

Menu 1151

Chapter 1151: The Hunter in the Foggy Night

It's misting?

The elder samurai glanced around and casually shook his head.

"Here, it's normal for the mist to rise in the evening or morning, isn't it?"

"If there's a day without it, that would be unusual."

The elder samurai didn't take it to heart at all.

"True."

"But this clammy feeling is too unpleasant."

"How about we grab a drink after the mission?"

The younger samurai nodded and then broke into a knowing smile. Lowering his voice, he said to the elder samurai, "I heard they've brought in a batch of 'new goods.'"

"They went 'hunting' again?"

"We had agreed to go together."

"Why did they act on their own again? Honestly."

Hearing this, the elder samurai's interest was piqued. Though he complained aloud, his eyes betrayed his joy and excitement.

"Because opportunities are rare. There used to be regular 'hunts,' but now it's become sporadic, hard to organize—those commoners really think they've become the masters of this land... tch."

The younger samurai spat on the ground.

"Hah, just a mob of fools."

"With so many people disappearing every year, they can't do a thing."

"But this time, it's your turn to treat."

The elder samurai replied with disdain.

For men like them, who inherited a long lineage of superiority since the Warring States period, commoners were never considered human.

In the glorious days of their ancestors, these peasants could be used as live targets to test their blades at will. Occasionally brewing bone tea from human remains and listening to screams in boiling cauldrons—now that was refinement.

But now? Even taking liberties with the peasants' wives and daughters had to be done with caution.

They even had to spend money.

It was truly disheartening to him.

"If only I could restore the glory of our ancestors!"

The elder samurai murmured under his breath.

Then, he suddenly realized his companion had gone silent.

"Why aren't you saying anything?"

"It's just one night of drinking, isn't it?"

"Last time, I was the one who paid... ugh!"

The elder samurai spoke as he turned his head.

And then, he saw a tall figure wearing a hockey mask.

His partner's head had already been severed, the body collapsing onto the ground.

A bloodstained blade was cutting toward him.

The elder samurai instinctively raised his weapon to resist, but Jason's strike was far too swift.

"Ah!"

Splurt!

In the abrupt silence of his scream, the elder samurai's head also tumbled to the ground.

His eyes widened in death, unseeing, unaccepting.

Jason didn't spare him another glance. With a flick of his wrist, the blood slid cleanly off the blade onto the ground.

Then, he moved toward his next target.

The next group was less than a hundred meters away, yet they remained utterly oblivious to the sound of blades slicing, bodies collapsing, or screams of agony.

No, they truly couldn't hear anything!

[Silence Technique]!

The legacy of Tongshou Temple played a critical role at this moment.

Paired with [Mist Concealment], creating an enveloping fog, Jason—whose mastery of stealth and camouflage had already transcended beyond the realm of the Transcendent to almost complete 'invisibility'—was unstoppable.

Not only had his presence vanished.

So had his sound.

The simple [Mist Concealment], while not as deadly as poisonous fog, could be devastating when wielded properly under the right circumstances.

Just as it was now—

One group, two groups, three groups...

Under the mist's shroud, these samurai fell one by one.

And of course, so did the ninja.

Compared to the clanking armor of the samurai, the lightly dressed, unarmored ninja were even easier targets for Jason.

Within the mist and under the cover of [Silence Technique], a single [Charge] followed by [Whirlwind Dance] was enough for Jason to annihilate an entire squad of ninja.

It couldn't have been easier.

Time ticked by, second by second.

The number of samurai and ninja fell drastically.

After just ten minutes, even the dumbest among them realized something was wrong.

"Stay alert! Stay alert!"

The leading Onmyoji shouted loudly.

"Understood!"

"Understood!"

Both samurai and ninja replied, one after another.

But it was useless.

The mist produced by [Mist Concealment] had long since blended seamlessly with the natural fog surrounding them.

Even if the samurai and ninja widened their eyes, they couldn't tell what was different.

In fact, in some sense, they couldn't see clearly at all.

And then?

A flash of the blade.

A head flew.

A group of samurai, standing back-to-back for better defense against any surprise attacks, suffered the same fate.

When the blade struck—

Two heads were severed at once.

Thud, thud.

Their bodies dropped simultaneously to the ground.

A team of ninja carefully formed a formation under the instructions of their leader.

"Everyone, stay vigilant."

"This is a cunning hun—"

As the leader ninja was about to finish speaking, a large, powerful hand suddenly seized his head and dragged him straight into the dense fog.

Plop.

The leader ninja's radio dropped to the ground.

"What happened?"

The Onmyoji shouted loudly.

"There's... there's... ah!"

A stammering voice came through the radio before ending abruptly in a scream.

With the radio transmitting, everyone heard the scream.

Unconsciously, their bodies stiffened.

Dread began to seep into the hearts of the samurai and ninja.

Their faces showed terror.

No different from ordinary men.

Chapter 1152: The Misty Night Hunter (2)

It's completely identical.

Thinking you're impervious to fear?

That only holds true when your overwhelming strength faces ordinary people.

When there's no disparity in power, they're just like anyone else.

But when their strength is far inferior to their target, what they experience is the same fear that ordinary people feel facing them.

Hunter and prey—it's never absolute.

From the moment they arrived here, it was all already predetermined.

Spurt!

"Ah!"

Another death wail transmitted through radio static.

The remaining Samurai and Ninja shuddered again.

How many times has this happened?

How many have died?

How many are left?

Shrouded in mist and dense fog, they couldn't discern how many had fallen or how many remained on their side.

This deepened their fear even further.

"Don't panic!"

"It's his trick!"

"Everyone, don't fall for it!"

The leading Onmyoji shouted loudly in an attempt to rally them.

Jason, who held the radio receiver, heard the call clearly and smirked beneath his mask.

Just as the Onmyoji claimed, he was inducing panic.

Although he never took these Samurai and Ninja seriously—as a direct confrontation would mean easy victory—he hadn't forgotten about the eleven Onmyoji.

Jason understood very well that these Samurai and Ninja were nothing more than "bait."

Bait to lure him out.

Bait to stall his actions.

The true threat was those eleven Onmyoji.

Standing in the shadows, Jason's gaze slipped past the remaining Samurai and Ninja and locked onto the eleven Onmyoji. He then deeply inhaled.

The aroma of "food."

Though not overwhelming, it was abundant enough.

Each of them carried items worthy of being called "food," some with one or two, while the leader alone carried four such treasures.

This left Jason salivating.

He wanted a taste.

Surely, it would be delicious!

The craving in his heart, tangible as steel, glinted through his eyes.

Especially the lead Onmyoji—their hair stood on end instantly.

Danger!

A perception sharper than ordinary senses alerted them to subtle unrest.

Pressure!

An inability to breathe!

The lead Onmyoji looked at his companions, and the ten alongside him turned to meet his gaze.

Eleven pairs of eyes exchanged glances and then nodded sharply.

They knew—they couldn't wait any longer.

Since the initial bait was ineffective, there was only one option left: brute force.

With no hesitation, the barrier dissolved.

Although they had promised their collaborators, at this critical juncture, the Hanakaiin Family's Onmyoji could no longer afford such concerns.

Three Onmyoji began chanting simultaneously.

