

Unspeakable 2061

Chapter 2061

The car gradually came to a stop.

Nonetheless, Albert couldn't hold himself back and persuaded Matthew again, "Mr. Larson, Old Master Bane really doesn't care about such formalities. Your presence alone is enough."

Matthew merely turned his head and intoned seriously, "It's impolite of me to go empty-handed since this is my first visit. Albert, do you mind waiting for me out here for a while? I promise to make this quick."

As he spoke, he had already gotten out of the car.

Albert could only smile wryly and shake his head when he saw that his persuasion had fallen on deaf ears.

Generally speaking, elders naturally preferred collecting items such as antiques and artifacts. For that reason, Matthew stopped by the antiquities piazza in order to get Old Mr. Bane a gift.

Still, Matthew chose to shop at The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium due to time constraints, as it is the largest antique store in the entire antiquities piazza.

The store's design adopted a railing-style archaic framework, and the materials used for its construction were entirely made of wood. Although it was lofty, the entire store only had three floors.

Under the cornices of the front entrance stood 12 straight pillars made of golden Phoebe wood. A signboard with gold-inlaid characters of the store's name, The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium, was hanging high above the main entrance.

The store's interior was luxuriously decorated, exuding a resplendent atmosphere, especially under the gigantic, dazzling crystal chandeliers. Various antiques and artifacts were placed in an orderly yet artistic manner in the spacious lobby.

As soon as Matthew entered the store, the manager, who was not far away, came over to greet him, "Hello, sir. Welcome to The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium. I'm Mr. Wadley, the manager of the store. How may I help you, sir? Is there anything you're looking for? I can show you."

Since Matthew didn't have a specific antique in mind, he replied casually, "Well, I'll take a look around first."

"Of course, sir. Right this way, please..."

With that, Mr. Wadley immediately led Matthew to the third floor.

This floor was considered to be the floor displaying items of the highest grade in The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium. The lowest selling price of all the antiques on this floor was above 15 thousand.

Years of engaging in this industry have enabled me to master reading people perfectly. I know that this young man isn't the kind of person who is strapped for cash with just a glance. Besides, youngsters nowadays won't think of shopping at a place like this unless they are getting their elders a gift.

He immediately devised a promotion plan when he arrived on that train of thought

“Sir, this purple clay teapot set is our store’s finest quality set of teapots, and it’s not expensive either. It’s only 50 thousand...”

As he spoke, Mr. Wadley wore white silk gloves before picking up the whole set of purple clay teapots next to him.

However, Matthew dismissed his purchase desire after simply casting a glance at the teapot set.

Hmm... This is too new...

For an elder such as Old Master Bane, the aspect he values in personal items such as purple clay teapots and jade pendants isn’t only about the price or the quality. Instead, it’s more about the years of companionship it had with its previous owner.

Take the antique walnut for an example. It may be worthless to others, but it’s a priceless treasure for the elders who have been using it for decades...

Even though the store was spacious and had several items on display, there were pitifully few items that truly caught Matthew’s eye.

Matthew concluded his gift-buying mission to be accomplished after he picked a pair of gilt celadon vases and a set of pens and inks.

Nonetheless, just when he was about to go downstairs, he caught a glimpse of a painting on the wall out of the corner of his eye. When he caught sight of it, he immediately stopped in his tracks.

“Is this for sale?” Matthew asked while gesturing at the painting.

Next to him, Mr. Wadley’s eyes instantly lit up before he swiftly concealed his excitement.

“Uh... This painting is a part of our store’s decoration. It’s not for sale...”

But, after a brief hesitation, he continued cautiously, “But sir... If you’re truly interested in this item, we can bear the pain and part with it. After all, we strive to ensure our customers’ maximum satisfaction with each purchase!”

Mr. Wadley vividly expressed the look of reluctantly parting with the item he cherished.

Of course, the not-for-sale sign hanging in the corner of the painting also verified the truth in Mr. Wadley’s statement earlier. After all, Mr. Wadley was the one who personally bought this painting known as ‘Two Swallows in a Spring Pond’.

Although it was a counterfeit that he bought for 80 dollars at a roadside stand, its fidelity was truly impressive.

Mr. Wadley had identified Matthew as someone he could scam easily from the moment Matthew inquired about the painting.

Micah Wikaedal was a famous painter in the late Kingdom of Wridia. His painting skills were so superb that even the king at that time period frequently visited him personally and invited him to paint his portraits.

At the same time, the king even bestowed him the title of Sir Micah Wikaedal. His reputation as a painter was second to none. His representative artworks would be his four paintings of the spectacular scenery of the four seasons. He was even dubbed the Master of Landscape Painting by later generations.

