

Menu 1071

Chapter 1071: The Other Courtyard. The Beginning (2)

So, he joined 'Blossom Cherry' to gain Strength.

It was the same with cooperating with Hanakaiin Ra.

What he was after was the 'Secret Scroll'.

This was a scroll that recorded various Yin Yang arts.

Although there were no overly profound or unique Yin Yang arts, just some ordinary, basic ones, for him, it was still a significant temptation.

After all, in 'Blossom Cherry', obtaining similar knowledge was extremely difficult.

'Blossom Cherry' offered knowledge and Strength.

But only the first time was free.

Afterward, if you wanted to learn and obtain more, you had to continuously establish merits and accumulate them to a certain level.

And with his method, accumulating merits?

That was simply impossible.

The merits from charging into battle were the highest.

Therefore, joining the action group was the fastest way to acquire merits.

But the action group's mortality rate made him hesitate.

He believed he had a better way.

In fact, there was.

He chose what suited him better.

Cooperating with certain forces from 'Inside World'.

Either in exchange for intelligence or to handle certain matters.

More importantly, this was one of the very reasons 'Blossom Cherry' existed.

He wasn't breaking any rules.

At most... he was just taking a little advantage.

And now?

Yamashita planned to keep doing this.

Thinking of this, Yamashita picked up the phone.

"Hello, Onodera, come to my office."

After finishing the sentence, without giving Onodera a chance to refuse, Yamashita hung up the phone.

He knew well what kind of person Onodera was.

Not just fearing death and loving life, but also a person who bullied the weak and feared the strong.

Such a person, he kept him around for times like these, didn't he?

To take the blame for him.

To take risks for him.

Even if something goes wrong, given the other person's character, no one would speak up.

Truly, there couldn't be a better candidate.

Knock, knock knock!

"Come in."

Onodera entered the room with a humble smile, pushing the door open.

"What can I do for you, Chief Yamashita?"

Onodera asked softly.

And deep down, Onodera had already cursed Yamashita thoroughly.

That phone call with no chance for questioning, he had received too many times.

Each time, there were never good outcomes.

This time?

He believed it would be no exception.

Indeed, immediately, Onodera's face fell.

"I need you to make a trip to the Hanakaiin Family's separate residence."

"Don't ask why; there's something there you need to bring back."

"And don't look at what's inside."

"Go now."

Yamashita, still giving Onodera no room to question, dismissed him with a wave of his hand.

Click!

Once Onodera left, Yamashita immediately locked the door behind him.

Then, he strode toward the office's adjacent closet.

He pulled open the door of the closet and stepped inside.

It was a secret door.

On one side of the secret door was Yamashita's office.

On the other side was a hidden chamber.

Inside the chamber, there were plenty of weapons, gold, and more so, disguises, wigs, and so on.

After proficiently disguising himself, Yamashita had transformed from a tall middle-aged man into a stooped, white-haired old man.

He turned and headed toward the 'exit' of the secret chamber.

A 'window' that, from the outside, appeared to blend seamlessly with the surrounding wall.

He pushed open the window.

And then...

Yamashita jumped out.

The height of six floors did not cause any harm to Yamashita.

He landed as lightly as a feather.

Utilizing the darkness, he quickly disappeared toward the Hanakaiin Family's separate residence.

Of course, he wasn't following Onodera.

He was quite confident in his handling of Onodera.

Even if unwilling, Onodera would do it.

There certainly would be some trickery involved.

But all within an acceptable range.

He was going to meet another collaborator.

Hanakaiin Itsuki!

Or rather...

This was his true collaborator.

...

"A detached residence?"

Miss Sagaraso was somewhat slow to react after hearing Hanakaiin Haru's destination.

"The Hanakaiin is a large family."

"Not only on the island, but they also have quite a lot of properties overseas."

"Therefore, there are detached residences in each place."

"After all, compared to hotels, a detached residence is much more convenient."

"However, there are fewer of them overseas compared to on the island."

Hanakaiin Haru explained.

"The island? Overseas?"

Miss Sagaraso was stunned.

Her brain cells were having trouble grasping just how extensive the properties Hanakaiin Haru mentioned were.

But they must be huge.

The kind that sounds impressive just by listening.

If that's the case...

"Are the chefs at the detached residence very skillful?"

Miss Sagaraso's focus was still on food.

Jason, sitting on the side, also sat up straight.

He was very interested in this question as well.

"They are more skillful than most chefs."

"But compared to true top chefs, there's still a gap."

"We've tried to recruit those top chefs, but... it's too difficult."

"Like Master Jūrō, for example."

Hanakaiin Haru said with a wry smile.

"Jūrō?"

Miss Sagaraso was unfamiliar with the name.

"He's the owner of 'Glowing Culinary Pavilion', and a true top chef—in our family records, there was a chef among Master Jūrs ancestors who could make demons retreat with just his 'cooking'."

"Although the records are not very detailed, that 'cooking' flavor... must be really good."

Slurp.

Gulp.

As she listened to Hanakaiin Haru's introduction, Miss Sagaraso had already begun to salivate. It was only when drool started to trickle over her lips that this carefree girl suddenly inhaled sharply, sucking the saliva back in.

However, the sound of swallowing was not from Miss Sagaraso.

It was Jason.

The 'Soul Summoning Gourd' at his waist had been continuously emitting the scent of 'food'.

For Jason, this was an ordeal in itself.

Now, hearing what Hanakaiin Haru had to say, the feeling of torment immediately doubled.

Even Jason felt unbearably uncomfortable.

"Are we close to the detached residence?"

Jason asked.

"Almost there."

Hanakaiin Haru replied.

Seeing the impatient look of the two collaborators, Hanakaiin Haru couldn't help but show a smile on his face.

Why did he decide to host a banquet at the detached residence to invite Jason and Miss Sagaraso?

Wasn't it to show respect?

The expressions of the two responded to his respect.

That made Hanakaiin Haru satisfied.

Although their focus may be somewhat off.

But what does that matter?

As long as they eat well, that is enough.

Although both of them had a strong appetite, with the financial power of the Hanakaiin Family, Hanakaiin Haru had no worries at all.

He believed he could satisfy their appetites.

The car continued to drive.

About ten minutes later, it turned into a quiet alley.

Twenty meters into the alley, the surroundings changed completely.

The once-backward city in Jason's view now became a quiet courtyard.

Stone-paved ground with scattered pebbles.

Lush arhat pine trees, beautifully spread out.

Black tiles, cleverly jointed to create pieces, white walls, spotless.

It had the charm of ancient architecture from Jason's hometown.

But it wasn't quite the same.

In certain areas, it always lacked some essence.

"Here we are."

As Hanakaiin Haru said this, the car stopped. The young man was the first to push open the car door, inviting Jason and company with the demeanor of a host, and began to introduce them.

"This detached residence has been here for a hundred years."

"So, it maintains some measures."

"The 'Barrier' created by Yin-Yang arts outside will make those who are uninvited leave on their own."

"Don't worry, Miss Hui Lijing and Mr. He Tai, I will have my servants take special care of you."

Hanakaiin Haru said, leading Jason and company toward the inside of the courtyard.

The main gate of the courtyard was a pair of wooden double doors without door studs but assembled from thick square timbers, each door being two meters wide. When the two were put together, it looked like the gate of a small city.

Moreover, even though it had been beautified, Jason could still see marks of axe chops on it.

Clearly, the true purpose of this gate far surpassed what most people could imagine.

"In the chaotic times of the past, defensive measures were a necessity."

"However, now they're needless."

"The world is now in a state of peace."

Hanakaiin Haru confidently declared.

Then—

Boom!