A surge of cold, violent energy immediately erupted.

Then—

Three 3-meter-tall Oni emerged, their skin a deep scarlet, horns protruding from their foreheads, dagger-like fangs gleaming, their hulking frames clad with beast-hide skirts at the waist and wielding Wolf Fang Clubs.

Jason had seen them once before.

The taste remained vivid in his memory.

It was the flavor of spicy duck neck.

And now, there were three more.

Instantly, Jason abandoned his original plan to cut them down directly.

He sheathed his broad-bladed short-handled machete at his side, crouched slightly, and launched like an arrow from a bow.

"Three Oni are enough to keep that guy tied down."

The lead Onmyoji declared confidently.

Unlike humans, these Oni could effortlessly find a person even in thick fog.

Jason, this self-proclaimed Sword Saint, had only blindsided them with tricks and manipulation.

All they needed was to locate him.

Then everything would change.

With this thought, the lead Onmyoji's confidence grew even stronger.

"Let's begin the next phase..."

Bam!

Bam-bam!

Before finishing his sentence, a series of muffled impacts cut him off.

The eleven Onmyoji stared ahead in shock.

Their faces were filled with disbelief.

What were they witnessing?

A figure had suddenly burst through the dense fog, colliding full force with one of the Oni. The immense creature toppled backward into the second Oni behind it, which then crashed into the third Oni.

The overwhelming force sent the three Oni rolling wildly like giant gourds.

Bodies tumbling.

Wolf Fang Clubs spinning.

But the hulking figures quickly came to a halt.

Not voluntarily.

But because a hand had grabbed one of their ankles.

The hand, disproportionately small when compared to the ankle it clutched, was possessed of power and tenacity unmatched by the limb it restrained.

Snap!

With a crisp sound, one Oni's ankle was crushed instantly. Soon, the other two Oni suffered the same fate.

Three ankles, accompanied by three legs, twisted and braided together in Jason's grip like tangled rope.

Jason held them in one hand, turned, and glanced at the eleven Onmyoji.

"Your turn."

Speaking these words, Jason dragged the three Oni into the mist.

As if nothing had occurred at all.

Yet the Wolf Fang Clubs scattered on the ground told the eleven Onmyoji otherwise—what they'd seen was real.

In just one exchange, three Oni had been felled.

Not only defeated but dragged into the mist.

The entire process lasted no more than two seconds.

They hadn't even had time to react.

Whoosh!

The night wind blew through, and the eleven Onmyoji shivered involuntarily.

It wasn't just the chill of the night air.

Their hearts were colder.

The scene they'd just witnessed clearly told them—if Jason wanted to kill them, it would be effortless.

Like that sudden ambush.

If Jason had aimed for them instead of the Oni, what would've happened?

Death!

Recalling Jason's speed during his sudden appearance and the force exhibited upon collision, this answer surfaced unyieldingly in the hearts of the eleven Onmyoji.

Without hesitation, a chorus of chanting emerged.

Defensive arrays appeared one after another.

Layer upon layer stacked on top of one another.

Only when the eleven Onmyoji finally felt secure did they stop.

The lead Onmyoji exhaled quietly.

He wasn't inexperienced in combat.

Taking advantage of numbers had always ensured easy victories for him.

Often, he didn't even need to act.

Watching the Samurai and Ninja fight was often enough.

This time, facing the so-called Sword Saint, he recognized it as an entirely different battle, so he had made significant preparations—well-thought and comprehensive.

He'd brought three times the usual manpower.

Including ten other Onmyoji.

He deemed this infallible.

But now, it seemed it was all just his assumption.

Suddenly, the lead Onmyoji began considering retreat.

But...

Thinking of the clan leader.

He immediately dismissed the thought.

He wouldn't risk living a fate worse than death.

So combat was his only choice.

And victory was imperative.

The lead Onmyoji glanced around at his companions, their fear still lingering in their eyes, then straightened his back and shouted: "We were merely caught off guard just now. Now, with our solid defenses, we're standing in an impregnable position. No matter how strong he is, he can't possibly break through the layered defenses of eleven of us in one strike."

"Additionally!"

"We have our advantages too!"

"If regular Oni aren't enough!"

"Then we'll summon Greater Oni!"

"Moreover, our Onmyoji arts are the most powerful!"

"As long as we maintain distance, we can exhaust him to death if need be!"

"Don't forget your past experiences!"

"Now, everyone, muster yourselves!"

The lead Onmyoji roused the others.

Jason heard this.

But he didn't care.

Flames danced in his hands—the Oni were cooked quickly.

The aroma of spicy duck neck returned once again.

Three spicy duck necks now; the joy was tripled.

90 points of satiation gained.

Jason wiped his mouth and stared at the Greater Oni the Onmyoji had summoned.

Standing 10 meters tall, blackened crimson skin, corded muscles, malevolent expression, and holding a Wolf Fang Club five meters long; every casual swing stirred a bone-chilling gust of wind.

Currently, this Greater Oni was advancing directly toward Jason.

"I wonder what you'll taste like?"

Jason's heart swelled with anticipation; he showed no intention of avoiding its oncoming strength, merely standing there awaiting it.

Though Jason's gaze shifted slightly—

"Finally losing their patience, huh?"

Chapter 1153: The Real Bait!

In Jason's field of vision, far beyond the reach of the average person's sight, a strange-looking missile was swiftly approaching.

In just two seconds, the Onmyoji also realized something was amiss.

When they saw the missile, their expressions changed drastically.

"Defend!"

The leading Onmyoji shouted, swiftly forming seals with his hands.

The surrounding Onmyoji no longer held back.

Layer upon layer of defenses began to stack up.

However, just as the missile reached the sky above them, the warhead split apart.

Woo-woo-woo-woo!

Hundreds of smaller round bombs rained down.

Immediately, all the Onmyoji turned pale as a sheet.

Cluster bombs!

Although they adhered to traditions, it didn't mean the Onmyoji had cut ties with the outside world. In fact, they were even more concerned about the development of 'gunpowder' than regular people.

Because that was precisely what had once overturned their rule.

For this reason, they deeply understood the destructive power of cluster bombs.

Wider range, stronger penetration.

If possible, avoid direct confrontation at all costs.

But now...

They had no choice but to stand their ground.

"Increase the defense!"

The leading Onmyoji gritted his teeth and commanded.

Perhaps at this point, it was akin to a futile attempt to stop a flood with a cup of water.

But even the slightest additional defense was welcome.

The other Onmyoji understood this as well and began reinforcing the defenses again.

Defensive fields created by Onmyoji techniques overlapped layer after layer, forming dozens.

Initially invisible and transparent, the defensive fields became semi-transparent with further stacking, appearing to ordinary eyes as rippling layers.

And then—

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A dense series of explosions erupted.

Fire burst forth.

Shards of debris flew.

The surrounding buildings turned to ruins in an instant, and the Onmyoji were swallowed by shrapnel.

Even the giant 'demon' suffered what was nearly a catastrophic blow.

Its blackened crimson muscles became riddled with holes under the dense shrapnel.

Its ferocious face twisted even further in agony.

The Wolf Fang Club in its hand, used as a makeshift shield, had long since split into two pieces.