‘Ethereal’ and ‘Realistic’ were the most common comments on Micah’s pieces. The only pity was that his paintings of the four seasons seemed to have vanished after the long passage of time.

One could barely get any clues about the locations of these four original artworks in today’s market, let alone see them with their very own eyes. Though the counterfeits were countless.

Matthew never expected that he would actually get to catch a glimpse of the original artwork by Sir Micah in The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium.

Well... By the looks of things, it's obvious that Mr. Wadley is unaware of the history of this painting...

Otherwise, how would he casually hang such priceless artwork on the lobby wall?

With that thought in mind, Matthew no longer hesitated as he nodded nonchalantly and said, “Mr. Wadley, thank you for your willingness to give up this piece of painting. Please, name your price!”

As he spoke, Matthew turned to scrutinize the painting once more.

Although I'm not knowledgeable in art, I could still rely on my ability to pick up the faint quaint aura exuded by this painting...

Or rather, it's the Bloodreaper trembling slightly in my hand that caught on...

On contrary, the other party thought wildly after hearing Matthew’s question.

This young man seems to be highly interested in this painting, but most importantly, he is clearly an inexperienced youngling in antiquing.

Ah, a young and innocent lamb just waiting to be scammed!

Mr. Wadley made an exorbitant offer after that devious thought. “40 thousand!”

Mr. Wadley instantly felt rather displeased when he saw Matthew frown at his offer.

Tch! I can't believe this young man is a stingy person despite looking extraordinarily charming from the outside. He isn't even willing to spend 40 thousand. How indecisive!

Not the slightest ounce of decisive and resolute verve of the rich can be seen in him! But of course, I can only criticize him secretly in my mind. After all, my purpose is to make off with his money...

So, Mr. Wadley calmed down as he wracked his brain for a viable plan before he feigned a mysterious aura and approached Matthew.

“Sir, I’m making such an offer because I think you’re a trustworthy young man, and I want to befriend you. You should know that this painting has yet to undergo artifact appraisal at the moment. if it’s

appraised and confirmed that it's the original artwork by Sir Micah, then this piece will be a priceless treasure... Take it as placing a bet worth 40 thousand. You will have a 50% chance of winning this bet. I would have bought this painting myself if I had the money."

Although Mr. Wadley wasted none of his eloquence in trying to persuade this naive little lamb to invest in the counterfeit piece, he was actually secretly criticizing Matthew, 'Hah! Appraisal my foot. it's just a piece of painting from a roadside stand that only cost me 80 dollars. Why would anyone be willing to send it for artifact appraisal for hundreds or thousands of dollars? Not even a fool will do that...'

As soon as those words escaped Mr. Wadley's lips, Matthew looked at him in surprise.

No one can top this manager's salesmanship and exchange perception techniques.

Of course, I know how extraordinary this piece of painting is. In any case, even if this isn't the original artwork by Sir Micah, the time-worn aura concealed within it is definitely not something that one can buy with merely 40 thousand...

Of course, Matthew deliberately showed signs of reluctance just to make sure Mr. Wadley wouldn't sense something was amiss, faking that he was truly hesitant to part with his money.

"Mr. Wadley, don't you think the offer is a bit too high? How about this? I will counter-offer 30 thousand for this piece of painting. I'm willing to bet on its authenticity."

Across from him, Mr. Wadley's facial expression changed before he went on to say, "Uh... That's not how you bargain. I can't sell it to you for that price..."

Matthew glanced at him indifferently when he heard Mr. Wadley's response and moved his feet without saying a word, clearly indicating his insistence on leaving right there and then.

"Hey! Wait! Wait! Okay, sir. I'll take it as doing business with a friend. It's a deal!"

It was until this moment that both buyer and seller shared knowing smiles. As expected, like a game of chess, each move made was fatal when two experts dealt with each other.

Still, there was no doubt that both disdainfully regarded each other as idiots in their minds. And just like that, a pleasant deal was about to be closed.

Except, none of them noticed a figure standing by the stairs at this moment. Endless resentment oozed from the figure's hateful eyes as they glared straight at Matthew.

Chapter 2063

Old Madam Bane's birthday was fast approaching. So, Tritus, her god-grandson, naturally had to prepare for the big day.

Hence, in order to choose a few birthday presents, he came to the business premise run by his family, The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium. Yet, he couldn't believe the world would be so small that he would stumble upon his enemy on his family's business premises.

"Hold up!" Tritus shot a smug glance at Matthew while he approached them before he continued, "We won't sell you this painting!"

Since enemies naturally loathed each other when they met, Tritus was using this rare opportunity to cause trouble for Matthew.

He had overheard their conversation earlier and knew that Matthew was interested in this painting, so there was no way he would let this chance slip by his gleeful fingers.

