

## Menu 971

Chapter 971: Jason: I stood on the 5th floor (2)

It was apparent that the oldest of them was the Leader among the three.

After the office workers calmed down, he turned his head to look at Jason, Ryosuke, and Hui Lijing.

"We have no ill intentions."

"We are here just to temporarily trap you."

"Other than that..."

The middle-aged man seemed to want to say something else but eventually shook his head.

"The first round is over, the murderer has been found."

"Now, the second round begins."

"You have to catch me—the information is in the box behind the plaque."

After the female student finished speaking, the surrounding darkness enveloped the three of them. Then, the three disappeared.

It wasn't until the three had vanished that Ryosuke and Hui Lijing were jolted into realization.

Only at this point did they remember this was not a regular murder scene but rather within a mysterious environment.

Almost instinctively, Ryosuke picked up the ladder again.

He needed to take down the box from behind the plaque.

"Do you need help?"

Hui Lijing asked, but Ryosuke declined.

Hui Lijing did not insist anymore and turned to look at Jason.

"How did you discover it, Jason?"

"Does an Exorcist also go through detective training?"

Hui Lijing inquired.

I have professional skills.

Jason silently answered in his mind, but aloud he repeated a phrase he often used—

"It's all quite obvious."

In the world intermingling with fantasy and reality where the female pastry chef was, Jason often used this phrase to muddle through everything, with the help of the female pastry chef's explanation, there was naturally no problem.

However, Hui Lijing in front of him didn't possess such quality.

She tilted her head and thought for a long time.

The curly hair that covered her forehead fell to one side, revealing her beautiful eyes.

It was a pity, though, that her eyes were full of confusion.

All quite obvious?

Why didn't I see it?

Did I miss many important clues?

Hui Lijing furrowed her brow and after a good four to five seconds, blurted out.

"So once the result is out, the process isn't important, right?"

She said, looking at Jason expectantly.

Jason fell silent for a second and then nodded.

Because he didn't know how else to explain.

Silently, he found himself missing the female pastry chef a bit.

"Take a look at this box."

Ryosuke, holding the box from behind the plaque with one hand, jumped down from the ladder directly.

The box was made of wood, roughly the size of an adult's palm, with no lock, so it could be opened directly.

Inside was a piece of paper, written on it with a brush were the words—

I line up in the east, without eyes.

I line up in the west, without ears.

I line up in the north, without arms.

I line up in the south, without legs.

...

Faced with these incomplete phrases, Ryosuke frowned while Hui Lijing looked even more confused.

After a moment, both of them looked up at Jason.

"Do you have any findings, Jason?"

Hui Lijing asked.

"It's written in the same handwriting as the message left for us previously."

Jason said.

"We know that!"

"Besides that?"

Hui Lijing pressed.

Then, right after she asked, she noticed that Jason was looking at her with a very strange expression.

Hui Lijing felt very awkward being stared at, and even thought the laces of her shoes came undone, involuntarily glanced down.

"Perhaps this isn't knowledge of the 'Mystical Side', but I hope you'll remember—"

"Never follow your enemy's steps."

Jason replied in this way.

While saying this, Jason walked towards the outside of the temple.

Up to this point, Jason still didn't know what was happening.

But one thing was certain, the hidden adversary that lured him here wasn't intending for a social tea party.

And as for the words of the office workers, the middle-aged clerk, and the female student?

Jason wouldn't believe a word.

Before he learned in 'Nightless City' not to follow the enemy's footsteps, he had already learned not to trust anyone's words, especially those of an enemy.

Perhaps these three people had no ill intentions.

Perhaps these three people did not lie.

But!

This does not mean that the hidden adversary behind the scenes had no ill intentions, no lies.

The opponent could easily deceive the three of them with lies.

Then, use the mouths of the three to lull them into complacency.

This would be a better way than direct lying.

Because... the office worker, the middle-aged clerk, the female student, they believe the other party.



Even if the other party was telling lies, the three would take them for the truth.

Then, the three would convey these 'truths' to them.

But who could possibly know what the real outcome would be?

Therefore, even though Jason could still sense the aura of death on the three and easily pinpoint their locations at this moment, he wouldn't go looking for them.

He could imagine that even if he did find the three,

There would inevitably be a third round, a fourth round,

And even more entanglements to follow.

