

Great Master 601

Chapter 601: Cat and Cat and Cat!

Alas!

A sigh came from behind.

It was filled with helplessness.

And carried a hint of weariness.

"You actually don't have to do this, Aeolia is a jerk, and you are a good girl," he said.

That slightly aged voice held a note of retention.

But Mimi just laughed.

"Right, I know I'm a good girl, so I have to clean up the mess for Aeolia—this arrogant jerk always wanted to surpass the 'God Ascension Ten Stages.'"

Yes, he did it!

But does this jerk think everyone's talent is the same as his?

'God Ascension Ten Stages' is already very tough.

Surpassing the 'God Ascension Ten Stages' to the Seventeen Order...

I doubt anyone can step on it, right?"

Mimi touched her beloved pipe, murmuring softly.

"He created the Seventeen Order.

But it only makes sense if someone steps on it!

So, I must make someone ascend these 'Seventeen Stages'!"

Having said that, Mimi forcefully threw away her pipe.

It contained a tsunami-like 'food energy' that erupted at that moment.

Mimi took a deep breath.

Like a whale sucking in water, she absorbed all the 'food energy' into her belly.

Immediately, a layer of force field defense mixed into her physique.

Then, Mimi slapped her stomach.

The food stored in her stomach burned rapidly.

Suddenly, Mimi's aura began to climb step by step.

Entry- level steps improved progressively until—

'Ascend Step'!

Ascending that 'Seventeen Order'!

Mimi took a step up, and when she stepped on the first order...

Cough!

A low cough.

Blood spilled out.

"Damn guy, is this something normal people can step on?"

This kind of backlash, you really are too reckless!" she said.

With those words, Mimi fiercely slapped her lower abdomen again, and the food in the other four stomachs hidden inside her body burned rapidly.

Immediately, Mimi's aura climbed another level.

She took another step upward.

Second Order!

Gasping!

Mimi gasped heavily.

This time it wasn't just coughing up blood.

Blood started flowing from Mimi's mouth, nose, eyes, and ears— all seven orifices.

Feeling that unimaginable burden, Mimi couldn't imagine what kind of person could step on this 'Seventeen Order.'

'Unless some extraordinary power comes along to endure and dissolve the backlash of each step!

But most secret techniques and rituals can't do it!

So...

I need to ascend two more steps to bear more backlash for those who follow.'

Thinking this, Mimi continued upwards.

"Damn guy, I really want to slap you!" Mimi roared, her corpulent figure becoming slender.

All the food in her five stomachs was burned up.

She could only burn her own fat now.

And the pain of this process far exceeded Mimi's imagination.

Without any hesitation, Mimi cursed Aeolia loudly.

Another step upward...

Third Order!

Mimi stepped on the third order, the invisible backlash made her bones creak and groan, with her organs beginning to burst, and the pain was ten times worse than before.

But Mimi still wanted to ascend one more step.

The Fourth Order was Mimi's goal.

If the successors could smoothly step on the Fourth Order, they would have some ability to defend themselves.

She wanted to clear the thorns for Aeolia's successor.

This was a cat's gratitude.

And—

Cats are proud indeed.

You saved me.

I want to repay you.

But you must owe me to do so.

Otherwise...

How could I be content?

Mimi took a deep breath and shouted—

"You owe me, and even in the next life, and the next, and the next, you won't be able to pay it off!"

The shout echoed.

Bang!

Mimi's body shattered, and blood and flesh splattered, flowing downward and quickly evaporating.

Since then, there were no more obstacles before the 'Seventeen Order' first, second, third, and fourth orders.

The old man silently watched everything.

A deep sorrow emerged in his eyes.

"Two fellows, don't you know to provide for the elderly?"

My friends, I'm down by two."

Speaking such words, Hercules suddenly smiled.

"You two bastards, thought I would be sad?"

Thought I would wallow in misery like a lonely old man?"

Ha, how could that be possible!

I am Hercules!

You think you can leave me behind? How is that possible!"

The old man said this, took a deep breath, took out a paintbrush he carried with him, and began frantically sketching and painting, and moments later, a colored pencil drawing of a fat orange crushing a bed appeared.

Then, the old man added some 'preference settings' to the drawing.

"The inheritors for you two guys can't be just anyone.

He or she or it must meet the criteria."

Having said this, the old man picked up a potion and splashed it on.

After completing all this, the old man folded the colored pencil drawing into a paper airplane, blew on it, and then threw it with force.

The paper airplane flew higher and faster.

Finally—

Pop!

It struck Arthur right between the eyebrows and fell into his hands.

Arthur looked down at the brand-new 'Entry-level Atlas'.

No!

More precisely, the 'Stairway of Ascension'!

The text in front of him began to swarm—

[Stairway of Ascension 'Seventeen Order', assessing...]

[Possesses Ritual 'Great Orange', assessment passed!]

[Does not possess 'Cat's Nest', assessment failed!]

[Does not possess 'Dragon's Horn', assessment failed!]

[Does not possess 'Fierce Tiger's Claw', assessment failed!]

[Does not possess 'Raging Bear's Gallbladder', assessment failed!]

[Does not possess 'Terrifying Wolf's Ear', assessment failed!]

['Great Orange' Ritual does not reach High Tier, will you use 30000 points XP insufficient?]

...

['Great Orange' Ritual, assessing...]

[Physique, assessment passed!]

[Spirituality, assessment passed!]

[Assessment 'Great Orange' Ritual, can achieve perfection, will you use 99999 points XP to extrapolate it to perfection?]

...

Arthur watched the text before him, his eyes slightly narrowed.

This time, Arthur didn't marvel at the more XP needed.

Even though it was indeed much more than he had imagined.

He didn't pay attention to the necessary ingredients like 'Cat's Nest', 'Dragon's Horn', 'Fierce Tiger's Claw', 'Raging Bear's Gallbladder', 'Terrifying Wolf's Ear', and so on.

He just remembered Mimi.

Or rather...

Mimi's eyes.

Blue eyes.

The same eyes as Marinda's.

'I'm overthinking it, right?'

Arthur thought this, even curling his lips upwards, showing a self-mocking smile, but deep in his eyes, a barely perceivable scrutiny appeared.

Even this scrutiny was fleeting.

Then, Arthur naturally looked towards Pendragon, his face showing worry and anticipation, his voice mixing with a slight tremble—

"Pan, how do you feel?"

Chapter 602 Pan: I've already seen through everything!

Meow!

Something's not right!

What happened?

Why the concealment?

Pendragon raised its head to look at its master.

It could clearly sense that its master was hiding something at this moment, but that didn't matter. It simply wanted to share its current transformation.

A transformation full of surprises—

[Name: Pendragon]

[Type: Pet]

[Quality: Arcane (+)]

[Attributes: 1, Orange Cat Strong-Body II; 2, Baptism II; 3, Griffin Physique. Cripple]

[Remarks: Pendragon has once again undergone a second Baptism with you, and this Baptism has started its advancement into a true Arcane Creature. This process will take about 1080 days. Feeling its own changes, Pendragon is overjoyed and wants to share them with you immediately. Moreover, it's growing fonder of you by the day—meow~ meow~ meow~]

...

[Orange Cat Strong-Body II: The orange cat has a natural talent. As long as there's sufficient food, it will quickly become stronger. Under the lingering effects of the 'Great Orange' Ritual, Pendragon can easily break through the limits of its body size. This will give Pendragon a much more robust physique, and at the same time, its strength, speed, and defense will undergo qualitative changes.]

[Baptism II: The afterglow of 'Orange Cat' and 'Great Orange' Rituals has caused earth-shaking changes in Pendragon. Not only has its intelligence reached the level of an adult human, but it has also awakened the talents 'Thick Flesh' and 'Body Control.' At the same time, its appetite has begun to become exaggerated.]