“What’s the matter? Are you riding roughshod over your customers just because your store is the largest in this piazza?”

Matthew also couldn’t believe the random store he found in the antiques piazza would turn out to be under the Lullaby Family’s management. To make matters worse, he had even run into Tritus here.

Tritus had to smother a triumphant grin when he saw that he had Matthew under his thumb.

‘Hah! I wonder how it feels to be so close yet so far from the object of your desire, dear Matthew!’

Nonetheless, he had a malicious smirk on his lips as he said disdainfully, “That’s right. We’re riding roughshod over our customers. What of it? Are you thinking of pulling a daylight robbery?”

Matthew certainly wouldn’t bother wasting his time on Tritus if it were any other antique. Honestly, he would just turn around and leave. But the item in question was the painting, ‘Two Swallows in a Spring Pond’. It was the original artwork by Sir Micah!

This was such a steal that he refused to allow this purchase to pass him by.

Matthew knew he might never have the chance to buy it for the rest of his life if he missed it due to his irritation with Tritus.

Just when the two were at a stalemate, Mr. Wadley, who was on the side, panicked.

Silly! I had a hard time scamming this young man earlier...

If Mr. Tritus ruins the deal, not only will I lose all my sales for this trade, but I’m also about to lose this significant transaction of exchanging an item worth 80 for 30 thousand!

Finally, he dragged Tritus to the side in a fit of panic.

When he saw that Tritus was about to explode, he immediately donned a flattering smile and explained in a fawning tone, “Mr. Tritus, that painting of ‘Two Swallows in a Spring Pond’ is a counterfeit. It’s just a painting we bought from a roadside stand for decoration. If you have a grudge against this young man, you might as well let him buy it...”

“After all, with his insight, I’m sure he won’t be able to immediately detect the authenticity of this painting. Moreover, even if he discovers the painting is a counterfeit, it will be far too late. And since we won’t be responsible once the item is sold, it will be hard to tell who is telling the truth by then.”

Tritus understood what Mr. Wadley was getting at after listening to his explanation.

So, he nodded at Mr. Wadley in gratification and praised, “Not bad, Mr. Wadley. I am pleased to know that The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium is under your care.”

After that, Tritus patted Mr. Wadley on the shoulder.

Tritus couldn't be more pleased as he thought of Matthew's defeated look in the future.

Oh, what he wouldn't give to be a fly on that particular wall. 30 thousand in exchange for a piece of junk bought from a roadside stand. No buyer will agree to such a trade unless they have lost their mind!

After their private discussion, the two came to Matthew's side again.

Tritus cast a disdainful glance at Matthew before he said, "Larson, Mr. Wadley had reported the wrong offer just now. This painting will cost you 90 thousand, as well as the pen and ink and that pair of gilt celadon vases. That will be a total of 162 thousand. But since we are acquaintances... I will give you a discount. 160 thousand, and you can take all of them home."

Haha! Since we want to cheat him of his money, we should maximize our benefits! 30 thousand? Ha! I want you to spend 90 thousand to purchase a useless counterfeit product!

As soon as these words escaped Tritus' lips, Mr. Wadley, who was beside him, instantly fell into a state of shock.

What? And here I thought that my behavior was unethical. I can't believe Mr. Tritus is even more ruthless than I am. Not only did he triple the price of the two sets of antiques in his enemy's hands, but he even raised the offer for the painting to 90 thousand as well!

This... This is marvelous! As expected from Mr. Tritus!

Regardless, neither of them expected Matthew to agree immediately without hesitation. "Deal! 160 thousand it is. I'll pay by card."

Tritus fell silent at Matthew's reaction.

I am aware that Matthew is rich after our conflict at the restaurant the other day. After all, he can give away the Flaming Elysian Lotus Seed, whose value starts from a hundred million, without even a twitch of his brow...

That's why I dared to demand such an exorbitant price...

Tritus instantly felt that he was too hasty after he saw Matthew agreeing so decisively.

Darn it! I think the offer I made was too low!

Chapter 2064

Although Tritus had succeeded in scamming Matthew, he couldn't help but feel as though he had lost.

The instant he realized that his offer was too low, he silently gestured to Mr. Wadley, who was beside him, with his eyes.

Mr. Wadley understood what he meant.

Thus, he said to Matthew, "Alright, Mr. Larson, pay by card it is. However, The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium adopts a membership system for its payment. Therefore, you will need to apply for a membership card if you want to purchase these items."

Matthew didn't mind at all, for his primary purpose was to get this original artwork by Sir Micah.

“Sure, but can you please make one for me now? I’m in a hurry.”

Since Albert was still waiting for him outside, Matthew certainly didn’t want to waste any more time in this store now that he had chosen the gifts.

