

## **Menu 1171**

Chapter 1171: Ding! (3)

Hui Lijing and Hu Qiandai charged out through the opening.

But the monsters were still relentlessly in pursuit.

Once, twice, three times...

The encirclement formed again and again.

And it was broken through again and again.

Yet the number of monsters hadn't decreased; instead, it had increased.

At first, Hui Lijing and Hu Qiandai could roughly remember the route they had entered from, but after Hu Qiandai unleashed a burst of energy, the two of them were completely disoriented.

Now, the two were hiding in a half-collapsed decrepit house, making their final stand.

Huff, huff.

Hui Lijing was gasping for air in big breaths.

Beside her, Hu Qiandai's face was also a little pale. The burst of energy earlier had drained far more than she had anticipated.

Their Physical Strength was beginning to bottom out.

"Damn it, why are these guys still following us?"

"Do they think we're easy prey?"

Hui Lijing grumbled angrily as the bullets from her Uzi submachine gun continued to rain down, forcing several approaching monsters to retreat. Then, leaning against a nearby wall, she quickly changed the magazine.

When the sound of those distinct footsteps reached her ears, she tossed out a grenade she had already prepared.

Boom!

After the explosion, Hui Lijing got up and started shooting.

Once again, the monsters were driven back.

Hui Lijing didn't dare to let out a sigh of relief as she quickly inspected her ammunition.

The submachine gun had two magazines left.

The pistol came with one magazine.

There was only one grenade left.

That was all she had.

Of course, she also had a dagger hidden in her boot.

But Hui Lijing didn't think it would be of much use in the current situation.

Once the ammunition ran out, relying on the ruins in front of her for defense would be like trying to stop a tidal wave with sand.

What now?

Hui Lijing furrowed her brows.

Hu Qiandai, on the other hand, had closed her eyes and was resting.

At the very least, she hoped to regain enough strength to help Hui Lijing in a better state.

"I'm sorry."

Suddenly, Hui Lijing spoke.

"Hm?"

Hu Qiandai opened her eyes, looking at her friend with a puzzled expression.

"If it weren't for me, you wouldn't have come..."

"Even if it wasn't you, I'd still have come back."

"For my 'moral principles'!"

Hu Qiandai interrupted Hui Lijing's words. The heiress holding a long blade spoke with a resolute and dashing demeanor, saying, "Even in the face of certain death, I have to uphold my 'moral principles'!"

"To die for 'moral principles'... I would die without regret."

"But..."

Hui Lijing, filled with guilt, wanted to say more, but her words were interrupted by soft, low sobbing—

"Wuuu, it's so scary."

"Monsters, they're all monsters."

"No, I can't cry, I mustn't cry."

"But not crying... I just can't do it."

"Waaa, I'm so scared!"

The sound of sobbing caught Hui Lijing's attention.

She couldn't help but walk toward the collapsed wall on the side of the house.

The collapsed wall formed a cornered space with another wall.

There, a young girl clutching a dandelion was crying softly. When she noticed Hui Lijing approaching, the girl immediately shrank back further.

When Hui Lijing saw this girl, she couldn't help but think of the young children like Cherry who would visit her shop every afternoon after school.

They were all so small, looking so harmless.

Although the girl in front of her seemed a bit unusual, clutching a dandelion.

But why hadn't that dandelion scattered?

It was round, fluffy, and kind of cute.

Unthinkingly, the look in Hui Lijing's eyes softened as she glanced at the girl.

"I mean no harm. I'm Hui Lijing."

The female detective intentionally lowered her voice, speaking gently.

The girl holding the dandelion still had tears in the corners of her eyes, but upon seeing the detective's pure gaze and gentle smile, she mustered her courage and responded in a trembling voice—

"I... I'm Yingcao."

Chapter 1172: Throwing Out the 'Bait'!

Firefly Grass?

Such a strange name.

Is it because of "In the mid-summer month, decayed grass becomes fireflies"?

But she's clearly just an adorable little girl?

Hui Lijing's mind flashed with scattered pieces of knowledge, and then, instinctively, she reached out her hand.

She wanted to pull the little girl away from this dangerous place.

The corner formed by the collapsed wall looked stable, but hidden dangers lurked everywhere. A single mistake and the little girl before her could be buried alive.

That was something Hui Lijing simply could not bear to witness.

The little girl, holding a dandelion, trembled slightly as she looked at Hui Lijing's outstretched hand.

She had never been treated with such kindness before.

A warm smile.

Bright eyes.

A pure heart.

She could feel the goodwill emanating from the woman before her.



It was devoid of even the tiniest trace of other emotions.

Nor did it contain any disdain toward her.

Even though she was the weakest... Shikigami.

Involuntarily, the little girl reached out her hand toward Hui Lijing.

When her small palm landed in Hui Lijing's hand, she felt a warmth greater than she had imagined, radiating from her palm into the depths of her heart.

In an instant, her heart was filled to the brim.

"Come, be careful."

Hui Lijing worried the little girl might bump her head, so she raised her hand to hover over the girl's head, signaling her to come out.

But—

Rustle, rustle, rustle!

That distinctive sound startled Hui Lijing.

She snapped back to her senses.

How could she let the little girl come out!

The outside was far more dangerous than here!

Realizing this, Hui Lijing immediately crouched down again, meeting the little girl's gaze.

"Firefly Grass, listen to me."

"Stay here obediently."

"It's too dangerous outside!"

"Remember, do not come out!"

Having issued these instructions, Hui Lijing then began searching for something to shield Firefly Grass from view.

These items weren't hard to find.

There were many bricks and broken wooden boards scattered on the ground.

Hui Lijing started moving them.

"Lijing?"

"Are you abandoning me?"

The little girl gazed at Hui Lijing tearfully, like a puppy about to be left behind.

"No."

"I would never abandon Firefly Grass."

"It's just too dangerous outside. If Firefly Grass comes out..."

"Then let me lend you my strength!"

Hui Lijing was explaining, but before she could finish her words, Firefly Grass interrupted her.

Once again, Firefly Grass extended her hand and gripped Hui Lijing's hand.

A faint, sweet smile appeared on Firefly Grass's face.

It was the last image Hui Lijing saw in her dazed state.

When she regained her senses, she was still sitting against the wall, with Hu Qiandai nearby, panting heavily.

"What happened?"

Hu Qiandai clearly noticed her friend was not quite right.

"Just now... how long was I dazed?"

Hui Lijing opened her mouth, wanting to explain, but as the words reached her lips, she changed the subject.

It wasn't that she didn't want to explain.

But now was not the time.

The roaring of monsters in her ears constantly reminded Hui Lijing of the urgency.

"Not even two seconds."

Hu Qiandai responded.

Then, the heiress of the Uesugi Family stood up and drew her blade once more.

Though her body was unsteady, there was not the slightest wavering on Hu Qiandai's face.

To fight, without retreat.

That was her creed.

And now, with her friend by her side.

She adhered to it even more fiercely.

She wanted to create a slim chance of survival for her friend.

With this resolve in mind, the determination in Hu Qiandai's eyes grew stronger.

She was ready to charge!

Taking a deep breath, Hu Qiandai turned toward Hui Lijing and said, "Lijing, I..."

"You should rest for now."

"From here on, leave it to me."

Hui Lijing suddenly interjected, and to Hu Qiandai's astonishment, a layer of emerald light blossomed in Hui Lijing's hand.

The light enveloped her, and the injuries she had sustained earlier were rapidly healing, while her once labored breathing quickly calmed.

