

Menu 1061

Chapter 1061: Jason: My Foodie Friend

Dressed neatly with not a hair out of place, Hanakaiin Haru walked into the temple from outside.

His steps appeared leisurely, but the distance between each step was exact, as if measured, accompanied by a subtle smile, displaying exceptional elegance.

A few attendants halted at the steps of the Tongshou Temple, bowed towards Hanakaiin Haru's retreating figure, then dispersed to stand around.

This was not only in respect of the Tongshou Temple but also a sign of trust in Jason.

They believed that Hanakaiin Haru would not encounter any danger inside the Tongshou Temple.

Of course, outside the Tongshou Temple, they needed to be fully responsible.

"Lord Jason."

Hanakaiin Haru, walking into the courtyard, came straight up to Jason and greeted him with a very polite bow.

However, Jason's gaze lingered on Hanakaiin Haru for a moment before shifting to a person beside him.

The girl with twin tails still somewhat messy, golden hair, emerald green eyes, and healthy tan skin, was Sagaraso, who Jason had met at the 'Gourmet Battle' eating contest.

"Jason!"

This somewhat goofy and carefree girl, upon seeing Jason, an acquaintance, immediately waved her hand and then ran over.

"Jason, what are you doing here?"

"Are you a monk?"

"Is the companion Mr. Hanakaiin mentioned before you?"

The carefree girl bombarded him with questions, her face full of curiosity.

"I've been staying here these few days."

"Not a monk."

"If you are referring to the 'King of Fighters' tournament, I indeed will be teaming up with Hanakaiin Haru."

Jason, quite patient with a friend who could eat and had once given him a burger, answered all of the goofy girl's questions one by one before his gaze returned to Hanakaiin Haru.

He needed an exact answer from him.

Why was Sagaraso here?

"Sagaraso is the third companion I've recruited."

"She will join us to compete in the 'King of Fighters' tournament."

Hanakaiin Haru answered very earnestly.

Jason looked at Sagaraso.

The carefree girl immediately flashed a goofy smile: her mouth wide open, a canine tooth revealed.

"Fighting helps me get in better shape than working out!"

"For the ideal figure... cheer up!"

Sagaraso gave a reason that left Jason utterly perplexed.

To participate in the 'King of Fighters' just to lose weight?

What the hell?

Jason stared at the carefree girl in astonishment.

"I have informed Sagaraso of the dangers involved this time, likewise, I have offered adequate compensation, a reward — and my visit this time is also to renegotiate the previous reward with you."

"As you see, Sagaraso became one of us only because I truly couldn't find anyone reliable, she had to be involved; thus, in this competition, Lord Jason, you will inevitably shoulder more."

"Therefore, on top of the original reward promised to you, I would offer you an item similar to a 'Fragment of Inaho's Arrow' as compensation, paid immediately, what do you say?"

Hanakaiin Haru said, bowing deeply.

No doubt, Hanakaiin Haru was extremely polite.

He didn't choose to notify at the start of the competition, but informed ahead and brought a gift.

However, this did not hinder Jason's thought process.

Hanakaiin Haru was faced with more trouble than imagined.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have dragged the still-studying Sagaraso into this.

Naturally, he would shoulder more of the battles as the other party said.

Moreover, without extra teammates for substitutes, the risk of failure and danger greatly increased.

So...

"Three pieces!"

Jason named his price.

Upon hearing this price, Hanakaiin Haru was taken aback, but then smiled immediately.

"A very fair price."

Hanakaiin Haru said sincerely.

He had been quite worried, but now he could finally relax.

This young Onmyoji of the Hanakaiin Family wasn't worried about Jason naming an exorbitant price or quitting the competition; his biggest fear was Jason withdrawing.

If Jason withdrew, he would truly be doomed.

Though confident, Hanakaiin Haru wasn't arrogant enough to think he could handle a 1v3 situation.

Especially since some of those people were his 'acquaintances.'

Moreover, those 'acquaintances' understood him better than he had expected."

If not for seeking teammates for 'The King of Fighters' this time, he wouldn't have realized that those damn guys had infiltrated his surroundings so deeply."

Even among the fighters he knew, some were arranged by these damn guys."

Luckily, he unexpectedly met Sagaraso.

Otherwise, he would have been embarrassingly replaced by one of his own attendants this time.

Just thinking about that scenario made Hanakaiin Haru feel worse than death.

Luckily!

It didn't happen!

Lucky to have met Sagaraso!

Jason did not give up!

Phew!

Hanakaiin Haru didn't hide his relief, letting out a long sigh in front of Jason and Sagaraso.

"I was really worried you would give up."

"That's great."

Hanakaiin Haru showed a relieved expression, then, he sat down opposite Jason: "Three 'Inaho's Arrow' fragments are hard to find at once, but I have an item worth three times the total value of 'Inaho's Arrow,' I hope it can serve as a substitute—of course, as I said, it will be delivered to you immediately."

Hanakaiin Haru's words made Jason smile."

Though this young man had an exaggerated demeanor, it undoubtedly made him likable.

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The current method of 'extra' gifting is even more so.

No one dislikes a 'generous' partner.

Jason is no exception.

"Okay."

Jason smiled and nodded.

"Please wait a moment."

"I'll be right back."

After saying this in all seriousness, Hanakaiin Haru stood up and walked outside.

Jason withdrew his gaze and turned to look at the Sagaraso girl next to him.

From the very start, the Sagaraso girl had been curiously sizing up Tongshou Temple.

"I visited a temple when I was little."

"But that was a very long time ago."

"This is my first time since growing up."

"Can we go inside?"

The Sagaraso girl pointed in the direction of the main hall.

"Not at the moment."

"A Master is conducting the noon ritual."

Jason shook his head.

Although the old Monk of the Tongshou Temple used the Silence Technique to block out the chanting, Jason could still sense the other's presence.

"Is that so?"

The Sagaraso girl seemed a bit disappointed, but her attention was immediately drawn to the side rooms.

She seemed like a curious child filled with wonder.

That was Jason's inner assessment of her.

And because of this, Jason became even more curious.

"Where did you meet Hanakaiin Haru?"

Jason asked.

"He came to me on his own initiative."

"He said he saw the video from 'Foodie First' the other day, and he was very interested in my fist."

"Then, he introduced me to the 'King of Fighters' martial arts competition, asking if I'd like to participate."

"It seemed like a good opportunity, so I agreed to join in."

The Sagaraso girl answered as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

That made Jason frown.

"Do you really understand what the 'King of Fighters' martial arts competition is?"

Jason pressed on.

"Of course!"

"Mr. Hanakaiin Haru explained it to me in detail."

"Teams of three, where the fight continues until all three members of one team are defeated, or the opposite team is defeated."

"There are four divisions: A, B, C, and D, with 8 teams each, making a total of 32 teams."

"Aside from these 32 teams, this edition of the 'King of Fighters' martial arts competition also has two wild-card teams — this is specially set up for those teams without invitations."

"We have an invitation, so we directly advanced to the knockout round."

Sagaraso nodded while she spoke confidently.

"What else?"

Jason continued to ask.

"What else?"

Sagaraso appeared simple-minded and confused.

"Danger!"

"Are you aware of the dangers involved?"

Jason asked seriously.

As a 'gourmet', he did not want to see any of his foodie friends in this alternate world get into trouble.

"I'm aware!"

"Mr. Hanakaiin Haru has informed me of these risks."

"I will be the last to perform, and also, I can give up at any time."