Yet, the powerful life force of the 'demon' allowed it to remain alive.

Its body even started regenerating.

Shrapnel was pushed out of its body, and wounds slowly began to heal.

This made Jason feel satisfied.

At least when he eats later, he won't have to spit out 'bones.'

As for sparing the food because it's been seriously injured?

Sorry.

Jason never wastes food.

Clad in tattered clothing shredded by explosions and shrapnel, Jason charged toward the giant 'demon.'

After fusing the [Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique], Jason's body's defensive level had already surpassed that of war machines.

This was a tier of defense above knives, bullets, explosives, tanks, and warplanes.

Even at the epicenter of the explosion, Jason would merely sustain serious injuries but never face true death.

Let alone when he was only at the edge of the blast, and the cluster bombs' 'bullets' were just regular explosives, neither chemical agents nor armor-piercing rounds. As long as Jason protected his vital points, his skin wouldn't even be scratched.

As soon as Jason made his move, the giant 'demon' took notice.

The 'demon' roared angrily and swung a punch.

It wasn't that it didn't want to use other tactics.

But in its current state, the 'demon' had no ability to use any other abilities.

It was down to pure melee combat.

BAM!

Jason didn't dodge or evade, meeting the 'demon's' blow head-on.

The massive body of the 'demon' carried an equally massive strength.

Yet, Jason didn't retreat in the slightest.

Jason's strength was already nine times that of a normal person, and after building up momentum during his charge, this force reached an exaggerated level that far exceeded human imagination.

Thus, everyone watching the scene witnessed an unforgettable moment.

A strength-focused giant 'demon' was forced back by a mere human.

The stark contrast in size between the two made the moment even more impactful.

The 10-meter-tall figure stumbled backward.

The 2-meter-tall figure stood firm and unmoving.

Thud, thud-thud!

The 'demon's' retreat caused tremors across the ground.

Jason pursued swiftly, leaping forward.

ROAR!

Facing the rapidly approaching Jason, the 'demon' roared furiously, slapping its enormous palm down at him. But in an instant, the roar turned into a screech.

Jason's broad-bladed dagger had stabbed deeply into the palm of the 'demon,' and with a twist of the hilt, the entire hand was split wide open.

The 'demon' howled in even greater agony.

But this was just the beginning.

Pulling the blade out, Jason sidestepped, moving behind the 'demon.' His blade targeted the back of its knee.

Slash, slash!

With crisp slicing sounds, the back of the 'demon's' knees suffered precise cuts.

The ligaments and its equivalent of the meniscus were both severed.

The 'demon's' massive body swayed—

THUD!

It collapsed to its knees.

Then, a flash of the blade appeared at the 'demon's' throat.

SLASH!

Blood sprayed into the air.

The 'demon' clutched its throat and fell lifelessly to the ground.

Having already been heavily wounded by the cluster bombs, it couldn't sustain another bout of regeneration.

Death arrived as promised.

Once Jason confirmed that his 'food' was secured, he looked toward the remaining 'food.'

The lingering waves of the explosion gradually subsided.

The eleven Onmyoji who had created dozens of defensive fields were nowhere to be seen, leaving only their fallen bodies scattered across the ground.

Their once pristine hunting robes and black hakama were now filthy and stained with blood.

Chapter 1154: The Real Bait! (2)

Breathing still exists.

But consciousness is far from clear.

The shrapnel lodged in his body feels like a ticking clock counting down to death.

Even the lead Onmyoji with open eyes is no exception.

He surveys the devastation around him, whispering softly.

"The era has changed, the era has changed."

While muttering, blood drips from his mouth.

The lead Onmyoji's eyes have lost nearly all their light.

Though the advent of 'gunpowder' ended their reign, their power remains—such 'power' gives them a trace of confidence, or perhaps arrogance.

Most Onmyoji share this blend of confidence and arrogance.

This lead Onmyoji is no exception.

But at this moment.

It seems he has only now realized that this so-called confidence and arrogance is merely a veil of shame.

A veil for a fallen era.

And now?

The last veil has been torn away.

Shredded to pieces.

Torn apart along with his faith and soul.

So, even as Jason approaches, the Onmyoji—who originally still had a trace of power to counterattack—does nothing, merely watching Jason draw closer, and then... laughs.

"What are we fighting for?"

"We've always been remnants of an outdated era."

"And now?"

"Profits go to someone else."

"Such bitterness."

The laughter is ugly, resembling crying.

Indeed!

Bitterness!

He had believed he understood this 'world' and thought he had given 'gunpowder' the attention it deserved.

But in reality?

His inner arrogance had long since tinted his view with prejudice.

His biases, his hubris, had long determined today's outcome.

How bitter he feels!

If only he'd been more humble, would things have gone differently?

Could he have reversed it?

If the collaboration with 'Blossom Cherry' had been more cautious, might he have truly succeeded?

The spiraling thoughts in his mind accelerate the blood loss from his mouth.

Looking at Jason standing before him, the Onmyoji speaks.

"Please grant us dignity."

"We don't wish to die under 'gunpowder.'"

"Bring us to the River Styx with your sword."

The Onmyoji musters his strength to sit upright, trying to straighten his back, adjusting the half-destroyed hat still perched atop his head. This movement aggravates his injury—a shard of shrapnel embedded in his chest.

The agonizing pain makes him freeze in place, but he still completes the motion.

Then, he looks at Jason with pleading eyes.

He can feel death creeping closer.

But dying to 'gunpowder' is not what he wants.

He wishes to preserve a final shred of dignity.

Not just a veil of shame.

Simply a stubborn obsession.

Swoosh!

Jason raises his blade swiftly.

The sharp edge, with a piercing sound, slices across the Onmyoji's neck.

As blood sprays out, a sliver of relief surfaces in the Onmyoji's eyes—a relief born from his personal obsession, false in Jason's view.

Still, he convinces himself.

He has found release.

The Onmyoji's lips tremble slightly.

No sound escapes.

But Jason can roughly discern the words from his lip movements.

Thank you.

Jason frowns and responds coldly.

"No need; I've been paid."

With these words, Jason collects the remaining artifacts from the body.

The lead Onmyoji's lips curved into a faint smile, his eyes filled with an even greater sense of peace before collapsing lifelessly onto the ground.

No breath remained.

The other ten Onmyoji followed suit.

They chose the same end as their leader, embracing their deaths.

Jason, on the other hand, systematically 'claimed' his compensation.

"Such a troublesome band of opponents."

This was Jason's summation of the group of Onmyoji clearly used as actual 'bait.'

Then, firelight danced.

Everything was consumed by the [Charles Burning Technique].

The night wind blew past.

Sparks swirled upward alongside thick smoke.

Moments later, nothing remained.

Save for Jason holding a substantial haul of food.

"Still 21 items—10 more than initially calculated. Likely triggered automatic defensive mechanisms during the cluster-bomb explosions. Quite a shame."

Jason sighed softly.

Don't misunderstand.

He's merely lamenting fewer prey to hunt.

As for these Onmyoji used as 'bait'?

Just as Jason had said.

He took his compensation.

Nonetheless, Jason still harbored doubts.

First, why would the Hanakaiin Family do this?