"What is this?!"

Hu Qiandai was stunned.

"Something extraordinary just happened."

"I'll explain it to you later."

"But right now?"

Hui Lijing cast her gaze outward.

In the ink-black mist, monsters roared and their shadows overlapped endlessly, their numbers unknown.

Yet, without hesitation, Hui Lijing stepped forward.

The firearm was still strapped to her body, but Hui Lijing chose not to use it. Instead, a peculiar weapon materialized in her hand—

A dandelion!

A long, seemingly fluffy dandelion!

Hui Lijing gently swung it.

Whoosh!

A deep thud sounded out of nowhere, accompanied by a gust of wind that swept the scattered sands and stones into the air. Hu Qiandai, standing nearby, instinctively raised her arm to shield her eyes.

"Is this... a dandelion?"

Hu Qiandai was dumbfounded.



"No!"

"This is definitely not a dandelion!"

"This must be a long-handled weapon disguised as a dandelion, or maybe it's just an actual battering ram in disguise!"

Hu Qiandai quickly shook her head.

What a terrifying weapon!

How heavy must it be!

Even with her awakened memories, Hu Qiandai was utterly shocked.

After all, in those memories, no one had been able to wield such a massively heavy weapon with such ease.

No doubt about it!

A super-heavy weapon!

When Hu Qiandai saw Hui Lijing sweep with the dandelion and the monsters before her get smashed apart, she naturally classified it as a super-heavy weapon.

Given her prior experience fighting these monsters, Hu Qiandai knew well the resilience of their skin.

If not for her weapon, "Princess Crane Ichimonji," ordinary blades wouldn't even scratch them.

And now?

The monsters touched by the dandelion had no ability to resist.

They were smashed into lumps of flesh.

Especially those directly struck.

They turned into a mist of blood instantly.

Although no one yet understood what Hui Lijing had experienced.

## Chapter 1173: Threw out the 'Bait'! (2)

But from the current situation, this is a good thing.

Hoo!

Hu Qiandai let out a small breath, but her eyes remained vigilant, sweeping her surroundings meticulously.

Even though things were turning for the better, she couldn't afford to let her guard down.

She needed to prepare for any eventualities.

This was what she had learned on the battlefield.

It was also her key to surviving multiple encounters.

Although Xiaolu Youfeng had never set foot on a true battlefield, as one of the outstanding heirs of the Onmyoji family renowned for its "divination," Xiaolu Youfeng naturally had his own unique methods.

Facing the darkness ahead, Xiaolu Youfeng didn't hesitate or linger; he strode forward decisively.

However, for every segment of road he walked, he would calculate with his fingers.

And after each calculation, the safest path would appear before him.

Yet, after walking for some time, the young Onmyoji furrowed his brows.

The reason was straightforward.

The safest path wasn't necessarily the correct one.

"That guy had already anticipated that an Onmyoji skilled in divination might enter here."

"So, he hid the most correct path amidst the perilous and treacherous routes."

"And the safest path?"

"It became the most useless instead."

Xiaolu Youfeng quickly discerned the "trick" employed by the Hanakaiin Family Head.

Although it was a minor trick, he had to admit—it was incredibly effective.

At the very least, it left him unable to pinpoint the opponent's location in a true sense.

Because within his divination, the only safe path was the one he was currently treading.

And the correct path?

There were as many as five different options.

He couldn't possibly traverse them all alone.

Besides, his purpose wasn't to find the correct path.

He was here to look for Jason.

Almost instinctively, he wanted to "divine" Jason's whereabouts.

But instantly, he suppressed the thought.

The previous divination was still vivid in his memory.

Without Jason's consent, he wouldn't take that risk again.

Once was enough for a loss.

A few more losses?

That would truly mean his death.

He was well aware that the backlash he suffered last time hadn't fully healed; to this day, he still occasionally felt sharp pangs in his heart.

And every time the pain struck, he thought of Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

There was no doubt—this was Tsuchimikado Motoharu setting him up.

As for why?

It might have been retaliation for his divination of the "Arei-no-Hi Banner."

Or maybe it was just pure boredom.

Because that's exactly the kind of person Tsuchimikado Motoharu was.

No one could predict what he truly wanted to do.

In fact, Xiaolu Youfeng suspected that the "Arei-no-Hi Banner" was also just Tsuchimikado Motoharu putting on an act.

Simply to "mess with" him thoroughly.

Otherwise, with Tsuchimikado Motoharu's intelligence, he wouldn't have missed the inconsistencies within.

After all, he had noticed them long ago.

The reason he played along was likely just curiosity—curiosity about who was truly pulling the strings behind the scenes.

Now that he had fixated on the Hanakaiin Family Head,

His curiosity had long vanished.

Or rather, to be precise, the moment Jason appeared.

All his focus shifted solely to Jason.

Anything else?

He no longer cared.

Even his long-standing interest in Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

Achoo!

Tsuchimikado Motoharu sneezed.

"Who's praising my good looks?"



Tsuchimikado rubbed the tip of his nose, murmuring softly.

Then, the handsome and young Onmyoji surveyed the surrounding black mist, sensing the corrosive power within, as well as the hidden forces that lured the heart, and shook his head involuntarily.

"So many years have passed."

"Yet nothing has changed even slightly."

"If it's always going to be like this..."

"It really kills any enthusiasm."

If Tsuchimikado Motoharu had previously been unsure about the Hanakaiin Family Head's intentions, now he was completely certain.

"Another one falling for temptation."

"Power may be good, but if it isn't yours, it's ultimately useless."

"I just wonder..."

"Does all of this have anything to do with the Splendorous Moon?"

After making this lament, Tsuchimikado casually surrounded himself with a barrier.

Then, he sat down on the ground.

His entry here was merely a matter of convenience.

Not to search for Jason.

Nor for anything else.

When it came to his liege, Tsuchimikado had unprecedented confidence.

Jason wouldn't run into trouble.

As for the rest?

He had already confirmed those moments ago.

What remained was to wait.

To wait for his next move to unfold.

If all this was connected to the "Splendorous Moon," then at the critical moment, a flaw would undoubtedly reveal itself.

He firmly believed this.

After all, he had already cast the "bait."

...

"The place that guy arranged to meet us is actually within the Hanakaiin Family Head's territory?"

"Could he be one of the Hanakaiin Family?"

"Like a young master from one of the branch families?"

Yuli clasped her hands behind her head, speaking as she walked.

"It's possible."

"Who knows?"

"We're just people who get paid to do a job. Beyond that?"

"We shouldn't worry too much."

Hui Lixiang responded nonchalantly.

It didn't matter who their employer was, so long as they paid for the job as agreed—they were a good employer.

As for anything else?

She didn't feel like getting involved just yet.

Right now, all she wanted was to make more money.

Why?

Without any innate talent, she needed all sorts of rare materials to support her advancement—some of which were extraordinarily rare.

And all of this required a lot of money.

Some were so rare that money alone couldn't even buy them.

She'd have to rely on pulling every possible string she could.

Just thinking about it made Hui Lixiang feel stuffy in her chest.

Her own little sister—without lifting a finger—had others willingly providing her everything she needed.

And her?

No matter how much effort she poured in, all she ever got was, "You don't have the talent; it's something you can't learn."

If she hadn't gritted her teeth and refused to give up—managing to find some body-strengthening secret techniques through certain channels—she might've long succumbed to despair under the myriad of setbacks and sought solace in an endless lineup of lovers.

But precisely because of this.

She came to understand how terrible her talent really was.

She had to work twice as hard to succeed.

