

Great Master 581

Chapter 581: Thunder in Winter!

In Arthur's view, two carriages drove side by side.

The coachmen were nowhere to be found.

In the drivers' seats were two ladies.

Madam Susan.

Ms. Camille.

Both ladies wielded whips, striving to get their carriages ahead of the other, while continuously murmuring under their breath—some to spur their horses, others cursing their rival.

It was probably something like—

You ****ing ****, I ****ing ****!

That barrage of beeping left Arthur speechless.

Especially from Arthur's perspective, when these two ladies looked at each other, there were actual sparks between their gazes.

The crackling kind.

As if...

they would explode at any moment.

A smile played on Arthur's lips.

The scene before him was nothing unexpected!

On the contrary, everything was part of Arthur's plan—

Old Charlie's beloveds treated him well because of Old Charlie.

But that did not mean that Old Charlie's beloveds were amicable toward each other.

This, Arthur had known for a long time.

Otherwise, why would Old Charlie need to travel every year?

He certainly would have bought No. 1, No. 3, No. 4 Cork Street, and so on.

However, one thing did surprise Arthur.

'Did Madam Susan and Ms. Camille have conflicts before?'

With others, Arthur was still unclear what was happening, but these two were undoubtedly at odds.

Under Old Charlie's 'suppression,' such situations must involve considerable conflicts—otherwise, it couldn't have been this bad.

And facing these kinds of conflicts?

Arthur maintained an 'onlooker' mentality.

Otherwise, what could he do?

He certainly did not possess Old Charlie's courage to break his own legs directly, did he?

Was he supposed to rush forward and shout...

'Stop it! Don't fight anymore~'

But there was no rain falling either!

That definitely wouldn't work.

Arthur pondered at the bottom of his heart, his gaze involuntarily turning towards Marinda, who was assisting Ms. Anna in the kitchen.

He couldn't manage the two ladies.

But Marinda could.

Don't forget that Marinda now bore a 'destined role.'

The first fourth-generation member of the Kledos Family!

That was significant enough!

Just as Arthur was about to call out to Marinda, the two carriages suddenly slowed down, and the competitive momentum of driving side by side was lost.

All that was left was a slow advance.

Even the drivers had returned to their compartments.

And the original coachmen then leaped from inside the carriages back to the seats, and continued to manage the carriages.

Even from a distance, Arthur could see the coachman's relief.

It was a kind of...

relief from narrowly escaping death.

And the joy of being alive.

'They must have thought they were going to die just now, hadn't they?'

Arthur thought to himself, yet walked to the courtyard entrance with a smile on his face.

Meanwhile, he silently thought—

Grandpa rocks!

Arthur did not know how Old Charlie had attracted such ladies, but these women clearly loved Old Charlie more than he had imagined.

Otherwise, they would not have been as considerate of Grandpa's dignity, choosing not to argue in his presence.

And that was enough!

Perhaps in private, they would fight until blood flowed, but as long as they maintained decorum in front of him, that was sufficient.

Nobody would feel awkward.

That was what Arthur hoped for.

As for more?

Naturally, it was Old Charlie who smoothed things over.

Otherwise, who else could it be?

He was just a young, naive, kind-hearted, and upright "Spirit Medium" after all, not a gentleman like Old Charlie.

With a self-aware smile, Arthur waited patiently.

Two carriages came to a stop simultaneously.

The carriage doors were opened by the coachmen.

Madam Susan and Ms. Camille were both dressed in casual attire.

Madam Susan wore a white gown with a rabbit fur shawl, exuding an air of intellect and gentleness.

Ms. Camille, on the other hand, wore a gray-white vest, a black lace blouse, and gold-rimmed glasses perched on her nose, emanating a scholarly vibe.

If Arthur had not witnessed the tense exchange between the two women moments earlier, he would never have imagined they could bicker all the way.

"Good evening, Madam Susan, Ms. Camille.

Please excuse the intrusion.",

Arthur said with impeccable manners.

Madam Susan and Ms. Camille stood side by side, behaving like close sisters and smiling at Arthur.

"This is the pine branch I selected. Hang it on the door.",

Madam Susan brought out a gilded pine branch.

The gold made the pine branch shimmer brightly.

Of course, what was most important was the Thunder and Storm inscriptions from the Kledos Family on the pine branch.

Anyone familiar would immediately recognize that this place was under the protection of the Kledos Family.

"These are pastries I baked myself. Let's eat them together.",

Ms. Camille said.

Linda poked her head out from the carriage, holding a delicate food box in her hand.

Linda, dressed in hunting gear, was agile and hopped down swiftly.

Then, a joyful smile spread across her face.

Clearly, Linda was genuinely happy to be attending the Winter Banquet at the Kledos Family's house, and after placing the box full of pastries inside No. 2 Cork Street, she started helping Arthur hang the gilded pine branch.

Marinda's pine branch had not been taken down.

The gilded pine branch was simply hung beside it.

The Cold Winter Festival did not require hanging multiple branches.

Some hung it just for show.

There was no harm in hanging two either.

Unless you were planning to stick an entire pine tree into your roof beams, during the Cold Winter Festival everyone would be forgiving.

Especially when there were unexpected rewards —

A group of journalists crouched outside No. 2 Cork Street, eagerly writing.

They knew that waiting here wasn't in vain!

Look!

The grand steward of the South Los House.

The golden pine branch of the South Los Earl.

The lady from Camille's house.

And the hand-baked pastries.

If it weren't for being kindly disciplined by Marinda's men just yesterday, these journalists would definitely be writing an explosive serialization.

And now?

They wrote honestly.

Though it wasn't very satisfying, it was sufficient.

At least, their bonus wouldn't be reduced.

Of course, there were always those who risked danger.

A journalist glanced at No. 2 Cork Street nearby, his mind uncontrollably drifting towards unpredictable directions.

The pen in his hand started to move uncontrollably too.

Madam Susan of the South Los family, Ms. Camille, the "Lady of the Eternal Night" — these ladies were great, very decent, but not explosive enough.

The real explosive subject, of course, was ...

The Earl of South Los!

Compelled by his thoughts, the journalist began to write.

And he had written just about three lines, describing how the "Spirit Medium" Arthur Kredos took the hand of Countess Ash Bonaparte of South Los, when —

Boom!

A thunderbolt struck out of nowhere.

The man turned instantly into charcoal.

And inside No. 2 Cork Street, Arthur who had just sat down at the dining table, heard the thunderclap and suddenly had a thought stir within him.

Chapter 582: The Winter Fireworks!

Firecrackers!

Or rather, firecrackers!

The 'Cold Winter Festival' had passed, how could they not set off firecrackers!

And this had not been a problem for Arthur.

After the incidents involving Nicole (Grandma Andor) and Cotton, how could Arthur not be well-prepared? He had previously asked Merlin to place an order for plenty of fireworks at the grocery store.

And since they were buying fireworks, firecrackers naturally came along with the purchase.

Although the world before them didn't have the custom of setting off firecrackers during festivals, they did use them in circus performances. Some clowns would even wrap themselves in firecrackers, light

them and amidst the sounds of the firecrackers and their own continuous screams, they would earn the laughter of the audience. The more pitiful the screams, the happier the crowd.

Sometimes, happiness is just that simple.

While Ms. Anna and Marinda were still serving up dishes, Arthur winked at Linda and Malz.

Isn't it time for the 'Winter Banquet'?

The pair didn't understand, but they still followed Arthur.

When the two arrived in the courtyard, Kuliqi and Kiri had already carried two boxes of firecrackers and fireworks from the safe house in the basement and were squatting next to Arthur.

"Fireworks and firecrackers?"

Linda was taken aback.

"Mm-hmm."

Arthur nodded repeatedly as he picked up some fireworks and walked out of the courtyard, standing directly on Cork Street—there were no people on Cork Street at that time, and the patrol officers standing on the side of West Mok Avenue were completely unaware of what was happening here. Even though they had just carted off a charred corpse, it didn't cause any extra ripples in their hearts, after all, anything could happen at the doorstep of No. 2 Cork Street.

If you appear there, you definitely need to be mentally prepared for anything.

So, after the two patrol officers handed over the body of the journalist struck dead by a winter thunderbolt, they returned to their post.

