

Menu 551

Chapter 551: Edward's 'Genuine' Account

The ritual can be disrupted.

Whether it's the arcane knowledge Jason had learned, or the arcane knowledge he'd come across, they both definitively stated this fact.

But, how should it be disrupted?

Disrupting the ritual isn't a reckless act, but requires an appropriate method.

Therefore, once Jason confirmed that 'Edward' was conducting a 'ritual', he had been thinking hard.

After all, if you disrupt the ritual correctly, it will immediately backlash against the conductor."

But what if it's disrupted incorrectly?

Those who disrupt the ritual will face unimaginable consequences.

Moreover, some consequences are irreversible.

Thus, Jason was extremely cautious.

Even though he knew that 'Edward's explanation was part of the 'ritual', he did not attempt to disrupt it.

Because such 'disruption' was simply too easy, too direct.

Given the caution and cunning 'Edward' had demonstrated, would he reveal such an obvious flaw?

The answer is no.

To interrupt the ritual by cutting off the opponent's speech should be a trap!

Or, to be more precise, Jason thought the so-called explanation of the opponent was a lie, intended to make those entering the ritual speak out to disrupt it blindly.

This is quite normal.

The two were enemies after all.

Believe what the enemy says?

That's even more foolish than believing in the enemy's good intentions.

Of course, there's an even more important point!

Jason was absolutely certain he could turn everything around at the last moment.

Because—

He, Jason, was undying!

No matter what the final result of the 'ritual' in front of him was, he, the 'substitute', was certain to die.

And as long as he didn't die, the 'ritual' would naturally be disrupted.

As for whether 'Edward' wanted to kill him or not?

On this, Jason was certain.

Ever since his appearance, although 'Edward' had always been smiling, the hostility and murderous intent in his eyes when he looked at Jason could not be hidden.

It was a fight to the death attitude.

In fact, it was.

Staying true to his objective of keeping the ritual going, 'Edward' took decisive action.

Though this differed from his initial expectations, it wouldn't stop the ritual. He'd just have to put in extra effort and pay some price, and 'Edward' believed he could afford such losses.

And then—

Crack!

Along with the crisp sound of breaking bones, the smiling and victory-awaiting 'Edward' froze, his whole body tumbling to the ground.

The broad blade cleaver that he held in his hand now appeared in Jason's.

The moment Jason's hand gripped the handle, he instinctively waved it twice.

Whoo, whoo.

The blade tore through the air, emitting a deep roar.

Like the lament of tormented souls.

And like the roar of a monster.

It felt fitting in his hand.

As before.

Yet, Jason could feel that the broad blade cleaver in his hand had become even sharper and sturdier.

Without question, 'Edward' was to thank for this.

And in the next moment, the hockey mask that 'Edward' wore appeared in Jason's hand as well.

The cool, comfortable sensation seeped into his heart.

It brought Jason a sense of comfort that he hadn't felt in a while.

Unconsciously, Jason put on his hockey mask anew.

Just like before, there was no difference.

But the instant Jason donned the mask, an intimidation stemming from a primal fear began emanating from it.

Jason felt the power originating from the mask clearly.

"Not bad," he appraised it.

This, naturally, was also 'Edward's' doing.

However, "Edward's" contributions weren't limited to just these.

[Ritual conversion, Barehanded Combat upgraded to Master Level!]

[Barehanded Combat (Master): Your body itself is a powerful weapon, and you are a master of it, not only relying on punches and kicks, but your entire body is a lethal weapon; Effect: Constitution, Strength, Agility +0.3 (Proficiency, Expert, Master +0.1)]

[Barehanded Combat upgraded to Proficiency Level, unlocked inherent Talent option: Well-Trained]

[Barehanded Combat upgraded to Master Level, unlocked inherent Talent option: Danger Instinct]

[Well-Trained (Passive): Extensive combat training has granted you this talent. When faced with unexpected combat, long-term training allows you to adapt more quickly to sudden situations.]

[Danger Instinct: Long-term training and constant battling have honed your sense of danger to an extreme, Effect: Perception +0.5]

...

The next moment, a textual prompt appeared in front of Jason's eyes.

The skill [Barehanded Combat] was upgraded directly from Expert to Master level, incrementing Constitution, Strength, and Agility by another +0.1 each.

But what surprised Jason the most was that the Master level also came with its inherent talent options.

The newly emerged [Danger Instinct] in particular added a full 0.5 to his perception.

At this moment, Jason's attributes were updated to: Strength 3.8, Agility 3.6, Constitution 4.5, Spirit 2.6, Perception 6.2.

Crack, crack!

Feeling the harmony between the knowledge in his mind and his body, Jason squeezed his fist, feeling the changes at that moment.

The changes to his body were minor, but those to his perception were extremely noticeable.

The latter even influenced the former.

Keen perception allowed Jason to better control changes in himself.

It also allowed him to grasp his surroundings better.

At least, Jason could now determine that 'Edward', whom he had just snapped the 'neck' of, wasn't dead.

Even if the other had no breath, no heartbeat.

The flow of blood was still present.

Chapter 552: Edward's 'Genuine' Account (2)

In a manner different from that of ordinary people,

"The power of the 'Reincarnation Ceremony'?"

Jason guessed.

Then he struck down with a cleave.

He could confirm that the 'ceremony' had been interrupted, and it had backfired on 'Edward'.

Just now he had merely twisted 'Edward's' neck and had not crushed his previously strong and powerful heart.

The heart had burst directly as a result of the ceremony's backlash.

Oof!

The short-handled Broad Blade Cleaver swept past 'Edward's' neck with a whoosh.

Thud!

'Edward's' head flew far away.

But no blood sprayed out.

The headless 'Edward' rolled over several times quickly and then stood up.

Next, as if shedding a 'coat', 'Edward' crawled out from that tall, strong body.

Edward, covered in some sort of mucus, looked quite disheveled, and that tall, strong body, along with the far-flung head, began to wither away as soon as Edward crawled out.

In a breath's time, it turned into something akin to 'snake sheddings'.

No!

To be precise, 'human sheddings'!

Edward wiped some mucus from his face.

At this moment, Edward's face finally lost its smile.

What remained was only anger, resentment, and... disbelief.

Edward was certain that he had decapitated Jason.

Can a person live without a head?

Clearly impossible.

So how was Jason still alive?