Of course!

The money also had to be doubled.

No!

It had to be tenfold!

"I feel like he's trying to take advantage of the chaos here."

"Could our next task possibly involve entering the Hanakaiin Family estate?"

Kaoru voiced a different perspective.

Her words immediately made Yuli's eyes light up.

The Hanakaiin Family Head's territory!

She had never been there herself!

But she'd heard stories countless times!

It was rumored to hold plenty of treasures.

"Don't even think about it!"

"Their security isn't something just anyone can breach!"

"Even now, it's the same!"

"In fact, you should be even more cautious—the likelihood is high that they've left 'bait!'"

"The Hanakaiin Family Head isn't some charitable benefactor."

One glance at Yuli's expression, and Hui Lixiang instantly knew what her teammate was contemplating. She immediately issued a warning.

As for Kaoru?

She had initially been planning to provoke the "brat" a little.

However, before she could utter the words, the disturbance within her senses caught her attention, prompting her gaze to shift toward the distance.

A man was walking toward them from afar.



Ordinary attire, unremarkable.

His face wasn't particularly distinctive either.

Yet, that face left Hui Lixiang, Yuli, and Kaoru astonished.

Because they recognized it.

They had even observed this person from afar.

Cao Ye!

The same man who, during the "King of Fighters Tournament" qualifiers, served as a guide.

And later, after boarding the "Reaper," murdered an elder from the Hanakaiin Family Head's household.

Currently, he was still on the police's wanted list.

Why would he suddenly appear here?

The answer was obvious.

"You're our employer?"

Hui Lixiang frowned, her eyes wary.

Kaoru was equally serious.

They had speculated about their employer's identity for quite some time but never expected it to be Cao Ye.

Such meticulous concealment!

Could there be a deeper scheme at play?

The two of them pondered.

Just as Hui Lixiang was about to probe further, Cao Ye preemptively spoke.

"Yes."

Cao Ye candidly admitted his identity.

Then, in a calm tone, he said—

"I have a new assignment for you..."

"Protect me!"

Chapter 1174: To Death!

Cao Ye gazed at the three women before him, letting out a small breath of relief.

He knew that as long as he found these three women, he would be safe for the time being.

Ever since he chose to leave with Tsuchimikado Motoharu on that day at the beach, Cao Ye understood that his relatively peaceful days were gone forever.

However, what surprised Cao Ye was that, aside from delivering letters for Tsuchimikado Motoharu a few times, he hadn't been assigned to do anything else.

At first, this made Cao Ye quite happy.

But as time went by and the task remained simply delivering letters, unease began to surface in Cao Ye's heart.

He was well aware that Tsuchimikado Motoharu was far from being a good person.

He knew this crystal clear ever since the man eliminated an elder of the Hanakaiin Family's main house.

What he understood even more deeply was his own identity.

A pawn.

Time passed in Cao Ye's restless anxiety.

Every day, he delivered the letters in a state of constant fear.

Then, he would return to the residence arranged by Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

During this time, Tsuchimikado Motoharu did not appear again.

Nor did he meet anyone else.

Phone calls and letters.

These became the primary means of communication between them.

Especially the latter, which was even more encrypted.

Each letter would automatically incinerate itself upon being read.

Of course, Cao Ye did not emerge empty-handed.

On the contrary, after each delivery, he would gain some sort of 'artifact.'

There was a knife capable of storing Sword Qi.

Beaded charms that could protect their owner.

Potions that could treat wounds.

And even an introductory manual to Onmyoji casting techniques.

It could be said that Tsuchimikado Motoharu's generosity had far exceeded Cao Ye's expectations.

Yet, the more this occurred, the more apprehensive Cao Ye felt.

But he had no right to refuse.

He could only familiarize himself with the artifacts around him and hurriedly try to master the basics of Onmyoji techniques.

Familiarizing himself with the artifacts had quickly fallen into place.

But as for mastering Onmyoji techniques?

Cao Ye was completely clueless.

Beginner's steps?

He didn't have any.

Because he couldn't calm his Xin whatsoever.

And the first step in mastering Onmyoji techniques was to quiet the mind.

But with his heart racing and fearing imminent crises, all Cao Ye thought about each day was what lay ahead and what might happen.

Distracted and uneasy, how could he possibly calm his Xin?

Especially today.

He had been sent out to complete his final task.

"Complete this task and you'll be free."

These were Tsuchimikado Motoharu's exact words.

Cao Ye trusted Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

His opponent would not renege on his promises, but that also signified the difficulty of this task.

During the preparation, Tsuchimikado Motoharu contacted him alone, instructing him to change the original location.

This further solidified the complexity of the task in Cao Ye's mind.

Especially when Tsuchimikado Motoharu warned him that if he wanted to survive, he needed to seek shelter from the three ladies Hui Lixiang, Yuli, and Kaoru, which made Cao Ye's heart tremble even more.

Hui Lixiang, Yuli, Kaoru.

He recognized these three women.

All of them were highly esteemed female fighters whose reputations were sky-high.

Each one of them could easily defeat him without breaking a sweat.

No!



Each of them alone could spark a small war and twist the tides completely.

And now he needed all three of them to keep him safe?

What on earth was he going to face?

As these thoughts whirled in his mind, Cao Ye's dread surged further.

Thus, when he arrived at the foot of the Hanakaiin Family's mountain, Cao Ye headed straight for the predetermined meeting spot.

Fortunately.

The three female fighters hadn't defaulted on their agreement.

Phew!

From afar, when Cao Ye caught sight of the three women, true relief washed over him.

He knew he was saved.

With these three female fighters present.

He was absolutely convinced he could make it out alive.

Cao Ye exuded this confidence.

After all, he used to be an 'King of Fighters Tournament' organizer.

He had a clear grasp of the trio's personalities.

Hui Lixiang and Kaoru were the calm and collected types.

But Yuli was different!

The young woman was fiery and deeply hateful of injustice; if he pleaded with her, she would certainly act.

And once Yuli acted, Hui Lixiang and Kaoru would inevitably follow suit.

To be clear, the three were always united in their movements.

With such a plan, Cao Ye swiftly calmed himself.

He strode toward the three lifelines and spoke frankly to them.

"Protect you?"

Hui Lixiang sized up Cao Ye, her eyes filled with scrutiny.

Kaoru, on the other hand, was more direct, her fighter's aura pressing down on Cao Ye immediately.

Cao Ye instantly felt the pressure akin to a mountain bearing down on him.

Yet, thanks to the 'artifacts' given to him by Tsuchimikado Motoharu, he managed to maintain his composure.

"I mean no harm!"

"I simply ask for your help, that's all."

Cao Ye raised both hands, trying his best to appear earnest.

"That means we have the right to refuse, correct?"

Hui Lixiang retorted.

Although she desperately needed money, the moment she realized Cao Ye was the one requesting help, her instincts put her on high alert.

Unlike Hui Lijing's good fortune.

Hui Lixiang knew just how poor her own luck was.

Hui Lijing would always encounter people who would aid her time and again.

But her?

All she ever encountered were scoundrels, scoundrels, and more scoundrels.

She had no choice but to overcome and overcome again.

Time after time confronting troubles and peril.

There was simply no comparison between them.

Nonetheless, her intuition for trouble and danger was exceptionally sharp.

For instance, the man standing before her now—Cao Ye.

From his presence alone, she could feel major trouble.

This level of trouble was nearly indistinguishable from the life-threatening situations she had endured in the past.

Money was important.

But life was more important.