And then...

The two people gazed blankly at their distant homes, lost in a reverie.

Without doubt, they were thinking about their loved ones at home and the taste of the 'Winter Banquet'.

At such times, no one would blame them.

Even if it was seen, it would also inspire a sentiment that patrol officers have it tough—

Whoosh, bang!

After a muffled sound, dazzling fireworks illuminated them.

Similarly, Arthur and Malz were lit up as well.

Upon seeing Arthur and Malz, the two patrol officers immediately came back to their senses.

Almost instantly, not only did the two patrol officers straighten up, but they also jogged over to Arthur and Malz.

"Your Excellency the Advisor, Police Chief!"

The two patrol officers saluted.

With time passing by, and after taking Dico, Andy, Looney, and Simon under his command, along with the cooperation of Middel and Gite, the two original fifth-level police officers, the entire Shire District Police Station had been made impregnable by Malz, especially since Malz was willing to show consideration for his subordinates.

Thus, the entire Shire District Police Station held a considerable amount of respect for Malz.

And Arthur?

As Arthur's reputation grew day by day, especially after he earned the title of 'Champion' at the South Los Swordsmanship Competition and acquired the status of 'Knight,' the people at the Shire District Police Station grew increasingly reverent towards their advisor.

However, looking at Arthur setting off fireworks and firecrackers during the 'Cold Winter Festival,' the two patrol officers were still utterly puzzled.

Noticing the confusion of the two patrol officers, and the neighbors on Cork Street peeking around, Malz, being Arthur's good friend, immediately stood up—

"This is one kind of 'Spirit Medium' ritual, which can drive away calamities and bless everyone."

Malz immediately said.

This was certainly a 'well-meaning lie' to protect his good friend.

Moreover, the old sheriff was very tactful; he knew well what people liked and disliked.

Upon seeing his subordinates' sudden realization and the neighbors showing an expression of understanding, the old sheriff promptly lit a string of firecrackers and threw them into the air.

Pop pop pop!

A series of crisp sounds.

Along with the fireworks Arthur occasionally lit.

Instantly, a look of longing filled the eyes of the children from the neighboring families on Cork Street.

Some parents, who pitied their children, immediately mustered the courage to come closer.

"Um, um, could you give me a firework?"

"I can pay for them!"

Mr. Duer spoke haltingly, his eyes fixed on the slender fireworks in the box; he wasn't eyeing the better-looking, larger fireworks shaped like stumps.

He was worried Arthur wouldn't let him have them.

"Take this one.

It's enough to ward off bad luck and pray for blessings."

Arthur picked up a string of firecrackers and also handed a firework similar to a Magic Bullet to his neighbor.

"Thank you, thank you."

Overjoyed, Mr. Duer placed a Suo in the box and then, holding the Magic Bullet, ran towards his son and daughter. In front of the two little ones, Mr. Duer puffed out his belly, looking like a general returning in triumph, his face conveying a look of 'Isn't dad amazing? Quick, come and praise dad!'

"Dad is so amazing!"

The crisp shout from his little girl almost melted the old father's heart.

"Come, daddy will carry you!"

He picked up his little girl and let her sit on his shoulders, then lit the Magic Bullet with one hand.

As for his son?

Not important.

Whoosh, bang!

Whoosh, bang!

One by one, the Magic Bullets soared into the sky, and the children around became noisier, tugging at their parents' clothes. With Mr. Duer leading by example, the middle-class residents of Cork Street naturally didn't hesitate to start exchanging money for fireworks, just like Mr. Duer.

And at high prices.

Arthur didn't refuse.

To gain something, there must be a cost.

That was his philosophy of life.

So, he wasn't so generous as to give them away for free.

Because—

Doing so would only result in a few quickly forgotten words of praise and nothing else. Sometimes, it might even backfire,

With all kinds of unbelievable rumors being spread by certain people, and others believing them without doubt.

This is human nature.

Being well aware of these things, Arthur would never do such a thankless thing.

He just wanted to have fun with the fireworks.

After finishing with one string of firecrackers in his hand, Arthur raised his hand to take another one.

And at that moment—

Ding!

A clear sound rang out.

It was the sound of a Gold Coin.

Arthur was all too familiar with it.

But at that moment, he tensed up completely.

Because, before that sound emerged, he hadn't sensed anyone there at all.

A man as paranoid as Arthur, who practically wished to sleep with his eyes open, how could he not be vigilant with so many people around?

So, it might look crowded, but Arthur was aware of each and every person.

But,

The person just now wasn't among them.

A Large Gold Coin fell into the box.

A pale hand reached into the box and took out a stump-shaped firework.

Arthur maintained a calm demeanor and continued to reach for the firecracker he had set his sights on.

As he lit the firecracker, Arthur finally cast a glance from the corner of his eye at the figure that hadn't been in his perception.

And then—

Huh?!!!!

Chapter 583: Gentle in the Time of Thunder!

Arthur saw a small figure.

Whose child is that?

That was Arthur's first thought.

Then, the second thought emerged—

No!

What child could be so powerful?

But if it's not a child...

Isn't that too short?

Could it be a gnome?

Arthur watched the roughly four-foot-nine figure without letting on, guessing to himself.

This height, it's indeed similar to some of the kids around.

And...

Can't tell if it's a boy or a girl.

Not just the attire, but also that walking posture, sloppy, but the fairness of those hands just now is not something boys... no, not something that boys would have.

While Arthur was contemplating, the figure lit that firecracker—

Whoosh, bang!

A burst of bright light ascended, releasing a huge, brilliant firework.

The fireworks were beautiful, eliciting gasps of amazement from the adults and shouts of joy from the children.

But these were not important.

What's important is...

As the fireworks burst into bloom, that four-foot-nine figure vanished like a bolt of lightning.

Aside from Arthur, everyone's attention was captivated by the fireworks, utterly missing this scene.

And Arthur?

Fair hands, a woman.

Large gold coins, used by nobles to showcase their distinction.

And then there was that lightning...

'Hiss, Ash. Bonaparte. Countess of South Los?

Countess of South Los?

This?!!'

Arthur was shaken to the core, nearly paralyzed with shock.

From his impression, the Countess of South Los simply couldn't be someone who was four-foot-nine and sloppy—after all!

Even if not commanding in stature, at least she should be tall and slender, with delicate and pretty features, but overall slightly cold and even a bit gloomy; not one to easily smile, and with every word and action exuding a careful yet unassailable sense of dignity—that would suit her status, fit with her control over thunder, and be more in line with her 'secrecy'.

But why would it be a four-foot-nine, sloppy person?

Could it be...

'Is this the real reason she chose 'secrecy'?

Arthur thought to himself.

Of course, Arthur knew the real reason was surely to allow South Los to recover and to evade the Old Lion at the peak of his fame.

But—

Pfft!

Unable to contain himself, Arthur burst out laughing.

Compared to that feigned gentleness, this was a genuine laugh from the depths of his heart.

Moreover, when this smile appeared, Arthur did not pretend any longer; to continue doing so would have seemed forced, so Arthur simply laughed.

Firecrackers popping continuously.

Fireworks unending.

The young 'Spirit Medium's' face was lit with a genuine smile, amidst the surrounding laughter and voices of joy.

Everything was just right.

Concealed behind the clouds in the sky, the Countess of South Los's gaze swept over Arthur and the people of Cork Street.

"Humph, the 'Spirit Medium' of South Los?

He is just an ordinary person!

So grown up and still likes to play with fireworks... childish!"

After offering what she considered a 'fair assessment,' the Countess of South Los vanished in a flash of lightning as the fireworks illuminated for a moment.

For this Countess,

Even on the day of the Cold Winter Festival, there was no rest.

She had to personally deal with six different documents.

After all, those documents were from Inner Bay.

And in front of No. 2 Cork Street, Marinda, looking at Arthur, also offered an evaluation similar to that of the Countess of South Los.

'Childish!

Not only does he love to show off, but he also loves frolicking, huh?

Just suppressing it on normal days, but now when the time comes, letting go?

This lady naturally thought to herself.

Because—

There was a time when she had been like that too.