[Griffin Physique. Remnant: The complete fusion of 'Orange Cat Strong-Body II' and 'Baptism II' with an entire magic potion has transformed Pendragon beyond recognition. It now possesses the legendary 'Griffin Physique'! Pendragon's strength, speed, endurance, and agility have surpassed those of an ordinary griffin! The presence of the 'Thick Flesh' talent allows its fur to effortlessly resist knives, swords, arrows, bullets, and even confront flames, acid, poison, and lightning with equanimity. Its movements have become even more silent, and its jumping ability has undergone a qualitative change, allowing it to glide short distances at will. Especially its eyes, which not only can see through the darkness but also possess strong abilities to detect supernatural darkness. Stealth and invisible creatures find it hard to escape its sight, especially lost souls that cannot evade Pendragon's gaze. Most importantly, its claws can easily shred any armor.]

(Note 1: Lacking [Griffin Spirit Potion], Pendragon's state is not complete, and it cannot use Griffin Secret Art.)

(Note 2: The second Baptism combined with [Griffin Potion] has greatly increased Pendragon's appetite. If allowed to eat freely, it can consume a cow in five days, and eating large amounts in a short time can give Pendragon a hibernating stomach. Similarly, Pendragon can also go without food for long periods, but afterward, there will be compensation with meaty food—after that, Pendragon will develop a strong preference for meat and will not opt for a vegetarian diet. Faced with vegetarian options, Pendragon's mood will sink, leading to the little cat's irritability.)

(Note 3: After taking the Griffin Potion and bathed in the afterglow of the 'Orange Cat' and 'Great Orange' Rituals, you can now communicate without hindrance with Pendragon, and sometimes you can even understand each other's intentions—of course, understanding each other doesn't mean it will listen to you.)

(Note 4: Pendragon's promotion, having bathed in your 'Orange Cat' and then in the 'Great Orange' Ritual, has given feedback to you, leading to yet another efficiency enhancement in your 'Great Orange' Ritual effects.)

(Note 5: With two Baptisms and the acquisition of the Griffin Physique, Pendragon's lifespan has been significantly extended. Without any accidents, it can easily live for several centuries.)

...

The familiar exhilaration appeared again.

Previously it was [Orange Cat].

Now it is [Great Orange].

Arthur could clearly feel his [Feast of Revelry], [Super Healing], [Adaptive State], [Golden Thread], [Large Body], [Thick Flesh] all being enhanced.

But different from the enhancement of [Orange Cat].

The current enhancement was in efficiency.

It made it easier for him to obtain food, sleep, and conversion of food energy.

It was not just an improvement on the existing foundation.

'After the entry stage, has Pendragon's effectiveness weakened?

No!

It's that Pendragon is not complete!'

Arthur's gaze turned to the remark about the incomplete [Griffin Physique].

And his [Spirituality] was telling him that his guess was correct.

As long as he could get his hands on [Griffin Spirit Potion] and [Griffin Storm Potion], he would see Pendragon become complete, and the changes he was hoping for would appear again.

'I'll have to ask Grandma Susan for help.'

Arthur thought to himself.

Previously, Arthur had wanted to enlist the help of Marinda—as compared to his newly established grassroots force, Marinda, with a professional team and having set up the "Lady of the Long Night Salon," was undoubtedly more suitable. However, Marinda had clearly stated that it was nearly an impossible task.

Marinda wouldn't lie about such matters.

Furthermore, given Marinda's personality, though she verbally dismissed the possibility, she would definitely be searching desperately in private.

And if she hadn't found anything up to now, it meant there truly were no leads.

Otherwise, Marinda would have showed up before him and flaunted her success by now.

However, Madam Susan's situation was different.

Backed by the South Los Family, her resources were truly extensive.

What may seem like long-lost items to the outside world could just be an inconspicuous object hidden within the treasure vaults of these ancient Great Nobles.

Of course, empty promises wouldn't suffice.

The value must be demonstrated.

Fortunately, he was not lacking in that respect.

For example: The head of Sakiri!

The head of this "Devil of Dokiman Island" was quite valuable.

Especially so for the South Los Family.

The "Dokiman Island" itself was a rare island flying the South Los family's flag. After the initial strategies and subsequent pursuits failed, leaving their own naval forces nearly wiped out, The Old Earl shifted strategies, readying to employ the "island governs island" approach.

And the Old Earl had chosen "Dokiman Island."

The Old Earl had gone to great lengths for this island, paying a not insignificant price to establish what was known as the "South Los Family's Overseas Honor," but it was utterly destroyed by Sakiri, who even allowed the Pirate Group to plunder the island extensively, eventually burning the entire island down to ashes.

Most importantly, due to previous pursuit mishaps and lacking a necessary navy, the South Los Family had no way to retaliate against this "Devil of Dokiman Island."

Simply put, they had no way to reclaim their honor.

Although the appraisal of The Old Earl within everyone, including the South Los Family, was not high, the chance to restore the family's honor would surely not be hesitated by the Countess.

'To trade it for a Griffin Spirit Potion should be an effortless exchange, right?' Arthur thought to himself as he picked up Pendragon.

"You must thank Daddy for the love he has shown you!" he said as he held the cat.

Pendragon, however, wore a disdainful cat face.

In his heart, Pendragon was even more certain that Arthur was covering up something significant this time.

Something of great importance.

However, Pendragon did not expose it.

He was a good cat.

Therefore, he went along with Arthur's act.

Arthur, holding Pendragon, broke through the soil and reemerged from the cave.

After packing up all his plans, Arthur returned to South Los as quietly as a whisper.

And as Arthur stepped into the room at No. 2 Cork Street, "Horton," Arthur's alias on Coconut Island, began to make his move.

Horton sought out "Bloody John" and said—

"Could you send a trustworthy person to help me meet with that South Los 'Spirit Medium'?"

Chapter 603: Friendship Between Pirates is Not Even as Good as Seaweed!

Inside the enhanced version of the "Shelter," Old John looked at Horton, who had appeared in front of him, with a face full of surprise.

"Part of your trade?"

Old John, while soothing the monkey on his shoulder that had become restless due to the scent of blood, secretly sized up this special collaborator before him.

The captain 'saw' the battle that had just occurred.

That's why the captain was surprised by the strength Horton displayed.

Old John had thought he had already overestimated the young man's strength, but when it was truly displayed, he was still taken aback.

'Damn it!

Why are young people like this nowadays?

One more cunning than the next, each better at hiding their trump cards.

Shouldn't youth be about being carefree and careless?

Should we old folks be thinking about retirement?'

Recalling the sight of Horton manipulating the storm to raise massive waves and a large ship, then aiming at Sakiri's chest for a blow, and even decapitating that fool Sakiri's head, the old captain felt his skin crawl. This feeling was especially strong when he thought about how Horton maintained a considerable distance from that fool Sakiri during the whole process. It made the old captain's scalp tingle.

Thus, at this moment, the old captain looked at Horton with caution filling his heart.

"Trade?"

If it truly were a trade, I'd be off to Coconut Island to find the 'Spirit Medium' right now."

Horton slightly shook his head.

This made 'Bloody John' startle.

"What is it?"

The old captain couldn't help but ask.

In the room at No. 2 Cork Street in South Los, Arthur took a deep breath, controlling 'Horton' and spoke softly—

"Pleasing."

"Hm?"

Faced with Horton's reply, the old captain was dumbfounded and he couldn't help but ask again.

"What? What did you say?

I didn't mishear, did I?"

With that, the old captain's eyes widened.

"No, you didn't mishear.

I am indeed trying to please the 'Spirit Medium'."

Horton smiled and shook his head with even more certainty in his words.

Suddenly, 'Bloody John' felt like his brain wasn't working properly.

The old captain simply couldn't associate Horton, who had effortlessly slain Sakiri, with the word 'pleasing'.

Without a doubt, Horton's strength was 'Entrant' level.

And it was related to 'Storm.'

Such an ability was exceedingly convenient at sea, capable of creating storms and enabling flight. With a decent ship, one could freely roam.

Even faced with the Mother Tigress of the South Los House, there would be considerable leverage.

Why would such a person need to 'please' anyone?

It's because—

The South Los 'Spirit Medium' is so powerful that Horton needs to please her.

That power far exceeds what he had originally calculated.

And there's influence!

The influence would also surpass imagination!

'If 'Entrant' Horton has to please her, then the South Los 'Spirit Medium's strength is...

Ascend Step?!

Hiss!'

'Bloody John' gasped in shock.

Involuntarily, the old captain began to imagine.

