

Menu 1021

Chapter 1021: Jason: Today is a good day! (3)

It really melts in your mouth!

The dip is sweet and sour!

It completely eliminates any gamey taste from the beef!

No cooking needed, this purest form of food is simply unforgettable.

The female detective couldn't help but close her eyes in bliss.

Then –

"Another serving, please."

Jason's voice came through.

The female detective opened her eyes.

The plate that was once filled with beef in front of Jason was now empty.
Not just Jason's.

Hers too.

And she had only had one piece.

How could it be gone already?

Hui Lijing looked at Jason with fury.

Jason's face was the picture of innocence.

"It wasn't me."

As he spoke, Jason looked towards the elderly monk of Tongshou Temple.

The old monk, understanding the situation, passed his own plate of beef to Jason.

But his smile quickly faded.

Because Jason was eating too fast.

The beef that had just been served vanished in the blink of an eye.

With his own eyes, he could barely catch a trailing shadow.

This, this...

The old monk was flabbergasted.

"Had there not been an accident, Jason would've been the winner of the 'Gourmet No.1' eating contest."

Hui Lijing said indifferently.

"The hamburger eating contest, right?"

The old monk asked, a hint of tension in his voice.

Tongshou Temple was not far from the 'Gourmet No.1' district.

He was acutely aware of that eating contest.

Everyone who could participate possessed monstrous appetites, terrifying indeed.

"Yes."

Under the increasingly anxious gaze of the old monk from Tongshou Temple, Hui Lijing nodded seriously.

Instantly, the old monk began to sweat.

He clutched the wallet inside his left sleeve tightly.

What felt like a thick wallet suddenly seemed rather thin.

Before his eyes seemed to be floating bills flying away.

And each bill seemed to cry out in the wind –

It's over! It's over!

"It's over!"

After the tenth time Jason added meat to his plate, the old monk closed his eyes.

He finally understood why Jason had repeatedly confirmed the invitation to eat solely for the sake of reimbursement.

Could it be...

Was I too naive?

The old monk sighed inwardly.

Then, when he heard Hui Lijing's words, he tensed up again.

"Too much beef sashimi can get cloying."

"There should be barbecued beef and hotpot as part of an all-beef meal, right?"

Hui Lijing inquired.

Yes!

The beef sashimi was just the beginning; there was still barbecue and hotpot to follow!

The old monk sighed and pulled his hand, which had been clutching the wallet, and slowly inserted it into the right sleeve.

This wasn't cash.

It was a card.

It was the card where he kept his savings for old age.

Gently caressing its hard surface, tears brimmed in the old monk's eyes.

Why do tears often fill my eyes?

Because that is my love for life!

What does it matter if I'm retired or not.

I am still living just the same, am I not?

The old monk told himself, and then, thinking of something, he abruptly stood up.

"I need to use the phone for a second."

Saying so, the old monk hurried out.

"Hello, the ticket center?"

"Yes, that's right, I want to cancel a ticket."

"What?"

"I can't get a full refund?"

"Only half the price?"

"Fraud, this is fraud, it's not even past noon yet!"

"You should give a full refund!"

"I am a monk!"

"A monk who serves the Buddha, the person closest to Buddha!"

"How could I possibly lie!"

...

The voice of the old monk was clearly heard by Jason.

Is it the limit?

Jason sighed inwardly.

Then, once again, he tried to suppress his hunger.

This was not an easy task for Jason.

If he hadn't started eating, then restraining himself would be manageable.

But once he began eating, to restrain himself afterward...

For Jason, that required a resolve ten times, a hundred times stronger than before.

But at this very moment, that young man from the Hanakaiin Family walked into the restaurant.

Despite the bamboo curtain separating them, the young man spotted Jason instantly.

He hurried over, his expression serious, and upon reaching the curtain, he bowed slightly and spoke directly—

"Excuse the interruption of your meal, Mr. Jason."

"As an apology, I would like to host a banquet for you afterward."

Chapter 1022: The Beginning of a Perfect Trade!

A banquet?

So, you mean to say a feast?

Jason seemed to envision a round table before his eyes, and then, delicacies from land and sea appeared on the table like flowing water.

Suddenly, the anger in the bottom of Jason's heart flashed and vanished.

Despite feeling angered by being interrupted during his meal, Jason would find such an interruption forgivable if there was compensation involved, especially an adequate one.

Jason was a man of such principles.

"Mhm."

Jason nodded.

Then, he placed the grilled beef into a small dish, flipping it with his chopsticks, and the hot, greasy beef immediately became coated in cumin and sesame seeds, coarse salt, and chili powder.

Once in his mouth, the beef's distinct thickness enveloped his taste buds with salty and spicy flavors.

The saltiness was like a sword, cutting fiercely.

The spiciness was like a bomb, exploding in an instant.

Coupled with the beef itself, the sense of thickness was like armor wrapped around Jason's body, making him unafraid of the slashing and bursting; on the contrary, his body shook from the impact of the slashes and explosions, over and over again.

After the whole body trembled, it was a sigh of satisfaction.

Sesame and cumin were the adornments in that sigh.

Crunchy and aftertaste.

A natural second sigh following the resonance.

Gone was the initial impulse.

But it became even more enduring.

"Delicious."

Jason silently critiqued in his heart.

Not only was the quality of the beef quite high.

But also because the seasoning was just right.

Next, Jason's gaze turned toward Hui Lijing.

Hui Lijing immediately began to grumble non-stop: "I've been grilling constantly, I haven't had a single piece of beef—ten times now! It's been ten times!"

However, even as she grumbled, Hui Lijing still picked up the plate and placed slices of beef on the grill.

Sizzle! Sizzle, sizzle!

The concerto of fat and charcoal sounded once more.

At this time, Jason finally turned his attention to the young member of the Hanakaiin Family.

Instantly, the young man bowed again in a respectful salute.

"I'm very sorry, I was too disrespectful before."

"It was exactly as you deduced."

"The recent attack was merely a cover-up for assassination and silence."

As the young man spoke, he raised his hand and took off a bracelet strung with a pebble-sized stone, holding it in his hand.

"As per our agreement."

"This 'amulet stone' is yours now."

After finishing his words, the young man presented the bracelet with both hands to Jason.

Jason did not hesitate and took it straight away.

After all, it was his rightful due.

Moreover, the 'food' scent emanating from it informed Jason that this 'amulet stone' probably tasted pretty good.

Even with the continuous aromatic fragrance from the beef on the grill, it was incredibly distinct.

Although this item wasn't the strongest smelling on his person, it certainly wasn't the worst.

This made Jason slightly move, conjecturing in his heart.

But Jason did not dwell on it.

It already took quite an effort for Jason to maintain his usual state in front of 'food'.

In fact, had there not been strangers around, Jason would probably have swallowed the 'amulet stone' in one gulp.

The young member of Hanakaiin Family was relieved to see Jason accepting the 'amulet stone'.

He had been genuinely worried that Jason would refuse it.

Should that have happened, he wouldn't be able to bring up the subsequent matters.

But now?

