

Menu 1081

Chapter 1081: Before the Big Competition!

Hanakaiin Haru returned to his own little courtyard.

Then, he was dumbfounded.

Upon hearing the cryptic words of Hanakaiin Ra, Hanakaiin Haru had made numerous preparations, but he had never imagined he would encounter the scene before him—a team of 30 servants, each with a numb expression from shock, eyes vacant and lifeless, simply operating mechanically, placing dish after dish on the round table.

At the round table, Jason and Miss Sagaraso ate like wild beasts.

The afterimages left by their chopsticks made Hanakaiin Haru wonder if the two had already become great swordsmen.

Every chopstick placement was like the clash of swords.

It very much resembled a life-and-death struggle.

But, there was no tension in the air.

On the contrary, it was harmonious.

For each dish, Jason and Miss Sagaraso shared it evenly between them.

However, as time passed, Miss Sagaraso ate less and less.

Jason?

He continued to eat with a healthy appetite.

Quickly, all of Miss Sagaraso's portions were consumed by Jason.

And then another half hour passed.

"Burp~"

Burping with satisfaction, Miss Sagaraso stood up contentedly.

"I'm so full! So full!"

"I haven't eaten such delicious food in a long time!"

With these words, Miss Sagaraso quickly walked towards everyone.

Miss Sagaraso, having swallowed portions fit for a hundred people, walked as usual, with no stiffness whatsoever.

Especially her lower abdomen, which remained unusually flat.

"This, this?"

Ryosuke and Urashima were completely at a loss for words.

They had already encountered the Mystical Side, but the notion of consuming portions for a hundred people and still having a flat stomach was beyond their imagination.

The most critical point: where did the food go?

It couldn't have just disappeared into thin air, could it?

More critically, Jason was still eating.

Was it really true that the more you eat, the more powerful you became?

Looking at Jason, who was still eating, they were utterly at a loss for words.

Because, up to this point, Jason was still eating.

Not only was there no slowing down in a meaningful sense, but he also seemed to show no signs of satisfaction.

A bottomless pit, perhaps?

This thought arose in everyone's mind.

Among all the people, Hanakaiin Haru was the first to snap back to reality.

He looked at Jason with a smile.

What's the big deal about eating?

The important thing was that he had found two reliable partners.

Although... they were a bit unusual.

Recalling his father's assessment, the corners of Hanakaiin Haru's lips twitched involuntarily.

Was his father simply saying 'extraordinary eaters'?

Very tactful.

Very gentle.

Very much his father's style.

But the more it was like this, the more he wanted to reclaim for his father what had been lost.

While reflecting, Hanakaiin Haru thought and his gaze landed on Miss Sagaraso.

The cheerful girl was already his teammate now.

And breaking into the group stages from the wild card round wasn't easy.

Even though he was very confident in his teammates, they still needed to be strengthened.

Thus, naturally, the young member of the Hanakaiin Family said—

"Miss Sagaraso, would you like to gain a deeper understanding of the 'Inside World'?"

"In terms of knowledge and skills."

"Is that possible?"

Miss Sagaraso, who had just satisfied her hunger, had her eyes light up once again.

"Some techniques of the Hanakaiin Family can't be taught to you, but techniques other than the Hanakaiin Family's are not an issue; rest assured, there are many such techniques in Hanakaiin Family's library,"

Hanakaiin Haru said with a smile.

"That's wonderful!"

Miss Sagaraso cheered joyfully.

Seeing the sincere girl, Hanakaiin Haru's mood also became uplifting.

Then, the young member of the Hanakaiin Family turned to the others.

"Mr. Ryosuke, Mr. Urashima, and Miss Hui Lijing, if you wish, you can also study with Miss Sagaraso."

Hanakaiin Haru extended the invitation.

This was quite normal.

The family's upbringing made it clear to Hanakaiin Haru that at any time, it was necessary to ally with those who could become part of one's own camp.

Only those who are truly part of one's camp are worth investing in.

As for those outside the camp?

If not enemies, strive to win them over.

If they are enemies, still try to win them over.

But never lose sight of what is truly important!

One's own side is always the most important.

But to Hanakaiin Haru's surprise, Hui Lijing shook her head.

"I've decided to learn from Jason."

The female detective stated bluntly.

"Jason?"

"An excellent choice!"

Hanakaiin Haru nodded earnestly.

It wasn't lip service.

Hanakaiin Haru recognized Jason's qualities, not just in terms of strength, but also in wisdom and insight.

With Jason's guidance, Hui Lijing's choice was unquestionable.

However, contrary to Hanakaiin Haru's expectations, Ryosuke and Urashima also shook their heads.

"I am very grateful for your offer."

"But for now, I have no plans in that regard."

Ryosuke bowed deeply as he spoke.

Ryosuke had his own plans.

Layers of clues and dense obstacles were all pointing to 'Blossom Cherry'.

Although his crisis was temporarily resolved, it was not forever.

Troubles would still come his way.

Before troubles could find him, he needed to resolve them.

It was a pipe dream to think of resolving such issues with his current abilities.

Therefore, he must strengthen himself.

Learning 'mystic knowledge' from Hanakaiin Haru would be an excellent opportunity.

But he had already planned out his own path.

A plan made on the premise of not troubling others.

He...

Would join 'Blossom Cherry'!

Chapter 1082: Before the Big Competition! (2)

It's not about really joining, but about thoroughly understanding 'Blossom Cherry' and then, uprooting this poisonous tumor completely.

Although having Jason, Hanakaiin Haru's help would be better.

But, he just can't bring others into things that don't concern them.

The middle-aged man's pretentiousness goes online once again.

Ryosuke chose such a path, more perilous than he imagined.

As for Urashima?

It's totally because of Ryosuke's choice.

Urashima thinks very simply.

Whatever Ryosuke does, he'll do.

After all, his own boss wouldn't screw him over.

Hanakaiin Haru looked at Ryosuke, then at Urashima, and finally nodded.

"If you need help, just say it, we're friends now."

Hanakaiin Haru knew much more about Urashima than Urashima imagined.

He's very clear about what kind of person he is.

Therefore, he roughly guessed what Ryosuke wanted to do.

Although he had his own plans before, as the situation changes, he hopes Ryosuke can change accordingly.

Unfortunately, this middle-aged man is just a stone in the latrine, both stinky and hard.

Left with no choice, Hanakaiin Haru could only settle for the next best thing.

"Thank you once again."

Ryosuke bowed once more.

What followed were some casual chats, with nothing unexpected happening.

Or rather, it was all expected.

Jason ate until dawn!

Not that he was full.

But because there was no more food!

All the food stored in the Hanakaiin Haru branch house was gone!

All eaten up, clean!

Jason glanced at the fish-belly white sky to the east, then just rubbed his stomach and stood up.

"Not bad."

Jason commented.

Hearing such an evaluation, the servants who had been busy all night collapsed to the ground, one after another, exhausted.

Hanakaiin Haru approached with an undisguised look of astonishment.

"I'm starting to worry about the two feasts I owe you."

"From what I see now, they are big projects."

"I need more chefs and servants."

