

Great Master 381

Chapter 381: The Heart's Eye is Petty and Stingy in Searching!

"That guy couldn't possibly expose such an obvious flaw!"

Although Marinda said this, her steps didn't stop, and she took out the Messenger Stone again.

This lady once again contacted her loyal coachman Edwin, instructing him to not only thoroughly investigate No. 6 White Bird Street, but also to increase manpower and keep a close watch on her properties in the Docklands.

Clearly, this lady had guessed something from Arthur's words.

Arthur wasn't surprised by this.

Marinda was always so clever.

Thus, the young 'Spirit Medium' didn't hide anything and directly confessed about his people being attacked on Rat Street—

"It must be that guy from the Death Poetry Society who has a certain fondness for me, right?"

He instigated the remaining forces on Rat Street to siege my grocery store.

He even sent out 'Blazing Wind' Greta as a backup.

This guy must be one of those whom Old Lion allocated to his team, though I'm not sure where the rest are now?"

Saying this, Arthur just shrugged.

In face of the clever Marinda, Arthur was more than willing to give her a bit of a challenge.

It wasn't out of any malice.

It was simply because his forces in South Los were too few, and he needed to borrow this lady's manpower to 'suppress' the other side's recklessness.

It was just a simple 'suppression'!

Definitely not revenge!

As a 'Spirit Medium', how could Arthur be petty?

If not being petty, naturally, he couldn't afford to give too much!

But, if he were to bring it up proactively, this lady, although she wouldn't necessarily ask for a fortune, would definitely require him to give up something in return.

This was something Arthur absolutely didn't want to see.

Being weak and without savings, Arthur couldn't afford this.

Thus, he could only make this lady take the 'initiative'.

Listening to Arthur's words, Marinda frowned.

""Blazing Wind' Greta?

This guy has actually sided with Old Lion!

What about the rest?"

As she spoke, she gave Arthur the middle finger.

Marinda had already guessed what Arthur was up to, but she couldn't ignore one fact—a 'Blazing Wind' Greta was, of course, not something to focus on.

This lady was more concerned about what the appearance of 'Blazing Wind' Greta implied.

You know, in the thirty years since the Seven Years' War ended, the number of well-known bandits who disappeared wasn't just limited to 'Blazing Wind' Greta.

There were those weaker than 'Blazing Wind' Greta.

And there were those stronger than 'Blazing Wind' Greta.

If Old Lion really gathered these guys together, that would be a real problem.

No!

Even gathering half would be enough to make sleep elusive.

Marinda, who achieved her position today through caution, knew her anxiety was somewhat excessive, but despite Old Lion possessing the 'Lion Group' Talent, it was improbable he would achieve that.

Nevertheless, relying on caution, the successful Marinda absolutely could not be careless.

Therefore, this lady asked Arthur—

"Can your backup plan still be used?"

"Of course!"

Arthur laughed and nodded.

Fujin and Wuni, who had risen in rank through the 'Breath of Death', bore feathers that were the best carriers of the 'Pit of Death'. After the crazy accumulation of Death Qi during the day, Arthur generously infused 'Deathly Fire', 'Death Qi Slash', 'Control Corpse', 'Minor Curse Technique', and other 'Technique of Death' into Fujin and Wuni's feathers, enchanting not just one feather. Besides 'Death Qi Slash', Wuni had two more, and the remaining 'Technique of Death' were even more.

"Good, send your backup to the Docklands—regardless of whether the worst happens or not, I'll send you a brand-new Kirk Sailboat.

If the worst does happen, I'll decide based on the situation and provide you with the appropriate compensation!

Also, I heard about the 'Bloody John' incident before, for this information, I'll also compensate you with two brand-new Kirk Sailboats."

Marinda said straightforwardly.

Why Arthur liked to cooperate with Marinda.

This generosity was really hard to refuse.

A brand-new Kirk Sailboat cost as high as 25,000 Gold Coins.

Moreover, it required quite a long time before it could be launched.

If he could obtain three brand-new Kirk Sailboats from Marinda, then he only needed to buy a few second-hand ships to start coastal trading immediately—unlike the twenty ships cooperating with Marinda, taking twenty percent of the profits, these would be completely his own.

This was how the two had finally settled on the number of ships and the division of profits when they were setting new terms at their last meeting.

However, Arthur did not mind earning more.

Of course, Arthur was more aware of the dangers involved.

'There is no such thing as having no worst-case scenarios.'

In the Docklands, the worst could always happen.

Otherwise, why would 'Death Poetry Society' members collude with pirates?

But Arthur was very willing to see such things happen.

As for Wuni, Arthur was very confident.

Perhaps this move by Wuni could earn him back an entire fleet.

'You can do it, Wuni!'

Arthur thought to himself, yet he turned to look at Marinda—

"Pleasure to cooperate."

Arthur said with a smile.

Afterward, Arthur did not ask any further questions.

He would not ask what Marinda had placed in the Docklands that made her decide to pay such a price.

Sometimes, knowing too much was not a good thing.

Watching Arthur continue to walk away, Marinda pursed her lips.

Although she knew that Arthur was unlikely to inquire further, his swift decisiveness still left the lady feeling somewhat helpless—she had set a trap here.

If Arthur had asked, she could have mentioned it and made Arthur pay dearly.

After all, the 'Tower of Mist' ruin was enough to interest anyone.

Its value was immense.

So, had she mentioned it, Arthur would have had to give her some compensation.

100,000 Gold Coins was not excessive, right?

It's a pity that this fellow had not a tiny bit of curiosity.

'Wait!

How could this guy not be curious?

Could it be that he knows something already?'

Marinda thought, her gaze towards Arthur becoming conflicted.

A secretive family rooted in a place for decades, knowing some secrets wouldn't be surprising.

Even the very reason they had settled here could be because of some secrets.

Like that ship.

Like this ruin.

Arthur astutely noticed Marinda's change.

'Did this guy find something good in the South Los Docklands?

Hmm...

Let Wuniduo pay more attention.

Maybe there'll be a pleasant surprise!'

Arthur thought to himself, then he switched to Fujin's perspective.

When the young 'Spirit Medium' used Fujin's perspective to see everything in South Town clearly, he was immediately surprised—

Can it really be like this?

Chapter 382: Family Heritage Can't Compare to the Guidance of a Kind Father!

Little Lisop strode into the study of South Town Manor and gestured for a manservant to come over.

"Please summon Lord Gold and Lord Leixide immediately," he said, "and tell them I have something of utmost importance!"

Little Lisop said this with a serious expression on his face.

The manservant sprang into action at once.

Once the manservant had left, Little Lisop's breathing began to quicken.

Intense headaches assailed the young nobleman.

"I am not wrong!"

"It wasn't me!"

"Kind Father told me, the ones in error are the 'Death Poetry Society'!"

Little Lisop, leaning on the desk with his hand, couldn't help but mutter to himself.

As he continued muttering, the sensation of headache rapidly receded.

When he reassured himself again that the fault lay with the 'Death Poetry Society,' his headache completely vanished, leaving only a refreshing feeling that radiated from inside out.

It was as if he were brimming with energy after a good sleep.

It was also a feeling of vitality that filled his entire body.

"'Death Poetry Society'!

How dare they incite the Hill father and son to assassinate me and my father!

My father died by your vile schemes, but I survived—Kind Father not only saved me but also guided me!

I must make you pay!"

Little Lisop's eyes turned bloodshot as he pounded the desk with his fists, his whole body growling through clenched teeth.

Then, the son of the noble quickly calmed down.

He was well aware of what the 'Death Poetry Society' was.

With his current capabilities, it was impossible to confront them.

He needed to arm himself!

He needed to become stronger!

Little Lisop immediately walked over to a bookshelf, pulled out a book from it, and pressed something inside.

Click!

With a crisp sound, the mechanism turned.

The bookshelf then moved slowly forward, revealing a gap wide enough for a person to pass through.

Little Lisop stepped inside.

This was his father's collection.

Or rather...

The foundation of the Lisop Family.

There were numerous books about the Mystic Side, some elucidated hidden secrets while more of them contained special knowledge, including but not limited to secret techniques, rituals, and so forth.

However, this wasn't Little Lisop's goal for coming here.

What he needed was something more direct—

Scrolls and props!

If it were before, he wouldn't have thought about these things.

Even if the Lisop Family was already in absolute crisis, it would be the same.

Because he couldn't use them.