Chapter 1072: Various Parties in the Separate Courtyard

A massive explosion erupted behind Hanakaiin Haru just before he finished speaking, the powerful blast sweeping the surrounding area and causing everyone's clothes to rustle loudly.

Hanakaiin Haru's complexion instantly turned extremely unsightly.

The young man of the Hanakaiin Family felt his face burning with pain.

He gestured with a wave of his hand.

Immediately, several guards hidden in the shadows of the Hanakaiin Family rushed towards the site of the explosion.

Jason, on the other hand, looked back with keen interest.

Ryosuke blinked as he too turned to look behind.

He saw acquaintances.

It was Hui Lijing and He Tai.

He Tai was also holding Onodera in his hands.

Hui Lijing and He Tai seemed to be unharmed, but the bloodied Onodera they were holding was a different story.

What had happened?

Everyone asked in their minds.

...

Onodera tried to keep his composure as he drove the car out of the office building's parking lot.

After turning out of the block, he parked the car in a corner and rolled up the window.

Then—

"Aaaahhhh!"

Onodera yelled from inside the car.

His voice was so loud that it became hoarse.

It was as if he was venting all the anger in his heart.

After four or five seconds, Onodera finally stopped.

Panting, panting.

He was gasping for air, his arms resting on the steering wheel, his forehead pressed against his arms.

His eyes could clearly feel the muscles in his arms as they tensed up with the effort of his hands, filling Onodera's vision with a sense of pressure.

But how could such physical pressure compare to the emotional pressure he was feeling at the moment?

The attack on Ryosuke by 'Hannya' had happened just this morning.

And in the evening, he was sent to the Hanakaiin Family's branch residence.

Everything was as he had guessed.

His superior must have been in cahoots with one of the Hanakaiin's factional heirs.

He had prepared for the countermeasures.

But what he hadn't expected was that things would happen so fast.

Before his arrangements could take effect, he had to risk his life and head to the Hanakaiin Family's branch residence.

That's right!

It was a matter of life and death!

Although Onodera didn't know the specifics.

Just the order from Yamashita to go to the Hanakaiin residence was enough for him to make an educated guess.

Why didn't Yamashita go himself?

The other party was a collaborator; it would be more appropriate for them to go.

The answer was obvious—danger!

Uncertain danger!

Potentially lethal danger!

Yamashita was afraid.

So he, the one habitually scapegoated, was pushed forward.

After all, if he died, given his usual performance, no one would speak up for him.

He was all too ideal of a candidate!

"Damn it! Damn it!"

Onodera muttered under his breath.

The fists that were already clenched tightened even more.

Anger blazed like a wildfire, roaring fiercely.

Yet, Onodera forced himself to calm down.

Because he wanted to survive.

Anger at this time was pointless.

What to do?

What to do?

Onodera asked himself.

He thought about who might be able to help him now.

Enemies included.

For Onodera at this moment, anyone who could help him was no longer an enemy.

Firstly, he ruled out Jason and his group.

Not just because he had already schemed against Jason's group.

More importantly, the pressure Jason put on him was simply too great.

That inexplicable pressure gave him a feeling more terrifying than death itself.

Thus, setting aside Jason, Hanakaiin Haru was naturally excluded as well.

Onodera had seen Hanakaiin Haru's dossier and knew very well what kind of person he was.

If he chose to surrender now, Hanakaiin Haru would definitely hand him over to Jason.

Thus, Hanakaiin Haru was also a PASS.

When these two options were discarded, there weren't many left.

Hanakaiin Ue, Hanakaiin Itsuki, Hanakaiin Ra, and Hanakaiin Tōru.

These were the individuals related to this incident, who had considerable say, or were decisive figures.

Of these, Hanakaiin Tōru was naturally the best choice.

But the latter had already stated more than once that he would not participate in the trials of 'succeeding the main house.'

Moreover, Onodera did not believe he could persuade this well-known genius.

So that left only Hanakaiin Ue, Hanakaiin Itsuki, and Hanakaiin Ra.

And Yamashita's collaborator was among these three.

Hanakaiin Ue was immediately ruled out.

He knew of the other's reputation for arrogance and conceit.

He wouldn't give anyone but the Onmyoji a second glance; going to him would just be wasted effort.

That only left Hanakaiin Itsuki and Hanakaiin Ra.

Which one did Yamashita choose?

I just need to choose another...

Wait a minute!

The pondering Onodera suddenly sat up straight.

He understood a person like Yamashita.

Seemingly calm, actually impulsive, quick to anger.

And a greedy coward.

Such a person, when facing the Hanakaiin Family's trial of 'succeeding the main house,' how could he maximize his interests?

Naturally, it's through investing in and cooperating with multiple people!

That is to say, both Hanakaiin Itsuki and Hanakaiin Ra could be Yamashita's collaborators.

Moreover!

Both might be unaware of each other's collaboration with Yamashita.

Which means...

My chance has arrived!

Are any of the Hanakaiin branch heirs easy to provoke?

Not just in terms of power, but also the domineering nature of their personalities.

Their mutual obstinance has created an opportunity for me!

As long as I use this incident as a 'bargaining chip,' I might be able to survive!

With this thought, Onodera's mouth curled into a smile.

He had found a lifeline.

The previous restlessness and sense of oppression in his heart had slightly diminished, and without even realizing it, Onodera took out a cigarette.

Chapter 1073: Various Parties in the Separate Courtyard (2)

He needed to make his final preparations.

After going over the entire matter in his mind, Onodera set off.

Meanwhile, as Onodera was departing, Yamashita had already secretly met with another collaborator: Hanakaiin Itsuki.

This was a youth who bore a resemblance to Hanakaiin Haru, albeit with a darker aura in his eyes.

Dressed in casual attire, donning a peaked cap, most of his face was concealed, and except for Yamashita sitting opposite him, no one else around could see his visage.

The individual sitting there maintained a casual demeanor, but Yamashita was extremely respectful.

Yamashita was fully aware of the other party's tactics.

He dared not be the slightest bit careless.

Unlike Hanakaiin Ra's 'simplicity'.

Before him, Hanakaiin Itsuki was a person who truly did not blink an eye when taking a life.

For this reason, he candidly disclosed his cooperation with Hanakaiin Ra.

And it was because of this candidness that he gained an opportunity to collaborate with the individual before him.

"Hello, here's your double sugar and pearl red bean milk tea."

A young server placed the milkshake in front of Hanakaiin Itsuki.

In an instant, the brooding youth's expression softened.

The young man leisurely picked up the milk tea, stirred it gently, and took a sip.

The corners of his mouth turned upward slightly.

Then, the youth sipped the milk tea bit by bit until it was all gone.

Not leaving a single tapioca ball or red bean, he then lifted his head to look at Yamashita.

"Ra is planning to kill you."

Hanakaiin Itsuki stated bluntly.

Yamashita was startled.

Had he been discovered after all?

"No, no, no."

"You haven't been discovered."

"It's just that Ra must have taken advice from Tōru—that old-fashioned guy... tsch."

When mentioning Hanakaiin Tōru, Hanakaiin Itsuki frowned briefly, then let out a sound of disdain.

"Please save me!"

Without any hesitation, Yamashita began to plead for help.

To outsiders, the rank of Section Zero Chief might seem significant, but to the Hanakaiin Family, it truly meant nothing.

The identity of 'Blossom Cherry'?

It was the same.

Thus, Yamashita was well aware of what his fate would be once Hanakaiin Ra harbored the intent to kill him.

Even if Onodera was to act as the sacrificial lamb at the moment, it would be the same.

Ultimately, he would be dug out.

And then, he would be eliminated.

Fearing for his life, Yamashita was trembling at this moment.

Seeing Yamashita's appearance, Hanakaiin Itsuki laughed.