Though he hadn't been in this mirrored world long, Jason knew well that nurturing an Onmyoji was no easy feat. Talent, bloodlines, resources—all served as constraints.

Even the Hanakaiin Family, touted as one of the Four Great Onmyoji Families, wouldn't casually sacrifice eleven Onmyoji without significant repercussions.

It would almost certainly leave them gravely weakened.

"In-fighting, perhaps?"

Jason speculated.

Narrowing down possibilities, only this theory seemed plausible.

Moreover, this in-fighting undoubtedly involved 'Blossom Cherry.'

"Deeper entanglements than I'd imagined?"

"If that's the case..."

"Things are about to get interesting."

With some thought, Jason's eyes narrowed slightly.

If his guess proved true, everything happening around him began to make sense.

Verifying this theory wouldn't be difficult either.

In fact, he could confirm it shortly.

This also tied into Jason's second point of confusion: the timing of 'Blossom Cherry's cluster-bomb deployment.

Far too premature!

Logic dictated that it should have been launched while Jason and the Onmyoji fought in evenly matched combat, not fired in advance.

Although effective, its impact could have been maximized with precise timing.

"Another unexpected variable?"

"Did those hidden players intervene again?"

Jason pondered, striding boldly toward the grand 'Demon.'

No matter what transpired next, he wouldn't shy away.

But first, he needed food.

Of course, necessary 'sanitation' was essential.

Jason headed straight to the battered yet still-standing 'Polar Bear Café,' fetched a case of strong liquor from Hui Lijing's basement cellar.

Sanitize.

Roast.

When the grand 'Demon' was fully cooked, Jason tore into it with a savage bite.

If the lesser 'Demons' resembled spicy duck necks,

The grand 'Demon' resembled a whole roasted duck.

A duck cooked to perfection.

Spicy, naturally.

The crispy exterior, tender interior, and juices bursting forth upon each bite carried a mild spice.

It bore some resemblance to an Orleans-style roast.

[Devour Demon (Grand. Fake)]

[Physical Strength, Stamina, and Wounds Restored in Excess!]

[Satiety +200]

[Satiety: 711]

[Excitement of Feast +1]

[Excitement of Feast: 16]

...

"Fake?"

"Not gravely injured?"

Jason stared at the text floating in view, a flash of surprise crossing his eyes. With this revelation, his earlier assumptions grew stronger.

Indeed, a truly pathetic piece of bait!

Jason silently reflected, his gaze shifting to the Excitement of Feast.

Each point of Excitement brought him immense satisfaction.

"16 points now."

"Getting closer, getting closer!"

As Jason savored the thought, he picked up the remaining food.

Judging by the aroma, these items wouldn't yield Excitement of Feast. In fact, each piece wouldn't significantly boost satiety, but their sheer quantity—21 pieces—felt like miniature delicacies to him.

Jason resumed his process: rinsing, sanitizing.

Meanwhile, in a high-rise ten kilometers from the district, a man was raging.

"What's going on?"

"Why was the cluster-bomb fired without my order?"

"Damn it!"

"Are you all idiots?"

The man slammed the railing in fury, shouting into a handheld radio.

Yet the response on the other end left him bewildered.

"Sir, it was your order!"

"We launched it upon receiving your directive!"

The subordinate's reply stunned the man.

Then...

The man turned and ran.

But it was too late.

A tall figure stood blocking his path.

Chapter 1155: Confirmation!

Ryosuke felt cold sweat trickling down his forehead as he stared at the person before him.

The sweat slid into his eyes.

Burning pain!

An excruciating, scorching pain.

Yet Ryosuke didn't dare to blink.

On the contrary, he widened his eyes even further, keeping them fixed on the woman in front of him.

He recognized this woman.

Hui Lixiang!

The rising-star female fighter!

Of course, through his many intelligence channels, he knew her identity was far more than that. Beyond her public persona as a fighter in the Inside World, she held numerous shadowy roles. At the very least, according to his knowledge, she had connections to four or five "accidental murders."

Powerful, ruthless, and merciless—encounters with her warranted extreme caution!

Such a warning was prominently noted in her file.

When Ryosuke first read it, he took it to heart.

So now, he recognized her at a glance.

Staring at her, Ryosuke instinctively began to step back.

His movements were subtle, almost imperceptible.

At the same time, he secretly tried to contact the "bugs" he had stationed in the area.

Those bugs were to be his final trump card.

But what brought a sinking feeling to his heart was the lack of any response.

All 22 "sentinels" had not only failed to detect her approach but were now unresponsive.

The result was self-explanatory.

And the two specially trained "commanders" he had cultivated?

They, too, had gone silent.

Eliminated?

Ryosuke pondered this grim reality as he, one of the newly established Blossom Cherry officials acting as Ryosuke's "contact," finally spoke.

"Good evening, Miss Hui Lixiang."

"I believe we can have a civil conve—"

BANG!

Ryosuke hoped to buy some time, but Hui Lixiang gave him no such chance.

Her figure flickered, and in an instant, her foot slammed into Ryosuke's chest.

Accompanied by the sound of cracking bones, Ryosuke was sent crashing heavily into a rooftop water tower nearby.

Groan, groan.

The metal water tower screeched with a sound that made one's teeth ache.

Ryosuke's body ended up embedded within it.

"You... ugh!"

Ryosuke opened his mouth to say something, but as soon as he did, a mouthful of blood burst out.

It was mixed with fragments of his organs.

If I don't get treated immediately, I'll die here.

Feeling the changes within his body, Ryosuke quickly arrived at this bleak conclusion.

"I surrender!"

"I'm willing to—"

BANG!

Faced with the choice between his life and his duty, Ryosuke unhesitatingly chose the former.

But before he could finish his sentence, a distant gunshot rang out.

The next moment—

SPLOOSH!

Ryosuke's head shattered like a watermelon crushed under a truck.

The already-damaged water tower couldn't withstand any more.

Groan, groan... CRASH!

After a few groans, the water tower burst apart.

Its contents—an enormous surge of water—rushed out, surging toward Hui Lixiang with unstoppable force, carrying Ryosuke's lifeless body with it.

It was like a tidal wave during high tide.

More importantly, from a distance, deadly intent locked onto her.

A sniper!

The sniper who had just killed Ryosuke was now aiming at her.

As soon as she evaded the oncoming wave, the sniper would pull the trigger again.

An open rooftop with no cover—this was the perfect terrain for a sniper.

But Hui Lixiang's lips curved into a slight smirk.

Then, Hui Lijing didn't retreat but advanced instead.

Facing the rushing tide, she charged straight into it, her legs kicking rapidly.

One kick after another.

Each faster than the last.

Her kicks formed a relentless and overlapping barrage, creating a layered and intricate pattern, resembling a blooming rose.

In the blink of an eye, the oncoming "wave" was "blocked."

The water enveloped Hui Lixiang but couldn't advance an inch further. Furthermore, the redirected flow obscured Hui Lixiang's figure completely.

When the "wave" finally spilled off the edge of the rooftop—

Huh?!

The sniper, seeing the now-empty rooftop, was just beginning to feel perplexed when their neck was suddenly snapped beneath a descending foot.

CRACK.

In the clear sound of bones breaking, a crisp voice followed.

