mouth, perplexity appeared in Little Lisop's eyes—he had to face his father... no, Lisop.

Lisop was about to return with the 'Executioner'.

He needed to face them.

How should he face them?

Upon thinking, a wave of pain burst forth from deep within his brain, Little Lisop cried out 'Ah!' and collapsed to the ground in agony.

Pain!

An unparalleled pain!

But the next moment, it was gone.

Because that warm palm was once again placed on the top of his head.

Little Lisop subconsciously looked up.

In a daze, the young man seemed to see a figure sitting majestically on a throne above the clouds, looking down on all living beings with pity.

Unconsciously, Little Lisop once again neatly knelt down before that—

"Master!"

Arthur, seeing Little Lisop's manner, knew that this young man probably half lost his mind.

In just one night, not only did his father become an enemy, but he also killed his father.

Anyone would have a mental breakdown in his place.

And out of an instinct for self-preservation, to survive, Little Lisop needed a mental anchor in his state of mental breakdown.

And his appearance became that mental anchor.

Arthur guessed this.

But what Arthur did not guess was that Lisop was so incredibly mad and twisted.

Having observed everything, Arthur could confirm that Lisop also belonged to that kind of extremist.

With a noble status, the other could have easily dealt with his own steward, but for more gratifying revenge, he chose to endure for twenty years.

Such a temperament was truly frightening.

Such distortion even more so made one's hair stand on end.

So...

Lisop must die!

Thinking this, Arthur plucked a strand of hair.

"Ka!"

In the clear Glyphic Language, the strand of hair seemed to come alive. The shackles on Little Lisop were all unlocked, but Arthur did not remove them, and even handed the torn rag back to Little Lisop — footsteps were already sounding by his ear.

One belonged to Lisop.

The other must belong to his son.

"Whatever choice you make, I will support you!"

Arthur whispered, then completely disappeared into the Shadows.

The next moment, Little Lisop also heard those deliberately made footsteps.

Lisop wanted to torment him.

He wanted to keep him in constant fear.

Before, he would have been afraid.

But not anymore.

Before, he would have felt pain.

Now, there was still a trace of pain...

Wait, why should I feel pain?

I shouldn't feel pain, I still have my Master!

Like true family, my Master supports me!

A crumbling spirit reborn from the ashes, soaked in deceitful words, became distorted and blindly obedient, but no longer in pain. It was as if warmed by a Kind Father, nourishing Little Lisop's heart and soul.

Little Lisop was no longer himself.

No!

He was still himself.

He just saw things more clearly.

He just understood who truly deserved his concern.

So, he was still Little Lisop.

The loud footsteps approached closer.

Little Lisop became even calmer.

The damp, cold cellar that reeked badly, in Little Lisop's eyes, became bright, warm, and fragrant because—

the Master was with him!

Lisop entered the cellar with his son, coming up to Little Lisop.

The Lord looked kindly at his excited and confused son, and began to give guidance—

"Tel, do you see him?"

It's him!

It's this guy who forced me to make you live a life worse than that of animals!

Now, pick up your Dagger and start by chopping him up bit by bit, starting from his hands and feet!"

Tel, the son of the old butler.

Just a few months younger than Little Lisop.

The young man who used to respectfully call him 'young master,' now had eyes shining with greed and ferocity as he stepped closer to Little Lisop.

Tel seemed to be living in a dream.

He turned out to be the real son of the lord... no, his father.

His father told him it was to avoid danger that he had to adopt such a strategy.

About this, he was doubtful.

But he wanted to inherit South Town.

He wanted to own everything of South Town.

So, he came.

So, he drew his sword against Little Lisop.

So, his sword was snatched away by Little Lisop.

Tel had also been taught swordsmanship by the same master as Little Lisop, but it was only incidental, as the master paid more attention to Little Lisop.

In terms of swordsmanship, Tel was far inferior to Little Lisop.

And, seeing Little Lisop shackled, Tel didn't care at all.

By the time the Lord's son realized it, the Dagger was already at his own neck.

This scene happened in a flash.

Totally beyond Lisop's expectations.

As the Lord tried to intervene, Little Lisop had already taken Tel as a hostage against the back of the wall, the Dagger at Tel's neck opening a gash.