"It's written in the contract — that was my demand."

Sagaraso looked self-assured and clever.

Seeing this, Jason shook his head in the end.

Her demeanor had already told him that she would definitely climb onto the stage out of curiosity.

And once she steps onto the stage...

The danger becomes unavoidable.

Victory and defeat can happen in a flash!

Life and death are also in the blink of an eye!

It's very likely that Sagaraso won't even have a chance to cry for mercy before someone takes her life.

Jason definitely didn't want to witness such a scene.

So, he sighed and stood up.

"Hit me."

Jason said this.

"What?"

Sagaraso was stunned, her face naive once again.

"I said hit me with all your strength."

Jason repeated, and then explained.

"As teammates, I at least need to know your strength."

"This is good for you and for me."

"Oh, okay, got it."

The Sagaraso girl immediately stood up and took a boxing stance.

Then—

Bang!

A punch landed on Jason's chest.

In the midst of the fairly heavy thud, Jason remained unmoved, while the Sagaraso girl stumbled back, shaking her hand repeatedly.

"Ouch ouch ouch!"

"Jason, are you made of steel?"

"Why does it hurt so much?"

The Sagaraso girl cried out loudly.

"Not good enough!"

"With such strength, you'll just drag me down if you become my teammate."

"So..."

"Wait!"

Before Jason could finish speaking, he was interrupted by the Sagaraso girl, who, a moment earlier, was still shaking her palms in pain. Now, she suddenly became serious.

No!

Not just serious!

Her whole demeanor had changed!

It was as if the comic style switched from a comedic to a strong character type.

As though she had transformed from 'IS' to 'JOJO' in an instant.

A terrifying aura burst from Sagaraso, compelling even Jason to take notice.

"What is this?"

Jason squinted his eyes.

Just a moment ago, he sensed an aura similar to Aras's.

It wasn't the style.

It was the essence.

They were both strong!

"I wasn't serious just now!"

"This time I'm serious!"

Miss Sagaraso said, lifting her right hand.

At the same time, her messy blonde hair stood on end, especially the two longest strands near her twin ponytails, which stood up like two antennas.

Crackle, crackle.

A wind passed around Miss Sagaraso.

But it sounded like the buzzing of electricity.

Miss Sagaraso, with a serious face, took a deep breath and threw a punch.

"Serious Right Straight Punch!"

Woo!

The punch came, bringing a howling gale.

A gleam flashed in Jason's squinted eyes.

This punch!

He needed to take it seriously!

Hum!

With the stimulation of [Battle patterns. Prus. Griffin. Shadow-hidden Body Forging Technique], his muscles instantly became harder than steel.

Jason never said he would fight back.

So, he was going to withstand Miss Sagaraso's punch with his body.

It would certainly hurt.

But, Jason had no intentions of going back on his word.

The wind brought by the fist's edge was already hitting his face.

Jason could feel the force contained within it quite clearly.

But, the next moment—

The fist just stopped mid-air.

Miss Sagaraso's hair that was standing dropped down, and she swayed as if she was about to fall in a drained manner.

"What's wrong?"

Jason was taken aback.

"I, I... am hungry."

"I don't have any strength left."

Miss Sagaraso said, hugging her stomach and on the verge of tears.

...

Hanakaiin Haru, holding the box, returned to 'Tongshou Temple'.

Before entering the courtyard, she heard Miss Sagaraso's happy shouts.

"Delicious! Delicious!"

"This is really good!"

"This isn't bad either!"

As Hanakaiin Haru stepped into the temple, she saw Miss Sagaraso sitting at the sole stone table, holding a bowl of ramen in one hand and five chicken skewers in the other, eating with big bites.

A bite of noodles, a skewer, then a sip of soup.

And on the ground, there were already ten empty bowls.

However, that was just beside Miss Sagaraso.

On Jason's side, it was even more exaggerated.

Three stacks of bowls were too many to count properly.

Because they were piled up higher than a person's height.

What's more important is that it hadn't ended yet.

"How much did you eat?"

Hanakaiin Haru blinked.

As a talented member of Hanakaiin Family, Haru had seen people who could eat a lot, but seeing two people like Jason and Sagaraso at the same time was very rare.

"Make way, please!"

"Make way, please!"

The voice from behind made Hanakaiin Haru immediately step to the side.

Several young waiters were seen running over with food boxes from a distance.

They rushed into the temple and served bowl after bowl of ramen out of the food boxes.

The waiters were fast enough.

Barely keeping up with the pace of Miss Sagaraso's eating.

But compared to Jason?

They were far behind.

Hanakaiin Haru watched, stunned, as the waiters made five more trips before it was over.

Don't get it wrong.

It wasn't because Jason was full.

But rather... the noodles ran out.

The ramen shop at the entrance of Tongshou Town was sold out due to their preparation.

So the meal had to end prematurely.

"Thank you for your patronage, the total is 1024 yuan."

Jiro's son, Little Jiro, at the ramen shop said with a smile.

Jason did not hesitate, he took out money and paid the man.

He wasn't one to ditch the bill.

As for Sagaraso's portion?

He said he was treating her.

"Next time, I'll treat you."

Miss Sagaraso said somewhat shyly.

"Hmm, okay."

Jason didn't refuse.

How do foodies increase their friendship?

Naturally, by you treating me to kebabs, and I'll treat you to crayfish.

When you've shared many meals, you become confidants.

"The appetite of you two really is an eye-opener."

After Little Jiro left, Hanakaiin Haru came over and placed the box in front of Jason while saying.

"This is the compensation I promised you."

"Please take a look."

Hanakaiin Haru said.

Jason's nose twitched.

Instantly, his stomach, which had just eaten hundreds of bowls of ramen, once again roared with hunger.

Gurgle, gurgle.

He couldn't wait to open the box.

Then, his eyes lit up.

Chapter 1063: Fighting Hunger!

Inside the high-walled box made entirely of black lacquered wood, there rested a gourd.

It was a reddish-brown color, about the size of two adult fists, and it emitted a soft, glowing brilliance under the sunlight. Without need for close examination, one could determine that the age of this gourd was considerably ancient.

However, for Jason, things like ancient age were completely unimportant.

What mattered was the taste!

The rich 'food' aroma had already reached his nose before.

When the box was opened, such a scent became even more intense.

It almost hit him in the face.

Just like the stream of steam bursting out the moment a steamer lid is lifted when steaming buns.

It was not only hot but also carried that unique scent of wheat-based food.

However, the gourd in front of him was emanating a 'wine' scent.

In the rich 'food' aroma, there was a mix of faint wine scent.

Although weak, it was very distinct.

Jason furrowed his brows slightly.

It wasn't that he abstained from drinking.

In fact, to some extent, Jason was quite fond of alcohol.

Back in his hometown, drinking and skewers were one of the great pleasures of life.

Next to the streets on a summer night, when the sun had completely set, and the ground still retained some warmth, getting a small table with one or two friends to sit by the roadside, shouting to the owner: '10 meat skewers, 10 tendons, 4 kidney skewers, grill an eggplant, two green beans, and bring three crates of Snow Beer, chilled! And mix a plate of peanuts and edamame!'

Such pleasure was truly wonderful.

So wonderful that Jason wouldn't even dare to dream about it now.

Because he was worried about drinking too much.

Being drunk was not a good thing.

Not just because it reduced reaction time and clouded judgement, preventing response to sudden danger.

But also because one might 'speak truth after wine'.

Jason had far too many secrets.

Each one, if revealed, would cause unpredictable consequences.