After all, what good was money if you were dead?

So without waiting for a response, Hui Lixiang spun around and walked away.

Kaoru and Yuli followed her immediately.

Chapter 1175: Facing Death! (2)

Cao Ye panicked.

He hurriedly took two steps forward, circled to the front of the three female fighters, and knelt down without hesitation.

"I beg you."

"Save me."

As he spoke, Cao Ye directly kowtowed.

At the moment his head touched the ground, a sleeve arrow narrowly grazed past him.

More sleeve arrows were shot toward Hui Lixiang and the other two.

Swish swish swish!

The piercing sound of arrows filled the air.

The sleeve arrows embedded into the nearby grass.

The vibrant green grass instantly turned scorched and blackened.

Each blade of once-thriving grass withered rapidly.

Even the ground itself became parched and cracked.

Poison?

This was far beyond the level of ordinary toxins.

Seeing this, Cao Ye's face turned deathly pale with fear.

Meanwhile, Hui Lixiang sighed softly.

"No way to evade."

That was all she said.

Yuli, however, looked eager to try, her eyes scanning the dense forest and nearby shrubbery.

Kaoru?

This female fighter was already making her move.

She raised both hands high above her head, then brought them down heavily.

Whoosh!

A wave formed of Sword Qi surged forward with unrelenting sharpness, sweeping directly toward the cluster of shrubs.

Massive trees, requiring two people to encircle them, were destroyed instantly as though they'd been relentlessly crushed.



Including the attackers hidden within.

But that was just one group.

More adversaries emerged from the dense forest, launching an attack on the four of them.

Swish swish swish!

Bang bang bang!

There were arrows as well as gunfire.

In an instant, the previously quiet mountainside erupted into chaos.

Hanakaiin Ra, who had been outside the estate, was immediately drawn to the commotion.

"Stay alert!"

After gesturing to members of the affiliated families to remain vigilant, his gaze turned toward Hanakaiin Tōru.

He was waiting for Hanakaiin Tōru to issue orders.

But Hanakaiin Tōru remained intensely focused on the chessboard in front of him, ignoring Hanakaiin Ra's expectant eyes.

This left Hanakaiin Ra in a difficult position.

He was accustomed to leaving everything to Hanakaiin Tōru whenever the latter was present.

All he had to do was follow orders.

But now?

Even though Hanakaiin Tōru was right here, he wasn't giving any commands, forcing Hanakaiin Ra to make decisions on his own—something he found deeply unsettling.

Scratching his head.

Hanakaiin Ra finally said—

"Keep the alert up."

As soon as he said it, Hanakaiin Ra felt that this somehow undermined his “authority.”

He quickly added another line.

"Stay extra vigilant."

Then?

Hanakaiin Ra positioned himself beside Hanakaiin Tōru, silently waiting.

He firmly believed that with Tōru by his side, everything would be sorted out.

...

"Is that all?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu frowned deeply.

It shouldn't be!

This really shouldn't be!

Although the attack seemed intense, it was far weaker than he had expected.

At least, if the 'Flourish of the Moon' had intervened...

They wouldn't have resorted to firearms.

But if it wasn't the people from 'Flourish of the Moon,' then who had responded to his 'bait'?

Unconsciously, Tsuchimikado Motoharu turned to gaze toward a direction cloaked in dark mist.

That was a place permeated with concentrated negative emotions.

Very likely, it was also where the Hanakaiin Family Head resided.

"Could they really be so irrational?"

"Or perhaps

"You have another plan in motion?"

With this thought in mind, Tsuchimikado Motoharu stood up.

He strode purposefully toward the direction he sensed.

Clear in his intent.

Unwavering in his path.

Just like Jason.

Following the scent, he arrived at a relatively intact house.

Here, the battle between two groups was nearing its end.

Most of the combatants on both sides were already sprawled on the ground.

Only two individuals remained standing.

But even standing, they were both panting heavily.

It wasn't just their physical strength—both were gravely injured.

One had lost their left arm, with blood gushing uncontrollably.

The other had a gaping wound in their abdomen, with internal organs plainly visible.

It was clear that without the influence of transcendent secret techniques, both would have long been dead.

As Jason stepped forward, the two immediately turned toward him and charged.

"Mine! It's all mine!"

"Die! Everyone else, just die!"

The two screamed madly, rushing toward Jason with incredible speed, only to be kicked aside even faster.

One kick per person.

They soared through the air.

Fell heavily to the ground.

And lost consciousness.

Jason had encountered this kind of situation several times now.

Persuasion was futile.

A direct approach was more effective.

He then pushed open a still-functional door nearby.

The room was small, filled with various items.

But most were useless to Jason.

Save for one item that exuded the aroma of food.

For Jason, that was enough.

He picked up a dagger-like 'object' and swallowed it whole.

The unique texture was soft yet slightly springy, with a rich flavor of eggs and fresh shrimp inside.

The taste of egg and shrimp intertwined.

Neither dominated the other.

They complemented each other perfectly.



Paired with the outer layer.

Jason couldn't help but squint in satisfaction.

Rice rolls!

Too bad there was no sauce.

Jason sighed with some regret, then looked at the text before him.

[Consumed the Blade of Sacrificial Feasting (Imitation)]

[Physical Strength, Energy, and Wounds have been greatly restored!]

[Satiety +60]

[Satiety: 2048]

...

On his way to the Hanakaiin Family, Jason's satiety had fallen below 1000 due to integrating the [Great Majestic Heavenly Dragon Technique]. But ever since arriving at the foot of the mountain and continuing his feast, his satiety had been rapidly climbing.

Although there was no Excitement of Feast, achieving over 2000 points of satiety gave Jason an inexplicable sense of security.

As for the Excitement of Feast?

Thus far, he had only cleared out some 'food points' on the outskirts.

He hadn't yet reached the core.

He believed he'd find what he truly wanted there.

After thoroughly exploring the house and confirming there was nothing else worth his attention, Jason headed back outside.

"Was it... was it you who saved us?"

By now, the two individuals who had been fighting to the death earlier had regained consciousness.

Unlike their previous life-or-death struggle, now they were supporting each other, applying rudimentary bandages to their wounds.

The effect of the mist had disappeared!

Based on his prior encounters, Jason knew that knocking someone out would bring them back to normal upon waking.

Clearly, these two were no exception.

"No."

Jason replied as he always did.

He hadn't come to save them.

He was here for food.

Saving them?

Not even an afterthought.

Knocking them out had just been a means to better secure food.

As such, Jason didn't even entertain the idea of lingering and walked straight toward the core area.

The two, watching Jason's figure fade into the distance, were filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

They had already been saved by Jason once before.

And now, a second time.

"As expected, the Sword Saint has a cold exterior but a warm heart."

"Exactly!"

"This makes the second time he's saved us!"

"Huh, what about the items in the room?"

"What items? We were in such a bizarre state earlier—maybe those items were the cause of it. The Sword Saint must've destroyed them."

"True!"

"With the Sword Saint's noble character, how could he concern himself with such trivial things."

"And the Hanakaiin Family's head... truly sinister to set us up like this!"

"Indeed!"

"Absolutely despicable!"

Their voices reverberated through the mist.

Growing fainter and fainter.

Their perspectives lifting higher and higher.

Until it reached an extreme, revealing a crystal ball in a pitch-black room.

Two figures standing in the shadows watched the scenes within the crystal ball. The shorter one erupted into a series of laughs.

"Is this it?"

"Is this the person you planned everything around?"

"Do you think it's worth it?"

