

Great Master 591

Chapter 591: Really Walking into the Gun Barrel!

Wind!

Fierce wind!

The wind that seemed to erupt from the ground enveloped 'Bluebeard' as it spun around him rapidly.

The invisible and colorless wind now displayed its own color—

Red!

Scarlet red!

Mixed with the crimson of blood and viscera!

Following that was a ghastly pale.

It was the color that emerged when even bone fragments were caught within it.

Ugh!

Matilda, to the side, began to retch violently.

It was the scene of the blaze that had just appeared which frightened the lady so greatly that her curiosity drove her to observe everything.

She saw Horton, unscathed amid the flames.

She watched Horton stroll through the fire, just like a young noble gentleman.

Then, she saw the wind!

And because she was so close, Matilda could even see that First Mate of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group being flayed and torn apart.

Matilda was no naïve little girl, but this was the first time she had witnessed flaying and dismemberment.

Under the intense shock, Matilda's body followed its most primal response.

Last night's dinner came pouring out, and eventually, she even vomited up stomach acid.

Horton glanced at Matilda and, with a flick of his hand, the chunks of flesh landed on the empty ground beside him.

Just as Matilda had stopped her vomiting, she began again.

Horton saw this but paid it no mind.

He had more important things to do.

The wind carried Horton toward the distant port.

With a sweeping glance, Horton saw the fleet of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island'.

A two-masted caravel sailboat, three Kirk sailboats.

All four ships had been modified.

The caravel had completely abandoned its cabins, just for the sake of having more cannons.

The three Kirk sailboats had completely forsaken their cannons for more cabin space, even the nets and grappling hooks on the deck were for the purpose of transferring and binding goods.

'A very typical inshore pirate group!'

Arthur, controlling the Vest, evaluated this way.

From South Los to the 'Yan Fort' sea area, most people refer to it as inshore, with numerous islands and a not insignificant population. Some are loyal to the South Los Family, some to 'Yan Fort,' others are independent, and this so-called loyalty is merely formal.

Beyond paying some taxes every year and flying the flags of the two families, they can trade at the ports of South Los, the ports of 'Yan Fort,' but generally, they had no other obligations.

Likewise, South Los had no obligations to the individual islands.

Everyone maintained a 'rule-based' peace.

You pay taxes, you trade.

You get into trouble, you deal with it yourself.

That's inshore life.

Each mind their own.

That includes pirates.

Inshore pirates typically have one assault ship and several transport vessels.

The former for attacks, the latter for transporting and selling goods.

Even, most of the transport vessels are not officially part of the Pirate Group but are legally recognized merchants.

And everyone is well aware of this arrangement.

However, these pirates are smart, they never rob the islands protected by important figures, only merchant ships, and as long as one complies obediently, they won't kill.

The pirates also understand the principle of not killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Why not turn these islands into their own territories?

Although this area is known as inshore, it is large enough. So far, there are as many as two hundred seventy-seven documented islands, and this is only those that are inhabited. Including uninhabited islands, the number would need to be multiplied by five.

Therefore, when the Old Earl of South Los declared his intention to make the islands on the South Los side of the inshore his territory, the islanders simply abandoned their islands and left.

Leaving the Old Earl to occupy uninhabited islands.

Then...

The Old Earl kept pursuing, and the supply line started to stretch indefinitely.

And at this time, the islanders whose hiding places were unknown began attacking the supply lines.

Attack after attack left the Old Earl exhausted and running ragged.

More importantly, these islanders began to harass the shipping routes of South Los merchant ships.

Dozens of companies' ships were robbed, and the robbers simply claimed they were "victims," acting "out of necessity"—and such rhetoric received support from other non-coastal nobles in South County, especially those in Inner Bay. The Grand Duke of the time even declared that the Old Earl's tyranny would lead the South Los Family to extinction.

Complaints were rife for a time.

So much so that the Old Earl had to acknowledge his mistakes.

Of course, it was done with great reluctance.

It was heard that the Old Earl fell ill during this time.

Then, he secretly prepared his troops, ready to teach these islanders a lesson.

But before the Old Earl could take action, some islanders who had tasted the sweetness of loot turned into pirates. The entire island raised the black Skeleton flag and gathered forces on a large scale.

When hundreds of warships appeared outside Xisis Port, the Old Earl suddenly realized the enormity of his mistake.

In the end?

The victors were naturally the South Los House.

But it was a costly victory.

Not only were the warships heavily damaged, but the family's private army suffered thousands of deaths.

In fact, if the family's concealed trump cards had not withstood the fierce attacks of the three Pirate Generals and had taken down two of them, Xisis Port would have been breached long ago.

To demonstrate that the South Los House couldn't be trespassed, the delirious Old Earl issued an order to "pursue the last Pirate General".

As a result, the only two remaining large warships of the South Los House were damaged in this pursuit, with one even sinking at the edge of the coastal waters, at the entry of the open sea: Shipwreck Bay.

And the Old Earl of South Los?

Fell ill again.

Many people suspected that the Old Earl's untimely death, which was said to be caused by several bouts of anger, had key reasons behind it.

Of course, the Old Earl being angered to bedridden was not few in number.

However, none of this had anything to do with Arthur for the moment.

He was merely controlling his Vest, his gaze sweeping over the four ships below—

"Someone's there!"

The lookout, who had been soaked in alcohol for twelve days, finally spotted Horton's figure.

Immediately, the lookout shouted out.

At the same time, a signal flare was launched.

Bang!

The crimson signal flare was still dazzling in daylight, visible to the entire island.

After confirming this, Horton raised his hand.

Suddenly, a strong wind blew.

The wind carried the waves.

The waves boosted the ferocity of the wind.

The next moment, the pirates at the dock were stunned.

They stared dumbfounded at the tornado, over 30 meters high, approaching the dock.

"Run!"

Someone yelled out.

Everyone turned to run, but members of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group found themselves unable to escape.

The tornado, as if it had eyes, swept up the four boats.

In just a moment, the four boats turned to wreckage, and none of the people on them managed to escape.

This caused Sakiri, who had just run down from the island and was known as the 'Devil of Dokiman Island,' to roar in anger—

"Horton!"

In the shout, the captain grabbed a pirate by his side.

Boom!

Blaze erupted from the grabbed pirate.

The next moment, a huge fireball with a radius of 2 meters flew toward Horton in the air.

Horton in mid-air, however, smiled.

Because—

This was truly running into the barrel of a gun!

Chapter 592: Unexpected Discovery!

Sakiri was using "Abdel's Pyrokinesis"!

And it was even at level 4 "Abdel's Pyrokinesis"!

Arthur, who also possessed level 4 "Abdel's Pyrokinesis," easily confirmed this with the Entry-level "Storm" perception of his General Puppet.

In fact, when the other party's First Mate, that 'Bluebeard,' ignited the flames, Arthur had already speculated.

However, the cautious Arthur did not take it lightly because he "knew the enemy and knew himself."

He liked to keep cards hidden.

What about Sakiri, known as the "Devil of Dokiman Island"?

Probability would suggest he would also have one or two cards hidden up his sleeve, right?

Otherwise...

He couldn't possibly have survived this far just on luck, could he?

As Arthur thought this, facing the incoming blaze, he simply raised his hand—

The Storm arose again!

This time, the wreck of four ships was completely obliterated.

Wood chips and twisted metal, like shields, protected one of Arthur's vests, 'Horton.'

Of course, most importantly, the gold coins, gold bricks, and so on from the four ships all disappeared without a trace in the "Storm."

They were all absorbed by 'Horton,' replenishing his energy.

The power of the General Puppet was undoubtedly impressive.

The Entry-level "Storm" ability was indeed a unique existence under Arthur's command.

Even during regular combat, Arthur was slightly inferior.

But the consumption was also immense.

Just now, the seemingly effortless battle had consumed one-third of the General Puppet's energy, and a full recharge required 6000 Gold Coins or continuous bathing in moonlight for 60 days.

That meant, the battle just now had already cost Arthur 2000 Gold Coins.

On a normal day, Arthur would probably have felt quite distressed for a while.

But now it was different!

It's not that under normal conditions, the General Puppet's efficiency in replenishing energy through food, sleep, and bathing in moonlight had significantly improved.

But rather...

Gold was not lacking before his eyes!

Would pirates lack gold?

They would!

Their greed makes them perpetually short of gold, forever tirelessly chasing after gold!

But they are only short of gold, not without gold.

Especially for a pirate group with a considerable reputation.