In such entanglements, everything would become even more complicated and confusing.

Far better to strike directly at the most obvious point.

Once and for all!

That's always the best solution!

Following Jason, Hui Lijing and Ryosuke were also thinking.

"Is there any countermeasure?"

"Can we force the three murderers to show themselves?"

That's what Ryosuke was thinking.

And Hui Lijing's thought process was much simpler.

"Jason must have discovered the murderer and is pursuing them."

Clearly, this represents a limitation or habit of thought.

To give an example (a good example, but chestnuts aren't bad either) —

Hui Lijing was on the first level.

Ryosuke on the second level.

Jason, however, was standing on the fifth level.

...

Inside the courtyard, the 'startled deer' moved up and down, creating the distinctive sound of bamboo striking stone.

Within its crouched form, droplets fell, rippling the water's surface.

The handsome man holding a folding fan gently tapped his palm with the fan, a smile appearing on his fair cheek. He squinted his slender, fox-like eyes, watching the 'startled deer's' movements within the courtyard.

A servant stepped lightly and approached the handsome man from behind.

"Master, the three have completed the first phase."

"However..."

"They were almost immediately discovered by that Jason."

"Then, that Detective Ryosuke noticed something was amiss as well," the servant reported softly.

The handsome man showed no surprise.

Instead, he nodded as if it was expected.

"Of course."

"After all, he's an exorcist who has evaded dozens of assassinations."

"If he couldn't even detect this much, it would be truly disappointing."

"And what about that Detective Ryosuke?"

"If he weren't so hot-tempered and straightforward, with his record he would have been promoted to Superintendent by now, and since this case is his jurisdiction, such a discovery is only to be expected."

At this point, the handsome man paused.

"Otherwise, how could we move on to the second round?"

After saying this, the handsome man seemed to find something amusing, his expression growing even more delighted.

He waved his hand.

Immediately, the servant respectfully withdrew.

Then, the handsome man turned his gaze back to the courtyard.

There, an old monk appeared, clad in a gray, tattered robe, at some unknown time.

The old monk was filthy and disheveled, with a darkened face.

However, his eyes were bright.

At the moment, these bright eyes were fixed on the handsome man.

"Tongshou Temple monk, you've finally decided to show yourself."

The handsome man said with a smile.

The monk sighed, did not speak, and simply bent down and began to wash his hands in front of the 'crouched beast.'

This gesture brightened the handsome man's eyes.

He rose from a kneeling position.

The folding fan in his hand was gently opened.

With one hand, he formed several seals.

Woo!

A cold wind blew into the courtyard.

Dark clouds followed.

The stars were obscured.

The moon grew dim.

Several armored skeleton samurai appeared in the courtyard.

They drew their swords, surrounding the old monk.

The old monk calmly washed his hands and face, then shook out his monk's robe and looked at the handsome man.

In the face of the handsome man's anticipation and excitement, he knelt straight down and shouted in a high voice—

"Spare my life!"

Chapter 972: Fear!

The handsome man was stunned.

He looked at the old monk, who was kneeling in front of him and begging for mercy loudly, his face full of astonishment for a moment.

In his memory, the Monk of Tongshou Temple was not like this at all.

In fact, one could say they were world's apart.

Whenever encountering demons, the other party always had the fierce eyes of a vajra.

Whenever encountering injustices, the other party always acted with righteousness and haste.

To this day, he still remembered the fierce appearance of the other party when they last made a move—

'Great Power Heavenly Dragon! Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva! All Buddhas of the Prajna! Prajna Paramita Hrdaya Sutra!'

It was not just the mantra.

He also remembered the hand gestures very clearly.





At that time, the Monk of Tongshou Temple was an unmatched force.

He forcefully subdued that great demon.

It was also for this reason, knowing that that object had fallen into the hands of the Monk of Tongshou Temple, that he had carefully devised his plan.

He was wary of the Monk of Tongshou Temple.

This point, he would not deny.

But he also desired that object.

Therefore, he had been diligently strategizing up to now.

But was it all to witness this scene of surrender?

No!

It must be a disguise!

The Monk of Tongshou Temple is numbing my senses!

The handsome man instantly realized.

He stood inside the house, lowering his head to look at the Monk of Tongshou Temple in the courtyard.

"The world says you have been gravely injured."