Hanakaiin Haru joked.

"Then let them be worth the effort."

"Can we talk about this 'King of Fighters' tournament?"

"The changes afterward."

Jason straightforwardly said.

Hanakaiin Haru was naturally dissatisfied with having his qualification for the preliminary round revoked.

Although he was eating, his brain was also pondering a bit.

Of course, he knew, Hanakaiin Haru now had a new solution.

"Please come in and discuss with me."

Hanakaiin Haru said, gesturing for the Miss Sagaraso to enter with a hand wave.

After apologizing to the Monk from Tongshou Temple and the others, Hanakaiin Haru led Jason and Miss Sagaraso to a room aside.

Watching the three disappear into the room aside, the Monk from Tongshou Temple pressed his palms together in prayer.

Hui Lijing, Ryosuke, and Urashima, who were standing there, exchanged glances with each other.

They knew that this negotiation would definitely take a lot of time; just idling around here would be a waste of time.

Therefore—

"Shall we have breakfast?"

The female detective suggested.

"Okay."

Ryosuke nodded decisively.

The all-nighter left Ryosuke feeling hungry, too.

Might as well eat while waiting.

...

"Did we win?"

The head chef of Hanakaiin Haru's branch house asked the sous chef.

"Of course!"

"We satisfied Master Haru's guest!"

"That's our victory!"

The sous chef said matter-of-factly.

Wearing an expression filled with pride.

Making food for three hundred people overnight, and ensuring most of it was quality, was extremely difficult.

And they did it!

Shouldn't they be proud?

All the kitchen staff couldn't help but puff out their chests.

But just seconds later, a tidal wave of weariness swept over them.

"Everyone can rest..."

"Head Chef! Head Chef!"

"The guests need breakfast!"

Just as the head chef was about to let everyone rest, a servant's shout came from outside.

Upon hearing such a shout, the head chef was stunned for a moment, then rolled his eyes and collapsed to the ground.

"Someone help!"

"The head chef has fainted!"

The kitchen became a scene of chaos.

Instinctively, everyone's gaze turned to the sous chef.

And under the gaze of everyone, the sous chef also collapsed to the ground.

"Ah! Not good!"

"The sous chef has fainted too!"

Suddenly, the kitchen became even more chaotic.

But Jason was unaware of these events.

On the way back to Tongshou Temple in the afternoon, all he heard was Hui Lijing's muttering.

"Why isn't the Hanakaiin Family's breakfast as good as before?"

"Is it because the food procurement isn't up to standard?"

"It feels like it's not the original chef."

"Yes, indeed, the taste is a bit different."

The wandering Onmyoji in the passenger seat strongly agreed.

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple glanced at the two of them but didn't offer any further explanation.

He was the only person among them who knew the truth of the matter.

But what could he say?

He hoped the ointment from Tongshou Temple would be effective on the two chefs.

"Master, what do you have planned for after this?"

The old Monk, preoccupied with his thoughts, turned his gaze to Jason.

"I will make time to continue learning the traditions of Tongshou Temple."

"Also, Hui Lijing, I'll start teaching you some basic knowledge in a bit."

Jason's words immediately excited the female detective.

Is she finally going to learn the real knowledge?

Seeing the female detective's anticipation of jumping with joy, Jason frowned.

"It's just the basics."

"Also, when driving, please pay attention to the road ahead."

"Understood!"

The detective responded like this, but on the rest of the journey, she remained just as excited.

The wandering Onmyoji in the passenger seat silently fastened his seatbelt.

After pondering for a moment, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple did the same.

Jason had already fastened his seatbelt as soon as he got in the car.

It wasn't that he didn't trust the detective's driving skills.

It was just a habit!

Driving without care, loved ones shed tears in pair.

He knew that all too well.

Closing his eyes, leaning back in the seat, Jason reminisced about his recent conversation with Hanakaiin Haru.

Hanakaiin Haru, having been deprived of the right to directly compete in the group matches, needed an extra-tournament card.

Acquiring an extra-tournament card is not easy in itself.

In previous years, the card was the result of prolonged battling.

Battle after battle.

Only the ultimate victor could qualify to enter the group stage.

But the real challenge is that, once you've gone through numerous battles and reached the group stage, you're at a significant disadvantage.

Because the teams in the group stage are well-rested and prepared.

Each one is full of energy.

And all are unscarred.

On the contrary, the teams with extra-tournament cards are all battle-weary and exhausted.

Therefore, most teams holding an extra-tournament card are usually eliminated in the first round.

Unless you can dominated again and again, heading straight into the group matches.

But since the inception of the "King of Fighters" tournament, no such team has existed.

More importantly, this year's competition introduced a draw.

The teams with an extra-tournament card will not be battling in rounds, but in a melee.

All the teams gathered in one place, engaging in a free-for-all.

The ultimate winner will obtain the right to enter the group stage.

The rule change seems minor.

But the opportunities for manipulation are just too many.

The most straightforward one is: a collective assault!

And Jason was confident that once their team holding the extra card entered the field, they would definitely be targeted by a collective assault.

Otherwise, the disqualification of Hanakaiin Haru from the group stage would be meaningless.

It seems the Hanakaiin main family clearly does not wish for Hanakaiin Haru to advance to the next round.

Hence, the current predicament.

'I don't know what we will encounter.'

'But I can assure you, we'll stick together.'

'If you suffer casualties, I will compensate.'

'When there's nothing left to compensate, I'll compensate with my life.'

'I swear!'

These were the oaths given by Hanakaiin Haru on departure.

Sagaraso naively nodded her head.

Jason was noncommittal.

His alliance with Hanakaiin Haru was based on mutual interest; despite Hanakaiin Haru's amiable and friendly demeanor, it didn't mean he fully trusted her.

Similarly, he would also do his utmost.

"It's tonight!"

Thinking of the time for the extra-tournament card competition, Jason narrowed his eyes.

Such haste.

Made him smell an even larger conspiracy.

But none of that mattered.

What's most important is—

The scarecrow!

He held in his hand a scarecrow, coming from the Hanakaiin Tree!

A scarecrow with a fragrance that fills the nostrils!

Chapter 1083: Unexpected

Jason looked at the strawman in his hand as text began to appear before his eyes.

[Strawman: A farmer witnessed his secret love getting married and, in despair, withered away in the rice field before her house, transforming into a strawman. Worshiped by the surrounding villagers for a bountiful harvest, he gained a faint strength. Year after year, his consciousness awoke once more. He saw the village plunged into warfare, saw the woman he once adored protecting her child from harm, saw the long sword thrusting towards her. Without the slightest hesitation, he placed himself before her, blocked all for her, eradicated the invading soldiers for her, and fell in the fields. He looked up at the sky of his memories as the ritual gradually vanished without a trace; Effect: The wearer can block a fatal attack once.]

(Note 1: Love can give birth to miracles, but it's not worth demeaning oneself.)

(Note 2: Love can give birth to miracles, so, is it worth demeaning oneself?)

...

"A strawman like this?"

"It must taste really good."

That's what Jason thought.

For others, a [Strawman] that can block a fatal attack once would certainly be a treasure.