That's why, he truly did not dare to drink himself into intoxication.

"If 'food' has a wine taste, will it get you drunk?"

Jason pondered.

Meanwhile, Hanakaiin Haru beside him was explaining the origins of the gourd.

"This is a gourd crafted by a Warring States-era artisan who imitated a great demon's gourd. It looks like a real gourd but is actually forged from iron, bearing Secret Techniques within. Apart from storing wine, it can also capture an enemy inside the gourd, provided one knows the enemy's date and time of birth and possesses their fresh blood. It's a rare object indeed. Unfortunately..."

"Unfortunately what?"

The engrossed Sagaraso girl eagerly inquired.

"Unfortunately, the method to use this gourd has been lost."

"My ancestors tried many ways but couldn't activate the gourd."

"It just became an ornament."

Hanakaiin Haru spread his hands, a look of helplessness on his face.

A look of regret also appeared on Sagaraso girl's face.

As for Jason, something stirred in his mind.

Why does this gourd sound familiar?

"It can enclose anyone inside?"

Jason asked.

"Of course not."

"It's just a replica!"

"The maximum it can hold is the pinnacle of ordinary humans!"

"However, if it were the great demon's gourd, it should be able to contain everyone, right?"

"Of course, these are all rumors, I don't know if they're true."

Hanakaiin Haru said and laughed about it himself.

Even though he was part of the Mystical Side, the young Onmyoji of the Hanakaiin Family half-doubted the legends passed down in his family.

Because he knew too well some of the family's practices.

Or rather...

History is written by the victors.

Every 20 to 30 years, the books in the family would be rewritten.

The official statement was organization, modification, preservation.

In reality?

Ha.

So, truly believing in those records could really get someone killed.

"As mentioned before, this is my apology to you, please accept it."

Hanakaiin Haru took out the gourd and handed it to Jason.

"Hmm."

Jason nodded and accepted the gourd.

He was quite confident that the rumors were true.

But that was only a high probability, the final outcome?

Jason did not know.

However, Jason knew that the Hanakaiin Haru in front of him was a very good collaborator.

Even before their cooperation officially began, he had already obtained the 'Blessing Stone,' 'Rice Peace Arrow,' and this unknown gourd from him.

Therefore, Jason's opinion of the young man improved considerably.

Perhaps there was the pride of a great family, but the person was not stingy and kept his word.

And what Hanakaiin Haru said next made Jason's impression of him go up another notch.

"Since all three members of our team are gathered."

"How about I host dinner tonight?"

Hanakaiin Haru asked.

Sagaraso girl nodded eagerly.

With food involved, Jason naturally wouldn't object.

"As previously promised to Mr. Jason, one of the two banquets will be held when everyone is gathered, and I've long reserved the venue for this occasion."

"Mr. Jason, Sagaraso, do you have anyone you'd like to bring?"

"The banquet hall is very large and can accommodate many attendees," Hanakaiin Haru added.

Sagaraso girl instinctively wanted to invite all her friends.

But then, remembering she was going to participate in the 'King of Fighters - KOF tournament,' she immediately dismissed the idea.

After all, she had signed a non-disclosure agreement: She was not allowed to proactively reveal the Inside World.

"No."

Sagaraso shook her head regretfully.

"I'll probably have a few friends coming."

Jason straightforwardly said.

Whether it was the old Monk from Tongshou Temple, He Tai, Hui Lijing, Ryosuke, or Urashima, they were all familiar with the Inside World, so naturally there was no need to hide it from them.

Chapter 1064: Fighting Hunger! (2)

"Okay."

"It's 3 PM now; I will arrange for someone to pick everyone up at 6 PM."

Hanakaiin Haru gave the precise time before temporarily leaving Tongshou Temple.

Sagaraso did not follow her to leave.

Compared to Hanakaiin Haru, Miss Sagaraso preferred to stay with Jason.

When Hanakaiin Haru left, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple walked out from the main hall.

"The Soul-Gathering Gourd?"

Looking at the gourd in Jason's hand, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple showed surprise.

"You know about this?"

Jason tossed the gourd in his hand.

"Hmm, according to the records, it was a tool made by a craftsman who imitated a great demon's gourd."

"There are rumors that this gourd hides numerous secrets."

"However, it's just a rumor. Since the method of its use was lost, it's become nothing more than a decoration."

"If it were still functional, it definitely wouldn't have appeared in a branch family of Hanakaiin Court."

The old monk shared the information he knew, then turned his head to look at Miss Sagaraso.

"Hello, I am the Monk of Tongshou Temple."

The old monk greeted her amiably.

"I'm Sagaraso!"

Miss Sagaraso replied in a carefree manner, then seemingly remembering the etiquette she had been taught, realizing that it was inappropriate to act this way in front of an elder, she quickly bowed and said: "Nice to meet you, please take good care of me."

"Haha, it's okay, it's okay."

"No need to be so formal."

"Would you like some tea and sweets?"

"I remember there are some in the side room."

Facing the polite child, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple was very happy.

"Thank you for your trouble."

Sagaraso bowed again.

Jason watched the two, silently stood up, and walked towards the side room to the left.

This was his room at Tongshou Temple.

He had consumed quite a bit of Satiety.

Now, it was time to replenish it.

Having locked the door and set up several Kaya Seals to ensure all points of entry and exit were sealed, Jason finally approached the bed.

Even within Tongshou Temple, Jason would not abandon his customary precautions.

Sitting cross-legged on the bed, the first thing Jason took out was the 'Blessing Stone'."

After sniffing it, he threw it directly into his mouth.

Slightly sweet, but not intense—when he applied pressure with his teeth—

Crack!

The entire 'Blessing Stone' split open.

Inside was... peanuts?

Peanuts wrapped in a sweet coating?

Not the kind soaked in old vinegar. Though a bit odd, they were still delicious.

[Swallowing 'Blessing Stone' (Small)]

[Physical Strength, Energy, and minor injuries recover slightly!]

[Satiety +10]

[Satiety: 604]

...

10 points of Satiety aren't much for Jason right now.

But this form of Satiety, obtained without the need for hunting, is always an unexpected gain for Jason.

Next, Jason picked up a Fragment of 'Harmony Arrow'."

Unlike the 'Blessing Stone's' mild sweetness, the Fragment of 'Harmony Arrow' was intensely sweet.

Like a ball of cream.

And it was the kind that melts in your mouth.

It felt as if he had just eaten a mouthful of sweet, creamy butter.

"Delicious."

Jason evaluated it from the bottom of his heart.

Sweetness always brings happiness.

That's why people unconsciously lean towards sweet flavors.

No matter how bitter life may be, sweetness can dilute the bitterness.

Do you still remember the bowl of sweet water your mother made when you were taking medicine as a child?

How many people fear falling ill.

But it's precisely because of this bowl of soup.

The sickness doesn't seem so frightening anymore.

Even, there is some anticipation.

Of course, it's not the sickness, but the sugary soup.

Sweet, truly wonderful.

What's even more wonderful is the text prompt before Jason's eyes.

[Consuming 'Inaho's Arrow' (Fragment)]

[Physical Strength, Energy, and Moderate Injuries have recovered!]

[Satiety +25]

[Satiety: 629]

...

Still savoring the lingering sweetness in his mouth, looking at the text prompts before him, the corners of Jason's mouth curled up.

Then, he picked up the 'Collecting Souls Gourd'.

The food was right before his eyes, its aroma becoming even richer.

But!

