

Great Master 611

Chapter 611: Invitation!

When Arthur left No. 17 Garden North Street, he was carrying not only the 'Cat's Nest' made from century-old silvervine but also two bags of dried small fish.

Both were free of charge.

Especially the two bags of small fish, which had earned Pendragon's approval.

By the time he returned to No. 2 Cork Street, Pendragon had already shown off half a bag of dried fish.

And Arthur, while petting his own 'Cat's Nest,' was contemplating the promise made by Lady Amanda—

Two members of the 'Great Arcana Level' from the Black Cat Faction would join his new Black Cat Faction and would pledge their loyalty to him.

And he?

He had to fulfill a promise of 'tenfold, a hundredfold, a thousandfold.'

To this, Arthur did not refuse.

Before preparing for oceanic trade, Arthur's coastal trade had already quietly begun.

Exemptions in three areas?

Far from enough!

He wanted more!

So, when presented with such a 'legitimate reason,' Arthur certainly wouldn't mind.

In fact, he demanded even more.

However, such matters, of course, required a perfect plan to proceed.

And a perfect plan required time.

Lady Amanda did not press him on this point.

Arthur expressed considerable gratitude for the lady's magnanimity and secretly marveled at the strength of the concealed Black Cat Faction.

After receiving the 'Stairway of Ascension' at Cat Hole interrupted by 'God's Lock,' and the unexpected secret message left by the leaders of the black, raccoon, and flower factions, Arthur had quietly assessed the existing power of the Black Cat Faction.

In his assessment, the Black Cat Faction's high-end combatants, the Great Arcana Level, would not be too many.

At most one or two people.

But when Lady Amanda effortlessly proposed two old Great Arcana Level members of the Black Cat Faction to join his new Black Cat Faction, Arthur understood.

His previous assessment was incorrect.

The high-end combat power of Lady Amanda's Black Cat Faction was far beyond his imagination.

There must be at least three people at the Great Arcana Level.

Perhaps there were even higher-level 'Entrant' existents.

'Facing the unexpected, adjusting one's lifestyle with composure and actively preparing for it?

Should I say it's a force that has accumulated over time?

Truly not to be underestimated!'

Arthur was full of exclamations in his heart.

But regarding the unexpected strength of the Black Cat Faction, he felt a tinge of excitement.

After all, they were all his!

Perhaps these remnants of the old era's Black Cat Faction had not yet understood their own significance, but as time passed, Arthur, as the contemporary 'Black Cat,' would definitely make them understand their purpose and thus join the new Black Cat Faction.

In this matter, Arthur had absolute confidence.

After all, being a young, upright, naive, and kind 'Spirit Medium,' making this happen was simply too easy.

Even with a heart black enough, just one or two 'accidents' would suffice.

Regrettably, as a young, upright, naive, and kind 'Spirit Medium,' Arthur believed he had to act more openly and honorably.

At least...

To do it 'open and aboveboard!'

And for that, he would need to ask a favor of his enemies in the shadows.

Arthur was convinced that they would surely fulfill his wishes.

But that was for later.

Now?

Arthur looked down at the 'Cat's Nest.'

'Aside from the 'Cat's Nest,' I still need 'Dragon's Horn,' 'Fierce Tiger's Claw,' 'Raging Bear's Gallbladder,' 'Terrifying Wolf's Ear'...

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

At this moment, Arthur was no longer a rookie on the Mystic Side.

He was very clear about what 'Dragon's Horn,' 'Fierce Tiger's Claw,' 'Raging Bear's Gallbladder,' and 'Terrifying Wolf's Ear' represented.

Power!

Glory!

The most direct one, "Raging Bear's Gallbladder", if an ordinary person consumes it and doesn't explode, he will certainly enter the Arcana Level.

And "Fierce Tiger's Claw" is one of the best base materials for forging weapons.

Jewelry crafted from "Terrifying Wolf's Ear" can enhance a person's hearing several fold.

As for "Dragon's Horn"?

It's even rumored to be one of the base materials for the "God-Slaying Spear".

Each of these is incredibly rare, and simply cannot be valued using Gold Coins.

Especially since the dragons that possess "Dragon's Horn" and the fierce tigers with "Fierce Tiger's Claw" have long been extinct.

According to records, the last dragon died at the beginning of the Holy Era, slain by The Holy Court's "Paladin".

As for the fierce tiger, it was in the later period of the Holy Era, sanctioned by the head of the Religious Tribunal, and its claws were forged into the renowned "Holy Sword": Atiya.

While the raging bear and terrifying wolf have not been extinct, their numbers are scarce and can only occasionally be seen deep within North County.

Hunting either requires the help of seasoned wilderness hunters, and must be led by "Entrants".

The last time a raging bear was captured was ten years ago.

And catching a terrifying wolf was even further back, twenty years ago.

The base materials from both were auctioned off in private, never reaching the market.

Arthur thought he was doing not too badly, but getting his hands on these four base materials was something he reckoned to be impossible, unless he had an incredible stroke of luck.

And in some ways, Arthur indeed had incredible luck.

Because he had a good grandfather.

More importantly, this good grandfather had an excellent eye for quality, as well as extremely reliable initiative.

Which allowed him to obtain these items in an effortless manner.

Just like the "Griffin Spirit Potion".

For others, it would be virtually unobtainable.

But there might be one in the treasure vault of the South Los House.

"Dragon's Horn", "Fierce Tiger's Claw", "Raging Bear's Gallbladder", "Terrifying Wolf's Ear", it would be the same.

Even if the South Los House didn't have them.

Then...

How about the Golden Lion Family?

As the foremost family of South County, they should have some, right?

And as the legitimate heir of the Golden Lion Family, wouldn't it be reasonable for him to take a little?

Moreover, he wasn't doing it for himself, he was only seeking justice for his mother!

Thinking thus, Arthur stepped down from the carriage.

"Sir."

Merlin and Gawain greeted him.

The two young servants returned to their post the second day after the Cold Winter Festival ended, helping with various chores at No. 2 Cork Street, occasionally assisting Ms. Anna as well.

Ms. Anna had praised them more than once.

Just like at this moment, seeing Arthur holding items, they immediately ran over quickly to relieve Arthur of the dried fish and the 'Cat's Nest'.

Arthur, with a smile, handed half a bag of dried fish to Gawain, then holding the 'Cat's Nest', he looked straight at Merlin and said directly.

"Merlin, go send a message to Madam Susan for me.

Tell her that I have prepared dinner at No. 2 Cork Street."

Arthur instructed.

He was absolutely confident that Madam Susan would accept the invitation.

With Old Charlie's connection, the lady would surely make the appointment.

"Yes, sir."

Merlin nodded and immediately went to deliver the message.

Gawain placed the half bag of dried fish into the cabinet at the Spirit Medium Parlor in Pendragon.

And Arthur?

Stretched lazily.

"Such a hassle."

Mumbling these words, Arthur collapsed onto the bed.

Atop the roof, Wuni received the order and immediately took flight—

It flew towards the Docklands.

Chapter 612: Arrangement!

Coconut Island, 'Bloody John' stood beside Horton, pointing at a young man and saying—

"Xavier, a local from Coconut Island, can be trusted."

The young man named Xavier, with his dark skin, immediately revealed an honest smile upon hearing Old John's introduction, respectfully saluting Horton while greeting him.

"Hello, Mr. Horton."

His voice was somewhat stammering.

Even a bit hurried.

Everything fit the setup of an honest man.

Arthur was not surprised by this.

For the plan that would follow, Old John would not play any tricks with this choice of person.

Simply put, this Xavier was reliable and trustworthy.

Of course, even if the other party disguised himself well enough, there would be no loss to him.

"I need you to deliver a message to the 'Spirit Medium' His Lordship at No. 2 Cork Street in South Los—

I am willing to become the sword in your hand.

I am willing to conquer lands for you.

I am even more willing to dedicate everything to you.

Killing the 'Devil of Dokiman Island' is just the beginning."

Arthur, manipulating his own facade, spoke earnestly.

Xavier nodded repeatedly.

Old John, standing to the side and seemingly smiling, actually felt his skin crawl upon seeing Horton's 'loyalty.'

'Is this the power of the Lion Group?

It's terrifying!

Should I reconsider the risks associated with contacting that Old Lion...

No!