And through the eyes of the 'General Puppet,' Arthur smiled at this scene.

He wasn't afraid of others thinking or imagining.

He was happy for others to think and imagine.

When others' thoughts and imagination are within a certain range, it would only bring about his greatest goodwill.

"I can no longer stand in South Los, but I can still stand on the nearby seas—I originally hoped to manage an island to showcase my ability and win that person's recognition. Then, I could follow the great person by the means of the 'Lionheart Ceremony'...

However, the appearance of some idiots made me realize, perhaps compared to the long-term operation of an island, it's far better to offer some 'Meritorious Service' to the great person!

The great person lives in South Los, so if there's goodwill from the South Los House, the great person will definitely live better.

And then I would gain the great person's recognition."

Horton casually spoke words that sent shivers down 'Bloody John's' back.

The old captain asked tremulously.

"You want to be a Pirate Hunter?"

"No!

I only want to be a pirate hunter who is useful to the adult.

I will hunt down those guys who can provide the adult with better living conditions.

John, rest assured, this does not include you.

Just as I won't mind that you disclosed my name and didn't stick to calling me X."

Horton said, revealing a smile.

In response, Old John appeared somewhat embarrassed.

The old captain had done this deliberately.

The old captain did not trust Horton.

Therefore, the old captain prepared many tests.

However, the affairs of the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group were not in the old captain's plan.

But the sudden appearance of Sakiri brought the old captain a substantial gain.

While mulling over this in his heart, the old captain lowered his voice and said—

"Nobles are not to be trusted."

This was a well-known saying throughout South County.

And that South Los 'Spirit Medium' had only recently acquired noble status, fitting perfectly into this category.

"Other nobles are not to be trusted,

But this definitely does not include that adult—Old John, you will never understand what that adult stands for, nor do you comprehend that adult's charm.

If necessary, I could die for that adult!"

Horton declared emphatically.

Old John was dumbfounded.

'What's going on? What's happening?

Has the 'Entrant' been bewitched as well?

Is this some Succubus-level 'Spirit Medium'?

'Bloody John' couldn't help but rant inwardly.

Then, suddenly, a name nearly forgotten sprung up unbidden in the old captain's mind—

Severus Hamlet!

Or call him: Old Lion!

The charm displayed by that South Los 'Spirit Medium' seemed to be like the widely talked about ability 'Lion Group' of Old Lion.

Suddenly, the old captain shivered.

He felt as if he had stumbled upon a shocking secret!

Could it be?

Could it be?

How is this possible?

The old captain kept exclaiming in his heart.

But somehow, the old captain had already started to believe in this possibility.

Because, apart from 'Lion Group', the old captain could think of no other explanation.

Thump! Thump, thump!

Unwittingly, the old captain's heartbeat began to quicken.

The old captain felt this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Perhaps he could...

One idea after another came forth, and the old captain immediately began to smile, his three gold teeth glinting among a mouthful of rotten ones—

"Rest assured, leave it to me.

I will certainly help with this favor.

After all, we're friends."

"Thank you, John."

Horton expressed his gratitude sincerely.

Old John didn't feel even a tiny bit sorry.

Even though he had already decided to betray Horton and exchange this earth-shattering news for a favor grand enough.

Yet, he still acted like Horton's dear friend.

Pirates, huh?

Betrayal is all too common.

The crux of the matter now is...

Who to sell this information to?

But soon, the old pirate had his answer—

Old Lion!

Chapter 604: Pendragon's Home Schooling!

No. 2 Cork Street, South Los.

When the warm afternoon sunlight streamed through the skylight, Pendragon was contentedly licking his fur.

However, upon noticing Arthur, lounging lazily in the bedding, turning over with an ambiguous smirk on his face, Pendragon immediately knew he had to flee—experience had taught him all too well that when his master showed such a smile, it was best to bolt.

Unfortunately, no sooner had Pendragon taken a step than Arthur scooped him up and hugged him close.

The young 'Spirit Medium' even let out a strange cackle—

"Come here, kitty, let daddy take a sniff."

With these words, Arthur tightened his embrace, pressed his nose and mouth hard against the top of Pendragon's head, and took a strong sniff. When Arthur's nose and mouth left the top of Pendragon's head, a smear of saliva was left on it.

Pendragon looked at Arthur with a shocked face, seemingly unable to believe that Arthur would be so disgusting.

Facing such an astonished gaze from Pendragon, Arthur just laughed and smeared the saliva around.

Suddenly, Pendragon's head was a wet mess.

If Pendragon was shocked before, by now he was absolutely petrified.

This is the end!

Kitty's not clean anymore!

Kitty's dirty!

The little kitty just collapsed to the ground, displaying a look of utter despair.

Arthur, however, was roaring with laughter.

Then, the young 'Spirit Medium' held Pendragon in a comfortable position and whispered—

"What do you think that old pirate will do?"

Meow meow?

Pendragon's cat face was confused, clearly still dazed.

"As daddy's little kitty, you need to adapt quickly and respond rapidly, or else you might end up in big trouble, sometimes...

you might even lose your life."

Arthur murmured to himself.

Then, he straightforwardly said.

"That old pirate will definitely betray 'Horton'!"

Pendragon immediately widened his eyes, full of disbelief.

"Human nature cannot withstand tests.

Especially the greed in human nature—it always erodes the inherent brilliance of human nature.

The reason why keeping promises is considered a valuable quality is precisely because it conquers greed.

This is true for ordinary people, let alone pirates.

Piratical betrayals are a commonplace thing."

Arthur said softly, then scrutinized Pendragon.

"So guess, who will he inform?"

Meow meow meow!

Pendragon raised his head and said the Earl of South Los.

Arthur smiled and gently tapped Pendragon's nose tip.

"Mother Tigress is a decent choice, but since there's betrayal, the benefits must be maximized, so Mother Tigress is not the best choice.

It's

Old Lion!"

Arthur announced the answer.

Pendragon's cat face was puzzled.

Arthur stroked the pads on his kitty's paws, continuing to explain—

"As I said, once you choose betrayal, you must maximize the benefits.

And Old Lion just happens to be the person who can offer this old pirate the greatest benefits.

Not only because Old Lion is wealthy enough but also because my being a member of the Golden Lion Family is crucially linked to Old Lion.

Particularly when I display the Bloodline Talent of the Lion Group, it becomes truly critical for the Golden Lion Family."

As Arthur explained, Pendragon's cat face showed dawning understanding.

Taking the opportunity, Arthur continued to ask.

"Then do you know whom the old pirate will send to contact Old Lion?"

Meow meow meow!

Pendragon confidently answered.

"A trusted follower?"

Pirates don't have trusted followers!

Pirates only trust themselves, so..."

"This old pirate will just go by himself!"

Arthur couldn't help but laugh out loud in the face of the naïve little kitten.

Meow?

Surprised, Pendragon kept asking about things he hadn't understood since the very beginning.

"You're curious why I would leak such important information to him and even let him inform a terrifying enemy like Old Lion?"

Arthur retorted, his lips curling up with the question.

Seeing Arthur's expression at that moment, Pendragon felt overwhelmed and immediately curled up into a ball.

It knew its master was scheming again.

Poor kitty is scared!

Pendragon let out a soft meow with a hint of fear in his voice.

"Don't hide, you're a big tomcat, it's really disgusting."

Arthur lightly tapped Pendragon on the head before continuing,

"I disclosed the information to him because I knew he would definitely leave Coconut Island to meet Old Lion in person.

And once he left Coconut Island?

It would be mine!"

The curled-up Pendragon was shocked.

The little kitten couldn't believe what his master was planning.

The little kitten had no idea his master was actually scheming to take over the other's Coconut Island.

"I've observed that Coconut Island isn't just any island to be taken lightly. That old pirate has been quietly developing it. Not only does it have fresh water, but it's also fully equipped, and most importantly, it has plenty of manpower—I sent Horton specifically because I wanted an island just like that.

Why wouldn't I take it when the old pirate delivered it right to me?

As for making a formidable enemy like Old Lion?

It would only happen if the old pirate delivered the information, right?

Besides, I did give him a chance!

If he hadn't left Coconut Island, then his cooperation with Horton would have continued."

Arthur said, looking at Pendragon again.