Many pirates' favorite thing to do is to convert the plundered items into gold and store them in the ship's hold until they can't fit anymore, then choose a deserted island to bury it as a contingency fund or retirement fund.

However, it is exactly because of this that the seeds of internal strife are sown.

The reason that the pirate groups near the coast disappear is more than half because of these buried golds.

Because pirates are also salaried.

Simply put, a part of that buried gold, aside from what is due to the captain, most of it belongs to the crew.

But oh, how alluring gold is!

Who wouldn't want to take a bit more?

Thus, it's commonplace among pirates for captains to murder crew members and crew members to murder captains.

This also led to that widely circulated saying—

Betrayal and being betrayed are the destiny of pirates!

However, the "Devil of Dokiman Island" pirate group doesn't need to worry about this.

Because the gold on the ship all belongs to the captain, Sakiri.

The crew members can only receive a miserably tiny bit of salary.

Rebellion?

There have been!

They were all turned into torches by Sakiri.

Moreover, Sakiri also targeted the crew members' families.

So much so that for a long time, no one was willing to join the "Devil of Dokiman Island" pirate group. Ordinary people feared Sakiri's cruelty, and Sakiri's crew feared even more, but with the joining of 'Bluebeard,' this phenomenon changed—It was not just that 'Bluebeard' brought enough men, but also because 'Bluebeard' displayed the power gained from Sakiri.

Such power attracted those madmen of the seas.

No one understood the importance of power better than the pirates.

Thus, when rumors spread, the "Devil of Dokiman Island" Pirate Group gathered ample manpower, and their fleet swiftly expanded to be one of the formidable pirate groups in nearby waters.

Of course, those madmen were turned into mincemeat by the "Storm" of the General Puppet.

The gold that Sakiri always carried with him on the ship also became the energy of the General Puppet.

Arthur felt the abundant energy of the General Puppet and waved his hand again—

This time it wasn't just the shipwreck remains.

Seawater!

The seawater was sucked up by the tornado and poured directly on the Blaze that was about to touch the "Wreckage Ship Shield."

Hiss!

When the Blaze met the seawater, steam immediately rose.

However, the momentum of the Blaze was not hindered and still hit the "Wreckage Ship Shield."

Boom!

The firelight flickered in the steam, and the loud booming sound seemed like the roar of thunder.

Sakiri's roar was deafening—

"Go to hell!"

The exploding fireball split into 9 Flame Arrows that scattered in all directions.

It wasn't that Sakiri didn't want to aim at Horton.

It was the steam that obscured his view, making the Devil of Dokiman Island's captain unable to see where Horton was, forcing the Flame Arrows to shoot randomly.

Simultaneously, another large fireball was "borrowed" from a pirate beside Sakiri and blasted into the steam.

Sakiri's idea was simple—using the high heat of the flame and the airflow from the explosion to disperse the steam and increase the temperature to burn Horton.

The idea itself wasn't wrong.

If, however, Horton, controlled by Arthur, had not left the area, this would have indeed been feasible.

But as soon as the steam spread, Arthur had already maneuvered the General Puppet out of the Abdul's Pyrokinesis attack range using the regime of "Storm."

Much higher up, making use of the General Puppet's vantage point, Arthur watched as Sakiri threw one fireball after another into the fog formed by the steam.

'A ritual focused on recovery?

Or a secret technique?'

Arthur observed Sakiri.

By the time the third fireball was thrown, Sakiri's breathing became rapid, but after taking a few deep breaths, the rapid breathing stabilized, and he could even throw a fourth fireball, although his breathing became rapid again as he threw it, but quickly, after a few breaths, it steadied again.

Immediately, Arthur became interested.

If it's possible to recover physical strength...

Could it also recharge the energy of the General Puppet?

From the fact that activities like eating and sleeping could obviously restore physical strength, it was clear that physical strength was also a form of energy.

Thinking of this, when Arthur saw Sakiri gasping again, he spared no effort, drawing on the gold while vigorously propelling the "Storm"—

Swoosh!

Intense winds whipped up, causing the sea to churn.

The remaining ships in the port of Coconut Island bobbed up and down.

And when a cloud brought in specifically by Arthur arrived, lightning fittingly struck down.

Boom!

Electric sparks flickered, and thunder rumbled loudly!

Some ordinary pirates were already scared by this spectacle.

These people wet their pants as they ran toward the island's shelter.

The captain of the Devil of Dokiman Island Pirate Group, Sakiri, also changed his complexion.

Sakiri hadn't expected that effeminate Horton to be so strong.

It wasn't just the wind; it was a storm!

Seeing that cloud and the thunder, the captain of the Devil of Dokiman Island Pirate Group immediately thought of the Earl of South Los and, thinking of the Earl, he did not hesitate and turned to run.

He too needed to enter the shelter.

Only there could he avoid the thunder.

And just as the captain turned to flee, 11 invisible Wind Arrows that had been concealed in the wind for a long time and were charged up shot out abruptly—

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Puh! Puh! Puh!

Chapter 593: The Scented Treasure Map!

Sakiri lay on the ground, unable to get up, still spitting out fresh blood.

The captain of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group glared at Horton in the sky, with a look of unwillingness and regret in his eyes.

He was unwilling to die like this, for he had grand ambitions.

He regretted allowing his First Mate to provoke the other party, which had brought about his downfall.

'Indeed...

Was this Old John's scheme?

Did he bring this seemingly harmless, yet actually terrifying guy, just to lure me into a trap?'

In his dying moments, Sakiri couldn't help but think of 'Bloody John.'

The captain of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group believed this was a trick by 'Bloody John.'

And indeed...

As the dark clouds appeared and thunder roared, the old captain had immediately ducked into a shelter.

It was a shelter specially designed against the Earl of South Los!

It could effectively disperse the power of thunder!

Although it was just a few lightning rods, they were genuinely life-saving devices!

Pirates sailing the nearby seas understood well that if they didn't want to be struck by lightning for no reason, they must have a shelter with efficient lightning rods.

Coconut Island was no exception.

In fact, Old John had added many conductive installations to ensure greater safety.

All the pirates in the port of Coconut Island had scattered.

Arthur, manipulating the General Puppet, decapitated Sakiri and fired a Wind Arrow into both sides of his chest before finally descending.

Of course, he didn't actually get close.

Instead, he used the power of the 'Storm' to search Sakiri's body.

It was somewhat similar to the 'Hand of Void,' but could delve deeper because...

Wind, permeates everything!

Soon, Arthur found a notebook and a compass needle on Sakiri's body.

Then, Arthur discovered in Sakiri's rectum a sheepskin parchment, divided into quarters, each wrapped around a pig's bladder—all rolled into balls and emitting an odd smell.

Even though he was using the General Puppet to do this, Arthur still felt a sense of discomfort.

He felt the power of the 'Storm' had been dirtied.

Tainted.

So, Arthur washed the sheepskin papers wrapped around the pig's bladders in sea water several times before he opened them.

Blank!

There were no texts or drawings.

Even piecing together the four pieces of sheepskin paper made no difference.

Arthur frowned, but he did not get frustrated.

Because, there was still the notebook.

Arthur believed there should be some clues in the notebook.

Indeed, there were.

The notes contained information about the purpose of the sheepskin paper: the Pirate King's treasure map.

It was only necessary to find the heir of the Pirate King and use their fresh blood to reveal the treasure map.

And that compass was the pointer to find the heir of the Pirate King.

Of course, this compass wasn't crafted by Sakiri—he wasn't skilled enough for that—the compass needle was personally made by the Pirate King.

According to the notes, the Pirate King Edward, in his later years, hoped to find his own bloodline heir to inherit everything from him.

To this end, the Pirate King Edward was very confident.

He was confident that having been with so many women, he must have an heir.

He would find his children and then instruct them carefully.

For this purpose, the Pirate King Edward sought out the then renowned 'Marine Alchemist' Danny Portman and traded 60,000 Gold Coins and a deep-sea dragon's eye as a reward, in exchange for the compass needle.

Then, something happened that drove Pirate King Edward to despair.

Just as he was confident, he truly had children.

But his children either died at birth or were abandoned by their mothers.

The only one who managed to grow up also died at 15 when his ship was sunk by North County's navy warships.

After confirming these news, Pirate King Edward nearly collapsed.

In the following years, the Pirate King repeatedly attacked the ports of North County, directly setting back the strength of the North County navy by more than 30 years.