The scent of alcohol was also becoming clearer.

Even mixed with the scent of alcohol, faced with the aroma of the food, Jason couldn't help but open his mouth wide.

He wanted to taste this gourd.

At the same time, dishes like drunken shrimp involuntarily sprang to his mind.

But deep down, a voice kept echoing.

Stop!

Don't eat!

If you're unsure of the outcome, don't try it!

Learn to resist hunger!

Don't be controlled!

This voice stemmed from Jason's cautious habits.

Or rather... rationality!

Rationality was telling Jason again about the danger of doing so.

But, the gourd was getting closer and closer to Jason's mouth.

10 centimeters, 5 centimeters, 2 centimeters.

Just when Jason's teeth were about to touch the gourd's skin, he stopped.

It wasn't a decisive stop.

But rather a shaky one.

Jason's body felt like it was pressing down on a mountain, and he was also holding a mountain in his hand.

Furthermore, these two mountains were magnet mountains!

Mountains with opposing magnetic poles!

An immense attraction was present between them.

The originally halted distance started to waver again.

And then—

Slap!

Jason abruptly slapped himself with his empty hand.

The slap was crisp and loud.

But, it was completely useless.

Jason still wanted to eat.

And... he even stuck out his tongue!

The gourd wasn't far from Jason's mouth.

When the tongue was stretched out, it could naturally touch the gourd.

Once he tasted the gourd's flavor...

The remaining shred of Jason's rationality made him understand what that would entail.

Perhaps he would have a big meal.

But a more likely outcome was him collapsing drunk to the ground.

Of course, that's the best-case scenario.

The worst?

Naturally, it would be 'a drunken man's words are a sober man's thoughts'.

No!

Such a thing cannot happen!

Chapter 1065: Fighting Hunger! (3)

Deep down, Jason told himself, his free hand suddenly pushed against his chin.

This push left no room for hesitation.

When his teeth touched the stretched-out tongue, it was... bitten off!

Splat!

The tongue fell onto the bed, blood pouring out.

In the wake of the pain, Jason's eyes suddenly cleared.

He fiercely tried to loosen the hand holding the gourd.

But the hand holding the gourd wouldn't respond.

Without hesitation, Jason's free hand snapped it.

Crack!

The bones in his wrist broke, and the gourd fell straight onto the bed.

Then, looking at the gourd, Jason, without his tongue and with a broken wrist, still filled with longing from the bottom of his heart.

Thud, thud, thud!

With every heartbeat, Jason's longing increased by a bit.

And the remainder of his rationality was driven away bit by bit.

Bang!

Bang bang bang!

Jason lifted his hand and smashed it against his left chest.

Continuous, unceasing strikes.

Pounding until flesh was mangled.

Pounding until bones fractured and tendons snapped.

Pounding until the heart shattered.

Pounding until there was no sign of life.

Death, had come.

Afterwards, life surged forth again.

Awakening, Jason escaped from the bed like he was electrocuted, leaning against the door, gasping for breath.

Huff! Huff!

Jason was drenched in sweat as if he had just been hauled out of water, droplets falling to the floor.

At this moment, Jason was more exhausted than he would be after a genuine battle with death.

Battling hunger is never an easy task.

Jason held considerable authority on this matter.

Ever since awakening his [Predator] talent, he was almost always battling hunger.

From being completely unable to resist at first.

To later being able to resist a little.

To being able to resist most of the time as long as he didn't start eating.

What Jason experienced and endured was definitely beyond anyone's imagination.

And to resist after starting to eat, like just now?

The price he just paid was all too clear.

However, that was just the beginning.

Jason stood behind the door, and it took a full five minutes for him to completely calm down.

He approached the bed bit by bit with caution.

As though there was some great danger there.

A distance that normally would take a single leap, Jason moved for a full minute.

Just when he was close to the bed and the hunger in his heart was about to surge again, Jason returned to the doorway and began to gasp for breath.

After doing this ten times, Jason finally calmed down.

But this was just merely approaching.

By the time he could pick up the gourd, night had completely fallen.

How many attempts he tried in between?

Jason couldn't remember.

All he knew was that he was somewhat successful.

Pulling out a string tied to the gourd, Jason hung it at his waist, then stepped out the door.

Outside, Hanakaiin Haru had been waiting for a while.

Seeing Jason emerge, Hanakaiin Haru stepped forward and asked with a smile, "Lord Jason, what happened?"

"Slept in," Jason replied casually.

Facing such a dismissive answer, Hanakaiin Haru didn't press further.

He didn't want to damage the good relationship between them over some minor matter.

"Oh, shall we set off then?" Hanakaiin Haru asked.

"Fine," Jason nodded.

"Let's go! Let's go!"

"Feast! Feast!"

The carefree Sagaraso had already started cheering.

The Monk from Tongshou Temple along with Ryosuke and Urashima, who were also coming along, carried a hint of anticipation.

Of course, Hui Lijing had also been notified by phone.

However, just as everyone was leaving Tongshou Temple, a servant of Hanakaiin Haru came running in a panic.

"It's terrible, Lord Hanakaiin Haru, your invitation to the 'King of Fighters Tournament' has been revoked!"

Chapter 1066: Someone is Targeting Jason's Food

"Okay, Master."

"I know. I'll be there on time."

"Uh-huh, that's it, see you in a bit."

Hui Lijing was in quite a good mood after hanging up the phone with the old monk from Tongshou Temple.

Someone's treating her to a meal!

For a female detective, what could be more delightful than being treated to a meal by someone else?

Naturally, the meal being treated is a feast.

The previous feast at 'Glowing Cuisine Pavilion' had already made her happy for a long time.

Where will it be today?

The female detective wondered, humming a cheerful tune uncontrollably.

For a female detective who had aspired to be a barista since she was young, she didn't dislike eating; in fact, in some regards, she had a great fondness for it.

A person who doesn't love food can't make delicious dishes.

"Cherry, your original-flavor Pudding!"

"This one is a complimentary caramel Pudding!"

The female detective smiled as she handed over the two Puddings in a bag to Cherry.

"Thank you, big sister Hui Lijing."

Cherry cheered joyfully.

Children, aren't they just like this?

They can cheer for a tasty treat.

They can also get upset over a toy.

Everything's so innocent.

Especially when paired with Cherry's smile, it adds a pure and sincere cuteness to that innocence.

Seeing such a smile, Hui Lijing thought that giving away the caramel Pudding was well worth it.

She hoped to see more of that smile.

After all, the happy times of one's childhood are what support people to keep going in the cold, cruel reality as they grow up and struggle.

"Thank you."

Cherry's grandfather, seeing his granddaughter's happy smile, immediately thanked Hui Lijing.

"It's nothing."

"Seeing Cherry's smile makes me very happy too."

Hui Lijing hurriedly said.

Such a reply made the bald old grandfather smile too.

"If there's anything, you can tell me."

"Most things, I can help you with."

Cherry's grandfather said with a smile.

"Okay, thank you again."

Hui Lijing, standing behind the counter, bowed slightly in appreciation.

Although deep down the female detective didn't believe this old gentleman before her could really be of any help.

But the man had good intentions.

Even if he was boasting a little.

Hui Lijing thought it right not to dispel his boasts.

Hui Lijing spared the old man's feelings, but Cherry sure wouldn't.

"Grandpa is boasting again."

"He even stealthily ate my Pudding yesterday and got caught."

Cherry looked at her grandfather, and the memory of half of the Pudding disappearing by morning made her little face crinkle up instantly.

