

Great Master 391

Chapter 391: Ten Bets Nine Cheats, One Swindler!

...

Found them?!

The angry 'Death Poetry Society' member was startled, then immediately left the Exquisite Human Puppet and returned to themselves to check their surroundings.

The whole process was completed in an instant.

And it didn't make any unusual noise.

But this time...

Arthur had truly found them!

About 20 meters below his feet, the Death Qi had just shown a slight disturbance.

Such a disturbance was imperceptible to most people.

Even members of the 'Death Poetry Society' would hardly notice it.

But for Arthur, who possessed the Talent 'Breath of Death' and had always been extremely restrained in absorbing 'Death Qi', it was all too clear, as clear as someone scratching the sole of your foot.

At once, the rats searching underground found their direction and began to dig frantically towards it.

Horton quickly noticed this.

The 'Death Poetry Society' member was both shocked and angry.

It was only at this moment that the 'Death Poetry Society' member realized they had been tricked again.

Arthur hadn't discovered them just now.

However, compared to this time, the member of the 'Death Poetry Society,' still having defensive cards up their sleeve, didn't care.

On the contrary, they were more concerned about the recent poker comparison.

How could they possibly lose?

They wouldn't lose!

With such doubts, the 'Death Poetry Society' member once again controlled the Exquisite Human Puppet—

"You truly are the opponent I respect the most.

How did you do it?"

The other party's face showed no sign of anger or panic but asked sincerely.

Without doubt, the opponent had defensive arrangements underground.

This did not surprise Arthur.

If there had been none, Arthur would have thought he was looking in the wrong direction.

After all, above his head, in the dense Death Qi that seemed like a dark cloud, there was also a 'person' floating in mid-air.

Fujin saw it and informed Arthur.

And underground, the rats had also discovered something strange.

When nearing a certain area, the rats would quickly lose their vitality.

The two places previously guessed both had arrangements, which made it difficult for Arthur to determine which was the correct spot.

So, just now, facing the opponent's loss of composure, Arthur had simply bluffed.

Of course, the effect was good.

And now?

Arthur continued to play along with the opponent.

Because Arthur needed to confirm further—

"Horton, you mentioned before that your family used to run a gambling house, right?"

"Yes!"

Horton nodded.

Arthur immediately laughed and said.

"If that's the case, didn't your elders ever tell you not to gamble with a 'Spirit Medium'?"

"Are you referring to Necromancy or Mind Reading Technique?"

How could that be possible..."

"Didn't you just try to use the history of my mother as a breakthrough point to plant a seed of doubt in me?"

And now, the anger in your heart makes you wish you could kill me!

Plus, you want to use the Exquisite Human Puppet for a fake death to completely hide your whereabouts and then make a big move to drag South Los into the Abyss!"

Arthur cut off the other party's words.

When Arthur's first sentence was spoken, the opponent's body trembled.

When the second was uttered, the opponent's eyes widened.

By the third, the opponent blurted out.

"How do you know?"

"Of course I know, I'm adept at Mind Reading and Necromancy."

Just like in the poker game earlier, in the first round, I knew through mind reading that after the cut, the first card at the bottom was the Ace of Spades.

In the second round, I knew you were concealing and changing cards.

So, I used Necromancy to change your card."

Arthur answered with a smile.

Bluff lit up again at this moment.

These were of course all lies.

That the opponent would use his mother to set a trap for him was something Arthur deduced from the opponent's behavioral patterns—given their malice towards him and their habit of instigating others, it was natural to target someone close yet unfamiliar, and based on Arthur's memory, Old Charlie rarely spoke of his parents.

So the opponent would certainly target his parents.

And compared to his father, his mother would seem 'more unfamiliar' to Arthur.

Because matters regarding his father could be inquired about from Old Charlie.

The opponent knew this.

...

Therefore, he would definitely choose his mother.

With such a conjecture, bluffing the opponent became much easier for Arthur.

As for being so angry that he wished to kill?

Who wouldn't be angry after failing?

Plus, with the original hatred, it was too normal to want to kill.

And feigning death to cause real trouble?

Arthur had long suspected this, and as things developed step by step, especially after the appearance of the Exquisite Human Puppet, he was even more certain of it.

Of course, these words would have loopholes.

Therefore, Arthur had to speak vaguely.

If it were usual, the members of the Death Poetry Society in front of him would definitely notice something amiss.

But now it was different!

They had just played a game of poker.

During the explosion in South Town, the third and fourth Hand of Void had replaced the original poker cards with those from the Magic Poker Box.

Then, when Arthur shuffled again, he rearranged the new deck of cards according to the order he had previously memorized, making them identical to the previous arrangement.

For Arthur, who could Change Cards, this was effortless.

As for memorizing the order of 54 cards?

That wasn't difficult for Arthur either.

Although he hadn't learned the Memory Technique yet, short-term memory was always one of Arthur's strong suits.

Next, he used the opponent's rules to bind them and obtained the biggest spade A.

And in the second game?

Changing Cards still helped immensely.

No matter what the opponent did, the cards in their hand would definitely end up being the Ghost Card, and his would always be the spade A.

Ten gambles nine cheats, the remaining one is a trickster.

Unless you don't gamble, once you're at the table, you are destined to lose.

Just like Horton right now, under Arthur's words, even though he was only using the Exquisite Human Puppet's body, disbelief could still be seen in his eyes.

After that, the gaze became dull and lost its luster.

Clearly, Horton had temporarily left the Exquisite Human Puppet.

Noticing this, Arthur immediately exclaimed—

"Eh, not bad!

You've actually used escaping the Exquisite Human Puppet as a way to avoid my Mind Reading Technique!"

Acting, of course, requires a full performance.

Arthur, aware of this, would not drop the ball at such a critical moment.

And Horton, observing this scene through the props on the Exquisite Human Puppet, immediately felt a chill down his back.

Arthur truly possessed the Mind Reading Technique!

'No!

That's not right!

It definitely wasn't a true Mind Reading Technique, it must be some sort of secret technique that can read strong intentions!

As for Necromancy?

It must also be some secret technique that I don't know about!'

So thought this member of the Death Poetry Society.

But immediately, the member scoffed inwardly.

'Hmph!

Even if I failed this time!

In the end, the victor will still be me!

Do you think all my preparations were just for show?

I will show you what I'm capable of!

Horton made this triumphant declaration.

Suddenly, the 'person' in the death qi cloud moved slightly.

The next moment—

An endless surge of Death Qi slammed down towards Arthur as if from nowhere.

Arthur didn't even look up, just raised his right hand and waved it lightly.

"Song of Death. A flash!"

The young Spirit Medium murmured these words.

Instantly, the sky full of Death Qi vanished.

Gone without a trace!

Without any warning!

It was as if a fireball had been eaten by an invisible Big Mouth, swallowed whole into its belly.

Horton was stunned.

No, to be precise, he was completely dumbfounded.

The scene before him was beyond the understanding of this member of the Death Poetry Society, but quickly, the member could no longer afford to think too much about it.

Because a faint voice was echoing across the ground—

"Little sparrow, take my sword strike!"

The moment the words fell, a 40-meter-long pale Sword Qi burst forth, slashing directly into the ground below.

Chapter 392: Got it!

The sword Qi was pale, its sharpness unmatched.

The breath of death filled the air, shattering the ground.

Not only was the ground beneath Arthur's feet sliced apart, but the six layers of defenses arrayed within were shattered upon contact, failing to offer any resistance whatsoever.

Even more so, the sword Qi that Arthur swung with his hand became sharper and more formidable.

Because—

All these six layers of defense were constructed of death Qi.

When Arthur unleashed the "Breath of Death," these defenses essentially ceased to exist.

All were absorbed by Arthur.

And then, surging with the "Death Qi Slash."

Hum!

A unique brilliance flashed and was gone.

Horton was dead.

But he wasn't completely dead.

From the split corpse, a semi-transparent soul floated up.

Standing over the scene, Arthur looked down.

The young 'Spirit Medium' gazed with interest through the cut he had made, surveying everything in sight—

A ritual track 10 centimeters wide, drawn on the pitch-black soil with fresh blood mixed with heart and brain tissue, formed two acute triangles, one large and one small, with opposed angles, from which a crimson track ran straight up for about 3 meters. Then it began to fork; the two tracks angled upwards, continuing for roughly 1 meter before connecting to two circles of the same size, each with a radius of about 50 centimeters.

From Arthur's perspective, within the smaller acute triangle, there was a vertebra with a head attached, quite fresh, and though the blood had been cleaned, brain matter and tissue fluid were slowly oozing. Inside the larger triangle were seven pairs of eyeballs staring back, two by two.

In the two identical circles lay...

Goat horns smeared with bone ashes!

For the experienced Arthur, the bone ashes were fairly recognizable.

And the place where Horton had stood was exactly at the point where the ritual track forked upwards.