Therefore, such an evaluation didn't make Marinda dislike Arthur; on the contrary, the lady let out a sigh of relief in her heart.

This lady became increasingly convinced that she and Arthur were of the same kind.

And the slight pressure Arthur had put on her before?

At this moment, it had all vanished into thin air.

If there was a great disparity in strength, then chasing it was fine.

After all, Arthur's strength had also been accumulated in secret before it burst forth spectacularly.

If Arthur could do it,

she, of course, could too.

With that thought in mind, the lady stepped out of No. 2 Cork Street and stood beside Arthur, signaling him with a look that only the two of them could understand—

Wait for me!

The surprise flickered in Arthur's eyes as he happily unwrapped a string of firecrackers, lighting them and tossing them around for fun.

Without context, Arthur definitely wouldn't understand.

But he knew how to respond.

He handed a magic bullet to Marinda.

"Come on, set off some fireworks to dispel the bad luck,"

he said, lifting his hand, and the remaining sparks on the ground gathered on the magic bullet.

Whoosh, pop!

The magic bullets soared into the sky one after another.

Watching the lit magic bullets, Marinda's face also revealed a hint of a smile.

Everyone was very happy.

Except...

Linda Camille.

Holding a magic bullet in her hand, Linda was hesitating. She wanted to set off fireworks with Arthur but was concerned about Marinda.

At this moment, seeing Arthur and Marinda standing side by side setting off fireworks, she felt even more bitterness surging in her heart.

'I've come at the wrong time!'

Linda thought silently, about to cry.

And Arthur just happened to see Linda standing there, not looking very happy, and immediately waved and called out—

"Linda, you've come at just the right time!

Come, set off fireworks!"

"Ah?!"

Linda was startled.

But her feet moved towards Arthur involuntarily.

Ms. Camille frowned upon seeing this scene.

Madam Susan, on the other hand, watched with a smile on her face.

"Every time I see Arthur's happy smile, I can't help but think of that bastard Old Charlie... Although I hate to admit it, for some reason, I find it very appealing,"

Madam Susan said with a hint of mockery in her voice.

Because Madam Susan was well aware that Old Charlie would never allow his grandson and his own daughter to be together.

This was not one of those stories where you could call out 'auntie,' cut off an arm, and then both enter an ancient tomb together.

"There's no doubt about Arthur's excellence, and it's normal for Linda to be attracted,"

Ms. Camille said calmly, resuming her composure.

"It's a pity the 'Silver Age' has ended.

Otherwise, there might have been a chance."

Madam Susan shook her head and sighed.

In the 'Silver Age,' in those days when bloodline was paramount, inbreeding among nobles for the purity of blood was the norm.

Although it led to many deformities, the birth of a single genius made it all worthwhile.

Ms. Camille certainly understood what Madam Susan was referring to.

Similarly, the lady was even more aware that she should not get entangled in this way.

So, the lady said softly—

"Are you willing to see Arthur get hurt?"

Yes, Linda is my daughter.

But Arthur?

Don't think I don't know that you've already assumed the role of Arthur's grandmother.

Since you are Arthur's grandmother, then would you allow your grandson to get hurt?

The lady's eyes were full of challenge.

Madam Susan remained smiling.

The lady said with utter certainty—

"I trust Arthur!"

And just as the lady finished speaking, she saw Arthur waving at them—

"Come, set off fireworks!"

While speaking, Arthur moved his feet to stand on one side of Marinda, making room for Marinda and Linda to stand together.

Seeing this scene, Camille was taken aback.

Afterward, the lady sighed softly.

"This damn tenderness, just like Old Charlie's."

Chapter 584: Unexpected Help!

As the two boxes of fireworks and crackers ran out, the people of Cork Street said goodbye to each other.

However, just as they were about to enter their homes, fireworks lit up another street in the distance.

Clearly, some people were following suit.

Arthur wasn't surprised by this.

After all, happiness is contagious.

When you keep laughing nonstop, those around you will always join in, especially when doing something joyful, as the laughter always seems to add an extra touch of pleasure.

The fireworks continued to light up the sky outside the window from time to time.

Pendragon looked around curiously.

This wasn't the first time Pendragon had seen fireworks.

But they still felt novel.

To Pendragon, these glowing objects were quite interesting.

The Police Chief, on the other hand, was trying to catch Pendragon's constantly swishing tail from behind.

And the result each time?

He ended up being whipped to the ground by Pendragon's tail.

After seven consecutive times, the Police Chief became extremely cautious.

Then he ran under the table, shielding half his body with the table leg and peeking out, as if it wasn't Pendragon's tail he was observing but an orange snake.

When Malz just couldn't help wanting to pick up his cat, the Police Chief, on the other hand, held on to the table leg with both paws, a picture of loyalty.

This left Malz quite helpless.

Arthur, however, was holding a roast venison steak, a smile on his lips, savoring the meat in his hand while enjoying the scene before him.

"Malz, have you noticed that the Police Chief really is like a summer sled dog?"

"I have noticed.

When the Police Chief bit a hole in my bedboard, I noticed."

Malz said with a wry smile.

Bitten through the bedboard?

Arthur was momentarily startled, then gave the Police Chief a thumbs-up.

The Police Chief tilted his head, not quite understanding the gesture.

Then, perhaps feeling silly, he jumped out of Malz's arms to the ground and meowed at Arthur.

A posture that said "I am formidable; don't mess with me."

Then—

Thwack!

He was slapped to the ground by Pendragon with a single claw.

Instinctively, the Police Chief was about to fight back.

But the size difference was too great; once Pendragon lifted his paw and pressed down on the Police Chief's head, the latter stretched his paws in vain, unable to reach Pendragon.

When Pendragon let go of his paw, the Police Chief hid behind the table leg again, observing Pendragon.

Pendragon, however, couldn't bother with this idiot.

If it hadn't been for the Police Chief's show-off attitude towards Arthur just now, Pendragon wouldn't have cared at all.

My master, only I can meow!

Proudly lifting his head, Pendragon jumped onto the windowsill once more.

Someone was setting off fireworks in the distance again.

So beautiful.

"Sigh, I doubt the Police Chief is very smart."

Malz sighed once again.

"No worries, a silly child is easier to take care of."

Arthur then picked up a piece of braised venison.

Different from the roasted one, this piece of venison was juicier, and after he suggested adding vinegar and garlic paste, the taste improved even more.

And as Arthur finished eating this piece of venison, Ms. Camille was the first to speak up—

"Are you ready for the trip to Inner Bay?"

The lady asked.

"Everything that could be prepared has been prepared.

The rest?

Play it by ear."

Arthur said frankly.

In fact, it was exactly as he said.

He had prepared all that he could.

But plans can't keep up with changes.

He could really only play it by ear.

He wasn't a direct descendant of any deity, constantly graced with Divine Favor.

"Hmm,"

Ms. Camille said, then handed Arthur a slip of paper—although the lady knew that everyone present could be trusted, even Susan, that damn woman, could be trusted, the battles of commerce had accustomed her to caution.

Arthur took the slip of paper.

It read: No. 107 Bell Tower Street, Van Helsing.

"He's a quirky fellow, but trustworthy.

If! I mean, if!

You encounter unexpected trouble, go to him—and tell him that the debt you owe to Anna Vilis needs to be repaid."

Ms. Camille said earnestly.

"Vilis?

You still have connections with the Hunter Family?"

Madam Susan appeared to recognize the name and was immediately astonished.

"It was just a coincidence,"

"In fact, if possible, I wish I could get in touch with the current brothers of the Winchester Family.

"With their intervention, Arthur's safety could be truly guaranteed."

Ms. Camille did not explain further, her words filled with regret.

"Are you sure you're not pushing Arthur into the fire pit?

"Every generation of brothers in that family is a trouble magnet.

"If you let them handle problems, they'll only sink into bigger ones."

Madam Susan made such a remark.

Then, this lady also handed Arthur a note.

"He's a nice man,

"And can be trusted.

"When you need help, go find him."

Madam Susan's tone was similar to Ms. Camille's.

Arthur immediately turned the note over, and it read: No. 13 Crimson Lane, Lady Selene.

"She owes your grandfather a favor,

"And she owes me one too.

"Two favors are enough for her to help you once.