"Mr. Jason, are you familiar with the Hanakaiin Family?"

"About the matter of a branch family member entering the main family."

The young man asked with a deliberate pause, not out of hesitation, but organizing his speech.

He needed to use more tactful language to convey to Jason what had happened.

As for being straightforward?

Sorry.

The pride inherent in his big family lineage made it difficult for him to speak so directly.

Or rather, things hadn't reached the truly dire straits just yet.

Not yet... fatal.

Only very troublesome.

As just verified through investigation, everything was as Jason had said.

The person assassinated was Hanakaiin Akira; the one who assassinated Hanakaiin Akira was Hanakaiin Shuu.

Both were companions he had sought out for this test.

What Hanakaiin Haru hadn't expected was that a supposed ally would stab him in the back.

Such betrayal made it clear to Hanakaiin Haru that he could no longer find helpers within the family.

Not that everyone in the family had become unreliable.

But that he could no longer trust these people.

Quite simply, would the person who went to such lengths to eradicate traces and silence others do so just so he had to select two new companions?

Of course not.

Hanakaiin Haru could guarantee.

The moment he chose two new accomplices, two individuals more suitable than Hanakaiin Akira and Hanakaiin Shuu would immediately appear, and at a critical moment, these two would surely betray him.

Because that was the task of these two individuals: to ensure his failure to enter the main family from the branch family.

Within these branch families, there were around three to five individuals capable of such deeds.

He was not yet certain who.

But one thing Hanakaiin Haru was sure about.

He had to follow through with the original plan.

This wasn't just his ambition.

It was also his parents'.

It was the expectation of everyone in his branch family.

Therefore—

He needed to find external allies.

Conveniently, there was one right in front of him.

"I know a bit."

Under Hanakaiin Haru's gaze, Jason nodded.

There was no need to deny such a matter.

He indeed knew a bit.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu had brought it up.

The Monk of Tongshou Temple also mentioned it.

Chapter 1023: The Beginning of a Perfect Trade! (2)

But specifics?

He really didn't know.

"I, Hanakaiin Tōru, Hanakaiin Ue, Hanakaiin Itsuki and Hanakaiin Ra are the main contenders this year from the branch families to enter the main family."

"We five, leading the outstanding juniors within our own branch families, must complete the tasks given by the main family."

"The recently deceased Hanakaiin Akira and Hanakaiin Shuu were the helpers I sought, but Hanakaiin Shuu killed Hanakaiin Akira, leaving me in a dilemma."

"I need to complete the task given by the main family, so I must have two helpers."

"But now I cannot trust anyone within the family."

"So, I hope Mr. Jason can provide me with help—of course, not without compensation."

Hanakaiin Haru explained in detail.

"Two helpers?"

Jason didn't ask about the reward, but something he was more interested in.

"Yes."

"The task given by the main family is to participate in this year's 'King of Fighters' tournament, and rank determines who gets to join the main family."

"Unlike the usual individual combat and reserve format, this 'King of Fighters' tournament requires a team of three to participate."

Hanakaiin Haru nodded in affirmation.

King of Fighters?

The King of Fighters Tournament?

King!

Jason almost immediately thought of Hui Lijing's sister.

The woman who snatched the 'Ultimate Flow' invitation.

Hui Lijing, who was barbecuing, couldn't help but raise her head and glance at Hanakaiin Haru, but immediately looked down again.

You don't want the meat to burn.

As for her sister?

Although there might be things she didn't know, since that person snatched someone else's invitation, she would naturally participate.

When the time comes, she can go to watch the fight and definitely find that person.

That's what Hui Lijing thought.

Jason thought the same.

Jason hadn't forgotten the commission given to him by Hui Lijing and the promise he made.

To find the other's sister.

Thus, upon hearing Hanakaiin Haru's invitation, Jason was very tempted.

It was killing two birds with one stone.

However, Jason didn't immediately agree.

One thing at a time.

Jason didn't mind seeking more benefits for himself while on this convergence of objectives.

"Compensation."

Jason said.

"I offer a 'Fragment of the Arrow of Inaho' as reward."

Saying so, Hanakaiin Haru pulled out from his sleeve a corroded, severely damaged arrowhead.

Had it not been for Hanakaiin Haru mentioning the word 'arrow,' Jason could not have associated the object in front of him with an 'arrow' at all.

However, the strong 'food' aroma on it couldn't be faked.

Moreover, this item was the one with the most intense 'food' scent on Hanakaiin Haru.

"Although this 'Arrow of Inaho' is only a fragment, it still retains a sliver of its former power. Just need to activate it, and it can deliver a blow threatening to great demons."

"Of course, it's only a threat."

"It can't be lethal."

"But, if you find a weak spot, maybe it could be a fatal blow."

Seeing Jason examining the 'Arrow of Inaho,' Hanakaiin Haru immediately explained.

There was no excessive exaggeration.

Just factual.

Incidentally, Hanakaiin Haru also introduced the 'Prayer Stone.'

"The Prayer Stone comes from a century-old temple, blessed by incense and prayers, it can effectively avoid malicious spying and scare away most ordinary demons, and even, if the fate of the wearer is right, it may bring good luck."

"Um."

Jason nodded again.

Then, he asked.

"What about the other person?"

Since it's a team of three, just him and Hanakaiin Haru won't suffice.

For the third person, Jason had no special requirements, they didn't need to be very powerful, but they had to be reliable.

"I have some candidates, but since someone was able to kill Hanakaiin Shuu and keep it quiet, they can naturally arrange people within the family, as well as implant similar spies around me."

"So, I need some time to find the right person."

"But, rest assured, as long as you agree to team up with me for the 'King of Fighters' tournament, no matter the outcome, the 'Fragment of the Arrow of Inaho' will be yours."

"Of course, if you can help me win, I will offer you a higher and better reward."

"At least five times the value of the 'Arrow of Inaho.'"

After Hanakaiin Haru finished speaking, he made a 'Balloonflower Seal.'

With this as a vow, demonstrating his conviction.

"Okay."

Jason's gaze towards Hanakaiin Haru became more gentle.

Not to mention other aspects, at least there was plenty of generosity.

First was one good piece of 'food.'

Then five good pieces of 'food,' or an equivalent.

And there's more!

A banquet invite.

"When is the banquet?"

Jason asked as soon as he thought of it.

When it comes to food, he's not at all vague.

Because, once vague, the one who suffers is oneself.

Like when hotpot is being served, the one who picks up the plate to serve the meat could be the one who ends up not getting any meat.

"I will arrange it as soon as possible."

"This is my promise to you."

"When I find the second companion, I will host another banquet to introduce you two."

Hanakaiin Haru keenly grasped Jason's preferences.

A food lover?

Truly quite a straightforward and reliable hobby.

Unlike other hobbies that can be troublesome.

Such a hobby is almost something anyone can satisfy.

Even if Jason can eat a lot, he probably can't eat the Hanakaiin Family out of house and home, right?

Thinking this, Hanakaiin Haru, who had received an elite education since childhood, immediately spoke up again.