"Calm down! Let's talk!"

Seeing his own son wounded, Lisop was shocked.

Little Lisop, however, smiled.

"Talk?"

Sure!"

Saying this, Little Lisop forced the Dagger inward with a jerk.

Puh!

Chapter 368, Section 1, Subsection 2!

Bloodied ears slid from the side of Tel's head.

But, Tel did not cry out.

It was not fearlessness, nor was it indifference to pain.

It was because the moment Tel, the son of a lord, had just opened his mouth, Little Lisop's dagger had been thrust into his mouth, the cold and sharp blade pressing tightly against the noble's son's tongue, rendering him immobile, especially with the sensation that the tip might pierce deep into his throat at any moment. Even though the pain was severe enough to make his whole body tremble, the noble's son still raised his hands high, not daring to make a sound.

On the other side, Lisop didn't dare to move either.

In fact, after taking one step forward, the lord stopped in his tracks.

The lord watched Little Lisop with an expression that was seemingly crying yet smiling, but also concealed a hint of madness.

He knew that his plan had worked.

After crumbling, Little Lisop had gone mad.

And according to his plan, this was the most delightful moment for torture.

Except...

Tel was being held hostage.

The lord didn't know how Little Lisop had unlocked the shackles and chains, but he knew that now was the time to placate Little Lisop.

He absolutely had to retrieve Tel.

After all, he had only this one son.

With this thought, the lord spoke—

"My son, you have passed the test!"

Lisop's face once again showed the smile that Little Lisop was familiar with.

Seeing such a familiar smile, Little Lisop was taken aback.

What stunned the young man even more were Lisop's words.

A test?

What test?

Was everything that just happened a test?

Little Lisop became bewildered.

The young man looked incredulously at Lisop.

Seeing Lisop nod affirmatively, with eyes full of encouragement and joy, Little Lisop began to believe that the recent events had indeed been a test.

Or more accurately, Little Lisop wanted to believe it was a test.

Seeing Little Lisop's reaction, the lord smirked with pride and contempt in his heart.

This was what he had wanted.

With everything that had unfolded before, he knew that simply asking for calm with his mouth was utterly useless and would only provoke Little Lisop, the lunatic.

So, he had to start from a key point.

What was Little Lisop's key point?

Identity!

The 'identity' of Little Lisop that he had declared with his own mouth.

Words spoken could not be changed, of course.

But words spoken could carry different meanings.

Nobles were most adept at such tricks.

And he, Lord Lisop?

Had long since learned these little tricks!

Tel, who was being held by Little Lisop, was utterly confused.

'Could it be that just now father... no, the master was just bluffing him?

Was he using him to test the young master?'

Upon this realization, despair flickered in Tel's eyes.

Lisop noticed the expression on Tel's face and felt quite helpless that his son didn't understand how to cooperate, but he had no recourse, and wouldn't blame his son.

Because he knew the education his son had received before wasn't sufficient to handle the current situation.

But that was something that could be remedied.

Now, what had to be done was to make his son safe.

As for the ear that had been cut off?

It was of no consequence.

Among nobles, there were plenty of ways to reattach an ear.

While thinking this to himself, the lord looked at Little Lisop and, smiling, slowly took out a blank contract from his bosom, biting his finger and writing in the presence of both Little Lisop and Tel—by Lisop, I sell the South Town Iron Mine and coal mine to Little Lisop for the price of 1 Gold Coin.

A radiant glow began to bloom.

The contract took effect!

No!

There was one step left!

One Gold Coin was still needed!

"Come!

My son!

Come and take what belongs to you!

You shall be the master of South Town, and next, you must follow me and learn how to truly manage a town, and how to become a qualified lord!"

Little Lisop had no Gold Coins on him, of this, Lisop who had searched him could be certain.

So, the lord took out a Gold Coin from his pocket.

The lord's idea was simple, to use the Gold Coin as a prop to distract the eye. When Little Lisop went to take the coin, that would be his chance to kill Little Lisop.

As long as he killed Little Lisop, naturally, there would be no need to honor the contract.

Although he couldn't torment Little Lisop, which was a bit regrettable, saving his son was the top priority.

And to ensure his own son's safety, Lisop continued to imply with his words to Little Lisop—a qualified lord should not kill his subjects indiscriminately.