Otherwise, it wouldn't have appeared on the Hanakaiin Itsuki.

But for 'Uniquely Talented' and 'Immortal' Jason,

Such an ability was indeed just like chicken ribs, tasteless yet a pity to discard.

Far less satisfying than eating it.

After all, the scent of the [Strawman] had long informed Jason that it was food far surpassing 3 fullness points.

"After you park the car, come to my room."

Jason said as he got out and headed towards Tongshou Temple.

He couldn't wait to eat the [Strawman] now.

Watching Jason's retreating figure, Hui Lijing quickly reversed into the garage to park.

Master Tongshou Temple and He Tai stood aside waiting.

"Is he always so solitary?"

The wandering Onmyoji inquired.

"Most of the time, yes."

"Who in the world is not like that?"

"Though it seems in groups, eventually, one walks alone at the end."

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple said with his hands clasped together, then couldn't help but sigh.

This sigh was somewhat spontaneous.

More so, it was a habit of Master Tongshou Temple.

To fit the image of 'Master Tongshou Temple', he tried his best to conform to the image of a high monk.

Naturally, some of his words also became profound and inscrutable.

It's a pity that he didn't understand those inscrutable sayings.

He could only choose some of his own insights to share.

"Are you speaking of the end of life again?"

The wandering Onmyoji asked respectfully.

"Not just the end of life, but from the moment a person is born, he is an individual, and then, step by step, moves towards death. One has to bear this process alone."

"Neither parents, lovers, nor children can take their place."

"It's difficult, but one must endure."

"Therefore, many people say — life is good, but I'll not come again in the next life."

The old Monk sighed.

He thought of his parents, his once-wife, and his children.

But the more he thought, the lonelier he became.

Because they were already gone.

"But there are also beautiful things, right?"

The wandering Onmyoji retorted.

It's hard to imagine someone who mingles in the shadowy corners of the 'Inside World' believing in the goodness of humanity.

But that's the reality.

The wandering Onmyoji considered himself not a good person, even admitting to being a bad one, but never a wicked person.

Because he still had his own bottom line.

So, he believed in the goodness of humanity.

Even if such goodness is rare, very rare.

"Yes, there is!"

"Right here."

The old Monk admitted candidly.

He then pointed to his chest.

Although his parents, wife, and children had long passed away, the memories in his heart remained beautiful.

Or rather, it was precisely because of such loss that this beauty was all the more precious.

He would never forget.

He couldn't possibly forget.

Because, after getting used to 'loneliness', this was his only solace.

It was also the driving force for him to keep going.

People, after all, need reasons and excuses to press on.

Master Tongshou Temple, who considered himself a mortal, was no exception.

Even more so, he believed he needed more.

After all, this mortal was also a falsely eminent Monk who took up the robes halfway through his life.

The wandering Onmyoji looked at Master Tongshou Temple.

He always felt there was a different kind of aura emanating from the Master before him.

But what exactly was it?

He couldn't quite articulate.

Is this what being a Master is?

The wandering Onmyoji touched his own chest, a vague epiphany beginning to form.

The old Monk looked at the wandering Onmyoji's expression, without any commentary.

He was used to it.

He didn't know when it started, but people who conversed with him always showed such expressions.

Then, they became more grateful towards him.

Though unsure of what had happened, it must be a good thing, right?

Hui Lijing, who had finished parking, looked at the old Monk and the wandering Onmyoji standing on the side, completely ignoring them, and hurried towards the Tongshou Temple.

Her mind was totally focused on the knowledge she was about to learn.

Slurp.

Like slurping noodles, Jason ate the [Strawman] in his hand.

When his tongue touched the [Strawman], the binding straw rope melted directly, turning the strawman, which could be chewed in hand, into something as slurp-able as noodles.

And quite chewy, too.

Even a little springy.

Chapter 1084: Unexpected (2)

As for the flavor, it truly carries the essence of flour and tomato.

"Is it because it stands tall in the fields?"

Jason speculated.

The characters in front of him revealed the truth.

[Consuming 'Scarecrow' (Complete)]

[Physical Strength, Energy, and Wound Recovery Beyond the Normal Rate!]

[Satiety +200]

[Satiety: 829]

[Excitement of Feast +1]

[Excitement of Feast: 1]

...

"Excitement of Feast?"

Jason looked at the increased 'Excitement of Feast' and was momentarily stunned.

In his past 'meals', such easily obtainable food, even if provided a considerable amount of satiety, would not result in 'Excitement of Feast'.

But now?

"Is it because I have never encountered such a 'meal' of considerable extent before?"

"Or is it because the fight with Hanakaiin Itsuki also factored in 'hunting'?"

"If that's the case... perhaps the combat mode can be adjusted."

Thinking this, Jason's face revealed excitement.

Because if it was like the latter, during combat, he could completely rob... no, 'collect' items with a 'food flavor' from his enemies.

It was just a conjecture, but such a conjecture made Jason get up and pace around the room.

Plans were already forming in his mind.

It wasn't until Hui Lijing knocked on the door that Jason snapped back to reality.

Knock, knock knock.

"Jason?"

The female detective asked.

"Come in."

Jason responded, and then, looking at the entering female detective, pointed directly to a spot on the ground in the adjacent room.

"Stand here for now."

Jason commanded.

The female detective was a bit puzzled but did as she was told nonetheless.

She trusted Jason.

"What do you want to learn about the 'Mystical Side', or should I say, the 'Inside World'?"

Jason inquired.

To be serious, this was Jason's first time truly playing the role of a teacher.

He had no experience whatsoever.

He didn't know how to teach.

But with a 'promise' as a premise, he would surely do his best.

So after some thought, Jason decided to start with the female detective's interests and to teach her about what she was interested in.

Interest is the best teacher.

Jason believed in this saying.

And it would save him a lot of effort.

"Combat!"

The female detective said without hesitation.

Over the past few days, the female detective had witnessed too many incidents of the 'Mystical Side'.

Almost every one of them was a matter of life and death.

Without sufficient strength, one could indeed end up dead without a place to be buried.

Therefore, she chose combat.

Or rather...

Attack!

In the heart of the female detective, the best defense was to take the offensive.

"Combat?"

After a moment of contemplation, Jason quickly understood the female detective's thoughts and immediately asked, "Do you have a dagger or a short sword?"

"Yes!"

The female detective immediately replied.

She then took out a small dagger from within her belt and handed it to Jason.

Jason took the dagger and, after getting a feel for it, immediately launched an attack towards the side.

Whoosh!

The dagger sliced through the air, making a sharp wind sound, and the female detective's eyes widened in surprise. But before she could react, Jason stabbed out with the dagger once again.

Whoosh!

This time the dagger was even faster!

Although the female detective didn't react, she could feel the increase in speed.

A sudden acceleration?

The detective's eyes lit up.

Not a combat ignoramus, the battle-hardened female detective was well aware of the importance of this ability.

At critical moments, it could truly turn the tide.

"This technique stems from a skill developed by a friend of mine based on the understanding of long spears in the military and some assassin schools' techniques with the short sword and dagger, requiring you to..."