Chapter 1024: The Beginning of a Perfect Trade! (3)

"Additionally, if you can help me achieve victory, I will host a grand banquet at the Hanakaiin Family, inviting you—and I guarantee you will have your fill."

Hanakaiin Haru promised.

Hearing such a promise, Jason's eyes lit up.

A tangible brilliance shot out from Jason's eyes.

An invisible aura rose from Jason's body.

A pitch-black monster.

It glared with crimson eyes.

It opened its huge mouth and roared loudly.

Hungry!

So hungry!

With a roar, Hanakaiin Haru uncontrollably took a few steps back.

He looked at Jason with a mix of shock and uncertainty.

The pitch-black monster seemed not to exist in this world, but Hanakaiin Haru, as an Onmyoji, could vaguely sense that something terrifying had just appeared.

Is this your power?

Hanakaiin Haru's forehead beaded with cold sweat.

But his heart was overjoyed.

The stronger Jason was, the better it was for him.

Thus, Hanakaiin Haru immediately adjusted his mood and said,

"I assure you, my words are true."

"Good."

Jason restrained the leaking aura and nodded again.

"I will start preparing right away."

"When everything is securely prepared, I will go to 'Chopper X Mask X Meat' firm to find you, please keep some time reserved for me in the coming month."

Saying this, Hanakaiin Haru bowed and retreated.

When passing by the old Monk from Tongshou Temple, Hanakaiin Haru politely bowed.

The old Monk put his palms together and returned the gesture, a hint of pity and... sympathy in his eyes.

The old Monk also sensed the aura leaked by Jason.

He felt it even more clearly than the young Hanakaiin Haru.

The old Monk could even distinctly feel the 'hunger'.

A 'hunger' that could devour all things.

Even making him mistakenly think he had returned to the Mythical Era of the East, seeing the legendary 'Taotie'.

But the 'Taotie' wasn't black.

Pitch black like ink, its face unclear.

Unclear?

Could it be...

Concealment?

The old Monk suddenly thought of something.

But immediately, an unprecedented sense of crisis emerged in his heart.

Much more intense than when he was first caught cheating.

Instantly, the old Monk put his palms together.

"Forget! Forget!"

He muttered under his breath.

Almost instantaneously, the old Monk completely forgot his earlier speculation, just walking back and looking at Hui Lijing, who was panting heavily, and softly asked, "Is Ms. Hui Lijing alright?"

"Is it alright, just now?"

The female detective asked uncertainly.

"It's normal, after spending a long time on the Mystical Side, you'll get used to it,"

The old Monk answered.

He had already forgotten the earlier episode.

He only thought Hui Lijing was asking about the cooperation between Hanakaiin Haru and Jason.

The female detective, who had never really encountered the 'Mystical Side', trusted the old Monk deeply.

"So it is."

The female detective nodded.

Then, she quickly flipped the cooked beef.

"The beef is cooked, eat it quickly."

"Where's Ryosuke? How come he's not back yet?"

"If he doesn't come back soon, the beef in the shop will be all gone."

The female detective spoke realistically.

Hearing this, the old Monk's face uncontrollably twitched.

He thought of Hanakaiin Haru again.

What happened to being from a respected family?

Shouldn't he have impeccable manners?

Interrupting people during meals, shouldn't he have settled the bill by adding it to his invitation?

Why only mention hosting another banquet?

Oh Buddha!

Save your faithful follower!

I am not asking to retire and go home!

But please don't leave me to wash the dishes!

The smell of detergent, it's awful!

The old Monk continuously prayed.

And just when the old Monk's face was twitching, Ryosuke's face was twitching as well.

However, the old Monk was worried about money.

Ryosuke, because of the... gun at the back of his head.

Chapter 1025: Preparedness averts peril.

Ryosuke left the "Glow Restaurant" through the back door.

He didn't take a cab.

Instead, he rode away on the bicycle he had left at the back door—this was something he had prepared in advance upon learning he'd be dining at "Glow Restaurant" that night, and of course, the preparations involved far more than just the bicycle.

Ryosuke knew he only had one chance.

Because the person he was searching was also a veteran.

Both parties were quite familiar with each other.

Any slight mishap, even with Jason's cover, could help Ryosuke clear himself of suspicion, but there would be no next time.

Therefore, he had to make it work in one strike.

He had to find corresponding evidence!

Ryosuke thought this to himself as he pedaled the bike, accelerating continuously.

Under the night sky, Ryosuke avoided the main roads monitored by surveillance cameras.

After a series of turns, he entered an alley behind a street.

This was behind the apartment block where his target lived, standing under the shadow of an overhang, Ryosuke looked up at the apartment in front of him, placed his bike in a corner, and began to put on gloves, shoe covers, a mask, and other items, before pulling on a black camouflage raincoat.

He didn't pass through the apartment lobby.

There were six cameras there, covering everything from the entrance to the elevator, all the way to the elevator exit, with no blind spots.

To avoid the cameras, the only option was to burst in from the staircase on the second floor.

After a running start to gain momentum, Ryosuke kicked off the exterior wall and flipped into the stairwell of the second floor of the apartment.

The window of the second-floor stairwell would generally not be closed unless it was raining.

This was something Ryosuke had scouted out beforehand.

The target lived on the 5th floor.

Ryosuke briskly climbed up until he pushed open the stairwell door on the 5th floor, and when he saw the door to room 505, he finally breathed a sigh of relief.

The first step was a success!

The target was working overtime tonight and wasn't at home.

Nonetheless, to be safe, Ryosuke still peeped through the door's peephole and used a stethoscope on the door to confirm that the person was indeed absent.

Empty!

After 10 seconds, Ryosuke confirmed.

Then, he took out his lock-picking tools.

2 seconds!

Click!

The door opened.

Such speed would leave many veterans speechless.

As to why Ryosuke was familiar with lock-picking?

Who said cops can't pick locks?

In fact, the best lock-picking expert in the Silver District was in the police department.

Supporting the door gently, he slowly opened it.

Once it was wide enough for a person to enter, Ryosuke slipped inside.

Then, once again slowly closed it.

Throughout the whole process, the door didn't make a single sound.

After the door closed, Ryosuke breathed another sigh of relief.

The second step was a success!

He leaned against the door, surveying the entire room.

It was a typical bachelor's room.

Living room and bedroom combined, with a small bathroom, and the kitchen was even smaller than the bathroom, aside from a single gas stove, sink, refrigerator, and a wall-mounted storage cabinet, there was barely room for a person to sidle through.

However, even so, it was enough to provoke envy.

Ryosuke clearly remembered that after the person bought this place, he and several close colleagues had been invited to celebrate; they had shabu-shabu in this room.

One of the colleagues had said with envy.

"I probably can't afford such a house even by the age of 60!"

Although there was some exaggeration in the words, it wasn't overly exaggerated.

With Ryosuke's previous salary as a police officer, even with careful budgeting, he would need to wait until 50 to buy this place, assuming there were no unexpected expenses; any minor mishap would make home ownership an unreachable dream.