"As I expected, Blossom Cherry's begun taking precautions."

Dressed in tight pants and a martial arts uniform, with a pair of boxing gloves, long hair tied in a single braid, and a red headband across her forehead, Yuli couldn't help but voice her admiration.

"Blossom Cherry's people aren't fools. After so many of our operations, it's only natural they'd react."

"If they hadn't reacted by now, I'd start suspecting they were doing it on purpose."

Kaoru, casually dressed, spoke with a calm tone.

"On purpose?"

"Wait!"

"Are you implying I'm a fool?"

With her unusual line of reasoning, Yuli puffed up her cheeks and glared at her friend, Kaoru, indignantly.

"I'm talking about Blossom Cherry, not you."

Kaoru clarified.

"But I didn't see it coming either."

"So you're saying I'm a fool!"

Frustrated, Yuli pounced toward Kaoru.

Her movements fast and extraordinarily agile, like a swallow darting through a storm.

Kaoru, however, stood her ground without moving an inch.

She allowed Yuli to close in.

Then, at the exact moment Yuli raised her hand, Kaoru struck suddenly.

Kaoru's hand moved like lightning, grabbing Yuli's outstretched wrist firmly before twisting it slightly.

SWISH!

Yuli, who had just approached Kaoru, was flung aside effortlessly.

"Ahhh, how did you catch me again!"

"I swear I'll avoid it next time!"

Landing steadily on her feet, Yuli shouted in defiance, charging toward Kaoru once more.

Chapter 1156: Confirmation! (2)

But in the end, there was no exception.

Every time, Kaoru threw Yuli out.

After being thrown ten times in a row, Yuli grew furious and waved her arms wildly. Just as the little girl was about to strike again, Hui Lixiang stepped forward.

"Alright!"

"Yuli, stop making trouble."

"And Kaoru, stop bullying Yuli. She's still a child."

Hui Lixiang said.

"Hmm, okay, I won't bully kids."

Kaoru nodded, faithfully echoing her words.

Especially when pronouncing the word "kids," the emphasis was notably clear.

There was no doubt Kaoru did it on purpose.

Hui Lixiang sighed helplessly.

Kaoru, who appeared refined and composed, like a white plum blossom, was undoubtedly black-hearted if split open.

Perhaps it was precisely this mischievous cunning that allowed her to master their family's martial skills to the level she had.

Hui Lixiang thought to herself, raising her hand simultaneously to intercept mid-air Yuli as she lunged toward Kaoru. Caught securely, Yuli was tucked under Hui Lixiang's arm.

"Lixiang!"

"Let go of me!"

"I must have a duel with Kaoru to determine the strongest female!"

Yuli shouted loudly.

"We're all female."

Kaoru quipped softly.

Yuli froze for a moment.

Then, baring her teeth and claws, she snarled at Kaoru.

"None of your business!"

"None of your business!"

"Alright, alright, Yuli, don't get mad."

Hui Lixiang comforted Yuli as if coaxing a child, and moments later, the bristling Yuli calmed down. She lifted her chin and asked Hui Lixiang, "Can I have ice cream later?"

"Yes, you can."

Hui Lixiang nodded.

"Yay!"

Yuli immediately jumped up and cheered.

"I'm not giving you any!"

Yuli declared to Kaoru.

Kaoru didn't even bother responding to Yuli.

Bullying children was something Kaoru did no more than four or five times a day. Overdoing it would lessen the thrill.

"Can that matter be confirmed?"

Kaoru asked Hui Lixiang.

"If there were still doubts before, we can now be fairly certain."

"After all, not just anyone would sacrifice eleven Onmyoji as bait."

Hui Lixiang replied.

"That 'Sword Saint' should be grateful to us for saving his life."

Kaoru remarked with a hint of meaning.

"Him?"

"Forget it."

"I know Jing's friends too well. Gratitude isn't in their vocabulary; they'll only see us as meddling nuisances. If you want to get something out of them, you can't ask outright. You can only wait for them to offer on their own."

Hui Lixiang spoke with the tone of someone who had been through it all.

"Is that so?"

Kaoru frowned.

They were now under scrutiny and could no longer ambush their way through like before.

With the strength of their trio, ordinary enemies posed no threat.

But who could guarantee there wouldn't be surprises?

Thus, securing a strong ally became essential.

And who could be more suited than Jason?

Even though he was Hui Lijing's friend, the current generation's Master of Tongshou Temple, and bore the 'Sword Saint' title, his connections and power were certainly reassuring.

"Shouldn't we try?"

Kaoru's reluctance was evident.

"No need."

"Go with the flow."

"Besides, our mission isn't mandatory. According to our employer's terms, if unmanageable events occur, we are allowed to withdraw."

Hui Lixiang reassured her team member.

"Withdraw?"

Kaoru frowned again, clearly dissatisfied.

"We can't give up!"

"We need to prove that what men can do, we can do too!"

Yuli stepped forward, her expression unusually serious.

Jason is a man too!

Hui Lixiang wanted to say this to Yuli.

But fearing that Yuli's brain might short-circuit, Hui Lixiang swallowed her words and instead said,

"Alright, I'll give it a try."

Then, as the leader of their trio, Hui Lixiang took the lead heading downstairs.

"Are we going to have ice cream now?"

Yuli asked.

"No."

"We're going to meet our mysterious employer."

Hui Lixiang answered.

"We've already completed about ten tasks for him, and now he wants to meet us—another test? Or has he begun to trust us?"

Kaoru had more on her mind.

"A mix of both, probably."

"Though it's likely time to move toward deeper collaboration."

Hui Lixiang said with an underlying implication.

Kaoru nodded, instantly understanding.

Yuli?

The girl whose thoughts were entirely consumed by ice cream had long ceased thinking.

But just as the trio reached the staircase—

BOOM!

A massive explosion broke out behind them in the distance.

Towering flames soared a hundred meters high.

The night sky was instantly illuminated.

The wind suddenly grew fierce.

The ground trembled slightly.

"That direction—is it?"

Kaoru turned to look, her expression shifting slightly.

She had anticipated trouble, but she hadn't expected it to come so quickly.

It felt almost surreal.

"Isn't that the Hanakaiin main household?"

"Were they attacked?"

"It looks brutal!"

Yuli spoke bluntly.

"Yes, brutal."

"But the true brutality hasn't even begun."

"Let's go."

"We need to meet our employer."

After a final glance at the explosion, Hui Lixiang unhesitatingly continued downstairs.

There was no need to linger over what had already been foreseen.

However...

An explosion of this magnitude would surely draw many onlookers, right?

Some curious.

Others ready to exploit the chaos.

But most would likely end up as collateral damage.

The Hanakaiin Family, after all, still had surviving members.

...

21 pieces of "food" provided Jason with 321 points of satiety.

Glancing at his restored [1032] satiety points and savoring the lingering taste of the food, Jason let out a slight breath of relief.

Though not at his peak, with over 300 "lives," he had sufficient capital for risk-taking.

Jason was well aware that if his earlier guesses were correct, a major event was imminent.

To get involved, [Satiety] was indispensable.

Even though Jason considered accidents unlikely in this dungeon world, one could never be too careful.

Hence, [Satiety] abundance was always a blessing.

BOOM!