His father was a noble of merit but didn't have a real 'Bloodline Talent.'

He was the same.

These collections were prepared for his sons and daughters.

But just now, as he witnessed his father's assassination and was about to collapse, 'Kind Father' blessed him, 'Kind Father's' words comforted him, urged him what to do, and even granted him some 'Talent.'

How did he know this?

His intuition...no, according to the Mystic Side, it was his 'Spirituality' that informed him.

He was somewhat unsure.

So, he wanted to try.

Little Lisop quickly walked forward to the cabinet where his father stored the scrolls and props.

Opening a drawer, Little Lisop took out a scroll.

Sensing the vitality within, a smile of joy spread across Little Lisop's face.

"It's different!

It's really different now!"

The young noble whispered to himself, he had interacted with them before and they were lifeless.

But now?

He could actually use them.

Not those scrolls and props that even ordinary people could use, but the truly meaningful scrolls and props intended for the 'Gifted Ones.'

The former are more precious, mostly exquisite.

The latter are more common, yet their power is not inferior.

For the Lisop Family, the former are more costly and don't fit the 'Noble Identity,' so the latter are the focus—of course, Little Lisop was very aware of the truth that the former were sufficiently expensive.

But now it was different.

He could now use these scrolls and props normally.

But...

"Father!"

Little Lisop's expression conveyed sorrow, but it swiftly turned to determination.

He had lost his father, but he still had his Kind Father!

With this thought, Little Lisop immediately sprang into action.

First, he took a vest from the top drawer of the cabinet and put it on—this was a vest that could provide effective protection for the wearer and had the capacity to hold a large number of scrolls, with all the scrolls being stored in a pocket at the lower left side, though it could only hold scrolls and nothing else.

But that was already miraculous enough.

Little Lisop loaded 273 various scrolls into it, and after noticing not even a tiny bulge in the pocket, he marveled at its magic.

Afterward, he picked up two coins from the second-to-last drawer.

One copper coin.

One silver coin.

The copper coin was a replica of the legendary thirteen copper coins, which could provide the bearer with an explosion-proof level of protection.

The silver coin was cast as a replica of the rumored seven silver coins and could protect the bearer from the Mystic Side's mental and Illusion Technique influences.

Little Lisop placed the two coins in the right lower pocket of the vest.

Then, he took out two rings from the bottom drawer of the cabinet.

One ring was set with a ruby, capable of shooting out powerful fireballs.

The other ring, made entirely of brass and engraved with a pair of small wings, could allow the wearer to fly briefly.

"The safe zone is the index finger, pinkie!"

Muttering to himself, Little Lisop put the two rings on the index and pinkie fingers of his left hand.

His right hand then reached for the long box on top of the cabinet.

Inside was a longsword.

The longsword was a wide-bladed hand-and-a-half sword, its hilt wrapped in leather, the pommel inlaid with a diamond, and the scabbard made primarily of oak and secondarily of wrapped leather.

This was a longsword bearing the late period style of the Holy Empire and the early style of the Silver Age.

Understated yet not lacking in opulence.

Of course, what Little Lisop cared about more were the Sharpness of the longsword and its ability to release Sword Qi.

Although he could only release three bursts of Sword Qi in a short time and would need a secret technique or gold to recharge afterward, for him, who was adept in swordsmanship, there was no better weapon than this longsword.

He didn't abandon his original sword.

This too was a 'Sharp Weapon'-level longsword, a rare find, so Little Lisop placed the original sword at the other side of his waist.

Next, he placed his hands on the hilts of both swords, took a deep breath—

"Kind Father, please protect me!"

In Little Lisop's view, even now fully armed, he still couldn't compare to the guidance of the "Kind Father."

Only under the "Kind Father's" guidance would his heart be steadfast and his vision clear.

Thus, after yet another prayer, Little Lisop at last stepped out of the secret room.

The lights in the secret room slowly went out.

While in the study outside the secret room, Little Lisop, with a resolute expression, waited quietly.

About four or five minutes later, Lord Lisop's Guard Commander and Swordsmanship Chief, Gold, arrived first.

This was a middle-aged man who had a military background dating back to his grandfather, and had become prominent in his youth. Regrettably, without Noble Bloodline, he was unable to receive the treatment he deserved. Ultimately, with substantial financial motivation from Lord Lisop, he became the Lisop Family's Guard Commander and Swordsmanship Chief.

The hundred-man Guard he had personally trained was an indispensable protective force for the Lisop Family.

His swordsmanship, moreover, earned most people's admiration.

Of course, what was most commendable was Gold's serious and loyal attitude.

Seeing a stern-faced Little Lisop but not Lord Lisop, the Guard Commander and Swordsmanship Chief felt puzzled, yet still respectfully took his place beside Little Lisop, silently waiting for Head Hunter Leixide to arrive.

Unlike the disciplined Gold, who came from a military family,

Leixide was once a mercenary, known for his outstanding Archery and skilled in hunting and training.

Hence, he became the Lisop Family's Head Hunter.

Even after becoming the Head Hunter for the Lisop Family, Leixide remained casual—

"My dear young master, good evening!"

"Good evening, Head Hunter Leixide."

Little Lisop detected the smell of alcohol on his Head Hunter but didn't mind and, after signaling for the two to sit down, went straight to the point.

"My father has been assassinated; the 'Death Poetry Society' bribed Tel and his son to do it!"

"What?"

Both Gold and Leixide looked shocked.

"How is the Lord?"

Gold asked anxiously.

Leixide stared unblinkingly at Little Lisop.

"Father, father..."

Little Lisop opened his mouth.

Both Gold and Leixide immediately knew what had happened, and both faces linked closely with the Lisop Family overflowed with grief.

Leixide's eyes reddened.

Gold even let his tears fall, and with his longsword drawn directly from its scabbard, he stabbed towards Little Lisop.

Chapter 383 The Power of Inspiration!

Gold's sword was not only fast but also ruthless.

The moment he drew his sword, its tip was about to pierce Little Lisop's throat.

This sudden attack exceeded everyone's expectations.

Leixide, the Head Hunter, did not react in time.

Neither did Little Lisop.

Because, in both of their eyes, everyone in South Town could betray them, but Gold would never betray.

This was a man who demanded of himself the standard of a "Knight"!

As a "Knight," what he valued most was honor!

Just before the sword tip touched Little Lisop's throat, it was blocked by a force field—the Protection Copper Coin had taken effect. Shocked, Little Lisop quickly regained his senses and drew his sword to counterattack.

Clang!

Gold's sword intercepted Little Lisop's longsword.

The next moment, both men stepped forward, beginning to wrestle with the section where their longswords touched.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

In the subtle, continuous collisions, both longswords emitted bursts of crisp sounds—

"Mystic Tools, huh?

What a pity!"

Gold glanced at the residual force field shield around Little Lisop and murmured softly.

"Why?

Why, Gold?"

Confusion was written all over Little Lisop's face, his words filled with questioning.

"Why?"

A self-mocking smile appeared on Gold's face as he seemingly heard those never-ending voices once again.

'Congratulations on winning the Ainhars Territory Swordsmanship Competition championship. Keep it up; you'll soon earn the title of 'Knight'!

'Eradicate this gang of bandits, and you can earn the title of 'Knight'!

'This group of murderous bounty hunters is up to you to handle!

'The title of 'Knight' is not that easy to achieve!'

'Thank you for your efforts; I have already applied for your 'Knight' title!'

'Sorry, your honor is not enough for you to become a 'Knight'!

'Sorry, I can't wait for the day you become a 'Knight,' and my family can't wait either. I need to get married!'

'You coward! How can you think of fleeing your family after a few failures? Do you know how much we've already spent to get you the 'Knight' title!'

...

Each voice, each time.

Each sound made Gold's expression turn ferocious.

Each time made the murderous intent in Gold's eyes boil.

"Of course, it's because I enjoy doing this!"

In a low growl, Gold misstepped and, with a twist of his sword, flung Little Lisop's blade outward while striking the younger knight's chin with his elbow.

Bang!

In the dull sound, Little Lisop staggered backward.

The residual force field kept the lord's son from falling unconscious, but intense dizziness appeared before his eyes.

Little Lisop shook his head, struggling to clear his mind quickly.

And Gold's sword lunged at him again.

Whoosh!

Ting!

An arrow intercepted the attack as Leixide continuously triggered his hand crossbow, shooting rapid rounds that gave Little Lisop a chance to breathe.