Especially after the recognized high-quality deep-water port of Lordaeron was completely destroyed, North County's trade capital instantly fell from its pedestal, allowing Xisis Port to see unprecedented development and enriching South Los, which owned Xisis Port, with prosperity and flourishing trade.

Particularly once tea leaves were discovered in South County, the establishment of quality cloth factories, and the discovery of a large gold mine in Inner Bay, the status of north-south trade began to shift.

And when the weather in North County turned increasingly cold, half the year being winter, the north-south trade was completely reversed.

North County could no longer catch up to the prosperity of South County.

However, these are not important!

What's important was the deal between 'Bloody John' and Glast.

Glast claimed to have clues to the Pirate King's inheritance.

Could it be that Glast possesses clues to the descendants of the Pirate King?

Although Arthur didn't discover these from Glast's memories, there had to be an original reason for Sakiri to conceal them so "solemnly".

Moreover, among those children who were said to have died young, perhaps someone didn't want the child's father, Edward, to be known, and thus conspired accordingly.

Even, it's possible...

that the naval bombardment of the young man who went to sea by the North County navy was also a set-up.

It was meant to provoke a conflict between Pirate King Edward and North County.

Of course, these are all speculations.

However, the records found at the end of the notebook were indeed real—

The Ritual "Pirate's Blood"!

The secret technique "Abdel's Pyrokinesis"!

The secret technique "Sea Whale Breathing Technique"!

Both rituals and secret techniques were exceptionally detailed.

But what truly caught Arthur's attention was the signatory.

Edward!

'Pirate King' Edward!

This was 'Pirate King' Edward's notebook, not Sakiri's.

Footsteps sounded nearby, and Arthur, controlling the General Puppet, gathered up the notebook, but just as he was about to secure the compass as well...

The needle on the compass moved.

Very slightly.

But it hadn't been moved by the wind.

It moved on its own.

Having ascertained this, Arthur, through the General Puppet, turned to look.

He saw her, Matilda.

The moment he saw this lady, Arthur came to a realization—

'So that's it!

No wonder Sakiri had betrayed the Coconut Island Alliance's pirates!

It was because he'd found a descendant of Edward!'

Arthur thought to himself.

As for whether such a rebellion was irrational?

Not at all!

On the contrary, for pirates, such a rebellion was perfectly reasonable.

A rebellion over a woman was all too common among pirates.

Even if the rebellion failed, leaving with the woman would not raise suspicions.

Afterward?

The natural course would be to search for 'Pirate King' Edward's treasure.

No one would realize Sakiri's true motives.

They would even mock Sakiri's overestimation of his abilities and his hasty retreat.

With rapid thoughts, Arthur, manipulating the General Puppet, furrowed his brow.

Afterward, he headed straight for his abode on the island.

He was adept at dealing with the present situation.

Don't be too proactive.

If they had come after him,

then they would continue to chase him.

Because—

they wanted something from him!

Meanwhile, Matilda, with a lost shoe and a soiled dress, was at a loss as Horton passed by her, which was utterly unlike what she had imagined.

Shouldn't he have asked her something?

Or hadn't she appeared miserable enough?

She had even purposely stumbled!

However, soon after, Matilda followed after him.

Hearing the movements behind him, Arthur continued to walk forward.

The wind grew fiercer.

The sound of thunder was also terrifying.

And such wind and thunder were enough to cover some unusual sounds.

For example—

the meow of a cat.

Chapter 594 Demon Cat!

Off the coast of South Los, an uninhabited island.

Using the technique of "Silent Successive Steps," Arthur stepped on the "Hand of Void" and descended from mid-air.

Fujin, with Stolas and Mapa in tow, circled above Arthur's head.

Kuliki and Kiri emerged from the sea, shaking off the water from their bodies as they came ashore.

"Stay alert to anyone approaching here,"

Arthur ordered the two "Death Hounds."

An unprecedented solemnity made the faces of the two "Death Hounds" turn serious, even Kiri, who bore the appearance of a silly, big dog, nodded in agreement.

The cream-colored Labrador that was Kuliki even restrained its smile.

Woof!

After the two "Death Hounds" barked once, they vanished into the shadows.

"Fujin, if something appears in the sky, I'm counting on you,"

Arthur said, looking up.

Caw!

The crow flying with outstretched wings responded with a loud call.

Stolas and Mapa by its side also responded in kind.

Arthur nodded slightly, his gaze turning toward the sea.

The next moment—

Whoosh!

The water churned as a giant snake, 40 meters long, rose from the sea.

"Nidhogg, stop any boats that approach!"

Arthur instructed.

The giant snake Nidhogg, who regarded Arthur—with his "Serpent of Death" bloodline—as a brother, nodded repeatedly before diving back under the surface of the sea.

The tens of thousands of water snakes that followed Nidhogg began to gather around the waters of the nameless island.

They could not understand complex orders.

So, Nidhogg gave only the simplest command—

To kill any living being that approached.

Indeed, not just Nidhogg, but also Fujin, Kuliqi, and Kiri thought the same.

In their simple worldview, their master was undertaking an exceptionally important task, and they would not allow any disturbance.

And their "spirituality" was telling them that the importance of this task was a matter of life and death.

It concerned not only their master but also themselves.

If they were to fail, they would die.

If they succeeded, they would have a future of unparalleled brilliance.

With such an instinct, they, being arcane creatures, displayed an unprecedented ferocity.

Even Pendragon, who was always held in Arthur's arms, silently adjusted his state.

"Don't be nervous, Pan.

Your role is not here.

You once bathed in my 'Orange Cat' ritual, which greatly aided me.

And for this 'Great Orange' ritual, while it isn't explicitly stated, I believe in my intuition—that you will undergo 'Baptism' again.

Similarly, you will again provide me with the corresponding feedback.

So, Pan, relax."

As Arthur spoke, he walked toward a cave nearby.

The cave wasn't carved by Arthur himself, but naturally existed.

It was also because of this cave, after checking and confirming there were no mistakes, that Arthur chose this island among the many uninhabited islands near Coconut Island.

Demon-Repelling Holy Salt, white in color.

Evil-Repelling Brick Powder, red in hue.

They were set in place, one after another, sealing up the entrance to the cave.

What came next was Barrier Oil.

After completing these precautions, Arthur started to dig a Z-shaped passageway within the cave, ending in a space that could completely accommodate him and Pendragon.

He then filled the tunnel with the freshly dug soil.

Having Fujin inspect it once over to ensure there were no flaws visible from the outside, Arthur then circled around the space, layering Demon-Repelling Holy Salt, Evil-Repelling Brick Powder, and Barrier Oil in cycles from the outside inward three times.

It was only after doing all this that Arthur felt slightly relieved.

Then, Arthur reached out and stroked the top of Pendragon's head.

Arthur could clearly sense that because of his own cautiousness, Pendragon had become tense again—

"Don't worry.

Isn't it just another Baptism?

You're with me, your dad, you'll be fine!"

Arthur gave himself a thumbs up.

"Meow!"

Pendragon meowed.

Unlike the prolonged call of warning,

This time, there was a bit of a... milky tone to it.

Of course, Arthur understood that his cat was expressing concern for him.

But, Arthur wouldn't admit it so openly.

"Eh?"

Pan, are you showing your sassy side now!"

Arthur wore a look of surprise.

"Mew mew mew?"

Pendragon's cat face was dumbfounded.

"What?"

You're talking about the 'Griffin Spirit Potion'?

And the 'Griffin Gale Potion'?

Such a greedy little kitty...

True to my own cat!

You're so like me!

Don't worry, if I can get them, I'll definitely get them for you!"

Arthur picked Pendragon up into his arms and gently stroked him.

Originally intending to emphasize that he was just genuinely concerned, Pendragon eventually resigned himself to lying in his master's arms, rubbing his head against Arthur's palm.

"Stop worrying.

Even if something did happen to you, I'd go to 'The Eternal Resting Land' to find you, and then...

I'd stuff you into the body of a little female cat."

"Meow!"

The infuriated Pendragon began to struggle.

Arthur, however, didn't care and held Pendragon up, pressing his forehead against Pendragon's and said in a very serious tone—

"I promise you!

We won't have any problems!"

After saying this, Arthur put down his cat.

The young 'Spirit Medium' looked at the words before him—

[Evaluating the Entry-level Atlas 'Great Orange'...]

[Has 'Phantom Stomach', evaluation passed!]

[Physique, evaluation passed!]

[Spirituality, evaluation passed!]