As Jason mulled over these thoughts, a massive explosion echoed from afar.

"Just as I suspected!"

Looking toward the explosion, Jason wasted no time and headed straight for it.

Heading there as well were Hanakaiin Tōru, Hanakaiin Ra, Hanakaiin Haru, and Hanakaiin Itsuki.

The moment the explosion occurred, Hanakaiin Tōru stood.

This figure, acknowledged as the Hanakaiin Family's number one, raised an arm and shattered the barrier with ease.

The casualness of his movements reaffirmed that the rumors were true.

Hanakaiin Tōru was indeed the strongest of the younger generation.

"Hanakaiin Tōru, what are you doing?"

"This is a serious offense!"

"You'll face the death penalty!"

The guards stationed by the main household shouted in panic.

"Get some sleep."

"When you wake, everything will be clear."

With these words, Hanakaiin Tōru waved a hand.

Instantly, everyone in the courtyard, except himself, Hanakaiin Ra, Hanakaiin Haru, and Hanakaiin Itsuki, fell into a deep slumber.

"This!"

Hanakaiin Haru's pupils shrank, stunned by this display of power.

Hanakaiin Itsuki sized Tōru up with renewed curiosity.

"Tōru?"

Hanakaiin Ra voiced his confusion.

To him, it seemed impossible for Tōru to do something like this.

"I'm merely confirming something."

Hanakaiin Tōru replied calmly.

"Confirming what?"

Ra was puzzled.

Haru and Itsuki, however, looked thoughtful.

Hanakaiin Tōru turned his gaze to sweep over the trio's faces, his voice still flat—

"Confirming whether the fabled 'Blossom Cherry' Leader is truly the Hanakaiin Family's head."

Chapter 1157: The Journey!

'Blossom Cherry's Leader is the Family Head of the Hanakaiin Family?

This time, not only Hanakaiin Ra, but even Hanakaiin Haru and Hanakaiin Itsuki were taken aback.

Although Hanakaiin Haru and Hanakaiin Itsuki had already suspected, after all, the Hanakaiin Family and the 'King of Fighters Tournament' were too deeply intertwined. Even under the guise of the 'Branch Family Trials', it was the same, especially with the development of the situation, it made Hanakaiin Haru and Hanakaiin Itsuki increasingly suspicious.

However, speculation and suspicion cannot serve as evidence.

"Are you sure?"

Hanakaiin Haru asked in a deep voice.

"We'll know by taking a look."

Hanakaiin Tōru said these words and started walking towards the outer courtyard.

Hanakaiin Haru and Hanakaiin Itsuki immediately followed him.

It was only after the three walked several meters away that Hanakaiin Ra came to his senses.

"Brother Tōru, wait for me!"

With these words, Hanakaiin Ra quickly chased after them.

As he walked, Hanakaiin Ra's expression remained somewhat dazed.

He felt like his brain couldn't keep up with the situation.

How did the Family Head of his main family become the mysterious Leader of 'Blossom Cherry'?

Although the Hanakaiin Family had declined after the main family head's succession, it was still one of the four major Onmyoji families in the 'Inside World'.

And 'Blossom Cherry'?

It's an organization hidden within the police, where all members are official personnel. With such a premise, how could the Family Head of his main family become the Leader of 'Blossom Cherry'?

However, Hanakaiin Tōru's words were believable to Hanakaiin Ra.

He believed that Hanakaiin Tōru would not speak without reason.

If Hanakaiin Tōru said so, there must be a rationale behind it.

With this thought, Hanakaiin Ra no longer hesitated and quickened his pace.

The four of them swiftly disappeared into the courtyard.

...

"Why am I the driver again?"

Hui Lijing grumbled with a bit of dissatisfaction.

"I can't drive."

Jason, sitting in the backseat, lied without a hint of embarrassment.

He only wanted to conserve his physical strength to face any real battle in the best condition possible.

As for lying?

For residents of the 'Nightless City', when necessary, not only is lying as simple as drinking water, but other more outrageous things are as well.

Hui Lijing was unaware of this.

She was therefore quite surprised by Jason's answer.

Even though the island was closed off, she knew that outside the island, one should have a driver's license upon high school graduation.

Jason, no matter how you looked at him, was far beyond this age.

Moreover, outside the island, a driver's license seemed linked with an ID card.

How could he possibly not have a driver's license?

"Are you bluffing me?"

Hui Lijing raised an eyebrow.

"Have you ever seen me drive?"

Jason retorted.

Hui Lijing fell silent.

She really had never seen Jason drive, not even touch a steering wheel.

Plus, Jason didn't seem to have much aptitude for electronics or mechanical things either.

"Jason, are you a 'Traditionalist'?"

With her increasing engagement with the 'Inside World', Hui Lijing had come to understand a lot of basic things.

At the very least, she knew that within the 'Inside World', there was a group of complete throwbacks who had abandoned the conveniences brought by electricity, gunpowder, and other technological goods, sticking to the initial traditions.

They wouldn't even sit in a car.

They believed that doing so was an insult to their dignity.

Hui Lijing simply thought such people had something wrong with their heads.

If anything, it insulted their intelligence.

"I'm just not good with electronics and machinery, but I do watch TV, use telephones, and am quite happy to ride in a car."

Jason couldn't help but roll his eyes at Hui Lijing's strange look.

Of course, he knew Hui Lijing was being somewhat intentional.

However, more than anything, it was curiosity.

Much like Hu Qiandai in the passenger seat.

This daughter of the Uesugi Family was staring at Jason with wide eyes, full of curiosity.

Despite the many layers of camouflage, for Jason, who was perceptive, it was as conspicuous as can be.

"Sorry, sorry."

"I'm just purely curious."

"Xin has told me a lot about you, Jason, so I couldn't help it... Sorry, sorry."

Upon noticing Jason's glance, the usually reserved daughter of the Uesugi Family immediately started apologizing, her speech turning more and more stuttered.

"Oh, what has Xin said?"

Jason elongated his tone and asked.

Then, he forced himself to move his gaze away from Hu Qiandai.

No!

To be accurate, it was from the long blade Hu Qiandai held in her arms.

It smelled too enticing!

Since getting in the car, his saliva hadn't stopped secreting unconsciously.

Otherwise, he wouldn't need to use conversation to divert his attention.

He really wondered how it would taste.

No!

You don't want to!

Being born human means adhering to the most basic bottom lines.

Following appetites is also a human instinct; how can it be wrong?

It's not wrong!

But Hu Qiandai isn't wrong either.

She hasn't shown me any malice.

Once again, Jason's mind was embroiled in a conflict of ideals.

Or rather, a struggle of beliefs.

Whew!

His breathing slightly heavier, Jason leaned back, letting himself merge completely into the shadows of the back seat.

Hui Lijing, mostly focused on driving, didn't notice anything amiss with Jason in the back seat.

And Hu Qiandai?

Busy formulating her words, she definitely wouldn't notice.

"Xin says you're very strong, although sometimes you do weird things that are incomprehensible to normal people, but at heart, you're a considerate gentleman."

Chapter 1158: Journey! (2)

Here is the translation:

"Gentleman?"

Jason froze.

"I never said anything like that!"