Leixide drew the longsword at his waist, locking eyes with Gold and forming a pincer with Little Lisop.

Even though it was two against one, the Head Hunter's eyes were wide open, not daring to be negligent in the slightest.

Nobody knew better than Leixide how formidable Gold's swordsmanship was.

They had once fought side by side against robbers, and Gold alone, with a single sword, could take down seventeen men.

And him?

He was merely using a bow to restrain the enemies.

In Leixide's view, Gold's swordsmanship could definitely rival that of the 'Nobles'.

There's no winning this!

Recalling Gold's swordsmanship, Leixide quickly reached a conclusion and took a deep breath—

"Young master, please leave!"

Having said that, Leixide charged at Gold.

His swordsmanship, of course, was not comparable to Gold's.

But as the Head Hunter of the Lisop Family, it was his duty to do just that.

Moreover, he had made a vow in the past.

Not to Lord Lisop,

but to...

the Countess of South Los.

As a spy of the Lord Count, even though he was not aware of what was exactly happening, he knew that South Town should not fall into chaos, and it should certainly not affect the whole of South Los!

His longsword thrust forward, but Gold easily dodged it, leaving the Head Hunter full of frustration.

'Damn it, I knew I shouldn't have drunk!'

Leixide, looking helpless, watched Gold's counterattack.

The Head Hunter wanted to dodge, but the alcohol-induced paralysis of his nerves had slowed his reactions tremendously.

He watched helplessly as the sword approached, unable to evade it.

Then, a fierce light flared in the Head Hunter's eyes.

Can't dodge?

Then don't.

Leixide allowed Gold's longsword to thrust towards his chest, his own longsword aiming for his opponent's chest.

Gold frowned.

He looked at Leixide, puzzled.

He knew Leixide very well.

In some ways, they could be called friends.

He was well aware of some of Leixide's past, more full of complaints than him, and in his mind, Leixide was the easiest to sway.

But now—

Clang!

His longsword lightly tapped, and Leixide's longsword veered off course, sending him lunging forward due to inertia.

After tripping him up and watching him quickly get back up, he fearlessly held his sword against him again.

"Why?"

The Swordsmanship Chief and Guard Commander couldn't help but ask.

"Because I like it, of course!"

Leixide grinned, retaliating with the same words against the Swordsmanship Chief and Guard Commander before him.

"Don't you think it's unfair?"

The Swordsmanship Chief and Guard Commander asked.

"Unfair?"

Leixide was taken aback.

He finally understood why Gold had done this.

Gold understood Leixide.

Leixide also knew some things about Gold.

Cheated by a former employer.

Abandoned by a lover.

Forsaken by parents.

He knew all these things, but he had thought that Gold had found a way to solve them, not like him, drowning his sorrows in alcohol daily and needing to rely on alcohol to sleep.

"Tch, you guy, always acting so convincingly, I thought you had come around!

Of course, what you are doing is unfair—you vent all the injustices you suffered on the people who were fair to you, is this your idea of fairness?

If you want your fairness back, why don't you go after those who treated you unfairly?

Your swordsmanship is so good, wouldn't it be easy to take them down?

Go kill them!

But what are you doing now?

Spreading your injustices and creating a bunch of guys just like you?

Ignorance!"

Leixide yelled loudly, then was knocked to the ground by Gold's sword.

"Such a nuisance!"

Gold stared coldly at Leixide.

Feeling the pain on his body, Leixide, however, started to laugh.

With one strike of his sword, Gold could have killed him.

But he didn't do it.

Gold wavered.

Knowing this, Leixide spoke again—

"Heh, you guy, not purely kind, not thoroughly evil, completely indecisive—just like me.

We are just a bunch of ordinary people with hesitations.

Whatever we do, we will regret it.

Do you believe if you had killed the young master, from now on, you would be tormented even more than you are now...

Because, you guy, still have a conscience!"

Leixide slowly stood up, staring straight at Gold.

And in Gold's ears echoed those voices—

'Do you think it's fair?'

'Do you want fairness?'

'I have a plan!'

'It can make you feel fair!'

...

'Is this the fairness I want?'

Gold asked himself as he fell into confusion and hesitation.

Due to Leixide's words.

But even more so...

Little Lisop!

The sight of Little Lisop kneeling and praying to the 'Kind Father.'

Chapter 384: Spreading the 'Love of a Kind Father'!

Little Lisop keenly felt Gold's pain.

Such pain, just like his own before.

He had experienced it firsthand.

That's why he understood what Gold felt.

That's why he believed Gold hadn't meant to, that he had been compelled by such torment to make that choice—just as he had.

But he was fortunate, for he had the "Kind Father's" guidance.

Then...

Could Gold also be guided by the "Kind Father"?

Little Lisop immediately knelt on one knee and silently called upon the "Kind Father."

There was no direct response.

But Little Lisop wasn't disheartened.

Because—

He felt the warm power of the "Kind Father."

Within him.

In his blood.

Flowing through his entire body with his breath and the beating of his heart.

'Is this the "Grace" of the "Kind Father"?

Did the "Kind Father" foresee that I would face such a situation and so, granted me this "Grace" early on?'

An indescribable sense of emotion rose from the depths of Little Lisop's heart.

That warmth made his eyes even more resolute.

He must allow Gold to feel the love of the "Kind Father."

And...

Leixide!

Yes, Leixide!

Little Lisop felt pain in Leixide too.

No!

To be precise, agony!

The torture brought by such agony caused Leixide's soul to cry out constantly, as if it were about to shatter at any moment.

"We are the same kind of people!

Not purely good enough, not thoroughly evil, indecisive when it comes to making choices!

But the 'Kind Father' told me that none of that matters.

No matter what I choose, the 'Kind Father' will always choose to support me."

Little Lisop whispered softly, but his heartbeat grew stronger, his blood completely being pumped throughout his body, bringing a powerful and hot flow of energy.

The temperature of Little Lisop, still kneeling on one knee, started to rise rapidly.

Like a little sun that warms the winter day.

He radiated his warmth onto Gold and Leixide.

Warm, peaceful.

Gold was startled and unconsciously raised his hand to touch his heart—the irritation, the discontent had vanished.

Even now, recalling that encounter, he could more vividly sense the malice in that fellow.

Immediately, regret surged in Gold's heart.

Why did he do it?

Why had he done it?

Having done so, even if he acquired the title of "Knight," could he still consider himself a knight?

A knight without any sense of honor, what difference is there from a robber?

Was he still himself?

In an instant, Gold fell into a daze.

Leixide's feelings were even more direct—

As the Countess's Spy, he believed he should possess a sense of honor.

Yet Lord Lisop also gave him corresponding respect.

In the Countess's service, he was just an insignificant pawn.

But in Lord Lisop's presence, he became a highly esteemed Head Hunter.

Everyone in South Town accorded him respect; he liked it here.

But he had a mission.

Thinking of such a mission every day, he couldn't sleep without the aid of alcohol, and facing those who respected him, he always had to remind himself that he had a mission.

Especially when a lady expressed her love for him, and he had to act nonchalantly, breaking the lady's heart, he wept bitterly.

He even thought of giving up everything.

But the honor he stood by made it impossible for him to abandon everything.

Agony!

Unbearable agony!

He didn't know how much longer he could hold on.

He planned to end himself when he could no longer bear it.

Living was too hard.

But what was this warmth?

Why do I want to cry?

Leixide stood there stunned, tears streaming down unconsciously.

In this moment, his emotions became incredibly peaceful, and his conflicted heart settled down for the first time—the sense of peace made his breathing smooth and even.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know about your experiences, Gold and Leixide.

But I am willing to be a listener, to hear your confessions.

At the same time, I am willing to do everything I can to help you—because that's what a 'Kind Father' would do, and I hope to follow in the 'Kind Father's' footsteps and move forward."

Perhaps I'm not doing enough.

But I hope you can help me correct that."

Little Lisop lifted his head and looked at Gold and Leixide, his eyes clear and earnest.

Such a gaze, in an instant, ignited the warmth enveloping Gold and Leixide.

The two were filled with emotion.

Such emotion affected both their feelings and their reason.

No!

To be precise, both their perceptions had undergone a complete shift at this moment.

"'Kind Father,' huh?

Indeed a merciful father."

Feeling the calm and warmth in his heart, Gold knelt on one knee before Little Lisop—

"Please forgive my ignorance.

And please allow me to atone for my sins through meritorious deeds."