Could it be the 'ceremony'?

Unconsciously, Edward began to make associations, and his gaze toward Jason changed.

"So that's how it is!"

"It's not just me who discovered that point!"

"You noticed it too!"

"No wonder after you wrote the not-bad 'Cross Street Tracker' back then, you became so unremarkable, not only weakening in writing but also lacking in logic. Turns out you devoted all your energy to learning from the 'Mystical Side'."

Edward said, nodding as he spoke; the surprise and disbelief in his eyes began to dissipate.

Edward had seen and experienced the power of the Mystical Side.

Having such a miraculous power, no matter how many anomalies appear, it's all normal.

Jason had revived.

Hadn't he, too, revived?

There was nothing strange about it.

But there was something Edward couldn't get over, something he dwelled on.

"You have mastered a considerable amount of 'mystical knowledge', and besides that, your own perception is extraordinary. Even more, you have some sort of technique to apply that perception, ceremonies! Because only through combining the two, could you divine, calculate my perfect plan! So, quite naturally, you turned my plan against me. You didn't stop everything from happening, nor did you act rashly. You just quietly waited, waiting for me to show a flaw!"

"It's my biggest mistake to not realize that my opponent was also a member of the 'Mystical Side'!"

Indignation spread over Edward's face.

Jason's eyebrows lifted behind his mask.

He really wanted to say, "You're overthinking it; that's not how it is."

But Jason did not speak.

He didn't mind the enemy overthinking.

Because it was beneficial to him.

Edward kept talking.

"You cleverly caught my flaw!"

"It's only right that you knew when to interrupt my 'ceremony'."

"You also knew that the flaw in my 'interrupting speech' that I showed deliberately was a trap."

"But!"

"Do you really think you have control over everything?"

Edward's voice grew louder. He pointed the King's Scepter in his hand at Jason, saying word by word,
"Do you really think I didn't plan for the worst?"

"Let me tell you!"

"What I completed was not just the 'Reincarnation' ceremony!"

"There was more!"

With these words, Edward disappeared from the spot.

The next moment, when Edward reappeared, he was standing behind Jason.

Edward had 'emerged' from Jason's shadow.

The former King of Cherry City still pointed the scepter at Jason, which glowed faintly at the base with a profound light.

This light, like that of fireflies, seemed insignificant, but to Jason, who was 'illuminated' by it, it felt like a mountain was pressing down on him. However, Jason didn't care.

Under the hockey mask, Jason's nostrils twitched.

He had caught the scent of 'food'.

It was Edward's scepter.

Jason was certain that the scepter had been just an ordinary one before.

But now?

It had become quite delicious.

Did some 'ceremony' mask its own scent?

Jason was filled with curiosity as he guessed.

If it could disguise one piece of 'food',

Could it be masking more 'food'?

At the thought, Jason's saliva began to secrete uncontrollably.

He was filled with anticipation.

Edward looked at the bound Jason, his heart filled with resentment and hatred.

This resentment and hatred were ten times deeper than when he had first chosen Jason's "Cross Street Tracker."

After all, back then, it was he who had chosen willingly.

But now?

All of this was the scheme of the man before him!

Yes!

It was all a scheme!

Edward, having just thought of something else, looked at Jason's back and gritted his teeth with a grating sound.

"You must have sensed something from my initial movements, and thus before I even chose 'Cross Street Tracker', you began to subtly influence me, leading me to choose your book."

"I must say, you did an excellent job!"

"I didn't realize it until now!"

"No, wait!"

"That's not right!"

"You couldn't have started influencing me only then; you must have started even earlier!"

Chapter 553: Edward's 'Genuine' Account (3)

Edward spoke, suddenly denying his own previous words, then a look of realization dawned on his face.

"I've always wondered why I suddenly accessed 'Mystical Side's' special knowledge when I found out about that thing; it turns out this was all your arrangement."

"You gained access to 'Mystical Side's' special knowledge even earlier than I did, and besides, your Talent is quite extraordinary, so naturally, you discovered that thing."

"Regarding that matter, you felt fear in your heart just like I did."

"So, you also started to seek self-preservation."

"Unfortunately, even though your Talent is great, you don't have enough 'wealth' to collect or buy more materials; therefore, you needed someone who was equally tormented by fear but extremely rich. Then, you chose me."

"So that's it!"

Edward took a deep breath, his gaze filled with wariness as he looked at Jason's back.

He had never imagined that everything about himself was merely someone else's scheme.

Such a person was simply too terrifying!

He absolutely couldn't let his opponent live!

"However, you overlooked one thing!"

"I am not only richer than you might think, but my Talent is also exceptional!"

"Once I confirmed the existence of 'Mystical Side', I quickly acquired several oddities and completed a number of 'rituals'. You felt uneasy, afraid I would slip beyond your control, so you struck in the shadows, disrupting my crucial 'ritual' and causing severe damage to my mind, forcing me to resort to a 'Reincarnation' ritual!"

"At that time, I wondered why I still failed despite being fully prepared, and by sheer luck, I had measures in place for when things went wrong."

"I even felt grateful for it."

"And now, I still feel grateful!"

"Grateful that I didn't discover it too late!"

At this point, Edward paused.

He had a full understanding of the causes and effects of the situation.

Now?

Naturally, he had to kill Jason.

To kill Jason, who had manipulated his life!

"Die!"

"You who so casually manipulate others' lives!"

Edward yelled as he thrust his staff straight forward.

Jason, bound by a special force field, had no chance to dodge, and the staff pierced straight into his back. His defense, capable of withstanding Explosive-level Strength, offered less than a second of resistance against the apparent bludgeon.

Thump!

The staff that had pierced through Jason's heart protruded from his chest.

But that wasn't the end of it.

Edward released the staff and took several steps back, twisting the Ruby ring on his finger.

Boom!

A massive blaze erupted from the ring, engulfing Jason completely.

The flames roared fiercely.

Hiss!

The distinct sound of burning fat resounded through the flames.

"Die!"

"Just die!"

"I will reduce you to ashes!"

Edward roared, twisting the ring once more.

Instantly, the blaze grew even more ferocious.

"Jason!"

John and Brian shouted in the distance, but aside from their cries, they were unable to do anything else, as the faint glow from the staff also enveloped them.

"Since you can't become my Knights, you might as well die too."

Edward said coldly to the two men.