"Don't worry."

"Things haven't gotten that bad yet."

"Would you like some milk tea?"

Hanakaiin Itsuki asked, and immediately ordered another milk tea with extra toppings for himself.

While waiting for the milk tea to be served, Hanakaiin Itsuki continued.

"Ra isn't going to act personally, he'll send someone to kill your subordinates, but over the phone, you said you went in person, so..."

Hanakaiin Itsuki's voice trailed.

Yamashita's eyes lit up.

"Killing to silence?!"

Yamashita blurted out.

And then, with quick thinking, the Section Zero Chief began to flesh out the plan.

"Eliminate Onodera! Take out everyone who came into contact with Onodera!"

"Stage it as a mutual destruction scene!"

"An explosion would be ideal!"

"I'll be able to get away cleanly!"

Yamashita muttered to himself.

But almost immediately, the Section Zero officer thought of something and looked up at Hanakaiin Itsuki.

"But by doing so, I'll lose my value to you."

"Would you help a pawn that's lost its value?"

Yamashita asked in return, his eyes becoming vigilant.

"No, no, no!"

"How could you be of no value?"

"Firstly, you helped me take out Ra's men—that's a task he would only assign to someone he trusts deeply. For Ra, the loss of someone like that would be painful for a long time."

"Secondly, you can continue to serve me, becoming a concealed card in my hand, potentially surprising others at any moment."

"It's a win-win situation; how can you think you're useless?"

Hanakaiin Itsuki shook his head, speaking rapidly.

Meanwhile, the youth's fingers gently tapped on the table.

Thud!

Thud, thud!

The crisp and forceful sound made Hanakaiin Itsuki's words even more convincing.

The previously on-guard Yamashita instantly relaxed.

Not just relaxed, but also convinced.

Indeed!

I still have value!

As long as I have value, I won't be abandoned.

At this moment, the shop attendant came over again with the milk tea.

"Your milk tea, sir."

The attendant set down the teacup.

With a smile, Hanakaiin Itsuki picked up the milk tea, stirring while reminding: "Someone's coming, seize the opportunity."

"Understood!"

With those words, Yamashita hurriedly walked outside.

In fact, he had already seen Onodera's car.

The location was not far from the Hanakaiin's detached court.

The beverage shop they were in even had a clear view of the entrance to the court.

Watching Yamashita's departing figure, Hanakaiin Itsuki sneered.

"A foolish and greedy fellow."

"Except for being a stepping-stone, really of no use at all."

Muttering softly, Hanakaiin Itsuki once again savored the milk tea in his cup.

"So sweet."

"Delicious."

He praised in a low voice.

...

Onodera arrived at the agreed-upon location by car, but he didn't immediately get out. Instead, he picked up a box from under the seat.

The box was only the size of a fist, and inside was a piece of jade the size of a fingernail.

Every person who joined 'Blossom Cherry' had one opportunity to receive knowledge or an item for free.

Onodera chose an item.

A shield that can form in critical moments for protection.

This shield could last for 5 seconds, even against the blast from a high-explosive grenade.

All along, Onodera had been reluctant to use it.

Of course, this was known only to himself.

Outwardly, this 'Amulet' was supposedly used up in a previous mission.

Now, he carefully hung the 'Amulet' around his neck.

Then, he checked his sidearm.

Although Onodera thought this was needless, who knows what might happen?

He always liked to be fully prepared.

"Hope everything goes smoothly!"

As he got out of the car, Onodera patted his cheeks to put himself in the best condition.

As for the person Yamashita asked him to meet?

Onodera saw him.

Just inside the alleyway mouth, slightly set back.

Standing in the darkness, dressed in black, holding a box in his hand.

Simply getting closer would attract Onodera's attention to such a person.

"Hello, I am Onodera, representing Commander Yamashita. I have a matter and hope to meet with Young Master Hanakaiin Ra or Young Master Hanakaiin Itsuki. You must be one of their underlings. Please convey my message; the situation is urgent."

As soon as he approached the other person, Onodera said hastily.

To avoid being silenced directly, Onodera tried to make himself appear anxious and sincere.

Of course, there was a hidden message in his words.

He had said, 'I hope to meet Young Master Hanakaiin Ra or Young Master Hanakaiin Itsuki'!

He believed the person before him would understand.

Otherwise, he wouldn't be one of their confidants.

In fact, the other party understood.

After a slight hesitation, he said.

"Wait a moment."

Saying this, the other party took out an origami crane.

This was a form of onmyoji magic, used for long-distance communication.

The origami crane took flight and quickly disappeared from sight.

Onodera watched the direction in which the origami crane vanished, envy flashing in his eyes.

He also wished to possess such power.

Unfortunately, he had chosen life-saving equipment for his first choice.

Afterwards?

Most of the credit was taken by Yamashita.

Detestable Yamashita!

Thinking of this, Onodera couldn't help but curse in his heart.

And just at that moment—

Thud, thud thud!

Amidst the dragging footsteps, an elderly man appeared from far to near.

Onodera glanced over, then looked away.

It was normal for someone to approach in the street.

However, the person across from Onodera was taken aback.

With the existence of a 'Barrier', apart from being 'permitted', no ordinary person would approach this place.

While Hanakaiin Ra's subordinate was still thinking, Onodera had already noticed the other's surprise.

Then, Onodera thought of the internal data describing the Hanakaiin Family's detached court.

Suddenly, Onodera turned and fled.

And just as Onodera turned to run, several grenades were thrown from the hands of that elderly man, landing at the mouth of the alley.

Then—

Boom!

Chapter 1074: The Separate Courtyard. A Path to Life!

Hui Lijing was driving, with He Tai sitting in the passenger seat.

"The Hanakaiin Family's trial to take over the main family's position is quite cruel?"

The female detective asked.

"Cruel?"

"It's practically hell."

The wandering Onmyoji shook his head and then chose another adjective.

Seemingly worried that the female detective still didn't understand, the wandering Onmyoji gave another explanation.

"Do you know about a secret technique in that mysterious land called 'Gu raising'?"

"It involves placing hundreds of poisonous insects in a container, allowing them to kill each other, and in the end, the one that survives is the 'Gu'!"

Seeing the puzzled look on the female detective's face, the wandering Onmyoji gave a simplified introduction.

Although not very bright, the female detective was not dumb, and coupled with the general account of what had transpired earlier from the wandering Onmyoji, Hui Lijing could already imagine what they were about to face.

Advise Jason to quit?

Hui Lijing had no such thoughts.

Despite the short time they had known each other, Hui Lijing already had a fairly good grip on Jason.

Indifferent, appearing unconcerned with anything.

But once he makes a promise, he keeps it.

Never going back on his word.

And without any complaints.

Unexpectedly displaying a man's fortitude!

"Why is your face red?"

The wandering Onmyoji sitting in the passenger seat couldn't help but ask, noticing the driver's sudden blush.

"It's cold."

The female detective answered.

The wandering Onmyoji frowned.

Cold?

At most, it's just chilly, right?

Moreover, the heating is on in the car.

Nevertheless, the wandering Onmyoji didn't inquire further.

At the moment, he was contemplating how to ensure the safety of Master Tongshou Temple and the female detective.

The Hanakaiin Family's trial to become the head of the main family was no joke.

One misstep, and someone could truly die.

And there's...

Jason!

The more the wandering Onmyoji thought about this man who seemed like a demon taking part, the more uneasy he felt.

He always suspected Jason had ulterior motives.

With this thought, the wandering Onmyoji suddenly spoke up.

"What do you think of Jason?"

The female detective, who had regained her composure, was taken aback by the wandering Onmyoji's words and panic flashed in her eyes.

"What do you mean 'what about'?"