But with the fall of the sword Qi, the bisected body and the two upward tracks formed a bizarre shape.

Arthur easily controlled the intensity of the "Death Qi Slash," leaving the ground ritual intact, which was why Horton was not completely dead—Arthur could clearly sense through his spirituality that Horton's specter had appeared using the power of the ritual on the ground.

The clearer sensation was...

His own feeling of hunger.

The "Serpent of Death. Thin. Cripple" originating from Arthur's bloodline created a sensation of 'hunger' within his body.

Like being starved and then suddenly smelling stewed meat.

Delicious!

So tantalizing it made one salivate!

It was for this reason that Arthur had not destroyed the ground ritual.

This ritual was useful to him.

And Horton's specter state?

Merely an accident.

Therefore, Arthur raised his hand, ready to eradicate the other party.

In his specter state, Horton's senses were even sharper. As a killing intent flickered in Arthur's heart, this member of the 'Death Poetry Society' immediately cried out.

"Wait a moment, Lord Kledos.

Why do you call me little sparrow?"

The other party was once again delaying the time.

Arthur laughed.

Because the ground ritual was becoming more enticing.

It seemed that the presence of Horton's specter was causing the ground ritual to operate in some unknown state.

'Grudge Rite?

Can specters complete it as well?

Or...

Was it originally prepared for specters?'

Every person has a soul, but after death, the souls of the vast majority of common people will fall into a muddled state, heading for "The Eternal Resting Land."

Only the souls that have made contact with the 'Mystic Side' have the chance to become specters, lingering in the human realm.

However, the probability of becoming a 'specter' is not high.

About one in a thousand.

For Horton to directly encounter such odds, Arthur was absolutely incredulous.

As a result, Arthur began to question the true nature of the Grudge Rite.

Still, the suspicions in his mind did not affect his words.

"Hand over the control of those two human puppets to me—I believe in fairness, so, you give me two human puppets, and I'll answer one question for you; that's fair, right?"

Before Horton had completely passed on, the two human puppets still maintained their original state.

And for Arthur, the two human puppets were the original targets.

Even with this unexpected discovery, Arthur did not forget his initial objective.

One must always remember their original intention!

In the face of the resolute Arthur, the specter of Horton caused his ethereal figure to ripple, distorting his form.

Clearly, Horton was exceedingly angry at that moment.

But this member of the Death Poetry Society still kept a smile on his face, and with an almost obsequious manner, he said—

"Of course!

That's very fair!"

As Horton spoke, he controlled the Exquisite Human Puppet to approach Arthur, reverting directly back into its puppet form.

Then, a prop fell to the ground.

It was a thin mask.

[Name: Mask of Concealment]

[Type: Other Types of Items]

[Quality: Hero]

[Attributes: 1. Disguise; 2. Shielding; 3. Dark Perception]

[Remarks: This is the masterpiece of Carmen, the most dazzling gentleman thief of the Silver Age, who, despite being balding in his middle age, had extraordinary talent and intelligence. When he made significant progress in alchemy, he refused to accept the loss of his lockpicking abilities due to his baldness. Hence, he created this mask, hoping that he could have ever-changing faces and a head of

beautiful hair. And... he succeeded halfway—his face could change into thousands of variations, but the top of his head remained bald.]

...

[Disguise: You can record 3 faces you have seen, and when you wear the Mask of Concealment, you will have those faces.]

[Shielding: This mask has the ability to block perception, granting you a +1 modifier to your Hide and Stealth skills.]

[Dark Perception: When you wear the mask at night, you will gain an extraordinary perception within a 30-meter radius. In this range, your field of vision becomes 360 degrees, and you can see through a certain degree of invisibility, Stealth, and supernatural darkness.]

(Note 1: Disguise only changes your face, not your body shape, and you will not have the power of the person you imitate.)

(Note 2: If your face is too big to be covered by the 'Mask of Concealment,' the mask will lose all effectiveness.)

...

When Arthur picked up the mask with the Hand of Void, he was quite surprised.

Surprised to encounter a prop made by that 'old friend' of a gentleman thief and even more surprised by Horton's cunning.

The Exquisite Human Puppet, after choosing a target to imitate, although it can revert back to its puppet form, cannot change the predetermined human appearance.

With the additional Mask of Concealment, the operational space increased significantly.

Arthur could even imagine that the character imitated by Horton's Exquisite Human Puppet must be the most, most inconspicuous one.

Only in that way could the Exquisite Human Puppet perform more tasks.

Thinking to himself, Arthur picked up the Exquisite Human Puppet that the Hand of Void handed to him, identical to the one he had obtained earlier.

This brought immense joy to Arthur's heart.

With an extra Exquisite Human Puppet, there was much more he could accomplish.

And there was also another very special puppet.

Just thinking about the performance of that 'Entrant' puppet, Arthur was filled with anticipation.

However, to safely obtain this puppet and to successfully make its entrance later on would require some arrangements.

After all, that puppet was engaged in a confrontation with Marinda.

His partner was not easy to deceive.

With this in mind, Arthur looked at Horton with a smile.

Horton immediately shuddered all over.

Chapter 393: General Puppet!

Whoosh!

A gentle breeze blew by.

Marinda pressed down on her deerstalker cap and leapt to the side. In a flicker, she appeared a hundred meters away.

The next moment—

Boom!

The invisible breeze turned into a gray tornado.

Moreover, this gray tornado swept out like a massive stick.

Amidst the explosive roar, the spot where Marinda had been standing was now in complete disarray.

A middle-aged man dressed in a black military uniform with an icy demeanor stepped out from the shadows.

From a distance, Marinda narrowed her eyes at him.

In their recent exchange, because her "smoke" was countered, she could only rely on props and a few "undead" to deal with him, but it was clear that most props were useless against an "entrant" like him. She had set up two traps, and both had been triggered.

But they hadn't scratched the man in the slightest.

Not even his clothes were damaged.

And her?

She had become desperate under his relentless approach.

This kind of "frustrating" fight made Marinda very uncomfortable.

Boom!

Another flicker, and the eyes that Marinda was narrowing now shone with the dangerous glint of a big cat stalking its prey.

She was ready to play her last card.

There might be some troubles afterward.

But...

If she couldn't even get through this challenge right before her eyes, what use would it be if she died here? What about the future?

With this thought, Marinda put the pipe back in her mouth.

Whoosh!

The thick smoke was mixed with the fresh scent of mint.

That was something that bastard Arthur said smelled good, so she had personally concocted it.

And what happened?

That bastard had thrown her off and run away.

'What a shitty brother!'

Marinda cursed internally.

This lady was well aware that Arthur's departure had its reasons, even that he might have discovered some critical point she had missed, but that didn't stop this lady from complaining.

Women are always like this.

When they think someone else is at fault, even if it turns out they were wrong, it's still the other person's fault—because, in her mind, it's the other person's failure to inform her in advance that led her to make a mistake and suffer avoidable losses. Therefore, it's the other person's fault, a big, serious fault.

Unreasonable?

Heh, those who dare to reason with women are truly brave.

The more she thought about it, the more irate Marinda became, but she didn't immediately act.

She planned to lure that man on the opposite side to an even more secluded place.

And then?

Completely take him apart!

As the lady thought this, she did exactly that.

However, suddenly her adversary stopped in his tracks.

'Have I been discovered?!'

Marinda was a bit surprised.

She believed her expression and demeanor hadn't given anything away.

The man shouldn't have noticed.

'Some sort of special perception?'

Marinda began to speculate, but she immediately dismissed the thought.

Because, within the lady's sight, the middle-aged military man looked shocked, with disbelief in his eyes—

"Failed?

It actually failed?!

This..."

The middle-aged man's brow was furrowed, his words incomplete.

Then, not only did the specter of the storm behind him vanish abruptly, but his face was also filled with helplessness.

"You got lucky this time!"

Leaving those words behind, the middle-aged man turned and walked away.

Marinda, with narrowed eyes, seemed intrigued.

The lady was interested.

His failure was naturally her success.

And she didn't mind expanding on that success.

But just at that moment, she heard Arthur's voice nearby—

"Lord Bern's three sons have conspired with pirates."

Marinda immediately turned around.

Although it was not the first time she had seen Arthur's crows, when the lady saw Fujin, surprise still flickered through her eyes—a secret technique creature was rare, let alone one that could connect with human consciousness, and this Arthur guy had two at once!

'Indeed, the talents of these two crows are sufficiently impressive!

And there's...

The special props accumulated from 'Cat Faction. Hei.'

Marinda thought to herself, but she felt not the slightest bit of regret.

For this lady, what was given out was done so, never to be second-guessed, even if it was something she had selectively chosen from thousands.

But at the moment of giving, this selective process only represented her intent.

Besides, compared to the two crows, she was more keen on discussing the three sons of Lord Bern's family.

"55?"

Marinda proposed a profit-sharing ratio.