Clearly, Pendragon was shocked by his master's audacity.

Not because of the scheming.

But because of the shamelessness.

The little kitten couldn't imagine how his master could be so barefaced.

You just said human nature can't stand the test!

Now you're testing that old pirate!

According to you, the old pirate's human nature is even worse than normal people's, isn't it?

You could have forcefully taken it, so why bother giving him a test?

Pendragon furiously complained in his heart.

"Of course, because I am a young, upright, simple, and kind 'Spirit Medium,' right?

I'm not some bad guy who schemes for others' capital."

Arthur retorted, looking puzzled.

It seemed strange to him that his kitty could ask such a silly question.

Pendragon looked at his owner, then thought for a moment, and finally, decided to turn his butt toward Arthur—shameless humans only deserve my kitty butt...

"Meow??"

Before Pendragon could finish complaining, he let out a sharp meow.

Pendragon jumped out of Arthur's embrace, his cat face terrified as he looked at Arthur.

Just now!

Just now, Arthur had grabbed Pendragon's tail and yanked upwards.

Pervert ah!

There's a pervert ah!

Someone come, save meow!

Pendragon shouted loudly.

Arthur, playing along, laughed wickedly again and pounced on Pendragon.

"Hehehe, little kitty, you can scream all you want but no one will come to rescue you!"

As soon as he finished speaking, a huge ring of smoke appeared inside the Spirit Medium Parlor.

Marinda, smoking a pipe, had just entered the Spirit Medium Parlor and saw Arthur pinning down Pendragon.

The lady didn't back down or feel embarrassed; instead, she raised her eyebrows and said directly—

"Continue."

Chapter 605: Arthur's Ambition for the Coastal Waters!

Watching Marinda's amused expression with raised eyebrows, Arthur didn't feel the slightest bit embarrassed.

When it comes to thick-skinned, Arthur considered himself unmatched in the world.

Because—

he was shameless!

Thus, under Marinda's watchful gaze, Arthur smoothly brought Pendragon into his embrace, and did not forget to smooch the top of Pendragon's head one more time.

Smack!

The rich sound of saliva being smeared made Marinda's brows furrow slightly.

"Are you disgusting or not?"

Marinda looked at Pendragon, who seemed to have lost all will to live, and couldn't help but speak out.

"Disgusting?"

You haven't seen what truly disgusting is!"

As Arthur spoke, he spread the saliva evenly over the top of Pendragon's head.

He even combed a slanting fringe for Pendragon.

"Not bad, really handsome, just like me!"

Saying this, Arthur released Pendragon and was about to walk towards Marinda.

"If you don't go wash your hands, don't speak a single word to me."

Marinda sternly warned Arthur.

Arthur shrugged his shoulders and walked into the washroom.

About two minutes later, when Arthur came out again, Ms. Anna had already brought afternoon tea for Marinda—black tea and baked treats, primarily biscuits and shortcrust pastries, with fresh toast on the side, spread with honey, nuts, peanut butter, apple jam, and egg sauce respectively.

A total of six slices.

Just the right amount, Arthur and Marinda had two slices each.

"This fresh toast is the softest I've ever had."

After carefully tasting the fresh toast smeared with peanut butter, Marinda affirmed its quality.

"Mhm, mhm."

Arthur nodded repeatedly.

In the face of delicious food, it's best to finish eating before saying anything else.

The three slices of fresh toast that belonged to Arthur were quickly finished, and the young 'Spirit Medium' then set his sights on Marinda's. However, the lady was well-prepared.

Before Arthur could reach out, the remaining two slices of fresh toast disappeared into thin air amid smoke.

Even the biscuits and shortcrust pastries were gone.

"You know, you'll have no friends if you do that!"

Arthur protested.

"Ever since I became friends with you, I haven't had any other friends."

Marinda rolled her eyes.

"Hey, hey, hey, how can you tarnish my reputation out of nothing?"

In South Los, my reputation as Arthur Kredos is way better than yours, isn't it?"

Arthur looked incredulous.

To know 'Lady of the Long Night's' title was not exactly a good reputation, in South Los, it represented bloodshed and killing.

And him?

He was the Winter Blessing Giver! The Winter Guardian!

Plus, the eliminator of the Winter Monster!

How could such titles not be better than 'Lady of the Long Night'?

"Ah right, right, right.

The covertly born Child of Misfortune! The favorite of the Grim Reaper!

Your titles are well-known to me!"

Instead of mentioning Arthur's positive titles, the lady chose to talk about the negative and frightening ones.

"That's just an exaggeration!

I think you should seriously consider my titles as the Champion of the South Los Swordsmanship Competition, the man of the house at Caesar Manor, and the Winter Blessing Giver and Guardian.

They represent me more accurately."

Arthur said earnestly.

But Marinda was utterly dismissive.

This lady could easily tell that the current Arthur was just 'acting' exaggerated.

And her?

She didn't dislike this Arthur.

At least, she felt quite relaxed.

On the side, Ms. Anna brought out extra fresh toast, biscuits, and shortcrust pastries.

Ms. Anna, like an elder sister, watched Arthur and Marinda with a smile, and a warm feeling made the lady's [Spirituality] grow even more active.

And the conversation between Arthur and Marinda turned to the main topic—

"Which pirates are under your command?"

Arthur asked bluntly.

Backed by the Earl of South Los, Marinda had a rather exaggerated business foundation in South Los, with long-distance trade being of paramount importance.

And for any long-distance trade, armed merchant ships are necessary.

These armed merchant ships typically protect their own trading vessels.

And under unusual circumstances, they could play the role of pirates.

Everyone does it this way.

Arthur believed that Marinda was no exception.

Even more so, Marinda would surely do it even more and more thoroughly.

If it were him?

He would certainly not do it this way.

Because it was too lacking in technical content.

It was definitely not because the profit was too little.

If he were to act, he would make a big move.

What about a privateering license?

That was just the beginning.

He would build his own mercenaries at sea, establish his own island base, and use his own currency on the ocean trade routes.

The islands off the coast were rich in resources.

Who could be sure there weren't any minerals there?

If there were, that would be the first step toward taking off.

If not...

Then make it so!

Then he would turn the place he wanted into a mountain of gold!

If there were a mountain of gold, then surely many people would go out to sea, right?

As long as they went to sea!

Population, trade, it would all be solved!

And by that time, Miss Qiu's Security Company would still be a security company, able to escort those who went to sea, and those without the escort of Miss Qiu's Security Company would all be sunk without exception.

Definitely the work of pirates, having nothing to do with him.

At the same time...

You have no money? You have land?

Good!

I'll lend it to you!

That would be the time when Mr. Wu's Exchange would upgrade further, with a section specifically carved out and called—

022 Bank!

Arthur calculated his own plans in his heart.

Watching Marinda lift her teacup on the opposite side, Arthur leaned back and said,

"Don't tell me you don't have any!"

"I do!"

Marinda stated with certainty.

Then, she stared at Arthur without blinking.

"You bastard, what are you trying to do?"

"What can a young, upright, simple, and kind 'Spirit Medium' like me do?"

Of course, it's to clear some obstacles for my soon-to-sail ocean fleet, and at the same time, provide some effective guards, right?

Otherwise, how could I dominate the coastal waters?

You're thinking too much."

Arthur shrugged, his face the picture of innocence.

The lady looked at Arthur with suspicion, always feeling that Arthur wanted to do something, but dominate the coastal waters?

Impossible!

Not only the Old Earl from the South Los House, but after the end of the Holy Era, countless renowned powerhouses wanted to dominate the coastal waters.

But in the end, they all failed.

Even the Pirate King Edward, who was nominally dominant over the coastal waters, was far from the title of 'Lord of the Near Seas' in reality.

Then...

Could Arthur do it?

While the lady pondered this in her heart, she then said—

"Roberts Pirate Group, Morgan Pirate Group, Giant Axe Pirate Group, Cotton Anne Pirate Group, Bellamy Pirate Group, Kidd Pirate Group..."

She listed the names of twenty-two pirate gangs in succession.

Clap, clap clap!

Arthur gave a light applause.

"Excellent!

My Pirate Female General!"

Arthur appraised her.