“Right away, Mr. Larson. Our members need to pay a credit deposit of...”

Initially, Mr. Wadley wanted to ask for 15 thousand. Nevertheless, when Tritus shot him a reassuring look to go big, he demanded,

“150 thousand. A deposit of 150 thousand is required!”

“Sure, no problem. Just deduct it from the card.” Matthew didn’t hesitate even the slightest.

Of course, he had noticed the two-person comedy show between Tritus and Mr. Wadley. He knew that they were playing him for a fool, but that didn’t matter, he could afford to pay.

For Matthew, forget 150 thousand, he would agree without hesitation even if it cost him 1.5 billion or even more, as long as he could have this painting.

Regardless, to prevent Tritus from coming up with dirty tricks again, Matthew added, “Since it costs a large sum of money to become the store’s member, we should sign a contract for it. We need to clearly state that there will be no retrieval of the items I purchase from the store for any reason once the transaction is completed. If you wish to retrieve them, the other party can only redeem the items with an offer three times the market price.”

As soon as these words escaped Matthew’s lips, Tritus forced himself to suppress a derisive snigger.

I would have burst out laughing if it wasn’t for the fact that the subject of the matter was right in front of me.

Does this idiot really think this Two Swallows in a Spring Pond is an original artwork? Three times the market price?

For a painting from a roadside stand that’s worth 80 dollars, and two sets of antiques worth only 30 thousand, the total cost will still be less than 90 thousand even if it’s tripled. But, of course, none of that matters at the end of the day. The issue here is what sort of fool would ever think of redeeming this pile of garbage?!

Tritus let out a burst of unrestrained and frank laughter as he thought of that.

“Sure! Customers come first. it’s just a contract, anyway. We’ll sign it. We always aim to please our customers, after all.”

After he said that, he almost couldn’t hold himself from bursting into raucous laughter.

Hahaha! The feeling of revenge is simply too wonderful!

Meanwhile, just as Mr. Wadley was preparing the contract, a gray-haired old man was seen outside the building of The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium. He was currently leisurely making his way toward the building.

As soon as Albert saw this old man, he immediately stepped out of the car.

“Old Master Bane, why did you come out by yourself?”

The old man was none other than Old Mr. Bane.

Old Mr. Bane waved off his concern with a dismissive gesture and replied calmly, “Didn’t you say that Matthew insisted on coming to this antiques piazza to get me some gifts? It just so happens that I haven’t been out for a while, so I’m here to check if there are any new collections.”

Old Mr. Bane’s daily life was mostly routine by now. In addition to practicing some mixed martial arts and drinking tea, antiques was one of the few hobbies he particularly enjoyed. He especially cherished ancient paintings.

“Wait for me here. I’ll go in and browse by myself.”

As he spoke, Old Mr. Bane strolled into The Whimsical Antiques Emporium.

Several shop assistants instantly turned pale with shock as soon as Old Mr. Bane entered through the entrance. These panic-stricken staff hurriedly stepped forward to greet Old Mr. Bane.

They stood up straight and lined up in two orderly lines.

“Welcome, Old Master Bane...”

Old Mr. Bane didn’t react when he saw such a scene.

Instead, he intoned calmly, “Didn’t I tell you that it’s unnecessary to greet me in such a manner? Forget it. None of you listen to what I say. Continue with what you’re doing. I’m just taking a brief stroll.”

Although he acted familiarly with them, he only visited The Whimsical Antiques Emporium once or twice a year. Even so, these shop assistants didn’t dare to act in a presumptuous manner. After all, Old Mr. Bane was a prominent figure at the top of the pyramid in Bainbridge.

Therefore, their etiquette should be error-free when serving Old Mr. Bane. Yet, Old Mr. Bane had already ambled up to the third floor with his hands behind his back after everyone straightened their posture from their humble bows earlier.

Chapter 2065

The contract was ready. After they signed it, 315 thousand was deducted from Matthew’s account.

He looked at Two Swallows in a Spring Pond in his hands, letting out a smile of satisfaction.

Finally...

Meanwhile, Tritus and Ajay were over the moon.

This guy is a lamb to the slaughter...

Tritus gazed at the smile on Matthew’s face.

At the thought of Matthew fuming upon knowing the truth, he could not help but guffaw. “Welcome aboard, Mr. Larson! You are officially a member of The Whimsical Antiques Emporium. Hahaha!”

He wished he could just reveal the truth that the painting was a mere counterfeit.

“Mr. Larson, now that you’re a member, feel free to contact me if there’s any request like appraising the painting. We can reimburse the money.” Ajay joined the tease by giving explicit hints.

He could have almost blurted that this painting was a counterfeit.

Matthew could tell what was on their mind, hence the kind reminder. “This is Micah Wikaedal’s work...”