"But, do you think you can deceive me?"

"You've disguised yourself as a common person, but you've done it too well, in my senses, you are just like any other person!"

"Others might be fooled!"

"But not me!"

"Because—"

"A seriously injured person wouldn't act just like a regular person."

The handsome man said, raising his hand.

Immediately, more than ten skeletal samurai who emerged from the shadows now receded, but their blade tips still pointed towards the old Monk of Tongshou Temple.

The Monk of Tongshou Temple knelt there, hands clasped together, silent.

Even his eyes were closed.

Such a submissive posture made the handsome man start to laugh.

"Still wanting to keep up the act?"

"Let me tell you, it's useless."

"Even if you can keep it up, the people inside 'Tongshou Temple' can't wait!"

"'Exorcist' Jason, 'Detective' Hui Lijing, 'Policeman' Ryosuke."

"One who lost a father, one who lost a wife, one who lost a mother."

"And then, add one deceased abuser."

"Guess what will happen during my specially arranged 'Omagatoki'?"

The Monk of Tongshou Temple, with his eyes closed, suddenly opened them wide.

The handsome man was extremely satisfied with the Monk of Tongshou Temple's reaction.

"Exactly."

"Just as you thought."

"A malignant spirit will be born."

"It will be born from the corpse beneath Yan Xia, and grow rapidly... Guess, will it become a true 'Great Ghost'?"

The handsome man laughed.

He had already mastered the whole situation.

Moreover, with ease.

He believed, even the Monk of Tongshou Temple, had no way to break through 'Omagatoki'.

Because, it's not just his arrangement.

It's also... the right moment!

Even the most powerful beings cannot contend with 'Heaven'!

"So, hand over the 'Flag of Awe'!"

The handsome man said as he walked up to the Monk of Tongshou Temple, extending his hand.

The Monk of Tongshou Temple stared at the palm before him, speechless.

Yet beneath that calm façade, the Monk was panicking.

Where would he find the legendary 'Flag of Awe'?

He was just an ordinary fake monk, how could he possibly possess such a legendary item.

Being here was already the greatest courage he could muster.

In fact, he had already planned to leave the country when he felt something was amiss.

But, halfway through, he turned back.

His conscience wouldn't allow it.

Even after reciting the Heart Sutra ten times, his conscience was still uneasy.

This was different from swindling a meal or two's worth of money.

This concerned human lives!

Hoping he could make it in time!

The Monk of Tongshou Temple sighed deeply once again, clasping his hands together.

"Are you still hesitating?"

"Or do you think..."

"That I'm bluffing you?"

The handsome man frowned.

The Monk of Tongshou Temple, still silent, lowered his head.

Buying time!

Delay as much as possible!

Until the people are rescued!

...

Jason, Hui Lijing, and Ryosuke returned to the riverside.

Though they had seen it before, when Hui Lijing saw the seemingly endless river again, she still felt it unreal.

"Wasn't this a market entrance before?"

Ryosuke was stunned for a moment, then turned his head towards Hui Lijing and Jason for confirmation.

Evidently, compared to Hui Lijing, Ryosuke was more shocked.

Previously completely distracted by office workers, middle-aged clerks and female students, the detective now displayed his most genuine response when faced with the abnormal.



"Yeah."

"And my car should still be parked here."

Hui Lijing nodded.

"Is this the power of that unknown world?"

"Truly terrifying."

Faced with such an almost 'world-altering' power, the middle-aged detective couldn't help but sigh, then after a moment of contemplation, he quietly asked, "Was there a car loan?"

"None."

"Paid in full."

"My sister bought it for me."

Hui Lijing replied with ease.

"Your sister?"

"That's nice."

The middle-aged detective smacked his lips, his face showing indescribable envy.

"Nice?"

"That's an insult!"

"She doesn't just use cars to humiliate me, she uses cash, gold, mansions non-stop to insult me!"

"I will definitely work hard to earn money and pay that person back!"

After grumbling a bit, Hui Lijing spoke assertively.

Ryosuke looked at Hui Lijing in this state, while the middle-aged detective's hand involuntarily reached for his own wallet.

Chapter 973: Fear! (2)

The withered touch made him smack his lips again.

Whenever he thought of the debt he owed, the middle-aged detective's face couldn't help but be filled with worry and distress.