Jason began explaining the 'Thrust' technique to the female detective.

The female detective was quite smart; Jason only had to explain it twice before she had committed it fully to memory.

After that, she started practicing on her own.

Having it in mind and getting the hang of it were two different things.

It's a process that requires a considerable amount of time to adapt.

"This is one of the skills I promised to teach you, and another fundamental aspect of the 'Mystical Side': the Dufol Language,"

"It will be your most direct way of encountering the entities of the 'Mystical Side'."

"However, right now you need to master the 'Thrust'."

"Afterward, I will teach you again,"

Jason said this and stepped outside.

Although he didn't know how to teach, Jason wouldn't forget such basics as the Dufol Language.

And teaching 'Thrust'?

Jason definitely didn't relax his standards for the basics because of the female detective's hospitality over the past few visits.

After all, his 'core' skill, he hadn't taught at all.

Exiting the left wing room, Jason strode towards the Sutra Depository where the old monk of Tongshou Temple resided.

Since he started teaching Jason the 'Tongshou Temple Inheritance', the old monk spent most of his time there.

During this time, Jason saw He Tai standing at the doorway.

The wandering Onmyouji furrowed his brows as he watched Jason, but he didn't say anything, not until Jason's figure vanished. Only then did the wandering Onmyouji shift his gaze towards the outside.

Continuing to adhere to his principles of guarding.

Jason was fully aware of this.

But he didn't care in the least.

Because he did not sense any malice.

As for being cautious?

That should be there, of course.

It's not just the wandering Onmyouji, his level of caution is something common people do not possess.

If he has it, why can't others?

Inside the Sutra Depository, the lights shone brightly.

On the table Jason was familiar with, the old monk had lit a pot of incense.

The haze of smoke drifted around as the old monk perused the scriptures.

Not any secret scripture or arcane lore.

Just an ordinary scripture.

And he was seriously making annotations on it as he read.

Not just perfunctorily skimming through it.

Merely observing this scene, it was hard for Jason to picture the old monk as a 'fake monk' who joined the monastery mid-way through life.

"Has he completely immersed himself in the role?"

Jason thought to himself and walked over to sit across the table from the old monk.

"Master."

Seeing Jason, the old monk immediately put down the scriptures, joined his hands together, and greeted him.

"Do you really enjoy reading scriptures?"

Jason asked this after glancing at the fully annotated scriptures.

"It is what a monk should do."

"After all, I do not wish to let down the expectations of the previous Master."

"Before meeting you, Master, I will strive to maintain the reputation of Tongshou Temple."

The old monk said sincerely.

With Jason, who knew the whole story, the old monk didn't think of concealing anything.

And Jason once again reflected on the situation.

When the fake acts real, the real becomes fake.

When the real acts fake, the fake becomes real.

Unexpectedly, this saying popped into Jason's mind.

"What is it, Master?"

The old monk asked, puzzled.

"Nothing, let's continue with the inheritance."

Jason shook his head.

He didn't think he should alert the old monk to anything.

This was the old monk's own business.

And naturally, it was for the old monk to deal with on his own.

Jason just thought that the old monk was too engrossed in his role. However, what Jason completely failed to realize was that the old monk was no longer just engrossed; he had incorporated the 'role' into his life.

"Of course!"

"Master, the Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique is the core secret of Tongshou Temple, it shouldn't be taught to outsiders apart from the inheritors of Tongshou Temple," the old monk explained before teaching Jason.

Instantly, Jason understood what was going on.

The old monk was worried that he would teach Tongshou Temple's core secret to others.

To this, Jason shook his head.

"I won't."

"I will only teach it to the inheritors of Tongshou Temple."

Jason gave his assurance.

"Then let us begin!"

The old monk said and unfolded the Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique in his hands.

Meanwhile, Ryosuke had already returned to his office with Urashima.

Upon closing the door, Ryosuke looked earnestly at Urashima.

"Urashima, have you thought it through?"

"There is still a chance to withdraw now."

"Once we start... there will be no turning back."

Ryosuke inquired.

"No problem."

"I've thought it through."

"Let's begin."

Urashima nodded firmly.

Ryosuke looked at Urashima and then picked up the phone on the desk.

He dialed a number.

After a brief busy tone, the call connected.

"Hello?"

Ryosuke spoke first.

But silence came from the other end.

"Hello?"

"Is this Chief Miyamoto?"

Ryosuke asked again.

This time, the silence on the phone was broken by a pleasant voice—

"Looking for Miyamoto?"

"I'm sorry, he just died."

"I... killed him."

Chapter 1085: The Rules Changed Again!

"What?"

Ryosuke exclaimed in shock.

However, the woman's voice on the other end of the phone line did not respond any further and simply hung up.

"Hello, hello?"

Ryosuke repeatedly called out, but it was no use.

Click.

After placing the receiver back on the cradle, Ryosuke furrowed his brows, speculating about the truthfulness of what the woman's voice had just said.

Then, swiftly, Ryosuke picked up the phone again.

"Hello, this is Ryosuke."

"I just called to speak with Chief Miyamoto, something happened."

Ryosuke didn't conceal anything and recounted his recent experience in full detail.

In those brief few seconds, Ryosuke had already thought things through clearly.

Whether the woman's voice spoke the truth or not, it had 'nothing to do with him'.

He just needed to report the facts as they were.

As for the rest?

If it was false, he would continue as planned.

If it was true?

Ryosuke looked at Urashima.

Urashima had also heard the voice through the handset just moments ago.

This young police officer clearly wasn't prepared and seemed unsure of what to do next.

Now, faced with Ryosuke's gaze, Urashima stated resolutely.

"I leave it in your hands, Chief Ryosuke."

"I will follow your lead."

"Hmm."

"If it's really as I suspect... maybe, our opportunity has arrived."

Ryosuke said this.

Urashima looked puzzled, he semi-understood but, upon further thought, was again perplexed.

"Do you think the person who killed Miyamoto will only kill Miyamoto?"

Ryosuke asked in a lowered voice.

"Of course!"

"She probably had a grudge against Miyamoto and will flee after killing him!"

The young man nodded assertively.

"No!"

"She won't!"

"She's targeting the entire 'Blossom Cherry'!"

Ryosuke shook his head firmly and declared.

Seeing Ryosuke's demeanor, Urashima finally understood.

Hiss!

He sucked in a breath of cold air.

"Chief, isn't this too dangerous?"

Urashima's voice was extremely low.

At that moment, he almost wished he possessed a secret technique that would allow him to transmit his voice silently.

Because he had figured out what his chief was planning to do.

It was utterly insane!

One false move would mean utter destruction.

"It is."

"But I'm willing to take that risk!"

Determination shone in Ryosuke's eyes.

Although he still did not know why Miyamoto was killed, he knew this was his chance.

A chance to resolve the issue in the most straightforward and decisive manner possible.

Very dangerous!

But worth taking the risk!

Seeing the determination in Ryosuke's eyes, Urashima helplessly shook his head.

He knew Ryosuke all too well.

This Ryosuke, once determined, was beyond any dissuasion.

Since that's the case...

He joined.

That was his initial thought, after all.