She had long been interested in Lord Bern's manor, and she had already been scheming.

Nonetheless, Marinda certainly wouldn't mind if she could obtain it easily.

"That's fine.

However, I need you to help me select two more crows with sufficient talent."

After Arthur finished speaking, he let Fujin spread its wings and fly away.

Watching Arthur disappear into the night sky, Marinda immediately frowned.

Something was off!

According to her usual practice, this lady had been prepared to negotiate several times with Arthur and had set her psychological expectations at a 46 and 37 profit split.

Arthur's straightforward agreement always made the lady feel like Arthur was setting a trap for her.

Or to say...

'Could this guy be so severely injured that he needs immediate treatment and hence doesn't have the time to haggle with me?'

Marinda thought as she kept walking.

Arthur's abnormality indicated that the situation was grim, but his silence meant that everything was still under control.

And what she needed to do was to nab the three sons of Lord Bern's family.

Catch them red-handed!

Only by doing so could she negotiate with the lord.

Whew!

After exhaling a large smoke ring, Marinda disappeared into it.

Meanwhile, a brand-new Human Puppet appeared in Arthur's hands—

[Name: General Puppet]

[Type: Other Item]

[Quality: Legend]

[Attributes: 1. Body of the Human Puppet; 2. Mimicry; 3. Storm; 4. Recharge]

[Remarks: With the legacy left by her companions, Robin studied the knowledge she could learn, including forbidden arts. These teachings allowed Robin, after choosing the path of 'Human Puppet', to ascend rapidly. When she first successfully 'Ascended', Robin, with Blessed Focus, made eight General Puppets—unlike the usual Human Puppets she made, these eight General Puppets were the upper echelon of the Human Puppet forces, and also Robin's trusted aides.]

...

[Body of the Human Puppet: With a special plant and two unique minerals for the body, infused with a very special type of blood, and branded with secret techniques, this Human Puppet not only understands complex commands, possesses a Physique comparable to an 'Entrant', but also masters various knowledge of cold weapons, Horsemanship, and has a high military quality, capable of training soldiers and strategizing, and can easily learn and master three Secret Techniques.]

[Mimicry: You can allow the Human Puppet to imitate anyone, but you must have seen the person's face and heard their voice.]

[Storm: Ascended with 'Storm' as the Entry, possessing corresponding capabilities.]

[Recharge: The General Puppet's combat will consume a lot of energy, and after each battle effort, it needs Gold for recharging, or to bathe in Moonlight; starting a battle without being able to recharge will enter a burdened state, hastening damage.]

(Note 1: Once a mimicry target is chosen, the determined character form cannot be changed, but you can still switch back to the Form of the Human Puppet.)

(Note 2: Damaged Human Puppets can be repaired using Gold or by bathing in Moonlight.)

(Note 3: If the Human Puppet body is damaged beyond 90%, it's considered a fatal injury, it will shatter and cannot be repaired.)

(Note 4: You can borrow the sight and hearing of the Human Puppet or directly control it, but you cannot bestow abilities onto the Human Puppet.)

(Note 5: The Human Puppet unconditionally obeys your commands.)

(Note 6: Mastered Secret Techniques: None.)

(Note 7: A complete recharge requires 6,000 Gold Coins, or continuous bathing in Moonlight for 60 days.)

(Note 8: Under normal conditions, the General Puppet can replenish energy through Food, Sleep, and Moonlight baths.)

...

Looking at the attributes of the [General Puppet], Arthur's lips curved upwards.

Arthur had previously guessed the power of the [General Puppet], but he still couldn't suppress his joy after seeing it.

This was the subordinate of an 'Entrant'!

As for the cost?

Arthur, who was now very wealthy and would be even richer in the future, didn't care at all.

Worst case, he could just establish a 'Human Puppet Fund.'

To prepare for the recharging and repairs of the three Human Puppets in his hands.

Moreover, compared to the [General Puppet] he now had, what Arthur cared about was something else.

The 'secretiveness' of the [General Puppet]!

Who knew of the existence of the [General Puppet]?

Or to put it simply, how did Horton come to possess this [General Puppet]?

As Arthur thought this, he played with the [General Puppet] in his hands and looked towards Horton, who was in a Specter state, and said softly—

"The 'Death Poetry Society' treats you quite well."

Chapter 394 Listen to me, thank you!

Horton's smile became even more servile.

"The investment from the 'Death Poetry Society' in me was only in the early stage, the acquisition of the [Exquisite Human Puppet] and [General Puppet] was completely unexpected."

Of course, Horton understood what Arthur was asking.

Because that's what he had done before.

Using the [Exquisite Human Puppet] as bait to attract some fellows, then reaping them with the [General Puppet].

Or directly using the [General Puppet] as the trump card.

"Unexpected?"

Arthur showed interest.

"Do you know the 'Puppeteer' Darmato?"

Horton asked.

Immediately, an image of that 'Bare Butt Teleport' flashed through Arthur's mind.

For this half-colleague, Arthur's memory was still fresh.

If it hadn't been for that master and his disciple, his early plans wouldn't have gone so smoothly.

"I know him, a very interesting person."

Arthur gave an evaluation that surprised Horton.

'Puppeteer' Darmato was really all about swindling and stealing, and his reputation in Seberlin was rotten to the core, which is why he had to come to South Los.

Moreover, he had crossed paths with the 'Spirit Medium' before.

'Is it because he was bluffed by the other party that he finds him interesting?

Or is he being sarcastic?' Horton thought to himself, while keeping the conversation going.

"The [Exquisite Human Puppet] and [General Puppet] were found from a 'Treasure Map' sold by the 'King of Puppets' Robin—he charged me 11 Gold Coins at that time."

Arthur was taken aback.

The young 'Spirit Medium' truly hadn't expected this kind of accident.

Clearly, the so-called 'Puppeteer' who peddled the Treasure Map of the 'King of Puppets' Robin hadn't expected the map he held to be genuine.

And there must have been many copies of these treasure maps.

Just like those fortune crystals from No. 2 Cork Street.

But who knew that among a pile of fakes, a real one would actually be mixed in.

The luck of 'Puppeteer' Darmato was truly terrible.

And Horton here was really quite lucky!

At least, before he met him, his luck was quite good.

And after meeting him?

It seemed his luck had run out.

'All used to hiding in the shadows, using [Exquisite Human Puppet] as a vest and leaning towards 'Death'... What's with this clumsy sense of copying?

No, no, no!

We still have some differences: I don't sow discord among others.

As a young, upright, simple, and kind 'Spirit Medium,' I adhere to my true heart.

And him?

Tsk, it really is no good to sow discord among others!

Arthur felt an inexplicable sense of superiority in his heart.

Then, he followed through with his earlier promise—

"I called you a little sparrow, of course, because you chirp and chatter back and forth, just like that little sparrow, making it... noisy."

As he spoke, Arthur raised his hand, ready to send Horton on his way.

The promise was fulfilled.

Of course, he had to continue with the killing.

He never said he would let him go.

And moreover, that was his original intention.

Sticking to one's true heart is the 'Spirit Medium's' greatest asset.

More importantly, his tolerance for 'hunger' was about to reach its limit.

"Wait, Lord Kledos, hear me out—we've seen each other when we were kids; my house is in the back half of Dar Alley, I've passed by your house more than once!

It was destiny that we did not meet then.

But destiny has brought us together again at this moment."

Feeling Arthur's killing intent, the 'Death Poetry Society' member in front of him immediately cried out in panic.

"Oh, so that's how it is."

A look of realization appeared on Arthur's face.

Then, the young 'Spirit Medium' said—

"Back then my grandfather concealed my 'Destiny,' causing any Peeping Toms to come up with some wonderful misunderstandings, and that 'Right Pastor' from the 'Death Poetry Society' must have been one of them.

He found you."

"He thinks you're 'Death's Child'."

"But he never considered that you're just a poor imitator."

"Haven't you noticed how our experiences resemble each other at certain stages?"

"Haven't you noticed how obsessed you are with defeating me?"

"That's the innate instinct deep within the soul of an imitator, you yearn to surpass the original!"

A look of astonishment spread across Horton's face.

This member of the 'Death Poetry Society' stared blankly at Arthur, his mind incessantly chanting, 'Impossible! Absolutely impossible! All of this is fake!'

Yet, reason told him that it could very well be true.

Arthur had no reason to lie to him!

Plus, what Arthur said was the truth!

Not only were his and Arthur's experiences similar at one point, but since meeting Arthur, he truly became obsessed with victory and defeat. After losing the first time, that desire to win grew uncontrollably.

"Could it really be like this?"

Horton murmured to himself, his specter's body beginning to tremble rapidly.

No longer twisted, but diffusing.

'He believes it! He believes it! Hahaha!'

Arthur laughed internally.

He obviously had no reason to deceive Horton in the current situation.