Inside the cellar, Little Lisop, looking at the Gold Coin in Lisop's palm, felt an excitement that was beyond words.

It's fake!

It's indeed fake!

All of it was fake!

It was truly wonderful!

"Hehehe haha!"

The ecstatic joy in his heart made Little Lisop burst into manic laughter.

The evasive 'he' appeared once again.

Pushing aside the one who was born from the collapse.

He knew everything was fake.

He was still the son of Lord Lisop of South Town!

He was Little Lisop!

He had to inform his father about the 'Spirit Medium's' Bewitchment!

But before that—

Thrust!

Little Lisop's Dagger thrust forward, piercing Tel's throat.

Tel's eyes widened as he fell rigidly to the ground as Little Lisop let go of his palm.

Looking at the fallen corpse, Little Lisop methodically flicked Fresh Blood off the blade of his Dagger, his gaze seeking recognition and yearning to boast, turned towards Lisop—

"Father, you once said that as a qualified lord, you must never let your subordinates know too much, especially when one of them harbors ill will towards you!"

Looking at the body on the ground, Lisop stood still as if struck by lightning.

Dead!

His only son was dead!

The lord's eyes dimmed at this moment.

But the next moment, the lord's expression became Distorted.

"You!

It's all your fault!

I will kill you!"

Lisop roared as he pinned Little Lisop to the ground, his fist raised high, but it did not come down—the lord looked down in shock at the Dagger that was plunged into his chest, his face showing astonishment and disbelief.

Thump!

Lisop fell to the ground.

Little Lisop was completely stunned.

He had just acted on reflex and raised his sword when Lisop lunged at him, but who knew it would pierce Lisop's heart.

The next moment—

"Father?! Father?!"

Little Lisop got up and embraced Lisop.

"Get off me, you bastard!"

The lord struggled and bellowed with all his remaining strength.

But the struggle soon became powerless.

The voice weakened rapidly.

About a dozen seconds later, no matter how Little Lisop called out, the lord would no longer respond.

From the Shadows, Arthur watched the scene.

He slowly put on his gloves.

Misfortune, for the moment, dissipated.

But 'Death' was still present.

He watched intently all that he saw.

Chapter 369: The Ringtone!

Arthur gazed upon the corpse of Lisop.

This lord had died with his eyes wide open, a look of rage upon his face.

Anyone who saw the lord's body could feel that sense of unwillingness and anger.

Although Arthur would not have allowed this lord to live, he did not know that the lord would die so coincidentally, so... dramatically?

Contemplating the scene before him, Arthur made his assessment.

Then, the young 'Spirit Medium' turned his gaze toward Little Lisop.

At that moment, Little Lisop was not in a good state—

"Did I kill my father?

Did I kill my father again?

Why do I say again?

It was Little Lisop who killed him, not me!

Then who am I?

It's fake, all that just now was fake!

It's real, all that just now was real!

How could I possibly not distinguish?

I can't distinguish ahhh!"

Little Lisop held his head and screamed madly.

One-time destruction is not fearful.

What's terrifying is repeated destruction.

The fleeing him, believing he could finally grasp everything, faced collapse again.

This time he couldn't escape, he couldn't avoid it.

He was firmly targeted by 'Death.'

Or rather...

He chose death.

He just disappeared.

He believed everything was false, and such falsehood allowed him the autonomy to choose.

But Little Lisop did not die.

'He' still existed.

'He' firmly believed that the Kind Father would not abandon 'him.'

Indeed, it was so.

After glancing once more at that brand new '1 Gold Coin' contract on the ground, the young 'Spirit Medium's palm reappeared over 'his' head.

Even though he was wearing gloves, 'he' could feel that temperature.

And that voice made 'him' brim with tears—

"No matter how you choose, I will be with you."

The gentle voice nourished 'him.'

It also made the him who disappeared in the collapse completely turn into nourishment.

'He' became stronger, and finally, completely replaced him.

The new Little Lisop crawled on the ground, kissing Arthur's boots, whispering in his heart—

'Father!'

Afterward, Little Lisop got up swiftly, rushed to Lisop's body, tore a corner of his garment, took the bitten finger dripping with fresh blood, and quickly began writing on the piece of clothing—

Butler Hill, Tel were bribed by the Death Poetry Society, is...