He just didn't expect it to be so dangerous.

But no matter how dangerous, for Urashima, it was not a reason to back out.

"Count me in."

Urashima said this.

"Thank you, I..."

Ryosuke looked at his young assistant, feeling a surge of emotion. He knew how dangerous the plan was, and Urashima's complete trust in him warmed the middle-aged man's heart.

He was even somewhat at a loss for words.

"Let's get started."

"Time waits for no one."

"First, we pick a target."

Urashima was eager to get going.

"Okay."

Ryosuke nodded.

...

A tall woman dressed in black put down the phone in her hand.

Seeing her companion put down the phone, another lady couldn't help but say,

"Hui Lixiang, doing this could expose you."

The lady's voice contained no resentment, but rather a sense of regret,

As if she had missed out on some fun.

"At least it's better than introducing yourself voluntarily—don't think I don't know. If Hui Lixiang hadn't grabbed the phone first, you would have definitely been the first to pick it up and announce who you are!"

At this moment, the last lady in the room spoke.

Her voice was soft and gentle, yet there was a sense of firmness in her tone.

"Kaoru, how can you say that about me?"

"I would never do that!"

"Xin, am I right?"

The lady whose inner thoughts were revealed immediately hugged the woman with a gentle voice, started to use the facial cleanser, and turned her head to look at Hui Lixiang.

Before Hui Lijing could speak, the hugged lady's face turned red instantly.

"Stop it!"

"Let me go!"

"Yuli, you fool!"

The lady known as Kaoru said this while twisting her wrist, throwing off the lady who was hugging her.

But the lady named Yuli, who was thrown out, did not fall to the ground. Instead, with Agility, she flipped and stood firmly on the ground.

"Kaoru, you actually want to hit me, and I was even thinking of sharing my snacks with you later."

Facing her friend's words, the woman named Kaoru didn't care at all and just scoffed.

At this time, it was Hui Lixiang who stepped in.

"Alright, we need to leave."

"Those guys might be fools, but they're not idiots."

"They will act soon."

Hui Lixiang continued while walking towards the exit.

"What does it matter?"

"With my Strength, no matter how many come, I can send them flying!"

Yuli said with full energy.

"Be careful."

"According to the current information, 'Blossom Cherry' is much stronger than we thought."

"They just hid their capabilities."

The calm Kaoru reminded.

"Yes, hiding."

"So..."

"That's why we have to make them all expose themselves."

Hui Lijing said this and went to the window, leaping out.

Yuli and Kaoru, who were accompanying her, also leapt out.

The former touched her toes to the ground repeatedly, each time steady and Swift.

Chapter 1086: The Rules Changed Again! (2)

The latter was incomparably light, like a soaring swallow.

Very soon, the three of them had vanished into the afternoon sunlight.

...

[Yes/No spend 20 Satiety points, 1 Excitement of Feast point to learn Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique?]

After the old monk finished his explanation, such text appeared in front of Jason.

Jason was not surprised.

He had guessed as much before.

And now, it was just confirmation.

"Yes."

Jason gave a positive answer.

[Spent 20 Satiety points, 1 Excitement of Feast point to learn the basics of Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique.]

[Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique (Basic): This is a secret technique passed down from the first Master of Tongshou Temple, 'Ming Wang.' It's a unique technique created by the Master combining several secret techniques, which can gather special strength and attach a 'dragon form' to the body, greatly enhancing the user's capabilities; Effect: Consumes a certain amount of Physical Strength, with a 3-second preparation time, gains a +0.2 bonus to all attributes, continuously losing Physical Strength during the duration.]

(Note: Its dragon form is just a shape, not an actual dragon in the literal sense.)

...

Looking at the detailed explanation of the Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique, Jason's eyes lit up.

His gaze was fixed on the all attributes +0.2.

If the basic level increases all attributes by 0.2, then... what about at the Master level? The Transcendent level?

How much will the attributes increase?

Will there be more special effects?

The thought excited Jason.

However, when he saw that raising the Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique from basic to entry level required 30 Satiety points and 2 Excitement of Feast points, he quickly calmed down.

Satiety points are easy to obtain.

Excitement of Feast?

Too difficult.

Especially for Jason, Excitement of Feast was never enough; he was always in a state of shortage.

"I need more 'hunting'!"

Jason thought silently.

And the old monk of Tongshou Temple once again sighed with admiration.

Jason truly has extraordinary talent!

Starting from the [Substitute Hair], although it wasn't the first time he had sensed Jason's immense talent.

But each time he saw it, the old monk of Tongshou Temple couldn't help but exclaim again.

"Indeed, my choice was right."

"Entrusting Tongshou Temple to a true Master like Jason is the most correct decision."

"I, the imposter, can finally retire."

With this thought, the old monk of Tongshou Temple genuinely felt relieved at heart.

He could already imagine the unshakeable state of Tongshou Temple as time passed and Jason grew stronger step by step.

And it wouldn't be long.

Ten years!

Fifteen years!

At most, no more than twenty years!

Jason would be able to reach the average level of past Masters of Tongshou Temple.

Even, he could be on par with the second and third-generation Masters.

By then, he could close his eyes in peace.

Thinking of the beautiful future, the old monk of Tongshou Temple couldn't help but curve his lips into a smile.

But then, he immediately remembered the troubles that Jason is facing now.

"Master, please be extremely careful."

"The Hanakaiin Family's trial for the branch family to 'take over the main house' is far crueler than you can imagine."

"And far more... sinister."

The old monk chose his words carefully before using that term.

"I have already felt it."

Jason replied.

The fact that the invitation from Hanakaiin Haru had mysteriously disappeared said it all.

And the 'wildcard' competition tonight further clarified things for Jason.

"This is just the beginning."

"Or rather..."

"What is given is always what they want the Master to see, and what remains hidden is truly what they care about."

The old monk reminded.

"I understand."

"Tonight's fight, how could they simply notify us so straightforwardly."

"It's nothing more than an early notice of the new rules to disrupt our 'Xin', to make us 'actively adapt' to the new rules, but when we arrive at the scene, they'll simply change the rules again."

Jason said with a smile.

When he first heard the new rules, Jason had already made similar speculations.

It seemed incredulous and shameless to ordinary people.

But to Jason, it was just commonplace.

Because, in the Nightless City, such things are too common.

"Master, you are truly wise."

The old monk initially wanted to remind Jason again, but after hearing Jason's words, he just smiled and brought his hands together in a sign of respect.

What he wanted to say, Jason had already understood on his own.

It couldn't be better.

What's left?

The old monk also believed that Jason would do well enough.

Of course, when Jason left, the old monk still made a final reminder.

"Master, you are still young."

"The gains and losses at the moment don't amount to much."

"What is most important, is to stay alive."

"Only by staying alive do you have everything."

"Only by staying alive can you witness miracles."

The old monk said earnestly.

"Of course."

Jason responded even more earnestly.

Nobody understood the significance of 'staying alive' better than Jason.

If he didn't stay alive, how could he return home?

If he didn't stay alive, how could he avenge the old Earl?

If he didn't stay alive, how could he taste those foods he'd never tried?