He, too, wished to have an older sister!

An older sister who would give him money to spend for no reason, and shame him with gold, luxury cars, and mansions if he refused!

Damn it!

Is this flaunting?

Curse it!

I'm so envious!

Ryosuke took several deep breaths and turned his head to look at Jason.

He decided not to talk to Hui Lijing for the time being.

Too infuriating!

His blood pressure was rising!

"Jason, what can we do to make those three murderers appear?"

Ryosuke hadn't forgotten their purpose for coming here.

"Appear?"

"Aren't they supposed to be here?"

"Isn't Jason supposed to be pursuing them?"

Hui Lijing asked in shock.

"How is that possible?"

Ryosuke scoffed.

At this moment, he found a bit of a good feeling again.

So what if you have a good sister?

Isn't it just due to intelligence?

I'm different.

I have always relied on myself!

With this thought, Ryosuke began to explain.

"They have prepared for so long, even Jason might not be able see through it at a glance, but Jason must have meticulously found a way to counteract them."

"So, by being here, we can force them to reveal themselves, and thus win the second round."

"This will certainly lay the foundation for our victory."

Ryosuke explained earnestly, causing Hui Lijing to blink.

She felt there was some sense in what Ryosuke said.

But also felt something was off.

Yet when asked to articulate it, she couldn't.

So, Hui Lijing turned to Jason and asked,

"Jason, is that so?"

"Do you remember what I said before?"

Jason didn't answer, but instead asked.

"The previous words?"

"Yes... never follow the enemy's steps."

Hui Lijing immediately remembered.

Then, the female detective frowned and pondered.

The middle-aged detective beside her very much agreed.

"Right, never follow the enemy's steps!"

"We must stay one step ahead of them!"

The middle-aged detective spoke while looking around.

He was convinced there must be some clue here.

But other than the big river in front of them, there was only darkness, and even the lights of the distant Tongshou Temple seemed somewhat illusory and dim at this time.

Where exactly?

The middle-aged detective pondered, and then, involuntarily, he looked at Jason.

At this moment, Jason, with a backpack containing a hockey mask and a Broad Blade Cleaver, stood on the shore, gazing at the river.

Could it be?

As if thinking of something, the middle-aged detective immediately looked towards the river.

But no matter how wide he opened his eyes, he could only see the dim river surface, the mist rising, and with the rumbling in his ears, the river became more turbulent.

Nothing on the surface... could it be at the bottom of the river?

The middle-aged detective thought subconsciously.

But just as the middle-aged detective was about to bend down to see if he could see clearly to the riverbed, suddenly, he froze.



He blankly looked towards the misty river surface in the distance.

Amidst the rising mist, a small boat was cutting through the wind and waves!

A lantern hung at the bow, and at the stern stood an old monk in tattered robes who looked unkempt.

The old monk was struggling to row, propelling the boat towards here more swiftly.

A few breaths later, the old monk appeared at the shore.

"Get on the boat!"

"No time to explain!"

The old Monk shouted repeatedly.

But whether it was Jason, Hui Lijing or Ryosuke, they all looked at the suddenly appearing old monk with suspicion.

The three who had appeared before were killers.

So what about this monk who has now appeared?

Hui Lijing and Ryosuke were full of caution.

Jason looked at the monk with an inquisitive gaze.

There was nothing particularly remarkable about his aura.

But the small boat under his feet was quite interesting, giving off a faint scent of mint; he wondered whether it tasted crunchy or soft?

Thinking this, Jason listened while the old monk became increasingly anxious.

"I'm from Tongshou Temple, I'll take you away from this Illusion Realm, this place..."

Boom!

The old monk's explanation was interrupted by the thunder.

A lightning bolt from the sky struck Tongshou Temple.

The originally dim lights of Tongshou Temple were completely extinguished after the lightning strike.

In that darkness, no more light could be seen.

Only—

Crack, crack!

Sizzle, sizzle!

The sounds of bones breaking and flesh tearing.

Hui Lijing and Ryosuke's complexions changed.

What happened?

The two looked towards Jason.

Jason, unfazed, stood still, while the old monk from Tongshou Temple on the boat had a pained expression.

"We're doomed! We're doomed!"

"The 'ghost' has appeared!"