The Blood Book abruptly ended.

A single 'is' left room for rampant speculation.

Arthur instantly guessed what Little Lisop was about to do.

Lisop was dead.

But that did not mean Lisop was without value anymore.

On the contrary, the deceased Lisop, in a sense, became even more valuable.

Because the former Lisop had saved Baron Bolna.

Because the current Lisop's territory was in South Los.

The former, related to the Old Lion.

The latter, related to the Mother Tigress.

And...

Both coveted the mines of South Town!

This was almost common knowledge.

With this suggestive Blood Book, it really could mean anything.

Arthur thought to himself, his eyes reflecting more pity.

Meanwhile, Little Lisop picked up that '1 Gold Coin' contract, along with the Blood Book, and handed them over to Arthur for safekeeping, then said—

"Master, leave the rest to me."

Arthur did not refuse.

In this matter, it was not appropriate for him to directly intervene.

Indeed, his appearance would make a 'normal' situation abnormal and invite suspicion.

But it was different for the victim, Little Lisop.

Everything would seem reasonable.

Even if there were some unreasonable details, Arthur would make them appear reasonable since, tonight, the Mother Tigress's Swordsmanship Chief was coming to visit...

...

Arthur returned from the secret passage to No. 2 Cork Street and as he came up from the basement bedroom, Marinda was chatting with the Countess's Swordsmanship Chief, Julie—

"Although the advent of gunpowder altered the dynamics of the battlefield, it only changed part of the situation, not all of it, as secret techniques are the true power!"

The Countess's Female Swordmaster said so.

"Yes, secret techniques are indispensable, but gunpowder can also be combined with secret techniques to exert greater power."

Marinda did not object.

As a 'Mystic Side Person', this lady was quite aware of the potency of secret techniques.

Even, to some extent, those true powerhouses could influence the direction of a battle.

And...

Those kinds of powerhouses were not scarce in South County.

Old Lion, Mother Tigress, and even those well-known Great Nobles were such powerhouses.

And her?

She was also striving to become one among such powerhouses.

So far, she was quite successful.

"Right!

From being a 'Gifted One' to becoming a 'Mystic Side Person', and even growing into an 'Arcana Level', that is an incredibly lengthy process.

Even with extraordinary talent and ample resources, it starts from ten to twenty years.

In this process, there are many uncertainties.

And a firearm can reduce at least half of these uncertainties.

Therefore, letting ordinary people use gunpowder as the basis to serve 'Mystic Side Persons' is a very good choice."

The Countess's Female Swordmaster nodded repeatedly.

However, it was clear that the Swordmaster misunderstood Marinda's meaning.

Marinda meant 'complementing secret techniques with gunpowder,' not 'ordinary people armed with gunpowder weapons serving Mystic Side Persons and Nobles.'

But this clever lady would not dispute with the Female Swordmaster at this time.

Their views were different.

But both were right.

The only difference was their perspectives.

Just at this moment, Arthur walked in, and Marinda immediately smiled, saying,

"Have you finished your meditation?"

When he had just left, the two had agreed to use 'meditation' as an excuse.

This was the perfect excuse for a 'Mystic Side Person.'

Every 'Mystic Side Person' has their fixed or unfixed meditation times.

The fixed ones, naturally, are times set each day to channel one's spirituality.

The unfixed ones, those are random, maybe a breeze could inspire a 'Mystic Side Person,' leading to meditation.

"Yes!"

Arthur smiled and nodded, then greeted the Female Swordmaster.

"Good evening, Julie."

"Good evening, Arthur."

The Female Swordmaster then handed a box she was holding to Arthur.

Clearly, the matter of 'making up for the gift' was not mere talk from this Female Swordmaster.

Inside the box was a wind chime with several tiny cylindrical bodies—

[Name: Warning Wind Chime]

[Type: Other Type Items]

[Quality: Secret Technique]

[Attributes: 1, Malice Detection; 2, Melodious]

[Remarks: One of the protective props created by Master Alchemist 'Lady Abel,' who always pays attention to personal safety while searching for materials abroad. This inspiration came from the Vigilance Oil Lamps carried by Great Nobles of the Western Sea during winter battles in North County, although unlike the brutal 'Lamp Shadow Sentinel,' this master prefers more gentle methods]

...