The shorter one turned their gaze to the taller figure beside them.

"It's worth it!"

"Every bit of this was worth it!"

The taller one replied firmly, their eyes not on the crystal ball but on the scene behind them.

There, hundreds of artifacts were arranged in a specific pattern.

Dozens of unconscious Shikigami were tied to wooden stakes.

The ever-thickening darkness obscured the room.

Blocking perception.

And preventing divination.

"There's no problem here, is there?"

The taller figure asked.

"Of course not."

"I can guarantee it."

The shorter one said.

"Then that's good."

With that, the taller figure began walking toward the exit.

"Hey, is this really necessary?"

"Why not just wait here?"

"Everything is already perfect!"

The shorter one hesitated briefly before urging otherwise.

"No!"

"Something is still missing!"



"The answer they seek—me."

With these words, the taller figure's steps never faltered.

He continued forward.

Even if certain death awaited him, he didn't stop.

Or rather, he had been prepared to...

Face death head-on.

Chapter 1176: Amended: 106 Attraction!

Hanakaiin Haru sat calmly in place, waiting patiently.

Although his vision had not fully returned to normal, a faint 'barrier' blocked the corrosive gases from approaching him.

For Hanakaiin Haru, that was enough.

Sometimes, his paper dolls were more useful than his own eyes.

For instance, at this moment—

Sitting on the ground with half-closed eyes, Hanakaiin Haru suddenly opened them wide and rolled to the side.

BOOM!

Just as Hanakaiin Haru moved four or five meters away, an explosion erupted abruptly.

Rocks and dirt flew everywhere, stones scattering in all directions.

And the explosions didn't stop at just one.

Before Hanakaiin Haru could fully stand, he rolled again.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A series of explosions ensued.

Not giving Hanakaiin Haru a single moment to catch his breath.

After nine consecutive blasts, the chaos finally ceased.

By this point, Hanakaiin Haru's clothes were in tatters, with bloodstains smeared all over him. His left arm, in particular, was a mangled mess of flesh and blood.

He was injured!

Hanakaiin Haru glanced quickly at his left arm, then raised his other hand to wipe it.

A faint glow shimmered.

When Hanakaiin Haru lowered his right hand, the left arm had already healed, as good as new.

Clap, clap!

The sound of crisp applause echoed.

A tall man emerged from the swirling mist.

"Not bad."

"Haru, your onmyōdō is even more impressive than I imagined."

The man praised him in this way.

Yet the young onmyoji felt no joy at all.

He stared at the tall man, his face dark with anger.

"Why?"

"Why are you doing this?"

Hanakaiin Haru demanded.

"You mean all this?"

The tall man seemed surprised by Hanakaiin Haru's questioning, as if perplexed, and gestured vaguely to the surroundings.

The pitch-black mist churned, retreating from the area under the tall man's direction.

Moonlight poured down, its silvery glow illuminating the figure of the tall man.

He was not dressed like a traditional onmyoji, but instead wore a black cloak draped over a white inner robe. His hair was bound with a bluish-green silk band, and his face was scholarly and refined, with a long beard adorning his chin.

Graceful and unassuming, even exuding an aura of transcendence.

Had it been only based on this appearance, Hanakaiin Haru would never have believed that this man was the one orchestrating the recent series of events.

Events that included blowing up his family's territory.

And even now, he showed not the slightest hint of remorse.

Instead, his demeanor seemed to suggest this was entirely justified.

Fury!

The rage burned like flames within Hanakaiin Haru's heart.

He glared fiercely at the tall man before him and shouted loudly.

"Hanakaiin Rō!"

"No!"

"You're not even worthy of the Hanakaiin name!"

As he spoke, Hanakaiin Haru hurled the talismans in his hand toward the head of his own main family.

Hanakaiin Rō made no effort to evade, allowing the deadly talismans to strike his body directly.

Clap, crackle!

They fizzled like sparks sizzling in the air.

The talismans, upon touching Hanakaiin Rō, charred to ash and fell to the ground.

Hanakaiin Rō didn't even glance at them, steadily walking toward Hanakaiin Haru.

"Hah!"

Hanakaiin Haru cast another handful of talismans.

This time, the talismans weren't aimed at Hanakaiin Rō.

Instead, they adhered to Hanakaiin Haru himself.

A radiant light burst forth.

Hanakaiin Haru charged straight ahead.

Left straight punch, right hook, backhand punch, right elbow strike, left roundhouse kick, right high kick—a dazzling combination of attacks accompanied by the sound of rushing wind. Each punch and kick carried immense force.

This was power that went beyond mere physical strength.

It also channeled the force of onmyōdō.

Every strike could easily pierce through a tree trunk as thick as a person's waist.

Every blow was so swift that the human eye could barely follow.

Yet these were not his true killing moves.

In the distance!

Within the mist, a sword bearer held their breath.

It resembled a swordsman.

That is, if not for the massive, somewhat endearing dog head it bore.



At this moment, the dog head—normally so silly and lovable—was filled with solemnity. Clutching its blade, it stood as immovable as a mountain, with a ‘Sparrow’ and ‘House Guardian’ plaque hanging from its back, resembling a lone cabin atop a peak.

Both a burden.

And a source of strength.

"Impressive strength!"

"Blending combat techniques with onmyōdō, eh?"

"Yet still just a little short!"

Hanakaiin Rō endured the young onmyoji's flurry of punches and kicks. Even within the protection of the Great Barrier, Hanakaiin Rō could not help but acknowledge that Hanakaiin Haru's strength surpassed what was usual for his age, reaching the level of the older generation.

Truly praiseworthy!

But...

For the sake of his plan!

Apologies must be made!

With that thought, Hanakaiin Rō raised his hand.

He was ready to counterattack.

And just then—

Schwing!

The sound of a blade unsheathing.

A figure rushed forward at incredible speed, plunging into the battlefield like a doppelganger phantom.

"Where the heart points, there the blade follows!"

"Draw

"Cut!"

With a resounding cry, the sword light flashed.

Splat!

The hand Hanakaiin Rō had raised was severed cleanly.

"Inugami?"

"You've already obtained your own shikigami, even before joining the main family?"

"Truly an unexpected talent."

Hanakaiin Rō gazed at the sword-wielding dog-headed swordsman standing protectively in front of Hanakaiin Haru, unable to conceal his amazement.

Branch family members were not given shikigami before joining the main family.

Of course, nothing prevented them from seeking out shikigami themselves.

But most shikigami were far inferior to those passed down in the main family.

After all, forming a contract with a shikigami was no simple matter. For an onmyoji, every shikigami they contracted with placed a heavy burden on them. As such, most onmyoji would only choose a single shikigami.

Chapter 1177: Attract! (2)

So, the members of the Hanakaiin branch rarely make such a choice.

Especially those with the potential to challenge the main family.

For the first time, Hanakaiin Rō sized up Hanakaiin Haru with a serious gaze.

"Have you already decided to give up on the main family?"

Hanakaiin Rō asked.

"Heh."

"Are you serious asking that question? Don't you find it laughable?"

Hanakaiin Haru scoffed coldly.

Hanakaiin Rō fell silent momentarily, shaking his head slightly before striking again.

This time, Hanakaiin Rō seemingly teleported behind Hanakaiin Haru, raising his hand to grab at Haru's back.

Fast!

Far faster than Hanakaiin Haru had imagined!

But, the Dogheaded Swordsman was even faster!

"My dear friend! I will protect you!"

Turning swiftly with his blade, the long sword met Hanakaiin Rō's outstretched hand.