"Hahaha, that was an accident."

Cherry's grandfather, rubbing his shiny bald head, led Cherry out the door.

"Can accidents happen every day?"

Cherry was clearly skeptical.

"Of course, accidents are everywhere!"

"You need to know that when your grandpa was young, I often destroyed cities... whole cities..."

"Uh-huh, all thanks to you, Grandpa."

"Also, grandpa, you once knocked down a giant alien demon king with a single punch."

Cherry's grandfather hadn't finished his story when Cherry interrupted him.

"Right."

Cherry's grandfather laughed heartily, nodding his head.

But Cherry didn't believe his tales for one bit.

"Braggart!"

"How could a grandpa who sneaks my Pudding be a superhero?"

Cherry pouted as she spoke.

Dingling!

The wind chime rang.

The figures of grandfather and granddaughter disappeared behind the door.

Hui Lijing shook her head with a smile and began to tidy up the counter.

She watches the sparring between the two almost every day and is used to it.

But He Tai was somewhat spellbound.

The wandering Onmyoji, who frequented the 'Inside World' all year round, striving to revive his clan, dealing daily with people who were gloomy, bizarre, or exceptionally violent.

At the slightest provocation, it would lead to a fight.

He hadn't seen such a heartwarming scene in a long, long time.

So long that he had almost forgotten.

Suddenly seeing it now, touched the softest part of his heart.

Family.

That was something he longed for but could not reach.

And precisely because of that, he felt its preciousness even more.

"That's nice."

The wandering Onmyoji silently said to himself.

Then, turning his head, he said softly to Hui Lijing—

"Thank you."

"Huh?"

Hui Lijing was startled.

Then she shook her head.

What a weirdo.

That's what Hui Lijing thought about him.

From the moment he followed her to the White Bear Café that afternoon and then sat silently in a corner, Hui Lijing had considered him to be a strange person.

Of course, Hui Lijing understood why he had come.

And because of this, Hui Lijing didn't drive him away.

After all, he was probably a good person.

He was worried about her safety and that's why he appeared here.

But Hui Lijing really wanted to tell him it wasn't necessary.

She had her own means of self-protection.

Even though she had just come into contact with 'Mystical Side', after Jason's simple teachings, Hui Lijing had quite a bit of confidence.

Fire, electricity.

These were the things she was best at and easiest for her to master at this stage.

Once she had a grasp of these, her safety was assured.

If those things couldn't deal with the 'Mystical Side' monsters?

She had another way.

Or rather...

She trusted Jason!

She believed that Jason would appear when she was in danger!

Just like the previous times.

So, Hui Lijing really wanted the wandering Onmyoji to leave.

However, in the end, the kind-hearted female detective didn't say anything, choosing instead to make a cup of coffee for the wandering Onmyoji.

Without asking if he wanted milk or sugar, she placed the creamer and sugar on the saucer next to the cup, and brought it over, letting the wandering Onmyoji choose for himself.

Chapter 1067: Someone is Targeting Jason's Food (2)

"Thank you."

After a moment of astonishment, the wandering Onmyoji thanked again.

"No need to thank me."

"The cheapest instant coffee."

The female detective said, then got busy again.

The wandering Onmyoji added all the coffee creamer and sugar to his cup, stirred it slightly, and then picked it up.

He doesn't mind the bitterness, but he prefers it sweet.

So, he adds as much sugar as possible.

Leaning in a corner chair, the wandering Onmyoji with his coffee did not forget to watch the outside.

Hmm?

When he saw a figure flash by on the street, the wandering Onmyoji frowned slightly and gently put down the coffee cup.

Ding Ling!

The wandering Onmyoji quickly walked out of the cafe, and just as the figure was about to leave, grabbed the person's collar.

"Let go! Let go!"

"It's me, He Tai!"

"Me! Me!"

The man, not tall but rather bulky, began to struggle after being grabbed by the collar.

The person hurriedly called out the wandering Onmyoji's name and pointed to his own nose, indicating that he was an acquaintance of the wandering Onmyoji.

However, He Tai laughed coldly.

"Of course, I know it's you."

"But it's precisely because it's you that I'm curious. Why are you here?"

"Don't tell me you came here to drink coffee."

While speaking, the wandering Onmyoji tightened his grip.

Instantly, the bulky man was lifted up by the wandering Onmyoji.

The man immediately felt suffocated, his face turning red.

But, the wandering Onmyoji showed no mercy.

Because he knew exactly who this bastard was.

Seijiro, the biggest information dealer nearby, who also dabbled in some illegal businesses.

Whatever happened nearby, he always knew it in detail.

If there were some inexplicable thefts or similar incidents, he was likely involved.

Of course, his illegal business was not limited to these only.

He also dealt in mercenaries, assassins, as long as... the price was right.

In short, he's a bastard without a bottom line.

The appearance of such a bastard nearby immediately caught the wandering Onmyoji's attention.

You should know, he wouldn't show up early without profits.

Appearing nearby, and deliberately flashing past him, the wandering Onmyoji was the first to disbelieve it was without reasons.

Therefore, when the man's suffocation reached its peak, the wandering Onmyoji then let go.

Thud.

Seijiro fell to the ground.

Panting, panting.

It took several seconds for Seijiro to catch his breath.

"You jerk, unless there's a big profit in it, I wouldn't appear in front of you," complained Seijiro.

"Ha, if it weren't for knowing you could provide information, do you think you'd see tomorrow's sun?"

The wandering Onmyoji sneered.

"So, I'm still alive, aren't I?"

"A valuable me, can always keep living."

"Moreover, living quite comfortably."

Seijiro raised his head proudly.

Then, he directly said to the wandering Onmyoji —

"I have some information about you."

"10,000 bucks."

"Want to hear it?"

As Seijiro spoke, he rubbed his right thumb quickly against his middle and index fingers, displaying a greedy expression.

The wandering Onmyoji furrowed his brow.

It's not that Seijiro's price was too high.

Although utterly unprincipled, he still carried on his business because it was 'genuine.'

In simple terms, if he quotes 10,000 bucks.

Then this information is worth 10,000 bucks.

And regarding the information worth 10,000 bucks about him...

Could it be that my identity has been exposed?

Thinking of this, the wandering Onmyoji's heart tightened.

If his identity is exposed, then he must leave immediately.

Otherwise, it could likely bring trouble to those around him.

Whether Master Tongshou Temple or Ms. Hui Lijing, he doesn't want to involve these truly good people.

With these thoughts, he nodded imperceptibly.

"Speak!"

"Hehe, the accident this morning at 'Tongshou Temple' was not an accident, but was manipulated by someone," Seijiro said with a grin.

But such words made the wandering Onmyoji grab his collar again.

Nonsense!

If this morning's scene wasn't manipulated, how could the people from 'Blossom Cherry' appear so coincidentally?

"Are you playing me?"

The wandering Onmyoji said in a deep voice.

"No, no no."

"Don't be hasty, listen to me slowly."

Seeing the wandering Onmyoji's face turn grim, Seijiro instead smiled.

He wasn't intentionally keeping people in suspense.

It was just that he had been too tightly squeezed just now.

This was a time to relax.

If you call it revenge, it's possible.

But, he wouldn't admit to that.

Of course, he knew how to handle the situation. Really anger the man in front of him?

He wouldn't dare.

He still wanted to live.

He was just a businessman making money.

As for anything else?

Making money was enough.

With a smile fading from his face, the information trader began to speak in earnest.