Apart from the Old Lion, I doubt anyone else could help me!

After all, it's about the treasure of the 'Pirate King!'

After a brief hesitation, Old John became even more determined.

Old John knew very well that in the whole of South County, only the Old Lion could 'help' him, or rather, only with the Old Lion's permission could he get close to the 'Pirate King's treasure.

Because—

The 'Pirate King's' treasure is in Inner Bay!

Yes, the infamous 'Pirate King' Edward hid his treasure in Inner Bay!

For years, everyone was fooled!

Everyone believed the 'Pirate King' Edward's treasure was somewhere off the coast.

Even, in deep sea.

But the real treasure was in Inner Bay.

This was the answer Old John obtained after secretly investigating for thirty years.

On this matter, Old John has more than once secretly cursed the direct descendants of the 'Pirate King' Edward.

He's really hateful!

'Serve you right, you bastard, to die without descendants!

Dying and still playing tricks on others!

You're truly a damn scoundrel!'

Old John cursed in his heart, but outwardly, he spoke without a change of expression.

"Don't worry, Horton.

I will personally ensure Xavier reaches South Los.

I guarantee by midnight, Xavier will stand on the land of South Los."

Old John did not hide his tracks, but stated them openly and aboveboard.

Because the old captain knew very well that his movements could not be concealed. Instead of being discovered by Horton later, it was better to openly state them.

As for being found suspicious by Horton later?

That was a matter for later.

Moreover, Old John was confident that even if Horton found something suspicious, he wouldn't be in a hurry to find him.

Because, Coconut Island!

He had left the entire Coconut Island to him!

Faced with his disappearance, Horton surely wouldn't seek him first, but would take over Coconut Island.

After all, that's what a normal pirate would do, right?

'Thank me, Horton!

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!'

Old John inwardly sighed.

Then, he started to look forward to life in Inner Bay.

For the treasure of the 'Pirate King' Edward, he must go to Inner Bay, and he would definitely settle there for a while!

During this time, he must not show any anomalies.

So, he now needed to practice his expressions well.

'Maybe I should get a noble title?

That would make my information seem more valuable!

It would also make me seem more sincere!

Hey, Lord John doesn't sound too bad!'

This old captain began to minutely adjust his plan.

"Thank you, John."

Horton nodded with a smile.

"Haha, what are friends for."

Old John laughed heartily and then walked with Xavier toward the dock.

There, a 'speedboat' was already waiting.

That was the special 'speedboat' of Bloody John's Pirate Group, which, from the outside, looked just like an enlarged version of a barrel.

But the barrel's sides were curved, and people sat inside it.

Xavier was clearly not accustomed to riding such a 'speedboat' for the first time.

"Kid, lie down inside and take a nap,"

"When you wake up, you'll be in South Los!"

With that, Old John kicked Xavier into the 'speedboat.'

Then, with a wave to Horton, his entire form transformed into a pool of water that clung to the 'speedboat.'

The next moment—

The 'speedboat' sank beneath the surface of the sea.

In Horton's field of vision, the concealed 'speedboat' was moving forward at an unimaginable speed.

'Such a convenient power!'

Arthur exclaimed once again.

The reason Old John could consistently escape pursuit, apart from his caution, was his reliance on such power.

'Is it a secret technique? Or a ritual?'

If it's a secret technique...'

Arthur thought to himself as he controlled Horton to walk towards the cabin on the mountaintop where he lived.

Mountaintop cabin.

Matilda, having changed into fresh clothes, was sitting obediently there.

Earlier, that man named Horton had not driven her away.

This made Matilda realize that her judgment was correct.

Horton was different from the other pirates.

No!

Horton was not a pirate at all.

Rather, he was more like a scholar.

Boring, dull scholar.

Not only did he not pay more attention to her, but he also focused more on his books.

'Are books really that interesting?'

Matilda wondered to herself, envy appearing in her eyes.

She also wanted to know what was written in the books.

Unfortunately...

she was illiterate.

Footsteps approached, and Matilda, who was sitting there, immediately stood up, like a maid greeting the returning Horton.

When the door opened, Matilda was stunned.

Because there was a huge crow perched on Horton's shoulder.

Ignoring Matilda, Arthur, controlling Horton, handed over the neatly packed head of Sakiri, the Devil of Dokiman Island, to Wuni and watched as Wuni flew towards South Los, then looked again at Matilda, the descendant of the Pirate King, pondered for a moment, and said through Horton's voice—

"Lady Matilda, would you be willing to become my test subject?"

Test subject?!

Matilda was startled.

But looking at Horton's smiling face, the lady did not turn and run but instead asked cautiously,

"Will it endanger my life?"

"No!

In fact, it won't cause you any real harm.

If you agree, I can give you some money."

Horton shook his head.

Immediately, the lady breathed a sigh of relief, patted her chest with her hand, and a smile once again spread across her face.

"That's good!

I don't want money!

Can you teach me to read?"

Matilda looked at Horton expectantly.

The lady was not really disinterested in money.

But the Horton she was dealing with was obviously worth far more than 500 gold coins!

If she could get close to Horton and even have something more intimate happen, if she could have his child, then it would be worth far beyond 500 gold coins.

Arthur saw through what the lady wanted at a glance.

But he had no intention of revealing it.

"Good.

We will start tomorrow."

Arthur gave a firm reply through Horton's voice.

It wasn't just that he needed the descendant of the Pirate King's fresh blood.

He also needed an assistant overseas to help him manage Coconut Island, and he wanted to see the limits of the Pirate King's descendant.

As for Horton?

He was a qualified enforcer but not a qualified manager.

"That's great!"

Matilda cheered joyfully, appearing like a little girl.

Arthur watched, then, controlling Horton, he picked up the books again.

And his consciousness returned to his original body.

At that moment, it was getting late.

There was still some time before the arrival of Madam Susan.

And in this gap, Arthur was not just lying around anymore.

He still had one important thing to do.

Chapter 613: Do You Know What Hide and Seek is?

A saint once said, "Only when a person has hobbies can they truly be called a human."

Another sage said, "A person without hobbies is not worth associating with."

Arthur always considered himself a decent person precisely because he had hobbies.

More than one, in fact.

Arthur's favorite hobby used to be observation!

Sitting alone in an inconspicuous corner, he would observe everyone that came into his view, guessing their possible professions, family backgrounds, and their intentions.

Then?

He would naturally verify each one.

Of course, all within what Arthur considered his ethical boundaries.

He certainly would never stir up any trouble.

As for being hit by a muck cart?

That was just a coincidence.

After arriving in the current world, Arthur had developed another hobby.

Eating?

No!

Eating is an instinct!

A lifelong love!

How could one call eating a hobby?

Those who call eating a hobby surely have never endured hunger, do not know the pain of an empty stomach in the middle of the night, staggering around without a penny in their pockets, forced to quench their hunger with tap water.

Eating is survival.

Definitely not a hobby.

Arthur had always thought so.

His new hobby, however, was—

Leveling up!

A hobby that allowed him to gain strength through his own talent.

The entire process was exhilarating.

It brought a unique pleasure.

Therefore, this hobby had Arthur hooked.

Having retaken his seat in the "Spirit Medium Parlor," Arthur glanced at the 2800 points of XP, his eyes scanning over the mystical arts he possessed.

The first to catch his eye was the "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique"!

Just as he had told Lady Amanda, Arthur would be heading to Inner Bay in about a week.

Although Arthur had done everything possible to ensure his safety,

he certainly wouldn't mind being safer.

Thus, with sufficient XP, the first enhancement he targeted was the "Shadow Flash" effect of the "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique."

[Consume 1600 points of XP, upgrade Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique!]

[Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique Lv3: At this moment, your mastery of this mystical art has already surpassed Harris's understanding. Your unique bloodline and talent have transformed the Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique, a core legacy from the "Tower of Mist's" "Gray Robe," into something even more forbidden—now that "Death" mingles with some "Shadows," its power is evident, and you have just begun to understand it!]

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

[Shadow Stab: Command shadows within a 50-meter radius of you to form 1-66 spear-like "Shadow Spikes" to attack your opponents. When there are only 9 "Shadow Spikes" existing, they will possess the highest attack power of the current "Arcana Level," but when there is only one "Shadow Spike," its power will be of the "Great Arcana Level." As the number of "Shadow Spikes" increases, their power decreases, and the length of each "Shadow Spike" cannot exceed 50 meters.]