He barely lifted his finger, and John and Brian, bound, each aimed their guns at the other.

The two struggled.

But compared to the binding force, their efforts were far too weak.

Utterly useless.

Seeing the gun muzzles so close, resignation spread across the faces of John and Brian.

Death, they had thought about it more than once. Experience new stories on

But they had never expected it to end like this.

Just when they were ready to give up, the specks of light that bound them vanished.

They regained their freedom.

Meanwhile, amidst the sound of blazing fire, there was another noise, as if something was being chewed—

Crunch, crunch.

Chapter 554: Edward: I'm Going to Humiliate Jason!

The sound of chewing was incredibly clear.

Even the noise of the flames burning couldn't cover it up.

John and Brian heard it.

Edward, who was closer, naturally heard it too.

Even more so, Edward felt a deeper sensation.

He could distinctly feel his hand-staff slipping away from him.

Immediately, Edward stopped the flames, his expression anxious as he looked over.

He absolutely didn't want anything to happen to his hand-staff; after all, this was a high-grade item that could only be used through 'ritual,' and even the former Edward could only find three such items after exhausting all his resources.

Therefore, when he clearly saw that Jason, his body charred black, was chewing vigorously on what should have been the hand-staff sticking out of his chest, the color drained from the face of the once uncrowned king of Cherry City.

He pointed his hand towards Jason.

He hoped to use the power he had obtained through 'ritual' to bind Jason.

But it was utterly useless.

Compared to the 'hand-staff,' such a 'ritual' gained power was far too childish for Jason.

On the contrary, Edward's action had caught Jason's attention.

The Jason whose body was blackened from searing flames, shoved the remaining piece of the hand-staff into his mouth, chewed a few times, and then spat out the remnants of the hand-staff.

Then, he grinned at Edward.

Jason's mouth split open all the way to his ear roots, his ghastly white teeth gleaming coldly under the street lamps.

"Roasted sugarcane, tasty," Jason murmured in a low voice.

Edward was taken aback.

He had not expected Jason to utter such words.

Or rather, he had never imagined his 'hand-staff' could be eaten.

You see, his 'hand-staff' was incredibly sturdy, impervious to both flame and ice, not only could it be used as a 'sword,' but it could also bind opponents.

But now it was being eaten by Jason?!

In utter disbelief, Edward watched Jason, blackened from head to toe, mask half-lifted from chewing, grinning at him, feeling an involuntary shiver in the pit of his stomach.

It was an instinctual response from his body, not at all voluntary.

It was like walking through a wilderness and suddenly encountering a hungry wolf... no, not a wolf.

A hungry Tyrannosaurus Rex!

Edward stared at Jason, frozen in shock.

But Jason didn't.

Whoosh!

The next moment, Jason, who had launched a [Charge], charged towards Edward like an arrow shot from a bow.

He moved so fast, Edward had no time to react.

A flash of cold light!

Edward felt a sudden pain in his right hand.

By the time he realized what had happened, he found his right hand was gone.

Sliced off by that Broad Blade Cleaver.

And Jason was now holding his hand in his hand. Discover more stories at

"Ah!" Edward couldn't help but cry out in pain.

Jason, however, plucked off the Ruby Ring and casually tossed Edward's severed hand aside in disgust.

Then, a Flame flickered in Jason's hand.

High-temperature disinfection is never wrong.

Without further ado, he tossed the ring into his mouth.

Crunch, crunch.

That familiar chewing sound began again.

Different from the previous roasted sugarcane taste of the hand-staff, this Fire Ruby Ring was a bit... spicy.

However, it was quite delicious.

It was like an egg with tiger-skin pattern dipped in chili oil.

The exterior was slightly crispy while the egg white inside was incredibly bouncy, and upon biting into the yolk, the soft texture made Jason's eyes light up.

But what surprised Jason the most was that the remaining caramelized taste of roasted sugarcane in his mouth had mixed with the spiciness, creating a very unique sweet and spicy flavor.

[Devouring the Binding Staff!]

[Physical Strength, Energy, Injuries greatly recovered!]

[Satiety +22!]

[Satiety: 162]

...

[Devouring Flame Ring]

[Physical Strength, Energy, Injuries greatly recovered!]

[Satiety +20]

[Satiety: 182]

"Delicious!" Jason couldn't help but comment again.

It was well worth the burns he suffered under the intense flames, dying three consecutive times.

No!

It was more than enough!

If dying three times could give him a taste of such deliciousness again, Jason was truly willing to do it all over, and if such 'death' had a limit, he wished it were ten thousand times over.

The deliciousness stimulated Jason's brain.

His gaze couldn't help but turn towards Edward, who was clutching his wrist and slowly retreating.

There was still a 'food' scent emanating from the other party!

Without the concealment of 'ritual,' Jason's nose was doing its job!

Besides the hand-staff and the Ruby Ring, there was still 'food' on the other party!

And it was even more aromatic than the hand-staff and the Ruby Ring!

"Don't come any closer!"

"Stop!"

"I..." Edward didn't finish his sentence before Jason's blade swept across his neck.

The blade sent back that distinct sensation of cutting through flesh, but Edward did not die.

He just staggered and fell to the ground.

And this 'death' finally brought Edward completely back to his senses.

Looking at Jason, who seemed surprised, Edward sneered.

"You think you can kill me?"

"I am a King!"

"The King of Cherry City..."

Edward's sentence was once again cut short as Jason struck again, this time grabbing Edward's ankle and swinging him around like a sandbag before smashing him into the ground.

Bang!

In the heavy sound, Edward was forcefully slammed into the ground by Jason's immense strength.

The asphalt road cracked, and a large puddle of blood appeared.

However, Edward did not die.

Chapter 555: Edward: I'm Going to Humiliate Jason! (2)

Even though the other party was bleeding profusely, with a flattened skull, he was still alive.

Jason spun around without hesitation and slammed Edward harshly to the other side of his body once more.

Bang!

In his perception, Edward was still alive.

Jason spun again, grabbing Edward by the ankle and slamming him back.

Bang bang bang!

In the following minute or so, Edward was lifted and smashed into the ground dozens of times, from side to side.

Not only had his skull been crushed to mush, but his upper body had already vanished by the time Jason threw it out.

However, the moment Jason let go, Edward's legs stood up, and the flesh and blood scattered around rapidly gathered back together.