Arthur had thought before that Marinda would have a few pirate gangs but hadn't expected there to be so many.

Twenty-two pirate gangs, calling her a Pirate Female General really wasn't an exaggeration.

According to the rumors, the Western Sea Pirate General had under him only twenty-nine pirate gangs, although he had heard that the latter's forces had greatly expanded, now counting forty-seven pirate gangs.

But what did that have to do with him?

Marinda was what mattered to him!

After pondering for ten seconds, Arthur suddenly leaned in towards Marinda and asked in a low voice—

"How are your relations with these pirates under you?"

Chapter 606: Full of Confidence!

Marinda picked up the pipe and looked at Arthur, who was close at hand, with vigilant deep blue eyes—

"What do you want to do?"

"What I want to do,

is the same as what you're thinking."

Arthur chuckled.

"Don't even think about it, though betrayal among pirates is common knowledge, they have performed the 'Gift of the Sea' on me!

Their loyalty is beyond doubt!

Just as their abilities are!"

Marinda obviously guessed what Arthur wanted to do and immediately spoke up as a reminder.

"Alright! Alright!"

Arthur shrugged and sat back down in his chair.

He had truly wanted to take action to help Marinda clean up some internal problems.

He truly wanted to help.

And it wasn't just for the XP.

Even though getting XP that way was really cost-effective—

[Killing 'Devil of Dokiman Island' Pirate Group captain Sakiri, First Mate 'Bluebeard,' and all the others;
XP+800]

...

This was the kill prompt he received earlier.

800 XP was still a significant amount for Arthur at the moment.

Or to be precise, any 1 XP value was something Arthur considered worth cherishing.

Arthur knew from a young age the principle that the accumulation of sand creates a tower, and the collection of fur makes a coat.

Especially after facing the huge deficit of the 'Seventeen Order' limit of 99999 XP points, Arthur cherished every single XP point even more.

At the same time, Arthur was extremely grateful to Mimi.

This was the simplified version obtained after Mimi burned herself.

If it were the regular version, Arthur couldn't imagine how many XP points it would require.

200,000?

300,000?

Or even more?

Arthur couldn't be sure.

But what Arthur was certain of now was that climbing the 'Stairway of Ascension' was definitely not an easy feat.

It wasn't only difficult to get started, but the path that followed...

was even harder.

'Ascend Step' could make one stronger, but to gain that strength, one must endure the corresponding pain.

And that inevitably led to the 'Secret Rituals' possessed by various factions and families.

Having observed Mimi's 'Ascend Step,' Arthur had a considerable understanding of the 'Stairway of Ascension.' He could confirm that a complete 'Stairway of Ascension' must have corresponding rituals to alleviate the pain at every order; otherwise, most 'Ascend Steppers' would explode and die.

Of course, there would inevitably be survivors.

Madmen, fools, they too are alive, after all.

Clearly, the 'Seventeen Order' 'Stairway of Ascension' was only easy for the initial one, two, three, and four orders. From the fifth order onwards, the difficulty would skyrocket.

However, Arthur had no intention of changing his 'Stairway of Ascension.'

Firstly, 'Seventeen Order' had seven more steps than the average 'Stairway of Ascension,' allowing one to stand higher.

Secondly, the quick completion of the first four orders was enough to provide him with a certain ability to protect himself.

Furthermore, Arthur trusted that old gentleman.

That old gentleman was none other than 'God of Potions,' 'God of Alchemy,' Hercules.

Facing the departure of his two friends, how could that old gentleman remain indifferent?

So, there must have been some contingencies planned.

And him?

His task was to find these contingencies.

Arthur believed that as long as he found these contingencies, his path to ascension wouldn't fall short compared to those with a complete 'Stairway of Ascension.'

Of course, there was one last and most important point!

Arthur firmly believed that the combination of his effort and talent (XP) could help him overcome this difficulty!

After all, everything he had now was earned through his effort and talent!

Before, he could do it!

Afterward?

Naturally, he could do it as well!

While contemplating his own affairs, Arthur's gaze never left Marinda.

And this playful look made Marinda frown.

"What?

You don't believe me?"

The lady asked.

"No!

I do believe you!"

"Just as I'm certain that you've absolutely not divulged to them the true nature of your relationship with each other!"

Arthur shook his head firmly as he spoke.

Marinda remained silent.

It was clear that what Arthur was saying was the truth.

And it wasn't hard to guess.

With pirates, cooperation is all that's needed.

How can they be considered close confidants?

They are somewhat like a chamber pot.

Handy when you need them, but just looking at them when you don't is disgusting.

Therefore, Arthur was certain that Marinda would never inform these pirates that they were colleagues, who should love and care for each other.

Such news absolutely could not be leaked.

Once leaked, it would bring big trouble.

Even, it could become an unmanageable problem that backfires.

The greed of pirates was beyond doubt.

Once they were aware of each other, they would definitely form a force that couldn't be ignored, and then they would be the ones pressuring Marinda.

Or rather...

The Mother Tigress of the South Los House would step in.

And that was something no one wanted to face.

Arthur didn't want to face it.

Marinda didn't want to face it either.

So, Arthur leaned back in his chair and said with a smile—

"I won't rush you, but I'm willing to let you know that if any of your subordinates start having ideas they shouldn't have, I'll help you eliminate them.

Of course, not for free.

However, considering our many partnerships, I'm willing to give you a 99% discount."

Marinda gave Arthur the middle finger.

Then, her brows furrowed again.

"Have you received some news?"

The sudden question startled Arthur.

Is there really something happening?!

Arthur thought to himself while maintaining a calm exterior.

"Hmm!

I've got my hands on some very interesting news!"

Arthur was deliberately vague.

Internally, he already had a guess.

It could only be the emergence of the Western Sea Pirate General that had stirred up some people's ambitions that shouldn't exist.

I wonder if the Western Sea Pirate General would be willing to work together? If I could cull his subordinates, with the size of his 47 pirate groups, maybe he could reach the 'Seventeen Order' baseline limit.

After all, killing pirates is not only about the XP brought by the pirates themselves, but also the influence it generates is bound to be the center of attention.

Unfortunately, that's not possible!

Arthur lamented inside.

"Cunning fellow.

If it really becomes necessary, I'll let you take action.

But for now, I need to wait."

Arthur raised his teacup and clinked it with Marinda's in acknowledgment.

Ding!

Amid the crisp sound, Marinda didn't mind Arthur substituting tea for a toast, took up her own cup, downed it in one go, and then stood up to leave.

"I'll be busy in the coming days and won't be coming back!"

Marinda's parting words dissipated with the smoke.

"Alright!"

Arthur replied loudly.

He could be sure that Marinda heard him.

Even without a response.

But that was enough.

After all, they are close collaborators.

As the guest left, Ms. Anna began to tidy up the teacups and dessert plates.

Arthur, on the other hand, started to put on his coat.

He had something to do.

Something he hadn't been sure of before but now felt confident about—

"Pan, fancy trying a new flavor of cat food?"

Chapter 607: First Clues Revealed!

In South Los, on the docks of Xisis Port, dock workers followed the foreman's instructions, moving boxes and boxes of goods.

On a small mobile stall, there were fried fish, French fries, and a drink named 'Gu Juice'—a spicy-sweet beverage made with a bit of sugar, alcohol-based, mixed with ice water, quite peculiar.

But it was much loved by the dock workers.

Sailors, after a rest of more than ten days, boarded the ships energetically, standing on deck waving goodbye to their beloved girls.

The First Mate and Chief Sailors were secretly placing contraband among the goods being loaded onto the ship, and only breathed a sigh of relief when the dock workers stowed everything in the vessel's hold.

Afterward, they headed to the captain's quarters to discuss the distribution of the 'goods' for the first transport of the new year.

Everything was busy.

Everything was also orderly.

Lady Amanda stood in front of her goods, carefully inspecting them.

It was a box of Silvervine.

It should have arrived before the Cold Winter Festival, but it was delayed due to the 'sailors' negligence before the festival.'

Fortunately, the lady had some stock.

Otherwise, the reputation of 'Amanda's Cat Best Friend's Home' would have been ruined.

"Very good,

although it arrived late."

Lady Amanda said as she paid the Chief Sailor.