[Shadow Devour: The unique corrosive energy of shadows will reside in every "Shadow Spike." When the number of "Shadow Spikes" is only 9, the corrosive energy will be of "Arcana Level," but when there is only one "Shadow Spike," its corrosive energy will be of "Great Arcana Level".]

[Shadow Flash: You can use shadows to perform a short-range blink not exceeding 15 meters, each time consuming a substantial amount of physical strength.]

...

Just as Arthur had guessed earlier, when the "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique" was upgraded to level 3, both "Shadow Stab" and "Shadow Devour" would possess the attack power of "Great Arcana Level."

What pleased Arthur the most was the reduced physical strength demand of "Shadow Flash".

As his ritual "Great Orange" had been completed, he had truly advanced a level.

"Physique," "Spirituality," and "Traits" were all enhanced comprehensively. Now that the physical strength demand of "Shadow Flash" was further reduced, it was truly a case of $1+1>2$.

In fact, it was so.

When the synchronization of knowledge and body was complete, Arthur's figure began to flicker continuously in the 'Spirit Medium Parlor'.

Arthur first appeared behind Pendragon, tugged on Pendragon's tail, and when Pendragon turned around, he appeared in front, poked Pendragon's head, and when Pendragon turned his head furiously back, Arthur appeared behind him again and blew a breath at Pendragon's bottom.

Meow!

After twelve times, Pendragon couldn't bear it anymore. He let out a piercing cat scream, jumped onto the roof beam, fled through the skylight, and kept Fujin company on the roof.

"Tsk, tsk, so petty!"

What's wrong with letting dad blow a little?"

Arthur said with a smile on his face.

This smile was genuine, not because of teasing Pendragon, but because of the number of times he could now use "Shadow Flash".

'Normally 12 times, and if I push it, 16 or 17 times isn't a problem.'

Coming to such a conclusion, Arthur's smile grew even happier.

He readjusted his sitting position and then looked towards "Silent Successive Steps"!

Compared to "Extreme Illusory Shadow Technique," which is critical for survival, "Shadow Flash," "Silent Successive Steps" is more comprehensive.

Whether it's for traveling, fighting, or escaping, it works.

Moreover, it fits his identity from the Cat Faction.

Most importantly, Level 2 "Silent Successive Steps" only needed 200XP.

If there were no surprises, Level 3 would be just 400XP.

For Arthur now, this was quite suitable.

[Consume 200XP, upgrade Silent Successive Steps level!]

[Consume 400XP, upgrade Silent Successive Steps level!]

[Silent Successive Steps Lv3: Once one of the core mystical arts of 'Cat Hole,' is the favorite and essential mystical art that every member of 'Cat Hole' must learn. It not only improves the learner's physique but

also significantly enhances the learner's coordination. However, it must be based on the 'Cat Hole' ritual; otherwise, irreversible mutations will occur. Now, you have just made it past the entry-level!]

[Effect: 1, Silence Lv3; 2, Continuous Step Lv3]

[Silence Lv3: Move in a state of swift walking, while still achieving true silence]

[Continuous Step Lv3: When running or leaping, any protruding object can become a point of support for your flipping jump, and when you are mid-air, stepping from your left foot on your right foot, you can still complete a double-jump, but only one double-jump.]

[Physique +1.2 (0.2+0.4+0.6)]

...

Streams of warmth flowed through his body with every heartbeat.

Especially in his spine and legs, Arthur could distinctly feel a tingling sensation.

The additional increase in "Physique" was expected by Arthur.

However, the emergence of the 'double-jump' surprised him.

'Step from left foot on right foot, straight to the moon.'

Arthur mused to himself in words only he could understand, then with a light hop, he reached the same height as the roof beam, but instead of using it to gain momentum, he stepped from his left foot on his right foot and silently passed through the skylight, landing next to Pendragon.

When Pendragon noticed something was amiss, he was already being held by Arthur, who had returned to the 'Spirit Medium Parlor'.

"You eat what dad gives, drink what dad pours, and yet you think to abandon dad.

Dad is so heartbroken!

Now, dad will play a game called 'hide and seek' with you!"

As Arthur spoke, he swung his arm and threw Pendragon out, while yelling loudly—

"Kitty, quickly dodge the wall ahead!"

Chapter 614 Silly... No, Silly Cat!

Pendragon, flung through the air, had a look of utter resignation on his cat face.

Pendragon had already thought Arthur was dog-like before.

And now?

Pendragon believed Arthur was definitely a dog.

"Does your family play hide and seek by throwing the cat to evade obstacles?"

This is dodgeball...

No!

It's dodge cat, to be exact!

Pendragon had his inner rant, but he was quick to react. As he was about to hit the wall, he twisted his body midair and changed direction, gliding like a paper plane and landing smoothly on a nearby bookcase.

Afterward, the cat warily watched Arthur, who had sat back down in his chair.

In fact, Arthur had returned to his chair right after throwing Pendragon.

Worry about Pendragon?

With the afterglow of two Baptisms, combined with the Griffin Physique Potion, Pendragon was far from the fragile creature one might imagine, and Arthur had controlled his strength.

Simply put, this level of tossing was really just playful.

Having finished playing with his cat, Arthur's gaze returned to the Silent Successive Steps.

'Lv4 needs 2000XP?

1200 points more than the usual estimate?'

Looking at the XP needed for the next level of Silent Successive Steps, Arthur wasn't surprised at all.

In fact, he was quite calm.

After all, compared to those masters' secret techniques that easily ran into the tens or even hundreds of thousands of XP, the current Silent Successive Steps was truly approachable.

However, approachable as it was,

for the current Arthur, there still weren't enough XP points.

Glancing at the remaining 600 XP, Arthur's gaze finally settled on the secret techniques Cat's Grace.Orange and Cat Claw.

The former was an auxiliary technique within the Cat Cave Mystic Arts.

The latter was a purely offensive technique.

For Arthur, there was no lack of means of attack.

And close combat was something he would choose only as a last resort.

Thus, the technique Arthur eventually chose was Cat's Grace.Orange.

Compared with the first three levels.

Normally, Cat's Grace.Orange Lv4 would need 240 XP, and Lv5 would need 480 XP.

For the current Arthur, who had only 600 XP to use, he was short by 120 points.

But the current Arthur was not the Arthur of the past.

He briefly communicated with Horton, far away on Coconut Island.

The next moment, text appeared—

[A few pirates who had been staring at Matilda were slain by Horton; XP+120]

...

The sea, like the desert, is always so rich in resources.

In the desert, one could casually pick up drones or rocket launchers.

So, it's only reasonable that one could randomly pick up XP points in the sea, right?

After all, Arthur had been using 'bait.'

Matilda was a very effective 'bait.'

And this was another reason why Arthur had left Matilda behind.

Arthur knew very well how attractive Matilda was to those pirates.

And this 'fatal attraction' was just what Arthur needed.

Then, Cat's Grace.Orange was leveled up twice in rapid succession, reaching its peak—

[Cat's Grace.Orange Lv5: As the Cat Cave split into four factions, the original core technique 'Cat's Grace' split into four, each faction adding their own understanding and style, forming the techniques seen today, especially 'Cat's Grace.Orange', heavily influenced by the 'Golden Lion Cat', Aeolia, focusing more on physique and recovery—in the eyes of an Orange Cat, being able to eat and sleep constitutes all life's joys. To protect this happiness, they need to keep gaining weight, getting bigger, using their massive physique and tremendous strength to overpower their opponents, and now that you have reached their pinnacle, maybe you can attempt to review the other three factions' 'Cat's Grace', restore them, and go further]

[Effect: 1, Force of Orange; 2, Sleep of Orange;]

[Force of Orange Lv5: Rapidly digests food, converting energy to reinforce organs, bones, and muscles, enhancing one's physique; Physique+1.5 (+0.1+0.2+0.3+0.4+0.5)]

[Sleep of Orange Lv5: Sleep not only rapidly nurtures and restores physical condition, but also slowly heals emotional wounds]

(Note 1: The effects of "Force of Orange" and "Sleep of Orange" will be enhanced by the ritual "Great Orange" and reciprocally augment "Great Orange".)