However, he had plenty of reasons to deceive the 'Death Poetry Society.'

After all, the identity of 'Death's Child' was quite useful.

Especially since he was about to be recognized as the 'South Los Swordsmanship Competition' champion and was planning to attend the upcoming 'Pioneer Celebration Day' in Inner Bay.

Without some 'tiger skin' to flaunt, just the Countess of South Los's restraint wouldn't give Arthur the confidence to go to Inner Bay.

Another point was to continue elevating the status of the Kledos Family.

My grandfather could conceal destiny!

Even if it's just a sliver, it's enough to make people speculate and dread.

Before he truly rose in prominence, this was necessary.

'My dear grandfather, you must hold on! Don't show any weakness!'

Arthur thought inside, while continuing to speak out loud.

"When my destiny was concealed, my grandfather told me that in that instant, fifty-seven thousand six hundred twenty-two possibilities emerged, and fifty-seven thousand six hundred twenty of them led to death."

Only two were paths to life.

One was exceedingly difficult.

Yet the other was quite easy.

Originally, I planned to choose the easy path, but who knew...

I met Marinda!"

As he said this, Arthur's face showed helplessness.

Portraying Marinda as his own 'weakness' and using her to attract fire was something Arthur had wanted to do for a while but never found the opportunity.

Now?

The timing was just right.

After all, there were no 'people' around.

But sometimes, peeping doesn't require people.

Not even in the present moment.

The Right Pastor of the 'Death Poetry Society' possessed a prophet-like ability to foretell.

Didn't the legacy of the Old Lion of Nether Bay or the Countess of South Los have some special retrospection secret techniques or props?

Arthur believed they did.

With such commotion here, even if they restrained themselves now, how could they not take action later?

Thus, he performed with great conviction.

Even when mentioning the name 'Marinda,' his eyes softened, and he couldn't help but turn up the corners of his mouth with tenderness.

Of course, the next moment, all that vanished.

Arthur returned to his usual indifference.

Lifting his hand, a pale blue 'Deathly Fire' spread over Horton's body.

With a scream, this member of the 'Death Poetry Society' completely vanished from this world.

The next moment, another surge of dense death qi erupted from the ritual.

But unlike the death qi earlier that thickened into dark clouds,

This death qi was not only dense but also pure.

The hunger in Arthur's bloodline instantly escalated several levels, but he didn't immediately embrace this death qi. Instead, his expression grew solemn and respectful, and he whispered to himself—

"For Marinda, it's all worth it."

Having said that, he leapt down.

Chapter 395 Hidden in the Fog!

The moment before dawn, when the night is at its deepest, is also when people are most weary.

Even the most diligent and responsible members of the Night Patrol can't help but yawn continuously at this time.

But the three sons of Lord Bern, their bodies wrapped in bandages, were wide-eyed, warily watching each other as they emerged from the cabin—the bloodshot in their eyes spoke of sleepless nights, while their expressions were filled with a strange kind of excitement.

They were about to do something big!

They were going to attack Xisis Port!

Attacking and plundering weren't the goal, merely incidental; what they truly wanted was to become 'heroes'!

Indeed, they had colluded with pirates.

But the reason they colluded with pirates was to capture all those pirates in one fell swoop!

They were bearing humiliation and biding their time.

They were commendable.

If they succeeded in this endeavor, all three could earn the titles of 'Knight'.

As for who would inherit their father's noble title?

That would be decided later.

They were resolute in ensuring that it wouldn't come down to the three of them dueling it out only for a commoner to take advantage of the situation.

The thought of this afternoon's competition almost instinctively made the brothers reach for the wounds on their bodies.

The eldest son of the Bern family had a 20-centimeter long wound on his left arm, inflicted by the second son; had he not dodged in time, he would have lost the arm.

Similarly, the second son had been stabbed in the abdomen, the blade nearly piercing through his body.

And what of the youngest, the most cherished by their father?

Not only had his right forearm nearly been chopped off by the eldest, but he also received a slash across the chest from the second, nearly spilling his guts.

The clash between the three sons of the Bern family was the highlight of the afternoon's event in Section E.

It was so real!

Like a true battlefield, ruthless and unrelenting!

Everyone who watched the afternoon's competition could attest that if it weren't for the Countess acting as a referee, at least two of the Bern sons would have died—because the victor was sure to deliver a death blow.

However, what people relished discussing most was the winner of Section E, the swordsman who advanced to the quarterfinals, also called Bern.

It appeared he was an instructor from the Joel Jock Swordsmanship Club.

People marveled at the wonders of destiny.

Meanwhile, the three sons of Lord Bern were bitter about destiny's injustice—

'Why didn't father designate me as the heir when I am so outstanding?' each of them thought simultaneously.

The trio began to act.

This ship belonged to the Bern Family, a merchant vessel equipped with cannons for 'defense'.

What they planned to do was attack the surrounding ships and Docklands with the cannons to create chaos, and then, proceed to kill the 'colluding' captain, First Mate, and sailors—these individuals, including the sailors, had already been drugged by them into a stupor.

They had to fight bloody battles in order to eliminate the traitors harboring ill intentions toward them.

Then, they would immediately inform everyone around them of everything.

And the end result?

Naturally, the 'Knight' title as a reward!

Commoners might not receive such an accolade, but as the offspring of nobility, they surely could.

With the prospect of the 'Knight' title almost within grasp, despite their injuries, the three brothers sprang into action immediately.

The eldest and the second sons of the Bern family pushed two cannons to the gun ports at the ship's side, while the youngest and most favored—who was also the most severely injured—loaded the gunpowder and cannonballs.

The three sons of the Bern family couldn't help but aim the cannons at the fleet under the command of the 'Lady of the Eternal Night'.

Because the notoriety of this lady was significant enough to showcase their Meritorious Service.

"Fire!"

The youngest of the Bern family aimed at the fleet moored at the dock and gave a low command.

Then...

Silence.

'Useless fools!

Can't even handle this simple task!' the youngest Bern cursed inwardly, then turned around to take matters into his own hands.

But upon turning, the youngest Bern was stunned.

Dressed in khaki hunting attire, wearing a Deerstalker Cap, and puffing on a pipe, Marinda had appeared behind him without notice, and the eldest and second Bern were lying on the deck, their fates unknown.

"Miss Caesar, I..."

Not interested in listening to his excuses, Marinda raised her hand and knocked him unconscious.

Although the lady had wished to kill the three scoundrels instantly after seeing them aim the cannons at her fleet, she had to restrain herself for the sake of maximizing gains.

This time, it wasn't just Bern Manor that belonged to her.

The Bern Family's ship fleet was hers as well.

Of course, not all of it.

According to the arrangement, she still had to share half with her partner, that bastard "Spirit Medium"...

Achoo! Achoo!

As she thought about it, Marinda suddenly felt an itch in her nose.

Then, uncontrollably, the lady sneezed twice.

'What's the matter?

Who is cursing me?'

Marinda's eyebrows furrowed.

Catch a cold?

Impossible, with her strength, there was no such thing as a cold.

Almost instinctively, Marinda thought of Arthur.

'Is that bastard cursing me?

That shouldn't be, even if there was cursing to be done, it should be me doing it.

To think he left me to face an "Entrant" who can restrain "Smoke" all by myself...

Wait a minute!

No way!

Did this guy really find out?!

As the lady thought more about it, she remembered the bastard's recent odd behavior.

Suddenly, surprise appeared in the lady's eyes.

You see, she had been careful enough.

To better hide, she had been preparing for nearly half a year, and even the people closest to her, the coachman Edwin and the cook Mary, had no idea.

How could Arthur, that bastard, possibly know?

Even if that guy really practiced Necromancy, it wouldn't be possible!

After all, having met Arthur, she had made sure to clean that place just in case; the Specters and Undead had long vanished, only occasionally there would be some rats.

Does this guy also have Prophecy or Retrospection abilities?

Impossible, right?

Marinda subconsciously denied this guess deep down.

But oddly enough, the lady felt that it wouldn't be surprising if Arthur had such abilities.

Anyway, it's complicated.

And while the lady's emotions were getting complicated, the "Storm Sword" Deljo quietly led his team into the Docklands.

The "Storm Sword" needed to confirm the exact location of the relic before the Swordsmanship Competition ended.

With a ring in hand, the "Storm Sword" moved cautiously with his people.

This ring was the key to entering that relic!

And he had obtained this ring due to an accidental relic expedition—a warlock's laboratory that was burnt down by Witch Hunters during the Seven Years' War.

Originally, he thought he had gained nothing from that expedition.

It's well known that where Witch Hunters have been, the sky is one meter higher.

But who would have thought, he actually discovered a secret chamber that had never been opened.

Inside, there wasn't much, just a diary and this ring.

The diary recorded the warlock's research: the Tower of Mist.

To this, the "Storm Sword" was not surprised.