"A cold man."

"Apart from being a good eater and having decent observational skills, there's nothing else noteworthy."

The female detective said unconsciously.

"No, I don't mean that," he said.

"I mean..."

"Could he have other motives?"

The wandering Onmyoji said earnestly.

It's incredibly difficult for a person to fight alone, given the current situation.

If he could recruit the female detective into his ranks, it would be excellent.

And Master Tongshou Temple!

If it really comes to it, he'll take the two of them far away from the island, seeking refuge abroad.

It's also a rather good option to return after everything has settled down.

"Jason?"

"Him?"

"Don't worry!"

"A man who adores food as he loves life, even if he has other motives, it's still acceptable."

The female detective laughed unknowingly at the implication behind the wandering Onmyoji's words.

"You trust Jason that much?"

The wandering Onmyoji was taken aback.

"Because every time I face danger, this man always shows up!"

"If I don't trust him, should I trust you?"

The gaze the female detective turned towards the wandering Onmyoji held a hint of danger.

Compared to Jason, the female detective hadn't fully trusted this man who had joined halfway through.

Indeed, she even regretted buying him coffee that afternoon after he said those words.

Facing the female detective's gaze, the wandering Onmyoji raised his hands with a look of helplessness.

"Sorry."

"Consider it an occupational hazard."

"But it's always better to be cautious."

The wandering Onmyoji explained.

The female detective ignored his explanation and began to focus seriously on the road ahead.

This made the atmosphere in the car awkward.

Fortunately, the destination was near.

The female detective saw the narrow alley and even spotted an old man passing by the entrance of the alley, and... Onodera lunging out.

Screech!

Bang!

At the moment Onodera lunged out, the female detective slammed on the brakes, but still hit Onodera.

Thankfully, the impact wasn't powerful, only pinning Onodera against the car window.

The collision caused the female detective's hand to slip off the steering wheel, brushing across the windshield wipers.

Suddenly, the windshield wipers started swinging back and forth.

But they were blocked by Onodera's cheeks.

Smack, smack smack!

The crisp sounds of the wipers hitting his face snapped the stupefied Onodera back to reality.

What's happening to me?

Was I in a car accident?

The person in front of me looks familiar?

A female driver!

No!

A female detective!

"Quick, run!"

In the instant Onodera came to his senses, he shouted.

The female detective reacted extremely fast.

Though not knowing what had happened, she floored the accelerator without hesitation.

Vroom!

Amidst the low roar of the engine, the front of the car lifted and it shot forward with a screech.

Then—

Boom!

The immense explosion caused the female detective, the wandering Onmyoji, and even Onodera, who was pinned to the hood, to suffer from a momentary ringing in their ears.

Following that, it was like the world turned upside down.

Having advanced a few meters, the car tumbled several times under the assault of the blast.

All windows shattered, with multiple dents in the car body.

Onodera was covered in glass shards, bleeding profusely.

The female detective and the wandering Onmyoji were relatively unharmed.

The two crawled out through the car windows and exchanged a glance.

Chapter 1075: The Separate Courtyard. Path to Life! (2)

What happened?

Both saw the blankness in each other's eyes.

Especially the wandering Onmyoji.

They were already at the entrance of the Hanakaiin Court's annex.

Could someone have placed a bomb there?

To provoke one of the four major Onmyoji families of the Inside World, did they have a death wish?

The wandering Onmyoji turned his head towards the direction of the explosion.

He could see several severed limbs.

Shattered to this extent, not even Onmyoji techniques could save them.

The female detective turned her gaze towards Onodera.

She was impressed by this 'Onmyo-person'.

"Cough cough, Yamashita wants to murder to silence others."

Onodera said cooperatively.

Yamashita?!

Upon hearing this familiar name, both the female detective and the wandering Onmyoji were astonished.

Wasn't Yamashita collaborating with a successor from a branch of the Hanakaiin family?

Why cause trouble at the entrance of a Hanakaiin family's annex?

And what's this about murdering to silence?

Questions emerged in both of their minds.

But this time, Onodera didn't answer.

Because he was already grabbed by an old man with white hair.

An older man holding a middle-aged man in his hand was a very incongruent sight, especially since he was gripping his neck and lifting him mid-air.

"Indeed, you have a really tough life!"

"You didn't die from that!"

"But, this is the end for you!"

Disguised as an old man, Yamashita sneered coldly while looking at his subordinate in his hand.

And as soon as Onodera was grabbed by Yamashita, he had already recognized who the person before him was.

He struggled immediately.

But it was futile.

Yamashita's hand was like an iron clamp, unmovable.

"Stop!"

The wandering Onmyoji cried out, flicking the Talisman Paper from his hand.

The Talisman Paper turned into a fireball mid-air and shot towards Yamashita.

Bang, bang bang!

Yamashita didn't dodge, allowing the fireballs to hit him.

It's not that he didn't care about the fireballs. In fact, when the fireballs hit Yamashita, he not only staggered backward, but his skin and muscles were also burned.

Yamashita did this for the sake of killing Onodera.

He knew that as soon as he appeared, Onodera would definitely recognize him at close range.

So, he grabbed his throat.

It was to prevent Onodera from speaking out.

And to kill him with one hit.

"Go to hell."

Yamashita said quietly, starting to exert force with his hand.

It began smoothly; he already saw Onodera's face turning purple.

But soon, Yamashita found that his hand, capable of bending steel bars, could no longer continue.

An invisible force was blocking him.

Startled slightly, Yamashita quickly realized.

"Your amulet didn't work?"

"You actually falsified reports!"

Yamashita, annoyed, watched as Onodera rapidly recovered to normal.

"Learned from you."

Onodera replied, finally pulling out the hand that had been in his pocket.

In his hand was a gun, his finger pulling the trigger.

Bang bang bang!

Gunfire flickered.

Six consecutive shots.

Onodera's marksmanship was average, but at almost zero distance, missing was impossible.

Six bullets, each unerringly hitting Yamashita.

Blood splattered; taking six bullets, Yamashita finally loosened his grip and staggered back.

But he did not fall down.

Instead, the blood-covered Yamashita's face unconsciously twisted, turning ferocious.

The sight made Onodera shudder.

"Damn human modification!"

After joining 'Blossom Cherry,' everyone gets one free opportunity to receive knowledge and tools.

But some people are special and require 'Blossom Cherry' to pay a heavier price.

Facing such people, 'Blossom Cherry' provides a chance for free modification.

Almost instantly, an ordinary person can become

Superhuman.

Otherwise, a normal person would fall at a single gunshot; There's no way Yamashita could take six shots and be unafflicted.

Onodera wished he had such an opportunity.

But sadly, he wasn't qualified.

Yamashita had that qualification.

Because his status was higher than Onodera's.

This made Onodera frequently complain in daily life.

And now?

Onodera's grudge made his teeth itch even more.

Because ordinary discontent had become a matter of life and death!

Roar!

With a roar, Yamashita charged at Onodera.

There was no time left to change the magazine.

Onodera turned and ran.

Bang, bang bang!

The sound of gunshots rang out again.

Yes, the female detective.

Yamashita was pushed back once again.

But this pushback was merely just that—aside from a few new holes in his body, Yamashita had only slightly slowed down.

Yamashita glared at the female detective and charged towards Onodera again.

But this time, a little monk holding a lantern, his face red, stood in front of Yamashita.

"Hmm?"

The female detective paused, surprised at seeing this little monk.

He had pointed her the way when she was trapped in the Illusion Realm earlier.

Now?

The detective's gaze shifted to the wandering Onmyoji, who maintained a posture.

And Yamashita?

"Get out of my way!"

With a low growl, Yamashita raised his palm to strike the little monk.