"Remember, only once!

"After that, stay away from her!"

Madam Susan's expression was serious, her demeanor filled with unprecedented earnestness.

"Understood!"

Arthur nodded solemnly in response.

The young 'Spirit Medium' could feel the goodwill of this lady, as well as that of Ms. Camille.

For this, he was extremely grateful to his grandfather.

Even towards Lady Selene, he had begun to speculate.

Lady Selene is a woman, right?

From Madam Susan's tone, she must have been an outstanding figure in the previous generation.

And she knew Old Charlie, didn't she?

It's quite obvious.

Of course, Arthur didn't show it.

He just sincerely raised his glass—

"Thank you."

The genuine gratitude brought smiles to the faces of Madam Susan and Ms. Camille.

Afterward, the two ladies stood up to take their leave.

The fact that they could attend Arthur's 'Winter Banquet' meant they really squeezed it into their schedules; indeed, had it not been to give Arthur an ace up his sleeve, they might not have come at all.

Linda followed her mother and also left.

Looking back reluctantly as she boarded the carriage.

Arthur stood in front of No. 2 Cork Street, smiling and waving goodbye.

Linda immediately waved back.

Then, the carriage drove away.

"I can't give you the substantial help those two ladies can— I can only make sure South Los is well guarded!"

Malz shrugged his shoulders.

"Isn't that enough?"

Arthur asked in surprise.

The two of them smiled at each other, followed by a man-to-man hug.

"You must come back safe, Arthur.

"You're young, anything is possible!"

The old sheriff whispered.

"Don't worry!

"I'm more afraid of dying than you think!"

Arthur said with a laugh.

The two men clapped each other on the back.

Arthur watched Malz depart until he was out of sight, then he and Marinda walked back into No. 2 Cork Street.

There was still food, and of course, Arthur was not one to waste.

But just as he had polished it off, still wanting more—

"I left you a special portion in the kitchen,"

Marinda said, walking toward the kitchen.

"Marinda, I love you, you know that,

"I have never felt as much love for you as I do at this moment,"

Arthur said dramatically.

Marinda promptly flipped Arthur the bird.

And it was at this moment—

Ding ding ding!

The bell of Elta Square struck twelve times.

Only at midnight during the 'Cold Winter Festival' would the big clock of Elta Square chime.

It signified not only the coming of a new day but also the arrival of a new year.

Arthur and Marinda looked at each other and simultaneously whispered—

"Happy New Year!"

Chapter 585: Catch Up!

On the second day of the Cold Winter Festival, a good number of people were discussing the sudden fireworks from last night.

Soon after, someone boasted that it was a secret ritual performed by the Spirit Medium Arthur Kredos to bless and relieve the people of South Los of disasters.

Of course, it wasn't that this person had particularly insider information.

It was that all the major newspapers of South Los had published such information.

Some had even gone through numerous artistic elaborations.

For example, this one in Arthur's hands —

Spirit Medium Battles the Winter Monster!

This newspaper came from the South Los Morning News.

Although it is only different from the South Los Daily by one word, the disparity is as vast as heaven and earth. If South Los Daily were given a standard score of 100, the South Los Morning News would probably be around 1-2.

It all depends on performance.

Average performance, 1 point.

Exceptional performance, 2 points.

Of course, most of the time, the performance is average.

But, this time was different!

It was an exceptional performance, even exceptional of the exceptional!

Arthur looked at the first page featuring his own sketch —

Dressed in a cloak, him with a long sword in one hand and a magic wand in the other, facing a monster with sharp fangs and scales covering its body.

Although it was just his back, with the frontal view of the monster as a contrast, it made him appear all the more brave and ingenious.

The latter, of course, was a description from the South Los Morning News.

In the entire report, he used the terrain, props, and so on to create trouble for the 'Winter Monster' no less than five times.

Even establishing the ultimate victory because of it.

"Not bad!"

Arthur looked at the newspaper, nodding repeatedly.

Meanwhile, Marinda rolled her eyes.

"Narcissistic! Childish!"

The lady commented while fetching breakfast from the kitchen — fried eggs with ham, milk with oats, vegetable salad, and the fried breadsticks that Arthur insisted on having.

Of course, Marinda merely brought them out.

The real chef was Ms. Anna.

"Don't you like it when people praise you?"

Arthur asked curiously as he picked up a breadstick.

"I like it when people praise me!

But such praise has already become distorted!"

Aside from those psychologically distorted, who doesn't like compliments?

Marinda was no exception.

The lady also enjoyed being praised by others.

However, this was the time she was supposed to argue with Arthur, so how could she easily change her position?

Of course, the 'breadstick' was quite good.

"Distorted?"

Even if it has become distorted, people still love to read this kind of stuff!

I am creating joy for them!"

Arthur said, scanning the newly appeared text —

[Madam Susan and Ms. Camille attend your 'Winter Banquet', surprising many, especially the former's appearance which gives them plenty to think about; XP+100]

[An unexpected fireworks display has sparked a lot of discussion, inevitably a hot topic during the leisurely seven-day holiday: XP+500]

[More people have heard your name: XP+270]

...

Arthur wasn't surprised by the first piece of information on XP gain.

Why did he invite Madam Susan and Ms. Camille if not for more exposure and to gain more XP?

And the two ladies did not disappoint Arthur.

The third was rather expected too.

What truly caught Arthur's attention was the second one!

500 XP!

This figure really exceeded Arthur's expectations.

'Poor daily life, have people reached the point where they don't know what to do during their break, just gathering around the drink table to talk about me?

If that's the case...

I won't hold back!'

Arthur knew this was an opportunity.

A plan where time, location, and harmony all aligned.

The cold weather, seven-day holiday of the Cold Winter Festival, no need to work, plenty of social gatherings, there inevitably needs to be a topic.

And he?

He was that topic!

The people of South Los needed something, and Arthur would provide it.

Thereupon, Arthur raised his hand, and Wuni, in rest, immediately flew out the roof.

He needed someone in Rat Street to do some things.

Though Wiggins was busy training hard at Rick Farm, Rat Street still had Wiggins' Agent, and contacting him would do just as well.

Moreover, Arthur believed that the agent would do even better.

After all, to the agent, this was an opportunity to be seen.

Therefore, Arthur was not worried at all.

Seeing Arthur's sly smile, Marinda immediately said irritably—

"Who are you scheming against?

Smiling so sinisterly!"

"Nothing much, just that the 'Cold Winter Festival' seven-day holiday is too boring, and as the 'Spirit Medium' of South Los, I need to find some fun for everyone."

Arthur didn't hide anything from Marinda.

He directly indicated that he wanted to 'stir up the waters'.

At this, Marinda looked surprised.

"Are you three years old?

There should be a limit to being childish, right?"

Although the lady said this, she exhaled a thick ring of smoke and went into it.

About two minutes later, the lady came back out.

"I let someone promote it for you,"

the lady said.

"You also feel that the 'Cold Winter Festival' seven-day holiday is boring, right?"

Arthur asked excitedly.

"Only you feel bored. The documents that need my attention have piled up about two feet thick— I don't know what has happened in Inner Bay, news keeps coming one after another, but there's no specific reason; I need to analyze it right away!

If even I am helpless, I will have to temporarily retract Inner Bay's influence,"

the lady said, picking up a doughnut, ready to leave again.

The words she just said were not deceptive; the messages piled up inside Caesar Manor regarding Inner Bay really needed her personal attention, as others couldn't handle it, nor were they qualified to.

Was there trouble in Inner Bay?

Could it be that Alvis Hamlet's father found out his son was attacked and started rampaging?

If that was the case...

While Arthur was still thinking, Marinda looked suspiciously at Arthur.

"That expression of yours, don't tell me this has something to do with you!"

Marinda asked.

"Of course, it has nothing to do with me.

We both slept together last night.

How could I possibly stir up trouble?"

Arthur looked aggrieved, and Marinda flipped him the bird.

The lady didn't argue anything, because Arthur's next words captivated her—

"Do you remember the clue I gave you before?

The high probability is still about that Alvis Hamlet, alias Dorn—well, I've revealed the answer, consider this your New Year's gift.

After all, you just helped me, I'll count that as my New Year's gift!"