[Evaluating the 'Orange Cat' Ritual, can be pushed to the limit. Use 9981 XP points for promotion to Entry-level 'Great Orange'?]

...

'Yes!'

Arthur affirmed in his heart with confidence.

XP points blazed wildly.

Everything before Arthur's eyes became hazy, and double images even began to appear.

Subconsciously, Arthur squinted his eyes and shook his head vigorously.

The haziness dissipated.

The double images disappeared.

And the cave in front of him no longer existed.

All that remained in his ears was—

"Here! Over here! The Black Cat is here!"

"Why is there only one?"

"Shouldn't there be two?"

"Where did that Orange Cat go? You damn Witch!"

A mob armed with torches, pitchforks, and scythes charged into the secluded forest cottage, whose elderly hostess was powerless to stop the intruders—in fact, a few days ago, these same intruders had been but sick farmers who came to her for herbal remedies, and she did her utmost with the herbalism she learned in her youth to heal them.

All was well and good.

But for some reason, these people she had helped now sought to harm her and her cats.

She had lived a solitary life, losing her father when she was young, her husband when she was youthful, and her son when she was old, leaving only two cats for company.

The Black Cat had been raised since it was a kitten and was well-behaved and obedient.

The Orange Cat was picked up injured in the deep forest while gathering herbs half a year ago; it seemed to have been attacked by some large animal.

She had thought it wouldn't survive.

Unexpectedly, she nursed it back to health.

She had even celebrated—the two cats were treated to a special cat meal.

But how did she come to be known as a Witch?

She wasn't one!

The elderly lady wanted to explain, but a pitchfork pierced her heart, and together with the decapitated Black Cat, they were set ablaze.

Her body and that of the Black Cat, along with the forest dwelling, were engulfed in flames.

Meanwhile, deep in the forest, the Orange Cat had blinded a black bear's eyes and mockingly watched the Blind Bear ramble around in confusion, unable to help but excitedly meow.

Mew mew mew~

It had its revenge!

How dare it ambush him!

Today it would have its retribution!

The Orange Cat, waiting for the exhausted bear to collapse before finishing it off, suddenly paused and twisted its head towards the direction of the smoke.

Instantly, the Orange Cat began to run at full speed.

By the time the Orange Cat rushed back, its home was gone.

The woman and that foolish fellow of its kind were both dead, burnt beyond recognition.

And in the air, which was thick with the stench of burning, lingered thirty-seven unfamiliar scents and sixteen scents it had caught a few times before.

Sniffing these scents, the Orange Cat leaped up.

It perched atop a tree canopy, eyeing the direction from which the scents were emanating, its eyes flashing with the coldness of a hunter as it growled low in its throat—

Meow!

Chapter 595 Orange Cat Mimi. Up

A caravan with fifteen guards was carefully shuttling through the dense jungle paths in the southern part of the Holy Empire, the merchant on the carriage had his face filled with tension and worry.

Although he tightly gripped a dagger, the trembling extent clearly revealed the fear overwhelming the merchant's heart.

In fact, it wasn't just the merchant who felt this way.

The coachman beside him.

The guards of the caravan as well.

Everyone was afraid.

Because—

A month ago, a Demon Cat appeared in Saint Xis!

Initially, everyone disregarded these rumors, considering them to be tricks by some damned warlocks or witches.

Or simply thought of it as a great fuss over nothing by the superstitious folk.

In the Holy Empire, such occurrences happened every year.

Each time, The Holy Court would send deacons from the Religious Tribunal to investigate, and occasionally, they even alarmed the Paladins to join the investigation.

But each time, it turned out to be a false alarm.

Things like goats walking upright like humans.

Or unmarried ladies giving birth in cowsheds.

Or certain archbishops having a fondness for little boys.

Nonexistent!

All nonexistent!

All were rumors passed on erroneously!

Thus, a month ago, the same attitude prevailed for rumors about the Demon Cat appearing in the south of the Holy Empire, until the death of a deacon from the Religious Tribunal who was sent to Saint Xis made people exclaim that there really was a Demon Cat.

"Master, what does the Demon Cat look like?"

Inner unease made the coachman ask involuntarily.

The merchant, equally scared and anxious upon hearing the coachman's question, replied in a lowered voice.

"It's said to be a cat that can transform into a human form, very fast, even the revered deacons can't catch up to it, and it has sharp claws capable of tearing through steel.

Even more, it can turn invisible, making it undetectable.

If it were not that the client of this cargo is someone I absolutely cannot afford to offend, I definitely would not have come to Saint Xis!"

The merchant complained, his face filled with helplessness.

The merchant originally liked such deals which involved long-term supply of necessities to a particular place, due to the stable profits; no merchant would dislike that.

Especially when the remuneration offered was not low, it made the merchant even happier.

Of course, the merchant was aware that he made far less money compared to that guy.

After all, that guy had about six merchants like him supplying for him.

As for where the supplied goods ended up?

They probably went to some military barracks.

Moreover, likely those for new recruits.

Beyond the barracks, the merchant couldn't think of any other place.

'The wars in the north of the Empire must have the military officials worn ragged, right?

I wonder if I should try my luck in the north, might make a fortune!'

Such thoughts occasionally sprung up in the merchant's mind, but he quickly dismissed them each time.

War was no joke.

It indeed caused deaths.

A secure and stable income suited him better—although he also wanted to replace that guy and supply directly to the barracks, he didn't have the connections or the guts to sell inferior rice as high-quality rice.

'Those new recruits must be dying to kick that scoundrel's ass.

If you guys kick his ass, you can't kick mine!'

Thinking this, the merchant stood up from the carriage.

He saw the firelight of the agreed meeting point.

The meeting points were different each time.

This time it was the farthest.

The merchant wasn't puzzled by this.

That guy would definitely use misdirection to ensure he could make a lot of money; if it were him, he definitely would be more cautious.

As for probing, asking questions?

The merchant didn't dare.

He knew very well what the end of those who talked too much was.

Keep in mind, the deacons of the Religious Tribunal were very willing to interrogate such talkative fellows.

"Hurry up and unload the cargo, then, we're leaving immediately!"

The merchant shouted loudly.

He didn't want to stay in Saint Xis for a minute longer.

The guild's workers hastened their steps.

Like their master, they too were reluctant to stay here.

The guild's guards carried out their duty by scouting the surroundings. Two had gone to the temporary camp, while of the remaining thirteen, five stayed near the convoy and eight split into pairs and dispersed, signaling safety intermittently with whistles—though rudimentary, it was a commonly used and practical scouting method.

The intermittent whistle sounds reassured the entire caravan.

Until—

Clip-clop, clip-clop!

The rapid hoofbeats sounded as the two guards who had gone to the temporary camp returned.

Both had grim expressions and were panting heavily.

"Go! Run!"

One guard shouted loudly.

"All dead!

All dead!"

The other guard, evidently suffering a huge mental shock, was somewhat delirious as he muttered to himself and then fell off his horse.

Crack!

Everyone in the caravan heard the sound of his neck breaking.

The sudden death immediately tensed up everyone in the caravan.

The convoy, which had been moving forward, immediately reversed.

But,

It was no use!

The continuous, dense whistles became sparse.

Eventually, they stopped altogether.

Apart from the panting of the people, the sound of horses' hooves tapping the ground, there was silence all around.

As the caravan began to lose members, the merchant's face had already turned pale.

The coachman was trembling all over, his teeth chattering.

Because, he had just seen a furry paw pull one of the mounted guards into the Shadows.

Silently, the guard disappeared.

There was neither dragging sound nor a scream.

The coachman saw it.

The remaining people in the caravan saw it too.

When the merchant was also pulled into the darkness by the paw, the entire caravan collapsed —

"Demon Cat!"

"It's the Saint Xis Demon Cat!"

Screams rose and fell as the caravan scattered in escape.

And soon, such screams disappeared altogether.

Then came...

Footsteps!

Tap, tap, tap!

Clear footsteps as two individuals dressed in black, wielding unique weapons, emerged from the Shadows.

The weapons in their right hands were furry, orange, and the tips bore sharp, backward-facing spikes.

They looked like enlarged versions of Cat Claws.

In their left hands was a test tube.

"Such fools!"

To step into a trap all for a bit of money!"

One of them said softly.

"We should thank these fools; without them, we wouldn't have been able to find the experimental materials needed by the master so quickly."

The other laughed.

"Come on, before the master wakes up, we need to move these guys into the base.

Otherwise, we're going to get whipped."