But before his palm could touch the monk, the little monk screamed out.

"Don't come near! Don't touch me! It wasn't intentional!"

During his screams, the little monk delivered a headbutt right below Yamashita's belly.

Bang!

With the dull thud, the seemingly pain-immune Yamashita's eyes bulged out.

The whites of his eyes, threaded with blood veins, nearly filled his entire eyes.

Onodera, repeatedly backing away at this sight, suddenly felt unwell.

It was a kind of psychological unease.

Unshakeable.

Thud!

Yamashita fell to his knees.

Hands covering his lower abdomen, he bowed his head to the ground.

"Sorry! I'm sorry!"

"I didn't mean to do it!"

The lantern-holding little monk loudly explained.

But watching this explanation, both the female detective and Onodera somehow felt that the lantern-holding monk did it intentionally.

That's what both the detective and Onodera thought.

Yamashita thought so even more.

"Kill, I'll kill you!"

Yamashita gritted his teeth and stood up, ready to launch an attack.

But he had just steadied himself—

Bang!

Another headbutt.

In the same spot.

Thud!

Yamashita fell to his knees again.

More swiftly and thoroughly than before.

His body kept trembling.

Seeing this, the Onmyoji who summoned the 'lantern boy' couldn't bear it anymore.

He never knew his Shikigami had such attack power.

"Lantern..."

"Watch out!"

Instinctively, the wandering Onmyoji opened his mouth to call the lantern boy back, but as soon as he did, he sensed something wrong and shouted a loud warning.

The apologetic lantern boy quickly rolled to one side.

Whoosh!

A strong breeze blew over their heads.

Nobody could see what it was.

But deep down, everyone felt a chill and a tremor of fear.

Especially when they saw the young man with glowering eyes emerge.

The feeling of dread reached an extreme.

Not only humans, but the Shikigami too were affected.

The lantern boy, scared, hid behind the wandering Onmyoji.

"Hanakaiin Itsuki!"

Upon seeing the young man, the wandering Onmyoji cried out loud, his face showing fear.

He had heard of the other's reputation for ruthless killing.

"Master Itsuki!"

Yamashita was overjoyed.

But—

"Useless."

"Truly worthless."

Hanakaiin Itsuki briefly glanced at Yamashita then ignored him, walking towards the female detective, the wandering Onmyoji, and Onodera.

"Please, plea..."

Blurp!

Yamashita was begging for mercy but didn't finish his plea when his head flew off.

As the blood spurted, the female detective and the wandering Onmyoji turned and ran.

Both knew very well, this was not an enemy they could deal with.

Severely wounded, Onodera couldn't run fast.

Despair appeared in his eyes.

Indeed...

Am I going to die?

Onodera sighed in his heart.

At this moment, the wandering Onmyoji turned around and scooped him up, tucking him under his arm.

Onodera was startled.

Then, the 'old Onmyoji' shouted—

"Run to Hanakaiin Family's other court!"

Chapter 1076: The Separate Courtyard. Banquet!

Onodera knew where the only way to survive was at this moment.

The Hanakaiin Family's separate courtyard.

Behind him, Hanakaiin Itsuki would not be able to make a move within the Hanakaiin Family's separate courtyard.

It's simple: rules!

As a member of the Hanakaiin Family, it is impossible to take action within the separate courtyard.

Especially at such a critical moment of the 'taking over the family head' trial.

As long as Hanakaiin Itsuki still wants to truly take over as the family head, he would not leave such a handle for Hanakaiin Haru, Hanakaiin Ra, and Hanakaiin Ue.

He Tai heard Onodera's loud shout.

Instantly, this wandering Onmyoji reacted.

Immediately carrying Onodera, they ran towards the alleyway.

Hui Lijing was not slow to react either.

While running, a fluent turn changed her original direction.

The three of them sped up quickly.

Behind them, Hanakaiin Itsuki was neither hurried nor slow.

Even with a faint smile on his face.

Just like a cat that had seen a mouse.

Hunting?

For a cat, it does not hunt after it is fed.

But, it doesn't mind playing.

"Some warm-up shows before the real drama starts are also indispensable,"

Hanakaiin Itsuki said this, his gaze fixed on Hui Lijing, He Tai, Onodera who had just run to the mouth of the alley.

What is despair?

Mere slaughter cannot bring despair.

True despair is to give hope, and then, shatter it.

Hanakaiin Itsuki is all too familiar with this series of processes.

After all, he always does this.

He, standing still, had even already seen the surprise in the eyes of the female detective.

"Heh, just perfect."

Hanakaiin Itsuki chuckled softly, his fingers twitching slightly.

Whoosh!

The sharpness of the wind manifested again.

Directly streaking towards the female detective, the wandering Onmyoji, and Onodera.

The next moment, they will be cut in half.

...

Jason, Master Tongshou Temple, Hanakaiin Haru, and the Sagaraso girl, Ryosuke, and Urashima all had their attention drawn by the explosion.

Especially Hanakaiin Haru.

He had just spoken of 'peace under the heavens.'

Then, the explosion occurred.

This kind of slap in the face, even for Hanakaiin Haru, was a bit hard to bear.

Then, he saw the female detective, the wandering Onmyoji, and Onodera.

He also 'saw' that invisible attack.

Immediately, Hanakaiin Haru's expression changed.

This young member of the Hanakaiin Family didn't know exactly what had happened, but he was all too familiar with this kind of attack.

Hanakaiin Itsuki!

This person, next to Hanakaiin Tōru, whom he valued most.

Far more than Hanakaiin Ue and Hanakaiin Ra.

The former is an arrogant brute.

The latter is an obedient child.

Not worth considering.

Only Hanakaiin Itsuki, this opponent, Hanakaiin Haru still hasn't figured him out.

Or rather, he is always capricious.

Killing follows him wherever he appears.

Gloom also shadows him.

When happy, he laughs loudly.

When angry, corpses lie everywhere.

Although hard to predict, there's one thing Hanakaiin Haru knows:

He must save those Hanakaiin Itsuki wants to kill.

Especially, as they are acquaintances!

Thinking of this, Hanakaiin Haru raised his hand.

Hum!

An invisible force shield appeared in front of the sharp winds.

Crack!

After a crisp sound, both disappeared.

Saved!

The female detective, the wandering Onmyoji, and Onodera looked relieved.

But immediately, their expressions changed again.

Whoosh!

The sound of the wind rose again.

Just when the previous sharp wind disappeared abruptly, another blast of wind appeared.

Unexpected!

Taken off-guard!

"Hanakaiin Itsuki!"

Hanakaiin Haru shouted, hoping to stop him with his voice.

And Hanakaiin Itsuki?

With a bright smile, mixed with a trace of excitement.

"Despair."

The young Onmyoji said.

This is what he truly wanted his prey to experience—despair.

The one just now?

It wasn't enough!

Only this kind of killing, where someone seemingly successfully intervened and saved them, is the scene he most desires to witness.

Look at that expression!

It's truly delightful!

He felt the power once again.

As for Hanakaiin Haru?

He had noticed him long ago.

After all, such a group of people were too conspicuous just now.

The scene before him, truly a coincidence.

One that even he had not noticed.

But, such a coincidence cannot stop him.

Or rather...

No one can stop him.

Regarding the aftermath?

He would talk about it later.

The master family had already made such a move, and him being a bit willful would only be more 'like a fish in water.'

Punishment is natural.

But within a controllable range.

Hanakaiin Itsuki thought, his eyes brimming with more excitement.

And the female detective, the wandering Onmyoji, Onodera wore stunned faces.

It's over!

Is this where it ends?

Onodera sighed, yet felt a sigh of relief deep inside.

Alas!

Family!

The wandering Onmyoji had complex emotions, his gaze becoming elusive.