Arthur said, gesturing to Marinda to go wherever she was going.

The lady looked at Arthur, surprised.

She hadn't expected that there were still free messages from Arthur's side,

though under the guise of a gift.

Nevertheless, it was still nice.

Thinking this, Marinda prepared to leave.

However, at that moment, Arthur spoke up again—

"Wait!"

As the lady turned around, Arthur threw a beautifully wrapped box her way.

"I made this Mint Elixir, it's refreshing and tastes good too.

This is your real gift!"

As he spoke, Marinda caught the box with her hand.

The blue box, the golden ribbon.

All were her favorite colors.

Looking at the box in her hand, Marinda unconsciously felt a bit odd and a bit at a loss.

Arthur noticed this.

The young 'Spirit Medium' then raised his voice.

"Eh?"

What's with this unexpected expression?

Don't tell me you thought the previous message was your real gift?

Wake up, that one was purely free.

This one is the New Year's gift."

Arthur said, showing a misunderstood and sad demeanor.

Seeing Arthur's look, Marinda's confusion vanished, leaving behind an indescribable feeling.

Finally, the lady picked up the milk oatmeal in front of Arthur and drank it in one gulp, then turned and left.

"I won't come back tonight, I'll be very busy these next few days!"

The voice faded with the smoke.

Arthur scratched his head, muttering in a voice only he could hear.

"I've tasted that milk oatmeal."

After muttering to himself, the young 'Spirit Medium' watched the pedestrians on the road through the window, his heart unknowingly mumbling—

'If I don't truly 'Entry', going to Inner Bay would frighten me, so...

I must catch up!"

Chapter 586

Time had only passed by a few hours, and some 'after-the-fact' tabloids had already started to issue special editions, all of which reported on last night's 'fireworks' and the 'Spirit Medium' battling the 'Winter Monster'.

And there was a drunk who appeared in the tavern—

"I'm telling you, I saw with my own eyes Lord Kledos, the 'Spirit Medium', giving his blessings last night!"

The monster was invisible at first, but as the fireworks shot up one by one, the monster began to appear!

And the strings of firecrackers bursting one after another even made the monster flee in panic!"

A drunk sat there talking loudly.

In South Los's 'Cold Winter Festival', all industries had a long holiday break.

Except for the taverns.

Taverns were the only places that didn't close, and they were the only places that would be packed, especially the small taverns within residential areas, which were overcrowded.

No matter if it was the working-class or middle-class districts, everyone would take this rare opportunity to give themselves a break.

The New Year was just around the corner, couldn't they treat themselves to a drink?

Even the stingiest people would spend around 3 Zeroes on the cheapest mug of ale, sitting there and soaking up the holiday spirit.

But this noisy fellow was clearly not one of them.

This fellow, reeking of alcohol, had obviously had too much to drink the night before.

As a result, no one believed his words; instead, there was a burst of laughter.

During the festive season, everyone treated it as a joke.

Meanwhile, the tavern's Servant came over—festivities were festivities, but when it was time to pay, it was time to pay; he didn't want to have his wages deducted on a holiday by the boss.

Just like smiles don't disappear into thin air, but are merely transferred.

The money owed by those who fled without paying wouldn't vanish into thin air either; it would only be transferred to the Servant.

"What are you looking at?

Do you think I don't have money?

I'm telling you, I have money! I have lots of money!"

The drunk began to make a scene.

The people around immediately looked on with amusement.

Because, according to their experience, most of those who shouted like this were out of money.

The Servant's brows furrowed even more.

The drunk had only been drinking the cheapest ale, but he had already had two mugs!

Two mugs meant 6 Zeroes!

Damn, there were too many people, too busy!

He completely forgot to ask for payment after the guy finished the first mug, even allowing him to get a second one!

In his mind, the Servant lamented that his wage inexplicably decreased by 6 Zeroes.

Therefore, his actions became less polite.

As for staying on to work off the debt?

That's a joke.

Anyone who dares to keep such a drunk to work off the debt is a saint, it's like going in to provide for their retirement!

Not only would the individual not do any work, but they would drink more!

Anyway, I'm already working off debt; there's no drink I wouldn't dare to touch, just extend the term of my indentured service!

As for finding the person's family?

That's a joke too.

What would the family of someone who's soaked themselves in alcohol look like?

The Servant didn't know before, but after working for a year, the Servant was thoroughly frightened—

How could he drink so much, he has poor health, you are responsible!

Ah! How did his leg break? Was it you who broke it, you are responsible!

How come he's still not sober, did you sell fake alcohol, you are responsible!

Bite back!

Just be shameless!

Anyway, you can leave the person, but you must leave the money!

And as a Servant of a small tavern, there really was no way to deal with it.

Take action?

The other party would love for you to take action.

If you do, just wait to go bankrupt.

Once someone lies down, their life soars—got it?

Of course, these people wouldn't dare to make trouble in taverns with powerful backings; they only dared to bully honest business folk like them.

Really dare to make trouble in those powerful taverns?

Once someone lies down there, just wait to be cremated, early takeoff, since the ashes get scattered anyway.

And before death, anything valuable must be thoroughly scavenged.

Including but not limited to flesh, organs, bones, and so on.

Some small taverns' smell of alcohol couldn't suppress that rich Scent of Blood.

Unfortunately, their little tavern was not like that.

The waiter sighed in his heart, even as he tugged on the other person—

"Sir, please do not disrupt our business."

"The last two drinks are on me."

"Now, please leave!"

It pained the waiter, but he could afford the 6 Zeroes.

Moreover, parting with 6 Zeroes was still better than getting entangled with the drunkard.

More importantly, a typical drunk would usually opt to leave 'gracefully' at such a juncture.

Next?

They'd simply try their luck at another tavern.

However, today's situation was a bit special.

No sooner had the drunk raised his hand than he flung the tavern waiter to the ground.

Yet the tavern waiter did not get angry.

Because—

Gold notes!

A 10-denomination gold note was just slapped onto his face.

Everyone saw the scene unfold.

Upon seeing that large-denomination gold note, everyone's eyes bulged.

It was clear that the drunkard hardly seemed like someone who could possess a 10 gold note, neither by the way he was dressed nor by his stained face, especially the dirt caked in his fingernails.

Such a person was nothing but a vagabond.

How could he possibly have money?

Where did this money come from?

Could it have been stolen?

Quite a few patrons started to get ideas at the sight of the 10 gold note.

But the next moment, they all sighed.

For they saw the drunkard bellow loudly.

"I have money!

This was given to me by the 'Spirit Medium' himself!

He told me not to talk about last night's affair—I didn't speak of it; I'm just using it to buy everyone a drink!"

The ruckus made by the drunkard once again filled the surroundings with merriment.

"Right, you didn't speak of it!"

"Indeed!"

"We don't know a thing!"

Everyone responded with laughter.

Then, the tavern waiter quickly pocketed the 10 gold note.

Without giving the drunkard a chance to react, he started to serve up drinks.

Not any pricey liquor, just the cheapest barley beer.

After all, the drunkard wouldn't know the difference.

In truth, that was the case.

Initially, the drunkard showed a hint of regret, but once he saw the alcohol, he tossed caution to the wind and drank glass after glass, babbling on about South Los's 'Spirit Medium' battling the 'Winter Monster'.

Previously, people did not believe it.

Now?

People were skeptical yet somewhat convinced.

Convinced, because the 10 gold note was real.

Disbelieving, because they did not believe in monsters.

It was probably just some misunderstanding, right?

Or maybe they just felt sorry for the fellow?

Many thought so.

But there were others, hidden amongst the common folk, who harbored no doubts at all.

And then, they were disseminating the news in their own way.

The drunkard saw this.

He then pursed his lips in a smile.

After that, he just fell asleep.

His mission was complete.

What followed?

That was for the others to deal with.

Urs had everything planned out well in advance; there was no need for him to worry.

In fact, that was exactly the case.

Under the stealthy direction of the Head Hunter Urs, operating on behalf of Marinda, and closely coordinated by the Rat Street agent Wiggins, a title began to grow familiar among people—

The Winter Guardian!

Chapter 587: Old Charlie's Once Sworn Oath!