Saying this, one of them began gathering the caravan's horses to load the unconscious members onto the wagons and started heading towards the hidden base.

Neither noticed an Orange Cat sneaking into the convoy.

Chapter 596 Orange Cat Mimi. Continued

Mimi hid in the carriage filled with food and water barrels as she entered the concealed tunnel within the mountainside.

As early as fifteen days ago, Mimi had located the only surviving bastard who had killed that woman.

But the place where he was hiding was really too special.

The main entrance was heavily guarded by troops.

The ventilation ducts were monitored with Secret Technique detection methods.

Even for Mimi... no, that was the name the woman used to call it.

Now that the woman had died, there was no need to be called Mimi anymore.

It should be called...

It would still be named Mimi, though.

It sounded nice.

Mimi, lurking in the shadows of the carriage, couldn't help but remember the woman again, the one who had saved it from the brink of death and fed it precious herbs.

That woman was a good person.

But...

The woman was dead.

Therefore, the people who killed that woman, they all deserved to die.

It had killed all of them.

Now there was only one left!

After killing this guy, it would return to the forest and never come out again!

The carriage passed through the secret passage, and the soldiers inside the secret base began to unload the unconscious people and goods.

During this gap, Mimi slipped out.

Compared to those two fully armored men guarding the gate, these ordinary soldiers were like field mice to Mimi, insignificant.

Sniffing the scent, Mimi quickly found the last guy—

"Damn it! Damn it!

Why did that old woman find the Dolan Fruit we had been searching for so long?

Why was there an Arcane Creature by that old woman's side?"

The roar echoed through the room.

Desperation appeared in Malory's eyes as he reiterated his experience for the seventeenth time.

From his unfortunate injury while searching for 'Dolan Fruit' in the forest to being saved and healed by that woman, accidentally discovering that she had collected the 'Dolan Fruit' they had long been unable to find, but with the protection of an Arcane Creature by her side, he had no choice but to suppress his excitement and then decided to incite the residents of Saint Xis to burn the woman alive; however, he neither found the 'Dolan Fruit' nor saw the Arcane Creature again.

"Why didn't you call for reinforcements!

Be it a Deacon from the Religious Tribunal,

or the guards from the local church, they could have helped you.

You could even have requested reinforcements from the 'Paladins'!"

The bald man in front spat saliva onto Malory's face.

Malory didn't respond.

But inside, he was cursing up a storm.

Call for help?

Why wouldn't I call for help?

If I had called for help, would there be any credit left for me afterward?

Malory knew all too well the true colors of these local fellows, and he was clearer than anyone that if he had called for help, he would not only have missed out on any credit but also likely have lost his life.

The northern battlefields of the Empire had long since become corrupt.

Many were already planning to find a way out.

He was no exception!

He planned to use the 'Dolan Fruit' as a stepping stone to gain the recognition of that significant person.

And then?

Of course, to leave the current quagmire behind.

These things Malory knew.

Moreover, Malory was aware that the guy in front of him knew them too.

Just because the other party knew, he was being nagged incessantly.

Humiliation!

The man was humiliating him!

Moreover, he intended to use this as an excuse to harshly punish him.

If Malory showed even A Tiny Bit of weakness...

He would be sent to the Burning Stake.

And then?

His position would be taken by someone loyal to this man.

So, he reported 'truthfully' every single time.

And every time, he would request that a Punitive Deacon from the Religious Tribunal be present as an observer—because the Punitive Deacon possessed Secret Techniques capable of discerning whether he was lying.

In the past, he always felt loathing towards those Punitive Deacons.

But at this time, he felt grateful.

Just like at this moment—

After another routine inquiry, this ordinary Deacon of the Religious Tribunal respectfully saluted the Punitive Deacon.

As for that 'Honorary Knight'?

The Deacon didn't even give him a glance.

Once both men had left and the door was once again closed, the Deacon sat back down on the bed.

The Deacon contemplated his next steps after this.

'Twenty Inquisitions' had already subjected him to seventeen sessions, with just three more to complete the 'Twenty Inquisitions'.

Afterwards, he would be 'Innocent Released'.

But he would certainly not be trusted with important responsibilities again.

In fact, he might even be exiled.

But that was before; now?

The odds were he would be sent to the north.

'The battlefield?'

The Deacon murmured in his heart, a look of fear appearing in his eyes. He had not seen the northern Barbarians, but he had heard of them—each one was tall and strong, seemingly inhuman, their roars like thunder and the battle axes in their hands like whirlwinds of Death, reaping the lives of Empire soldiers.

Both of the Deacon's older brothers had died on the battlefield.

He didn't want to go there.

'Should I take to the sea?'

The Deacon couldn't help but think.

Saint Xis was near the ocean; it should be possible if he set out from Saint Xis.

Amidst the whirl of thoughts in his mind, the Deacon fell into a deep sleep.

Allowing one's body and mind to endure the Secret Technique of a Punitive Deacon was no easy task.

An ordinary person couldn't withstand it for minutes before fainting.

This Deacon was quite exceptional.

But this exceptional Deacon did not at all perceive the presence of Mimi lurking in the shadows.

Mimi appeared silently at the Deacon's bedside.

Familiar scent.

Familiar face.

This was the last bastard who brought about that woman's Death, the very beginning of the initial chaos!

Mimi had heard the recent words spoken.

Ever since that woman had fed it the Dolan Fruit, not only had its strength significantly increased, and its fatal injuries had recovered, but it also gained the ability to understand human language and comprehend its meaning.

So, at that moment, Mimi did not hold back its claws.

Pfft!

The sleeping Deacon suddenly felt pain in his neck.

Instinctively opening his eyes, the Deacon saw the cat.

No!

It was that Arcane Creature!

The Arcane Creature's eyes were coldly fixed on him, and then...

It raised its middle finger!

Indeed, it was the middle finger, erected with a Cat Claw!

And this was the last image seen by the Deacon!

After getting rid of its last enemy, Mimi leisurely knocked over the oil lamp.

Whoosh!

The flames immediately soared.

As thick smoke billowed, the 'Honorary Knight' who had left earlier was the first to rush back, his face changing as he saw the dead body of the Religious Tribunal's Deacon, and a thought flashed through his mind.

Then, he shouted loudly—

"Malory committed suicide from fear of punishment!"

With that, he ran outside.

Clearly, he wanted to frame the incident before an investigation could begin.

And Mimi had anticipated this.

Ever since eating that fruit, it had been able to guess things among humans that it previously didn't understand.

Walking with cat-like steps, Mimi stuck close to the corner of the wall.

It planned to leave amidst the chaos.

But just at that moment, a voice suddenly echoed in its mind—

'Stop immediately, if you don't want to die.'

Chapter 597: Cat. Nine Lives!

Mimi cautiously halted.

It wasn't because of the voice that echoed in her mind.

It was...

Cat language!

Yes!

The language that resonated in her mind was Cat language, the true 'language' of cat communication.

'Is there someone like me?'

Mimi thought, but her animal instincts chose to trust the voice at that moment and she immediately curled her body into the shadows.

And just at the next moment—

A black robe appeared in front of her.

Yes, it was the Punitive Deacon of the Religious Tribunal.

Someone Mimi absolutely needed to be wary of.

Although he was not as dangerous as the two armored fools at the entrance, being discovered would certainly plunge her into a tough battle.

After all, this was his territory.

After eating that fruit, Mimi always felt she had become much smarter.

The Punitive Deacon looked around suspiciously.

Just now, he had sensed an unfamiliar presence here.

It should be nearby!

Suddenly, the Punitive Deacon looked towards the depths of the corridor.

"Heh, a diversion, huh?"

Such child's play!"

With those words, the Punitive Deacon quickly charged into the depths of the corridor.

Mimi was about to move.

But then, that voice resonated in her mind once more.

'Don't move.'

Immediately, Mimi lay flat on the spot.

A second later, the Punitive Deacon returned.

This time, his expression turned grim.

He was sure his perception hadn't been wrong.

But why wasn't it here?

Thinking this, the Punitive Deacon walked towards the room where Malory's body was—he wanted to ask Malory's spirit.

He hadn't wanted to do this before.

Not only because it was a great burden on him, but also because such queries were fragmentary.

But now, he had to do it.

Otherwise, he would certainly be punished.

With this thought, the Punitive Deacon no longer hesitated and walked briskly.

Mimi didn't move.

Mimi sighed at the cunning of that human.

Then, she thanked another human for the reminder.

'No need to thank me.

I just didn't expect to be able to help a little guy before I died.