In a breath, Edward had restored his original form, including his previously severed right hand. Even his clothes were intact.

"Heh."

"Surprised?"

"Just like you, I have kept quite a few aces up my sleeve."

Edward said with a light laugh.

"Although you came into contact with the 'Mystical Knowledge' earlier than I, my Talent is more outstanding. Moreover, I possess wealth far beyond your imagination. Your heart must have been tormented when I acquired it, right? You wanted it, yet you wanted me to set up everything for you, to reap the benefits after all the hard work!"

"But what now?"

"Your plan has still been seen through by me!"

"You will never get it!"

A smug-faced Edward seemed to be proving his own Strength to Jason as he reached into his chest for something.

The next moment, a book appeared in Edward's right hand.

The book wasn't big, of average thickness, only the size of an adult's palm, resembling a pocketbook.
Your journey continues with

The cover of the book was dark yellow, and because Edward held the book up with his fingers covering it, Jason could not see anything else clearly, but he could distinctly smell the rich aroma of 'food' coming from it.

And Edward was flipping gently through the pages.

This was his ace in the hole.

The most powerful of his three artifacts!

It was also the core of all his schemes!

Unfortunately...

He had failed.

But with it in hand, he was certain he would rise again.

Edward firmly believed this.

"Although I was ensnared by your schemes, I failed this time, but so did you."

"We are even!"

Edward, who was flipping through the book, said so, but then the once uncrowned king of Cherry City shook his head.

"No."

"We are not even!"

"With this in my possession, in the face of that situation, I still have room for maneuver."

"And you?"

"A nine in ten chance of death!"

"So... it is I who have won!"

Edward spoke arrogantly.

Especially when he saw the eager look in Jason's eyes as they fixed on the book in his hand.

Edward was even more triumphant.

Then, the once defending champion of Cherry City, with the book lying flat in the palm of his hand, pushed it forward.

"Want it?"

"Come and get it."

Edward glared at Jason with malicious intent.

Although he had won, he had also lost two high-level artifacts.

Leaving like this, he was somewhat reluctant to do so.

Therefore, he wanted to humiliate Jason!

Although he couldn't kill Jason, humiliating his opponent was still doable!

And only by thoroughly humiliating Jason could he erase his reluctance and find joy.

Faced with the 'food' that was within his grasp, Jason was struggling to restrain his 'appetite' as he scrutinized both Edward and the book in his hand.

As an enemy, would Edward be so generous?

Of course not.

It was either humiliation or a trap.

And from the current situation, the former was more likely.

"A man who believes he has exceptional talents, who became arrogantly overconfident after easily accomplishing some impossible deeds with the power of the 'Mystical Side,' but in reality, has no more

actual combat experience than a common man, slightly stronger at best. Is he trying to play at me at the last moment, to save face, to prove his own victory?"

Thoughts raced through Jason's mind, his gaze turning to the book in the opponent's palm.

The book in the palm was now bottom-up, with the cover resting in the hand.

And just as Jason's gaze fell upon the book in his palm, Edward very obligingly flipped the book over.

The cover faced up.

"Cross Street Stalker"!

When the title appeared, Jason felt a surge of astonishment.

But immediately, Jason deduced that Edward, by imitating a perpetrator to recreate and compensate for the "Cross Street Stalker's" 'ritual,' was actually using this book as the 'core'!

Using this book as the 'core'!

Then could this book... create worlds?!

With such speculation, Jason's breathing became involuntarily labored.

What would the taste of a 'food' that could create worlds be like?

And how much satiety, the Excitement of Feast, would it bring him?

However, outwardly, Jason remained impassive, merely revealing his longing for the 'food.'

And for Jason at the present, this was all too simple.

He was inherently drawn to 'food.'

Such an expression from Jason was truly comforting to Edward.

Edward seemed to have completely forgotten that his 'ritual' had been interrupted, the loss of two high-level artifacts, and all the efforts he had expended, now he just wanted to see the yearning in Jason's eyes for that which was out of reach.

"Is it painful?"

Edward asked with a smile.

Then, the reigning king of Cherry City, perhaps in an effort to be even more joyful, casually tossed the book towards Jason.

Jason didn't catch it, but instinctively dodged to the side.

Snap!

The book fell to the ground.

Jason slowly approached the book and, after confirming there was no danger, tentatively reached out to touch it.

Then, his fingers passed right through.

Even though it seemed to be a solid book, his fingers couldn't touch it at all.

He tried several times with the same result.

And at this moment, Edward couldn't hold back any longer.

"Hahaha!"

Edward burst out laughing.

Amidst that laughter, Edward rocked back and forth, clearly delighted to the utmost.

If Edward dared to throw out his most important artifact, it was naturally because he had absolute confidence.

When he had acquired this special artifact, Edward had bound it to himself with a 'ritual,' and for safety considerations, he performed numerous special 'rituals' over the following days.

Under layers of rituals, the artifact had long become untouchable by others.

Similarly, he could summon it at will.

Without speaking, but at the whim of Edward's mind, the book that had just fallen flew back into Edward's hand.

Jason witnessed the whole process.

He instantly noticed the difference.

He could clearly see a slight link between the 'book's' shadow and Edward's shadow at all times.

Shadow?

Jason's eyes narrowed.

"How foolish!"

"You've only just noticed?"

"This is the power of the rare shadow strength," Edward said proudly, and then, with an affected modesty, he continued:

"Of course, I haven't mastered this special strength myself; I only used a 'ritual' to borrow its inherent power—the power of the shadow!"

"You probably only know that it can construct a brand-new 'world' through the ritual, but did you know that the world it creates is a shadow world?"

"That's right."

"How could you possibly know?"

"You, with your average Talent, lacking any greater fortune."

"Look at yourself now."

"It really does evoke pity!"

While saying this, Edward once again threw the 'book' toward Jason.

Snap!

Just like before, Jason sidestepped, evading as the 'book' fell to the ground.

Watching Jason dodge, the corners of Edward's mouth turned up.

He watched as if observing a monkey show.

And when Jason once again cautiously approached the 'book,' testing to touch the 'book,' the moment of greatest hilarity in the monkey show arrived. Edward, unable to wait, with mouth corners poised to bloom into a gratified smile.

Jason's fingertips rested on the surface of the cover.

They didn't come any closer.

Then—

Yi!