The female detective?

This lady was full of unwillingness; she still had too many unfulfilled desires.

Not becoming a true coffee master.

Not finding her sister.

Not learning the knowledge of the 'Mystical Side' from Jason.

Not even...

Finding a boyfriend!

Unwilling!

I am so unwilling!

The female detective roared inside her heart.

Especially when she thought about how her sister had had dozens or hundreds of boyfriends at the same time, such unwillingness almost became tangible.

Being sisters, why was there such a huge difference?

She asked herself.

Was it because she stuffed cow dung into those bad guys' mouths?

Yet her sister, although apologizing with a smile, had later placed laxatives in those bad guys' water and even locked the toilet doors!

Chapter 1077: The Separate Courtyard. Banquet! (2)

That state of utter disarray, more ruthless than herself.

But why was her sister so popular?

Death is like life flashing before one's eyes.

In the heart of this female detective, from her childhood, through her adolescence, to the battlefield, and now, to the present.

She suddenly realized that it was only recently that she had been truly happy.

Was it the tranquility of the cafe?

The leisure of day-to-day life?

No, it wasn't.

It was... Jason!

It was Jason who took her into a real world, showing her the most authentic side of life.
Even though it was dangerous, she didn't hate it.

After all, the battlefield, with its barrage of gunfire, was just as perilous.

But...

Nowhere near as thrilling as now.

Alas, this is where it ends.

My journey is over.

Still unwilling to let go!

With such a cry in her heart, the female detective closed her eyes.

She quietly awaited the arrival of death.

Though reluctant, she was remarkably calm.

The baptism of the battlefield had long accustomed her to this.

But then, one second, two seconds passed.

The expected agony did not come.

The detective opened her eyes.

A tall and robust figure overshadowed her from behind.

The sharp gust of wind was slicing against this figure.

This figure remained unscathed.

The sharp gust scattered and crumbled, turning into a gentle breeze that blew in all directions.

Under the night sky, beside the streetlamp.

This towering, solid figure was like a city wall, tall and substantial, offering a reassuring presence.

"Jason?!"

The female detective exclaimed with joy.

But Jason did not respond.

He gestured with his hand and took big strides towards the Hanakaiin Itsuki.

The curiosity in his eyes intensified.

The Hanakaiin Itsuki had 'food' on him!

Just like Hanakaiin Haru, there were three decent 'foods', one good 'food', and one extremely tempting 'food'.

Originally, when Jason met Hanakaiin Ue and found no 'food' on him, he thought Hanakaiin Haru was an exception. But after meeting the Hanakaiin Itsuki, Jason realized.

Hanakaiin Ue was the exception.

Perhaps not valued?

Jason didn't know any more.

However, he knew that the Hanakaiin Itsuki in front of him was not to be missed.

He was hungry!

Hanakaiin Itsuki sensed something different about Jason.

The most obvious sign was that his recent attack had no effect.

More perceptible was that, to his senses, behind Jason, a huge, dark monster loomed, howling at him.

It was a heart-trembling howl.

"Bloodline of a demon?"

"Or...?"

"A concentration of killing intent?"

Hanakaiin Itsuki couldn't determine precisely, but it didn't hinder his attack.

Whoosh! Whoosh whoosh!

One sharp gust of wind after another appeared.

Jason paid them no mind, continuing to advance.

Snap, snap snap!

The sharp winds slicing at Jason's body made crisp noises.

Cuts appeared on Jason's clothes, but Jason himself was completely unharmed.

Even these winds that could split a person in half had no power to halt his steps.

"Immovable King's Body'!"

"Such formidable secret teachings of the Tongshou Temple!"

Watching Jason approach step by step, Hanakaiin Itsuki was not panicked at all, but instead laughed again.

Such a sincere smile.

As if he was truly impressed by the secret teachings of Tongshou Temple.

But in his eyes, Hanakaiin Itsuki's sinister intent intensified.

As an heir of the Hanakaiin Family cadet branch, he couldn't possibly be unaware of what the 'Immovable King's Body' represented.

Overpowering an era.

Suppressing countless prodigies.

Normally, he would take it as a rumor or a jest.

After all, no one knew better than he did what the family records were like.

Exaggeration, distortion, were all too common.

Even completely fabricating stories was not unusual.

Thus, to the so-called 'Immovable King's Body', Hanakaiin Itsuki held a disdainful attitude.

He thought that even if the 'Immovable King's Body' did exist, it must be an exaggeration.

At best, it was just that the 'Vajra Body' had reached a certain extreme level.

But the successive attacks just now were telling him that the rumors seemed to be true.

Although not to the extent where one could ignore the attacks of great demons, being able to withstand half of his attack power had far exceeded the scope of the 'Vajra Body'.

Or rather, the 'Vajra Body' simply couldn't reach such a level.

Trouble!

Unnecessary trouble!

Watching Jason approaching closer and closer, Hanakaiin Itsuki felt a wave of irritation welling up inside him.

He hated situations that were out of his control.

Once faced with such a situation, he felt like having a cup of milk tea—double sugar.

But right now, he could not simply walk away.

Irritation → Wanting milk tea (double sugar) → Cannot have it → Irritation +1 → Wanting milk tea (double sugar) → Cannot have it → Irritation +2...

A vicious cycle made the smile on Hanakaiin Itsuki's face completely disappear at this moment.

Only frowning brows remained.

The eyes filled with a sinister aura flashed with malice and murderous intent.

But it vanished in a flash.

Because, he saw Hanakaiin Haru.

If facing Jason, who has mastered the Tongshou Temple's secret technique 'Immovable King's Body', and he unleashed all his efforts and secret techniques, he still held a few chances of victory, but adding Hanakaiin Haru to the equation...

No chance of winning at all!

"Jason, huh?"

"I'll remember you."

"Then..."

"We'll meet again next time."

Hanakaiin Itsuki once again revealed a smile, and even waved his hand at Jason.

Then, a layer of illusory light appeared on the body of this young Onmyoji from the Hanakaiin Family.

If there's no chance of winning, then just leave outright.

Procrastination is not Hanakaiin Itsuki's style.

But at this moment—

Boom, boom boom!

Sounds like war drums suddenly erupted.

They reverberated through the streets, drawing people's gazes.

Yes, it was Jason!

The once methodical steps forward Jason was taking suddenly accelerated.

His whole being shot forward like an arrow released from its bow, closing the distance to Hanakaiin Itsuki.

Then, he raised his hand and grabbed.

Hanakaiin Itsuki subconsciously tried to dodge.

But he didn't manage to avoid it.

Because Jason wasn't aiming to grab Hanakaiin Itsuki himself, but rather the spot on Hanakaiin Itsuki's garments that was wafting the scent of 'food'.

Rip!

Hanakaiin Itsuki's clothes were torn apart just like that.

A straw doll the size of a palm fell out, caught by Jason.

Meanwhile, the illusory light on Hanakaiin Itsuki's body reached its peak.

This young man from the Hanakaiin Family stared at Jason.

His look was filled with astonishment and disbelief.

And then he disappeared on the spot.

Jason, however, casually put the straw doll into his backpack.

The entire process was smooth and unhesitant.

Watching this, Hanakaiin Haru's eyes twitched.

How could this be so familiar?

It seems like this happens often?

Hanakaiin Haru thought to himself.

Jason, meanwhile, ignored the other's strange gazes.

Upon seeing Hanakaiin Itsuki, Jason knew it wasn't possible to have a real fight, not just because the Hanakaiin Family's separate residence was right behind him, but also because Hanakaiin Haru was here.

Therefore, Jason never intended to capture all the 'food' on Hanakaiin Itsuki in one fell swoop.