Clang!

The clash of metal sounded as Hanakaiin Rō retreated, but the Dogheaded Swordsman followed like a shadow, slashing relentlessly.

Clang! Clang, clang!

The dense sound of strikes echoed like a blacksmith's hammer on an anvil.

The two sides were locked in a stalemate.

Yet, Hanakaiin Haru knew full well that Hanakaiin Rō held the advantage.

Because this was the enemy's home turf!

Even with the Inugami on his side, the longer the battle dragged on, the more the tide would turn against him, leading inevitably to failure!

Thinking this, Hanakaiin Haru took a deep breath—

"Inugami, buy me five seconds!"

"Got it!"

The Dogheaded Swordsman nodded in agreement.

Hanakaiin Haru began channeling the power of Onmyōdō, stimulating the energy of a 'Martial Artist' within his body.

The two forces fused together in a bizarre, unnatural harmony under Haru's control.

Then...

Explosion!

Boom!

A massive surge of Onmyōdō erupted from Hanakaiin Haru's back and shoulders.

His already tattered clothing was instantly shredded apart.

The surge of spiritual energy shot upwards, scattering the surrounding black mist.

What remained was the sound of heavy breathing from the young Onmyoji.

"I can only hold out for ten seconds."

"Any longer, and my heart will overload."

"But ten seconds is enough!"

With this thought, Hanakaiin Haru shouted loudly:

"Inugami, get out of the way!"

"Leave the rest to me

"Shunkan Kai!"

Boom!



With a low cry, the young Onmyoji's fist connected with Hanakaiin Rs body.

The Great Barrier's defense—shattered!

Skin, bones, muscles—all torn apart!

The core of the body—obliterated.

Even the upper torso was gone.

The combination of Onmyōdō and Combat Power revealed its devastating might at this moment.

However, the young Onmyoji's expression was grim.

Because Hanakaiin Rs fallen lower half turned into a puppet.

A puppet!

All along, he had been fighting a puppet of Hanakaiin Rō!

"Just a puppet?"

Hanakaiin Haru muttered under his breath, his expression contemplative, before immediately turning to the side.

There were sounds of combat coming from that direction.

"Inugami, let's go!"

The young Onmyoji could no longer concern himself with anything else and rushed with his Shikigami toward the source of the commotion.

...

Hanakaiin Itsuki adjusted his hood, glancing at his hoodie, now torn halfway to shreds. His lips curled into a ferocious grin.

"Hanakaiin Rō, do you realize what you've done?"

"You ruined my favorite hoodie."

"Are you ready to pay for it with your life?"

Hanakaiin Itsuki looked at the tall man across from him, asking savagely.

He hated Hanakaiin Rō.

Or rather, he hated the entire Hanakaiin Family.

From a young age, he had been indoctrinated with the principle of 'loyalty to the family.'

But what kind of 'family' was worth such loyalty?

His mother could be abandoned, his father could shamelessly pander to an old hag for the sake of the family's "greater development."

What kind of family was that?

His mother had stopped smiling.

He stopped smiling too.

And then, they were cast out of the mansion.

In the dead of winter.

He survived by scavenging, digging through trash bins.

Yet, he didn't mind.

Because his mother was still there with him.

'I feel like drinking milk tea,' she had said one day.

'Leave it to me,' he replied.

Even though he scavenged, he had savings.

For what purpose?

Obviously, for moments like these.

He wanted to see his mother smile.

He brought back the milk tea.

His mother smiled.

Warmly, sweet like the milk tea itself.

And then, she was gone.

The morning after drinking the milk tea, his mother passed quietly. Her cold body devastated him, but she left one final wish: for him not to hate.

Not hate?

Impossible!

He hated!

Hated the heavens! Hated the earth!

He wanted to kill every last one of the Hanakaiin Family!

Yet, he fulfilled his mother's other final wish.

To place a snow lotus by her grave.

He did as she wished.

He climbed the snowy mountains, retrieved a snow lotus, and killed his father, his father's new bride, and everyone around them. The white snow lotus was dyed red, and he placed it before his mother's grave.

There was nothing left.

He had honored and betrayed his mother's wishes alike.

Milk tea?

Double sugar.

Half for himself, half for his mother.

Because his mother was still with him.

After all, milk tea is sweet.

As for others?

He could care less.

Although, if possible, he'd like to be friends with Jason.

Not just because Jason liked milk tea.

But because Jason was a pure-hearted person.

They were alike.

Which is why he came here.

To help his friend.

And if he could help his friend while taking down a head of the Hanakaiin main family?

That couldn't be more perfect!

"Die!"

Hanakaiin Itsuki unleashed a slash.

A sword!

Yes, a sword!

Despite being an Onmyoji, he wielded swords.



A blade made entirely of 'Frost.'

"A sword? An adept Swordsman?"

"And this...?"

"You've given up on the main family too, haven't you?"

Hanakaiin Rō managed to ask before he was frozen and sliced apart.

"Screw the main family!"

"I am who I am!"

Hanakaiin Itsuki swung his sword, severing the puppet's head, then raised an eyebrow at the wooden body.

"A puppet?"

"Heh!"

With a cold chuckle, Hanakaiin Itsuki headed toward the direction of the ongoing battle.

The fight wasn't over.

He still hadn't killed enough.

...

Crack!

Tsuchimikado Motoharu snapped Hanakaiin Rs neck.

"As expected, just another puppet."

"They really went to such lengths to send a puppet."

"What are you trying to hide?"

"No!"

"What exactly are you planning to do?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu muttered to himself before walking to the side.

Amidst the mist, Xiao Luyoufeng frowned.

"When did you discover me?"

Xiao Luyoufeng asked.

"When you led that puppet here... Hehe, Luyoufeng, do you owe me a favor now?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu asked with a half-smile, narrowing his eyes.

"Yes."

"Except for divining Jason's fate."

"What else do you want divined?"

Xiao Luyoufeng responded.

He already anticipated what price he'd have to pay when he made the decision to lead Hanakaiin Rō into this.

However, it was well within what he could accept.

After all, direct 'combat' wasn't his forte.

"I want to divine what exactly Hanakaiin Rō plans to do."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu stated plainly.

"Alright."

Xiao Luyoufeng nodded and began the divination.

Then—

Spurt!

A mouthful of fresh blood sprayed out as Xiao Luyoufeng rolled his eyes and muttered weakly to Tsuchimikado Motoharu: “You—you tricked me again.”

With that, he promptly passed out.

The sight left Tsuchimikado Motoharu briefly stunned.

He grabbed Xiao Luyoufeng, muttering softly to himself.

"Something truly big is about to happen!"

...

Whoosh!

Amidst a dull roar that made one's scalp crawl, over a dozen monsters were sent flying.

They were smashed into pulp.

But there was no blood or gore.

Instead, they dissolved into nothingness.

Or perhaps... they were absorbed.

Absorbed by that round, furry dandelion-like creature.

Meanwhile, Hui Lijing, heavily injured and drained of strength, instantly recovered.

Hui Lijing stretched in surprise and delight.

"Lijing, your Shikigami is truly suited for battle!"

Hu Qiandai couldn't help but praise.

"Indeed, I never thought Yingcao would be so battle-ready!"

The female detective nodded repeatedly.

Then, she suddenly turned sharply toward the mist on one side.

From there, a tall figure emerged slowly.

The individual first assessed Hu Qiandai, before fixing his gaze on Hui Lijing with a tone of curiosity and probing:

"Yingcao? The legendary Shikigami... can you tell me where you found her?"