After speaking, Gold bowed his head with his sword laid across.

Leixide, on the other hand, was much more straightforward.

"The 'Kind Father' allows drinking and marriage, right?

I hope to marry Beth, and I wish for your blessing!"

Leixide looked at Little Lisop with a face full of expectation.

"The 'Kind Father' will not hinder any of our choices, the 'Kind Father' will always stand by our side."

Little Lisop stood up as he spoke and helped both Gold and Leixide to their feet.

The son of the Lord looked at them seriously.

"Later, I will take you to see the 'Kind Father.'

"Now?

We have some matters to deal with!"

Little Lisop looked outside the manor, where sporadic gunfire could be heard.

Clearly, the Death Poetry Society's arrangements went far beyond what had just happened.

Assassinate my father.

Sow discord between my Swordsmanship Chief and Guard Commander.

Now, instigating people to rise in rebellion.

Phew!

Little Lisop took a deep breath.

Once again, the son of the Lord felt the love of the 'Kind Father.'

If not for the 'Kind Father,' he would have been doomed.

He admitted to himself that he couldn't deal with all these things.

"Fortunately, there's still time!"

Little Lisop said these words and took the lead in heading outside.

Gold and Leixide followed closely behind.

...

'Hehe, it's a piece of cake!

Once Gold takes action, with the inside-outside coordination, South Town Manor will be breached immediately.

Afterward, under the stimulation of blood and money, the whole of South Town will be set ablaze.

That will be enough to draw the attention of those guys!

Hmph!

Arthur Kredos, here, can you thwart my plan again?'

In the shadows, a figure cloaked in a hooded cape chuckled coldly to himself.

His plan was perfect.

The previous failure was nothing but the 'Spirit Medium's' dumb luck.

Now it was time to demonstrate his real power.

What comes next?

Of course, it's to make that 'Spirit Medium' realize the true terror of death!

Thinking this, the figure watched with anticipatory eyes as Little Lisop, Gold, and Leixide appeared inside the manor.

"Take action!

In full view of everyone, reclaim your justice!

Let this blood be the beginning of death!"

The cloaked person muttered under his breath.

But as time passed, and the Lisop Family's hundred-man Guard had completely assembled, Gold had not made his move, which caused the person in the cape to frown slightly.

However, he did not think that he had failed.

Moreover, he soon realized what Gold was up to—

"So that's it!

Worthy of being the man I chose!"

With that thought, the corner of his mouth turned up in a smile.

Chapter 385: Brothers in Trouble and You're Not There!

Killing Little Lisop with his own hands was a direct choice.

But having the mob kill Little Lisop was an even better choice.

"Not to stain my hands with fresh blood, and to gain benefits?"

Although I can't turn 'death' into art, still...

For an outsider, that's pretty good!"

The man wearing a hooded cloak muttered to himself.

Thereafter, this 'Death Poetry Society' member altered the original plan—in the original plan, Gold was a disposable pawn.

He was the one to bear the brunt of the mob's fury.

But now?

Death was necessary.

But what came after could be changed!

The other party had a bit of 'potential.'

Maybe he could become one of his attendants.

Different from those 'attendants' sent previously by the Left Cantor and Right Pastor.

A true attendant, belonging entirely to him.

Moreover, in his mind, he had already arranged a 'Ghoul Ritual' for Gold.

Of course, Gold was never his first choice.

The 'Bandaged Swordsman' was!

But due to previous concerns about exposure, he had to put his plans on hold, but now there was no need—

"Soon! Very soon!

Once I complete the ritual!

You will belong to me!"

An Evil Spirit returning from 'The Land of Eternal Night's Rest' was too precious for a 'Death Poetry Society' member.

He could fully imagine how heated the others in the 'Death Poetry Society' would become if they knew of the 'Bandaged Swordsman's' existence.

And his best efforts to block the news were merely a temporary impediment to the 'Death Poetry Society's' understanding of the 'Bandaged Swordsman.'

It wasn't going to last forever.

Once it was known, he would naturally be blamed.

However, as long as he completed the 'Grudge Rite', everything would be different.

'Death' is fair.

But the power that brings 'death' is not fair.

He had known this truth for ten years.

However, the 'Death Poetry Society' member scanning the battlefield harbored a trace of doubt in his eyes.

Where was Lisop?

Where was that old fox in the face of such a major upheaval?

The 'Death Poetry Society' member was filled with intrigue.

Then—

"Hm?!"

Just as the 'Death Poetry Society' member was lost in his doubts, he suddenly looked in surprise at the charging cavalry of the Lisop Family.

Gold was leading the charge!

And although Little Lisop was also in the ranks, he was in the safest position right in the middle of the formation, at least ten paces behind Gold.

It looked nothing like the expected turmoil where the mob was to kill Little Lisop.

Instead, it seemed like protective layers were in place!

And indeed—

After the return of four scout cavalry confirming it was just a mob armed with pitchforks and possessing very few firearms, the entire cavalry began their charge.

Unlike the early knights' lance charges during the Silver Age, the knights now held high...

Thunder Guns!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Flashes of fire.

Within the Thunder Guns' wide muzzles, volleys of bullets burst forth, sweeping across the battlefield with a force that destroyed all in their path.

In less than ten minutes, the mob that had gathered at the front gate of South Town Manor was completely suppressed.

The disparity in military force and equipment was too vast.

It was an utter rout.

There was simply no chance for a turnabout.

And the 'Death Poetry Society' member lurking in the shadows turned cold.

The unexpected outcome, Gold wasn't swayed and the plan failed.

Looking at Little Lisop, safe under the protection of the cavalry, the 'Death Poetry Society' member finally understood why Lisop hadn't shown himself.

Lisop had Gold's report and was assured of his victory.

Moreover, he was prepared to use this opportunity to establish his son's reputation.

"Heh, still dreaming of turning the Lisop Family into a hereditary line?"

"Such a foolish pipe dream!"

The member of the Death Poetry Society sneered repeatedly.

Perhaps the mutual restraint between the Old Lion of Inner Bay and the Mother Tigress of South Los had allowed the Lisop Family a bizarre period of balanced development.

But whether it's the Old Lion of Inner Bay or the Mother Tigress of South Los, neither would let the Lisop become too big to fail.

Therefore, the Lisop Family could never become hereditary.

What's more...

After tonight, the Lisop Family will be history!

Thinking of this, the member of the Death Poetry Society turned his gaze towards South Town—

There lay the Hidden Guard recruited by the Lisops.

Or more accurately, the 'Iron Blood Team'!

Not all of it!

Only about one-fifth.

But the combat power of this 'Iron Blood Team' was incomparable to these mobs before him.

Boom!

A massive explosion occurred.

Looking at the blaze from South Town not far away,

Gold immediately dispatched Scout Cavalry once more.

For now, the Death Poetry Society member did not pay further attention.

What followed, those 'Iron Blood Team' members who had been incited would handle on their own. After all, besides the 'Iron Blood Team' members in South Town, he had also stirred up some within the South Town Manor.

Not too many.

Just a few.

But this Death Poetry Society member believed these few would definitely create significant results.

Because—

This was the opportunity they had dreamt of, a chance to strike it rich overnight.

Leaving it in the hands of these folks was enough.

And him?

He naturally had to deal with the people from South Los.

If he didn't draw their attention, South Los's plan could become passive.

Taking big strides, the Death Poetry Society member made his way toward the main road leading out of South Town and toward South Los.

And just as this Death Poetry Society member stepped onto the main road, a carriage shrouded in mist appeared in his field of vision.

"Marinda Julius Caesar!

It is you indeed, Master!

You always charge into battle like this...

But it can lead to accidents!"

While saying this, the Death Poetry Society member drew from his bosom his biggest trump card—a puppet completely carved out of metal.

Or more precisely...

A Human Puppet!

But unlike Arthur's 'Exquisite Human Puppet',

this Human Puppet was even more delicate yet full of power.

Even when held in his hand, there was a feeling that life was about to surge forth, much like a volcano on the verge of eruption.

"Go, my 'General'!"

The Death Poetry Society member casually threw the Human Puppet out.

The puppet grew upon encountering the wind.

In just a moment, it became a two-meter-tall man in black military uniform with a stern face.

As soon as this middle-aged man appeared, the air around him seemed to solidify.

Not as a figure of speech.

But the air actually congealed at that moment.

Because—

Behind the middle-aged man appeared an illusory shadow of a storm.