Chapter 556: Great Harvest!

The deep chant of the Dufol Language was followed by an outpouring of the power of the Protection Against Evil like a tide along the direction of Jason's fingers.

The 'book,' which should have been illusory, began to tremble upon contact with the special force field of Protection Against Evil, and ripples appeared layer upon layer on the cover of the 'book.'

Edward, who had always maintained a comfortable and malicious smile, suddenly changed color.

"Come back!"

Without any hesitation, Edward issued the command from the bottom of his heart.

However, the 'book' did not return to his hands as it had before, instead shaking even more violently.

"Come back!"

Edward ordered again.

This time, it wasn't a silent thought from deep within but a loud roar.

Meanwhile, Jason completed another Seal Imprint of Protection Against Evil.

The power of Protection Against Evil directly enveloped the 'book.'

The already intense trembling became even more violent.

Pfft!

Edward, closely related to the 'book,' suddenly sprayed out a mouthful of fresh blood from afar.

The once reigning king of Cherry City widened his eyes in shock as he looked at Jason, knowing he had miscalculated once again!

Jason had the ability to obtain his 'book'!

Not only did he have it, but it was extremely powerful!

But why didn't he use it directly before, and instead waited until now?

Could it be...

Was he trying to humiliate me?

Murderous! Utter devastation!

Edward's body trembled with this realization.

Immediately, Edward's already widened eyes grew even larger.

He glared with rage, and anger invaded his reason like a wildfire!

"You not only sabotage my plan but also insult my intelligence!"

"I will not let you succeed!"

Roaring, Edward spit out another mouthful of blood.

And with the release of this blood, the shadowy power on the 'book' immediately intensified, the violent shaking beginning to subside.

But Jason cast another Protection Against Evil right away.

Gasp, gasp.

After casting Protection Against Evil twice in succession, Jason, now greatly drained of his physical strength, couldn't help but gasp for breath.

Seeing this, Edward's eyes shone with an uncontrollable glint.

"Being able to suppress the power of shadows must be a tremendous burden even for you, Jason, isn't it?"

"How many more times can you use it?"

"You are still a loser!"

With those words, Edward spat out another mouthful of blood.

The 'book' once again emitted shadowy power and began to struggle.

Feeling this struggle, Jason looked up calmly at Edward, and then cast another Protection Against Evil.

The breath of life disappeared from Jason.

Edward laughed.

"Hahaha."

"The backlash got you, didn't it?"

"I told you I am the victor..."

Edward wanted to say more but suddenly stopped short.

His widened eyes were full of astonishment.

Death retreated from Jason.

Life reemerged!

"Impossible!"

"This isn't an external attack, but a backlash from your own use of strength, you can't resurrect so easily!"

Edward shouted loudly.

But immediately, the once uncrowned king of Cherry City seemed to think of something.

His complexion changed drastically, his eyes showing unprecedented surprise, wariness, and anger.

"You stole my 'Reincarnation Ceremony'!"

"No, not just stolen!"

"You made it even more suitable for you!"

"You transformed into a..."

"Snake!"

Edward roared as if to confirm his own claim, and blood gushed from his mouth once more.

The power of resistance from the 'book' grew stronger.

Jason cast [Protection Against Evil] without any hesitation repeatedly.

The breath of life and death appeared alternately on Jason's body, like an 'ouroboros' in an endless cycle.

This breath confirmed Edward's guess.

"Snake!"

Edward said again.

However, this time Edward wasn't shouting loudly, but his tone turned grave; he looked at Jason with eyes as if seeing him for the first time.

The surprise in his eyes receded.

The wariness deepened.

Yet there was also a sense of relief.

"Yes!"

"If you couldn't even do this, how could you possibly be the person behind all the schemes?"

"I underestimated you before."

"I shouldn't have!"

"Was it your 'deception' that fooled me?"

"Worthy of you, Jason!"

Edward's voice grew increasingly vociferous as he stared intensely at Jason, uttering words that made Jason frown profoundly.

Overthinking it again!

Jason could confirm that Edward had misunderstood something, but at this point, Jason chose not to speak out.

The continuous use of [Protection Against Evil] had already exhausted him.

Although death was kept at bay, his energy hadn't recovered.

He really didn't want to speak right now.

And such silence, in Edward's eyes, seemed like an acknowledgment.

"But, deception only works once!"

"I'm clear-headed now!"

"Now!"

"Come on!"

Edward roared angrily and fiercely punched his own chest.

Bang!

Crack!

The punch was straightforward; Edward's ribs shattered, blood spurted continuously from his mouth, yet Edward's presence grew increasingly strong.

John and Brian, who had been watching the battle from a distance, subconsciously pulled the unconscious McCaul back.

Since the beginning, the battlefield had surpassed the capabilities of the two.

The two experienced men clearly understood that at this moment, not intervening rashly was the best help they could offer Jason.

However, deep down, Brian harbored some doubts.

"Is this really Jason's scheme?"

Brian asked John softly.

Then, he felt deeply ashamed under John's gaze, which resembled looking at a fool.

Chapter 557: Great Harvest! (2)

How could this possibly be Jason's setup?

If it really was Jason's setup, according to Edward's description, Jason would definitely have had more complete means rather than this kind of probing.

Exactly.

It was probing.

Brian could tell, Jason's previous actions were full of probing.

If it was a real schemer, they simply wouldn't act like this.

To put it simply, the previous assertion was completely Edward's conjecture.

It's just... this plausible and reasonable conjecture involuntarily influenced him.

Brian shook his head repeatedly, trying to throw Edward's influence out of his mind, but just then, he was slightly startled.

He saw something like a shadowy figure envelop Edward, who was vomiting blood in the distance. That shadowy figure was indistinct as though it was a... snake?

And a two-headed one at that!

Brian turned his head and looked, and when he saw John's expression, he knew he wasn't hallucinating.

"This madman still has a trump card?"

Brian couldn't help but say.

"Don't worry,"

"He has one, Jason has one too,"

"And more, only more!"

John said with considerable confidence.

Edward didn't hear any of the conversation between the two.

He stared at Jason and pointed at the huge shadowy figure that was there one moment and gone the next.

"Did you see that, Jason?"

"You are a snake, and so am I."

Edward said with an inexplicable pride, as if this was an immensely significant matter, but each time he spoke, he spat out blood and the 'book's' resistance intensified by several degrees.