For this reason, Ryosuke had been vigilant at the time.

Where did the money for the house come from?

Although the person claimed it was funded by his parents, Ryosuke had investigated this and found that his parents were just rural farmers from a remote mountain region, with no means to help him buy a house.

Not to mention paying for it in full upfront.

With such a suspicion.

Coupled with previous doubts, Ryosuke began his private investigation.

Perhaps it was the colleague's sigh of envy at the time that raised the person's guard.

Their relationship gradually became distant.

And the person had even requested a transfer.

From the front line to logistics, removed from Ryosuke's sight.

The reason given was poor health, and a doctor's report was produced, but, that doctor died in a car accident two months later.

Such obvious targeting made Ryosuke more suspicious.

If previously Ryosuke had merely suspected that the person had issues.

Then, since the doctor's car accident, Ryosuke was certain in his doubts.

Carefully stepping around the piled-up empty bento boxes and beer cans on the floor,

Ryosuke began his meticulous search.

A small flashlight appeared in Ryosuke's hand.

The first thing he checked was the bedside table.

Then, the desk.

After that, the closet.

But nothing.

Ryosuke stood up with a slight frown and his gaze naturally drifted to the storage cabinets in the kitchen.

Each storage cabinet became strikingly prominent in Ryosuke's eyes.

However, just as Ryosuke approached the storage cabinets, his brow involuntarily furrowed.

A slightly familiar scent entered his nostrils.

The smell of blood!

Mixed with the scent of rust!

Blood!

Despite the overpowering air freshener, Ryosuke recognized the scent of blood.

Subconsciously, Ryosuke drew his gun.

A faint smell of blood was coming from a kitchen cabinet no more than 40cm in length, width, and height.

So, what could be inside?

After a vague conjecture in his mind, Ryosuke slowly pulled open the storage cabinet.

The flashlight illuminated the contents inside instantly, allowing Ryosuke to see clearly.

Chapter 1026: Being Prepared Invites No Trouble (2)

A severed head!

Dripping with blood!

Wrapped in cling film, surrounded by charcoal, a severed head!

Even with mental preparedness, Ryosuke was still taken aback.

"Damn it!"

"Not just betrayal!"

"But murder too!"

Ryosuke muttered fiercely to himself.

Despite the cling film and bloodstains, Ryosuke could still clearly make out the outline of the head as that of a young woman.

The head of such a young woman immediately triggered the memories that Ryosuke least wanted to recall.

His breathing became slightly heavier.

But his rationality remained.

He knew why he was here.

After closing the closet door, Ryosuke continued to search for potential evidence.

However, when Ryosuke opened another closet nearby, the scene before him left him in shock.

Another severed head!

Of a young woman!

Wrapped in cling film!

Accompanied by charcoal!

Just like the one before.

"What the?!"

Ryosuke was stunned for about a second before he quickly opened the rest of the closets.

Inside the remaining five closets, there were heads.

And in a larger one, there was also a section of a torso.

"Bastard!"

Ryosuke cursed.

Then, his gaze turned to the not-so-small refrigerator.

Naturally, Ryosuke had another guess.

But he would rather have been wrong.

His hand trembling slightly, Ryosuke reached out.

The refrigerator door opened.

Chill air spilled out.

One by one, the transparent containers came into Ryosuke's sight.

Inside were hearts.

Human hearts.

In the layer below, there were livers.

Ryosuke didn't open the freezer.

But it was likely something similar.

"Cannibalism?"

"Or..."

"A psychopath?"

Ryosuke speculated in his heart as he turned to leave.

At this moment, he guessed that he had looked in the wrong direction.

The target was not what he was searching for.

The concealment was merely due to the criminal's deeds.

But just as Ryosuke was about to turn around, the muzzle of a gun pressed against the back of his head.

Ryosuke's face twitched.

Since when?

Though the scene just now was shocking, Ryosuke could swear that there had been no strange noises in his ears.

"Hey, Chief Ryosuke."

"Please put down the gun."

"Slowly."

"Yes, slowly."

Ryosuke frowned.

But he did not resist.

He did as he was told.

With a gun pointed at him, he had no room to resist.

However, this did not mean he was without options.

He placed the gun on the ground and was about to stand up when the voice behind him spoke again.

"You have another gun, probably hidden under your armpit, right?"

"And a little dagger, you should have it inside your waistband."

"Take them out, all of them, and lay them on the ground."

The familiar voice from behind, causing Ryosuke to sink.

Having a gun pointed at you is not the worst thing.

The worst is when the person holding the gun against you knows you too well.

Taking a slight breath,

While maintaining a half-bent position, Ryosuke started to take out another gun and a dagger from his body and placed them on the ground.

"Good."

"Now stand up."

"And slowly turn around to face me."

Seeing this, the familiar voice behind him spoke up again.

Ryosuke did as he was told.

But just as Ryosuke awkwardly turned around in the narrow space, the figure behind him kicked him in the abdomen.

The massive impact lifted Ryosuke off his feet, slamming him against the wall behind.

Bang!

In the dull sound, Ryosuke hung on the wall for a good three to four seconds before he slowly slid down.

The wringing pain from his abdomen meant Ryosuke couldn't stand up at all; he could only sit, supported by the wall.

He looked at the figure before him with shocked eyes.

The flashlight that fell to the ground cast a beam of light.

With this flickering beam illuminating the scene, Ryosuke could roughly make out this former colleague.

The face had not changed.

Lean, of average height.

But this lean figure had just exploded with surprising strength.

That kick just now was far beyond Ryosuke's imagination.

Keep in mind, at the police station, he was known for his fighting and shooting skills.

And the other party?

Average in all aspects.

Especially in fighting where he lagged behind many of his colleagues.

"Surprised?"

"At first, I was quite surprised myself."

"But now, I've gotten used to it—after all, in this world, there will always be some unexpected things... I thought it was a deadly disease, but who knew, it turned out to be the beginning of my transcendence."

The gaunt figure questioned Ryosuke.

A mysterious sense of mockery was on his face.

"I knew that after that day, you would definitely suspect me."

"So, I started to deliberately distance myself from you all."

"Then... I was diagnosed with a terminal illness."

"At that time, I thought it was retribution for what I'd done, I lived in fear every day, I was even close to telling you everything."

"But who would have thought!"

"This isn't a terminal illness, it's a new beginning!"

The mockery on his face turned into excitement.

"So, you killed that doctor?"

Ryosuke sharply caught something in the other's words and asked in a deep voice.

"Of course!"

"Doesn't a quack deserve to die?"

He looked as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"What about them?"

Ryosuke pointed with effort at the wardrobe.

"You mean to say they were innocent?"

"Joking."

"They're food!"

"When you eat pork, beef, lamb, do you think they're innocent?"

"Not really, right?"

"What right do you have to judge me?"

He scoffed coldly.

"To be human, one must at least know not to harm one's own kind!"

Ryosuke retorted angrily.

As a result of such a retort, his ankle was crushed under the other's foot.

Crack!

"Ah!"