(Note 2: More food will speed up the recovery process, heal the body, and soothe the soul.)

...

Arthur's physique had gained an additional 0.4 and 0.5 points respectively at Lv4 and Lv5 of "Cat's Grace.Orange".

At this moment, Arthur's physique had reached a level of 15.7.

Arthur felt that against an average 'Entrant', he could overpower them solely with his physique.

Against a commoner, without armor, weapon, or mystical arts, his physique alone would be enough to fight a thousand men single-handedly.

Of course, if any of those thousand were Mystic Side Persons, caution was still needed.

However, that was not what Arthur needed to care about.

For Arthur, once he was in a combat state, he would use all means available, be it fighting dirty or striking where it hurts most, without any reserve.

What shame?

What dirty trick?

These were the purest combat skills.

Simple yet effective.

However, for Arthur, "Cat's Grace.Orange" served a greater role as a support.

"Indeed, 'Cat's Grace.Orange' is beneficial for the ritual 'Great Orange' as well!"

Arthur keenly sensed how "Cat's Grace.Orange" fed back into "Great Orange", he could clearly feel that the 'speed' of "Great Orange" had increased by a notch.

And for Arthur, it meant reaching the limit of XP for "Great Orange" with less effort.

Even, with enough time, he could reach the peak much faster.

Of course, what Arthur valued even more was the "Cat's Grace.Orange Sleep".

No one could guarantee they wouldn't get hurt.

And how to recover after injury was crucial.

Especially after the trip to Inner Bay.

Arthur wanted to ensure his safety and health.

But what if?

No one could guarantee what twists fate might have in store.

Arthur was no exception.

Thus, all he could do was be better prepared.

"Ah! Destiny!

What shall I use to love you enthusiastically?"

With a sigh, Arthur rose from his chair and, with Fujin's perspective, had already seen Madam Susan's carriage.

Out of politeness, the young 'Spirit Medium' walked straight to the door.

Arthur was to wait for the lady at the front door.

However, when he passed by Pendragon, the young 'Spirit Medium' paused for a moment.

Suddenly, Pendragon hopped onto the cabinet, eyeing Arthur with an extremely wary look.

Arthur immediately clutched his chest.

"Are you that wary of daddy?

Daddy wouldn't harm you, would he?"

Pendragon remained silent, his glance shifting towards the wall where something had been thrown.

"It was a game!

You understand, right? A game that's good for your physical and mental health!"

Arthur emphasized.

Pendragon continued to maintain silence, but hesitation appeared in his eyes.

Then...

Arthur caught him by the back of the neck.

Arthur vigorously rubbed Pendragon's cat head, messing up his fur completely while Pendragon bemoaned his pitiful fate, only to hear Arthur whisper—

"That's enough!

Remember, act like a fool in a little while!"

Chapter 615: It Became Like a Child...

What does that mean?

Pendragon looked at Arthur with confusion.

Arthur, on the other hand, nodded with a smile—

"Yes, that's the look!

Right, just a bit clearer!

Good, keep it up...

Pay attention to my cues later!"

With that, Arthur stepped forward and pushed the door open to leave.

By the time the young 'Spirit Medium' arrived inside No. 2 Cork Street, the carriage carrying Madam Susan had just stopped at the entrance to the courtyard.

The coachman opened the door for Madam Susan.

"Good evening, Arthur.

Take it slow, no need to rush."

The lady stepped out of the carriage and saw Arthur, who was about to step away from the door quickly.

Immediately, a smile spread across her face, and while reminding Arthur, she turned around to take out a food container from the carriage.

"This is a batch of snacks made by Lady Cullen—you can call Lady Cullen 'Granny Cullen' when you visit the Lord Count's Mansion.

She is in charge of the entire kitchen at the Count's Mansion.

Her culinary skills are unparalleled."

As she spoke, the lady raised the food container, gesturing to Arthur.

Even with the container blocking the way, an alluring sweet aroma still caused Arthur to repeatedly flare his nostrils.

One should know, Granny Cullen was recognized as the first-rate chef in South Los while The Old Earl was alive.

If it hadn't been for the favor she owed The Old Earl, with Granny Cullen's culinary expertise, her reputation would've been tenfold more illustrious than it is now.

At the very least, the Old Lion of Inner Bay was willing to grant this granny a noble title.

But she unequivocally refused.

She chose to look after the then-young Mother Tigress after The Old Earl passed away and then went on to care for Julie, Cathy, Valerie, and others.

Undoubtedly, she treated these children as her own descendants.

Moreover, Granny Cullen only wished to cook food for her family.

Therefore, it was impossible for outsiders to taste the food prepared by Granny Cullen. There was even a noble from Inner Bay who publicly declared he was willing to spend 500 gold coins for a serving of pastries baked personally by Granny Cullen.

Then, when that noble happened to pass by South Los on a ship...

He was struck by lightning.

After that incident, no one dared to bring up the matter again.

But, many food enthusiasts still coveted Granny Cullen's culinary skills.

Arthur was no exception.

He too was curious about Granny Cullen's craftsmanship.

However, from beginning to end, Arthur never let it show.

And quite obviously, Madam Susan noticed Arthur's love for food from their limited interactions.

Many have the talent for detailed observation.

But after observing, few are willing to offer help.

Let alone fulfil one's wishes, which is even rarer.

Undoubtedly, the idiom 'love me, love my dog' was fully embodied by this lady.

"I'm truly grateful.

Grandma Susan, when you return, you must thank Granny Cullen for me."

Arthur crossed the courtyard gate, one hand taking the food container, the other hand steadying Madam Susan.

Just like a real grandson.

Even though Madam Susan did not need any assistance, she did not refuse Arthur.

Or rather...

Madam Susan very much enjoyed the feeling of being surrounded by her grandchildren.

"Where is Marinda?"

After entering No. 2 Cork Street, without seeing Marinda, Madam Susan asked outright.

"She has been very busy these past few days. She told me this afternoon that she won't be coming back for the next several days," Arthur replied with a smile, having hung up Madam Susan's coat.

"Is that so?"

Madam Susan frowned.

Not out of displeasure, but feeling that Marinda was overexerting herself.

This was about her great-grandchildren, after all.

Immediately, the lady felt it necessary to have another talk with Marinda.

However, the lady did not show it.

Instead, she put on a smile.

Ms. Anna was busy arranging plates filled with food on a tablecloth that was primarily silver-gray with checkered edges.

There was her favorite beef stew.

And she had made three different kinds.

Plain beef stew.

Potato beef stew.

And casserole beef stew.

Clearly, Ms. Anna had put her heart into it.

"Thank you, Anna,"

the lady formally expressed her gratitude.

The other party had been busy all afternoon; such thanks from her were necessary.

"It's all part of my duties, my lady,"

Ms. Anna revealed a happy smile.

Nothing was more joyful than having one's hard work praised.

With the food boxes set aside on the table, Arthur pulled out a chair for Madam Susan, while saying—

"Grandma Susan, I plan to close myself off until the 'Oriental' is launched, and then travel to Inner Bay aboard her.

Before that, I intend to seclude myself.

I need to get myself into the best condition to face the Old Lion's test."

The Oriental was Arthur's cruise ship, apart from the coastal freighters,

specifically used for carrying passengers.

Madam Susan knew this, but she was surprised that Arthur would go to Inner Bay so soon.

After all, the 'South County Swordsmanship Competition' in Inner Bay was scheduled to coincide with 'Pioneer Celebration Day', or to be more precise, starting from January 31st, 'Pioneer Celebration Day'.

As one of Inner Bay's most important holidays, celebrating the Old Lion's meritorious service, 'Pioneer Celebration Day' would last for five days.

From January 31st to February 4th.

And the 'South County Swordsmanship Competition' would begin on the third day of 'Pioneer Celebration Day', that is, February 2nd.

The 'Cold Winter Festival' had just passed; it was now January 2nd, and it would take roughly a week's time by boat from South Los to Inner Bay, sailing downstream – ample time by any measure.

Arthur, seeing the astonishment on Madam Susan's face, laughed and said,

"Facing the Old Lion, no amount of preparation is enough, it's better to head to Inner Bay early to get a lay of the land.

Moreover, I am leaving a week later, so there won't be much difference in timing.

I hope Inner Bay won't disappoint me."