"It's someone from a branch of the Hanakaiin Family who colluded with the Blossom Cherry people."

"They both wanted to test the capabilities of Hanakaiin Haru's helper Jason and to deal with some disobedient people internally."

"So, that's why the scene this morning occurred."

"Of course, this is not the end."

"They are just getting started."

"You also know the Hanakaiin Family's system that inevitably turns each branch's entry into the main family into a fierce battle; this time is no exception."

Hanakaiin Family?

The wandering Onmyoji was stunned.

He hadn't expected it to involve the Hanakaiin Family.

And Jason had even collaborated with Hanakaiin Haru!

He knew of Hanakaiin Haru.

Strong, insightful, and generally a decent person.

Then...

Did Hanakaiin Haru know about Jason's demon lineage?

The wandering Onmyoji wondered.

If he knew, it was fine.

Onmyoji families do not shun such lineage.

Indeed, to some degree, they highly welcome it.

But if he didn't know...

What were Jason's plans?

No wonder Master Tongshou Temple kept Jason at the Tongshou Temple!

Such a guy must be kept under close surveillance!

Must be closely monitored!

While the wandering Onmyoji thought this internally, his mouth was saying.

"That's it?"

"Such information isn't worth 10,000."

"Of course there's more!"

"I also have a name... heh heh."

The information trader said, again rubbing his fingers together.

The wandering Onmyoji frowned.

Eventually, he pulled out a bar of gold from his bosom and tossed it over.

Nobody carries so much cash.

Moreover, in the Inside World, gold is more popular.

Seijiro's eyes lit up as he caught the gold, immediately bit into it to confirm it was real, and then quickly pocketed it.

"Thank you for your patronage."

"That name is—"

"Yamashita!"

Having said that, Seijiro prepared to leave.

Then, after taking a few steps, he suddenly remembered something.

"As an excellent employer, I hope you don't return to Tongshou Temple for now, there are troubles happening there."

This time, Seijiro did not linger any longer and quickly ran off.

And the wandering Onmyoji?

He turned back to the café.

Moments later, Hui Lijing drove crazily towards Tongshou Temple.

Meanwhile, Hanakaiin Haru, after hearing his Attendant's report, had a grim expression on his face.

Without asking, he knew someone was making mischief.

But—

"The reason?"

Hanakaiin Haru asked in a deep voice.

"The reason is... "

"Of course, because someone is better than you!"

The Attendant barely started speaking when he was interrupted by another voice.

Along with this voice, a young man with several people entered Tongshou Temple.

The newcomer's face bore some resemblance to Hanakaiin Haru, but his eyes and brows brimmed with arrogance.

Just as he entered, the newcomer confronted Hanakaiin Haru, each unyielding to the other.

"Hanakaiin Ue, what are you doing here?"

Hanakaiin Haru bluntly asked.

With a cold laugh, Hanakaiin Ue turned his gaze towards Jason, or more precisely, at the gourd on Jason's waist, the young man staring at Jason, slowly articulating: "I've come to reclaim the family heirloom!"

Chapter 1068: The Infighting that Prohibits Infighting

Frivolous, arrogant, and laced with mockery.

Such words are truly detestable.

Hanakaiin Haru was no exception.

As Hanakaiin Ue spoke, the young man's face from the Hanakaiin family turned completely sullen.

"Do you know what you're saying?"

"This is something I gave away."

Hanakaiin Haru said in a deep voice.

"Yes, you did give it away."

"Naturally, it has nothing to do with you anymore."

"Then... what if I go 'retrieve' it? What's wrong with that?"

Hanakaiin Ue prolonged his tone.

Absolute sophistry, but Hanakaiin Ue acted as if it were natural.

Even his expression was full of aggression.

Provocation!

Naked provocation!

Hanakaiin Haru clearly understood why Hanakaiin Ue was doing this.

The other party wanted to enrage him.

Make him strike.

It didn't actually require a real fight; even an indication of intent or a mere gesture would suffice.

Because the Hanakaiin family prohibits 'infighting'!

A family that relies on sub-families to continually compete, striving to reside in the main house, prohibits infighting.

Anyone seeing this for the first time would laugh.

But upon closer examination, the intricacies become apparent.

A red line!

The ancestor who initially established this rule left the entire family with a red line.

Or, one could even say, 'shackles'.

Shackles that prevent everything from going off the rails, losing control.

Perhaps not everyone will adhere to it.

But on the surface, everyone complies.

Hanakaiin Haru and Hanakaiin Ue both abide by this ancestral command.

So, Hanakaiin Haru did not act.

Therefore, Hanakaiin Ue was aggressively provoking.

Verbal provocations do not count as 'infighting'.

This is also one of the rules that later generations have figured out.

Watching Hanakaiin Haru, who stood his ground without moving, Hanakaiin Ue narrowed his eyes with a smirk, his ridicule continuing unabated.

"Want to know who took your place?"

"If I tell you, it would probably shock you."

"But, I won't tell you."

"You can go ask for yourself."

"It's best if you do it in person."

As Hanakaiin Ue spoke, his gaze drifted towards Jason.

The implication was all too clear.

As soon as Hanakaiin Haru left, he would act to seize what he wanted.

"Jason, would you accompany me to the Hanakaiin family's residence?"

"Of course, the rest of you as well."

Hanakaiin Haru turned to ask Jason, Miss Sagaraso, and Master Tongshou Temple, Ryosuke, Urashima.

Miss Sagaraso nodded immediately.

Master Tongshou Temple Monk brought his hands together in prayer without expressing any opinion.

Ryosuke and Urashima exchanged a glance and nodded.

Jason?

His gaze never lingered on the immediate surroundings; instead, he covertly scanned the area.

In the shadows, there were two malicious gazes.

One was faint and elusive.

The other was sharp as a knife, seemingly aiming to carve a piece of flesh from his body.

Surveillant and accomplice?

Jason silently speculated.

The forbearing attitude of Hanakaiin Haru and the relentless provocations from Hanakaiin Ue were enough for Jason to make an educated guess.

There must be a rule in the Hanakaiin family that forbids clan members from fighting each other.

Otherwise, they would have already come to blows.

However, the presence of the surveillant changed everything.

Why would a surveillant appear here?

Or rather, how could the surveillant know that a fight resembling infighting could very likely break out here?

Foreknowledge?

Impossible.

Even among Onmyoji families, such precision doesn't exist.

It can only be... a setup.

Someone had laid a trap in advance, waiting for Hanakaiin Haru to fall into it.

And, to be on the safe side, an accomplice appeared.

This was an accomplice capable of compelling Hanakaiin Haru to 'act.'

Once Hanakaiin Haru made a move,

The surveillant would inevitably intervene.

And then?

Everything goes without saying.

Hanakaiin Haru would not only lose his eligibility to head the main house

But could even end up a prisoner at the steps of the throne.

Realizing this, Jason also gave Hanakaiin Haru a nod.

But his gaze continued to sweep over Hanakaiin Ue and the concealed dark corners.

He was waiting.

He believed the other party would not so easily give up.

And in fact, things turned out to be even better than Jason had expected—

"Alright, please follow me, everyone."

Hanakaiin Haru said, turning to invite everyone to leave.

"Heh heh, Hanakaiin Haru, are you colluding with outsiders to force a palace coup in the family?"

"With none other than the famous Master Tongshou Temple!"

Hanakaiin Ue sneered.

Hanakaiin Haru abruptly turned around, glaring fiercely at Hanakaiin Ue.