"But it arrived after all, did it not, my lady?"

The Chief Sailor said with a smile.

The words seemed respectful but were actually offhand.

For such regular, truly not highly profitable goods, he wouldn't have been here if not for 'the duty of the Chief Sailor.'

After all, any sailor could handle this job.

He counted the money.

Once sure the amount was correct, the Chief Sailor had no intention of continuing the conversation and turned towards the hold—there lay his privately stashed high-value items.

That was what he truly cared about.

Lady Amanda felt indignant about this treatment.

Then, she felt helpless.

She had already switched ships twice, but every ship was the same.

The lady was well aware that unless she could offer better compensation, the situation wouldn't change even if she switched numerous times.

But to offer better compensation?

That was not easy for her.

Although 'Amanda's Cat Best Friend's Home' was profitable, taking care of stray cats was an enormous expense, sometimes even subsidizing those who 'could not fend for themselves.'

So, it wasn't that she didn't want to, but that she couldn't.

"Hello, madam,"

Just as Lady Amanda was pondering, a young man ran up to her.

He was a neatly dressed young man with a friendly smile and impeccably styled hair, holding a pen and a clipboard covered with leather.

"Madam, hello.

I am a trader from Mr. Wu's Exchange, and I think you are encountering some troubles.

I believe Mr. Wu's Exchange can perfectly solve your troubles—

You just need to open an account with us. No deposit required, and then you can purchase any legal and regulated items within our Exchange.

We will deliver the goods to your doorstep on time!

And be it late delivery, non-delivery, or wrong delivery, we will compensate you.

If any accident occurs, your money for the goods will be refunded in the same way.

Such a situation?

It will never happen!"

The young man said, pointing at the box at Lady Amanda's feet.

Lady Amanda felt quite tempted on hearing this.

But she still hesitated.

She had heard of Mr. Wu's Exchange.

It seemed to be a new company established over the large warehouse area owned by the Bernice family, next to 'Miss Qiu's Security Company.'

Moreover, it was said to be a business of the Spirit Medium 'Arthur Kledos.'

"Are you not reassured?

Take a look over there."

The young man said, turning to point behind him.

As Lady Amanda looked in the direction he indicated, she saw dozens of young men dressed just like him, shuttling around the docks.

They were neatly dressed, smiling, holding pens and notebooks, recording each of their customers.

Even when rejected, they still maintained their smiles.

Even when insulted, the smiles never changed.

This scene made the surrounding sailors laugh out loudly, and some of the porters scoffed at these young people's actions, considering them as not taking their jobs seriously.

A company that offers refunds like this will surely close down soon.

Lady Amanda thought so too.

Because, this is human nature.

Thus, she subconsciously wanted to refuse.

But as the words reached her lips, thinking of the "Spirit Medium," the lady changed her mind.

"I reside at 17 Garden North Street..."

Lady Amanda disclosed her address, initiating her first registration.

The young man, with a smile, completed the registration, but didn't leave immediately. Instead, he assisted Amanda in moving her box to the side of the Docklands—where a carriage bearing the mark of Mr. Wu's Exchange was waiting.

"This is a carriage exclusively from the Exchange.

They are always at your service for guests like you."

With a smile, the young man opened the carriage door, placed the box inside, and then turned and bowed slightly to Lady Amanda.

Looking at the young man in front of her, then at the carriage, and the inscription 'Mr. Wu's Exchange' on its carriage.

Initially thinking that 'Mr. Wu's Exchange' would close within the year, Lady Amanda was now considering whether 'Mr. Wu's Exchange' could last another two months.

'What was Lord Kledos thinking?

Such an investment is a total loss!'

Lady Amanda pondered all the way.

Especially when the coachman enthusiastically moved the box containing silvervine into the shop, Lady Amanda grew even more curious.

Then—

When the lady walked into her own shop, she saw Arthur holding Pendragon in a corner of the shop, drinking complimentary tap water.

"Owning such a large exchange, Lord Kledos, if you only drink tap water, people might look down on you."

Lady Amanda said as she approached.

The Cold Winter Festival had just ended, and there were no other customers in the shop.

The lady was not concerned about being overheard saying something inappropriate.

"Save where we must, spend where we should.

That has always been the fine tradition of the Kledos family.

Also, my lady, if possible, please continue to call me Arthur.

Our relationship is not as distant as it seems."

Arthur implied.

Lady Amanda understood the meaning.

However, the lady didn't engage further but inquired about the curiosity she had just harbored—

"Are you really not worried about your exchange going bankrupt?

Even with the Kledos family's ample reserves, could it handle frequent returns?"

"We have to believe in the good part of human nature.

Do not assume the worst in others."

Arthur emphasized the words even he didn't believe.

If Arthur himself didn't believe it, Lady Amanda certainly wouldn't either.

"Alright! Alright!

There are always people who genuinely need certain things, right?"

Arthur said again.

Indeed!

There are always people who genuinely need certain things.

But that doesn't prevent many others from making malicious returns.

Lady Amanda continued to stare at Arthur.

"What if those genuinely needed items are cheap enough?

Ten percent, twenty percent cheaper than market price.

Or even...

Fifty percent?"

Arthur continued.

Lady Amanda was internally moved.

If cheap enough, that indeed could be a game-changer.

But still not enough!

Then, Arthur followed up—

"What if all these were borne by the sellers?"

Suddenly, Lady Amanda was stunned.

Chapter 608

Seller?!

Lady Amanda was stunned.

Almost instinctively, she asked,

"What do I need to give in order to sell goods at your exchange?"

"Right now, it's free!

Everything is free!

Once it all becomes habit, I'll start charging—

Deposits, service fees, and necessary fines."

Arthur said this quite frankly.

For Lady Amanda before him, he had no need to conceal anything.

Not only because her position and faction were the same as his, but also because Arthur believed she could not replicate his model.

Because—

She was in South Los.

South Los could not possibly see another 'Mr. Wu's Exchange'.

It was not merely a matter of scale.

Nor was it just about seizing the initiative.

It was because he, Arthur, nominally her lover, was Marinda who controlled many supply channels.

And because he, Arthur, nominally her grandmother Madam Susan, was the chief steward of the South Los House.

If anyone dared to compete,

He would knock out their teeth.

These things, Lady Amanda did not know.

The lady was only surprised at Arthur's frankness, and his ideas!

"Habit? Habit!"

Lady Amanda muttered softly.

The more she muttered, the more a gleam shone in her eyes.

Although there were still some key points she hadn't figured out, this lady was already sure that Arthur's 'Mr. Wu's Exchange' would definitely not go bankrupt.

In fact, it wouldn't just not fail.

Instead, it would thrive splendidly.

Because Arthur's 'Mr. Wu's Exchange' was changing the lifestyle of the people of South Los.

"You really are surprising, Arthur.

I'm very eager to see, in a year... no, in six months, what the expressions of those who mocked you will look like!"

Lady Amanda said this.

The lady was quite certain.

With Arthur's model, it wouldn't take long to see its effectiveness.

And at that time...

It would be the moment to stir up a huge uproar.

Those who mocked 'Mr. Wu's Exchange.'

Those who maliciously treated 'Mr. Wu's Exchange.'

Probably would all receive 'punishment.'

This lady firmly believed that Arthur would not easily let these people off.

After all...

Cats are very vindictive.

"Don't worry, their wonderful expressions will match the state of their wallets."

Arthur burst into laughter.

That smile was wicked and very amusing.

After that, this young 'Spirit Medium' looked to Lady Amanda before him, and said,

"My lady, I need a 'Cat's Nest.'"

Arthur believed this lady would understand his words.

He was practically laying his cards on the table.

'Cat's Nest,' a unique prop owned by the Cat Faction.

Made from a base material of century-old silvervine,

this prop allows Cat Faction members to rest and relax better.

The 'Cat's Nests' of all four major Cat Factions are the same.

At most, they just dye the 'Cat's Nest' in different colors according to the Cat Faction they belong to.

And indeed, just as Arthur had guessed,

when the word 'Cat's Nest' left his lips, Lady Amanda sighed.

This lady realized, she couldn't avoid it any longer.

Meanwhile, she also became anxious.