Jason repeatedly cast "Protection Against Evil", suppressing the 'book's' rebellion.

Meanwhile, the scent of the 'feast' grew stronger with the 'book's' struggle.

Jason's sense of hunger deepened within him.

Control!

Discipline sets me free!

Jason reminded himself, striving to not 'smell' the 'feast's' scent, but the aroma still involuntarily penetrated his nostrils.

This was agony for Jason.

It was torture.

His body began to tremble uncontrollably.

This was his willpower restraining his instincts.

And watching Jason's trembling, Edward also began to shake.

"Are you also excited?"

"This feeling..."

"It's marvelous!"

While spitting out fresh blood, Edward looked down at his trembling hands. The reigning king of Cherry City, who had never really fought, was experiencing a wondrous sensation for the first time.

Edward's earlier life had always been graceful, relying on his family's strength, he was invincible.

Even if there were any troubles, someone would solve them for him.

All this changed after that incident!

After that incident, he felt a sense of powerlessness!

He began to fend for himself!

Already accustomed to being cold-blooded and deceitful, he stopped at nothing.

He thought it was only natural.

After all, he was just trying to survive.

Even until just recently, Edward didn't think there was anything wrong with that.

But now?

He still didn't think he was wrong.

However, what was this 'Excitement of Feast' he had never felt before?

And, his enemy was also in 'excitement.'

Was this 'resonance'?

Was this...

'Nemesis'?

Whew!

Edward took a deep breath, involuntarily looking at Jason who was shaking just like him.

He was vomiting blood even more violently.

But then, he raised his hand and pointed at Jason—

"Jason!"

"My 'nemesis' for life!"

"Let us fight with all we've got!"

As he spoke, Edward charged straight towards Jason.

The massive shadow of the four or five-meter-tall Two-Headed Snake also charged forward.

The 'book's' struggle reached some sort of climax.

Jason's repetitive casting of "Protection Against Evil" seemed almost instinctual.

The rich aroma stimulated the desire deep inside him.

Gurgle, gurgle.

He could hear the hunger growling from his stomach.

But to others, these growls sounded like roars!

Roar! Roar!

With every hungry roar, a pitch-black shadow surged from Jason into the sky.

Crack, crackle!

A violent wind sprang up, and one streetlight after another exploded around them.

The night grew even deeper.

Only those colossal crimson eyes remained.

It lowered its head to look at the charging Edward, opened its gaping maw without hesitation, and swallowed Edward whole.

Whoosh!

The shadowy figure plunged down, its gaping maw sweeping past Edward.

The once majestic and faintly visible Two-Headed Snake had vanished.

Edward remained standing stiffly in place.

He lifted his head to look at the immense, inky-black figure above him.

His vision was too blurry to make out the details of the figure, but deep down, he was certain of one thing.

"Is this your 'Snake'?"

He murmured softly to himself.

Then, a trace of regret appeared on his face.

"I should have reached this level too, but I made the wrong choice of focusing on so-called 'strategy.' It has dissipated too much of my energy; such a pity."

"Indeed, human energy has its limits! The more I engaged in schemes, the earlier I should have realized the limits of human energy; unless..."

"Transcend humanity!"

Thoughts emerged in rapid succession from deep within, Edward felt life slipping away from him, but the regret on his face gradually faded.

He looked at Jason and said, word by word,

"Jason, I'm done being human!"

Boom!

Edward's entire body exploded.

His flesh, bones, and organs turned into swathes of shadow that merged into the 'book.'

The 'book,' which had quieted down after the disappearance of the Two-Headed Snake, once again struggled violently.

Similarly, the fragrance intensified.

"Jason!"

Edward's ethereal head appeared on the cover of the 'book,' he looked at Jason, his eyes devoid of any spark, his expression wooden, but the power was increasing exponentially.

The power of shadows!

The power of [Protection Against Evil] once again surged forth from the direction of Jason's fingers, enveloping the 'book.'

However, this force field lasted less than a second before it began to waver.

Jason immediately followed up with another [Protection Against Evil].

Then, a third time, a fourth time, a fifth time.

After thirty-three consecutive attempts!

A qualitative change was finally induced by the quantitative changes!

Rumble!

Like the sound of thunder, thin serpent-like lightning appeared amidst the collision of the two forces.

They coiled around Jason's body.

They also wrapped around the 'book.'

And they invaded Edward's phantom as well.

Almost instantly, Edward's phantom shattered.

The power on the 'book' was directly weakened to the extreme.

Jason's hand was getting ever closer to the 'book.'

3 centimeters!

2 centimeters!

1 centimeter!

Snap!

In the end, Jason's fingers touched the 'book,' pressing down on it.

The power of the 'book' shattered instantly.

In this shattering, Edward's shattered phantom exploded, turning into tiny glimmers that scattered all around.

The fragrance surged forward!

It kept drilling into the nose!

Having endured for so long, Jason lifted a corner of his mask, opened his mouth, and stuffed the entire book inside.

Upon entering his mouth, the 'book' began to taste sweet, its cover had a distinctive scorched crispness, while the pages were filled with soft mushiness. Most importantly, between the pages, the ink unexpectedly tasted like cream.

With a slight chew, the cream flowed from between the layers of softness, filling Jason's mouth.

A unique texture.

Perfectly sweet.

Subconsciously, Jason closed his eyes in contentment.

Cream layer cake, perhaps?

"Delicious."

Jason silently judged in his heart.

And before his eyes, words began to appear—

[Consuming the Shadow Book (Imitation, Damaged)]

[Physical Strength, Energy, Excessive Recovery of Injuries!]

[Satiety+200]

[Satiety:247]

[Excitement of Feast+2]

[Excitement of Feast:9]

...

Apart from dying thirty-three times in the last moment, Jason had also died twelve times during the previous battle, consuming a total of 135 satiety points, leaving only 47 from the original 182 points.

However, with the consumption of [Shadow Book (Imitation, Damaged)], the satiety on the verge of depletion not only recovered but increased further.

Of course, what Jason cared about more was 'Excitement of Feast'!

2 points of Excitement of Feast!

Jason had suspected he might gain Excitement of Feast during the fight, but he had not expected 2 points!

Looking at the total 9 points of Excitement of Feast, Jason took a deep breath.

Enough to boost [Protection Against Evil]

"With satiety, raise the level of [Protection Against Evil]!"