The title "Winter Guardian" appeared, and Arthur knew immediately.

Because it was he who had set it—

"Sir, we have spread the title 'Winter Guardian' as per your instructions.

As planned, this evening, it will be 'Winter Blessing Giver'.

Tomorrow morning, I will prompt the newspapers to frequently feature these two titles on the front page headlines."

Hughes reported meticulously.

As one of the first four youngsters around Wiggins who were able to help.

Hughes was immensely grateful to Arthur.

Not because Arthur's arrival meant they were fed and clothed.

But because Arthur's arrival meant their brother Wiggins no longer had to take risks.

They knew what Wiggins relied on to sustain them.

Wiggins, Rat Street, the first Golden Finger.

With his skills, Wiggins could have lived well.

But to care for them, these unrelated fellows, their brother struggled at every step.

And they?

Were constantly worried.

Their brother was indeed the first Golden Finger of Rat Street.

But the previous first Golden Finger had been killed in the street.

They did not wish for their brother to suffer the same fate.

So, Hughes, when he could handle a club, claimed territory in Rat Street.

That was the first time he saw his brother furious—

'I am the "Golden Finger", but you cannot be!

You have a better future than I do!

I will find a way for you to get an education, to become someone important, not like me, a rat in Rat Street!'

When he shouted these words, his brother had hit him.

Not hard.

The palm landed on his back with just a slap.

Afterward, his brother squatted down, hugged his head, and wept bitterly.

Thus, Hughes became even more determined to do as he did.

Because—

He was the second oldest!

Beneath him were the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth.

Six younger brothers and one sister who needed his care.

He also had to share his brother's burdens.

Hughes told his third brother the brother's words after he had fallen asleep.

And the next day...

When Hughes, carrying a club, left the house, the third, fourth, and fifth were beside him.

The four were known for being fierce and desperate.

Because they knew that if they wanted their younger siblings to become someone important, they had to be fierce, they had to be desperate.

Only by daring to risk everything, could they carve out a future.

Thus, Wiggins' small group gained a reputation in Rat Street.

Now, with Wiggins pulled into training at Rick Farm, Hughes, being the oldest, naturally became one of the most suitable Agents.

Yes, just one.

The other was what Arthur predicted as a 'very ambitious agent'.

However, before that individual truly emerged, Hughes had already dealt with him.

To Hughes, that individual's conspicuous behavior could jeopardize his brother's standing in Arthur's eyes.

This was something Hughes would never allow.

Similarly, when facing Arthur, Hughes chose to be honest.

He would not let himself affect his brother's place in Arthur's heart.

Because—

He needed to be responsible for his family.

And Arthur, faced with Hughes who fought for his 'family', smiled.

What could be more delightful than someone who fights for their 'family'?

Naturally, it is...

When one's 'family' is not just one person.

Upon learning from Hughes that there were six younger brothers and one sister, Arthur immediately promised Hughes that if he did well enough this time, he would have South Los's best teachers educate the three youngest brothers and the only sister.

In fact, with the 'family' boost, Hughes did far better than imagined.

"Hmm, well done."

Arthur was never stingy with his praise.

Then, the young Spirit Medium continued—

"Tell those tabloids to start serializing novels like 'Winter's Secret' and 'Winter's Battle' in the evening special edition.

Remember, apart from me.

Also, mention two people.

Madam Susan, Ms. Camille."

Both Madam Susan and Ms. Camille held considerable prestige in South Los.

If such figures became a sort of endorsement, it would definitely ignite public opinion in South Los to some extent.

Especially when both ladies would not come forward to explain...

Arthur could already imagine how explosive the scene would be.

XP would surely surge like a tumultuous ocean.

Of course, this sort of thing was likely only possible to do once.

Even if Madam Susan and Ms. Camille loved him dearly.

They would not allow him to cause such trouble again.

As for why it was only likely?

Of course, there was the variable that was Old Charlie.

Arthur was certain, if his grandfather intervened, the two ladies would agree once more.

Not to mention agreeing to such things.

They would even give their lives to his grandfather.

In this regard, Arthur was extremely confident.

'I wonder where Old Charlie is now? What is he doing?' Arthur silently pondered.

...

The pale, lifeless Land of Death.

A white warhorse pulled a pure white carriage across this desolate land.

Old Charlie sat in the carriage, his hands resting on a cane whose handle was carved from an unknown skeleton's skull, the pure silver ring inlaid with bone on his right ring finger shimmering with a light unique to 'Death' with each tap of his hand.

At that moment, Old Charlie looked undoubtedly like 'Death'.

Or rather...

Under the power of the same source, Old Charlie was, to some extent, 'Death' himself.

However, Old Charlie was well aware it was only to some extent.

He still had some distance from the other party.

But, that distance was being closed little by little.

'Thank you, my dear grandson!' Old Charlie could sense the three Demigods named Hunter, Kate, and Aaron encircling 'Death,' and he couldn't help but smile.

Old Charlie had heard of the organization 'Bell Tower,' to which the three Demigods belonged, but he had never dealt with them directly.

Thus, the appearance of the three Demigods was truly an unexpected joy, making his plan incredibly smooth.

Not only did he not have to sacrifice half of his Body, but he could seize... no, deceive... no, that's not right, take back!

Yes!

Take back!

I, Charlie Cremos, am merely taking back the power that originally belonged to me.

'Speed is of the essence!

The objective of the Land of Death has been achieved!

Next is...

The Wall of Sighs!'

Old Charlie thought to himself, and the white warhorse turned the carriage around, speeding towards the location only the Ride of Death could discern.

Using 'Death', he sensed the destination growing nearer, and Old Charlie took a deep breath—

'Dear Yevna, wait for me!

I am coming!

I once swore to you that even Death could not separate us!

So wait for me!

Don't be afraid!

I am coming to take you home!'

Heat flooded his heart, but Old Charlie forced himself not to think about his wife any longer.

He, once again, made himself become indifferent.

He, temporarily became exactly like 'Death'.

Chapter 588 An Indescribable Opportunity!

This year's Cold Winter Festival in South Los was destined to be an extraordinary one.

During the seven-day long holiday following the Winter Banquet, the topic of the 'Spirit Medium' battling the 'Winter Monster' not only maintained its fiery popularity but also became increasingly hot!

Some clever people had already realized that someone was fanning the flames.

But, that didn't matter.

Because everyone loved to hear stories about the 'Spirit Mediums' of South Los.

With the emergence of the 'Winter Monster,' incidents involving the South Los 'Spirit Mediums' in the past were compiled one by one.

To make the whole story lively and interesting, Arthur had specifically asked Fujin to visit Garcia.

Of course, it wasn't to have Garcia write it.

Instead, it was to have Garcia recommend a colleague with exceptional writing skills.

Because of this, the new member of the 'Cloak Society' was quite indignant.

While looking for a writer for Arthur, he also went to great lengths to write several pieces and submitted them to Arthur.

Then...

Arthur tossed them into the furnace.

What is 'Breaking Up with a Female Ghost'?

What is 'Traveling with a Ghoul'?

What is 'The Human Chair and the Female Demon'?

What is 'Kledos and the Giant Swordsmanship Chief Walking Together'?

What is 'Kledos and the 'Blood Descendants' Traveling Together by Ship'?

What is 'The Magical Me Still Envy Every Day of the Muggles'?

Arthur swore that if it weren't for the fact that he was just missing a werewolf and a yeti, he would have believed he was about to set off to teach the Defense Against the Dark Arts course at Hogwarts.

Moreover, Arthur swore again that if there was even a hint of truth in what was written, he would eat the teapot in front of him.

However, Arthur still secretly admired Garcia's guts and imagination.

Comparing Ms. Camille to a female demon.

Comparing Julie, the Female Swordmaster of the Earl of the South Los House, to a giant monster.

"Be thankful, it was I who saw this manuscript.

If those two ladies had seen it, you would have experienced for yourself what the terror of a female demon or a giant monster is like."

Arthur muttered to himself.