This lady was aware, Arthur was soon to embark on a journey to Inner Bay.

At this time, for him to come here, it was highly likely he was seeking help.

And this was something she could not possibly agree to!

Thinking this, the lady was about to refuse, but before she could speak, Arthur straightforwardly said,

"I just want a 'Cat's Nest.'

As for anything else?

Please don't think too much about it."

As he spoke, a sincere smile appeared on Arthur's face.

"Just the 'Cat's Nest'?"

Lady Amanda was taken aback and asked reflexively.

This was not the scenario she had envisioned.

In her expectations, Arthur would not give up so easily.

At least, he should start with some words she liked to hear.

Then, speak some words she could accept.

Next, Arthur would say what he needed to say.

Finally, he would state his own demands.

Just a little!

He definitely wouldn't go deep!

At the very least, he should ask about the Black Cat Faction, right?

How could he not ask anything and just want a 'Cat's Nest'?

Lady Amanda couldn't believe that the Kledos Family's treasures didn't include a century-old silvertine.

Even though century-old silvertine was precious, it was the same.

"Yes, just the 'Cat's Nest'."

Arthur smiled again and nodded.

"Please wait."

Lady Amanda said, turning and walking towards the basement.

When she came back, she was holding a mat woven entirely from century-old silvertine, embroidered with a large black cat on it.

"Thank you for your generosity.

I will keep your kindness in mind.

I'll take care of the rest."

Arthur seemed relieved, an unconscious smile appeared on his face as he reached for the 'Cat's Nest'.

But Lady Amanda, while handing over the 'Cat's Nest,' paused.

Then, the lady furrowed her brows.

Arthur's relieved expression indeed bothered the lady.

Pendragon, who had been watching from the side, turned his head away.

Meow, it really couldn't stand to watch anymore.

Its master was too wicked.

And how could this woman be so foolish to take the bait directly?

Couldn't she see that this was a trap waiting for her to jump in?

Sensing Pendragon's confusion, Arthur chuckled to himself.

Had Amanda not been on guard?

How could she not be?

Before his words left his mouth, Amanda's caution was almost tangible.

But after his words, the unguarded Amanda felt like she had punched cotton, that sudden sense of 'weightlessness' stimulating her curiosity, was something no one could react to in time.

And once they couldn't react in time, they would step into his rhythm.

In the Spirit Medium's "Bluff," losing themselves.

No!

In the Spirit Medium's rhythm, finding their true selves.

"What is it, madam?"

Arthur looked puzzled.

"What are you going to do next?"

When Lady Amanda asked this question, she was a bit embarrassed.

Just a moment ago, she appeared as though she didn't want to get involved, but now she was shamelessly inquiring — something quite embarrassing for a member of the Cat Faction like Amanda.

And while Arthur had been responding fluidly all along, he now hesitated.

After a few seconds, he spoke again.

And only one sentence —

"Madam, times are changing."

Lady Amanda was stunned.

But the next moment, the lady came to a realization.

"Are you saying we are outdated?"

The lady challenged.

At this time, there was a hint of anger in her tone.

But Arthur shook his head again.

"Not outdated.

It's just...

there's a better option."

Arthur said, rising to his feet and walking out.

He didn't even take the 'Cat's Nest.'

And as he walked, Arthur quietly counted to himself in his mind.

'One, two...'

Before he could count to 'three,' he heard the lady's voice from behind —

"Wait!"

Chapter 609

Hearing a "wait," Arthur couldn't help but curl his lips in secret satisfaction.

Arthur had considerable experience in how to interact with "cats".

You can't be too accommodating to a cat.

The more you cater to a cat, the more aloof it becomes.

However, when you ignore a cat, that's when it tends to cling to you the most.

Ever felt like dealing with a love-scorned woman?

If so, congratulations.

Your cat definitely has a pure pedigree.

Raising a cat is like being in a relationship.

There's nothing complicated about it, as long as you can pique its curiosity and possess strategies that ensure you remain unbeaten—such were the words of Arthur's gluttonous friend who, with a proud face, told him this while continuously sipping air out of pain.

Don't misunderstand.

It wasn't a beating.

He just accidentally bumped into something.

It really was painful.

But the advice still held an ounce of truth.

Especially when both elements were present, Arthur believed—

The remnants of the Cat Faction from South Los had been thoroughly bested by him!

It was no use whoever came!

After all, this was the planned strategy following the confirmation that the remnants of the Cat Faction hadn't "Ascended Step," and he himself had already achieved Entry.

Upon "seeing" the declarations of the leaders of Cat Faction.Black, Cat Faction.Raccoon, and Cat Faction Flower, Arthur understood why the Cat's Hole that had reappeared in the public eye had fragmented into four groups.

Because...

Ideology!

Aeolia punched a new stairway through the Cat's Hole.

The pride of the three others made them believe it was the doings of the Orange Cat, and they should find what belongs to them.

This search inevitably led to differences.

Ultimately, it split the entire Cat's Hole into four.

And after such division, it's very likely that the three leaders didn't succeed either.

There might have even been accidents and misunderstandings!

Arthur deduced this from the weakening influence of the Cat Faction.

Otherwise, with the pride of these three leaders, they absolutely wouldn't have allowed their younger followers to truly split the Cat's Hole into four, nor would they have allowed Cat Faction. Black to face such a disaster.

Something unknown must have happened.

Arthur couldn't guess what exactly occurred.

But what he could confirm was that the remnants of the Cat Faction hadn't "Ascended Step"!

This was a crucial point!

It was because of this that Arthur dared to act so boldly!

Otherwise, Arthur would have been completely honest!

After all, when cats get angry, it could be quite terrifying.

Arthur certainly didn't want to endure a couple of scratches.

With his face still sporting the earlier smile, Arthur turned around to face Lady Amanda behind him.

"What do you mean by a better choice?"

The lady obviously still harbored anger, her voice raised unconsciously a lot as she spoke.

"From the first time I contacted you, I hinted whether you wanted to reappear before the public eyes.

However, you did not respond to me.

Especially when I had to use the name of 'Black Cat Faction,' you still maintained your silence.

I believe that you have made your choice.

And the name 'Black Cat Faction' will have a better choice."

Arthur began to equivocate and obscure the truth.

This was far too easy and simplistic for the young 'Spirit Medium'.

And the effect?

It was particularly outstanding.

At least the fuming Lady Amanda paused, a flicker of contemplation passing through her eyes.

Clearly, the lady was thinking about the situation and words at their first meeting.

And that was exactly what Arthur needed.

He needed her attention to be unfocused.

Then, Arthur continued to speak—

"Just like now, why do you think I'm asking you for the 'Cat's Nest'?"

I was telling you and your companions whether you were willing to return home!

Yet, knowing this, you still gave me the 'Cat's Nest,' does that not once again prove that you've made a better choice?"

Having said this, Arthur took a deep breath.

It seemed he was adjusting his own emotions.

Then, Arthur stared at Lady Amanda.

"I don't want to sever ties."

Because I want to leave some dignity for both of us!

After all, the Cat Hole used to be my home."

As soon as he finished speaking, a giant shadow of an Orange Cat appeared behind Arthur.

The Orange Cat stood like a human, dressed in a grey shawl, muscular, with pronounced muscles on its exposed arms; even the thick fur could not hide the bulging muscles. The face of the Orange Cat was mysteriously similar to Arthur's, especially those deep eyes, which were almost identical.

Behind the grey shawl, there was a character that only Arthur could understand—

"Spirit!"

After successfully Ascending, Arthur learned how to manipulate his energy to form a phantom.

The whole process was as simple as feeling hunger and needing to open his mouth to eat.

The birth of the phantom was completely a reflection of the inner self.

Although it could be slightly adjusted, it could not be fundamentally changed.

Originally, Arthur hoped that after his Ascension, his cat phantom would be just like a real Orange Cat.

He did not want to attract attention.

Because he understood the benefits of Concealment.

However, clearly, the 'projection of the soul' did not give Arthur that opportunity.

Of course, none of these were important.

What was important was that the moment the phantom of the Orange Cat appeared, an aura of a superior predator enveloped Lady Amanda.

Feeling this almost tangible oppression, the lady's complexion changed.

"Orange Cat?!"