Staying alive was too important.

Therefore, strength was too important.

To stay alive, and to live better, he must become powerful!

Become powerful time and time again.

Powerful enough to live freely.

The old monk watched Jason's retreating figure leaving the Sutra Depository, and he could clearly feel that Jason had become a bit firmer once again.

It was obviously a strengthening of the mind.

"Master, do you have a goal?"

Chapter 1087: The Rules Changed Again! (3)

"I'm prepared to move forward resolutely."

"That's really great."

The old monk thought silently in his heart.

No one knew better than he did how fortunate a person with a goal was.

Even the heavens would lend their aid.

After watching Jason leave, the old monk turned and went back to the Sutra Depository.

He carefully placed the heritage of the Tongshou Temple back on the shelves, and then once again took out the scripture he was previously reading.

Once more, the old monk read and noted his insights.

An inexplicable aura began to emanate from him.

The aura spread without chaos.

As time passed, it even started to solidify around the old monk, bit by bit.

Not fast.

Yet not slow either.

However, as the old monk finished flipping through the scripture, everything dissipated.

The old monk appeared to be unaware.

He stood up, returned the scripture to the shelf, and took out another one, immersing himself in reading once again.

In fact, this was not his first time reading it.

But every so often, he would read it again.

And he would discover new insights.

This made him doubt once more just how poor his talent was.

Others could comprehend in one reading what he could not, even after so many attempts.

Indeed, he was not cut out to be a monk.

Again, the old monk exclaimed such a sentiment.

...

At night, Hanakaiin Haru's driver picked up Jason and Miss Sagaraso.

"Good evening."

Sitting in the back seat, Hanakaiin Haru greeted her two teammates.

At this moment, Hanakaiin Haru was not dressed in casual clothes like she usually was but wore the hunting costume of an Onmyoji, adorned with extra accessories that particularly caught Jason's eye.

With great willpower, Jason managed to avert his gaze.

"Good evening."

Miss Sagaraso greeted them in a casual manner.

She was dressed in sportswear, her hands wrapped in boxing tape, showing no signs of nervousness.

Jason?

As usual.

Plain clothes, a backpack with his machete and mask, and a fragrant gourd hanging at his waist.

Hanakaiin Haru scanned the condition of her two teammates with her eyes.

Upon seeing that there were no issues with the two, she nodded.

"Drive!"

At Hanakaiin Haru's command, the car started.

At the same time, Hanakaiin Haru began sharing more specific information.

"This wildcard competition will be held on a ship, with around 200 participants! Those bastards really think highly of me; many are people from the Inside World, and there are quite a few well-known ones at that. We must be cau..."

Ding-a-ling-ling!

Before Hanakaiin Haru could finish speaking, the car's phone rang.

The young Onmyoji answered the call, and the next moment, her face turned ugly.

Thud!

She almost threw the receiver onto the base, anger written all over her face.

"How dare they!"

"How dare they!"

Hanakaiin Haru roared.

After a full four seconds, Hanakaiin Haru calmed down. She looked at Jason with his usual calm expression and the puzzled Miss Sagaraso, saying—

"The venue hasn't changed; it's still on that ship."

"However, the time has been delayed until just before dawn."

"Because they've changed the rules again—we not only have to defeat those bastards, but we also have a time limit: 1 hour!"

"When the sun fully rises above the sea level, if we haven't won by then... that ship will explode."

"They delayed the time just to install enough bombs!"

"Damn bastards!"

With that, Hanakaiin Haru cursed once more.

Jason's expression was somewhat inscrutable.

He murmured softly.

Dawn, huh?

Chapter 1088: Board the Ship!

Squeak!

The car came to a steady stop at what appeared to be an abandoned dock.

A man in a black suit wearing a white mask walked over, bent down, and directly opened the car door.

"Welcome, Master Haru."

The man wearing a completely white, unadorned mask that only revealed a pair of curved eyes spoke respectfully.

Because the mask had no mouth, his respectful voice carried a strange buzzing sound.

Hanakaiin Haru, with a gloomy face, stepped out of the car, completely ignoring the other person.

This young member of the Hanakaiin Family was once again infuriated.

Despite repeatedly telling himself to stay calm and not let anger cloud his judgment.

But the other party was simply too shameless!

They had changed the rules for the wildcard game once again.

And it was a killing blow of a change.

One hour of time.

If victory is not achieved within one hour, a bomb will detonate.

The location is set on a ship.

This, truly, is a killing blow!

Hanakaiin Haru was very confident in his own abilities, as well as Jason's, but he wasn't so blind as to think that he and Jason could take down 200 opponents within 1 hour.

If they were regular people, he had no doubt.

But among these 200 people were quite a few well-known figures in 'Inside World'.

'Inside World' was a very realistic place.

There, fame equates to strength.

Perhaps none of these individuals could match him or Jason individually, but what about if they teamed up?

And their union was destined!

After all, from start to finish, this was a game devised against him.

These guys would team up.

They would work together against him and his teammate.

If they fought head-on, his team was no match at all.

And buying time?

That bomb was clearly prepared for such a scenario.

"Damn it!"

Hanakaiin Haru gritted his teeth, his voice popping out between them.

The man in the black suit with the white mask heard such a sound, but acted as though he didn't.

As the guide for this wildcard game, he knew exactly what he was supposed to do.

"Please follow me."

With that, the man in the suit bowed once again.

Impeccable etiquette was the surefire choice to avoid harm.

This guide certainly did not wish to become the target of someone's displaced anger.

He had only just found out about the rule change for the 'Group Stage (Wildcard)' himself.

Almost the instant he learned of it, the guide sensed a conspiracy.

If it hadn't been firmly stipulated earlier that guides could not be changed on the fly, he would have left immediately.

Unfortunately, there was no way for him to make a last-minute switch.

Everything about 'The King of Fighters Tournament' had already been decided three months ago.

Including every single guide.

At this point, if he suddenly had 'something come up', then he truly would 'have something come up'.

To gamble on chance?

He certainly understood the principle that trying his luck could lead to his demise.

So, at this time, he could only hope that Hanakaiin Haru was a 'good-tempered' person.

At the same time, to increase the chances of Hanakaiin Haru having a 'good temper', he behaved even more humbly.

He walked as silently as possible.

He spoke as softly as possible.

Moreover, from beginning to end, he kept his waist bent.

Perhaps the guide's behavior had an effect; though Hanakaiin Haru remained quite angry throughout, by the time they reached the players' 'rest room,' he hadn't shown any signs of excessive behavior.

"This is the place."

"It's a temporary setup and not very accommodating, please forgive us."

Standing in front of a motorhome, the guide bowed to a 90 degree angle before speaking.

"Temporary?"

"Huh."

Hanakaiin Haru snorted coldly.

The guide felt his heart skip a beat.

He wished he could slap himself.

Why mention 'temporary'? Wasn't he just making things difficult for himself?

Thankfully, Hanakaiin Haru only let out a cold snort and did not proceed further.

Watching Hanakaiin Haru walk into the motorhome, the guide heaved a long sigh of relief, bowed to Jason and Miss Sagaraso, and then took his leave.