Chapter 1178: Faces

Facing the sudden question from the middle-aged man, Hui Lijing maintained absolute vigilance.

She wasn't a three-year-old child; how could she possibly answer so casually?

Especially considering the surrounding environment and the recent battle, the female detective deeply understood the importance of not speaking lightly to the stranger in front of her.

Thus, in the next moment—

The dandelion in Hui Lijing's hand was pointed directly at Hanakaiin Rō.

Whoosh!

A dull, nerve-racking whooshing sound filled the air, and Hanakaiin Rō couldn't help but take a step back.

Although he had already witnessed the power of 'Yingcao,' facing it directly still brought an overwhelming pressure—so much that it felt suffocating.

"How heavy is this dandelion?"

Hanakaiin Rō couldn't help but wonder.

Then, as he looked again at Hui Lijing effortlessly wielding the massive dandelion, his eye twitched involuntarily.

This woman... No!

No, that's not right!



How strong is 'Yingcao'?

If I were to take even one hit, I might die on the spot.

'Yingcao' was once the strongest Shikigami of our family."

"But later

"We lost her."

Hanakaiin Rō spoke like this.

It wasn't a lie—it was the truth.

Of course, it wasn't the whole truth.

For instance, ever since the Hanakaiin family had obtained the Shikigami 'Yingcao,' no one had truly owned her.

In fact, after the Hanakaiin clan member who acquired 'Yingcao' passed away, people no longer even knew what 'Yingcao' looked like.

Based on snippets of information later, all they knew was that 'Yingcao' appeared as a girl—a very cute one—holding a giant dandelion. She fought valiantly, unmatched in bravery, earning the title of 'a one-person army.'

Beyond that?

There was nothing else.

Especially after 'Yingcao' was lost, those records were merely records—nobody could verify them.

However, Hanakaiin Rō firmly believed in the power of 'Yingcao.'

After all, seeing is believing.

He had witnessed 'Yingcao's' might with his own eyes.

The girl in front of him—he recognized her.

Jason the 'Sword Saint's' assistant, the sister of the 'Female Fighter' Hui Lixiang, an ordinary person who had only recently encountered the Inside World.

Yet, such a person already managed to achieve 'one against a hundred' in a short time.

Doesn't that sufficiently prove the strength of 'Yingcao'?

In response to Hanakaiin Rs words, Hui Lijing did not lower her guard.

Even though Hanakaiin Rō sounded like he was being sincere.

But who could tell truth from lies?

Noticing Hui Lijing's wariness, Hanakaiin Rō merely smiled.

"Rest assured."

"I have no intention of holding anyone accountableYingcao' has long been an ownerless being, so whoever finds her naturally has the right to keep her

Yingcao' is not an object!"

"She's my companion in battle!"

Before Hanakaiin Rō could finish, Hui Lijing interrupted him.

These weren't some sentimental words.

Nor were they the ramblings of a pretentious youth.

They were Hui Lijing's heartfelt truth.

After all, she had encountered 'Yingcao' at the brink of death and, with 'Yingcao's' help, survived the crisis.

She was filled with gratitude toward 'Yingcao.'

Besides, 'Yingcao' was so cute.

How could such a cute girl be treated as an object?

She was a companion!

This was something Hui Lijing had already determined from the bottom of her heart.

And now?

She would certainly refute any opposing argument.

Seeing Hui Lijing's stance, Hanakaiin Rō nodded slightly.

"Acknowledging your Shikigami and being acknowledged by your Shikigami... that's a very good state."

"For someone like you who has become Transcendent, I imagine you must feel a sense of joy, correct?"

"Without the constraints of the past, possessing the right to resist—such joy is inevitable, isn't it?"

Hanakaiin Rō took a deep breath and spoke in a calm tone.

However, these words only caused Hui Lijing to furrow her brows.

She couldn't quite grasp what Hanakaiin Rō was trying to convey.

Instinctively, she glanced at her friend.

The Uesugi family's heiress had the same reaction.

Hu Qiandai frowned, scrutinizing Hanakaiin Rō in front of her.

She felt like this man seemed... a bit unhinged?

To tangle with someone unhinged?

That's never a good idea.

"Who exactly are you?"

"What's your objective?"

The Uesugi heiress asked directly.

"I am Hanakaiin Rō."

"My objective?"

Hanakaiin Rō openly admitted his identity, but when it came to revealing his intentions—

The head of the Hanakaiin family, who had orchestrated everything, merely shook his head.

It wasn't that he didn't want to say it.

It was that he couldn't.

In truth, he very much wanted to tell everyone what he aimed to accomplish.

But the moment he revealed it—

His plan would fail.

Thus, after shaking his head, Hanakaiin Rō deliberately lowered his voice and spoke in an eerily sinister tone: “My objective is, of course, to gain power, to attain immortality, to take you to unimaginable ‘transcendence’!”

Facing the suddenly changing demeanor of Hanakaiin Rō, Hui Lijing, who had been on guard all along, immediately swung her massive dandelion at him.

Hanakaiin Rō tried to dodge quickly.

But he had underestimated the force contained within the dandelion.

Though he had sensed it earlier, that was just a casual swing—not an actual attack!

Whoosh!

The surrounding air was smashed into a vacuum.

Pressure comparable to a mountain bore down on him, immobilizing him completely.



BOOM!

Amid a deafening explosion—

Hanakaiin Rō was utterly pulverized.

The Great Barrier's defense, which should have been impenetrable, shattered completely the moment it came into contact with the dandelion, as if it had never existed.

Chapter 1179: Appearance (2)

The energy within it had been absorbed quite significantly.

The puppet shattered to pieces and fell to the ground.

"A puppet?"

Hu Qiandai clearly knew more.

The Uesugi Family heiress, now possessing memories of her past life, frowned.

She looked at the puppet before her and couldn't shake the feeling that something major was about to happen.

"What's wrong?"

Hui Lijing asked.

"I just have a bad premonition."

Hu Qiandai responded, then turned toward Hui Lijing and cautiously asked, "Jing, how do you feel? Are you tired or in some sort of bad condition?"

"Not at all!"

"I feel totally energized!"

"Furthermore

"The more I fight, the better I feel!"

"It's as though I have endless strength!"

Hui Lijing shook her head, and to prove she wasn't lying, she swung her dandelion once more.

A burst of fierce wind roared through the surroundings.

Seeing the state of her friend, Hu Qiandai lightly sighed in relief.

"That's good to hear."

"If anything feels off, let me know immediately."

"Also, can you communicate with 'Firefly Grass'?"

Hu Qiandai continued to ask.

"Yes, I can."

Firefly Grass' was crying fearfully just now, but even so, 'Firefly Grass' didn't stop swinging the dandelion — even with tears streaming down, it's determined to fight until the end."

Firefly Grass' is truly a qualified warrior."

Hui Lijing couldn't help but recall her own beginnings on the battlefield.

Wasn't she the same back then?

Crying while pulling the trigger.

Turns out, there's someone just like me!

Hui Lijing thought silently.

Such thoughts were clearly conveyed to 'Firefly Grass'.

"I... I'll stay by your side, Jing!"

"I won't be a burden!"

'Firefly Grass' responded to Hui Lijing.

This wasn't mere words; under Hui Lijing's gaze, a magatama suddenly appeared on the sides of 'Firefly Grass' skirt, and beneath each magatama began to emerge a character.

From blurry to distinct.

It read—

Claw!

It resembled the roar of a primal beast, or the bellow of a monster.