Hanakaiin Haru was certain that Hanakaiin Ue had backers!

Given Hanakaiin Ue's usual behavior, it was utterly impossible for him to say such murderous and heart-stabbing words.

Who is it?

Hanakaiin Tōru?

Hanakaiin Itsuki?

Hanakaiin Ra?

Hanakaiin Haru pondered.

With each name he considered, Hanakaiin Haru silently shook his head.

He knew his sub-family brothers well.

None of them fit the current behavior of Hanakaiin Ue.

From seizing the initiative to targeting weaknesses and then muddying the waters, these aren't tactics his 'brothers' could come up with.

Could it be...

An outsider?!

Damn!

How could I have not realized!

When I was targeted for assassination, I should have thought of it.

And I even thought it was a 'daring try' from some guy!

I've been duped!

Hanakaiin Haru had a sudden epiphany.

The opponent's scheme against him had already begun, and it was a chain of connected plots.

Starting with the rocket attack at the 'Luminous Diner'.

Initially, he thought it was a risk taken in disregard of the ancestral teachings, even with a sense of desperation.

Chapter 1069: The Infighting that Prohibits Infighting (2)

This was to numb him, to make him secretly believe he still held the upper hand.

It was also to mislead him, leading him to focus on family internal strife and seeking allies.

Then, once he found his allies, targeted incidents began to emerge.

Hanakaiin Haru could guarantee that regardless of whether Jason was found or not, today's scene would still unfold.

And it would be even more unrestrained.

After all, 'Master Tongshou Temple' has considerable renown in the 'Inside World'.

Had it been someone else?

By this time, they would already be wavering.

You see, it was the Hanakaiin Family!

Well aware of his own family's prestige, Hanakaiin Haru now felt a touch of relief.

He was thankful that his chosen collaborator was Jason.

Seeing the expressionless Jason, Hanakaiin Haru sighed in relief once again.

As long as Jason remained unwavering, he still had means to turn the tide at this moment.

"Slander me?"

"You think..."

Hanakaiin Haru began to speak.

He didn't just want to refute Hanakaiin Itsuki; he wanted to bite back at him.

However, just as he opened his mouth, Hanakaiin Haru stopped.

Because Jason was striding directly towards Hanakaiin Itsuki.

What was Jason up to?

Hanakaiin Haru was stunned.

Master Tongshou Temple Monk, Miss Sagaraso, Ryosuke, and Urashima were all stunned as well.

They were all guessing what Jason was about to do.

Hanakaiin Itsuki, on the other hand, was smirking.

"What? You want to discard the gift Hanakaiin Haru gave you?"

"Let me tell you, even if you give up, you will still be punished!"

Hanakaiin Itsuki, heeding his instructions, exerted an air of superiority to its fullest.

He wanted to enrage Hanakaiin Haru.

As for Jason?

He was an even better choice.

If Jason were enraged and attacked him, all he needed was to capture Jason and, in front of Hanakaiin Haru, humiliate him.

Then, Hanakaiin Haru would surely intervene.

Moreover, Jason was so cooperative in approaching.

It couldn't be any better!

Thinking this, Hanakaiin Itsuki began to utter his most humiliating words.

"Want me to let you go?"

"Fine."

"Come, kneel—"

Bang!

Hanakaiin Itsuki's words were not yet complete when they were interrupted by Jason's fist.

This punch landed heavily on Hanakaiin Itsuki's face.

The self-satisfied Hanakaiin Itsuki had no time to react.

It wasn't until the pain set in that Hanakaiin Itsuki realized what had happened.

I've been hit?!

It hurts!

Then, everything went black.

Thump!

Hanakaiin Itsuki fell to the ground and passed out.

Meanwhile—

"Kill!"

A low roar, the 'ally' who had been hiding in the shadows for a long time made their move.

The person, like an arrow released from a bow yet completely silent, appeared behind Jason, and with the dagger in hand, aimed for Jason's back.

Swish!

Following the sound of the dagger cutting through the air—

Clang!

A clash of metal.

Sparks flying everywhere.

Then, brilliant light.

"Ah!"

The 'ally' let out a frantic cry.

The voice stopped abruptly.

Accompanied by the sound of flesh being sliced.

Master Tongshou Temple Monk swiftly covered Miss Sagaraso's eyes with his hands and retreated backward with her.

Ryosuke, reacting a bit slower, grabbed Urashima and blocked Miss Sagaraso's view with their bodies as soon as he realized what was happening.

Some scenes were indeed not suitable for Miss Sagaraso to witness.

But Hanakaiin Haru saw it.

Even the groggily awakened Hanakaiin Itsuki saw it.

The blade dripping with blood.

A head dripping with blood.

Jason, with a calm expression, holding a knife in one hand and the 'ally's' head in the other.

Under the evening's fading glow, Jason's entire figure was stained red, but the shadows' darkness became even more profound, making Jason's presence flicker ominously and ominously intense.

Especially when Jason lifted his head, revealing those utterly unfluctuating eyes.

Cold, merciless.

Filling the field of view.

A sensation of being preyed upon by a superior predator arose.

Instantly, the ominous intensity turned to terror.

"Aaaaaaah!"

Just awakened, Hanakaiin Itsuki was startled.

The once arrogant young man scrambled and ran backwards.

Jason did not pursue.

He casually tossed aside the head, his gaze shifting towards Hanakaiin Haru.

"Let's go, it's time to eat."

Jason said in such a manner.

"Okay."

Hanakaiin Haru nodded dumbly.

Up to this moment, this young man from the Hanakaiin Family hadn't grasped what had happened.

Everything occurred too swiftly.

From Jason's intervention to the slaying of the 'assistant,' it all happened in the blink of an eye.

Everyone felt as though they were trapped in a dream.

That's why nobody noticed Jason's imperceptible glance.

The watcher has left!

The moment he killed the 'assistant,' the watcher had departed.

It's clear that the other party was wary of 'Tongshou Temple.'

The Hanakaiin Family is one of the four major Onmyoji clans.

Tongshou Temple also has a long and storied heritage.

The reputation established by successive generations of Masters of Tongshou Temple isn't unwarranted.

Especially given the scarcity of the Tongshou Temple's members.

Though 'scarcity' often carries a negative connotation, that's not the case before a battle where all is laid aside.

Because with fewer concerns, there are fewer restraints.

If one chooses to act, they simply do so.

But it's different for the Hanakaiin Family.

Despite having the main house in place, there are numerous branch families as well.

With the multitude of constraints, one would definitely hesitate before taking action.

They might even fail to come to an agreement at all.

Therefore, Jason wasn't at all worried about the Hanakaiin Family's stance.

They might be unfriendly, but they definitely wouldn't make a move so quickly.

They would likely wait until—

'The King of Fighters - The KOF Tournament'!

That is also what Jason was focused on.

He didn't know whether his recent performance could be 'perfectly' conveyed.

A body hard and powerful.

But slow to react.

Exemplary in weapon use, but weaker in hand-to-hand combat.

These were the pieces of information he wanted others to know, and they had to be conveyed correctly!

Jason thought to himself quietly.

...

Clack, clack!

Amidst the crisp sound of Go pieces being placed, a smile gradually formed on Hanakaiin Tōru's face.

Hanakaiin Ra, on the other hand, wore a look of resignation.

"Tōru bro, you're too strong, aren't you?"

"Even though you gave me a three-piece handicap, why did I still lose?"

Hanakaiin Ra complained.

"You're too impatient."

"Under such favorable conditions, you still pressed step by step."