[Malice Detection, when emotions filled with negative energy appear within a fifty-meter radius of the wind chime, it immediately rings out, but under normal breeze, it will absolutely not ring, even if it is swaying.]

[Melodious: When the wind chime rings, the melodious sound will cause the malignant intruder to fall into a daze. This requires a 'Spirituality' check; unless the 'Spirituality' score is above 5, the daze will not occur, but the sound of the chime would become more urgent]

...

"I really appreciate your generosity!"

Arthur said sincerely.

Any form of mystic tool is precious.

Because you can never know when it might save your life.

Thus, even though Arthur was not lacking in mystic tools, he would not refuse.

Moreover...

This also represented the sincerity of the Swordmaster.

Without a show, Arthur glanced at the description of [Malice Detection] on the [Warning Wind Chime], understanding everything already settled in his mind.

"Come, let me help you hang it up!"

The Female Swordmaster said as she picked up the [Warning Wind Chime] and began walking toward the door.

In response, Arthur did not stop her but instead thanked her with a smile.

The two meters five stature of the Female Swordmaster just made her particularly fit for the task.

"Is it alright here?"

The Female Swordmaster raised her hand, gesturing above the Crimson Painting.

"Of course."

Arthur nodded repeatedly.

Just as the Female Swordmaster had barely hung up the [Warning Wind Chime], the melodious sound rang out—

Ding-a-ling!

Chapter 370 An Unexpected Opportunity!

Peals of pleasant sound began to echo in the corridor of No. 2 Cork Street.

But just in an instant, the ringing became harsh to the ears.

Arthur, Marinda, and the Female Swordmaster looked at each other—

Where was the malice coming from?

Or to be precise...

Who bore malice toward this Female Swordmaster?

One must know that the [Warning Wind Chime] was hung by the Female Swordmaster herself.

Following the rules of using Mystic Tools, it was naturally aimed at the Female Swordmaster.

Arthur definitely harbored none, as he had adjusted his state as soon as the [Warning Wind Chime] was hung.

Marinda was also clear of suspicion, Arthur trusted his partner, who would certainly have adjusted her state.

Hence, only one possibility remained.

From outside!

It could only be someone from outside!

Instantly, Arthur narrowed his eyes and looked outside the door.

Marinda did the same.

The Female Swordmaster, momentarily astonished, saw their reactions and swiftly turned her attention to the door as well.

And about a few seconds later, a clear sound of footsteps emerged.

The visitor rang the bell at No. 2 Cork Street.

"Lord Julie?"

The person inquired softly.

"Yes, I'm here!"

The Female Swordmaster said this and went straight to open the door and walked out.

Outside stood a guard of the Countess of South Los.

The uniform and the Sword that accompanied it were unmistakable.

And that face, Arthur had seen it before.

Upon seeing the Female Swordmaster, the person immediately saluted and then handed over a note. The Female Swordmaster reached out to take it, but the blade of her great sword was quicker.

Whoosh!

The great sword swept across with a whistling sound that made one's scalp tingle.

The pseudo guard of the Countess instantly tried to dodge, but a mysterious force appeared upon the great sword, dragging the so-called guard of the Countess forcibly into collision with the blade.

Clang!

A loud metallic sound reverberated in front of No. 2 Cork Street.

As the edge of the great sword was about to sweep past the body, this supposed guard of the Countess blocked it with a Dagger.

The edge of the great sword was stopped.

Yet the terrifying power contained in the blade was not blocked.

The pseudo guard's Body resounded with the noise of bones breaking and tendons snapping, while he flew backward, blood spraying wildly from his mouth.

And before he had flown out even two meters, he was 'sucked' back again.

But all this was no longer important.

What mattered was that the guard's confidence had been struck.

He had believed his disguise was perfect.

He was not just some random replacement.

He was a genuine Spy who had grown up under the Earl of South Los, with a 'contract' as his cover.

If this sudden event hadn't been so crucial, he would not have taken action against the Swordsmanship Chief to distract the Earl's attention.

But, unexpectedly, he had been discovered.

And moreover, he was discovered right from the start.

Previously...

He had likely been under surveillance all along!