Better to have one bird in the hand than ten in the bush.

Jason was very clear about this principle.

What he understood even more was the strategy of playing a long game to catch a big fish.

Look at Hanakaiin Itsuki's eyes when he left.

The other party will definitely come looking for him again!

Even if they don't, they will meet again.

Don't forget the 'King of Fighters – The Tournament'!

The other party is a seeded player.

"Jason, Jason, are you alright?"

The straightforward Sagaraso girl came running over somewhat belatedly.

But before Sagaraso could reach him, Hui Lijing stepped aside, blocking Sagaraso's path to Jason.

The tall female detective not only completely obstructed Sagaraso's view of Jason but also took off her own long leather coat and draped it over Jason.

After doing all this, the female detective turned to stand beside Jason, looking down at Sagaraso with a commanding gaze.

Sagaraso was taken aback, but then defiantly raised her head to meet the female detective's stare.

The atmosphere became tense.

Hanakaiin Haru blinked and looked at Jason with a slightly mocking expression.

Jason, completely unaffected, walked straight into the alley, his voice utterly indifferent—

"I'm hungry, time to eat."

Chapter 1078: Your two companions really are...

The highly anticipated banquet began in Hanakaiin Haru's courtyard.

Since the trial of 'assuming head of household,' the Hanakaiin Family's branch courts were divided into five sections: Hanakaiin Haru, Hanakaiin Ue, Hanakaiin Itsuki, Hanakaiin Ra, and Hanakaiin Tōru.

The five areas did not interfere with each other.

Even the servants would not greet each other when they met.

It was the rule.

Although it was never explicitly stated, it had been passed down from the very beginning.

As for the division of courtyards, aside from Hanakaiin Tōru's residence in the center, each took its corner in the east, south, west, and north respectively.

The corner where Hanakaiin Haru resided was the east.

At this moment, Master Tongshou Temple, Hui Lijing, He Tai, Ryosuke, and Urashima, already filled and satisfied, were staring wide-eyed at the round table in the center of the courtyard.

Jason and Miss Sagaraso were sitting on either side of the round table, frantically stuffing food into their mouths.

It seemed as if their mouths didn't chew at all, but sounds of crunchy, crunchy were incessant.

The hands holding the chopsticks moved at a speed so fast that they created layers of illusions.

Whole fish vanished in a blink, leaving only bones behind.

The leg of lamb was swallowed one after another, not even leaving bone crumbs.

As for the large beef slices, as soon as a whole plate was brought out, only the plate remained.

Everyone already had some mental preparation for Jason.

After all, it's well known that Jason can eat a lot.

But Miss Sagaraso?

Everyone was truly unprepared.

How could a young girl eat so much?

More importantly...

$1+1 > 2!$

One Jason was already a handful.

Now with Miss Sagaraso added to the mix?

By the side of the two, a dozen servants were continuously bringing food to the table.

Every servant looked breathless, their faces a mix of disbelief and exhaustion.

Two hours!

They have been serving dishes non-stop since the banquet began.

From the initial eight people.

To the current two people.

Far from feeling any relief, they were becoming even more tired.

Because these two people were just too exaggerated.

Each one could eat more than ten people.

It wasn't just a feeling.

It was a fact.

Very soon, more servants flooded into this branch court, joining the food delivery queue.

And at the kitchen, there was a hive of activity.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have two special guests," announced the chef solemnly.

"This concerns the reputation of our Hanakaiin Family."

"Therefore, we cannot afford any mistakes."

"Everyone, please do your best!"

The head chef in charge of Hanakaiin Haru's dietary affairs said with seriousness.

"Yes!"

A chorus of kitchen helpers responded loudly.

Then, with a wave of the head chef's hand, all hands were busier than ever.

Even the curious sous chef came over to ask while peeling potatoes.

"Is it a demon?"

The sous chef's voice was very soft and low.

Although in the Hanakaiin Household, demons were not a taboo, discretion was still exercised.

After all, there were differences in species.

"No, it's not," came the response.

"At least... probably not?"

"They look quite human," the head chef initially answered very affirmatively, then began to sound less certain.

Jason and Miss Sagaraso did indeed look like humans.

But can humans really eat that much?

Especially a seemingly gentle and frail Miss Sagaraso.

And demons are adept at shape-shifting.

It's difficult to say clearly whether the two are truly human.

However, there was one thing the head chef was certain about.

That is—

Both were guests of Young Master Haru.

The most honored kind.

"Get to work!" he said.

"We are but servants."

"We must be aware of our place as servants."

The head chef spoke thus.

The sous chef nodded immediately and then worked even harder.

With their lead, the delivery of food became even quicker.

And as more food was brought in, Master Tongshou Temple, Hui Lijing, He Tai, and Ryosuke, Urashima and others sighed with relief.

Perhaps this would be enough to satisfy the appetite?

The group thought.

But immediately, their eyes widened again.

Because the food was disappearing even faster than before.

It was as if what came before was just a 'warm-up.'

Now the real contest had begun.

"Let's hope Hanakaiin Haru doesn't get too shocked when he returns," the female detective murmured.

"With the Hanakaiin family's wealth, it shouldn't be an issue, but... what an enormous appetite, huh?" Ryosuke, who had once hosted Jason, trembled as he spoke.

And as it turned out, Jason had been 'taking it easy' all this time?

Was it really a meal that could cost me a month's...no, a year's salary?

The middle-aged detective assessed and felt despair.

Simply put, after being saved by Jason this morning, he had the idea to treat Jason to a meal again.

But now?

Ryosuke was in despair.

He wanted to thank Jason sincerely, hoping that Jason would enjoy a good meal.

But to spend a year's salary on just one meal?

And based on the current trend, even a year's salary wouldn't be enough.

Despair began to spread.

Because, after being saved, Urashima had the same idea.

As the actual payer, he had witnessed Jason's appetite.

He thought he understood it.

But in reality?

It was shockingly surprising.

Out of everyone, it was the female detective and the wandering Onmyoji who remained relatively calm.

For the female detective, it was shocking how much Jason could eat, but if Jason could indeed eat that much, it seemed only natural and easy to accept.

It was an inexplicable trust.

A trust born from every critical moment when Jason appeared.

As for the wandering Onmyoji, it was much simpler.

Isn't it normal for a demon to eat a lot?

What's more, for a great demon.

Chapter 1079: Your Two Companions Really Are... (2)

As for the old monk from Tongshou Temple?

He was thinking of a legend passed down within the temple about an ancient kingdom.

It was a scroll, with words that were rather ominous.

The remaining patterns were even more incomplete.

Most had to be guessed by people.

But some descriptions were quite detailed.

Son of the Dragon.

Devouring heaven and earth.

"Does Jason possess such a lineage?"

"It's not very likely, is it?"

The old monk from Tongshou Temple thought this to himself.

However, when he saw Jason pick up a roasted suckling pig, stuff the whole thing into his mouth with one bite, and then grabbed two more roasted suckling pigs, such thoughts began to waver uncontrollably.

"Perhaps... it's not so improbable."

The old monk from Tongshou Temple thought, bringing his hands together in prayer.

Next, the old monk's gaze turned towards the courtyard outside.

After everyone said they had eaten their fill, Hanakaiin Haru signaled that he needed to leave for a while.

As for where?

Everyone understood perfectly well.

The so-called 'King of Fighters – The KOF Tournament' invitation, which was agreed upon, had been given to someone else.

No one would remain indifferent.

Hanakaiin Haru was no exception.

In fact, Hanakaiin Haru had been holding back his anger all along.

Hanakaiin Haru was no fool; he clearly understood why such a situation had arisen.

It was nothing more than the current 'Family Head' exploiting loopholes in the rules.