Alright, hurry up and leave.

A murder happened here, and the two 'Paladins' at the door will definitely lead a thorough search in this base, and this is your chance.'

The voice said.

'Why are you going to die?

You are very strong!'

Mimi asked in her heart.

'Because I was foolish.

If I weren't foolish, I wouldn't have fallen for that woman's trap—so, little guy, when you look for a female cat in the future, make sure to keep your eyes peeled.

Otherwise, you'll end up like me.'

The voice was full of self-mockery.

'I don't understand.'

Mimi expressed her thoughts straightforwardly.

She really didn't understand,

why such a strong person would be deceived.

Shouldn't he have simply swatted the adversary away?

'How could you possibly understand, little guy?

Truthfully, I don't understand either.

I still think she must have loved me, and my current state must be unbearable for her—hahaha, isn't it funny?

Even now, I'm still trying to find ways to set her free.

I'm just that hopeless.

If my brother saw me like this, he would mock me for three days and three nights.'

The voice was filled with melancholy.

Then, it shifted to another self-mocking tone.

To humans, such a change in topic was obvious.

But to Mimi, it was quite helpful.

'You have a brother?

Is he very strong?'

Mimi's line of sight still followed a trace of instinct.

The voice was utterly calm.

'Very strong!

Stronger than me!

His fists were filled with conviction!

Faster than light!

Hotter than the sun!

If you, little fellow see him, tell him that I deeply regret not taking his advice—of course, I have a feeling that you probably won't meet him.

Trust me, my premonitions are accurate.

Now go on, hurry.

I must go too, to the place where the dead belong...

What?!'

The voice suddenly stopped.

The last 'What' was full of confusion, anger, and questioning.

Mimi didn't understand any of this.

Mimi quickly dashed out of the passageway.

It was going back to the forest.

It would never come out again in this lifetime.

The outside world, except for that woman, was too complicated.

But on Mimi's way back to the forest, a man blocked its path.

He too wore a black robe, yet he was not any of the ones seen before.

And, he was stronger than any previously encountered.

Terrifyingly strong!

'Meow!'

Mimi howled, its fur standing on end.

'Is this the "Demon Cat of Saint Xis".'

The man in the black robe adjusted his glasses on the bridge of his nose, scrutinising Mimi carefully, the inspecting look in his eyes inducing an unprecedented fear in Mimi— it was not the fear faced before death, but rather like a natural biological suppression.

'Oh? Quite a spirited one.

Unfortunately, you've defied 'God's will'!

Otherwise, I wouldn't mind taking you back to catch mice, alas.'

The man in the black robe sighed as he spoke.

Yet, there was not a hint of emotion in his eyes as he sighed.

They remained chillingly cold.

Then—

'Under God's love, return to the embrace of God.'

Whoosh!

With the man's words, a burst of white-mingled flame appeared on Mimi.

Pain!

An excruciating pain Mimi had never felt before made it shriek sharply, almost instinctively, Mimi began to roll.

Soil can extinguish fire.

It had seen travelers use soil to put out fires.

But, it was useless.

Soil, useless!

There was also water!

Near the sea, streams were not rare!

Mimi directly rushed into nearby water, but the flames were not extinguished.

Instead, the fire grew even more intense.

Initially it was the fur, then the flesh, and thereafter the bones...

Meow!

Unable to bear the pain, Mimi cried out loudly.

And the man in the black robe revealed a smile in the distance.

'Do you also understand repentance?

That's really wonderful!

Repentance under Divine Fire is what sinners should aspire to!

And you, as a Demon Cat, are no different!'

The man spoke these words and turned to leave.

There were more important matters waiting in the secret base.

As for the Demon Cat?

It was doomed.

In fact, it was so.

Mimi felt the approach of death, just like the last time it faced the bear's sneak attack.

Last time, it was saved by the woman.

This time, no one would save it.

After all, it should not be that lucky.

Perhaps it would meet that woman again?

Tell her, its name was Mimi.

Feeling death's approach, Mimi closed its eyes.

But just at that moment, a brash and wild voice suddenly rang out—

'A cat has nine lives!'

Chapter 598: Mimi's Gratitude!

Mimi, hovering on the brink of death, wanted to see the person speaking before her.

However, her eyes had been burnt out more than ten seconds ago, and she couldn't see anyone at all.

But...

Spirituality could!

Mimi applied her Spirituality in what she thought was a very rough manner.

The next moment, the figure of a tall man appeared in her vision.

Extremely rugged in appearance, with golden hair drifting freely, and a body so robust that even a cat would feel it powerful and vigorous.

Of course, these details were not important.

What was important was that under the observation of Spirituality, the man's body was like a bundle of fiery flames, pulsating and filled with brilliance.

And in the distance of Spirituality's vision, the man in the black robe was like a bundle of twisted, cold sensation, as if frozen inside an ice block were tendrils like vines, and those tendrils had an icy, slippery feel to them, like the mucus that drips when a snake sheds its skin, making Mimi uncomfortable.

But what was most uncomfortable was the man in the black robe.

The shattering of an established fact gave the man in the black robe a sensation of being 'defied'—

It was the feeling of a god being desecrated by a mortal.

He hadn't felt this way in a long time.

He felt anger.

"You have desecrated a god!

You should receive divine punishment!"

The man in the black robe said with an icy laugh.

Immediately, flames mixed with white appeared on the sturdy man's body.

Whoosh!

The flames burned flesh and blood.

The flames scorched souls and hunted lives.

The flames burned everything.

The flames couldn't be put out.

The flames...

went out.

The sturdy man with the rugged face casually patted the flames on his body, as if he were merely dusting off some ash.

In fact, these arcane flames that Arcane Creatures couldn't contend with were indeed like mere dust to the sturdy man.

"A god?"

You think you're like a god?

If things like you were gods, the world would have been destroyed long ago!" the sturdy man said with disdain.

"Who are you?!" the man in the black robe demanded, retreating rapidly.

His speed had already exceeded the range of vision of ordinary people and ordinary Mystic Side persons.

Moreover, after fusing the skills of the Religious Tribunal, this retreat felt even more bizarre and extraordinary, so much so that even a 'Paladin' might not be able to discern its trail.

Create distance!

Burn him to death!

That was what the man in the black robe thought.

But very soon, his eyes widened in shock.

The rugged-faced man stood in place and swung his fist.

It wasn't a punch charged with power.

Nor was it a punch delivered with all his strength.

It was just a casual raising of the hand, a swinging of the fist.

Then, the man in the black robe felt a pain all over his body, as if he was about to fall to pieces.

No!

It wasn't as if!

He was really shattered!

With a single punch!

Just one punch had pulverized the Deputy Director of the Religious Tribunal!

Who?!

Who is this?!

The remaining consciousness of the Deputy Director of the Religious Tribunal roared, but the next moment, it was obliterated by the blazing light, leaving nothing behind.

Mimi watched this unassuming punch and suddenly thought of the man's words just now.

His fist was filled with conviction!

Faster than light!

Hotter than the sun!

That was what her Spirituality had informed her.

So, she asked—

'Are you his brother?

He told me to tell you, he regrets not heeding your advice!'

Having said that, Mimi collapsed there and quietly waited for death.

But that guy's premonitions were really lousy.

Even though he ran into it right after he came out, the chances of that happening were still very low.

However, if that guy's premonitions were truly accurate, he probably wouldn't have been deceived by that woman.

Before dying, Mimi couldn't help but think of that guy and, after making a couple of complaints, thought of that woman and the fellow of its kind that kept licking its fur.

Didn't know whether it would see them or not.

If it could, they should live well together.

Thinking like this, Mimi was about to shut off its "Spirituality".

And then, it felt itself being picked up.

A broad and strong palm.

This was Mimi's first impression.

The breath of life!

A vitality so abundant it was unparalleled!

And next?

Let it be absorbed.

Mimi was taken aback.

"Haha, now that you've eaten the Dolan Fruit, you should be able to 'absorb' it, right?"

Don't be shy, take as much as you can!

And...

Thank you for relaying that guy's message to me!"

The sturdy man laughed heartily.

Mimi's instinct to survive led it to absorb the man's life force, but feeling that this was too despicable, it divided the power from the Dolan Fruit in its body in half and transferred it into the man.

The man was stunned for a moment, then laughed even louder.

"That's why I say the human heart is so complicated, not as simple as animals.

They don't understand gratitude, only how to weigh their options.

They also don't understand the resolve of being human, only how to cozy up to power.