And this phantasmal 'Storm Shadow' radiated annihilation like a real storm.

This illusionary storm influenced reality, drawing in the air around, growing rapidly in size.

Marinda's flying carriage was the first to be affected, being pulled towards that storm.

"Entrant!"

Feeling the influence of the illusory shadow emanating a presence far beyond that of a typical Great Arcana Level, Marinda immediately narrowed her eyes.

Without any hesitation, the lady prepared to dispatch this adversary as quickly as possible, together with her partner Arthur.

But just as her gaze swept by her side, her face showed surprise—

Huh, where is Arthur?!

Chapter 386: I've Decided on These Two, No One Can Change My Mind!

When your brother has a problem, you really run away!

Marinda complained about Arthur's "disappearance without a word" -- this lady was well aware that her partner must have discovered something to secretly leave.

But this did not prevent the lady from cursing Arthur in her heart.

Because--

The "Entrant" before her eyes was targeting her.

Her power was primarily "Smoke," secondarily "Undead."

And the "Entrant" opposite her was "Storm."

What happens when smoke meets a storm?

Naturally, the smoke is scattered to the winds.

As for the remaining Undead?

Lacking the main "Smoke" and left with only a third of the "Undead" power, they would be completely suppressed by the opposing "Storm."

The pipe in Marinda's mouth began to flicker rapidly.

It was not anxiety.

But hesitation.

'Do I have to use that move?'

Everyone has a trump card at the bottom of their box.

Marinda was no exception.

Only...

If she used this trump card, she was very likely to attract great trouble.

That was something she absolutely did not want to see.

So--

Drag it out!

Thinking this, Marinda took a deep drag on her pipe.

Then, she exhaled heavily.

Suddenly, the thick smoke turned into blankets of fog, completely enveloping the surroundings.

But the next moment--

Woo!

The raging wind swept through as a middle-aged man in a military uniform lifted his hand, and the whole mass of fog was blown away revealing that Marinda had vanished.

In her place was an "Undead."

Or to be more precise, a skeletal warrior appeared behind the "Entrant," with a rusty longsword slashing down directly.

At the same time, a skeletal hand emerged from under the "Entrant's" feet, firmly grasping his ankle.

A chilling power surged into the body of the "Entrant."

But it was immediately dispersed.

Woo!

The storm appeared again.

Not only the chilling power of the Undead that had surged into the "Entrant's" body, but also the skeleton hand grasping at his ankle and the skeletal warrior that had appeared behind him were shattered by the wind.

However, the bone fragments filling the air did not disappear.

The shattered bone fragments turned into a four-armed skeletal warrior in the storm and lunged at the "Entrant" again with a silent roar.

The chilly force was even stronger.

Its might far surpassed what had come before.

But the "Entrant" didn't even look, turning into a gust and rushing to the side.

There, next to the empty road, ripples immediately appeared.

Marinda's figure emerged there, retreating at extreme speed.

The "Entrant" immediately sped up, but just as he approached the area, he frowned--

Boom!

In a huge roar, a 3-meter diameter pillar of fire burst from the ground beneath him, shooting into the sky.

This 10-meter-long pillar of fire was like a uniquely shaped firework soaring into the sky.

People near South Town were all attracted by this bright light.

Arthur naturally saw this scene clearly.

'Well done!

Marinda, keep it up!

I'm rooting for you!'

The young "Spirit Medium," in a sprint and tracking pursuit, clenched his fist towards the direction of Marinda's fight, offering his heartfelt encouragement, then his gaze once again turned to the depths of the dense forest ahead.

With Fujin's vision, when that "Entrant" appeared, Arthur had confirmed his approximate location.

And soon, he had pinpointed the exact location of the other party.

As for why he didn't catch up?

It was naturally because of the Human Puppet!

When the 'Entrant' appeared, Arthur was not too certain.

Although there was a sense of familiarity about the 'Entrant', the young 'Spirit Medium' was unsure if a Human Puppet could achieve the level of an 'Entrant'.

Thus, Arthur harbored doubts in his heart.

However, once he confirmed the other's location and locked on, Arthur was certain.

The 'Entrant' was indeed a Human Puppet.

Because—

The one he was tracking was a Human Puppet.

An Exquisite Human Puppet, no less!

With an Exquisite Human Puppet as a vest, Arthur knew Exquisite Human Puppets all too well.

One might even say, no one understood Exquisite Human Puppets better than him.

After his active Spirituality had confirmed this, Arthur did not immediately take action but silently kept up, while expressing a sigh of admiration in his heart—

'Is this a completely new path?

Even 'Entrant' level Human Puppets can be created!

Then...

What about the higher-level 'Ascend Steper'?

They should also be possible, right!'

Arthur recalled the remarks related to Exquisite Human Puppets, which accurately stated that the initial creator of the Human Puppet, 'Robin', had found a brand-new path through 'Alchemy'.

At that time, Arthur did not have much understanding of the word 'path'.

But as he grew stronger and read more books from the Mystic Side, Arthur knew what the term 'path' meant in the Mystic Side.

'Ascend Steper'!

Only Ascend Steper is worthy of the term 'path'.

'An 'Entrant' Human Puppet is already remarkable enough.

An 'Ascend Steper' Human Puppet is truly terrifying.

No wonder that Master Robin firmly believed he could ultimately overthrow the Holy Empire!

I wonder if any Human Puppet of the Ascend Steper still exists?'

Arthur pondered and then shook his head slightly.

Having confidence is one thing; achieving success is quite another.

As far as Arthur knew, the Holy Empire was not overthrown by Master Robin—although, of course, the master contributed to its weakening.

But failure was definite.

And with the Holy Empire's cruel methods, the master's fate would certainly not be good.

After all, there was more than one master who had been burned at the stake in the Holy Empire.

And the masterpieces of those masters were most likely destroyed.

Even if preserved, they would only be used by the Holy Empire, and then, with the fall of the Holy Empire, these props would be further consumed and damaged.

Entering the Silver Age, the nobles continued their overt and covert strife, further consuming and damaging these props.

With the onset of the Seven Years' War, these props were then consumed and damaged en masse once more.

Therefore, Arthur did not hold much hope that the 'Ascend Steper' Human Puppet created by this master still existed.

Even if it did, such an item would definitely be in the hands of those Great Nobles.

He wanted to get it?

It would be difficult.

However, obtaining an 'Ascend Steper' Human Puppet might be difficult,

But acquiring another Exquisite Human Puppet was not very hard.

Even the 'Entrant' Human Puppet could be conveniently obtained.

With this in mind, Arthur's eyes narrowed slightly—

He was very clear about what the other party wanted to do.

Buy time!

Complete the Ritual!

That ritual is most likely the rumored 'Grudge Rite.'

Besides this possibility, Arthur could not think of anything else that would lead a member of the Death Poetry Society, still an ordinary person for the time being, to secretly hole up in number 6 White Bird Street and make such a commotion.

'If that's the case, then I'll help myself...

These two Human Puppets are mine to claim!'

The corners of the young 'Spirit Medium's mouth turned up slightly.

Chapter 387: The Second Game Begins!

The "Exquisite Human Puppet" in front did not circle around in the dense forest, but instead moved straight forward at a high speed.

And with the occasional rustling noises, it was a clear display of exposing its tracks, as if in a hasty escape.

If he hadn't been familiar with the "Exquisite Human Puppet," Arthur would have sped up to catch up, only to step into the next trap the opponent had set—for the successful completion of the 'Grudge Rite', in addition to utilizing the riot in South Town and the upcoming landing of pirates in South Los to

distract everyone's attention, another trap had been laid out targeting 'the ones who slipped through the net'.

Because, no matter how many preparations were made, there were bound to be omissions.

So, the opponent planned on 'entering the game with their body'.

The opponent planned to use 'themselves' to attract all the remaining people together.

Then?

Naturally, to use 'themselves' to completely cover up the noise of the 'Grudge Rite'.

Arthur didn't understand the 'Grudge Rite'.

But having experienced the ritual of 'Orange Cat', Arthur had a rough guess about the 'Grudge Rite'—time, place, and base materials were naturally necessary, and perhaps, the riot in South Town and the soon-to-arrive pirates in South Los were also a part of it.

Of course, the most important thing was...

Noise!

The opponent had taken such cautious measures, the 'Grudge Rite' probably would make a great noise when starting and upon completion.

Therefore—

'Overlap!