The Female Swordmaster in front of him was waiting for him!

Waiting for him to transmit important information!

Waiting for him to expose himself!

Realizing this, the guard completely tore off his disguise.

The face that had been pale due to the blood loss now turned a deep shade of purple, and the body emitting cracking noises started to give off a faint stench.

At the same time, a rich Aroma of Death emanated from the guard's Body.

"'Death Poetry Society'!"

The Female Swordmaster exclaimed lowly, her eyes filled with terrifying murderous intent.

The Female Swordsmanship Chief was aware of some minor actions by the "Death Poetry Society," but she didn't take them to heart.

But this time it was different!

The "Death Poetry Society" had the audacity to plant a spy right beside the Lord Count!

This had crossed the line for the South Los House!

There was no holding back!

The "suction" on the massive sword had more than doubled, and her strength sky-rocketed to the extreme. The muscles on the arms of the Female Swordsmanship Chief, which were already knotted with veins, began to grotesquely swell at an alarming rate. In merely a breath's time, their size reached a frightening 100 centimeters, and her entire figure seemed to grow taller as well.

"3 meters!"

After eyeing it for a moment, Arthur came up with a rather accurate estimate.

Then, he sized up the member of the "Death Poetry Society."

His eyes gleamed with a playful light.

Arthur swore it wasn't intentional.

When the Female Swordsmanship Chief brought out the "Warning Wind Chime" to show her sincerity, Arthur didn't refuse to demonstrate his own sincerity—he merely released a tiny, seemingly insignificant bit of malice to remind the Female Swordsmanship Chief that there were people outside with ill intentions.

And why were they harboring ill will?

Of course, it was because an accident had happened in South Town.

There were those who did not wish for the Female Swordsmanship Chief to be informed or to appear.

There were those who hoped to use some method to divert the Female Swordsmanship Chief's attention.

After all, when the Countess of South Los was confined in seclusion, this Female Swordsmanship Chief could be considered the Countess's representative.

If they could distract the Female Swordsmanship Chief, then naturally they would have diverted the Countess's attention as well.

Arthur assured himself he merely intended to divert the Female Swordsmanship Chief's attention a bit.

Who knew the "Death Poetry Society" would take the initiative to cooperate!

It wasn't just cooperation at the present moment!

There was also coordination from South Town!

When Little Lisop handed over the Blood Book and the contract, Arthur knew that other powers must be hiding in South Town—it was for safety that Little Lisop would choose to do so.

Arthur was not surprised at this.

If he had enough influence, he would have also stationed people to watch over such an important place like South Town.

However, what Arthur didn't anticipate was that the "Death Poetry Society" would be the first to emerge.

In Arthur's original conjecture, it should have been the Old Lion of Inner Bay who should have been the first to show.

Even if the "Death Poetry Society" had a cooperation with the Old Lion of Inner Bay, at such a time it should have been the Old Lion's "spy" who acted first.

This was not simply a matter of order.

It had to do with interests, ambition, and...

Respect!

"No way! It couldn't be!

Could someone be acting on their own accord?

If you dare do this...

Then I will not show any mercy!"

Having grasped a crucial point, Arthur revealed a benign smile in his heart.

The Old Lion had always cast an oppressive shadow over Arthur.

Coupled with the "Death Poetry Society" occasionally appearing around the Old Lion, even after Arthur obtained the "Breath of Death" Talent, he did not dare to be careless.

But now?

Things were different!

Everything was different!

The Old Lion and the "Death Poetry Society" were not nearly as close as he had imagined!

This presented an opportunity for him!

He was going to make the "Death Poetry Society" and the Old Lion fight a good fight!

Only then would he have more time to develop!

So, Arthur, who had been standing in front of No. 2 Cork Street, made his move.

Arthur sighed softly and then took a step forward.

But his foot did not land on the ground, seemingly stepping on an invisible stair instead.

It wasn't just one step!

Each step was the same!

Under the astonished gaze of Marinda, Arthur stepped step by step into mid-air, looking down at the "Death Poetry Society" members and the Female Swordsmanship Chief, who were separated by shock, whispering to himself—

"So that's how it is!"

After saying this, Arthur raised his right hand and lightly tapped his index finger towards the "Death Poetry Society" member.