Most warlocks had a fascination with the "Tower of Mist".

But what surprised the "Storm Sword" was the direction of the research.

The other party was actually researching where the remnants of the "Tower of Mist" were, and although they never figured out to whom the remnants of the "Tower of Mist" actually belonged, it was enough.

The general area had appeared.

He also had the key.

As long as he could get into South Los, no one could stop him.

With this belief, the "Storm Sword" Deljo clutched the ring and continued forward.

When the ring began to tremble, a look of surprise appeared on Deljo's face, but immediately, the "Storm Sword" frowned.

Because—

Someone had beaten him to it!

Chapter 396 Arrowsmith!

Deljo's heart tightened.

However, the 'Storm Sword' did not act impulsively. He gestured backward with his hand, and a team of people simply concealed themselves at that spot near the beach, closely observing.

When they realized that the people there were only guards and occasionally carrying out rubble, the 'Storm Sword' immediately breathed a sigh of relief.

Clearly, the relic he was looking for had most likely been discovered by someone else.

But the good news was that whoever discovered the relic had only just begun excavating.

It wasn't over yet!

With that thought, the 'Storm Sword' signaled for his team to retreat.

After the group completely withdrew from the beach, the 'Storm Sword' looked toward his team members behind him.

Although Deljo was the leader of this adventure team, he was well aware that to complete an adventure, just having him as the leader was useless— the entire team, including him, comprised 13 people, each with their respective duties, such as archaeology, riddle solving, decoding, machinery, cooking, etc., all of which he was not skilled at.

The only reason he could be the leader was that he was the strongest and loved adventuring.

"It seems there are no people near that beach, but there are at least 6 secret sentries.

Moreover, what's more important is that this is in South Los."

The team's archaeologist and the brains of the group, 'Adi,' spoke up first.

Having secret sentries near an excavation site is normal.

But arranging so many secret sentries near a relic site within South Los is not normal.

You see, having secret sentries is not a case of the more, the better.

There has to be a balance.

Especially in a bustling city like South Los, where more people mean a higher risk of exposure, unless...

That beach has been privatized!

And privatizing a beach within South Los... is not easy!

That represents power, reputation.

Their plan was to grab and go.

But now it's clearly not feasible.

As for conflict with the local powers of South Los?

Unless absolutely necessary, they were unwilling to do so.

They were well aware of the reputation of the 'Mother Tigress'.

"Does the 'Mother Tigress' know about this relic?

Or is it that the relic is being excavated by the 'Mother Tigress'?"

The team's cook and assistant striker, 'Pruitt,' leaned on his mace and scratched his head as he asked.

Compared to the archaeologist Adi, Pruitt was younger and more robust, but both had the same hairstyle— baldness.

Only, Adi's baldness was natural.

Pruitt had shaved his own head for convenience in cooking.

"If it is really the Earl who is excavating, then we might as well leave."

The team's Riddle Solver, 'Edwina,' rolled her eyes.

She was a lady with a slender build, wearing throwing knives and a dagger at her waist, and holding a rapier in her hand. Her dark red hair was still dazzling just before dawn and had to be covered with a headscarf.

"How about we just leave now?"

I don't know why, but ever since we entered South Los, I've felt very anxious!"

Little Winna immediately chimed in.

As the team's decryption expert and Mechanism Cleaner, Little Winna was Edwina's sister. Unlike her tall sister, this lady was much shorter. She didn't carry many weapons, but her red hair was equally dazzling.

Similarly, Little Winna had the most assistants in the team.

Her role in the team had already determined this.

Besides Little Winna, the one with the most assistants was Pruitt.

This cook had two sous chefs.

These two sous chefs were also responsible for the team's firepower support.

Little Winna looked toward Captain Deljo.

And the 'Storm Sword' looked to Vice-Captain Adi.

Of course, the 'Storm Sword' did not want to just leave like this.

But, if the team members wanted to leave, he would not oppose it.

As Deljo's gaze shifted, the rest of the team also turned their eyes toward Adi— being the oldest and the most experienced member of the team, most of the time, it was Adi who made the decisions.

"This place is definitely not being excavated by the Earl of South Los.

"If that were the case, trust me, we would have definitely been discovered just now."

"The South Los House is much more formidable than the world imagines."

"So, it must be someone else."

"But this person must be quite tricky as well—we need to gather as much information as possible after daybreak, and..."

"Find allies!"

"A reliable and powerful ally!"

As Adi spoke, the image of a figure involuntarily appeared in everyone's mind.

"If that person were to be our ally, I agree!"

Pruitt was the first to agree.

Following him, Edwina and Little Winna also nodded their heads.

"Alright then, let's do that!"

'Storm Sword' Deljo clapped his hands and made the final decision.

Immediately, the team started to head back to their residence.

But just as the team had walked less than 200 meters—

Crack! Crack!

A very distinctive sound, like that of fabric being torn, came from the direction of the sea.

The face of 'Storm Sword' changed.

"The South Los Sea's defense force field has disappeared!

Hurry!"

'Storm Sword' urged his teammates to speed up.

The defense force field of the South Los Sea was set up against pirates.

Usually concealed, it would appear at critical moments.

But it would never just disappear.

If it disappeared, it could only have been broken!

And to be broken so silently...

There must be problems within South Los!

Just thinking about it made 'Storm Sword's' scalp tingle.

He didn't know who had broken the South Los Sea's defense force field from the inside, but he knew that if they were found in the Docklands at this time, they would definitely become suspects.

Or rather, they would be made scapegoats.

'Storm Sword' was all too familiar with the ways of the nobility.

Not just 'Storm Sword', everyone in the team understood this as well.

Therefore, the entire team began to sprint as secretly and quickly as possible.

In a nearby building under the eaves, a crow stood in the shadows watching this scene.

Almost immediately, the crow's gaze shifted towards the direction of the lighthouse—

A tall woman, at least 2 meters in height, appeared there carrying a bow as tall as herself on her back.

Through Wuni's eyes, Arthur could clearly see the blue and red patterns drawn on the lady's dark skin.

It was a kind of decoration among the islanders near South Los.

However, unlike those ordinary islanders, this lady's decorations possessed power.

As the blue and red patterns flickered, she took the large bow off her back.

Then, she drew the bow.

She drew it halfway and then released the bowstring.

Whizz!

In the unique whizzing sound of the drawn bow, the bow didn't change at all, and an arrow formed entirely of condensed air shot towards a point in the Docklands.

Boom!

The man who was hit by the arrow while hidden in the darkness had his upper body instantly blown to pieces.

The others who saw this scene turned and ran.

The archer calmly continued to 'shoot' arrows.

But her gaze never fell on those people; instead, she looked towards where the crow was perched.

Suddenly, Arthur felt a chill in his heart.

Chapter 397: The Hidden Puppy Watches Everything!

When the gaze of the unknown archer turned towards this spot, Arthur promptly maneuvered Wuni to flip over and hide in the recess formed by the eaves and the wall.

This recess formed by the eaves and the wall was just right for Wuni to hide in.

Although Arthur had absolute confidence in Wuni's ability to conceal herself at night,

who could guarantee that nothing unexpected would happen?

Arthur always made it a habit to prepare for the worst.

And now, this caution had saved Wuni from disaster.

The archer's gaze shimmered with confusion.

She confirmed that just now someone's gaze was peeping at her.

Yet, there was nothing in her field of view.

Definitely not stealth or invisibility.

Under the enhancement of the "Eagle Talon Pattern" and "Dark Tenon Pattern," even the stealth and invisibility of an "Entrant" couldn't escape her eyes.

But soon, the archer became excited.

'Just like Madam Susan said, a "big fish" has come!'

The excitement in her heart didn't stop the archer's actions.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

One air arrow after another not only pierced through those who were destroying the sea's defensive barriers, but the archer's gaze also rapidly scanned the surroundings.

Then—

"Found you!"

the archer shouted excitedly.

Following that, she pulled her longbow into a full draw.

Hum!

The invisible air arrow turned into a gray arrow, and as the archer released her fingers, the gray arrow vanished instantly.

When the arrow reappeared, it was already caught between two fingers by a man cloaked in a hooded cape—his face was covered by the hood, but the exposed chin had a brown beard.

"Such archery and perception...

Are you Lady Valerie, the Countess of South Los's Head Hunter?"

The hooded man asked politely.

"Yes, that's me. And who are you?"

The archer admitted her identity and then asked.

The hooded man immediately laughed.

"You really are feigning ignorance.

However, I am willing to give you some hints—"

"In exchange, I hope you can persuade Lord Count to spare Horton.

After all, he's still just a child."

As he spoke, the hooded man applied a gentle force, and "Death" wrapped around the gray arrow, which instantly brought about the arrow's demise.

Crack!

The arrow shattered.

The remaining wind, vanished without a trace.

"Death wraps?!"

You are 'Death Poetry Society's Left Cantor Pottermann!"