"How could someone like Jason have anything to do with being a well-dressed gentleman?"

"He looks scarier than those wrestlers!"

Before Hu Qiandai could explain, Hui Lijing, who was driving, chimed in loudly.

She definitely hadn't said Jason was like a gentleman.

He merely saved her a few times and fulfilled promises he wasn't obligated to keep. How could Jason seem like a gentleman? At best, at best...

As she thought about it, Hui Lijing's face began to flush.

She started adjusting her breathing, afraid she might lose control of the steering wheel.

"Don't talk nonsense! I'm still driving!"

After emphasizing this once again, Hui Lijing forced herself to stay composed and looked straight ahead.

"Gentleman—this was simply the word I used after hearing Hui Lijing's description,"

"If you ask for my take, Jason is more like..."

"A swordsman!"

Hu Qiandai threw out another impressive term.

Jason was even more baffled than before.

He couldn't see how he had anything in common with a "swordsman."

Do swordsmen all love eating large chunks of meat and chugging bowls of liquor?

Jason looked at Hu Qiandai, waiting for an explanation.

"A promise kept."

"Righteous acts."

"Knowing what to do and what not to do."

"With qualities like yours, could you not be called a swordsman?"

Hu Qiandai turned around, lifting her head to look at the tall figure cloaked in shadows in the back seat, her eyes gleaming with an unusual light.

In her mind, images of Jason stepping forward kept replaying.

He clearly could have walked away.

Yet he still chose to act.

All because of the promise he made to her father.

Despite the overwhelming numbers and strength of the enemies, he disregarded his own safety to offer righteous assistance.

Even after learning the value of the "Hime Crane Ichimonji," he chose to turn a blind eye and walked away.

Can such a person really not be called a "swordsman"?

No!

It should be "swordsman!"

Just like the swordsmen in the novels she'd read.

Just like the memory that had suddenly appeared in her mind of someone adhering strictly to the "code of honor."

"Is that so?"

"I just act in my own way, abiding by my own bottom line; I am no 'swordsman.'"

"At best... maybe a 'gourmet,' that's all."

"The wandering gourmet."

Jason thought it over and answered honestly.

It was the truth—compared to the title of "swordsman," he preferred "gourmet."

The former was merely a baseline he believed every human should uphold.

The latter?

That was his lifelong pursuit.

As for wandering?

He didn't want to be a drifter; he wanted to go home.

But... where was the road home?

"The 'wandering gourmet'... would it be lonely?"

"Though 'the solitary gourmet' sounds good too, wouldn't it be better with more people?"

"If we could gather a group to cook and learn together, it'd definitely be better. Maybe setting up an academy system would lead to even more exciting possibilities."

Hu Qiandai murmured softly to herself.

She didn't refute Jason's words.

Everyone has their own pursuits.

As long as they don't interfere with others, there's no need to comment; watching quietly suffices.

For someone like Jason?

He deserved respect.

"Maybe it'll happen someday?"

"For now?"

"I just savor the present."

That's what Jason said, his tone openly laced with longing, though his mind remained clear.

If such an academy existed, he would definitely go there.

But it would depend on luck.

And his luck?

Judging by now, it wasn't too bad.

After all, men who smile often aren't ever too...

Click!

As Jason's thoughts wandered, the swiftly speeding car broke down unexpectedly.

"What happened?"

Hu Qiandai asked instinctively.

"No idea."

"Still got gas!"

As she said this, Hui Lijing prepared to open the door and step out, only to have her shoulder pressed down firmly by Jason.

"Stay here."

Saying that, Jason opened the door and stepped out.

It wasn't until she heard the car door shut behind him that Hui Lijing snapped out of it.

She'd been careless just now.

It was obvious something was wrong with the car breaking down.

And she hadn't noticed.

What was going on?

Also, just now, Jason's hand felt so warm, so strong.

When he pressed down on her shoulder, she felt an unprecedented sense of security.

"Jason will be fine, won't he?"

Hu Qiandai asked with concern.

"Don't worry."

"With Jason..."

"He definitely won't be in any trouble!"

Hui Lijing said confidently.

Then, this female detective began checking her firearm and grenades.

Although Jason wouldn't encounter danger, she refused to be a burden to him.

Seeing Hui Lijing's actions, Hu Qiandai finally realized too. However, she didn't have more weapons—only a knife.

But it was enough.

"Does this mean it's time for another fight?"

"Let's do this!"

Hu Qiandai whispered to herself.

Her knowledge of the modern "Inside World" was far less than Hui Lijing's.

But when it came to the "Inside World," thanks to the unexpected memory fragment she carried, she understood it quite deeply.

As a result, Hu Qiandai no longer had that naïve curiosity about the "Inside World."

What she had now was caution.

That was precisely why she'd insisted on following them.

After all, Hu Qiandai understood that if the Uesugi Family wanted to survive peacefully, they would need to integrate into the current "Inside World" and demonstrate their strength as soon as possible.

Otherwise, extinction would be their only path.

Of course, she also wanted to repay Jason.

Her sense of "honor" wouldn't let her ignore the help Jason had given her before.

The soft murmurs in the car were crystal clear to Jason, who'd already stepped outside.

Chapter 1159: Journey! (3)

Similarly, Jason could hear the approaching footsteps heading toward this direction.

He looked to one side of the road.

Thick bushes grew there, providing natural cover.

Under Jason's watchful gaze, two uniformed men emerged.

It was a very familiar uniform.

Ryosuke and Urashima wore it almost daily.

It looked somewhat like a suit, but the details were noticeably different.

One of them held a firearm.

The other held a black box.

Jason's eyes swept past the firearm and settled on the palm-sized box.

The sudden breakdown of the car earlier... it must have been caused by this box.

Technology?

Secret technique?

Or perhaps a fusion of both?

Jason silently pondered.

"Restricted area!"

"Sir, the area ahead has been designated a prohibited zone."

"Please turn back immediately."

The armed member of 'Zero Division' said, flashing his badge as he spoke.

Jason frowned slightly.

"Cooperate, please!"

The armed 'Zero Division' member emphasized his tone, subtly raising the gun barrel.

The other member holding the black box also drew his sidearm.

"Alright,"

Jason replied, turning to leave without hesitation.

As soon as Jason turned around, the two 'Zero Division' members exchanged bizarre smiles.

Suddenly, their necks thickened and lengthened, their heads rapidly swelling.

In a split-second, they transformed into two serpents as thick as footballs.

When they opened their mouths, rows of sharp fangs gleamed menacingly.

Hiss!

With a gust of foul wind, they lunged at Jason.

Meanwhile, their bodies collapsed like boneless heaps onto the ground.

"Hahaha!"

"Another foolish prey who fell for it!"

"Bite him to death!"

"Bite him to death!"

The two demonic creatures screeched noisily, closing in to mere steps from Jason.

Then—

Hiss!

Another gust of malevolent wind surged forth.

It wasn't the usual sound of something slicing through the air, but a deep, hollow sound of collapsing air drawing inward.

Jason opened his mouth.

A massive mouth—far beyond the realm of human imagination.

Sharp teeth glinted under the moonlight, dazzling like the edges of blades.

The two lunging demonic creatures froze in shock.

What was happening?

This mouth...