“Hahaha!”

“Yeah, right. That is his painting. You’ve struck gold, Matthew!”

“Congratulations, Mr. Larson! It is rare to find such a treasure at The Whimsical Antiquities Emporium!”

The duo cracked up so hard that their belly hurt.

Meanwhile, Matthew simply shrugged, finding it hard to rain on their parade. He lowered his head to keep the painting. At that moment, a figure flashed by so swiftly that even a skilled person like Matthew failed to react in time.

In split seconds, the painting fell into the unbidden guest’s hands.

They recognized who the person was.

Tritus, who let out a belly laugh a moment ago, hushed his breath and replaced his mockery grin with a serious expression.

The person was none other than Old Mr. Bane.

Unlike Old Madam Bane’s affable personality, Old Mr. Bane appeared reticent with his sophisticated grace. That was the exact reason why Tritus feared Old Mr. Bane. In short, it was because Old Mr. Bane was immune to flattery.

As Tritus had expected, Old Mr. Bane ignored his salutation as he stared at the painting in his hands.

“Not bad. It truly is Micah Wikaedal’s work...” He placed the painting atop the table to examine it further.

Then, his brows creased tightly. Unbeknownst to others, he possessed two works of The Seasons, which were Lilium in Summer Pond and Fall Leaves. Therefore, it took him one single glance to tell that Two Swallows in a Spring Pond was one of The Seasons.

Micah Wikaedal had a peculiar tendency to hide his name in each of his paintings. However, there was no sign of his name in that one.

“What’s the matter, old man?” Matthew could tell that Old Mr. Bane was a skillful martial artist from his aura.

Although Old Mr. Bane snatched the painting away from him, he knew that the old man was an aesthete, a passionate one at that.

At the same time, Tritus’ eyes widened upon hearing how Matthew addressed Old Mr. Bane.

What a bold young man. I wonder how Old Master Bane will teach you a lesson. You've dug your own grave!

To Tritus' surprise, Old Mr. Bane did not react to the way Matthew addressed him.

Instead, the old man muttered dubiously, "Strange... Where did Sir Micah hide his name in this painting?"

Chapter 2066

"Allow me to explain, old man..." Matthew approached the focused Old Mr. Bane.

Matthew was aware of Micah's habit. The artist's name was intricately hidden in the painting, so it was difficult to discern.

Silence settled in the air for a long time before Old Mr. Bane straightened his back. "My eyesight is following my age. Mr. Larson is the name, right? Tell me... I'm all ears. What are you standing there absentmindedly for? Didn't you promise to buy me a gift? Are you trying to take back your words by not recognizing me?"

Only then did Matthew recognize that the old man was the head of the Bane Family.

It was no wonder that he had such skills.

"Greetings, Old Master Bane... I'm Matthew Larson. I apologize for my rudeness. I hope you won't take it to heart."

Old Mr. Bane was the most powerful person in Bainbridge, so it would be unbecoming of him to address him like that. Despite that, Old Mr. Bane did not mind the formality as he lost himself in the painting. He acknowledged the apology by merely waving his hand.

"Old Master Bane..." Matthew pointed at the two swallows. "Look at the swallows closely. You'll see there are a few strokes that are slightly darker than the others..."

Hearing that, Old Mr. Bane bent over to take a closer look at the painting. As Matthew had explained, some of the lines on the swallows appeared uncoordinated.

He moved sideways to change his angle of view only to be struck by a discovery, the awkward lines were two slanted alphabets, M.W.

"Aha! It is Sir Micah's painting! Wonderful, wonderful," murmured Old Mr. Bane as the discovery elicited a smile across his lips.

Next, he examined the art further, but he was disappointed.

Noticing his countenance, Matthew pointed out the wonder of the painting straightforwardly instead of beating around the bush.

"The duckweed is floating in the pond, barely showing a ripple. And look at the sky, Old Master Bane... The sun is shining brightly, and there's a crescent moon hiding behind the clouds. The ones that complete the sky are present at the same time."

Even a fool could understand what Matthew meant at that point.

Excited, Old Mr. Bane held the painting gingerly and grinned. "Interesting. Liliu in Summer Pond and Fall Leaves are no match for Two Swallows in a Spring Pond!"

In the meantime, Tritus was nonplussed by Old Mr. Bane's rapturous visage.

According to his memories, Old Mr. Bane rarely smiled and always wore a serious mood. Despite the rare encounter with the old man, it was the first time he saw Old Mr. Bane smiling so brightly.

Tritus cast his gaze onto the painting, which provoked a sense of foreboding in him. "Mr. Wadley, are you sure you bought it from a stall?"

"Yeah... I paid for the painting and saw them hanging it on the wall with my eyes..." Ajay nodded with certainty, reassuring Tritus.