"That's how I seized the opportunity to kill the big dragon."

Hanakaiin Tōru said with a smile.

"But when the situation is already so favorable, shouldn't I push harder?"

Hanakaiin Ra furrowed his brow, his face filled with confusion.

"Are you asking me about how to play Go?"

"Or are you talking about Hanakaiin Ue and Hanakaiin Itsuki?"

Hanakaiin Tōru asked back with a smile.

"Both, both."

Hanakaiin Ra said with an embarrassed smile.

"Them... they are too impatient."

"Just like you."

"Outsiders are, after all, outsiders."

Hanakaiin Tōru spoke with an implied meaning.

"I understand, Tōru bro."

Hanakaiin Ra nodded his head, then he sorted the black and white Go stones and put them into their respective bowls, before continuing, "Shall we have another game?"

However, Hanakaiin Tōru waved his hand dismissively.

"No more games."

"Your mind is disturbed."

"Continuing to play would also end in a loss."

Hanakaiin Tōru sighed listlessly.

"Tōru bro, you're looking for an opponent of equal strength, huh?"

"What do you think about that new guy? His debut was astonishing, instantly taking Haru's place."

Hanakaiin Ra didn't insist, but instead sat cross-legged in front of Hanakaiin Tōru, eagerly inquiring about that 'newly risen guy.'

"Do you believe in coincidences?"

Hanakaiin Tōru asked in return.

"No."

Hanakaiin Ra shook his head.

"So, what do you think about a guy who appears so coincidentally?"

Hanakaiin Tōru asked again.

"It's..."

Hanakaiin Ra instinctively wanted to say something, but was stopped by a gesture from Hanakaiin Tōru.

Hanakaiin Ra's pupils contracted.

Instantly, he realized something.

Right away, this young member of the Hanakaiin Family stood up to take his leave.

As soon as he left the courtyard and made sure no one was around, the young man immediately made a phone call—

"Hello, Yamashita."

Chapter 1070: The Separate Courtyard. The Beginning

"Good evening, Young Master Ra."

A voice of utmost respect came through the receiver.

How respectful?

Just by hearing it, one could envision a bow straightening from a deep incline in one's mind.

"Thank you for everything you've done for me. As per our agreement, I will allow you to look at the 'Ding Chou Secret Scroll'."

"I'm at the villa right now."

"You may come directly."

Hanakaiin Ra was rather casual, talking while walking.

"I am extremely grateful."

"I will come immediately."

Yamashita replied.

"Good."

"I'll wait for you."

Having said that, Hanakaiin Ra hung up the phone.

Then, Hanakaiin Ra crushed the phone, which felt as solid as a brick, with one grasp.

After shaking the phone's parts and fragments to the ground, Hanakaiin Ra gently stomped his foot, and immediately, the solid earth beneath his feet surged up and devoured all the pieces.

In a breath's time, everything was as it was before, without a single sign of the scattered fragments.

After all was done, Hanakaiin Ra turned to look at the small courtyard behind him.

He knew such fluctuations from Onmyōdō couldn't escape Hanakaiin Tōru's notice.

Or rather, he had no intention of hiding it in the first place.

Among the five members involved in this division of the family, Hanakaiin Tōru was the most powerful, but also the least dangerous.

Because Hanakaiin Tōru had no intention of becoming the family head.

A month ago, Hanakaiin Tōru had once again made this clear to the main family.

Not just lip service.

But truly in writing.

It was because of this that he was tempted.

If Hanakaiin Tōru were to participate in this test to become the family head, Hanakaiin Ra would undoubtedly have thrown himself into Hanakaiin Tōru's camp without hesitation, ready to charge into battle.

But Hanakaiin Tōru had given up.

This ignited new thoughts in Hanakaiin Ra.

"Tōru bro, why did you give it up?"

"Can't even the position of the family head move your heart?"

Hanakaiin Ra murmured to himself.

From a young age, he had witnessed Hanakaiin Tōru's Talent.

Genius?

Traits like that would be an insult, in Hanakaiin Ra's opinion, to describe Hanakaiin Tōru.

The Talent of Hanakaiin Tōru was truly incomparable, unmatched in both past and future!

Any Onmyōdō technique, only needed to be seen once, and he could master it.

Any Shikigami, just by standing there, would swarm towards him.

Even the current Family Head had once stated that Hanakaiin Tōru was only limited by youth and lack of training and that with the passage of time, he would certainly stand above everyone else.

Even possibly reaching towards the legendary Tsuchimikado ancestor.

Therefore, everyone believed Hanakaiin Tōru would be the next Family Head of the Hanakaiin Family.

Unexpectedly, as he aged, Hanakaiin Tōru began expressing that he didn't want to become the Family Head.

And he did this not just once, but repeatedly in public.

In the end, he even put it in writing.

The former could still be taken as a joke.

The latter?

That needed to be taken seriously.

After confirmation over and over, the Hanakaiin Family restarted the test to become the main family head a month ago.

And this sparked ambition within the younger generation of the Hanakaiin Family.

Rumors and whispers.

Secrets and plots.

Traps and temptations.

All of these constantly emerged, and though there was an ancestral decree against fighting within the family, it merely maintained superficial appearances.

But in reality?

Bleeding was happening all the time.

Hanakaiin Haru, Hanakaiin Ue, Hanakaiin Itsuki, aside from Hanakaiin Tōru, including himself, nobody was exempt.

The recent attack on Hanakaiin Haru's convoy was a trap set by Hanakaiin Itsuki.

Regrettably, it was unsuccessful.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have contacted Yamashita.

But now...

Thinking of Hanakaiin Tōru's warning, Hanakaiin Ra's eyes flickered with a Cold light.

Outsiders will always be outsiders.

He understood the meaning of that phrase.

As for the aftermath?

Though Blossom Cherry was strong, in the Silver District, it couldn't dominate everything.

At best, it was a first-class power, not top-tier.

To handle the aftermath, he had plenty of ways to do so.

Thinking this, Hanakaiin Ra subconsciously wanted to return to the small courtyard.

He was still planning to continue the chess game with Hanakaiin Tōru.

But then, he immediately remembered the words of Hanakaiin Tōru.

Hanakaiin Ra paused in his steps.

He'd better deal with things first.

After dealing with them, he could return.

With this thought, Hanakaiin Ra turned and left.

His figure quickly vanished at the end of the narrow path.

...

Click.

The receiver was placed back on the phone cradle.

Yamashita was far from impatient as he had seemed on the phone.

He sat on the sofa, lighting a cigarette.

A large-framed, stern-faced middle-aged man, Yamashita sat there, his black suit jacket unbuttoned, revealing a white dress shirt with no tie and the top two buttons undone, exposing the scars hidden beneath the clothing.

Exhale!

Yamashita let out a heavy puff of smoke.

With the smoke swirling around, his brows furrowed deeply.

Things were going too smoothly!

So smoothly that it made him uneasy at heart.

"Could it be that they've discovered what I've done?"

Yamashita tapped softly on the armrest of the sofa, his brows becoming even tighter.

He knew fully well that if Hanakaiin Ra found out about his actions, he would face dire consequences.

A fate worse than death!

An outcome with nowhere to be buried was all that Yamashita could think of.

This made Yamashita very nervous.

Who isn't afraid of death?

Yamashita openly admitted his fear of death.

Otherwise, upon learning about the Inside World, he wouldn't have joined the Blossom Cherry group without hesitation.

Those Bizarre beings were not to be dealt with by conventional Strength.