That's why a guy like me can't live with people."

While laughing, the sturdy man carved all sorts of mystical knowledge in Mimi's mind with "Spirituality".

"Orange Cat"!

"Great Orange"!

"Silent Successive Steps"!

"Cat Claw"!

"Cat Flip"!

...

"I'm giving these to you, the Dolan Fruit isn't something you just stumble upon; it's what you deserve. Don't think about giving me anything in return.

I can't give you more than this!

But, if you don't mind, would you travel with me for a while?

I intend to avenge that bastard brother of mine, and I will probably die.

How about you take care of my remains?"

The man with the rough face asked Mimi.

Death?

Again, death?

Why was it always death?

Could someone as strong as him also face death?

Mimi was filled with confusion but did not refuse.

Because Mimi thought it should repay the kindness.

"Repaying a kindness?"

You really are stubborn!

If we're talking about favors, I'm the one who should be thanking you—with the power of the Dolan Fruit, I can push the 'Orange Cat' and 'Great Orange' to their limits!"

Saying this, the sturdy man picked up Mimi.

"Do you want to stand on my shoulder?"

The man asked Mimi.

Mimi, not quite accustomed to the man's embrace harder than steel, jumped onto the man's shoulder on its own initiative.

Seeing this, the man laughed again—

"Let me introduce myself. I'm Aeolia, Cat Hole. The current Orange Cat!"

"Mimi."

The man extended his palm, and Mimi extended its paw.

After a human and a cat shook hands, the man once again let out a hearty laugh and took large strides towards the Holy Court's concealed base in the mountains.

His steps were steady, without hesitation.

His eyes were determined, showing no fear.

Arthur fixed his gaze on that figure, wanting to see the 'Heritage Scene' that would follow, but everything vanished, and he didn't see what happened next—all he saw was the "Ritual Base Material", the "Phantom Stomach", beginning to emit a dazzling light—

Buzz!

Chapter 599: Entry!

The stomach of the Phantom Whale, which possessed the special trait space attributes, began to blaze as it lit up.

With XP as the fuel.

The [Phantom Stomach] was burning.

In fact, it wasn't just the [Phantom Stomach] that was burning, Arthur's entire person was also ablaze.

Initially, it was only the heart that burned, and then, starting from the heart, the burning blood was pumped to every other organ and muscle, eventually spreading throughout his entire body.

Arthur could clearly sense that with each breath he took, his [Physique] was increasing sharply, and his [Spirituality] had also become more active than ever before.

Besides [Physique] and [Spirituality], an extremely special energy also appeared.

It was the transformation after the [Golden Thread], grown to a certain pinnacle over the [accumulated years] maintained the [Ordination] effect of the [Orange Cat] Ritual.

It was as if a butterfly was emerging from a chrysalis!

It was an evolution!

Not just the evolution of the [Golden Thread]!

[Feast], [Self-healing], [Adaptive State] were all evolving at this very moment as well.

This evolution once again manifested within Arthur's body—

Crack, crack.

Sounds like frying beans came from within his bones.

The noise grew faster and denser.

When the vibration of the bones reached their peak, the blood began to vibrate as well.

Thump, thump, thump!

The heart beat time and again.

Each beat stronger than the last.

A unique form of [Spirituality] etched itself with the rhythm of the heartbeat, sketching the power that belonged solely to the peak promotion of the [Great Orange], and Arthur could sense his heart suddenly lighting up.

Not the entire heart, but a small spot on the heart.

First, it was a single spot.

Then another appeared.

In the space of a breath, they were like sparks of fire, these tiny points densely connected into a mass that enveloped Arthur's heart in a glow.

Moreover, this glow flickered with every breath Arthur took, and every beat of his heart.

In the flickering, a luminescent glow began to drift.

The next moment—

The luminescent glow on the small orb took the shape of a cat.

Bright red blood flowed within the heart, casting light upon the glowing kitten turning it into...

Orange!

The cat in the color of a big orange rested as if it had just woken up, with its paws stretched forward, its head raised comfortably, its body twisting, tail swishing, and then opened its mouth wide in a yawn.

Meow~

A soft meow.

Pleasing to the ear, melodious.

Much more pleasant to listen to than Pendragon.

It wasn't dubbed.

It was the real, natural sound.

And then, in an entirely new form, it appeared before Arthur—

[Ritual 'Great Orange' complete!]

[Physique +5]

[Spirituality +5]

[Great Orange: On the basis of a complete Cat Hole, inspired by Mimi who had eaten the 'Dolan Fruit,' Aeolia incorporated his own concepts and revamped 'Orange Cat,' pushing it to its pinnacle to create 'Great Orange.' This transformation rendered 'Orange' much more stable, endowing adaptability, recovery, and endurance that other Initiates, indulgent ones, and those bound by oaths lack.]

[Effect: 1. Ordination; 2. Feast of Revelry; 3. Super Healing; 4. Adaptive State; 5. Golden Thread; 6. Large Body; 7. Thick Flesh]

[Ordination: When faced with food, one may be picky, but once one starts eating, one must finish. There must be at least a six-hour period of drowsiness each day, but it's also possible to forego sleep for longer periods, accumulating the hours to have one long sleep, although accumulated sleep cannot exceed 72 hours. During the accumulation period, one will not feel tiredness, and it will not affect any strength. It's also feasible to sleep in advance to accrue sleep, making oneself more than capable of handling situations. In normal conditions, when encountering sleep or mind-related secret techniques, you will be instantly alert. While asleep, if someone with malicious intent approaches, you'll quickly become vigilant.]

[Feast of Revelry: With the stomach of a Phantom Whale, all food ingested will be fully digested, transforming into body muscle and fat, slowly increasing the physique. Moreover, you'll be able to store large amounts of food as reserves, and when the need for more power arises, you can burn the food in your stomach for a rapid boost; Current Food: 0/1000]

[Super Healing: In the face of injuries and negative states, you already possess a remarkable recovery ability, but it can still be accelerated through sleep and food; Current Sleep: 0/72; Current Food: 0/1000]

[Adaptive State: When faced with unfamiliar or extremely harsh environments, adaptability is quicker. With special requirement props, the demand can be reduced, and when in the presence of Blaze, frost, poison breath, lightning, mental force fields, or illusion force fields, stored food in the Phantom Stomach can be used to reinforce resistance; Current Food: 0/1000]

[Golden Thread: The new Ordination Ritual brings new Golden Threads, not only does the Harmony Value steadily increase as the Ordination is maintained over accumulated years, but also the physique will steadily rise through the years]

[Large Body: Infused with fresh concepts and reaching extremity, a special effect emerged, giving you, as an 'Orange Cat,' not just a much larger size than the average 'Orange Cat,' but also a qualitative leap in 'spirituality' and 'physique,' as well as increased limits on special traits]

[Thick Flesh: Purely relying on strong 'physique,' harnessing the 'food energy' accumulated in daily life to form special defensive measures. It's an intermediate defense between simple 'physique' and 'force field.' Any attacks solely targeting 'physique' or 'force field' would be easily blocked with more ease. But

when facing mixed attacks, defensive stance can be freely adjusted to achieve defense purposes, however, each defense or stance switch consumes 'food energy' (0)]

(Note 1: If 'Ordination' is not completed, 'spirituality' will not be disrupted, but if 'Ordination' is not completed for three consecutive times, 'spirituality' will briefly be in disarray. After failing to complete 'Ordination' nine times in a row, 'Golden Thread,' 'Large Body,' and 'Thick Flesh' states will be damaged and become irreversible.)

(Note 2: When faced with favorite food, 'food energy' accumulates while eating. With poisonous or maliciously imbued food, an Initiate can ignore it and significantly accumulate 'food energy'.)

(Note 3: Under the enhancement of 'Feast of Revelry,' an Initiate will break through the original body size limit more quickly as the physique increases.)

(Note 4: The newly promoted 'Great Orange' from the original 'Orange Cat' can more perfectly integrate other Cat Faction rituals within the Cat Hole and can optimally accommodate rituals from other factions to a limited extent. When faced with the 'spirituality' brought by arcane artifacts, there's an extremely perfect receptiveness and a quick ability to identify residual, concealed, hidden 'malicious spirituality' within props.)

(Note 5: When an Initiate learns other factions' rituals or secret techniques, the new 'Orange Cat' promoted to 'Great Orange' not only possesses great adaptability but can also lower the demands of secret techniques and rituals. The longer the 'Ordination,' the stronger the adaptability and the more it reduces demands.)