There's no need to be happy over a mere counterfeit.

"Grandpa, this is a counterfeit..." Tritus could not help the urge to reveal the truth because of how bright Old Mr. Bane's smile was.

Rather than enraging him when he discovered the truth, Tritus figured it would be better to level with Old Mr. Bane then. He would be told off at most anyways.

Old Mr. Bane's face turned solemn at that. "What's wrong? Do you think my eyesight is too poor to recognize Sir Micah's painting?"

The atmosphere sunk to solemnity due to the pressure in his voice, and a weight sat upon Tritus' chest. It was as though a beast was watching him.

At the same time, Matthew had goosebumps despite knowing he was not the target. That was his instinctive reaction under sketchy situations.

Chapter 2067

Beads of sweat rolled down Tritus' forehead as he bowed down. He dared not move a muscle upon recalling that Old Mr. Bane was the honorary chairman of the Antiques and Cultural Relics Association.

When it came to antiques and cultural relics, Old Mr. Bane's keen eyes were tantamount to modern identification machines.

Judging from his reaction, it was obvious that the painting was authentic. The late realization made Tritus shudder.

Micah's The Seasons... It is a priceless work of art...

Everyone in Bainbridge knew that Old Mr. Bane was a Micah mania. He even went to great lengths by announcing that the Bane Family would grant a wish to whoever could give him The Seasons.

The Bane Family is one of the greatest families in Cathay! If they can grant a wish...

In hindsight, Tritus could feel his scalp tingling and the goosebumps running all over his body upon the realization. Standing opposite him was Matthew, who could decipher that he was up to something from those greedy eyes.

He fished out the contract, waving it lightly in midair to make Matthew rue his decision.

Should I repurchase it by tripling the price?

But can money translate its value?

Can I ask for help from the Banes for the third time unconditionally?

Gritting his teeth, Tritus glared at Matthew in rage.

This annoying guy is the one to blame!

At that moment, Old Mr. Bane piped up, "Matt, I love this painting. Could you give it to me?"

Matthew shrugged coolly. "It is a gift for you, so please take it..."

"Thanks, Matt!" Old Mr. Bane patted Matthew's shoulder, and his solemn expression gave way to a genuine smile. "It's getting late. I have something prepared in my manor. Shall we head there right now?"

Matthew nodded. "I'm honored to be your guest..."

At that point, Tritus knew nothing he did could make things right. His reddened eyes fixed on the duo leaving.

With one painting, not only did Matthew earn brownie points from Old Mr. Bane, but he also snatched the chance to visit Old Mr. Bane's manor!

According to Tritus' knowledge, he could count the number of Old Mr. Bane's guests with his hands alone, and every single one was a big name in Bainbridge. Without Old Mr. Bane's consent, no one dared to lay a foot in his manor, not even the youngsters in the Bane Family.

After he comprehended the situation, a pang of guilt hit him like a tsunami.

"You had one job, Mr. Wadley!" Tritus slapped Ajay, who covered his swollen cheek in a grievance.

Who would have thought a painting from a stall by the street was the original work?

Tritus flicked his hand and left in low spirits. Scenes of what happened earlier replayed in his head, his mischievous grin, his foolish decision to sign the contract, and that valuable painting that slipped through his fingers.

Everything should've belonged to me!

Why does Matthew deserve to be Old Mr. Bane's guest?

He's nothing but a country bumpkin! I should be the one receiving the invitation! Darn it!

The more he thought about it, the more stifled he felt around his chest. He barely took two steps when dizziness clouded his head.

Following that was his vision going black before he fell into a swoon due to extreme anger.

He could still scarcely hear Ajay's frantic voice calling, "M-Mr. Tritus! What's going on?!"

Soon, he lost consciousness without knowing that Old Mr. Bane had invited Matthew before the deal happened.

Chapter 2068

"Thank you, Old Master Bane. I guess I'm the only person in Bainbridge to receive the pleasure of having you pour tea for me." Matthew raised the teacup to down the tea in one go.

Old Mr. Bane, who was sitting opposite him, halted for a moment upon hearing that. Those words were so familiar that they made him stare at Matthew.

He could almost see that man's shadow in Matthew, the shade of solemnity in that nonchalant character, and the evil-foreboding air hidden under that untrammelled demeanor.

To manage a big and great family, Old Mr. Bane had an eye for people. Hence, one glance was enough for him to tell that this young lad before him was saddled with a blood feud, just like how that man did.

The touch of passing time and tide was the only difference between them. That man had reached another level of maturity while Matthew set about things with vigor.

No wonder that brat helps Matthew in the South...

Since Old Mr. Bane was acting out of character, it piqued Matthew's curiosity. "What's wrong, Old Master Bane? Something on your mind?"