The monk from Tongshou Temple murmured softly, then, once again addressed Jason, Hui Lijing, and Ryosuke: "Get on the boat, I can't save the others, but I hope to save you."

His tone was earnest, his expression sincere.

"Get on the boat."

Jason suddenly spoke and jumped onto the boat.

Hui Lijing quickly followed onto the boat.

Ryosuke also boarded.

Seeing the three aboard, the old monk from Tongshou Temple immediately began to row.

The small boat swiftly left the shore, heading towards the middle of the river.

And the moment the boat left shore, in the darkness, two fist-sized red light spots lit up.

Then, those red light spots tore through the darkness.

Instantly, Hui Lijing and Ryosuke on the boat were startled.

It was a small giant, 3 meters tall.

Its entire body red, its head crowned with horns a foot long, and its fangs sharp as daggers, it had a robust physique, with what seemed to be an animal skin skirt tied around its waist, holding an incomplete corpse in its hand.

Judging by the clothes, it was a white-collar worker.

This red little giant was gnawing on the corpse while roaring at the people on the boat.

"Is, is this a 'ghost'?"

Hui Lijing asked stammeringly.

"It appears so."

Watching the little giant that very much resembled the 'ghosts' of legend, Ryosuke replied with a dry voice.

"It's just eaten one, so it can't be considered a 'ghost' yet; just a creature in its infancy. If it consumed the remaining two, it would then truly be a 'ghost' on a real level."

The monk steering the boat shook his head, explaining in a more professional tone.

Then, thinking of something, he had an apprehensive look on his face.

He slowly said,

"Lucky you boarded in time; if it caught you and ate all three of you..."

"It could potentially become a 'Great Ghost'."

"That's a being even many demons and spirits would avoid, extremely dreadful... Huh?"

"Where did your companion go?"

The old monk, who had just breathed a sigh of relief, suddenly realized Jason was no longer on the boat.

Hui Lijing and Ryosuke searched around.

"Look there!"

The sharp-eyed Hui Lijing pointed to the shore.

Everyone looked in that direction.

They saw Jason, who should have been on the boat, had somehow returned to the shore and was standing in front of the 'ghost'.

"Jason! Jason!"

Hui Lijing shouted loudly.

Jason seemed to hear her voice, but did not turn around, merely waving his hand.

Hui Lijing was about to jump into the water and swim back, but the next scene stunned everyone on the boat.

Jason charged towards the 'ghost'.

And then—

With a punch, he caused the 'ghost' to bend over and hold its stomach.

Next, he brought his knee up to the 'ghost's' face.

Before the 'ghost's' head could rise, Jason clapped his hands together and struck heavily on the 'ghost's' back.



Thump.

The 'ghost' fell to the ground.

Trying to rise but was continuously trampled on by Jason.

It soon appeared lifeless.

Jason leisurely picked up the 'ghost' by its leg and dipped it into the river water, using the swift current to wash it.

"Is, is this a 'ghost'?"

Ryosuke was confused.

Aren't the 'ghosts' in legends supposed to be powerful and evil?

Evil seems about right.

But powerful?

It feels just like a chicken being prepped for stew, being washed.

Wait!

Washing?

Could it be?

Ryosuke's eyes widened, and his breath almost stopped.

Hui Lijing, on the other hand, seemed much more normal.

"This is 'purification'!"

Hui Lijing said earnestly.

Ryosuke looked at the earnest Hui Lijing with an expression that said you're kidding me.

Who purifies like this?

Shouldn't it be with Holy Water?

Or by fire?

But regardless, Ryosuke was relieved.

At least the crisis was averted.

Immediately, Ryosuke turned to say something to the Monk from Tongshou Temple.

But as he did, he found the old monk's complexion had changed dramatically, and he exclaimed—

"Not good!"

Chapter 974: Once upon a time there was a mountain...

Monk Jing from Tongshou Temple was nearly in tears.

Really, even though he was holding back, tears were already spinning in his eyes.

How sinful!

He was originally just a bottom-of-the-barrel street swindler, occasionally relying on his not-too-bad skills in poker and mahjong to scrape together a bit of cash in the lowest-end gambling dens, of course, not too much.

If he won too much, he would be discovered.

If discovered, his hands would be chopped off.

He didn't want that.

He wanted to live a long life and be buried peacefully.

So, he mixed in carefully and lived on.