Afterward, his gaze shifted to the text in front of him—

[The continuous week-long portrayal of the 'Winter Monster' has led the people of South Los to accept that the 'Winter Monster' is ten meters tall, can become intangible, can bring extreme cold, carries plagues and diseases, and likes to abduct naughty children. As the hero who drives it away, your reputation continues to rise; XP+500]

[The children of South Los admire you greatly as their hero. This pure idolization once again increases your reputation; XP+500]

[Even more people have heard of your name: XP+500]

...

For seven consecutive days, Arthur's XP experienced a ladder-like surge.

At first it was just a couple of hundred, but from the third day on, it skyrocketed.

Every day brought Arthur a considerable income. Even though today was the second day after the holiday had ended, because the level of discussion had not diminished at all, XP income remained stable.

Even better, there were unexpected gains—

[More than five hundred thousand people believe you are the 'Winter Guardian,' and you have gained an ineffable opportunity; XP+1000]

[More than five hundred thousand people believe you are the 'Winter Blessing Giver,' and you have gained an ineffable opportunity; XP+1000]

...

These were the words Arthur saw this morning.

Compared to the first three 'daily routine' messages,

The last two were what really caught Arthur's interest.

XP was certainly worth celebrating.

But that so-called ineffable 'opportunity' led Arthur to all kinds of speculation.

Because Arthur's [Spirituality] was more active than ever during this time.

[Spirituality] was telling him that he had to seize the opportunity.

He must!

Otherwise, he would regret it for the rest of his life!

This unprecedented level of activity made Arthur mutter to himself from the bottom of his heart—

'It concerns the 'Cold Winter,' so the opportunity must also be 'Cold Winter-related.' Could it be that during the 'Cold Winter Festival' in South Los, I will receive an unprecedented boon?

Or does it mean I will receive the protection of the 'Cold Winter,' and everyone with malice towards me will freeze into blocks of ice in the cold winter winds?

It couldn't possibly be...

The 'God of Winter,' could it?'

Thinking this, Arthur couldn't help but shake his head.

'Impossible!'

'The gods have long since departed!'

'Even Ascend Step is called "Demigod," but it's still far too short of a true "God"—just some advertising and a few made-up stories, and out comes "an opportunity for deification?"

'Isn't that too childish?'

'It's only half a million people anyway.'

'South Los is said to have a population of twenty million—what's that in comparison?'

'It's not even one-tenth.'

'If one-tenth of the entire South Los recognized me as the "Winter Guardian," the "Winter Blessing Giver," would the chance increase slightly?'

'At least, wouldn't it be more tangible than it is now?'

Arthur pondered this at the bottom of his heart.

Clearly, the young "Spirit Medium" was outwardly dismissive, but his true desire was to give it a try.

'Although it's just "a faint chance that's hard to articulate."'

'Although the success rate can be foreseen not to be high.'

'Although there are too many "althoughs," but...'

Arthur wanted to try.

Without hesitation, Arthur had Fujin relay his intentions once again.

Increase the promotion!

At this stage, he has reached a bottleneck.

Further promotion won't be of much use; it can only rely on accumulation over time now.

Arthur was aware of this.

But he still went through with it.

Because—

He was laying the foundations for next year's "Cold Winter Festival."

This year was far too rushed.

He hadn't prepared anything.

Next year...

No, wrong!

It's this year already!

This year, he wanted to prepare thoroughly!

He needed a proper altar; he needed some high-ranking observers.

For instance: the Countess of South Los, the Duke of the Inner Bay.

And if Mother Tigress and Old Lion showed up, then the rest of the nobility would surely attend.

He wanted to use these people to push his renown across the entire South County.

Not one-tenth of South Los.

But that one-tenth of the people of South County recognized him.

By then...

The opportunity would become clearer, wouldn't it?

Arthur did not seek something readily at hand; he simply wanted a direction to move forward.

And that required strength.

It wasn't easy to expect Mother Tigress, Old Lion, and the many nobles to sit quietly together, even with his special identity and bloodline connections.

Strength had to be the foundation.

Phew!

Arthur took a deep breath, his gaze turning to his current XP value.

[XP:11981]

...

And the limit for the Entry-level Atlas "Great Orange" had been lowered to 9981 points after a week of Arthur's efforts.

This meant his XP was sufficient.

Not only just enough, but there was even a surplus.

Without any hesitation, Arthur rose and walked out of No. 2 Cork Street.

He needed to find a safe place to hold the Promotion Ritual.

And for this, Arthur was already prepared.

He would go—

Above the sea!

Chapter 589 Coconut Island

Off the coast of South Los, Coconut Island.

Almost two thousand pirates staggered drunkenly about the island.

South Los was celebrating the 'Cold Winter Festival'.

The pirates on Coconut Island were also celebrating the 'Cold Winter Festival', and they were far more indulgent than most people in South Los—plenty of roast meat, ample booze, women heavily made up became the theme of pirates' 'Cold Winter Festival'. They laughed and drank heartily, and the occasional screams of women only made the pirates' laughter grow louder.

But that was about it.

Although many pirates wanted to go further, these women were protected.

Bloody John had promised protection to these women from the moment they set foot on the island and had formally announced it—no pirate wanted to provoke this 'Bloody John'.

Even if they didn't all come from the same Pirate Group.

Because—

Among the four Pirate Groups gathered on Coconut Island, 'Bloody John' was the strongest.

Whether they were the 'Caspian Marauder', the 'Devil of Dokiman Island', or the 'North County Gentleman Pirate Gang', they all recognized and... submitted to Captain John.

Those who did not recognize and submit?

They were chopped up by Captain John and fed to the fishes.

Those who recognized him but did not submit?

They were hanged by Captain John and then fed to the fishes.

Only those who recognized and submitted could stay alive.

And plenty of food and alcohol made these surviving pirates' recognition of 'Bloody John' soar, including the women who were invited to the island.

They candidly accepted their identity as prostitutes.

That's right!

They were prostitutes.

But they were just prostitutes, not spoils of war.

If the pirates wanted them, they had to pay.

No money?

No chance.

Of course, there were always exceptions—

Matilda.

A girl who followed most of the women to Coconut Island to make money...

A girl!

The sweet-looking Matilda became the object of pursuit by many pirates as soon as she arrived on the island, but not a single one succeeded.

Matilda's price was too high!

500 Gold Coins!

"Is your XX lined with gold?"

"Does your XX have diamonds?"

Every pirate who tried to haggle and ended up defeated at Matilda's insistence would curse loudly in front of her door.

But being cursed a few times didn't mean losing a piece of flesh.

So, Matilda didn't care at all.

However, as the departure date approached, the girl started to get anxious in secret—for the 'Cold Winter Festival', 'Bloody John' spent 2000 gold notes to invite ladies from nearly a dozen nearby islands. Anyone who came could receive 5 gold notes, and even if they did nothing, as long as they stayed for twelve days, they could receive another 5 gold notes.

The 'Cold Winter Festival' lasted three days before and seven days after, making a total of ten days.

But 'Bloody John', wanting everyone to have a better time, extended it by two days to a total of twelve days.

Even Matilda, who disliked pirates, had to admit the generosity of Captain John.

However, 10 gold notes wasn't what she wanted.

She wanted 500 Gold Coins!

Only with 500 Gold Coins could she change her identity and live the life she wanted in South Los.

Rumor has it that South Los is rich, prosperous, and safe.

There are endless delicacies, theaters, libraries, and grand parades from time to time, not to mention countless shops on West Mok Avenue.

Matilda aspired for that place.

The first time she heard about it, she yearned deeply for it.

But she knew that to settle in South Los, she needed money.

So, she planned to sell her first time for a good price.

And then—

She started her new life.

Therefore, when she heard about "Bloody John's" recruitment on the island, she immediately headed there.

Unfortunately, the pirates, who were rumored to be wealthy, turned out to be much poorer than imagined.

Don't even mention 500 Gold Coins.

They couldn't even produce 50 Gold Coins.

Maybe those First Mates or captains could come up with that amount.

But Matilda didn't dare to mess with those people.

Because she knew very well that once she got involved with them, she wouldn't be able to get away, and most likely would become their personal plaything.

When she got old and lost her looks, she would be kicked to the curb.

She absolutely didn't want that.

So, she set her sights on another very unique presence on the island.

The man named "Horton."