Old Mr. Bane noticed his blunder and quickly regained his composure.

"Nothing. I was thinking about an old friend of mine. I heard you have a martial arts background. Is that right?"

Matthew nodded without a second thought. Based on the Bane Family's networking, it was natural for Old Mr. Bane to know what happened in the South. Thus, he had no intentions of hiding anything from Old Mr. Bane.

"Yes, but something happened in the past, and my hara meridian was impaired. It had been restored some time ago, and I picked up a long sword after that. Still, I don't have a flair for it, so swords are more difficult for me than fist fights." Matthew set his Bloodreaper atop the coffee table.

As a relic mania, Old Mr. Bane could recognize that Bloodreaper was no ordinary sword. "May I take a look at it?"

Matthew coolly handed it over to the old man, who drew the sword only to shake his head at the rusty blade. "What a shame... It's not an ordinary sword, but its nimbus..."

Old Mr. Bane suddenly noticed something surprising as he exclaimed, "Don't tell me... Did you absorb its nimbus? Attaboy! I was wondering how one can repair an injured hara meridian. The nimbus from ancient swords can do the trick, huh? Your luck is no joke!"

That practical reasoning astonished Matthew. Even if he had masked the Bloodreaper's nimbus, Old Mr. Bane could see through it right away!

As expected of the most powerful person in Bainbridge. Luckily, he sees the Bloodreaper as a mere ancient sword...

"You're sharp, Old Master Bane. Luck is truly on my side. Otherwise, I could've become a cripple for the rest of my life." Matthew laughed it off in an attempt to gloss it over.

Since it was closely related that Bloodreaper was an ancient divine weapon, he did not wish to give the game away.

Old Mr. Bane noticed Matthew's avoidance of the subject, hence the steer of the topic. "Why not we kill this boredom with a spar?"

Old Mr. Bane spent his whole life learning mixed martial arts, but he had never practiced it after stepping into his old age. Now that they were on the subject, the yearning for a duel was growing in him.

"I..." in actuality, Matthew wanted to turn down the offer because of his opponent's age.

Sparing was a physical duel, and things would become troublesome if accidents happened.

Old Mr. Bane had an insight into the reason behind Matthew's hesitation, "What's with that hesitation, young lad? Are you looking down on me?"

Well... Fine...

Now that Old Mr. Bane had put it that way, Matthew had no choice but to accept the challenge. Setting his Bloodreaper aside, Matthew nodded helplessly.

Subsequently, they warmed up their body and moved to the courtyard.

Chapter 2069

"Matt, mind if I ask who your master is?" questioned the curious Old Mr. Bane as he warmed up.

Matthew shook his head. "I mainly self-taught Eight Fists and Joint Technique. As for the others, I only have scanty knowledge of them..."

He did not belong to any sect, hence the self-taught journey, which made the corner of Old Mr. Bane's eyes twitch.

Those two techniques are deadly, though...

"I practiced martial arts ever since I was young. It has been over sixty years. Shall we begin, young lad?"

"I'll be in your care, Old Master Bane..."

The conversation ended, and they approached each other at full pelt. Their fists met and left mere shadows in midair. After a few counters, Old Mr. Bane suddenly turned sideways. It happened so quickly that Matthew's punches missed their target.

Damn it!

It was too late when he was going into defense mode, for Old Mr. Bane's arm had hewed onto Matthew's wrist like an axe, hitting right at his muscles!

Ouch!

Matthew's jaw tightened at that hit.

Meanwhile, Old Mr. Bane withdrew his hand and retreated. He was discontent with Matthew's careful advances.

"You don't have to pull your punches, boy. I am old, but my joints are still in their prime..."

"Fine. I will excuse courtesy for now and grant your wish, Old Master Bane..."

Matthew's arms shook as his aura changed.

Only then did Old Mr. Bane nod in satisfaction. "Attaboy! Show me what you got!"

He crouched slowly before charging forward. That ferocious air around him morphed him into a wild beast that intimidated others with its sheer presence.

Matthew was aware that Old Mr. Bane was taking it seriously from then. Gathering his thoughts, he mustered every ounce of nimbus in him.

"Watch out, Old Master Bane! Punches don't look where they go!" He bulldozed forward and utilized the Shield Technique to approach Old Mr. Bane before attacking with Eight Fists.

The experienced Old Mr. Bane had gone through many fights, so he saw through Matthew's plan readily. Once the distance between them drew closer, he folded his knees and attacked Matthew's lower limb. Although the Shield Technique was known for its attack-defense attribute, its shortcoming was exposing the originator's lower limb.

Noticing that Old Mr. Bane had grasped his intention, Matthew had no option but to duck the attacks while changing his technique.