Wasn't it a bit too exaggerated?

"Wait!"

With panic swirling in their minds, the two creatures shouted loudly, but to no avail.

Suspended mid-air, they had no leverage, and could only helplessly crash into Jason's mouth.

Like a crushing blow from a higher dimension, the moment the creatures entered Jason's mouth, their consciousness instantly faded, their souls were obliterated, and their bodies were seamlessly devoured.

Exhale!

Jason let out a breath.

Yet his brows remained furrowed.

He had forgotten to sterilize himself.

"As expected, despite suppressing it with great effort, I was still influenced by the lure of tastier prey."

"My self-control needs further tempering."

Jason reflected inwardly and tapped on the car window.

"Me."

Jason said.

The car window rolled down slightly, revealing a crack. Confirming that it was indeed Jason, Hui Lijing stepped out of the vehicle.

"Jason, what happened?"

Hui Lijing glanced at the distant piles that resembled discarded human skin, her brow furrowing.

"Some demons tried to stir up trouble."

Jason replied, walking toward the bushes.

Hui Lijing and Hu Qiandai followed closely behind.

The next moment, three corpses appeared before the two women.

"Ah!"

Hu Qiandai couldn't help but let out a startled cry.

Even with memories of her previous life, experiencing it firsthand still made her uneasy.

Hui Lijing coped much better.

Having been hardened by battlefield experiences, the female detective quickly examined the bodies and arrived at a conclusion.

"Two of them were members of 'Zero Division,' while the other seemed to be someone like us—traveling to the Hanakaiin Court estate. Unfortunately, they were ambushed and killed by those demons impersonating 'Zero Division' members."

Hui Lijing stood up with a solemn expression.

They hadn't even reached the Hanakaiin estate's territory, and bloodshed had already ensued.

What would it be like when they arrived there...

Hui Lijing turned toward Jason.

And Jason simply asked in return—

"Is this the only route to the Hanakaiin estate?"

"Are there alternative paths?"

Gulp.

As his words echoed, the sound of someone swallowing nervously pierced the silence.

Chapter 1160: Wuxin Chaliu!

Zhinai was a Mystical Side practitioner born into a small clan in the Kinki region.

Compared to the prestigious families in the 'Inside World,' Zhinai's family, including herself, consisted of only her mother and sister as true 'Inside World' members.

Her father and older brother?

They tried their best, but after being injured, their potential was gone, and at most, they could only be considered half a combatant.

For this, Zhinai felt a heavy guilt.

Because it was to save her that her father and brother used the family secret technique, losing their qualifications as 'Inside World' members.

Thus, when she learned about the massive explosion at the Hanakaiin Family's main estate, Zhinai didn't hesitate to head straight there.

She needed to find the Secret Medicine!

Or, any item that could restore her father and brother!

Unlike her small clan...

One of the four great Onmyoji families, the Hanakaiin Family, had resources that were utterly unimaginable.

Even finding just a tiny bit would be enough!

With these thoughts in mind, Zhinai quickened her pace.

"Zhinai, slow down!"

"I can't keep up!"

A young man behind her, slightly out of breath, called out.

Ah Guang, Zhinai's good friend.

This round-faced youth was also from a small clan in the Kinki region.

However, unlike Zhinai's family, where nearly everyone was an 'Inside World' member,

Ah Guang's family had only him.

His parents and grandparents were aware of the 'Inside World,' but they lacked the talent. They couldn't even walk the path of a combatant or swordsman, let alone master the family secret technique.

Ah Guang, on the other hand, had decent talent.

By the time he graduated high school, he had fully mastered his family's secret technique and could apply it skillfully.

And after that?

Ah Guang was introduced to Zhinai's family and teamed up with her to take on 'Inside World' tasks, honing himself and improving his strength.

"Maybe you should eat less fried chicken. At this rate, you'll be wearing XXXXXL!"

Zhinai turned her head and, looking at her panting friend, couldn't help but tease him.

There was no malice, just the playful banter between friends.

Ah Guang was the same way.

"No worries, no worries."

"The fabric you save for the country goes straight to me."

Ah Guang grinned and pulled a bottle of sugary soda from his backpack.

Gulp, gulp.

Ahhh!

Burp!

After a satisfied belch, Ah Guang took out a bag of chips and waved it at his friend.

"Be careful."

"We're already near the Hanakaiin Family's territory."

Zhinai reminded him.

"It's fine."

"Even if demons show up, there'll be big shots to take care of them."

"People like us?"

"We're not even worth a fart."

Ah Guang said as he grabbed a handful of chips and stuffed them into his mouth.

He perfectly embodied the saying: A broad mind leads to a round body.

"I'm not worried about demons."

"I'm worried about... people!"

Zhinai's gaze scanned the surroundings. She took a deep breath and spoke softly.

The girl's hand subtly gestured toward a nearby bush.

Zhinai wasn't the only one eyeing the Secret Medicine in the Hanakaiin Family's estate—others certainly had similar intentions.

Beyond the Secret Medicine, secret techniques, powerful items, and Shikigami were just as irresistibly tempting to most 'Inside World' members.

Once word spread, people would flock here like carp crossing the river.

That was certain.

And with so many people, conflicts were inevitable.

Fights were almost guaranteed.

Zhinai had already prepared herself.

So had Ah Guang.

Crunch, crunch.

After licking his fingers to savor the leftover chip flavor, Ah Guang casually raised a palm towards the shadow in the bushes.

Whoosh!

An invisible stream of air began to converge in Ah Guang's palm.

But just as the airflow was about to launch, a voice shouted—

"Wait!"

"We're members of 'Section Zero'!"

Two men in uniforms stepped out.

One of them immediately produced a police badge.

Section Zero?

Ah Guang frowned and paused his attack.

Most 'Inside World' members regarded Section Zero with cautious avoidance.

Not because of fear, but because they were trouble.

As a government-backed organization, even temporary gains could lead to massive headaches later on.

You never knew who they might send next time.

For that reason, ignoring Section Zero personnel was the standard practice for most 'Inside World' members.

Especially for people like Ah Guang and Zhinai, who had families in the 'Inside World.'

They couldn't afford to risk their loved ones' safety.

So, after verifying the badge was real, Zhinai signaled Ah Guang to leave for now.

Just for now.

After all, the paths to the Hanakaiin Family's estate weren't limited to just one.

She and Ah Guang could always take a detour.

Ah Guang thought the same.

The two immediately turned around.

But the moment they turned, the two 'Section Zero' members grinned menacingly and lunged at them.

Another successful hunt!

The name of 'Section Zero' was truly useful!

As the two demons pounced, Ah Guang spun around, raising his lowered hand once more.

"Air Cannon!"

Boom! Boom!

With two thunderous blasts, the charging demons were pulverized.

"Hah, did they really take us for rookies?"

"We're the famous 'Guang and Zhi Duo' around here! Next time, if you're going to disguise yourselves, at least hide your aura better!"

Ah Guang said, giving Zhinai a thumbs-up.

He hadn't sensed anything amiss earlier.

But Zhinai had noticed something wrong.

In the moment they turned, she gave him a critical heads-up.

"Zhinai, your family's secret technique is amazing!"

"It leaves these demons with nowhere to hide..."