Watching Arthur's smiling face, Madam Susan immediately instructed,

"You must be careful when facing the Old Lion.

If the situation becomes impossible, be sure to return to South Los right away.

Here, I can assure you that no one will be able to harm you."

The lady gave Arthur a promise.

Confronted with this promise, Arthur naturally believed it.

The young 'Spirit Medium' was very clear about the power wielded by the steward of South Los in the area.

"Of course.

I have no doubts!

Moreover, I am willing to contribute to your South Los!"

Arthur said, looking up towards the skylight as Wuni slipped through the window clutching a bundle.

Even with the lime, Madam Susan could smell a hint of the Scent of Blood.

And judging by the size of the package, the lady assumed it was a human head.

Whose head?

The lady speculated at the bottom of her heart.

Her gaze then fell on the package Wuni had placed on a side table.

Arthur, however, was rising to open the package and reveal the mystery.

But just at that moment, Pendragon jumped onto the table, grabbed the package, and ran off.

Arthur was taken aback, then reproached in a low voice,

"Pan, that item is not for playing with!"

Then, turning his head, the young 'Spirit Medium' spoke with a wry smile—

"Previously, in order to give Pan the ability to defend itself, I had it take a 'Griffin Physique Potion.' It has indeed grown and even gained the power to protect itself, but it seems its brain isn't very bright, and, like a child, it's quite mischievous."

Chapter 616: Shyness Is My Camouflage

Arthur said, and with a raise of his hand.

An invisible "Hand of Void" immediately grasped Pendragon's nape.

In an instant, Pendragon's eyes cleared completely, and his mouth gaped open.

Smack!

Clatter, clatter!

The parcel in his mouth directly fell to the ground, rolling to the feet of Madam Susan.

And the cloth that served as concealment scattered, revealing the head of Sakiri, the "Devil of Dokiman Island," inside.

"Sakiri?!"

Madam Susan was taken aback.

As the South Los Family's head housekeeper, of course, she couldn't be unaware of Sakiri.

She remembered clearly the pirate who had devastated the South Los House's Dokiman Island holdings overseas.

Furthermore, to capture him, she had personally raised his bounty twice.

But to no avail!

In the face of those weaker than himself, Sakiri indulged in displaying cruelty.

Against those stronger than him, Sakiri would simply conceal himself in the nearby sea.

The South Los Family did not launch an extensive manhunt, because—

Reputation!

Given the Old Earl's 'glorious past,' the South Los House could already not afford any setbacks, especially after Mother Tigress had shown exceptional Talent, they would not let the new Earl's reputation suffer any loss. Therefore, without absolute certainty, they wouldn't make any rash moves.

Thus, they had allowed Sakiri, the "Devil of Dokiman Island", to roam free.

But hatred is not easily forgotten!

With the passage of time, the South Los Family's hatred for Sakiri only grew by the day.

The Swordsmanship Chief Julie and Head Hunter Valerie of the Earl of South Los had more than once suggested going out on their own to bring back Sakiri's head.

But they were both rejected by the Earl.

The Mother Tigress knew very well that, whether it was Julie or Valerie, their actions would surely trigger a chain reaction.

Simply put, the Old Lion would not sit idly by.

The Old Lion would certainly find ways to 'expand his victories.'

Even a small misstep could trigger a full-scale war.

Before the South Los House was fully prepared, Mother Tigress would never allow such a thing to happen.

With that in mind, even if it was frustrating, the Mother Tigress, the South Los House, had to endure.

So, when Sakiri's head appeared before them, even Madam Susan, the South Los House's head housekeeper, couldn't help but be startled.

But the lady quickly regained her composure.

"Arthur, you have won Lord Count's friendship.

At the same time, the South Los House will treat you as a distinguished guest," she said formally.

At that moment, the lady represented the South Los Family.

Arthur, however, simply smiled and shook his head.

"I've only fulfilled your trust.

I didn't inform you beforehand because I was afraid of disappointing you.

Fortunately, luck was on my side."

Arthur once again made his position quite clear; he was placing himself as a junior to Madam Susan, and he did not seem to care about the so-called Earl of South Los or the South Los House. His simple and direct message was that he was only easing the worries of his elder.

This attitude pleased Madam Susan.

Because she too regarded Arthur as a junior.

When Arthur acted as a junior and managed to accomplish the task, Madam Susan felt an indescribable sense of gratification at the bottom of her heart.

If she weren't worried about attracting too much attention, she would right now send out invitations to hold a salon and introduce her grandson to those folks.

Unfortunately...

The secrecy of the South Los House!

Thinking of this made the lady feel like she owed Arthur.

But the next moment, when the lady saw Pendragon still being held mid-air, with his eyes clear, she instantly knew what to do.

"Alright, since you've taken on worries for your elder like me,

as your elder, I find a Griffin Spirit Potion and some Gold Coins to be a fitting reward— the Griffin Spirit Potion is enough to make Pan more whole and sensible.

And those Gold Coins?

The cost of living in Inner Bay is quite high!" said the lady with a smile.

"Thank you, Grandma Susan."

Arthur did not refuse, but instead agreed shyly.

This was an expression befitting a junior.

And watching Arthur's demeanor, Madam Susan was extremely pleased.

Afterward, the lady pondered for a moment before saying,

"I will bring back Sakiri's head to Lord Count, and he will definitely show you some goodwill—do not reject the goodwill that the Earl offers you.

Because he needs you to go out to sea to continue sweeping the pirates.

And he will surely raise the price."

Madam Susan said, winking.

Immediately, Arthur understood.

The lady planned to help him "openly and aboveboard."

Of course, Arthur would not refuse this.

However, the necessary "process" still had to be followed, much like during the New Year when facing red envelopes given by elders: one would turn their head, verbally decline, but the pocket of their clothes would be wide open, almost wishing the elder would stuff in a few more.

"This, this..."

Arthur was somewhat bashful.

"Arthur, this is what you deserve.

After all, you've proven yourself."

Madam Susan made the matter final with an irrefutable tone.

And thus, the dinner that followed was naturally pleasant and easygoing.

The dinner lasted for an hour and a half.

By nine o'clock in the evening, it had completely ended.

"Arthur, I would love to spend more time with you, but as the steward of the South Los House, I can't be away from my post for long—especially with the 'Pioneer Celebration Day' and the 'South County Swordsmanship Competition' about to start in Inner Bay, my work is going to be unimaginably busy."

Faced with Arthur's invitation for after-dinner dessert, Madam Susan sighed.

The lady did not hide anything but spoke bluntly.

Arthur had been expecting this.

Inner Bay kept sending spies into South Los.

South Los wasn't dead. How could it be indifferent?

Even at a disadvantage, it would certainly retaliate.

Of course, both sides were following the rules of the game.

They fought in the shadows while maintaining as much "dignity" as possible.

It was fighting without breaking.

"Grandma Susan, please take care of yourself.

If there's anything you need, make sure to let me know.

You know, I'm very willing to help you with some trouble."

Arthur's words were as sweet as honey, charming the lady into smiling once again.

"As an 'Entrant,' my body is healthier than you can imagine.

And even if there's trouble, it's for me to help you, not for you to help."

The lady said, gently patting Arthur's shoulder.

Then, she stood up to take her leave.

Arthur saw the lady out of No. 2 Cork Street, watching her carriage depart until it disappeared from view. Only then did he return to his room.

And then...

He immediately saw Pendragon looking at him with clear eyes.

Arthur raised an eyebrow.

Then, he smacked Pendragon on the back of the head.

Slap!

Amidst the crisp sound, Arthur scooped up the fleeing Pendragon and scolded with a low shout—

"You little rascal, you actually thought you could deceive dad?

Dad is really heartbroken!

Because...

Your intelligence really is problematic!

How could you think that using the tricks I taught you would fool me?

Come on!

Let the Cat Tossing Game 2.0 begin!"

Chapter 617

Earl of South Los' Mansion, study room.

A slightly crisp voice kept sounding—

"Nine hundred ninety-eight, nine hundred ninety-nine, one thousand!"

After bouncing up a thousand times, Ash Bonaparte of South Los turned around, lifted a bowl of bone soup boiled by Granny Cullen, and after drinking it up, the Countess ran to the side of the bookshelf.

There, a hidden ruler was concealed.