In the Hanakaiin Family, everyone must follow the rule of 'meritocracy'.

And this rule was mostly fair most of the time.

Of course, just mostly.

About this, Hanakaiin Haru was all too aware.

That's also why Hanakaiin Haru prepared to inquire.

However, before he could officially leave his assigned branch, he was stopped by a middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man was dressed in a black casual outfit, standing by the side of the road, silently watching the night sky.

When Hanakaiin Haru approached, the middle-aged man lowered his head, revealing a somewhat gentle smile.

Clearly, the middle-aged man in front of him was waiting for Hanakaiin Haru.

Hanakaiin Haru was surprised to see the middle-aged man, yet he was extremely respectful.

"Father."

Hanakaiin Haru bowed in greeting.

"Haru, would you walk with me?"

Hanakaiin Toku asked softly.

"Of course."

Hanakaiin Haru immediately answered.

Then, he followed behind his father, heading towards the garden behind the separate residence.

The garden of the separate residence was not large, but it had everything it should.

Hanakaiin Toku walked into the completely wooden gazebo, lit the lanterns inside, hung them up, and gestured for the servants to leave before sitting down on a bench.

Hanakaiin Haru then sat opposite him.

As Hanakaiin Haru took his seat, Hanakaiin Toku did not immediately speak.

Instead, he was enveloped in a bit of silence.

After a full minute, the middle-aged man suddenly spoke.

"Haru, I'm sorry."

Hanakaiin Toku leaned forward slightly towards Hanakaiin Haru.

Hanakaiin Haru immediately stood up, dodging the direction of his father's bow.

"Father!"

Hanakaiin Haru already had some guesses in his heart, but still reached out to support his father.

"I'm sorry."

Hanakaiin Toku said once more.

"I was powerless to stop the Family Head's decision—I received the notification, but it was after the Family Head had already decided."

"At that time, I had no power to stop what was happening; as a father, I have failed, and as a branch Family Head, I have also failed."

"I am a failure."

"After I lost the competition for the 'Family Head', everything became your burden to bear."

"I have never offered you help."

"And I have become your burden—I have already promised to comply with the Family Head."

"I'm sorry."

Once again, an apology, and this time, Hanakaiin Toku truly bowed deeply.

Hanakaiin Haru, who had anticipated this from the beginning, wanted to stop it but was restrained by an intangible force.

He could only watch helplessly as Hanakaiin Toku bowed to him.

And when Hanakaiin Toku raised his body, the constraining force on Hanakaiin Haru suddenly dissipated.

"Father!"

Hanakaiin Haru immediately knelt down, his head pressed tightly against the floor.

As a son, Hanakaiin Haru's upbringing made it impossible for him to accept such things.

His father had never wronged him.

He never lacked for clothing or food from childhood.

He received all kinds of elite education.

Even though it was difficult, he also saw a world invisible to ordinary people.

Moreover, in such a world, as a 'umbrella', his father protected him from the storms, ensuring he was unharmed.

What is there to be dissatisfied with?

Hanakaiin Haru thought it was enough.

As for the grievances he suffered?

Those grievances compared with the ones his father endured.

And compared with the clan members of the branch family.

What do they really amount to?

Moreover, he had not completely lost his chance.

He still had the right to challenge through a wildcard!

Thinking this, Hanakaiin Haru took a deep breath.

"Please rest assured."

"I will help our family take over as the Family Head."

"Definitely!"

Hanakaiin Haru said decisively.

Hanakaiin Toku smiled and helped his son to his feet.

"Taking over the Family Head is important."

"But safety is even more crucial."

"All I hope is that you can live well."

Hanakaiin Toku advised.

"Don't worry, Father."

"This time I am confident!"

"My two companions are reliable—Even if we go to fight for the wildcard team's right to participate, the ultimate championship will surely be ours."

Hanakaiin Haru declared confidently.

The expression on Hanakaiin Toku's face became somewhat strange.

"What's wrong, Father?"

Hanakaiin Haru looked at his father, curiously asking.

Chapter 1080: Your Two Companions Really Are... (3)

"Nothing much."

"Your two teammates are quite special."

"Yeah, special."

Clearly having received some message, Hanakaiin Toku seemed at a loss for the right adjective.

Special?

Hanakaiin Haru was startled.

It was no surprise to him that his father knew about Jason, Miss Sagaraso, and Hanakaiin Haru.

The power he was using still belonged to the branch family's power.

Or rather, it was his father's power to begin with.

Therefore, his father should be well aware of his actions.

Just such an appraisal?

Had something happened?

Hanakaiin Haru pondered.

"Don't overthink it, proceed as you have planned."

"I can't offer you more."

"However, I support you."

"Go and attend to your friends."

With that, Hanakaiin Toku waved his hand.

"Very well, Father."

After bowing respectfully, Hanakaiin Haru left directly.

Hanakaiin Toku watched his son depart.

Only after Hanakaiin Haru had disappeared from sight did Hanakaiin Toku leave the garden with a sigh.

This place was prepared for those from the branch families vying for the inheritance of the 'main house'.

Although he was Hanakaiin Haru's father and a branch family head, he had no right to stay here.

Such were the rules of the Hanakaiin Family.

Hanakaiin Toku had always adhered to them.

And as his son, Hanakaiin Haru.

Was also willing to comply.

As long as it did not violate his bottom line.

"Main house, main house."

Grinding his teeth, Hanakaiin Haru muttered under his breath, the light in his eyes chilling to behold.

He had too many thoughts right now.

But no matter which idea, he needed to truly take charge of the 'main house' for them to work.

What if he failed?

Of course, there would be nothing more to say.

Expect Hanakaiin Haru, on the premise of failure, to take revenge on others?

I'm sorry.

To Hanakaiin Haru, that was more unbearable than death itself.

But some people were different.

"Hey, Big Bro Haru."

Hanakaiin Ra greeted Hanakaiin Haru with a pure smile, waving his arm.

Hanakaiin Haru frowned, utterly unwilling to engage with the other, planning to walk past.

Towards Hanakaiin Ra, Hanakaiin Haru was always on guard.

Because he knew what kind of person hid behind that smiling face.

Not just bloodshed!

But also scheming!

He suspected that his previous encounters and the setup at the mountain base were orchestrated by Hanakaiin Ra.

So, he didn't want to deal with him.

But Hanakaiin Haru's disinterest in Hanakaiin Ra didn't prevent Hanakaiin Ra from blocking his way.

"Move aside."

Hanakaiin Haru said coldly.

"Oh, how heartbreaking."

"What happened to our brotherly love?"

"Big Bro Haru, you really disappoint me, I actually planned to tell you..."

Hanakaiin Ra stretched his words, but Hanakaiin Haru wasn't fooled, intending to bypass him again and return to his own branch.

"Big Bro Haru, let's cooperate!"

Hanakaiin Ra suddenly raised his voice.

Hanakaiin Haru did not even stop his steps, leaving only his words behind—

"If I'm going to win!"

"I'm going to win fair and square!"

"Oh?"

Watching Hanakaiin Haru's retreating figure, Hanakaiin Ra drew out his tone, then said unhurriedly, "Then you better hurry back, your two companions are... "

"You made a move?"

"If anything happens to them, I won't let you off!"

Hanakaiin Haru abruptly halted, turning his head to glare fiercely at Hanakaiin Ra.

Then, without waiting for Hanakaiin Ra to speak, he quickly headed towards his own residence.

Leaving only Hanakaiin Ra standing there, shaking his head with a smile.

"But really, it's quite enjoyable!"

After slowly finishing this sentence, he laughed once more.

"Bullying such an honest opponent like you is just too easy."

"I hope you can pass the test."

"A sinking ship... is not so easily managed!"