Chapter 558: Do you still remember what happened that year?

As the words at the bottom of Jason's heart echoed, a warm flow rose from his stomach.

The night, grew ever deeper.

The darkness, so thick you couldn't see your hand in front of you, enveloped everything before Jason's eyes.

Faint sounds began to appear in his ears.

At first, they were barely discernible.

But just a second or two later, these sounds became clear.

They were footsteps.

And they sounded like the flapping of wings.

They also resembled the sounds of crawling creatures winding their way forward.

In Jason's perception, they were getting closer.

Then, about a meter away, they stopped.

Because specks of light began to appear.

Very familiar specks of light.

They were the power of "Protection Against Evil".

But unlike before, where the specks were like fireflies, now they were starting to gather together.

They connected, forming larger patches of light.

And there was a tad bit of something within that Jason couldn't understand, something that would take time, that needed... to upgrade "Protection Against Evil" to the next level.

As he gazed at the weeny patches of light, no larger than a pinky fingernail, a realization dawned on him.

Then, by the light of the patches, he peered into the darkness.

He couldn't see.

He couldn't make out anything clearly.

The darkness was like a tangible wall standing before him.

The rustling sounds started up again.

They seemed to want to break out.

But, in the next moment—

This Dufol Language imprinted on Jason's heart burst forth with a dazzling brilliance.

Such brilliance illuminated Jason's heart, making its beat more vigorous and strong.

Thump, thump, thump!

With each beat.

The circulation of blood within became more pronounced, yet the change needing time continued.

The rustling sounds paused for a moment.

Then, they began to move away.

They started to retreat.

Moving away faster than they had approached.

Jason silently observed the impenetrable darkness, his mind full of speculation.

Was this a "legacy" imprint?

What the creator of "Protection Against Evil" faced and saw at that time?

Could it be discerned only when "Protection Against Evil" reached the Master level?

Was it a message left intentionally by someone?

Or perhaps... a warning?

Such thoughts emerged in his mind, but none could be confirmed.

And everything before his eyes vanished swiftly.

Only the emergence of words remained—

[Consuming 35 points of Fullness, 8 points of Excitement of Feast, upgrading Protection Against Evil (Expert → Master)!]

[Protection Against Evil (Master): As an undisputed master in using this Seal Imprint secret technique, on top of its original basis, you have enhanced it using a special power and integrated a similar force to strengthen it further! In the city, in the suburbs at night, it lets you ignore those malicious intents lurking in the depths, but you still need to expend significant Physical Strength to activate this Seal Imprint secret technique! Remember: Just the city and its suburbs! You are not yet able to venture further! This is the Night Watcher's warning! As a member of the Night Watcher, you must heed this warning as if it were a legacy passed down to you! Once, a Night Watcher made slight modifications to this Seal Imprint, giving you this long-range attack skill; likewise, the changes you make to the Seal Imprint can also be incorporated into this legacy! Effects: 1, A special force field attached to the surface of the body, not only defends against negative energy creatures' attacks (beyond Chariot level), but also dispels them and their associated power (beyond Chariot level); 2, You can direct the expulsion of evil forces towards any creature or object within a 15-meter radius centered on you, for a single long-range attack.]

...

[Upon reaching Master level in Protection Against Evil, you automatically obtain the fixed Talent: Mastery of Glyph Replication]

[Mastery of Glyph Replication: This is an upgrade to Glyph Replication, allowing you to store two instances of Protection Against Evil in advance, with the same consumption as the regular Protection Against Evil; due to your improvements, it can last for 5 days; over these 5 days, the power of Protection Against Evil will gradually weaken, completely vanishing at the end of the 5th day; any time within these 5 days, you can replenish Protection Against Evil; when releasing, you only need a brief Dufol Language syllable (Yi)]

...

"Chariot level and above and an extra chance to cast it, huh?"

"Not bad at all."

"Protection Against Evil" had once again been enhanced, and for Jason, this was most important.

And "Mastery of Glyph Replication" gave him even more room to maneuver.

As for the substantial Physical Strength still required,

Jason couldn't help but think back to the prior 'darkness'.

Clearly, it was a last-ditch effort with all one's might in a desperate situation.

Full effort was essential!

Of course, that was that stage.

Jason believed that as his 'attribute physique' improved, this situation would change.

If it didn't change, he would eat more, store up more Fullness, and make everything more manageable.

Then, Jason's gaze involuntarily locked onto 'Remember: Just the city and its suburbs!' and 'You are not yet able to venture further!'.

"Does this city refer to 'Lorde'?"

"It's probably not the 'Lorde' I'm in now, but an earlier time, even before the city of 'Lorde' existed."

Jason surmised, based on the text before him and the 'darkness' he had faced before.

After all, it was clearly marked as the 'warning of the Night Watcher'.

Other than in 'Lorde,' he had not encountered any other Night Watcher.

Chapter 559: Do you still remember what happened that year? (2)

Of course, the "Night Watcher" he created doesn't count.

Jason engraved such a guess in his heart.

This kind of guess would be verified sooner or later.

After he returned to "Lorde" again.

Now?

It's not time yet!

He was still too weak!

Protection at the Master level wasn't enough!

It had to be of a higher level!

"Is it the Unparalleled level after the Master level?"

"It requires 40 points of satiation and 10 points of Excitement of Feast!"

Jason glanced at his remaining 212 points of satiation and 1 point of Excitement of Feast, his brow slightly furrowed.

The satiation was sufficient, but the Excitement of Feast was about to run out again.

And to accumulate it to the level of 10 points would undoubtedly be extremely difficult.

However, Jason's frown soon relaxed.

Difficult?

He never feared it.

Could this difficulty be more terrifying than the despair he faced after awakening in the Nightless City?

He had endured that despair little by little.

Now he could certainly accumulate little by little as well.

"Unparalleled, the level after Unparalleled, the level after that!"

"I must reach each of those levels."

"And then return to 'Lorde'!"

"Shepherd', we'll meet again then!"

Jason narrowed his eyes and said each word in his heart.

This was his goal.

It was also his vow.

Even more so, it was his current pursuit.

Turning around, Jason walked towards John and Brian.

John still had that slightly cold and despondent look.

Brian was a bit embarrassed.

Without asking, Jason knew that Brian must have been affected by Edward's "fantasy."