Amid the slight moans of his joints, Ryosuke let out a miserable cry, then clenched his teeth to prevent himself from making any sound.

The other's eyes twinkled with the light of a cat toying with a mouse, as he began to slowly apply pressure.

Crack, crack...

Snap!

Ryosuke's ankle was broken.

Ryosuke's body trembled, sweat emerging like syrup.

But still, Ryosuke bit his teeth and remained silent.

The other person smiled, then placed his foot on Ryosuke's other foot.

Crack, crack...

Snap!

Another foot was broken.

Ryosuke bit so hard that his teeth bled, but still kept silent.

This appearance made the other shake his head.

"Truly worthy of being called 'Hard-boned' Officer Ryosuke."

"But Commandant Ryosuke, this is really not fun."

"When I hunt food, what I enjoy most is listening to their wails and screams."

"Do you know why I choose young women?"

"Because their screams are the most delightful."

He sighed, drew back his foot, and raised the gun again.

Ryosuke watched the gun muzzle without blinking.

Suddenly the other laughed.

"Do you think I don't dare to shoot?"

"You think shooting will bring trouble upon me?"

"Don't worry."

"There will be someone to take care of it for me."

"Just like Yan Xia, and the hitman this afternoon—as long as you demonstrate a certain value, someone will take care of everything for you, even if it's murder or cannibalism."

"Otherwise, why as a policeman, would you not know about so many missing girls?"

He sneered mockingly.

Anger gathered on Ryosuke's face.

He wanted to stand up.

But the pain in his abdomen and the broken bones in both ankles deprived him of such ability.

Merely struggling a bit, he fell down again.

But Ryosuke did not give up.

He fell down again and again.

And tried again and again.

As Ryosuke was about to truly stand up on his fifth attempt, after failing four times, the armed man immediately stepped forward and crushed Ryosuke's broken ankle with his foot.

Ah!

Ryosuke fell.

The short scream excited the other.

He began to forcefully trample Ryosuke's ankle.

"Cry out!"

"Scream for me!"

But Ryosuke fell silent once again.

Nevertheless, Ryosuke's scream just now had given the other hope.

Letting him know that Ryosuke too, could scream.

Immediately, the other raised his foot towards Ryosuke's fingers.

The ten fingers are connected to the heart!

He believed such pain would be enough to make Ryosuke cry out.

And the distance between him and Ryosuke was also closing.

Snap!

One of Ryosuke's fingers was crushed.

At the same time, a bag of white powder was thrown by Ryosuke—

Lime!

After Hui Lijing's suggestion to Urashima, Ryosuke thought it made sense, so he prepared quicklime in advance.

The very next moment—

"Aaaaah!"

"My eyes!"

Chapter 1027: The Self-Improvement of Tsuchimikado Motoharu's Retainer

Lime got into the eyes.

The pain spread in an instant.

Even though the person could no longer be called 'human', such pain was unbearable for them as well.

However, compared to an ordinary person, this twisted soul of a serial killer started firing several shots at Ryosuke's position the moment the pain began.

Bang, bang, bang!

When he threw the lime, Ryosuke had already made a movement to turn his head and side-step.

The bullets struck the wall behind him, and the splashed cement fragments hurt the back of Ryosuke's head and neck.

But what hurt even more was his chest.

He had been shot.

Not the heart.

But a lung lobe was pierced.

Ryosuke could even feel the sensation of blood gushing in his chest cavity.

A pain far more intense than anything before struck him.

Yet, Ryosuke was unmoved.

He quickly pulled out another gun from under his armpit and pulled the trigger.

Bang, bang, bang!

One shot in the brow.

One in the left chest.

One in the right chest.

The serial killer fell to the ground, his eyes filled with disbelief amidst the lime.

How did Ryosuke still have a gun?

To the end, the killer didn't understand.

"Idiot!"

"A man always carries a gun on him."

Ryosuke said while coughing.

Blood kept pouring from his mouth.

He should be nearly dead, right?

Such a serious injury, even if taken to the hospital now, would be hard to save.

And even if saved, the likelihood of being disabled was high.

He didn't want to spend the second half of his life in a wheelchair, needing help even to go to the toilet.

That would be too miserable.

Better to just die like this.

Even if...

It was a bit unfair to Jason.

They had agreed it was a cover.

Now it had become taking the blame.

Sorry!

A deep sense of apology surfaced in Ryosuke's heart.

Then, darkness struck.

Ryosuke lost consciousness entirely.

...

Light.

A faint halo passing through the eyelids awakened Ryosuke.

Am I not dead?

Or am I dead?

Where is this?

The Sanzu River?

On waking up, Ryosuke's mind naturally popped up with this information.

If he hadn't encountered the 'Mystical Side', Ryosuke would probably think he was in a hospital now.

But having encountered it, Ryosuke's thoughts were already erratic.

If I became a ghost, I wouldn't be an evil spirit, right?

If I were a ghost, would there be a trial?

I should be able to see my parents and sister, right?

I hope my parents and sister can forgive me.

Amidst his fluttering thoughts, Ryosuke was full of apprehension.

Just then—

"If you're awake, sit up."

At this somewhat familiar voice, Ryosuke was startled, then he turned his head and saw a handsome face.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu!

Ryosuke was quite familiar with this person.

But such familiarity was definitely not positive.

He didn't like this person.

Both for his disregard for life and his behind-the-scenes schemes.

Although he seemed to have an unusual relationship with Jason, Ryosuke didn't like him, and that was that.

Undeniably, this sentiment showed on Ryosuke's face.

"Is that how you treat your savior?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu held a folding fan, gently tapping it against his palm, his voice soft and warm.

A savior?

He saved me?

Ryosuke was stunned.

Then, Ryosuke found that the pain in his ankles was gone, there was no sensation in his lungs, and apart from feeling a little tired, there were almost no injuries on his body.

"Onmyoji magic?"

Ryosuke asked subconsciously.

"What else?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu retorted.

Such retort made Ryosuke feel awkward.

There was the awkwardness of asking a question to which the answer is already known, but more so was the awkwardness of not knowing how to face Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

He disliked the man.

Yet he had saved him.

He naturally wanted to express thanks, but due to the disdain, such thanks would seem hypocritical, which was something he didn't want.

Ryosuke wanted his gratitude to be sincere.

Yet he couldn't deceive his own heart.

And so, this middle-aged man found himself in a dilemma.

Moreover, this was a life-saving grace.

Not something that could be thanked with a few words.

With a deeply furrowed brow, Ryosuke finally said—

"Tell me how much you spent to save me, I'll repay you threefold."

"You saved my life, I owe you two lives, I'll repay that too."

"And..."

"Tha-thank you."

The words came out of Ryosuke's mouth with great difficulty and stuttering.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu's lips curled up, showing a smile that could be considered incredibly beautiful.

The Onmyoji opened his folding fan, covering his face with it, his slender eyes peeking out, enjoying Ryosuke's embarrassment.

Yes, appreciating.

Especially when he thought of how Ryosuke had previously left his estate with anger and stubbornness.

The current scene made it all the more interesting to him.