(Note 6: When harmony and adaptation exceeds one's own limitations through arcane artifacts' spirituality, 'Adaptive State' will insure the Initiate remains unaffected for a short duration.)

(Note 7: 'Feast of Revelry,' 'Super Healing,' and 'Adaptive State' will slowly increase as 'Ordination' time lengthens, while the presence of 'Large Body' will further raise the limits of many ritual traits, bloodline traits, and talent traits.)

...

Arthur stood up and felt his bones and muscles crack collectively once again.

He could distinctly feel his body growing at least 20 centimeters taller, not just in height but also in breadth, most notably in the chest area.

Amidst the sound of tearing fabric, Arthur's clothes turned into tattered rags.

Nevertheless, Arthur paid no attention to these things, he bowed his head, clenched his fists, and felt his power at that moment.

There were no other additions, just pure physique.

With the promotion of the Great Orange, Arthur's physique had already reached the level of 13.8.

Such a physique could certainly be called superhuman.

Not to mention the variety of secret techniques, rituals, talents, and bloodline traits that accompanied it.

Arthur now felt an urge to take on a thousand foes single-handedly.

And his spirituality told him that he could do it.

Just as his physique had surged to 13.8, his spirituality had also skyrocketed to 12.6, not only telling Arthur that he could achieve this feat, but also that even if there were 2-3 squads of 'Mystic Side Persons' involved, even if they were all composed of Arcana Level individuals, for the current him, it would still be easy.

As long as...

He was well-fed!

Had good sleep!

Had enough sleep and food stored up.

And had enough 'food energy,' this kind of one-against-a-thousand truly would be effortless.

'Am I really this strong now?'

Arthur mused to himself.

A long-missed sense of security emerged in his heart.

But immediately, the young 'Spirit Medium' shook his head.

Not enough! Not enough!

Just entering the entry-level, how could that be enough!?

Arthur thought to himself and pulled out the 'Entry-level Atlas.'

Then, the corners of his mouth lifted into a smile.

Chapter 600: Foolishness and Boldness!

Arthur looked at the 'Entry-level Atlas' in his hand.

The fat, plump Orange Cat that had crushed the bed boards with its huge body, pinning the dragon, fierce tiger, savage bear, and lone wolf beneath it, unable to move, now stirred.

From sprawling flat on its back, it flipped over.

Arthur felt a surge of benevolent 'spirituality'.

It was warm and gentle, just like a cup of warm water.

Reacting to this, Arthur tried to make contact.

The next moment, the scene before his eyes changed again—

Mimi!

Still Mimi!

But this Mimi was different from the one Arthur had seen before.

The agile, slender body was gone and had become bloated and tall; it also learned to walk upright like a human, wearing a gray linen poncho, holding a long, thin pipe, embroidered with the pattern of round copper coins on the back of the poncho, neatly combed whiskers and hair on its head.

It was wearing a pair of leather boots and had a rapier at its waist.

At this moment, Mimi was puffing on the pipe, looking solemnly into the deep blue eyes of its good friend Aeolia.

"Are you really going to do this?"

Mimi asked in a deep voice.

"What else?"

Leave the future matters to those who come after?

I'm not that shameless!"

Aeolia was as heroic as ever, his laughter as jubilant as ever, his face brimming with boldness, yet his body bore hundreds of different depths of wounds.

These were left after his skirmish with those bastards from The Holy Court.

The shallower ones were just skin deep.

The deeper ones revealed his internal organs.

The deepest one had light showing right through it.

Anyone seeing Aeolia at this moment would understand just how severe these injuries were.

Never mind the deepest one.

Even the slightly deeper wounds were life-threatening, keeping him lying down, awaiting rescue.

But Aeolia wasn't, he was like nothing was wrong, grabbing the barrel of wine beside him, laughing while chugging it down.

"Drink less."

Mimi frowned, trying to persuade its good friend.

"Hahaha, can't cut down!"

If I did, I'd have regrets!"

Aeolia laughed heartily, waving his hand and bringing out another barrel of the hidden wine Mimi incurred through its business.

"Is it just the wine you regret?"

Mimi didn't understand.

Over the years, it always failed to understand some of its friend's actions.

It always thought its friend was very...

Silly!

Yes, silly!

There were many strategies to fight The Holy Court, yet he chose to charge into battle himself and explode the enemies with his punches.

Despite suffering such severe wounds, he didn't have a tiny bit of regret.

Instead, he was arguing over some wine here.

"Of course, it's not just the wine!

It's also the food—I regret not having tried all the delicacies across the continent the most!"

Aeolia answered seriously.

"What about those guys?

The ones who left you with these wounds?"

Mimi was even more puzzled.

Aeolia paused, then laughed even louder.

"What's there to regret?

The guy called the Pope, I exploded him; twelve Cardinals are almost dead; the head and deputy head of the Religious Tribunal, twenty-two arbitrators have all turned into nothing. What more could I possibly regret?

Compared to them, I'm much more fortunate.

I am here drinking with you and can still laugh loudly.

As for what you're thinking?

It doesn't exist!

I've said it before, this matter is between me and The Holy Court.

Either they kill me.

Or I finish them off.

Others?

It's none of their business!"

As he said this, Aeolia guzzled down the wine with a gulping sound.

Another barrel of wine was finished.

Aeolia stood up.

Mimi immediately spoke.

"Wait!"

"There might still be a way!

I've already notified the old man, and he's on his way..."

"We can't wait!

If the old man arrives, he will definitely stop me from doing this, and I owe the old man a huge favor, so I will definitely be dissuaded.

So, I must act ahead—

The bald bastard from The Holy Court used the 'God's Lock' to seal the 'Stairway of Ascension' at Cat Hole, though those guys didn't say anything, but I can't just stand by and do nothing.

I...

have to repay this favor!

I am going to prepare to reopen a stairway."

Aeolia said, clenching his fist, and spoke word by word—

"I will use my fist to open a new stairway for the guys at the 'Cat Hole,' a better and broader stairway than before!

So, Mimi, don't stop me!"

Aeolia lowered his head, looking earnestly at his good friend.

Mimi, squinting her eyes and clutching a pipe, looked up at her towering friend.

"Get lost, you nonsensical man."

Having said that, Mimi turned around, no longer facing Aeolia.

"Haha!"

Aeolia laughed loudly, a golden light shining in his eyes.

The current 'Orange Cat' searching.

The next moment—

"Found it!"

Amid his shout, Aeolia's whole body erupted in golden light and he disappeared from the spot.

The instant Aeolia disappeared, Mimi turned around, her eyes brimming with tears.

Using blood as the guide.

Using flesh as the path.

Using bones as the steps.

Orange Cat...

Seventeen Order!

As an Orange Cat who entered the stage with the 'Great Orange,' Mimi instantly felt the 'God Ascension Ten Stages' Aeolia had re-laid.

No!

Not Ten Stages!

It's Seventeen Order!

"Ten Stages is divine, but you want to achieve Seventeen Stages, you bastard, do you really want to prove yourself that much?"

Mimi murmured softly.

Then, she turned her head to look at the three people who suddenly appeared beside her.

The current 'Black Cat.'

The current 'Raccoon Cat.'

The current 'Flower Cat.'

The two men and one woman felt the change, having ascended, they sensed it much more clearly than Mimi, so—

"I will also carve a new stairway for my 'Black Cat Faction'!"

The current 'Black Cat' said coldly, raising his hand, and the air of netherworld concealed the new 'Orange Cat's Rank.'

"If he can do it, so can I!"

The current 'Raccoon Cat' was even more defiant, similarly raising his hand, the power mixed with the Breath of the Dragon added a new layer of disguise over the 'Orange Cat's Rank.'

The current 'Flower Cat' was a lady who looked delicate and fragile.

Her beautiful face dazzled all beings, even the mother cat, Mimi, was unconsciously attracted.

At that moment, the lady smiled gently.

"We meet at the peak,"

Having said that, the tri-color lady disappeared.

They are not going.

She is not going either.

It's not that they can't change, but that they don't want to.

She has her own path to follow.

Moreover—

Born a cat, pride is etched in their bones.

The current 'Black Cat' and 'Raccoon Cat' exchanged smiles, then also disappeared.

Only Mimi remained, puffing on her pipe and exhaling smoke continuously.

Being born a cat, she felt she was less pure than the three of them.

As for that guy?

He's a bastard.

So, Mimi put away her pipe and spoke softly—

"Old man, may I ask a favor of you?"