The Countess stood straight, chest out, back straight, trying to stretch her head up a bit more.

Then—

1.4 meters.

Upon seeing this number, the Countess immediately moved the caliper up by 5 centimeters.

1.45 meters.

Next, she took off her shoes and stuffed two layers of height-increasing insoles inside.

1.5 meters.

"Hmm, exercise really works!

Growing 5 centimeters in such a short time, I am indeed impressive!"

The Countess muttered to herself.

Then, she picked up the tome that recorded the 'Grow Taller' secret technique.

This was not just any secret technique compiled at random, nor was it a swindler's trick.

It was an authentically magical technique.

It was truly capable of making a person grow about 10 centimeters after reaching adulthood.

But...

For the Countess, it was useless.

Because any 'special' power that entered her body would be devoured by the 'Thunder Force' within her.

This caused the Countess considerable distress.

However, the Countess soon found a solution.

A self-reconciliation—

Height-increasing insoles!

Of course, on regular days, the Countess still exercised.

Who knows? A miracle might happen.

Thinking this, the Countess sprang into action again, she jumped up, grabbed the beam, and let her body hang down, savoring the feeling of 'growing taller.'

"It definitely can happen!

It definitely can happen!

I will grow to 1.6 meters!"

The Countess of South Los declared resoundingly.

Her voice echoed in the study room, and with good soundproofing, there was no need to worry about being overheard.

In fact, every time she exercised, Ash Bonaparte of South Los made all the guards keep their distance, allowing no one close except for Madam Susan and Granny Cullen.

Even the close Swordsmanship Chief, Guard Commander, and Head Hunter were not allowed.

Similarly, when Madam Susan returned to the Count's Mansion and saw this setup, she knew her lord was exercising again.

With her towering height of 2 meters and a slender figure, the lady expressed her puzzlement.

Is height important?

It isn't important.

All these are delusions.

Because, the person who loves you will like every aspect of you.

For example: Old Charlie.

Thinking of this old rascal, Madam Susan's cheeks turned slightly red.

In her younger days, she had been mocked as a 'stick' because of her height.

Then...

Old Charlie grabbed an actual stick and fiercely whipped those who mocked her, until their skin split open and they were crying for their parents.

The next day, he carried a stool over, stood on it, and looked down at her.

"Aren't we a perfect match now?"

To this day, the lady remembers how Old Charlie, in front of those mockers, wrapped his arms around her neck and asserted himself beyond doubt.

Of course, those who mocked her didn't oppose either.

Including the two sisters who had always suppressed her, they too revealed a submissive, ingratiating smile.

Because, Old Charlie still held the stick from yesterday.

And this time, he had nailed spikes into it.

"You old rascal, don't think I don't know what you're up to.

Go ahead and do it."

"Arthur, I will take good care of it."

"I must give you a big surprise!" she thought and did not immediately enter the study but waited for a moment.

After confirming that the Countess had finished her exercise, she knocked on the door.

"Aunt Susan, please come in."

When there were no outsiders, the Countess of South Los showed affection to Madam Susan.

Madam Susan liked this feeling of affection, but she still reminded her,

"Lord Count, please be cautious with your words."

While saying this, the lady sensed her surroundings and only relaxed after confirming that no one else was around.

"You are the sole ruler of the South Los House."

"Similarly, you are the hope of the entire family."

"You are always being watched."

"And some people always make a big deal out of trivial matters to attack you."

The lady spoke these words and placed a package on the desk.

Then, she opened the bundle.

"Sakiri!"

The Countess, just like Madam Susan before her, was slightly startled.

Then, without any concealment, Madam Susan relayed Arthur's actions, embellished tenfold, to the Countess.

In Madam Susan's words, Arthur was not only a 'knight' full of honor but also deeply affectionate towards South Los.

Most importantly, Arthur was willing to serve the Countess, the ruler of South Los Territory.

"So it is!"

The Countess did not doubt Madam Susan's words.

Because the trust the Countess had in Madam Susan had long surpassed the nominal subordinate relationship.

Moreover, the lady's words were reasonable.

If Arthur Kledos did not cherish South Los, why would he bother doing so many things that were useless to him?

Most importantly, the Kledos family's management near the sea was somewhat unexpected!

Being able to find Sakiri so easily and eliminate him.

Indeed...

'Appointing him to eradicate the pirates was a show of my great judgment.'

The Earl thought contentedly.

Madam Susan, who had been watching the Earl's expression, immediately smiled and said,

"Arthur is a fine young man.

I think he deserves a proper reward.

I will use my meritorious service to exchange for a Griffin Spirit Potion for him, and some gold coins for a trip to Inner Bay."

To this lady, it was all too clear how 'stingy' her Lord Count was.

Because of the Old Earl's extravagance, the South Los House was not as wealthy as imagined, and the Countess' childhood was even more strained.

For this reason, the Countess had habitually become 'thrifty.'

Not only did she leave the 'Spring Planting Festival' to be prepared by each family themselves,

but 'Summer Celebration Day' was also entirely left to the merchants.

Only the 'Harvest Festival' and 'Cold Winter Festival' still maintained the traditions.

In fact, if it were not for 'Noble honor,' the Countess would have wanted to decentralize these two holidays as well.

Therefore, the Countess had an unimaginable fixate on taxes.

Of course, rewards as well.

But that was for outsiders.

For her own people, the Countess was quite generous.

So, upon hearing Madam Susan's words, the Countess immediately said—

"Don't be like that, Aunt Susan.

A Griffin Spirit Potion and some gold coins are within my means.

What I am considering now is how to ensure the safety of Arthur Kredos in Inner Bay.

That old lion will definitely use some tricks!"

"Yes!

This is also my concern.

So, I think we should provide Arthur protection while also branding him with the mark of the South Los House, leaving that old lion helpless."

Madam Susan nodded and commented accordingly.

The Countess was startled.

She asked subconsciously—

"What do you mean?"

Chapter 618: Go with the Wind!

"Lightning Strike!"

"The emblem of the South Los Family—Thunder!"

"With just such a Thunder Strike, Arthur's safety could be greatly enhanced, not to mention everyone would understand that he is from the South Los Family."

Madam Susan said with a smile.

The Power of Thunder is unique to the South Los Family, and it is the foundation of the South Los House.

Based on the Power of Thunder, many secret techniques had been developed by generations of the South Los Family.

The most famous of which was 'Lightning Strike.'

A secret technique completely developed by imitating natural thunder.

It was also the secret technique that granted the South Los Family their illustrious reputation.

A Lightning Strike from the sky was enough to make someone tremble with fear.

However, executing 'Lightning Strike' was not easy.

One could only touch the threshold upon 'Entry.'

Only after 'Ascend Step' could one truly perform it.

But it was not absolute!

Because—

Scrolls!

Scrolls capable of storing secret techniques of 'Ascend Step' level were very rare.

But the South Los Family had them.

However, the Countess shook her head.

"A single 'Lightning Strike' is not enough."

The countess said softly, then raised her hand.

Zzzt, zzzt.

Among the sparks, the Countess pulled out a blue pearl the size of a little finger.

The blue pearl, glowing luminously on its own.

When placed in front of her, one could clearly hear the sound of thunder.

"Lord Count, you mustn't..."

Upon seeing the blue pearl, Madam Susan immediately spoke out to stop her, but was interrupted by the Countess.

"The Old Lion is not a fool.

His strength makes us cautious.

But his magnanimity is what truly terrifies us.

If we do not give a 'Mark of Thunder' to Arthur Kredos, once Arthur meets with the Old Lion, he will certainly open the secret vault and allow Arthur to choose at will."

The Countess said solemnly.

Her youthful face showed a rare seriousness.

Whenever facing the Old Lion, the Countess was always serious.

In turn, facing the Countess at this moment, Madam Susan could only smile inwardly.

Her original purpose was indeed to secure a 'Mark of Thunder' for Arthur.

Not just to make the journey to Inner Bay safer.

But also for—

uniting Ash and Arthur.

She was creating momentum for Arthur.

Letting rumors spread.

Then, any age-suitable suitor for Ash would hear that 'the beloved of the Countess of South Los is the Spirit Medium Arthur Kredos.'

Thus, this one 'Mark of Thunder' was extremely crucial.

Only the appearance of the 'Mark of Thunder' could turn this rumor into reality.