Stubborn as always.

But now, mixed with embarrassment, it was truly amusing.

Under Tsuchimikado Motoharu's gaze, Ryosuke grew even more uncomfortable.

He wished he could push open the car door and leave this place.

But Tsuchimikado Motoharu had not yet told him the cost, so he needed to wait patiently.

"No need."

"I was just helping the master avoid unnecessary trouble."

"It's what a retainer should do."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu waved his hand dismissively, his tone nonchalant.

The less concerned he appeared, the more uncomfortable Ryosuke felt.

"Jason?"

Ryosuke inquired tentatively.

"Who else?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu habitually responded with a question.

Ryosuke fell silent.

He had incurred another favor.

A huge favor.

How should he repay it?

Ryosuke pondered.

At this moment, Tsuchimikado Motoharu spoke again.

Chapter 1028: The Self-Improvement of Tsuchimikado Motoharu's Retainers (2)

"As a retainer to my lord, I must remind you: Do not drag my lord into those nauseating disputes—this is the first time, and I hope it is also the last."

"If it happens again..."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu's tone stretched out, and a cold glint began to flicker in his slender, handsome eyes.

It was a chill that resembled the edge of a blade.

Making Ryosuke shudder from head to toe.

Almost instinctively, Ryosuke was about to bow in agreement.

But at the last moment, he held back.

"You know what happened?"

Ryosuke asked.

"I know some of it."

"An organization that plays both the referee and the athlete is rapidly expanding in the shadows, and then, its ambition began to swell."

"And in the end?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu snorted coldly and did not continue.

Playing the referee as well as the athlete?

Does that mean being the police and also...

Ryosuke was no fool and quickly caught on.

His brow furrowed tightly.

Even tighter than before.

With Tsuchimikado Motoharu's hint, Ryosuke had already thought of plenty.

"That just now?"

Ryosuke inquired about the doubt in his heart.

"A corpse puppet."

"Or one might say... Ghoul."

"He, no, it is something that lies between the two."

"Possessing both Onmyoji (yin and yang magic) and Alchemy, along with what is referred to as technology, they have created a kind of monster—polluting the present world with a foul stench."

When mentioning that person who was supposed to be a police officer but ended up a serial killer, Tsuchimikado Motoharu looked disdainful.

"Was it artificially created?"

Ryosuke was taken aback.

"Of course."

"Otherwise, how could it appear?"

"Once those guys' ambitions inflated, they wished not just to have limited control over the present world, they also wanted a hand in the Inside World... haha."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu let out another cold laugh.

Then, the Onmyoji closed his fan with a snap.

Clack!

In the crisp sound, the Onmyoji faced Ryosuke.

"Telling you all this, I'm just letting you know."

"These matters are not for you to get involved in."

"Especially when they could potentially involve my lord, you should understand what you ought to do."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu spoke word by word.

Shortly after, the car stopped.

As the door opened, Ryosuke saw the bicycle he had previously ridden.

"I have already wiped away the traces for you."

"What's left is for you to return to 'Glowing Gourmet Pavilion'."

Saying this, Tsuchimikado Motoharu gestured for him to proceed.

Ryosuke walked straight out of the car.

The car did not linger.

As soon as the door closed, it sped off into the night.

Ryosuke frowned, watching the car.

Only when the car had completely disappeared did Ryosuke mount his bicycle and head towards 'Glowing Gourmet Pavilion'.

The wind blowing in his face did not ease his frown.

On the contrary, his face seemed to scrunch up even more.

What should he do?

Really just withdraw and ignore everything?

But what then would all his persistence have been for?

But if he continued to meddle, what if it entangled others, what then?

The more he thought, the more irritable he became.

Ryosuke almost wished he could yell at the top of his lungs.

But in the end, all he could do was pedal the bicycle forcefully.

...

"My lord, will that officer give up?"

The partition separating the front and back seats slowly lowered, and the servant sitting in the passenger seat turned to his master and asked.

This nominal servant was in fact one of Tsuchimikado Motoharu's retainers.

Otherwise, he would not dare to ask such a question at this time.

A normal servant daring to ask such things would have long been beaten to death.

"Ranmaru, what do you think?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu habitually counter-questioned.

"I think not."

"Because that officer looks like someone who won't give up."

"Even faced with a dilemma, he will certainly strive to overcome it."

Ranmaru answered.

In fact, if Ryosuke were the type to give up, Ranmaru wouldn't have asked.

"Then what do you suppose he will do?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu continued to inquire.

"This..."

Ranmaru hesitated slightly.

Not because he didn't know the answer,

But because he had already thought of the most appropriate response.

However, this answer is a bit unrealistic.

"Speak boldly."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu encouraged his very young retainer.

"Feigned death!"

Ranmaru voiced his own answer.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu laughed and nodded his head.

"Not bad."

"Aside from feigned death, what other choice does he have?"

"Since Ryosuke is dead, the lord naturally won't be involved."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu uttered softly.

Ranmaru nodded, then the young man suddenly was taken aback.

It seemed, perhaps, all this was arranged by his own lord.

Could it be that the lord had such plans all along?

Involuntarily, a look of confusion appeared on Ranmaru's face.

"The lord has his plans, as a retainer it's natural to share the lord's worries, especially for someone like Ryosuke, it is better to leave the lord's side sooner."

"And now a method that is neither harmful nor face-saving for the lord is what we as retainers must learn."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu frankly admitted.

Ranmaru nodded thoughtfully.

Following that, Tsuchimikado Motoharu's retainer sat up straight in the passenger seat.

"I will strive to learn."

"For the lord and for Lord Jason."

Ranmaru said with a decisive tone.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu started to smile.

He believed that Ranmaru would.

After all, Ranmaru had been raised in his family from a young age.

He knew too well the young man's thoughts.

And he understood the young man's character too well.

Everything would develop just as he envisioned.

"The lord's power is still too weak."

"My own family's location is not enough."

"I need to seek further development..."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu pondered.

Naturally, his thoughts drifted to the person he was about to meet.

Clap, clap, clap.

The closed folding fan tapped continuously against the palm of his hand.

The crisp sound rhythmically emitted.

Ranmaru immediately held his breath in concentration, knowing that this was how his lord looked when pondering.

Akamaru, the driver, also tried to make the car ride as smooth as possible.

Yet the speed of the car did not decrease at all.

Quickly, the car arrived at its destination.

A three-story Western mansion on the outskirts of the Silver District.

The mansion was at the top of a hill, a road leading to it, with 'street lights' automatically illuminating as the car approached.

Clusters of will-o-the-wisps hung on the trees.

Several floating figures walked down from the hilltop in the distance.

Watching this scene, Ranmaru frowned involuntarily.

He disliked the other party's habits.

Even though he was born into an Onmyoji family.

Akamaru?

If it weren't for the lord not speaking, he would definitely smash these things to pieces.

As the will-o-the-wisps lit up, Tsuchimikado Motoharu ended his contemplation.

Looking at the descending spectral figure from afar, Tsuchimikado Motoharu sighed and shook his head.