Have the "Exquisite Human Puppet" set up a fake ritual, making noise that sounds similar!

With the traits of the "Exquisite Human Puppet," it would surely be able to fake it convincingly.

And if it were up to me...

I would deliberately make the "Exquisite Human Puppet's" fake ritual fail, then control the "Exquisite Human Puppet" to act unwillingly, making a final crazy move that ends in mutual destruction.

It's best to bury explosives!

Next?

Naturally, to hide in the shadows and continue the setup, staging a 'return of the Evil Spirit' play.'

Arthur thought to himself, quickening his pace.

The opponent, exploiting the traits of the "Exquisite Human Puppet," would naturally maximize those traits.

Arthur could even imagine that, as he sped up now, the "Exquisite Human Puppet" in front would also accelerate.

A faint glow appeared all over the opponent, making him conspicuous while simultaneously moving forward as if gliding.

'Arthur Kredos!

You really did follow!'

Utilizing a prop on the "Exquisite Human Puppet," that member of the 'Death Poetry Society' caught sight of Arthur's figure.

Immediately, a thick hatred emerged on the face of this 'Death Poetry Society' member!

That hatred was almost tangible.

If hatred could kill, Arthur would have died countless times already.

And such hatred was naturally not unreasonable.

It accumulated over and over again—

If it weren't for the 'Spirit Medium' in his sight, this 'Death Poetry Society' member wouldn't have needed to go to such great lengths, wasting a massive amount of the society's resources.

Even causing the Left Cantor and the Right Pastor to become dissatisfied with him.

And to start doubting his 'Child of Death' status.

Yes!

He was fake!

He was completely pretending based on that vague prophecy!

But indeed, he was the one with the 'Death Talent,' found by the Right Pastor through divination.

Since that was the case...

Why couldn't he become the 'Child of Death'?

Why couldn't he become the successor of the 'Death Poetry Society'?

If others could!

Of course, he could!

In fact, at the beginning, everything went extremely smoothly.

It took him a year to formally enter 6 White Bird Street, where he used his words to agitate the nerves of those attending the salon and auction.

He wielded their jealousy as his sword and their greed as his spear, pitting them against each other.

Ultimately—

The 'Axe Murderer' was born.

This was the first creation he had meticulously planned and produced.

According to his plan, the 'Axe Murderer' would remain active in South Los for at least a year before being completely eliminated.

For this, he even instigated the coach of the 'Joel Jock Swordsmanship Club.'

Dexi!

Knowing that Litter, the third place winner of the last 'Swordsmanship Competition,' had come about because of Dexi, whose jealousy was already palpable as if it were physical, he barely said two sentences before the other party took the bait easily.

The 'Axe Murderer' and Dexi would cooperate with each other, the latter helping to better conceal the former's identity.

But who would have known that it would all be ruined by that damned 'Spirit Medium'!

Then came the 'Baby Theft Case' and the 'Lady of the Long Night Salon Murder Case'!

He had originally planned to use the 'Baby Theft Case' and 'Graham the Toad' to divert everyone's attention so that Woolter could take over the Shire District Police Station smoothly.

But that failed too.

Even worse, that guy died inexplicably.

At that time, he suspected that the 'Spirit Medium' had discovered something, so he had to activate the backup plan at 'Oakwood Manor.'

That place was originally intended for himself.

But to test the 'Spirit Medium,' he had no choice but to do so.

But what was the result?

Nothing was gained.

The other party acted very normally, but it was precisely because of this normalcy that he became even more suspicious.

The series of events on 'Rat Street' further confirmed his suspicions.

The 'Spirit Medium' had an exceptional understanding of South Los.

He even suspected that there was some major force behind the other party.

Therefore, he once again deeply concealed himself.

He pushed out the retired financial advisor of the Grand Duke.

Using the police chief of the Dort District, James, as bait, he lured the 'Spirit Medium.'

As expected, his guess was not wrong.

The 'Spirit Medium' had significant influence in South Los; otherwise, how could the 'Blood Descendants' possibly cooperate with them, and so deeply at that?

He knew the descendant of the 'Blood Marquis' all too well.

Thus, he used the spy from the 'Death Poetry Society' and another 'Blood Descendant,' Bern, for several rounds of testing.

Everything proved that he was right.

Unfortunately, he discovered it too late, especially when the news that Arthur Kredos was the contemporary 'Black Cat' of the 'Cat Faction' and also an 'Entrant' spread, he knew he had to activate his backup plan.

Luckily, he was accustomed to having a backup plan!

Now—

Let's begin the second round!

Thinking this, the member of 'Death Poetry Society' controlling the [Exquisite Human Puppet] stopped and turned to wait quietly.

Just a few seconds later, Arthur truly appeared within sight.

"Welcome."

The 'Death Poetry Society' member made the [Exquisite Human Puppet] reveal a smile.

Then, he took off his helmet.

When Arthur saw the face beneath the helmet, his eyebrows raised—

"Is it you?!"

Chapter 388: The Grand Stage of South Town, If You're Scared, Don't Come!

...

The person before him, Arthur had seen before.

He had seen him the first time Marinda invited him to 6 White Bird Street!

Even when the female servant Ilena had used ice to hide the poison to kill Brody, he had boldly spoken out— it was that male servant who seemed to have a good relationship with Ilena!

'Impossible!'

'It couldn't be Ilena's!'

'You must have made a mistake!'

Arthur still remembered how the man had boldly spoken out then.

"I never expected it to be you!

You're called...

Horton, right?"

When Arthur asked, there was no hiding his surprise in his tone—

After the incident where the servant Ilena had poisoned someone, Marinda had checked all the servants, and Horton, who had been the first to speak up, was naturally the first to be checked.

Similarly, he was the first to be cleared of suspicion.

His record was clean, and after he was hired, he had always been diligent and honest. Although there were some minor flaws in the matter with Ilena, it was to be expected of a young man.

And the period of despondency afterward?

It just convinced everyone around him further that he was not a suspect.

Therefore, after it was confirmed that there was a member of the 'Death Poetry Society' who was a completely ordinary person inside 6 White Bird Street, the suspicion towards him had greatly reduced!

He was investigated, too, but with the detailed groundwork laid before, the attention of those investigating was more easily drawn to others.

It wasn't that the investigators weren't cautious enough.

It was just that Horton in front of him was too good an actor.

Especially with that setup, it was admirable.

Daring to 'Hide under the light', was surprising enough.

And to lay out 'Hide under the light' beforehand was even more remarkable.

Without having a thorough understanding of everything around, such a setup would have been impossible.

"Truly remarkable!"

Arthur sighed and raised his hand clapping.

"No!

My actions cannot be considered remarkable!

You are the one who truly surprised me—

Lord Arthur Kredos!"

The member of the 'Death Poetry Society' before him, while manipulating an Exquisite Human Puppet, stared intently at Arthur and asked directly.

"To divert attention and make up for the 'Axe Murderer's flaws, Ilana's incident was completely improvised by me, hence it was quite rough.

To others, it may not be apparent,

but to you, the flaws must seem even more significant, right?

Was it at that time that you started watching me?

That is also why you always manage to spot the traces of my web.

Just as I've laid my plans, you choose to unravel them!

You wish to exhaust me and make me reveal my flaws!

Now?

Your wish has come true!

I've revealed my flaws!"

The man spread his hands with a look of resignation as he spoke.

Arthur maintained a nonchalant expression as if everything was as the man had said, but inwardly he was cursing.

'So it was true!

I felt something was off at the time, I always felt like someone was spinning a big web—I thought it was aimed at me, but who knew this guy was planning a ritual!

Tsk, I wonder if he'd believe me if I said it was coincidence?'

Arthur inwardly exclaimed at the surprise, while the 'Death Poetry Society' member continued to operate the Exquisite Human Puppet and said—

"To be honest, I'd been driven to a corner before.

A series of failures had made the higher-ups of the 'Death Poetry Society' very dissatisfied with me.

Even some of the support I had was fading away quietly.

Because...

they thought you were also a 'Child of Death'!"

Saying this, the man's resigned face showed a hint of anger.

His tone of voice began to rise at this moment—

"This is also your reciprocation for my arranging the 'Axe Murderer' to provoke you!

You're telling me that you've guessed my identity and you want me to behave!

But...

Would you believe me if I said it was that bastard's own move?"

...

Arthur: Ah, right, right, right, whatever you say.