It's actually an Orange Cat?!"

That's impossible!"

The lady murmured to herself.

This was completely different from what she had expected.

She had expected the Kledos Family was one of the original members of the Black Cat Faction, or rather, had inherited some of the Cat Faction's Black legacy from the scattered original Black Cat Faction.

But she had never thought that the Kledos Family would be Orange Cats!

In the Cat Faction, it was well-known that since the disappearance of the leader of the Cat Hole, the 'Golden Lion Cat' Aeolia, the 'Orange Cat' faction, which should have been the leader, had completely declined.

After all, unlike the other three factions that had the Black Cat Faction, the Raccoon Cat Group, and the Calico Group.

There were only 1-2 successors in each generation of Orange Cats.

Outwardly, it's claimed to be about the legitimacy of the heirs.

But the insiders in the Cat Faction knew that every Orange Cat ate too much.

Not just food, but also resources.

And because of this overconsumption, there could only be 1-2 people per generation.

Any more than that?

There wouldn't be enough resources.

Or more precisely, they couldn't afford them.

But this also resulted in the discontinuation of generations of Orange Cats.

And it also led to the collapse and disintegration of the Cat Hole.

They all took this very seriously.

But...

Why did what should have disappeared reappear?

And what should have flourished, now perishes?

A deep sense of confusion and absurdity overwhelmed Lady Amanda's mind.

"Why is it impossible?"

Some things, if you think about them more, you will discover the clues.

But after you and your companions made new choices, perhaps even if you saw the clues, you would choose to ignore them, right?

You might not know, but I have changed the requirement to become a member of the 'Black Cat Faction' to 'Great Arcana Level,' I think this will make the Black Cat Faction even more deserving of its name, don't you think?"

Speaking, amidst the lady's astonished and incredulous remarks, Arthur proceeded to retract his aura, returning once again to that amiable demeanor.

The young 'Spirit Medium' said softly—

"Lady, do you understand?"

Chapter 610: Secret!

To subjugate the prideful is no simple task.

If possible, Arthur would have preferred to rely on time to establish a good relationship, and then use that relationship as a bond to tie their interests together, making them inseparable.

But Arthur lacked time.

So, Arthur had no choice but to select another method—

Suppression!

Or, to be more precise, shatter the pride of the prideful.

And to shatter what the prideful took pride in was no small feat.

Just like facing Lady Amanda before him.

Arthur needed not only his identity as the 'legitimate Orange Cat,' but also to demonstrate the strength of the 'contemporary Orange Cat,' and beyond that, the strength of the new Black Cat Faction.

Although that was only the 'strength criterion' he had drawn out through his second Exquisite Human Puppet Grindelwald.

But who knows this?

Even if Didian, Sapir, Longbain, and Garcia, who were involved, were asked, they would only think that joining the Black Cat Faction required being at the Great Arcana Level.

And that was enough.

Enough to deceive Lady Amanda in front of him.

Of course, there was still that tiny bit missing from the key point.

So—

"A dead end is no reason to sink into despair.

To wallow in self-pity...

That is!"

As he spoke, Arthur saw the look of bitterness emerge on the lady's face.

Arthur knew the time had come.

Without delay, the young Spirit Medium continued.

"Are you willing to join my new Black Cat Faction to make the name of Cat Faction.Black more fitting? Or do you prefer to continue with the status quo?"

I won't give you advice.

Your life can only be ruled by you.

I will stay in South Los for about another week, and before I leave South Los for Inner Bay, I hope you can give me an answer."

Having said this, Arthur turned as if to leave again.

But in his heart, Arthur had already determined the answer.

The prideful, even if their pride is shattered, will not sink as a result.

Their broken prideful heart is bound to be patched up and picked up again.

And then?

Naturally, to return to the pinnacle.

What Arthur had seen in the Phantom Realm of the past leaders of Cat Faction.Black, Cat Faction.Raccoon, and Cat Faction.Flower said it all.

And the descendants of these leaders?

There might be unworthy descendants.

But certainly not including Lady Amanda.

If Lady Amanda were truly resigned to decadence, she wouldn't have stopped him just now.

Now?

The same applies.

"Wait!"

Lady Amanda spoke up again.

"Do you have something else?"

Arthur asked.

"Yes, about Cat Faction. Raccoon and Cat Faction. Flower—about their sudden disappearance back then, does your Cat Faction. Orange know anything?"

The lady nodded and then asked directly.

About this matter, Arthur knew.

In the notes of the Demon Hunter Old Sunk, Arthur had found out these details.

But as for the exact reasons for their disappearance, the notes did not say, and Arthur did not know.

However, at this time, he couldn't show that.

Therefore, Arthur restrained his smile, shook his head, and then raised his right hand, placing his index finger to his lips.

Without saying anything, just one gesture.

But it was enough of an explanation.

Watching Arthur with an "I know, but I can't tell" expression, Lady Amanda let out a soft sigh.

Then the lady gestured for Arthur to return to the shop.

Pulling out a chair, she sat down and murmured to herself,

"Is there indeed a 'Great Secret'?"

At that time, the Cat Faction. Raccoon and Cat Faction. Flower leaders suddenly sent messages saying they had deciphered the solution left by our ancestors to the 'dead end ahead' problem.

That moment coincided precisely with the critical breakthrough made by the leader at the time.

Moreover, on the previous evening, that leader had told the successor that it shouldn't start from 'Ascend Step' or 'Entry', but from the very first 'Ritual'.

All three nearly simultaneously deciphered the puzzles left by 'Holy Era' leaders.

It was all too coincidental.

The leader at the time found it strange, but even stranger was that afterwards the Cat Faction. Raccoon and Cat Faction. Flower leaders sent out distress signals.

The contemporary leader immediately entrusted everything to the heir and ordered us to relocate; then, without delay, set off, only to encounter an ambush by those bastards!"

As she spoke, Lady Amanda clenched her fists.

Arthur's skills of Eagle Eye and Insight had been flashing incessantly since just recently.

He was checking if Lady Amanda was lying.

Even though she was from the Cat Faction, Arthur's guard remained up.

And quickly, Arthur came to a conclusion.

The lady had not lied.

However...

She had held something back!

To this, Arthur was not surprised.

The lady's age and hidden identity would naturally make her cautious in handling matters.

If she told everything to Arthur, an 'outsider'.

Then Arthur would be wary.

Even though he had revealed the phantom of an 'Orange Cat', their relationship was not so intimate.

Bearing one's soul without such intimacy meant setting a trap for the other party.

But this bad situation did not occur, allowing Arthur to breathe a sigh of relief and begin analyzing the lady's words.

Clearly, the other three Cat Faction leaders who witnessed Aeolia 'creating a new path' also established their factions' 'paths'.

However, these three must have realized they lacked a 'boost' like Mimi.

Therefore, to fundamentally solve the problem, it is undeniable that the talents of these three were truly astonishing; they managed to diminish the difficulty of 'Ascend Step' by changing the 'initial Ritual' and 'Entry Ritual'.

But...

Why not tell directly rather than having later generations decipher it?

This could not be explained away by any trite rationale about not appreciating what comes too easily.

Clearly, those three leaders had no choice but to do so.

And afterwards!

At the end of the Silver Age, the sudden messages from the Cat Faction. Raccoon and Cat Faction. Flower, leading to the incident where the Black Cat was ambushed!

It all reeked of intrigue.

Especially the fact that both factions of Cat Faction. Raccoon and Cat Faction. Flower disappeared.

This made Arthur even more concerned.

'What happened back then?'

Arthur pondered deep inside.

But on the surface, the young 'Spirit Medium' remained calm, simply saying in a soft voice—

"What was taken from us will be returned.

In tenfold, a hundredfold, a thousandfold manner."

No grand statements, just a straightforward declaration.

Yet within that simple statement lay Arthur's subtlety.

He had said 'our'.

He had also kindled 'hatred'.

Being in the same camp against the same enemy naturally garnered considerable favor.

Not to mention, Arthur's earlier groundwork made such favor come bursting forth.

Lady Amanda sitting across from him lifted her head, seizing the 'opportunity' provided by Arthur's words, she directly responded—

"If that's the case, we too are willing to lend a hand."