Of course, with how shameless nobles could be, even when facing such rumors, they would certainly rush headlong into marriage.

And when that time came...

For her grandson's happiness, she wouldn't be blamed for being ruthless.

To curb greed, let it meet its end.

Ms. Susan understood this.

And that was exactly what she intended to do.

"Not enough! Not enough!

Still not secure enough!"

The Countess said, raising her hand again.

Without hesitation, the Countess bit her finger, allowing her fresh blood to imbue the 'Mark of Thunder.' The red but slightly golden blood shimmered with flashes of thunder.

It was merely a drop of blood, but the moment it appeared, the thunder roared—

Boom!

Loud thunder resounded throughout South Los.

The Tower Keeper lit more torches on the lighthouse.

"I hope everyone makes it safely to shore!"

The Tower Keeper muttered to himself.

And just as the Tower Keeper lit the torch, he completely failed to notice a strange-looking "Barrel Boat" mooring at one side, from which Xavier emerged—

Ugh!

This dark-skinned native of Coconut Island, at this moment, his skin rejuvenated with his vomiting.

Meanwhile, the "Bloody John" transformed from water into a human paid no attention to him.

"Do as Horton instructed," he said.

Saying so, Old John was eager to proceed downstream.

According to the original plan, Old John would travel along the Inland River.

Three days later, he would be able to reach Inner Bay.

Then, the plan was to contact that Old Lion.

However, just as the old captain took a few steps, he stopped.

A man of ordinary appearance, with hair showing signs of pallor, blocked the old captain's path.

Of course, that wasn't important.

What was important was that two more people appeared on either side.

These two, hidden in the shadows, moved silently, and Old John could detect them because they wanted him to.

'Great Arcana Level?

Just this level of concealment?' he thought.

Old John scanned the two, and then his expression grew more wary.

His "Spirituality" told him that there were more people nearby.

More people?! Where?!

Old John never doubted his "Spirituality."

Immediately, the old captain started searching while asking the pale-haired man in front of him—

"Hello, may I ask who you are?" he asked politely.

He was polite, and had it not been for his attire and the three large golden teeth visible when he spoke, it would have been impossible to tell he was a pirate.

"Black Cat Faction, Grindelwald,"

the Exquisite Human Puppet Number Two introduced himself.

Then, without waiting for Bloody John's response, he continued.

"My master divined some not-so-favorable visions.

So, we would like to kindly ask you to make some inquiries.

We do not wish to create too much disturbance, and we hope you could cooperate."

Exquisite Human Puppet Number Two, controlled by Arthur, thus spoke.

Old John's heart sank.

The name "Black Cat Faction" was not unfamiliar to Old John.

He had heard it before, and now it was buzzing in his ears.

As Arthur Kredos, the contemporary "Black Cat," emerged, the Black Cat Faction once again appeared before people.

But...

Was the Black Cat Faction really this powerful?

Randomly they were all of Great Arcana Level?

And then, this concealed individual...

A supreme assassin!

Old John had no doubts about Arthur's 'Divination.'

Being a 'Spirit Medium,' having the ability to 'Divine' was quite normal.

Divining some visions was even more so totally normal.

So—

"Alright! I'll go with you!" he said,

but in the same moment, his entire form transformed into a puddle of water and he began to flee towards the open sea.

The old pirate always adhered to a principle.

If the situation went south, escape first.

But his usually infallible ability was not so useful at this moment.

Cold!

A temperature cold enough to instantly freeze a normal person pervaded the surroundings.

Transformed into a puddle of water, Old John felt himself starting to freeze.

Without any hesitation, the old pirate reverted to his original form, facing the smiling Grindelwald, and internally he cried out in alarm.

How could he have overlooked the man before him?

Someone who could be the leader of the Black Cat Faction.

This man named Grindelwald couldn't possibly be simple.

Moreover, with that faint murderous aura emerging, the old pirate knew that because of his escape attempt, the supreme assassin was going to make a move.

Without hesitation, the old pirate immediately knelt down, raising both hands, and said—

"I know where the 'Pirate King's' treasure is!"

Chapter 619 Pirate's Confusion!

What is most important to a person?

Some believe it's about eating and drinking.

Some believe it's about love and affection.

Others believe it's about sacrificing everything to make everyone better off.

And of course, there are those who think they live solely to make others uncomfortable.

Those who are about eating and drinking are considered vulgar.

Those who are about love and affection are considered fools.

Those who sacrifice everything are considered saints.

Those who make others uncomfortable are considered evil.

When the vulgar, the fools, the saints, and the evil are integrated, that's when we become ordinary people.

So, as ordinary people, what is most important?

To live!

Living is the most important!

Old John was well aware of this, so he knelt without hesitation.

For this old pirate, who had been sailing since the end of the 'Silver Age', countless dangerous experiences and narrow escapes had taught him that dignity, honor, and all that were insignificant.

Only life matters.

Only when alive can one indulge in food and drink, love and affection, make sacrifices, and torment others.

Arthur was not surprised by this.

When he designed the way to let the opponent know his "identity", Arthur had guessed how the other might respond.

Of course, there was a way to deal with it—

"Captain John has more than thirty years of sailing experience, I wonder if he could join my master's 'Oriental', as the Chief Sailor?

After all, my master's hidden enemies might target this ship.

We need a loyal and reliable assistant to help the ship sail smoothly for 20 voyages."

Grindelwald looked at Old John kneeling before him and revealed a smile.

This smile was welcoming and infectious.

Upon hearing this request, Old John breathed a sigh of relief.

The old pirate thought the South Los 'Spirit Medium' would make him swear allegiance.

It had to be either the 'Lionheart Ceremony' or the 'Gift of the Sea'.

Now that he heard it was just an ordinary escort mission, even for 20 times, it didn't matter.

It was better than being tied down for the rest of his life.

Dignity, honor, those things didn't matter and could be sacrificed.

But freedom...

He could not give that up.

The Old John kneeling here had just planned to paralyze his opponent, then launch a sudden attack, even at the cost of getting hurt, he intended to escape.

And after that?

Naturally, he would slowly seek revenge.

But now?

It seemed unnecessary.

And as for the position of Chief Sailor, ranked below captain and first mate?

Old John cared even less.

Forget being Chief Sailor, there was a time when Old John nearly sold himself into servitude just to escape pursuit.

Now things were already good enough.

And Arthur had anticipated this would be the case.

Arthur had reviewed 'Bloody John's' life. Aside from the labels of being cunning and cautious, the man's strength was also assessed to be above the 'Great Arcana Level', possibly at 'Entry'—and the information obtained from Kangsion wielding the 'Whale Slaying Sword' affirmed that 'Bloody John' was indeed 'Entry' level.

Without a doubt, 'Bloody John' had always been sending up smoke signals.

The intent was to hold an extra card up his sleeve.

The man might avoid combat, but when faced with a battle that couldn't be avoided, he would not back down.

After all, he was a pirate.

Similarly, as a pirate, facing the prospect of losing his freedom meant there was no other choice but to fight.

Therefore, Arthur would never have him come aboard and swear allegiance outright.

That was unrealistic.

It would instead push the man to take desperate measures.

Arthur planned to boil the frog in warm water.

Once on his ship, you belonged to him.

Think of running away?

Wishful thinking!

"I would be delighted to serve the 'Spirit Medium' of South Los."

Old John bowed respectfully.

"Follow me.

You and..."

Grindelwald's gaze turned to the young man from Coconut Island.

"Xavier, my lord, my name is Xavier."

Xavier immediately introduced himself, even more respectfully—he had witnessed how Captain John, who seemed like a Divine Spirit, was utterly dominated.

Having already succumbed to force, Xavier certainly knew how to present himself correctly.

"Hmm, John and Xavier, please follow me.

You'll need new clothes and also to familiarize yourselves with the 'Oriental'."

Of course, you can make requests as well.

As long as they are not excessive, I can agree to them."

Grindelwald's smile grew more cordial.

However, seeing such a smile, neither John nor Xavier could do anything but shake their heads repeatedly.

Despite the relaxed atmosphere, both men had a profound understanding of their status as 'captives'.

Yet, following Grindelwald into the Lotus Leaf Hotel, both men felt perplexed.

It was not that the conditions were too poor.

It was that they were too good.