Unlike the other crude, dirty pirates, this man was clean, wearing a gemstone blue robe, a black shawl, always holding a book in his hand, even during the Cold Winter Festival, he wouldn't join the pirates in indulging in debauchery, but quietly sat by the sea watching the sunrise, or strolling on the beach at sunset.

When he spoke, he was never harsh or loud.

He was always so deliberate, appearing graceful and well-mannered.

Even when receiving Food or drinks from others, he would always say thank you.

Of course, these were not the main points.

The main point was, on the day of the Winter Banquet, Matilda witnessed Captain John giving Mr. Horton a large chest of Gold Coins.

At least 1000 of them!

And that was what she needed!

Moreover, compared to other pirates, Horton was simply too outstanding.

Matilda hoped she could have a good day and by the way make 500 Gold Coins.

Therefore, Matilda got herself cleaned up and put on her most treasured white dress, and headed for Horton's residence on Coconut Island—Horton lived at the highest place on Coconut Island, where the sea breezes were the fiercest.

Matilda didn't know why Horton chose to live there.

But she knew, her feet hurt.

To better achieve her life goals, Matilda not only wore her treasured white dress but also put on high heels.

Apart from when she first bought them, this was Matilda's second time wearing them.

Therefore, Matilda hadn't really gotten used to the high heels.

Just two steps in, her feet began to hurt.

This forced Matilda to rub her ankles and inwardly lament why high heels even existed.

But at that moment—

"Miss Matilda, are you in some sort of trouble?"

I think I can help you!"

A voice rang out from behind her.

Matilda turned and saw "Bluebeard," the First Mate of the Devil of Dokiman Island Pirate Group.

A pirate who had only one eye left.

And that remaining eye was staring at her with ill intent.

Matilda had seen this kind of malevolence too many times.

She knew what he wanted.

Without hesitation, Matilda quickened her pace.

She was ready to leave.

She believed that with Captain John's warning, the other party probably wouldn't do anything excessive.

But she underestimated the audacity of this pirate First Mate.

Or rather...

She underestimated the charm she exuded at that moment.

In the remaining eye of the First Mate of the Devil of Dokiman Island Pirate Group, desire was brimming, and his smile was tinged with a hint of brutality and cruelty—

"Miss Matilda, would you consider becoming my wife?

I'll treat you well, just like my previous seven wives!

You will be my eighth wife!"

Chapter 590: Into the Gun's Muzzle!

Matilda definitely did not want to become a pirate's wife.

Let alone the eighth wife.

About 'Bluebeard' before her, Matilda had heard many rumors, the most famous of which was that this First Mate of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group was once an officer from North County, from a well-off family with a promising future. However, just when everyone thought this gentleman would rise to great heights, he was discovered to have cruelly murdered his seven wives using knives, swords, firearms, and machinery and even preserved their corpses in the cellar.

After that?

The gentleman took to the sea and became a pirate.

And he became renowned, known as "Bluebeard."

As for his real name?

It had long been forgotten.

What was remembered instead was his later rise to become the First Mate of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group.

Because—

It was this 'Bluebeard' who set fire to Dokiman Island.

Of course, compared to the captain who methodically slaughtered the residents of Dokiman Island, he still fell a bit short.

Thus, this pirate group was known as the 'Devil of Dokiman Island.'

And the guys in this pirate group were all utterly despicable villains.

Facing such men, Matilda always kept her distance.

Just then, as the other party finished speaking, Matilda nearly turned and ran.

But the next moment, she was blocked by 'Bluebeard.'

The First Mate of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group burst out laughing and spread his arms—

"My dear, don't be in such a hurry!

I've prepared a wedding ritual!

My captain will even come to attend it personally!"

With that, 'Bluebeard' took big strides forward, ready to embrace Matilda.

Matilda retreated in fright.

"Have you forgotten Captain John's promise?"

Matilda tried to use 'Bloody John' to intimidate 'Bluebeard.'

But Matilda immediately regretted it.

'Bluebeard,' previously sporting a trace of ferocity, now had a completely distorted face.

"Don't talk to me about 'Bloody John'!

This island will soon belong to our 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group!

And him?

We will surely kill him!"

The First Mate of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group growled.

The low voice and ferocious face made Matilda's complexion change.

This is bad!

These men are planning to rebel against Captain John!

Betrayal among pirates is all too common.

Ordinarily, Matilda would have treated such news as a bit of gossip.

But now?

She already knew about the rebellion before it had even truly begun...

What would be her fate?

Matilda wasn't extraordinarily smart, but she wasn't foolish either.

She knew very well that death was before her.

In fact, it was true—

"I had hoped to hold a 'wedding' for you, to make you one of my precious collectibles!

But unfortunately...

You always make me angry!"

'Bluebeard's' voice continued to be low, but the sound that burst from his throat was like the roar of a beast. The First Mate of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group approached Matilda, lowered his head, and looked at his prey with a condescending gaze, excitedly grinning to reveal his yellow, rotten teeth.

The words went on—

"I will tear you apart in the most cruel manner.

Of course, don't worry.

I will let Horton, that sissy, accompany you. You've been looking at him these days. You like that sissy, right?

Don't worry!

I will treat that sissy just as I will treat you!

What I hate the most is those pretentious sorts!"

With that, 'Bluebeard' began to undress.

As a pirate, "Bluebeard" wasn't just all talk—he genuinely intended to do so.

And then—

"Bluebeard" ran into the muzzle of a gun!

Arthur needed a promotion to Entry.

Even at sea, some cover was necessary.

So, being one of Arthur's Vests, how could "Horton" not stir up some trouble?

Originally, Arthur had planned to have his Vest, Horton, kill a few pirates, publicly claiming these pirates harbored ill intentions towards him, and thereby eradicate the Pirate Group they belonged to.

As for killing pirates, Arthur had no psychological burden whatsoever.

Compared to the guys who still made a slight effort to disguise themselves, pirates who directly engaged in killing and arson naturally needed to be prepared to be killed.

However, compared to this kind of 'initiative', how could it match up to the situation that presented itself right in front of him?

So—

Horton, holding a book in one hand, slowly walked down from the mountain top.

Without any disguise, his footsteps and breathing were clearly audible.

"Bluebeard" spotted Horton immediately.

The First Mate of the "Devil of Dokiman Island" Pirate Group was initially startled, but soon sneered.

"You pretentious fool!

Turn into ashes for me!"

"Bluebeard" roared, stretching out his hand.

Whoosh!

A Blaze rose up, the searing heat and strong winds instantly knocked Matilda to the ground.

Her white dress got dirty.

Her high heels snapped off entirely.

But Matilda was no longer concerned about these matters.

Fire?

Where did these flames come from?

Matilda looked towards the First Mate's waist.

There was a canteen.

No!

It contained—

Oil!

Now that she realized this, Matilda grew even more confused.

The flames came from the oil.

But how were the flames ignited?

And why could the flames rise so high?

Matilda's mind became a chaotic mess, but as "Bluebeard" raised his hand to swing the fire towards Horton, the lady couldn't help but shout out loud.

"Be careful!"

The voice was urgent, but it abruptly stopped.

The Blaze enveloped a large area in front of "Bluebeard" like dragon's breath, engulfing Horton within it.

The scorching wind, sharp as knives, prepared to slice through Horton in the flames.

"Burn!"

Shatter!

Turn all into debris for me!"

"Bluebeard," seeing Horton engulfed in flames, burst out laughing.

The laugh was loud and wild.

And it carried an indescribable arrogance.

As a result, the laughter grew louder and louder.

However, soon, the laughter unconsciously diminished, "Bluebeard's" eyes involuntarily widened, and the smile on his face became stiff.

Within the flames, a figure appeared faintly, walking forward slowly.

The scorching wind, as sharp as blades, blew on the figure's body, akin to a gentle breeze caressing the face.

The flames, useless!

The gusts, useless!

All of it, completely useless!

Sweat poured from "Bluebeard's" forehead, and as it slid down his cheek, a hand reached out from within the flames, grabbing the neck of the "Devil of Dokiman Island" Pirate Group's First Mate effortlessly, lifting his body with just a slight squeeze of the fingers.

The moment the sensation of suffocation appeared, the only sound left in "Bluebeard's" ears was this soft chant—

"Please listen to the wind!"