Though internally he was full of complaints, the young "Spirit Medium" cooperated very well, frowning as if the answer was beyond his own expectations.

The other side was buying time to complete the Ritual.

He, too, was buying time to find the other side.

Moreover, to make it more natural and avoid being detected, he had to provide the other side with emotional value.

Therefore, while Fujin was searching, Arthur spoke up.

"Do you mean this is a misunderstanding?"

"Of course!

That greedy bastard, after a series of successes, set his sights on my employer, the 'Lady of the Long Night'—his head is filled with dog shit...

He has no idea how big a mistake he's made.

If it weren't for this bastard, I think we could have been friends."

The other's speech began to calm down.

Afterwards, the look in his eyes towards Arthur was filled with regret.

"It's a pity, because of a greedy bastard, we missed out on each other.

Are you looking for the arrangements I've made here?

Let me show you!"

The other side said and then began to laugh.

And the next moment—

The earth quaked and the mountains shook!

The trees in the dense forest were uprooted, and a huge altar made entirely of skeletons rose from the ground.

The altar was 10 meters high and 50 meters long and wide.

At each corner stood a 3-meter tower.

Layer upon layer of skeleton heads piled up, with a single strand of hair flowing out from the mouth of the topmost skull, straight down toward the ground.

The closer to the ground this hair strand was, the thicker it became, until it reached the ground, where the single hair had become as thick as a thigh, a rope made entirely of dry hair.

Four thigh bones were pegging this hair rope into the ground.

And in the front, behind the "Exquisite Human Puppet" controlled by a member of the Death Poetry Society, a staircase made entirely of cervical and thoracic bones revealed itself, step by step.

With every emergence of a skeletal step, a thick Death Qi erupted from the ground.

By the time sixty-six steps appeared, the Death Qi was so dense it loomed over the dense forest like dark clouds.

Any bird that entered into the Death Qi lost its life.

And any ordinary person who entered this area was eroded by the Death Qi and their vitality sapped.

"You see, this is what I've prepared for you—but you're too cautious. Since you appeared, you've kept a safe distance from me, not giving me the slightest chance!

So, I've generously shown you."

The other side said.

Of course, Arthur didn't believe a word of it.

The situation in front of him was exactly as he had guessed.

The other party was using everything in sight to once again capture the remaining people's attention.

And that visible Death Qi?

Naturally, it was to conceal the start of the 'Grudge Rite.'

'The sky, perhaps?'

Arthur scanned the Death Qi cloud without a hint of alarm, and Fujin immediately crept closer.

Ordinary birds, approaching this concentration of Death Qi, were certainly doomed.

Even an Arcane Creature couldn't bear it.

But Fujin, completely enhanced by Arthur's "Breath of Death" Talent, felt no discomfort whatsoever, blending into it like a fish to water.

Of course, acting along with him were...

Underground!

A horde of mice neared the base of the high altar from below.

When unsure whether the dense Death Qi that seemed like dark clouds was a mere illusion, this was just Arthur acting on instinctual caution.

Seeing Arthur remain silent, the other side spoke with a smile—

"I admire your observational skills and cleverness.

But I am also not convinced.

You have too many advantages, so I hope to have a fair match with you—

If you win, I'll surrender without a fight.

If I win, how about you agree to three requests from me?"

"What will we compete in?"

Arthur showed a keen interest.

The other side didn't speak again but simply raised his hand and pulled from his sleeve...

A deck of poker cards.

Chapter 389: Playing Poker with the 'Spirit Medium'!

Poker?

Arthur's expression appropriately revealed surprise and astonishment.

Then, there was a sort of relief.

The Exquisite Human Puppet controlled by a member of the Death Poetry Society saw the range of expressions on the young Spirit Medium's face and immediately laughed.

"I knew, Lord Kledos, that you would understand my point—

What else tests observation, reaction, and intelligence more than playing cards?"

With that, the Death Poetry Society member, controlling the Exquisite Human Puppet, began to shuffle the cards single-handedly right in front of Arthur.

The whole deck of cards was split into two equally thick stacks which were then pushed together, merging into one with a rustling sound.

Next, the entire deck was divided into three, moving quickly and skillfully in the palm, and with each vertical shuffle, the middle stack of cards would encircle the fingers, blossoming like a flower when the vertical and circular movements combined.

Especially from Arthur's perspective, the encircling stack of cards faced upwards, displaying different card faces with each revolution.

Starting from the Ace of Spades and ending with the Two of Spades.

Thirteen changes, dazzling to the eye.

Undoubtedly, this was a very professional technique.

At least, Arthur could not find any fault with this way of shuffling.

Of course, Arthur was more aware that the opponent was pressuring him.

Facing his continuous failures, the opponent was quite dissatisfied.

The opponent wanted to win at least once.

Or even make him concede voluntarily—

For example: by changing the type of contest.

That's also why the opponent had showcased their skilled shuffling technique at the beginning, to intimidate him into backing down.

If it had been any other type of contest, Arthur might have changed it.

After all, as a Spirit Medium, he shouldn't care about temporary gains or losses.

But playing poker...

That was his strong suit!

As long as the conditions were right, with his Magic Poker Box, he was invincible at playing poker.

"Did you previously work part-time in a casino?"

Arthur asked curiously.

"Yes, my family used to run a casino."

The opponent nodded frankly.

However, Arthur didn't quite believe it.

In his view, this was also a further pressure tactic from the opponent, fabricating an identity to gain some advantage, a simple feat for anyone to accomplish.

Especially when he openly extended an olive branch, the opponent would surely step on it subconsciously.

Digging a pit?

No, no, no!

This was just the Spirit Medium's contingency plan when facing an "inferior" position.

"Really?"

Then for me, that's a challenge.

I want to check the cards!"

Arthur said with a smile.

"Of course!

That's only reasonable!"

Seeing Arthur accept the challenge, the smile on the Exquisite Human Puppet's face grew even wider.

Although other contests were prepared, poker was what the Death Poetry Society member felt most confident in.

Therefore, there wasn't any objection from the opponent, who was also talking about the rules.

And that was exactly what Arthur wanted.

One professional, one amateur.

The latter wanting to challenge the former must firmly bind the opponent to have a chance to win—even if it means binding them in their own strongest domain.

Because only then...

will you know what the opponent will do, and how they will do it.

It will also mislead the opponent about your own actions.

Simply put, you must influence their preconceived notions.

And you must also be unexpected.

So—

"Wait!"

Just as the opponent finished speaking and was about to toss the poker cards to Arthur, Arthur waved his hand in refusal and motioned for the opponent to place them on the ground—about 30 centimeters away from the skeletal staircase.

Watching Arthur's finger position, the other party maintained a smile and nodded.

According to the gambling table rules, one party providing the poker allowed the other party the right to examine the cards in any way—as long as the cards were not damaged.

Of course, if there was suspicion of cheating, one could choose to destroy them.

But there must be solid evidence, otherwise, one would lose ten times the amount.

Arthur was clueless about these issues, but his uncle, Drake, was extremely skilled at it. According to Drake, his card skills had been genuinely inherited from Old Charlie, especially when playing cards with ladies in the club, where he was unbeaten and claimed to be invincible.

Arthur was skeptical about this.

However, he still remembered some of the rules Drake had mentioned.

"Is it here?"

The other party confirmed.

When Arthur nodded, the other party immediately threw the poker cards in hand.

And the moment the other party threw the poker cards, the "Hand of Void" caught the deck.

Watching the poker hang mid-air, at first the other party was startled, then, upon seeing two "Hands of Void" shuffling and examining the cards one by one, he immediately exclaimed,

"I always appreciate your caution."

"Can't help it, you're a professional, and I..."

Boom!

Arthur hadn't finished speaking when an explosion suddenly occurred in the distance at South Town.

Almost instinctively, Arthur turned his head to look in the direction of South Town.

Seeing this, a sense of triumph grew in the other party's heart.

"Thinking of counting cards?"

How could I possibly let you get your way?"

The other party was certain that what Arthur had just called examining the cards was really counting them.

Because it was exactly like the first time he had counted cards himself.

And he had been prepared for this move!

"Just as I thought, an amateur!

I'm sure to win!"

The other party thought to himself, and then also looked towards the direction of South Town, and spoke straightforwardly—

"That's a group I provoked earlier, now trying to take back what they think belongs to them in their own way!"

"Blinded by greed, their end won't be pretty!"

Arthur said this as he began to check his cards again from the start.