To this, Jason was not surprised.

Because, if he weren't the party involved, he would also be persuaded by Edward's well-argued "explanation."

On the contrary, John's calm and wisdom took Jason by surprise.

"Why didn't you believe what he said?"

Jason curiously asked John.

"Because, he is the enemy."

John answered very straightforwardly.

This response took Jason aback, and then he gave John a thumbs-up.

He really liked that answer.

Brian, standing beside them, felt even more ashamed.

"Sorry, the retired life is just too comfortable, made me forget some critical things."

Brian expressed his apology in a straightforward manner.

Then, as if to make amends, the middle-aged father turned to Jason and asked.

"What do we do next?"

John's gaze also came over.

"You promised me."

The despondent, cold man watched Jason.

"Yes."

"I haven't forgotten."

"And I never break a promise."

Jason nodded.

John's dog had been killed.

The related Emod was already dead.

But that wasn't the end of it.

Emod was just one of them.

There were still people like Troys, Todini, and Dodd associated with it.

In John's heart, these were the culprits behind Daisy's death.

Troys was dead.

But the brother Todini and the nemesis Dodd were still alive.

They became John's targets.

John would never let these guys off.

"Thank you."

John said his thanks again.

Then the despondent, cold man headed for the car parked to the side.

In the roar of the engine, the car disappeared into the distance.

Jason and Brian watched until the car was out of sight, and then Brian, dragging the sleeping McCaul, approached the other's car.

After opening the back door and putting McCaul inside, Brian, looking at Jason seated in the passenger seat, asked, "McCaul is okay, right?"

"He's fine, he'll wake up at dawn."

Jason asserted confidently.

McCaul was influenced by Edward, but fatigue was also a factor.

Waking him up at that moment would not be a good idea.

"That's good then."

Brian nodded, started the car, and drove straight to 3A apartments.

What about John?

Stay tuned with

Brian was not at all worried.

He believed that John would do his best.

Jason felt the same way.

And indeed, that's how things turned out.

Just before dawn, after Jason and Brian had returned to the apartment,

John came back.

He was leading a stout bulldog, all black with a cross of white fur on its chest.

The bulldog, standing on its legs, reached the height of an adult's knee, had an untrimmed tail, and sturdy limbs, and its vigilant gaze meant that no normal person would easily pick a fight with it.

"What's this?"

Brian, who had been sitting in the living room, was surprised to see the bulldog staring defensively at him and looked inquisitively at John.

"I found it by the side of the road."

"It was in a overturned dogcatcher's van."

"With no tag, people were busy rescuing the driver and paid no attention to it, so I brought it back."

"I plan on adopting it."

John explained, then reached out and patted the bulldog on the head.

Immediately, the bulldog began wagging its tail and licked John's hand.

The ever-cold John's rigid expression softened slightly under the licking.

"Still calling her Daisy?"

Brian asked.

"Yes, Daisy."

John nodded, casually unfastening the leash.

He planned to have Daisy wait in the entrance hall for a bit and then go, but before he could say anything, John noticed his dog suddenly cower in fear, tucking its tail and hiding behind himself.

John looked up to see Jason walking out of the study.

"Sorry, animals don't usually take a liking to me."

Jason said.

Then, he looked down at Daisy.

Chapter 560: Do you still remember what happened that year? (3)

Immediately, Daisy began to whimper timidly, burying her head directly by John's pant leg.

"Quite a nice dog."

Jason genuinely praised.

After all, even a bear would be scared shitless if it saw him.

"Thank you."

John thanked him but still kept his distance from Jason with his dog, sitting in the hallway and soothing Daisy in a low voice. It took several minutes before John came back.

"Someone beat us to it, taking out Todini and Dodd."

As soon as he sat down, John stated bluntly.

"Their enemies?"

Brian asked.

"No."

"It must be two of the girls' fathers."

"Dodd was beaten to death with bare hands, including his bodyguard and Butler—an overall thirteen people. Aside from Dodd, all were killed with a single blow. The person who acted must be a true martial artist."

"But what concerns me is the other one."

"Shortly after receiving the fax, not only did he manage to stay calm and rescue his daughter, but he also found the true killer."

"Todini and his bodyguards were blown to smithereens."

John explained in detail.

Todini, sponsored by Emod, could be called the mastermind in some sense.

No one would disagree with that.

Then, John looked at Brian.

"Think I did it?"

"I was with Jason just now."

"And among my friends, none have daughters who are missing or kidnapped."

"Of course, I would be happy to make friends with this person."

Brian said with a smile in response to John's inquiring gaze.

John's gaze uncontrollably shifted back to Daisy.

Brian cared about his daughter.

John cared about his dog.

Though they were different species, their emotions were real.

Passionate, enduring, and unchanging.

Daisy seemed to feel her master's emotions, creeping over cautiously, watching Jason as she moved. Upon realizing that Jason wasn't watching her, she quickly sped up. Then, she deliberately took a detour to avoid coming close to Jason's side, instead coming over to John and Brian's side, lifting her head to lick John's hand.

John placed his hand atop Daisy's head, gently stroking her.

He felt as if his empty heart was filled.

Daisy had died.

Yet she lived once more.

Just now, inside that dog catcher's van, he heard a voice just like Daisy's usual tone.

The eyes were also identical.

Though her appearance had changed, Daisy was still Daisy.

"Thank you for coming back."

John whispered softly.

Brian watched the scene with a smile, then turned his head and glanced toward McCaul, who was fast asleep in the armchair, his smile deepening.

Eventually, Brian looked toward Jason.

"What's wrong, Jason?"

Brian asked.

Brian had noticed that Jason had been silent since the beginning.

"I'm thinking about what Edward mentioned."

Jason admitted.

Jason had been speculating since the car ride, trying to determine what could compel a city's defending champion to forsake everything for one ritual after another.

It was imaginable that this matter was terribly serious.

So serious that Edward, the champion of Cherry City, couldn't face it at all!

Brian furrowed his brows and sat up straight.

John, who was stroking the top of Daisy's head, paused mid-gesture.

The atmosphere became suddenly tense.

After a moment, Brian looked at the serious expressions of Jason and John and couldn't help but clap his hands with a smile.

The middle-aged father said with a casual tone—

"Hey, guys! With the four of us together, there's nothing we can't solve. It's not like it's... an alien invasion, right?"