Not by turning and walking away.

But by retreating step by step, a full 10 meters, before finally turning around.

Jason glanced at the man then turned and boarded the motorhome.

In Jason's eyes, a flash of delight passed by.

On that black-suited man, there was a faint scent of 'food.'

Not originating from the man himself, but rather something he had picked up.

More importantly, these scents were very fresh.

The man was undoubtedly a guide or similar figure for this 'Group Stage (Wildcard)'.

Hence, the answer was obvious.

There were at least eleven participants in this 'Group Stage (Wildcard)' who were carrying 'food.'

'Food' represents satiety.

For Jason, the more satiety, the better.

Especially if he can also get a taste of 'food.'

This is just great!

Of course, some things still needed confirmation.

"Wow!"

Just as Jason boarded the motorhome, Miss Sagaraso let out a cheer.

Followed by even louder exclamations.

"This is just too luxurious!"

Miss Sagaraso looked at the independent dining table and six chairs in front of her, she touched the floral tablecloth, then the vase and fruit on the table, and then directly opened the double-door fridge to one side.

It was fully stocked inside.

All sorts of food.

There was raw meat, as well as ready-made meals.

The open-plan kitchen beside it reminded Miss Sagaraso of those in upscale apartments.

What surprised Miss Sagaraso the most was that the motorhome actually had three bedrooms!

Chapter 1089: Boarding the Ship! (2)

Double bed, bedside table, vanity table, and so on, the bedroom has them all!

But what shocked Sagaraso the most was that upon going up the stairs to the second floor, on the second level of the RV, there was a balcony area similar to an observation deck, and the back half was actually... a karaoke room.

After testing the sound system, Sagaraso suddenly fell in love with the place.

However, a question also appeared in her mind.

"Are we driving? Or are we operating... a room?"

With her question in mind, Sagaraso ran down from the second floor.

"Mr. Haru! Mr. Haru!"

Sagaraso addressed Hanakaiin Haru in her own way.

"What's wrong, Sagaraso?"

Even though he was annoyed, Hanakaiin Haru still had a smile when facing his teammate.

Because, he knew that all this wasn't caused by his teammate.

And also, he trusted the teammate in front of him.

"If we win, can I exchange the reward you give me for this vehicle? If the reward is not enough, I can top it up for you."

Sagaraso said so.

Very naive.

And a bit cute.

This caused Hanakaiin Haru's angry and frustrated heart to ease a bit.

He looked at Sagaraso and started to smile.

Not that polite, instinctive smile.

But a smile that came from the heart.

"No need, I'll give you one later."

Hanakaiin Haru said.

"Huh?"

"This, this..."

Sagaraso was stunned.

The carefree girl didn't know how to respond, she did want the car, but felt uncomfortable accepting it directly, so after thinking hard, she straightforwardly said: "I will try my best in the competition! I won't let this car down!"

But Hanakaiin Haru shook his head.

This young Onmyoji took a deep breath and said.

"No need!"

"We're withdrawing from the competition!"

"What?!"

Sagaraso shouted.

It was twice as loud as her prior cheers.

"Why?"

She looked at Hanakaiin Haru puzzled.

Because, this is an absolute trap!

Once stepped in, it would mean total destruction.

Hanakaiin Haru wanted to say this, but the words at the tip of his tongue turned into—

"My skills are too poor."

"I can't handle it."

Hanakaiin Haru said.

"I'm poor too, but Jason is very strong!"

"With Jason here, it will definitely be okay!"

Sagaraso, somehow entirely confident in her foodie friend.

Under normal circumstances, having Jason around might increase the odds of winning by at least twenty percent.

But that's under normal circumstances.

Now?

Even Jason would be of no use.

Moreover, with Jason's keen observation, he must have noticed the current predicament.

He would surely choose to retreat.

Thinking this, Hanakaiin Haru's gaze turned towards Jason.

Then, Hanakaiin Haru was stunned.

He did not see the anticipated reluctant and compromising expression.

He saw excitement!

Subtle enthusiasm that overflowed from his face!

This?

Just as Hanakaiin Haru was utterly surprised, Jason spoke.

"'King of Fighters - King of Fist Competition' spoils go to whom?"

Jason asked.

"Spoils?"

Hanakaiin Haru was stunned, unsure why Jason would ask this question at this time, but still followed up saying: "The spoils go to the winner, this is a rule that has been passed down since the Warring States period, and..."

Upon saying this, Hanakaiin Haru paused.

He seemed to realize something, and a self-mocking smile appeared on the face of the young Onmyoji.

"If there wasn't such a rule, those bastards probably wouldn't be so eager to participate in this preliminary round of the group competition."

"They are here not only for my life but also for the artifacts on me."

"A bunch of vultures!"

The young Onmyoji's words gradually became chilly.

Dangerous sparks flickered in his eyes.

Hanakaiin Haru could already completely imagine the situation he would face after giving up the competition.

Condemnation from the family.

Disappointment from his father.

He was fearless of the former, but the latter was intolerable.

Therefore, he prepared to play big.

If the rules changed, then he wouldn't abide by the rules anymore.

You take my 'car' on the chessboard, I'll flip your chessboard and cover your face with it!

With such straightforward thoughts, Hanakaiin Haru clenched his fists.

He planned to start from here!

Right here!

Turn the 'King of Fighters - King of Fist Competition' upside down.

Then, return to the main family.

He plans to use the current Family Head's head to wash away the humiliation.

"Jason, I..."

"From now on, leave it to me!"

"Act according to my instructions."

Jason interrupted Hanakaiin Haru's words.

The young Onmyoji was taken aback.

"You're not planning to give up?"

Hanakaiin Haru asked.

"Give up?"

"Why should I give up?"

"The hunt has just begun!"

Jason retorted.

"But, but..."

Hanakaiin Haru's words started to stammer.

He couldn't believe that Jason couldn't see the 'hopeless situation' in front of them.

If Jason could see it, why would he still do this?

Could it be that Jason was bribed?

Almost immediately, the young Onmyoji thought of this, but then shook his head. From previous observations, he didn't believe Jason was that kind of person.

More importantly, he trusted Master Tongshou Temple.

He believed that a master of such character would never choose someone unreliable as his successor.

Putting that aside, there was only one possibility left...

Jason was confident in handling the current situation!

But how could Jason possibly handle it?

200 enemies.

Not ordinary people.

All are close to the 'Inside World', or from the 'Inside World'.

How could one defeat such enemies within 1 hour?

It can't possibly be done with a single sword stroke, cutting through them like mowing grass, right?

A swordsman couldn't achieve such a thing.

Even a great swordsman would find it beyond his reach.

Sword Saint!

Only the legendary peerless Sword Saint could possibly achieve such a feat.

But... Is Jason a Sword Saint?

Or is it something else?

Whew!

Hanakaiin Haru took a deep breath and looked at Jason.

"I didn't expect, Jason, that you had already mastered the true 'Immovable King's Body.'"

"If that's the case..."

"We still have a chance of winning!"

Hanakaiin Haru said as he began to contemplate deeply.