"If the ancestors of this person saw the state of their descendants, they would probably be so angry they'd climb out of their coffins to reprimand such unworthy offspring," Tsuchimikado Motoharu said.

"Rest assured."

"Even if he wanted to climb out of the coffin."

"He'd need to find his own coffin first."

A cool voice laced with sarcasm emerged in the car right after Tsuchimikado Motoharu finished speaking.

Ranmaru's hand immediately gripped the hilt of his sword tightly.

Akamaru's eyes also turned cold.

"Ghoul, you're still the same."

"Can't you learn to act like a normal person?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu showed a look of helplessness on his face.

"What's a normal person like?"

"In my eyes, a normal person looks like me."

"On the contrary, you seem abnormal to me."

The cool voice spoke, as a figure took a seat opposite Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

A young man in his twenties, dressed in black clothes inside, covered by an Onmyoji's cloak outside, his hair cascading down, his face and voice as cold as his gaze.

Especially his eyes, seemingly lifeless and unwavering.

Ordinary people would feel uncomfortable under such a gaze.

But not Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

He spread his hands out calmly.

"I've come for the matter of the 'Fear' banner."

"All I want now is to know the truth."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu spoke, his eyes intently gazing into the eyes of the person sitting opposite.

The other's lifeless eyes, under such a gaze, did not change at all.

Meanwhile, inside the 'Glowing Culinary Pavilion,' cries of shock rang out —

"Ah! This is..."

Chapter 1029: Dumplings – Soaring Dragon!

Glamour Cuisine Pavilion ended their expensive whole-cow set meal.

The total cost was 72,362 yuan.

Roughly the price Glamour Cuisine Pavilion would pay for three cows.

Not those common cows, but the special kind that grow up drinking beer and listening to music.

Such expenditures were of course exorbitantly expensive.

One could tell just by looking at the old monk of Tongshou Temple.

His face was already deeply wrinkled, occasionally twitching.

The wallet was empty.

The cards were empty too.

Most importantly, the credit card was maxed out.

Goodbye, my retirement life.

Goodbye, my cats.

Goodbye, my dogs.

Goodbye, my big goose.

The old monk of Tongshou Temple's eyes were shimmering.

He was really crying.

If it was just a dream being shattered, he wouldn't be like this.

But the one who shattered the dream was himself.

Especially since Jason had repeatedly confirmed with him, yet he was oblivious.

This was truly hard for him to accept.

Indeed, I'm just born to toil!

I won't have to toil until death, will I?

Just thinking about growing old and feeble, struggling to survive through a harsh winter, and ultimately collapsing at a street corner, covered by snow, only to be discovered after my body had stiffened...

The old monk from Tongshou Temple couldn't hold back his tears any longer.

But as he kept weeping, the old monk of Tongshou Temple suddenly thought of something.

How old am I this year?

Ninety?

Ninety-two?

Or ninety-five?

Upon thinking about this, it seems like I have lived much longer than most people!

The more he thought about it, the less painful it felt for the old monk.

However, his wrinkled face did not smooth out.

He had to pay off the credit card!

Twenty thousand on the credit card!

Until what year and month will I have to keep paying!

"Master?"

Hui Lijing had been watching the old monk of Tongshou Temple's expressions, alternating between crying and laughing, with a wrinkled face, the female detective truly worried that the old monk would collapse here, breathless.

Over seventy thousand, for the female detective, was already a huge sum without tapping into her sister's money.

Or rather, it's a fortune to anyone.

"It's okay."

"I'm used to it."

"Life, how can everything go as one wishes?"

The old monk of Tongshou Temple said with his hands clasped together, his face now completely relaxed.

His mind was already pondering what his future would hold.

Now, he was no longer Master Tongshou Temple.

It's not quite appropriate to stay in Tongshou Temple.

He could only move out and live elsewhere.

Fortunately, there was still some time before the real onset of winter, he could gather more cardboard boxes to build a home.

But under such circumstances, finding a new job was difficult.

Exorcism work paid well, but he truly didn't dare.

He feared not only losing his own life but also failing the client.

The client trusted him, which is why they sought him out.

If he lost his life over such a matter, he couldn't be at peace with his conscience.

Thus, throughout the last decade or two, he selectively accepted missions.

High-ranking executives and tycoons, he invariably refused.

For such people, there definitely was no shortage of real Onmyoji and Exorcists to help them, and if they hadn't resolved the issue, that meant the task was extremely tricky, far beyond the reach of a 'rookie' like him.

Instead, he preferred to take on jobs from common folk because most of these tasks were relatively easy to complete.

Somehow, the more he did so, the higher his reputation grew, and the better it got.

Even some started calling him a 'Bodhisattva.'

But he truly was a rookie!

Aside from mastering Substitute Hair, Boat Traversal Technique, and Silence Technique, he only knew Vajra Palm.

What about the secret Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique of Tongshou Temple?

Until now, he had only grasped the bare basics.

How could he possibly undertake exorcism with such skills?

Harmful to others and himself, it was out of the question.

Sigh!

Thinking of this, the old monk of Tongshou Temple couldn't help but let out a sigh.

Then, he looked pleadingly at Jason.

"Master, may I reside in Tongshou Temple for a while longer?"

"Please rest assured, it's just for a while."

"Just until I find a job, then I will leave."

The old monk of Tongshou Temple looked pitifully at Jason.

"Mm."

Jason nodded his head.

Deep down, Jason naturally had plans of his own.

Let the old monk of Tongshou Temple leave?

Impossible.

He was very clear about his own identity.

Or maybe, the problems he was considering now, were far beyond just Tongshou Temple.

Someone must stay in Tongshou Temple.

Who could be more suitable than the old monk of Tongshou Temple?

Nobody.

The old monk of Tongshou Temple was the best choice.

"Ladies and gentlemen."

The hall manager who was serving as the waiter, stopped outside the bamboo curtain, gently reminding everyone.

When everyone turned their heads, the hall manager, smiling, said: "Our chef has specially prepared a post-meal snack for you all, would you like me to bring it now?"

"They're giving snacks as well?"

Hui Lijing was startled, but then came to a realization.

After all, they spent such an enormous amount on the meal, it was reasonable to give something extra.

Just like in the coffee shop when someone buys a lot at once, she would give a Pudding.

It should be like that.

The female detective thoughtfully nodded her head.

It seemed that seeing the female detective's expression, the hall manager immediately explained.

"It's not a giveaway."

"Or rather..."

"This snack is far more valuable than the beef set meal you all just had."

The words of the hall manager left the female detective and the old monk looking at each other, with a look of astonishment.

Chapter 1030: Dumplings - Soaring Dragon! (2)

As for Jason?

At this moment, he had already sat up straight, his nose twitching constantly.

The scent!

Such a delightful fragrance!

Jason was completely captivated by the aroma, his gaze turning towards the kitchen.

"Why would such precious food be offered to us?"

The female detective asked cautiously.

Although the glowing culinary pavilion didn't look like a shady place, some things still needed to be clarified.

After all, they no longer had the capability to spend 70,000+.