Still, would Old Mr. Bane give him the chance to do so?

Not in the slightest.

No matter how strong Matthew's defense was, the switch of techniques in between was bound to give openings to vulnerability. Moreover, mixed martial arts, as practiced by Old Mr. Bane, trained one to be a versatile sucker-puncher.

In less than ten techniques, Old Mr. Bane discovered an opening for an attack. He flung a heavy punch right at Matthew's stomach. On the other hand, Matthew was aware he could not defeat Old Mr. Bane in terms of skills and experience. Thus, he opted to suffer pain to gain an advantage.

Gritting his teeth, he endured the throbbing pain and counter-attacked with Shoulder Strike immediately.

Albert, the spectator, missed a heartbeat when he saw that technique. Eight Fists put itself on the map as a fatal technique due to its aggressive attacks. He needed not worry about Old Mr. Bane if the spar happened two decades ago.

Now, though...

Fortunately, Old Mr. Bane had been watching out for Matthew's Eight Fists by keeping Matthew's self-introduction in mind. He let out a smile when Matthew used that skill.

He still has a long way to go, he lacks fighting experience...

Subsequently, he dodged Matthew's elbow by turning his body like a shadow.

Just as he was about to quell the fight with one final blow, a sharp pain penetrated his chest, and beads of cold sweat trickled his forehead.

At that moment, Matthew noticed something wrong and withdrew his attacks to support Old Mr. Bane.

"I'm alright! I'm alright... Age is always the main cause of one's weakness." Old Mr. Bane sighed.

Despite his pale face, he could not hide the tinge of sorrow in his voice.

Chapter 2070

Time waited for no one.

Back then, Old Mr. Bane was a brisk and vigorous young man that shore the Bane Family single-handedly. Now that he had marched into his old age, dyspnea easily recurred despite the short sparring.

Matthew helped him to the gazebo, whereas Albert rushed over with the medicine. Old Mr. Bane took the pills before drawing deep breaths until his complexion regained its color.

"Old Master Bane, mind if I check on your condition?" suggested Matthew.

"No problem. I invited you over because of this anyway..." Old Mr. Bane stretched out his arm.

A few moments after placing his fingers on Old Mr. Bane's wrist, Matthew's expression changed.

His pulse is unusual...

Frowning, he examined further before withdrawing his hand and inhaling a sharp breath. It was not dyspnea but serious internal damage!

Five of his organs suffered severe damage, especially the lungs...

On the contrary, Roxanne suffered from dyspnea because of a high fever at a young age. However, Old Mr. Bane's severe injury was incurred by the internal damage left during his younger days. Hence, everyone mistook it as dyspnea. It was not an exaggeration to say that he was internally impaired despite his deceptive healthy complexion.

If Old Mr. Bane suppressed the damage by taking elixirs, it would be a matter of time before he passed away. Besides, taking elixirs had its side effects.

Aging organs were bound to slowly lose their functions, and when medicine became useless to alleviate the condition, not even Hippocrates could do anything.

After contemplation, Matthew decided to bite the bullet. "With all due respect, may I ask what kind of elixir you're taking to hold up until today? Your organs are severely damaged."

Instead of getting angry, Old Mr. Bane reclined in the wooden chair and nodded helplessly. "Elixir of Revival... The old shaman made it."

No one knew better about his condition than he did, for he jumped through hoops to consolidate the Bane Family's influence and power.

The sparring and fights left countless injuries in him ever since he was young. Considering his young and robust figure, he took the matter lightly since they did not affect him much back then.

However, he gradually felt the effect as time passed. Now, there was nothing he could do to recover from the injury. In desperation, his only option was to take the old shaman's elixirs to sustain his life.

On the other hand, the fact that Matthew knew of his condition with a simple examination attested to his abnormal medical skills. Before that, Old Mr. Bane had a good impression of him because of the painting. Now, his medical skill was acknowledged by Old Mr. Bane.

Nevertheless, the old man was aware of the slim chance of total recovery. After all, it was a chronic disease-or rather a terminal illness, that consigned numerous great doctors in Bainbridge to their wit's ends.

Still, it did not stop him from asking, "Matthew, is there a way to cure this disease?"

Matthew dared not give a certain answer to that inquiry.

He questioned back to know more about Old Mr. Bane's condition before requesting. "May I take a look at the elixirs?"

His main intention was to understand the elixir made by the best miracle doctor in Cathay, Hal. Furthermore, it was reasonable to assume that Old Mr. Bane's body had gotten used to it after prolonged intake. Prescribing medicine hastily might result in contraindications, hence the need to understand what kind of elixir it was.

At Matthew's request, Old Mr. Bane did as he was told.

Soon, Matthew examined the Elixir of Revival only to have his brows knitted tighter as time passed.