The Countess's Head Hunter narrowed her eyes; her face's excited smile grew even more fervid as she raised her hand, and a dagger hovered next to the archer out of nowhere.

The dagger was all black, carved from stone, adorned with intricate patterns.

Those patterns, upon contacting the air and the lighthouse's light, seemed to come alive in an instant.

As the patterns on the dagger twisted and writhed, the Left Cantor of the "Death Poetry Society" sighed helplessly and disappeared on the spot, appearing far away on the sea surface and continuing to run towards the direction away from the Docklands, with a dozen pirate ships faintly visible in front of him.

Yet, the next moment, the ever-bright lighthouse plunged into darkness.

However, immediately after, something much brighter appeared.

The dagger!

The dagger lit up with a brightness many times that of the lighthouse and emitted beams as thick as arms, chasing down the 'Death Poetry Society's Left Cantor over the sea and striking the pirate ships concealed in the ocean.

Boom!

One pirate ship after another exploded.

Hundreds of pirates were shattered to pieces by the explosion.

And the remaining pirates, they were not far from death either.

Indeed, they met even more gruesome deaths!

In the scorching brightness, the remaining pirates burned like torches, completely illuminating the sea.

Only Bloody John, who had hidden the farthest and had fled as soon as he sensed danger, was spared.

"The Sun Arrow!

It really is the Sun Arrow!"

This veteran pirate muttered under his breath and then shouted to the people around him.

"Run! Run!

This is definitely a trap!

Back to Coconut Island!"

Without another moment's hesitation or observation, the old pirate turned the ship's head and fled.

'The Sun Arrow', one of Hercules's twenty-seven props.

Moreover, rumored to be among the top ten.

Though he did not know why it was in South Los, with the 'Sun Arrow' there, the old pirate knew he had no chance.

Even as an 'Entrant', it would not do.

Unless he could find two other warriors of the same caliber, facing the incessant 'Sun Arrows', he could only be worn down to death on the sea.

Bloody John ran.

The Left Cantor of the Death Poetry Society made a round over the sea and then returned beneath the lighthouse—only their voice, not their person.

"This too is my sincerity. I hope your excellency can persuade Lord Count."

"Hah, you draw in the enemy and then eliminate them, and you call this sincerity?"

The Head Hunter of the Countess scoffed, clearly unimpressed.

And the 'Sun Arrow' grew even brighter.

But it did not continue to emit light.

Because the Left Cantor of the Death Poetry Society was not even nearby.

"Escaped?"

Really as slippery as an eel!"

After confirming, the Countess's Head Hunter put away the prop borrowed from the Countess.

The lighthouse's light brightened again, and the Countess's guards appeared at the Docklands.

"My lord, the entire Old Lion team that infiltrated into South Los has been annihilated,"

a guard reported.

Everyone's faces wore an exhilarated expression, but internally they heaved a sigh of relief.

After all, having learned of the news 'from the elite Hidden Guard team under Old Lion from Inner Bay infiltrating South Los', their hearts had been hanging in suspense.

Everyone had been operating at full capacity in search of this team.

But all to no avail.

Fortunately, Madam Susan was there.

With a slight arrangement, she had wiped them all out.

"Hmm, continue to track any possible spies!"

The Countess's Head Hunter instructed before heading towards the direction she felt being watched from.

Potterman had likely been around here before.

This Head Hunter hoped to discover more traces here.

Or rather...

Could Potterman have used people's blind spots in thinking and hidden here again?

With that thought, the Head Hunter began a thorough search.

Unfortunately, after two rounds of inspection, the Head Hunter found no trace of that Left Cantor of the Death Poetry Society.

"Next time, I'll definitely catch you!"

the Head Hunter declared and turned to leave.

However, about twenty seconds later, the Head Hunter returned.

The Head Hunter quickly inspected the area again, confirming no one was there before she truly left.

This time, the Head Hunter didn't come back again.

She had really left for good.

After all, though the battle had gone well, the sea's defense force field had been breached.

The Head Hunter needed to quickly inform Madam Susan to arrange for its prompt repair.

And just minutes after the Head Hunter had left, a cream-colored Labrador Retriever emerged from a nearby courtyard, tongues out, and disappeared into the night before dawn.

Chapter 398: Bloodline!

After Arthur had Wuni quietly return to No. 2 Cork Street, he was not at all anxious.

The young 'Spirit Medium,' accustomed to holding back, had planted another 'Scout' in the Docklands.

His "Death Hound" Kuliqi.

Intelligent, loyal, and uniquely skilled, Kuliqi was bound to bring back everything he wanted to know.

Therefore, Arthur, standing at the bottom of the pit, focused on surveying his surroundings—

It was different from what Arthur had previously thought.

The bottom of the pit was not solely carved out by Horton as a hidden place; it also bore the distinct marks of the miners from South Town.

Besides the unique wooden supports used during mining and oil lamp hooks installed every 3 meters that confirmed Arthur's conjecture, there were... the bodies of miners.

'Lisop used the original mine as a starting point, digging around South Town, exploring the mining content he owned, and this place was an abandoned exploration mine...

No!

At least, his lordship made good use of it!

Arthur's gaze swept over those bodies.

Each body had bones broken and tendons snapped by heavy impacts.

Clearly, these were victims of the mining disaster.

South Town, wealthy in minerals, attracted a large influx of outsiders, even those bankrupted from South Los chose it as a place to settle.

Such people were generally disregarded by others regarding their ultimate fate.

As for those who cared?

After compensating them with some money, they too ignored it.

It's not that life can be measured in money.

Rather, the living are always swayed by money.

Of course, there are exceptions.

Arthur looked at some bodies clearly not dressed in miner's garb, silently without uttering a word.

Arthur reassessed the side of the 'Grudge Rite' ritual tracks.

Horton hadn't chosen this location for no reason.

The other party was leveraging the grudge of those wrongfully dead to initiate the 'Grudge Rite', then using that resentment to attract more Death Qi to complete the entire ritual.

The young 'Spirit Medium' clasped his hands and whispered—

"May there be rest."

His voice was soft and sincere.

This was not "Bluff", but a genuine wish.

Because what followed...

'Devour'.

As the beneficiary, Arthur believed he should maintain some attitude, instead of overlooking.

Of course, besides attitude, it was better to do a bit more.

Thinking thus, Arthur released the suppressed "Breath of Death".

Suddenly, like a whale drinking water!

Dense and pure Death Qi surged into Arthur's body, this time beyond the usual stored amount of Death Qi, those purest essences merged into Arthur's circulating blood, heading towards the heart, and then spread throughout his body with each heartbeat. In this cycle, a phantom giant snake appeared before his eyes.

The giant snake moved as Arthur willed.

When Arthur was happy, the giant snake swung its head and tail.

When Arthur was angry, the giant snake hissed continuously.

When Arthur was sad, the giant snake coiled up solemnly.

Every action of Arthur affected this giant snake.

Because—

This giant snake was originally Arthur himself.

In a moment of realization, Arthur confirmed this conjecture.

And just as Arthur confirmed this conjecture, the phantom giant snake began absorbing that purest Power of Death, its body becoming real, and expanding again.

Five hundred meters!

One thousand meters!

One thousand five hundred meters!

When the Serpentine Body grew to three thousand meters, such growth finally ceased.

A strong and powerful feeling permeated Arthur's heart.

It brought him an unmatched joy.

It was the purest form of joy.

And the text is describing that joy—

[The "Serpent of Death - Thin - Fragmentary" ascended to "Serpent of Death - Remnant"]

[Serpent of Death - Remnant: The ancient recollection has granted you the qualification to step onto the "God Ascension Steps", and under the influence of your Talent "Breath of Death", your Bloodline has become richer, easing your ascent on the "God Ascension Steps"—Death entwines with the serpent, chasing the serpent's tail, the serpent chasing the start of death, in a repeating cycle, another special Promotion has appeared; although the Bloodline is still Fragmentary, the Special qualities within your Bloodline are enough to make most God-born and Demon Offspring take notice, to make those Ascend Steppers envious, and to instill fear in the dark, shadowy, and deathly creatures, because they, they, They understand that your unearthly Talent will eventually complete your Bloodline...]

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

[Awakening: You have awakened a special Bloodline, making you different from others; Physique +5 (3+2), Spirituality +5 (3+2)]

[Shadow Concealment: When you are in shadows or darkness, you will receive a Stealth +6 modifier]

[Serpentine Body: Your joints and muscles are not only as flexible as a snake, allowing your entire Body to coil like a snake, but also provide you with increased Defense Levels against swords, Firearms, explosions, and Blazes of +3, against acid and toxins of +4, and against Thunder of +12; when food is plentiful, your Body will grow rapidly beyond limits as you feed it, matching Physique, Defense, and longevity, and you can freely control the size of your Body, but in winter, you will still instinctively want to hibernate, and if you choose to hibernate, your Body will grow faster; if you refuse to hibernate, the growth rate will stay the same.]