He wanted to devise a relatively perfect plan to maximize the effect of the 'Immovable King's Body.'

Unlike ordinary people of the 'Inside World', who only know the strong defensive power of the 'Immovable King's Body,' as a heir of a branch family of Hanakaiin, he clearly understood what the essence of the 'Immovable King's Body' was.

Strong defense is just the basics!

What really shows its power is... reflected damage!

Reflecting the damage back to the attacker!

This is what truly makes the 'Immovable King's Body' terrifying.

"If we can lure enough people to attack Jason, we could secure a significant advantage in the first instance!"

"Just by reducing their numbers by half, no, by just one-third, we might not be without a chance to win!"

"Just..."

Recalling something, Hanakaiin Haru looked up at Jason again.

"Are you sure there's no problem with this plan?"

Hanakaiin Haru asked.

Since Jason hadn't shown the true capabilities of the 'Immovable King's Body', he naturally had his own plans.

Or other motives.

Or it was Master Tongshou Temple's instruction.

Whichever it was, it needed to be kept secret.

Is it worth exposing for this...

"No problem."

While Hanakaiin Haru was anxious and hesitating, Jason answered very succinctly.

It's just a trump card.

And it needs the right timing.

If not now, then when?

Moreover, there would be a batch of food coming into play.

It really couldn't get any better.

But as soon as Jason finished speaking, he noticed Hanakaiin Haru looking at him with moved eyes.

"Jason, I, I didn't expect you would go to this extent for me."

"I swear by the name of Hanakaiin Haru, if you do not fail me, I will never fail you!"

"If I break this oath, may thunder strike me!"

Hanakaiin Haru said very formally.

Jason nodded subtly without any expression.

He knew that Hanakaiin Haru had been involuntarily influenced by 'Cat Hole.'

It didn't matter.

He was used to it.

Now he just wanted to quickly 'hunt' that food.

As Jason eagerly anticipated, time passed second by second, until finally a horn sounded in the distance.

Whoo!

Amidst the dull sound of the horn, a large ship slowly approached the shore under the cover of night.

On the bow, it prominently displayed—

Fated!

Chapter 1090: A Sword Emerges—

The bow of the ship bore the words 'Fatal', scrawled carelessly but exuding a fierce aura.

Some of the mere staff, upon seeing this, couldn't help but repeatedly retreat, with some even falling to the ground.

Due to the sound of the steam whistle, the contestants coming out from the various temporary 'player rooms' had also turned serious.

As people of the 'Inside World', they understood the meaning of these two words even better.

"If we continue to spill fresh blood...perhaps a monster will be born?"

"It should be said, it's already a half-monster."

"Just by words alone, it wouldn't have such a presence."

"Is the person hosting 'King of Fighters – The Boxing Competition' using the blood of contestants to cultivate his own Shikigami?"

"Heh, Shikigami? You've got guts to say that."

"It's just recycling waste at most."

"We're all going to die, why not let someone make use of it?"

"Otherwise, how could there be such high prize money and so many valuable items appearing in the 'King of Fighters – The Boxing Competition'?"

"Right."

"As long as the championship is mine, what else matters."

"Championship?"

"That's mine."

"It's mine."

The crowd buzzed with discussion.

Quickly, surprise turned into argument.

And the argument made the atmosphere at the dock instantly tense.

Amidst the drawn swords and ready bows, many were eager to fight.

They had come to participate in the preliminary rounds, but they didn't mind starting a fight first.

Hanakaiin Haru narrowed her eyes scanning the scene at the dock, whispering in a voice audible only to her, Jason, and Miss Sagaraso: "Be careful, someone is deliberately causing trouble."

"Hmm!"

Miss Sagaraso nodded, her longest strands of hair now half-erect, like semi-pulled antennae.

Upon sighting the ship named 'Fatal', Miss Sagaraso adopted this expression.

The aura the ship brought made her vigilant.

And Jason?

His eyes revealed surprise.

A surprise that was delightful.

He looked at the ship unconsciously swallowing his saliva.

Although faint and somewhat mixed, the scent of 'food' never changes.

The ship had a faint scent of food.

Excellent!

The corners of Jason's mouth couldn't help curling up.

And deep inside, Jason came up with a plan.

Perhaps...

This 'half-food' can be turned into real 'food'.

To make it even more delicious.

Thinking this, Jason's gaze turned towards the crowd.

His gaze swept over them one by one.

Well hidden, these people did not notice, but Hanakaiin Haru standing beside Jason saw everything clearly.

"No need to look further, Jason."

"That guy is hiding very well."

"After speaking, he concealed himself."

Hanakaiin Haru said, her face growing darker.

As an Onmyoji with a proper lineage, Hanakaiin Haru had considerable insight and observation; she could confirm that the ship named 'Fatal' was about to become a 'monster'.

Just a bit more fresh blood will do.

Especially the blood of 'Inside World' members.

Fighting on a ship about to become a 'monster'.

Hanakaiin Haru could guess the likely outcome just by thinking about it.

A backup!

Even if they beat these enemies within the allotted time, and according to the rules the bomb wouldn't explode, a ship that's just become a 'monster' would bring unexpected changes.

Making everything uncontrollable.

"Damn it."

Hanakaiin Haru cursed internally.

His killing intent towards those bastards grew stronger.

At this moment, Jason withdrew his gaze.

"Is it about to become a monster?"

Jason inquired.

"Yeah."

"About 500 more ordinary people's blood is needed to become a monster."

"But, judging by the current situation, just 50-60 members of 'Inside World' will suffice."

Hanakaiin Haru replied and was about to once again persuade Jason to abandon the competition.

It was clear now, those bastards never intended for him to win.

In this carefully laid trap, he couldn't possibly win.

It would only lead to death.

However, before Hanakaiin Haru could speak, she saw excitement on Jason's face.

Such excitement made Hanakaiin Haru stunned.

Why be excited?

Facing such a desperate situation, even if not hopeless, one should be annoyed.

Could it be...

Unyielding!

The greater the difficulty, the more it's worth conquering?

Somewhat unexpectedly, Hanakaiin Haru thought of something.

Instantly, his gaze towards Jason changed.

It became more admiring.

Yes!

Only someone holding such beliefs could successfully cultivate the Immovable King's Body, the secret technique of Tongshou Temple.

Only someone with such beliefs would be seen as a successor by Master Tongshou Temple.

"Again?"

"Really becoming more and more professional!"

Feeling the gaze of Hanakaiin Haru, Jason couldn't help but make an inward comment.

Even though he was accustomed to this, he had never seen anyone evolve as quickly as Hanakaiin Haru.

Tap, tap, tap!

The friction of dress shoes against the dock surface as the previously masked man in a suit appeared again.

"Master Haru, are you ready?"

The man in the suit asked cautiously.

He really didn't want to appear in front of Hanakaiin Haru again, but as the guide, he had to come.

This situation of being blamed at any moment yet unable to resist was truly unnerving.

When the man in the suit looked at Hanakaiin Haru, Hanakaiin Haru's gaze was fixed on Jason, and upon seeing no response from Jason, Hanakaiin Haru gritted his teeth and nodded.