Even if they did, they wouldn't just give it away for free.

"Because it's touching."

"It's because our boss was moved seeing you all traveling with friends."

"That's why it was inspired."

The lobby manager explained and then asked again.

"Do you need it served right now?"

"Serve it."

Jason agreed immediately.

"Alright!"

The lobby manager turned and ran towards the kitchen.

In a short while, he came out pushing a cart.

The cart was a food trolley.

On the cart, only the top layer had a basket still steaming hot.

Similar to a basket used for small steamed buns.

"Excuse me."

As he lifted the bamboo curtain, the lobby manager said.

Then, he carefully placed the basket, which seemed to hold only 8-10 small buns, on the just-cleared table.

"Shall I open it now?"

The lobby manager asked.

"Go ahead."

Everyone nodded.

The lobby manager immediately pinched the top of the bamboo steamer and then pulled it up sharply—

Whoosh!

Dense steam burst forth, and instantly, the basket was obscured.

Then—

Roar!

Roar roar!

Roar roar roar!

Deep yet lingering roars resonated, accompanied by the white steam spreading.

"What's this?"

Hui Lijing, seeing the sudden scene unfold, couldn't help but widen her eyes.

And then, she involuntarily opened her mouth.

Dragon!

A dragon appeared within the steam.

Rising with its head held high.

As if soaring to the heavens.

Covering all corners of the universe.

The dragon's roar resounded through the heavens.

The sounds of the dragon's roar still echoed in her ears, and in front of Hui Lijing, a divine dragon had already soared into the sky.

But, as soon as Hui Lijing blinked her eyes, she saw nothing.

All there was in front of her was a basket of steamed dumplings.

Wrapped with shrimp heads and tails.

But the scene just now?

An illusion?

Hui Lijing looked puzzled.

She turned her head to look at the old monk from Tongshou Temple.

The old monk from Tongshou Temple clasped his hands and looked towards the lobby manager.

"Is this the legendary 'Rising Dragon Dumplings'?"

The old monk asked.

"Yes."

"These are the special 'Rising Dragon Dumplings' crafted by our boss for you all."

"Please taste them."

As the words fell, the wind picked up.

The steam on the table was stirred by an extremely swift arm, creating a rolling motion, and the rising dragon dumplings in the basket had already disappeared, leaving only the sound of Jason chewing.

"Good, delicious!"

Jason, feeling the collision between his teeth and the shrimp, was completely joyful.

And what made him even more delighted was the words before his eyes—

[Swallowed 'Rising Dragon Dumplings' (Master meticulously cooked)]

[Physical Strength, Energy, Moderate Recovery of Injuries!]

[Satiety +5]

[Satiety: 724]

...

"5 points of satiety?"

Light sparkled in Jason's eyes.

It's not unusual for 'food' to provide +5 points of satiety.

But for regular food to bring about 5 points of satiety was truly unique.

In Jason's understanding, regular food can only cause a qualitative change by accumulating quantity.

"Could it be because of the chef?"

Jason looked at the description 'Master meticulously cooked'.

Almost subconsciously, Jason looked towards the lobby manager.

"Can I meet this chef?"

Jason asked.

"I'm sorry."

"Our boss generally doesn't see guests."

"And after making a satisfactory dish, our boss has already gone home."

Clearly, this lobby manager had faced such situations before, smoothly responding while bowing apologetically.

A rare look of disappointment appeared on Jason's face.

However, he didn't make it difficult for the lobby manager, merely nodding to indicate that he could leave.

After another bow, the lobby manager then left.

"Does it taste really good?"

The female detective asked.

"Better than I imagined."

Jason responded.

The female detective immediately showed a longing in her eyes.

Having the dream of becoming a barista, the female detective naturally has a passion for food.

She also wanted to taste this seemingly magical dish.

But should she actively reach for it?

Sorry, to intrude.

I am a poor person.

I am unworthy.

The female detective always had self-awareness.

And the old monk from Tongshou Temple was sitting there, thinking.

"Master, what's the matter?"

To divert attention, the female detective asked the old monk.

"The legend says, in some era, someone used cooking to pacify demons."

"That chef made countless delicacies in his life."

"But later, after winning the championship in a cooking competition again, he disappeared with a bunch of friends... Among his much-talked-about dishes, there seems to be this 'Divine Dragon Dumplings'!"

The old monk answered.

"Is there only one Divine Dragon Dumpling?"

"Are there other magical dishes?"

The female detective widened her eyes.

"Yes, there are also Catfish Noodles, Cosmic Siu Mai, Galaxy Noodles, Blooming Rice Crisps, Comet Fried Rice, True Sea Bream Continent Map, and so on."

"But these..."

"Are they just legends?"

The old monk spoke, his tone becoming somewhat less confident.

This lack of confidence was noticed by the observant female detective.

Facing the female detective's gaze, the old monk honestly said.

"Because the legend says, those who eat these dishes can live forever!"

"Immortality?!"

The female detective exclaimed.

"Yes, immortality."

"Even the great demons cannot achieve this."

"So, I guess it must be a legend."

The old monk nodded.

Jason, however, frowned on the side.

Immortality?

It seemed somewhat inconceivable.

But could it really not exist?

When the body reaches a certain level of physical strength, aging naturally slows down, and in some time period, it appears as so-called 'immortality.'

And can eating achieve this level?

Think about the sense of fullness!

Even death can be revived!

Let alone immortality?

Thus, Jason believed in the legend.

He definitely wasn't just for the sake of eating Catfish Noodles, Cosmic Siu Mai, Galaxy Noodles, Blooming Rice Crisps, Comet Fried Rice, True Sea Bream Continent Map, and other dishes.

"I really want to meet that chef!"

Jason thought to himself.

Then, his gaze shifted outside the bamboo curtain.

Ryosuke had returned.

He had the scent of medicine and the air of the Mystical Side on him.

Not from food.

But a residue from involvement with secret techniques.

"Not going smoothly?"

Jason asked.

"Very unsmoothly."

"I need to reorganize the plan."

"Consider our previous arrangement canceled!"

Saying this, Ryosuke bowed.

The female detective frowned.

"Hey, you..."

"Alright."

But Jason interrupted her words.

"Sorry."

Having said that, Ryosuke turned and walked away.

"What's up with him?"

"Jason, you were actually helping him!"

The female detective watched Ryosuke's back and spoke indignantly.

"Pretentious people are like that."

"Usually, a beating will do."

Jason replied.

The female detective was stunned.

"Usually?"

"What about not usually?"

She asked instinctively.

"Two beatings."

Jason stated confidently.

This statement left the female detective unable to speak.

Meanwhile, the old monk laughed.

It was indeed right to make Jason a Master.

Jason had great wisdom.

Thinking this, he remembered the dying wish of the previous old monk.

Master of Tongshou Temple!

No longer just a fraud.

He could truly be a Master!

Realizing this, the old monk from Tongshou Temple could no longer remain seated.

He solemnly looked at Jason and said—

"Master, please come with me... to receive 'the inheritance of Tongshou Temple'!"