[Serpent's Gaze: By meeting someone's gaze with Serpent's Gaze, you can instantly induce hallucinations in those with weak will, while it will have a Deterrent effect on those with strong will. If they panic under Deterrence, they will also fall into hallucinations. Those caught in hallucinations will be dragged into the Breath of Death.]

[Serpent Speak: You can communicate with snakes through hissing, command ordinary snakes, and even Secret Technique snakes will be Deterred by you; even when you aren't hissing, snake creatures will still respect you and want to follow you]

[Devour: You can open your mouth wider than your own limits, and you can swallow anything smaller than your mouth; moreover, you can ignore any toxins, acidity, or Dark Energy within the food you swallow, even stones can be digested by your stomach, turning into the purest nutrients to nourish your Body]

[Serpent's Breath: The air expelled from your mouth can become deadly poisonous miasma at will, your saliva will corrode the ground, and when you choose to, a single hibernation could turn South Los into a swampy nation of poisonous miasma, but when you do not wish it, you remain as a normal person, able to kiss the girl you love at any time.]

[Serpent Shadow: The Resonance between "Breath of Death" and Bloodline has completely transformed your shadow, which can turn into 33 Serpent Shadows, silently attacking anyone you wish to within your field of vision; when those attacked die, they will transform into the purest "Aura of Death" to be taken back.]

(Note 1: The Physique and Spirituality brought by Awakening are absolutely safe, and will slowly increase with more food intake and hibernation.)

(Note 2: During Shadow Concealment, even rapid running will not affect the Stealth Level, and when in light or when your figure is fully exposed, there will still be a +1 Stealth modifier level.)

(Note 3: The current stage of Serpentine Body can reach 5 meters, current natural lifespan is 444 years, maintaining a normal human state grants a natural extra +1 Defense Level, when you let go of your limits and grow to 5 meters, natural Defense Level is further increased by +5, specifically against Thunder, the extra Defense Level is +24.)

(Note 4: Each Defense Level is approximately equivalent to the explosive power of a single high-explosive grenade.)

(Note 5: Completing one deep sleep can effectively weaken your state of drowsiness.)

(Note 6: The initial Attack Level of each Serpent Shadow is comparable to the power of a bullet fired from a heavy-duty Firearm; Serpent Shadows can turn corners and also track targets, and once an attack is completed, if it absorbs enough "Aura of Death", it can continue attacking and increase its Attack Level, up to the power of a six-pound Little Emperor Cannon, consuming a lot of "Aura of Death"; when "Aura of Death" is insufficient, it needs to return to your shadow to replenish "Aura of Death", but when it attacks next time, it still strikes with the power of a bullet from a heavy-duty Firearm, and after completing a successful attack, it can also choose not to attack anymore but bring back the "Aura of Death" for you; when all Serpent Shadows are deployed, your shadow will become fainter, but will not disappear.)

(Note 7: Ritual "Orange Cat", under your Talent harmony, does not conflict with your Bloodline, rather, it complements it.)

...

The words "thin" in the Bloodline that greatly concerned Arthur disappeared completely after his "devouring" of the "Grudge Rite".

The transformation to a normalized [Serpent of Death - Remnant] Bloodline has brought Arthur a comprehensive enhancement.

Attack, Defense, Hide.

This uniform progression brought a smile to Arthur's lips.

Especially when he found himself immune to the blast of a single high-explosive grenade even when naked, it considerably soothed the deep-seated anxiety within him.

As for a normal state with +12 Thunder Defense Level, releasing bodily limits for an additional +24 Defense Level?

Arthur: Emmm.

He swore that it wasn't intentional.

Who knew why his bloodline always defended against Thunder.

He didn't want it to!

Really didn't!

Earl of South Los, please don't misunderstand!

I definitely am not targeting you!

I mean...

'The Shadow Earl plan has moved forward a step!'

Alas, Horton is truly a good man!

The young 'Spirit Medium' felt the changes within himself and highly praised that 'Death Poetry Society' member.

Even though he had killed the person and left no remains, this did not prevent Arthur from being grateful.

And...

He reconsidered the 'Death Poetry Society.'

Previously, Arthur planned to use the identity of 'Death's Child' for an additional layer of protection.

And now?

He might put it to better use.

It might even complete his bloodline, promoting his talent.

Of course, the original plan for swordsmanship could not be forgotten.

But not now.

Now?

Petting the dog head that appeared from the shadows, Arthur communicated with his hound, eyes gleaming with contemplation—

'Death Poetry Society's Left Cantor?

Coming to South Los?!

It seems the 'Death Poetry Society' is far more concerned about Horton than estimated.

Then, naturally, I can add some chips for myself!

With that thought, Arthur leaped up.

Chapter 399: Happiness that stems from naivety, is the beauty of life!

"Good morning, Mr. Kledos!"

"Good morning!"

As Arthur carried breakfast bought from a small food stand, with today's newspaper tucked under his arm, and walked past "Eivor's Mobile Snack Stand" from West Mok Avenue into Cork Street, he encountered many early rising neighbors sending their children to school. The children at the public carriage stop each greeted Arthur enthusiastically, and he smiled and nodded back to each of them.

Being a "Spirit Medium", having cats, dogs, and birds, along with his performance at the "Swordsmanship Competition", Arthur's appeal to these children was absolutely stacked.

In other words, looking at Arthur made the children inwardly shout: Awesome!

But the adults were different.

Though they too had heard and even seen Arthur's performance at the "Swordsmanship Competition" and had praised his character,

when they interacted with Arthur in person, they thought more about the rumors of Arthur's 'misfortune'.

So, as their children greeted him, the parents would retreat a few steps with their children, pulling them away from Arthur, while maintaining a polite but awkward smile.

And after Arthur had walked away, they would repeatedly caution their children—

"Stay away from him!"

"Why? Is Mr. Kledos a bad person?"

"He's not a bad person, but you must stay away from him!"

"Why?"

"Not so many whys; you'll understand when you grow up!"

As parents began to order their children using their authority, Arthur had already reached the front door of No. 2 Cork Street, and he didn't take such conversations to heart.

During one's youthful days, naïve cheerfulness eventually gets replaced by prudence.

People call this maturity.

Arthur didn't disagree.

Because the world was just like that, the real world taught those naïve children to learn to mature, to grow up, to take on more responsibilities, but it seldom told those children to make sure to be happy.

Arthur hadn't known this before.

Having died once, Arthur naturally came to understand it.

Therefore, Arthur hoped to live happily, and if he could live even longer...

That would be great!

So, as he opened the door to No. 2 Cork Street—

"Pendragon, I'm back!

Did you miss me?

Come, let's have a hug from Daddy!"

Arthur set aside the breakfast and newspaper on a nearby shelf, took off his coat, and went to hug Pendragon waiting at the door, but Pendragon dodged him disdainfully.

Then, the cat even elongated its tone in a meowing manner.

It sounded quite dirty.

"How can a little kitty speak like that?

I had serious matters last night!

How would you get your fish treats if I didn't go hunting?"

Arthur reached out to hug Pendragon again.

This time, the little cat did not dodge, but still looked disgusted, and then even raised its paw to block Arthur's mouth wanting to give a kiss.

But it only blocked it briefly.

Then, it let go and rubbed itself against Arthur voluntarily.

Pendragon's intelligence far exceeded that of an ordinary cat.

It naturally knew the dangers Arthur faced every time he went out.

It chose its own ways to comfort Arthur.

Arthur was aware of this, too.

So, everything was developing in a wonderful direction.

Until—

Pendragon saw the dog head Kuliqi emerge in Arthur's shadow.

Kuliqi swore, it was just showing its head simply, definitely with no other intent.

But Pendragon would not have it.

It thought that compromising with Arthur was an extremely embarrassing affair, and now this embarrassing incident was witnessed by a dog, so...

This dog had to die!

With a woof, Pendragon broke free from Arthur's embrace and charged at Kuliqi.

Cat cat flying kick!

Cat cat combo!

Kuliqi stood there dumbfounded, allowing Pendragon's paw pads to slap across his face — it wasn't that he didn't want to fight back, but Arthur wouldn't let him.

Facing Arthur's favoritism, Kuliqi whimpered incessantly.

'It's okay, Pan didn't even stretch out his claws!

Let him pat a few times!'

Arthur signaled his hound with his eyes, then picked up some food and the newspaper and headed for the kitchen.

Today's breakfast was bought at a newly opened food stall.

Five egg and ham sandwiches with sauce and a porridge named 'Tacke'.

The latter was highly recommended by the owner, supposedly a special product of Seberlin, made by simmering both rice and millet, with pumpkin, crushed peanuts, and syrup added.

The texture was soft with a hint of crunch, and the sweetness was just right.