As for finding a proper job?

He did that before he was fifty, too.

Convenience store clerk, chopping vegetables at the diner, car washer, parking attendant, etc., he had done them all.

Those were the happiest times of his life.

Although they were hourly jobs, not formal employment, and didn't pay much, he could still earn a little every day, and occasionally even get a free work meal.

But once he passed fifty, such jobs said goodbye to him.

He was replaced by younger people.

However, he did not curse his fate or others.

After all, compared to those who jumped off the rooftops after the financial tide receded, he was much happier.

At the very least, he was still alive.

Still living like a human.

Thus, his cardboard home was the cleanest, and he cleaned around it every day.

Until...

An old monk appeared.

It was a misty morning when the old monk, covered in blood, collapsed at the 'door' of his 'home'.

If it had been somewhere else, he would have turned a blind eye and walked away heartlessly.

But at the 'door' of his 'home', he couldn't just ignore it.

He didn't know what had happened to the old monk.

He only carried the old monk into his house and then cleaned up the blood.

Afterwards, he treated the monk with his cherished medicines.

To live a long life, having medicine was essential.

He always kept a portion of reserve funds for purchasing necessary medicines.

From cold medicine, anti-diarrheals to iodophors, bandages, and so on.

These things seemed basic, but at critical moments, they were lifesaving.

He had seen too many 'neighbors' lose their lives over a simple cold.

The old monk was gravely injured.

Covered in wounds from head to toe.

Many were deep to the bone.

It was a wonder to him that the old monk was still alive.

Likewise, there was the old monk's recovery power.

After he disinfected and applied medication, the old monk woke up by evening.

Weak, but that was normal.

Ordinary people with such serious injuries would have long been dead and cold.

"Thank, thank you."

The old monk struggled to express his gratitude.

"Don't thank me."

"If you died at my doorstep, it would trouble me too."

"Hurry up and eat, recover quickly, and then leave quickly."

He spoke indifferently to the old monk.

Then, he took out two cans from his 'emergency rations'.

Canned goods are easy to preserve and have a long shelf life.



Especially canned meat, which was a treasure during hard times.

He only had three cans hidden away.

Now he took out two just to help the old monk recover quickly.

Even so, he already had arguments prepared to convince the old monk to eat the cans of meat.

But unexpectedly, this old monk didn't seem to mind eating meat at all.

Completely different from any monk he knew.

The old monk was peculiar in more than that.

Apart from not eating meat, the old monk was also very interested in playing cards and mahjong.

Probably a fake monk!

The earlier injuries must have been from being caught while swindling!

That was what he thought at the time.

And thus, their distance closed.

After all, they were somewhat in the same line of work.

Days went by, day by day.

The monk's bald head was soon covered with a layer of short white hair, his body healed, and when he was well, he'd walk around the 'home' in his old clothes for half a day.

Sometimes they'd pick up cans together.

Occasionally, they'd rummage useful things out of the trash.

Then what?

Naturally, they'd exchange them for some beers.

He and the fake monk would drink together, chat together, laugh together.

He was the one laughing.

Because this fake monk always treated legends as truth, telling him stories with all the details.

He didn't believe it.

Then, a few months later, the fake monk suddenly said he had to leave, had some matters to attend to.

He didn't hold him back.

How could people like them hold someone back?

Absolutely no regret!

He didn't see the fake monk off, just returned 'home' early.

And then, staring at the clothes the old monk had left behind, he spent the whole night in a daze.

Life has to go on, right?

Another month passed.

After his life had returned to calm, the old monk reappeared.

Still injured, still covered in blood, collapsed at the 'door' of his 'home'.

"Hey!"

"We may be swindlers, but we must have a bottom line!"

"It's okay to scrape a meal or two, but don't go overboard."

"Otherwise, you'll end up dying on the streets!"

He said these words, but his actions were swift in 'carrying' the fake monk back 'home'.

The following days became a repeat of the previous experience.

In a cyclical pattern.

Every time the fake monk left, he always returned injured.

When healed, the fake monk would tell him stories.

Stories about how to deal with demons and ghosts.

The heroes in those stories had the Visualization Method, the Breathing Method, the Technique Method.

He found them interesting and remembered quite a bit.

At his age, there was a lot he couldn't remember anymore, but mysteriously, he remembered everything the fake monk told him, word for word.