Hot bathwater, clean clothes, soft beds, and a sumptuous dinner—for Xavier, it included steak, mashed potatoes, tomatoes, and a glass of wine, luxuries he dared not even dream of in the past. Even if the Sapir serving them seemed fierce, Xavier's heart was full of gratitude.

"Thank you, Captain John."

Suddenly, Xavier thanked Old John.

Old John was taken aback.

"I know, it's thanks to you that I can enjoy this meal. I am truly grateful."

Xavier explained.

Old John waved his hand dismissively, his heart filled with disdain.

He had seen such tactics too often.

And they thought they could win him over with this?

They were underestimating him.

About half an hour later, Grindelwald returned with a contract in hand—it outlined that Old John was required to escort the Oriental twenty times, with a complete voyage being from Xisis Port and back again.

These were the same verbal promises made just before.

To this, Old John was not surprised.

But what truly surprised the old pirate was that he actually had a salary.

Involuntarily, surprise flickered in the old pirate's eyes.

"My lord would not let someone exert themselves for nothing."

Grindelwald stated.

"Of course! Of course!"

The old pirate laughed outwardly, but inwardly he scorned.

He had encountered too many who said one thing and did another. Soon they would be inquiring about the 'Pirate King's' treasure, wouldn't they?

He was sure to give them a surprise.

To ensure the 'Pirate King's' treasure truly belonged to him, the old pirate had taken many 'precautions.'

One such 'precaution' was creating a 'Pirate King's' treasure.

Of course, it definitely contained no treasure.

But it would surely result in the death of anyone who entered.

As the old pirate looked forward to this moment, Grindelwald, after confirming the contract's efficacy by its glowing lines, bid his farewell with a smile.

No inquiries were made.

No tests were conducted.

Not even a guard was appointed.

Even though that formidable giant who had just arrived seemed suitable, it was clear he was not a guard but rather the hotel's manager—a judgment the old pirate trusted in, but it was this very thing that puzzled him even more, followed by a sudden shock.

He had thought of a terrifying possibility!

Chapter 620: Live and Eat with the Ship!

Could it be that someone really has their eye on the "Oriental"?

As this thought crossed his mind, Old John rolled over and sat up from the bed.

After all, he had just signed a contract with South Los' Spirit Medium—it stipulated that he must escort the Oriental for 20 voyages before he could regain his freedom!

So then...

What if the Oriental were to sink?

Those 20 voyages would become indefinitely postponed!

Because the contract specified that if the Oriental sunk due to forces beyond control, he would have to temporarily serve the Spirit Medium of South Los before a new Oriental was rebuilt. Only after the new ship launched could he continue with the original contents of the contract.

Simply put, if the Oriental sank and took a long time to rebuild, he would have to serve the Spirit Medium of South Los indefinitely.

'Hiss!'

Thinking of this, Old John drew in a breath of cold air, feeling incredibly relieved.

He then let out a cold laugh.

'Don't even think about playing games with me!

I will make sure the "Oriental" is looked after properly!

With that in mind, the old pirate began to pack up his bedding roll.

"Lord John, you?"

Xavier, who had been woken up, looked puzzled.

"Going to the dock, to sleep on the 'Oriental'."

Old John briefly explained, then headed out the door.

"Wait for me, Lord John!"

Xavier immediately bundled up his bedding and followed.

This young man from Coconut Island almost instinctively followed John.

It was out of admiration for the strong.

And beyond that?

It was also because of an identification with status.

For this young man from Coconut Island, becoming a sailor on the Oriental seemed like a very decent job. If it had been before, it would have been virtually impossible for him to find such a respectable job in South Los—the citizens of the island had always been strictly treated due to the old Earl's cause.

Ordinary islanders simply couldn't find work in South Los.

Even if they did, they would have to pay higher taxes.

Of course, this was not the case with Arthur.

Because—

The crew of the Oriental were all locals from South Los.

On the first floor, Sapir sat behind the inn's counter, still pondering the scene he had just witnessed—

Strong!

Very strong!

That man who looked almost like a pirate was very strong!

After his awakening, Sapir's spirituality surged.

Especially towards existences stronger than himself, he could perceive them clearly.

So, the moment he saw Old John, the sturdy man with a fierce appearance felt the hairs on his back stand on end.

But not a hint of it showed on his face.

Because his leader, Grindelwald, was also present.

Especially when he discovered that this old man, who terrified him so much and seemed like a pirate, was exceedingly respectful towards his own leader, the inn's Night Watchman felt even more at ease.

Only...

'Becoming an official member of the Black Cat Faction is so hard!

And although it's easy for someone like me, who awakened by accident, to reach the Arcana Level, I don't know if my talent is sufficient to reach the Great Arcana Level?'

The Night Watchman began to trust some of the information inadvertently revealed by his leader even more.

At the same time, some information he obtained from his sister made him increasingly cautious and prudent. His pride, already battered once, was completely shattered.

The inn's Night Watchman was already considering how he should train to smoothly reach the Great Arcana Level and then get promoted to an official member of the Black Cat Faction.

And just at that moment, Old John and Xavier came down from the second floor.

Seeing the two of them with their bedding rolls, Sapir was puzzled.

And before Sapir could react, Old John had already tossed out a gold coin—

"For the bedding, and you might also need to help deliver food to the 'Oriental' these next few days."

With that, Old John pushed the door open and left.

"Trouble you, Your Excellency!"

Xavier then bowed to express his gratitude.

Sapir watched the two leave without an inkling of intention to stop them.

Beforehand, his leader had already told him that there was no need to stop their departure.

Moreover, they were heading for the 'Oriental'.

Of course, Sapir knew the 'Oriental' was the ship soon to be launched by their big boss.

"So that's it!

To protect the safety of the 'Oriental', they've sought out a powerful person, haven't they?

Worthy of the big boss indeed!"

Sapir murmured to himself.

What Sapir didn't notice was that a drop of water, upon hearing his words, directly seeped into the floor, passed through the pipes, and merged back into the body of Old John who was moving forward.

"Indeed, it is to have me protect the 'Oriental'!

If someone attacks, I defeat the attackers, which is beneficial for the South Los 'Spirit Medium'!

If the attackers destroy the 'Oriental', in the meantime, I still have to continue my service, which is even more advantageous for the South Los 'Spirit Medium'!

Win-win!

It is simply win-win!

Is this the South Los 'Spirit Medium'?"

The old pirate reflected heartily.

At the same time, the old pirate swore that from now on, from this moment, he would eat, drink, and live on the 'Oriental', and any ill-intentioned individual who came close to the 'Oriental' would be his sworn enemy, against whom he could share no common sky.

If one came, he would kill one.

If two came, he would kill a pair.

Not only did he intend to kill the attackers, but he also planned to eliminate those behind the attackers.

Being a pirate, he was very clear that if he did not eradicate those behind the scenes, he would always have moments of negligence.

With this thought, the old pirate's steps became even more resolute.

And in the night sky, a crow flew past without a sound.

"Heh, boarded my ship and still thinking of escaping?

It won't be that easy!

Just obediently work for me for a lifetime!"

Inside No. 2 Cork Street, Arthur, with the help of Wuni's vision, couldn't help but laugh out loud.

Arthur knew exactly what Old John was thinking.

And he indeed had entertained the same thought before.

But there was no need.

He did not need to act personally.

Just one pass through Inner Bay with the 'Oriental' would be enough.

Certain members of the Golden Lion Family would surely target this passenger ship to trouble him, and Arthur had been pondering on how to handle it.

Now there was no need to worry.

With Old John, an experienced and powerful individual on board, Arthur couldn't wait for those members of the Golden Lion Family to make their move.

He was eager to witness the old pirate's methods.

As for the 'Pirate King's Treasure'?

Of course, Arthur wanted it.

But it was necessary to be methodical, otherwise...

It could lead to mutual destruction.

If the 'Pirate King's Treasure' offered by the old pirate had no strings attached, then Arthur would throw Pendragon onto the wall.

Meow?

Seemingly sensing something amiss with his master, Pendragon became vigilant.

Arthur, however, looked at his cat with a face full of disdain, rolling his eyes—

"Unfilial creature!

Tomorrow, you will know how much blood, sweat, and tears your father has invested for you!"

Arthur said this.

However, things turned out a bit beyond Arthur's expectations.