Clearly, disrupted by the recent explosion, Arthur needed to start over, but the other party did not give him the chance.

A member of the 'Death Poetry Society,' manipulated by the 'Exquisite Human Puppet,' spoke up,

"Lord Kledos, have you finished examining the cards?

Your time for card examination is almost up."

Examining cards could obviously not go on indefinitely.

According to local gambling table rules, one minute was the time limit.

"Done!"

Arthur sped up, almost skimming through the cards at the back.

Clearly, this was an attempt at forced memorization.

Seeing Arthur's action, a smile almost spilled out from the other party.

The other party knew, he was destined to win.

Arthur was purely an outsider in this.

Thinking this, the other party couldn't help but speak again—

"We'll draw cards to compare sizes!

Best of three rounds!

Drawing a Ghost Card means an immediate loss!

To make the game more interesting, aside from the earlier bet, let's add something else—within the three rounds, the winner can ask the loser one question.

Provided it does not violate any existing contract, the loser cannot refuse to answer and must be honest.

If asked about something already covered by an existing contract, one may refuse to answer, and it shall be considered as having responded.

How about it?"

Arthur furrowed his brows, pondering for a few seconds before finally nodding.

And just at the moment Arthur nodded, a scroll appeared in the other party's hand.

After the contract was drafted, just like before, the contract was thrown out.

Arthur had one "Hand of Void" hold the cards while the other caught the contract.

After all, it is well-known that the "Hand of Void" has only two hands.

Chapter 390: Put on the Clown Mask!

Arthur closely examined the contract.

After confirming that there were no issues, he finally signed his name.

Members of the Death Poetry Society who witnessed this scene could hardly resist cheering.

This time!

He had finally won!

He was determined to redeem his previous disgrace!

Moreover, he wanted to win so convincingly that the Spirit Medium in front of him would be speechless.

"For the first game, please shuffle the deck," he said.

The member of the Death Poetry Society began to feign generosity.

"Alright!"

After nodding his head, Arthur continued to shuffle the deck with the two "Hands of Void." Compared to the cautious way he had checked the cards before, his shuffling now was extremely fast.

The Death Poetry Society member across from him felt a hint of disdain when he saw this.

Even if it was fast, so what?

He had already memorized all the cards.

Moreover, it was his turn to cut the deck next.

He could completely control the placement of the highest ace of spades within the desired pile and then draw the ace of spades.

With the ace of spades in hand, how could he lose?

"Where should I cut the deck?"

Arthur asked after finishing the shuffle.

"Here!"

The opponent pointed to a spot about a third of the way down the deck.

Because the next card down was the ace of spades.

Without hesitation, Arthur placed the stack of cards on the ground, removed the portion from where his opponent had cut, and immediately picked up the first card from the new top of the deck—cutting the deck first before drawing was also a rule of the gambling table.

However, as Arthur drew his card, his opponent was stunned.

Because Arthur had drawn the ace of spades.

The highest card!

How was this possible?

Just dumb luck?

Was the Spirit Medium's luck that good?

The opponent kept crying out in his mind but kept a smile on his face as he drew a card.

Of course, the result was that Arthur had the higher card.

"Well, your luck is undeniable.

Ask me anything you want!"

The opponent sighed.

"Tell me precisely what your purpose is," Arthur said.

The opponent, surprised, showed a bewildered expression on his Exquisite Human Puppet face.

"I thought you would ask something more valuable—haven't you realized by now that I am preparing for my own Ritual?

From South Los to South Town, it was all for my Ritual.

In South Los, I not only coordinated with pirates but also dispatched all the personnel assigned to me by His Highness and, for safety, activated my own spies, the three brothers of the Bern Family.

In South Town, I instigated the conflict between that Lord's Guard Commander, the restless residents, and some within the Hidden Guard 'Iron Blood Team.'

They diverted your attention, allowing me to face you genuinely and incidentally complete my Ritual," the opponent explained in detail.

The three sons of Lord Bern were spies for this member of the Death Poetry Society?!

Arthur felt an unexpected shock.

Then, the young Spirit Medium sighed softly.

"So that's it!"

"Haha, it seems you had your suspicions and only wish to confirm their true identity now—their greed far exceeds your imagination, their arrogance startled me too.

The Title of Lordship cannot satiate any of the three.

With brains like swine, they think they deserve a higher status.

Still, I think you should inquire about something more valuable," the opponent said, a look of pity on his face.

As if Arthur had missed his chance.

But Arthur was unfazed.

If it weren't for the rule that 'the loser, without violating the existing contract, and if asked about the existing contract, can refuse to answer, and it will be considered a completed response,' Arthur would definitely inquire about the secrets of the Death Poetry Society.

Or simply ask where the real opponent was.

But with that rule.

Asking would be futile.

Instead of inquiring about something half-public yet deeply probing.

"The three of them already carry significant value," Arthur said with a smile.

As if there were some secrets tied to these three men as well.

The Death Poetry Society member frowned secretly.

Have I missed something?

Or could it be...

that there is a problem with these three?

The other person thought to himself, yet continued—

"Alright, let's not talk about them anymore.

Come, let's start the next game!

This round, I'll shuffle the cards!"

As he said this, he looked towards the deck of cards.

Arthur manipulated the "Hand of Void" to securely toss the cards into the opponent's hands.

The opponent started showing off again.

Compared to using one hand, the opponent shuffling with both hands was dizzying for anyone watching. The deck in his hands seemed to come alive, as if glued to his hands, and even with the trembling of his palms, the deck between the two hands became a chain that could extend and contract.

"Please!"

After the opponent had shuffled the cards, he did not immediately toss them out. Instead, he began to ask—as Arthur had done—using the same method to cut the cards, ensuring fairness at the table.

"Split the deck in half."

Arthur said so.

"A very fair choice.

At the casino, I've heard more than once, 'Split the deck in half, and leave everything to destiny!'"

The opponent said as he split the deck in half.

Then, he drew a card from the bottom half.

Clubs Ace.

This was the largest card from the bottom half.

As for the Spades Ace?

It was naturally in the opponent's hands as well.

Moreover, the opponent had completed the swap.

The dizzying shuffling just now had allowed the 'Death Poetry Society' member to complete a 'card-stealing'—a basic sleight of hand trick application, and his most confident method at the moment.

If it weren't for using the "Exquisite Human Puppet", the opponent wouldn't even need that dizzying maneuver to conceal his actions to swap the cards in an instant.

Is this unfair?

He had already said that playing cards is a test of observation, reflexes, and cleverness.

And what he was doing now was being 'clever'.

Watching Arthur manipulate the "Hand of Void" to earnestly draw a card, the opponent sneered internally.

'Hmph, the purpose of rules is to be broken!

If you don't understand that...

You deserve to lose!'

Thinking this, the opponent was already preparing to ask his victory question.

Undoubtedly, what the 'Death Poetry Society' member most wanted to know was the Kledos Family's concealed secret in South Los.

However, clearly, this question would be protected by the 'contract'.

So, the opponent prepared to ask Arthur...

Do you know who your mother is?

He eagerly anticipated the astonished and infuriated expression on Arthur's face when asked.

Even if it were protected by the 'contract', he still wanted to ask.

Because he wanted to see the "Spirit Medium's" confusion.

He wanted to plant the seed of doubt in the "Spirit Medium" before him.

If there were no 'contract protection'?

All the better!

He would listen to the "Spirit Medium" before him tell his story.

And then?

Naturally, to rebut it!

He was determined to make the "Spirit Medium" before him realize the consequences of provoking him.

And just as the 'Death Poetry Society' member was relishing in his impending victory, Arthur drew his card and immediately revealed it.

Spades Ace!

Seeing this card, the 'Death Poetry Society' member was stunned.

"Impossible!

Absolutely impossible!

The Spades Ace should have been in my hand!"

The opponent cried out repeatedly, pulling out his own card.

Shortly after, the 'Death Poetry Society' member was stunned.

Because in his hand was—

the Ghost Card!

On the Ghost Card, a colorful joker had a full face of mirth.

Standing there dumbfounded, the 'Death Poetry Society' member, even just controlling an "Exquisite Human Puppet", turned pale, then flushed and pale again, resembling the joker just a bit as if he were wearing a joker's mask on his face.

Then, the 'Death Poetry Society' member glared at Arthur and roared.

"You cheated!"

But facing such a roar, Arthur remained unmoved.

Simply murmuring to himself with an indifferent expression—

"Found it!"