And the words that appeared in front of him took Arthur's taste experience to a new level —

[The performance you showed at the Swordsmanship Competition amazed people, earned their praises, and more people learned your name. Even those who didn't pay attention to you before are noticing you now. Your name is starting to become a household word in South Los; XP+500]

[The events in South Town have caught the attention of Mystic Side Persons. They do not dare to approach it in the true sense, but they speculate more about you. Rumors that you are the current "Black Cat" of the 'Cat Faction.Black' are being acknowledged by more Mystic Side Persons; XP+300]

...

800XP!

An unprecedented bounty!

A smile curled the corner of Arthur's mouth as he began to speed up the cleaning of the table.

As for contemplating which secret technique to boost?

Arthur had already decided.

800 XP seemed like a lot, but in reality, it wasn't enough to last, not even enough to learn all the secret techniques he possessed once.

A beginner's course in Gliding Technique alone costs 500 XP!

Although Arthur was really curious about what the secret technique created by Hercules would look like if pushed to its limits, he really couldn't afford to learn it recklessly with limited XP.

More so since Arthur already had a target —

Swift Bird Swordsmanship and...

Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique!

The former, because the bloodline of Serpent of Death was still fragmentary, Arthur wanted to experiment whether learning Swift Bird Swordsmanship could complete the Serpent of Death bloodline.

After all, the noble's swordsmanship was originally invented to stimulate and complete a bloodline.

As for the Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique?

This technique, which he had ranked as second tier, Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique. Remnant!

This bloodline-determining secret technique!

As his bloodline advanced to Serpent of Death - Remnant and removed a debuff, the necessary XP for entry increased instead of decreased, changing from the original 300 XP to 400 XP.

And Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique. Remnant turned into Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique!

Clearly, its drawbacks had vanished.

This technique, which Harris could use to freely shuttle through shadows, had long been coveted by Arthur.

Such a life-saving technique naturally attracted Arthur.

Especially as he was about to head to Inner Bay, it was essential for him.

Even though he had wrapped himself in layers of 'tiger skin'.

But what if the Old Lion of Inner Bay flipped the table?

Even if Mother Tigress avenged him in the end, what good would it do?

He would be dead.

Arthur definitely did not want to see such an outcome.

So—

"XP, apply points!"

Chapter 400 Visitors!

Mentally adding points, the text appeared before his eyes—

[Swift Bird Swordsmanship Lv1: This is one of the high order sword techniques developed by the nobles of South County to stimulate and complete their own bloodline. The Golden Lion Family, over the next hundred years, further integrated fighting skills from 'Assassin. Shadowflow' and 'Assassin. Bloodflow', turning it into a sword technique that not only targets special bloodline effects but also enables quick and efficient target elimination. During the Seven Years' War, when the Old Lion partially disclosed it, it caused a great stir. Lisop learned a simplified version and profoundly sensed its uniqueness, and thereafter spent thirty years gathering breathing methods and meditation techniques, hoping to deepen the legacy of the Lisop Family—and at this moment, you have just entered the beginner level and cannot yet experience its true effect.]

[Effects: 1, Extreme Speed; 2, Quick Strike]

[Extreme Speed: When you employ the Swift Bird Sword Posture, your speed will be +1 above your natural physical strength.]

[Quick Strike: When you employ the Swift Bird Sword Posture, the speed of your next sword strike increases by +0.3, and this effect can stack up to 3 times consecutively.]

...

[Physical Strength, Spirituality +0.3]

...

'Entry Level, and the real effects haven't manifested yet?

Could it be that the stimulation and completion of my own bloodline only occur at the limit?'

Arthur squinted his eyes and began spending 200 XP to raise [Swift Bird Swordsmanship] to Lv2.

The speed of [Extreme Speed] immediately became +2.

The speed of [Quick Strike] became +0.5.

He also gained [Physical Strength, Spirituality +0.3] once again.

Besides that, there were no other changes.

Arthur frowned, looking at the remaining 500 XP and took a deep breath to control his impulse.

Level 3 of [Swift Bird Swordsmanship] now required 400 XP, according to this rate, level 4 would be 800 XP.

And for level 5, it would be 1600 XP.

However, Arthur, with his extensive experience in advancing secret technique levels, knew that the limit for level 5 would definitely not be just 1600.

He might need several times, or even over ten times that amount of XP.

'I simply don't have enough XP!' Arthur exclaimed inwardly.

Then, the young 'Spirit Medium' started to seriously consider the hidden relic in the Docklands.

Exploration could also yield XP.

If the relic's level was high enough, he might gain a large amount.

If one relic wasn't enough, then he would explore several more.

Arthur stroked his chin, beginning to contemplate his approach to Deljo of the 'Storm Sword'.

Originally, Arthur had planned to collaborate with Marinda once, betray her, and smoothly gain the qualifications to enter that hidden relic for exploration.

However, now Arthur had to rethink his strategy.

'Storm Sword' Deljo had a complete exploration team.

Could this team, including 'Storm Sword' Deljo himself, become his?

If it were usual times, it would naturally be extremely difficult.

But with the advantage of having 'observed' a scene in the Docklands through Wuni's eyes, he felt quite confident.

Of course, he still needed to inform Marinda!

Only, the timing needed to be slightly delayed to achieve the best effect!

Thinking internally, Arthur started to learn [Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique] as planned.

[Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique Lv1: The young Harris was once an exceptional explorer, until his fate changed after discovering the ruined laboratory of a Mystic Side Person; it seemed that a significant explosion had occurred there, yet upon thorough searching, there were still some gains to be found. Picking up bits and pieces of information, young Harris began his studies, coming into contact with some forbidden powers: 'Shadows'—through continuous human experiments, he gradually completed this secret technique, believing that once he mastered it, he could obtain everything he desired, after all, that was the core legacy of the 'Gray Robe' from the 'Tower of Mist'. Even to his death, Harris had not fulfilled his wish; however, you, possessing a unique bloodline, have completed this technique mingled with the forbidden power 'Death' and some 'Shadows', making it somewhat different from the original—because it has become stronger!]

As for you now? You have just entered the beginner level!]

[Effects: 1, Shadow Stab; 2, Shadow Devour; 3, Shadow Flash]

[Shadow Stab: Mobilize the shadows within a 15-meter radius of you, forming 1-22 spear-like 'Shadow Spikes' to attack your opponent. When there is only one 'Shadow Spike', it will possess the highest attack power at the current Arcana level. As the number of 'Shadow Spikes' increases, their power will decline respectively. Each 'Shadow Spike' cannot exceed 15 meters in length]

[Shadow Devour: Each 'Shadow Stab' contains a unique eroding energy of the shadows]

[Shadow Flash: You can teleport short distances not exceeding 5 meters through shadows, each time consuming a lot of physical strength]

...

As the text appeared before his eyes, the synchronization of knowledge and body began.

Arthur flipped through the knowledge in his mind, his heart slightly stirred.

Immediately, the shadows inside No. 2 Cork Street began to tremble rapidly.

Just having achieved 'victory,' and parading around on Kuliqi, the boastful Pendragon was immediately startled.

What bewildered Pendragon even more was that its master disappeared from in front of it and reappeared behind it.

"Hehe, little kitty!

Are you surprised?

Tell daddy, did it startle you?"

Arthur scooped up his little cat from Kuliqi's dog head, letting out bursts of strange laughter.

Truthfully, Pendragon was indeed startled at first.

But upon hearing Arthur's familiar strange laugh, disdain immediately appeared on Pendragon's face.

It swayed left and right, struggling vehemently to get back on top of Kuliqi's dog head.

Unfortunately, how could a little kitty escape from its master's embrace?

The firmly bound Pendragon could only watch helplessly as Kuliqi slipped into the yard.

"Meow! Meow!"

The elongated cat cries were filled with grumbling.

But Arthur didn't care.

The recent experiment with [Shadow Flash] had pleased him immensely, the sensation akin to swimming through air, and he hadn't felt any discomfort, only that the distance was a bit short.

However, that was just Lv1 of [Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique].

As the level increased, it would certainly improve.

And the power!

Lv1 of [Shadow Stab] already possessed 'Arcana Level' power, could it be said it was a formidable force completed with his bloodline?

'At Lv5, would it directly 'Ascend Step'?'

Arthur speculated.

This speculation was highly probable.

However, reaching this stage wouldn't be easy.

The XP gap was too significant.

Lv2 of [Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique]needed 800 XP.

By inference, Lv3 would be 1600, Lv4 would be 3200.

As for Lv5?

Arthur chuckled, picked up his little cat, and prepared to go to sleep.

No more thinking, it was too much.

Thinking further would only give him a headache.

Just as Arthur had lain down, a figure that appeared in the vision of Fujin on the roof caused the young 'Spirit Medium' to sit up again.

Because that figure was—

'Death Poetry Society' Left Cantor: Pottermann!