But soon, only 'Firefly Grass' serene smile remained.

Not understanding what had just occurred, Hui Lijing simply nodded her head.

"Let's do our best together!"

Hui Lijing responded in this way.

"Alright!"

'Firefly Grass' replied.

Standing nearby, Hu Qiandai instinctively narrowed her eyes.

What's going on?

Why does it feel like Jing's aura just grew stronger?

No, not Jing!

It's 'Firefly Grass'!

After the recent battle, has it evolved?

Could such a powerful Shikigami evolve so easily?

Hu Qiandai was floored.

According to the memories she had gained, the stronger a Shikigami is, the harder it is to fulfill the conditions for evolution.

For a Shikigami like 'Firefly Grass', wouldn't it have to single-handedly challenge Orochi to evolve?

How could it be this simple?

What shocked Hu Qiandai even more was her friend Hui Lijing's reaction.

Hui Lijing seemed not at all surprised by this evolution.

But how could that be?

Hui Lijing must have felt this evolution!

Such a surge in power — as the host, she must've sensed it more acutely.

But why wasn't she surprised?

Isn't gaining strength a good thing?

"Jing, why aren't you surprised?"

Hu Qiandai asked.

Between friends, the Uesugi Family heiress spoke without hesitation.

And Hui Lijing was just as candid.

"Why should I be surprised?"

"I trust 'Firefly Grass'!"

Firefly Grass' trusts me too!"

"The rest?"

"It's merely incidental!"



Hui Lijing answered as though it was the most natural thing in the world, leaving Hu Qiandai speechless.

She felt something was off, but couldn't pinpoint exactly what.

Then—

"Thank you... thank you, Jing!"

"I'll do my best!"

The voice of 'Firefly Grass' echoed in Hui Lijing's heart, and soon, two more magatama appeared on the left and right sides of its skirt. Beneath the previous 'Claw' characters, two additional ones emerged.

It grew even stronger!

Hu Qiandai's eyes widened in astonishment.

This time, however, the Uesugi Family heiress chose not to question further.

A bond!

The bond between companions!

Her heart had already provided the answer.

"To have you as a friend is truly wonderful!"

Hu Qiandai said this as her gaze turned to the depths of the fog, where the sounds of battle had reached the heavens.

Blinding flashes pierced through the black mist.

Genuinely sharp gales swept across the ground.

Though far away, both Hu Qiandai and Hui Lijing could clearly see the battle unfolding there.

Hanakaiin Haru, Hanakaiin Itsuki, and Tsuchimikado Motoharu were battling Hanakaiin Rō.

No longer a puppet.

The genuine Hanakaiin Rō.

Not far from them, Komichi Yabee was slumped on the ground, her chest stained with large swaths of blood — clearly severely injured.

"Let's go help!"

Hui Lijing said, charging toward them.

These people had entered the fray all because of Jason.

And as Jason's assistant, she couldn't stand idly by.

Especially Komichi Yabee — she needed immediate treatment.

"Alright!"

Hu Qiandai followed closely behind, rushing ahead.

Within two minutes, Hui Lijing and Hu Qiandai reached the battlefield.

But in just those two minutes, Hanakaiin Haru, Hanakaiin Itsuki, and Tsuchimikado Motoharu were already looking quite battered.

Hanakaiin Haru's lips were slightly bruised.

Hanakaiin Itsuki's sweatshirt was completely torn, baring his torso.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu's ever-present smile had vanished, replaced with a grave expression.

"He's used a ritual to merge his power with this 'fog'."

"If we don't dispel this 'fog

"We'll never win!"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu said solemnly.

Chapter 1180: Appearance (3)

"Nonsense!"

"The problem now is, how do we dispel this 'mist'!"

"Where is its source?"

Hanakaiin Itsuki raised his hand and swung his sword.

The roaring freezing Sword Qi knocked down the black arrows flying in from all directions.

These arrows, entirely black, turned into black 'fog' upon hitting the ground, merging back into the surrounding 'mist'.

Meanwhile, the spreading frost stopped Hanakaiin Rs movements for a moment.

This was the opportunity Hanakaiin Haru had been waiting for.

A burst of strength erupted from his shoulders, propelling him like a cannonball toward Hanakaiin Rō.

Bang!

A direct, unembellished collision.

Between Hanakaiin Rs body and Hanakaiin Haru's fist, a layer of black 'fog' formed a barrier.

Hanakaiin Rs body flew backward.

But Hanakaiin Rō suffered no actual injury.

On the contrary, Hanakaiin Haru gasped heavily for breath.

Seeing this, Hanakaiin Itsuki's mouth curled slightly.

Just as Tsuchimikado Motoharu said, without dispelling the 'mist', they couldn't win at all.

Instinctively, Hanakaiin Itsuki's gaze turned toward Xiaolu Youfeng.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu's eyes had already landed on Xiaolu Youfeng.

Xiaolu Youfeng shuddered all over.

"Wh-what do you want to do?"

"If I divine again, I'll die!"

Xiaolu Youfeng shouted.

At the same time, the young Onmyoji's eyes turned toward the swiftly approaching Hui Lijing and Hu Qiandai.

He hoped the two ladies would speak up for him.

As for Tsuchimikado Motoharu and the other three?

He already saw through them.

Each one was worse than the other, always scheming against him.

Under Xiaolu Youfeng's pleading gaze, Hui Lijing spoke.

"Don't worry! I'll heal you!"

Xiaolu Youfeng: ...

To prove she wasn't just talking, Hui Lijing raised her hand and cast the healing glow of 'Glowing Grass' onto Xiaolu Youfeng.

Xiaolu Youfeng's pale complexion quickly turned rosy.

But his lips trembled.

"Are you all demons?"

He shouted, though he didn't hesitate in taking action.

Once again, the divination began.

"In... pfft!"

Before he could finish speaking, Xiaolu Youfeng coughed up blood again and fainted directly.



Hui Lijing immediately healed him.

Xiaolu Youfeng slowly regained consciousness, barely knowing where he was, before hearing Hui Lijing's insistent questioning.

"Where?"

"East-Southeast!"

"And... pfft!"

Once more, Xiaolu Youfeng coughed up blood and fainted.

Hui Lijing healed him again.

Xiaolu Youfeng woke up once more.

"And what else?"

"And, he's just bait!"

"The real danger is in the East-Southeast!"

This time, Xiaolu Youfeng forced himself to finish despite gritting his teeth.

As his words fell, the backlash struck again.

Save me!

Signaling Hui Lijing with his eyes, Xiaolu Youfeng fainted once more.

As Hui Lijing continued to tend to him, her face grew solemn.

Not only Hui Lijing—Hu Qiandai, Hanakaiin Haru, Hanakaiin Itsuki, and Tsuchimikado Motoharu all wore grim expressions.

Had they been tricked?

Everyone shared the same thought.

Hanakaiin Rō looked at the faces of his comrades, then at Xiaolu Youfeng, and couldn't help but sigh softly.

"I tried my best to hide it."

"Didn't expect it to be discovered anyway."

"Kids these days are terrifying."

Speaking, Hanakaiin Rō turned toward the East-Southeast.

Over there, a deliberate disturbance had begun to emerge.

Hanakaiin Rō breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thankfully

"I succeeded."

He said with a smile.

The next moment—

The void shattered.

The 'membrane' of the 'present world' broke apart.

A massive and unfathomable figure flickered beyond the void.

It rapidly approached.

Eight towering heads shrieked.

Sixteen ravenous, greedy eyes fixated upon them.