At first, he found it strange.

But later, he got used to it.

Chapter 975: Once upon a time there was a mountain... (2)

He only remembered because he thought the fake monk's story was interesting.

It has been another month since the fake monk left.

He filled a cardboard at 'home' with the numeral "1."

He counted carefully.

There were exactly 80.

"So many years already?"

He looked at these numerals in shock.

Without realizing it, he had known the fake monk for almost ten years.

"It's also luck."

He thought to himself.

In these ten years, every time the fake monk returned, he was covered in injuries, yet he never died.  
What was that if not luck?

But good luck always runs out.

This time was it.

The fake monk returned.

There was a huge hole in his chest, and his face was torn.

If not for familiarity, he could not have recognized him.

"What happened?"

He wanted to carry the fake monk back to 'home' like before, but the fake monk stopped him.

"From cause to cessation, it happens in an instant."

"You always say you don't have a name."

"I'll give you my name."

The fake monk ignored his pleas and continued on his own.

Since he moved to this new 'home,' he had been nameless.

Most of the people around him were the same.

Everyone was known by a code.

Or simply, a "hey."

"From now on, you're 'Tongshou Temple.'"

"It's entrusted to you as well."

"As for more?"



"I can't teach you anymore, you need to gradually discover it."

After saying this, the fake monk handed him a cloth bag, then raised his hand.

His once proud neat hair, not a bit bald, was gone.

He was left with a bald head.

Before he could protest, the fake monk's bloodied face seemed to smile, then, his head tilted, and he died.

Just when he thought the fake monk was undying, the fake monk died.

Moreover, after the fake monk died, his body rapidly decayed.

In a breath's time, it turned to ashes.

Only the cloth bag remained.

Inside the bag was a key and a real estate deed.

Tongshou Temple!

The fake monk left him a temple in the streets of Tongshou Town.

It was small, but it was impressive.

Why did the fake monk deceive?

With such a temple, a little management could make a fortune.

Soon, he found out.

The stories the fake monk had told him were true!

Those stories!

Those demons and monsters!

The so-called Visualization Method, Breathing Method, Technique Method were all real!

Indeed, people sought him out for exorcisms.

Had the client's expression not been so grave, he would have almost laughed.

And he very much wanted to laugh at that time.

Because, if he had laughed then,

He wouldn't be in such dangerous situations now, bearing the name 'Tongshou Temple.'

Even though he took risks cautiously, he still couldn't escape.

This time, he was doomed!

Because, that was—

Tsuchimikado!

Thinking of this family, the old monk of Tongshou Temple's scalp tingled.

Even a branch family was the same.

They were not something he could resist.

Using 'Double' to deceive the other party was already his limit.

Then, using 'Boat Traversal Technique' to sneak in here to rescue someone, was only because he feared he wouldn't be able to eat or sleep, feeling uneasy.

But once discovered,

The old monk of Tongshou Temple still wanted to cry.

Thirty years away from a hundred.

Indeed, am I going to die prematurely?

It's truly heartbreaking.

Thinking thus, the old monk of Tongshou Temple straightened his robe.

Then, with a serious face, he brought his hands together.

Some habits, imprinted within the bones over time, do not change.

Even when facing life and death.

As the old monk of Tongshou Temple completed all this, Hui Lijing and Ryosuke were surprised to discover that the old monk before them suddenly seemed different.

Where it was different, they couldn't tell.

But there was always a feeling of facing a high monk.

That serious look always reminded them of the statues in the temple, and those calm eyes seemed as if they were seeing a bodhisattva, while the long breaths brought a sense of peace.

What?

Hui Lijing and Ryosuke looked at each other, puzzled.

They didn't know what had happened.

Just as Hui Lijing was about to ask, an abrupt change occurred.

The already tumultuous river suddenly surged with huge waves.

A sound like thunder echoed across the sky—

"Tongshou Temple!"

The voice was loud and filled with obvious anger.

"You dare to deceive me with a 'substitution technique'?"

"Are you mocking me?"

The questioning, under the anger, became exceptionally sharp.

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple looked up at the dim sky, his hands joined together in prayer, merely bowed slightly.

It seemed like an apology.

Or perhaps a habit.

"Good! Very good!"

"Since you want to save someone!"

"Then I will let you save to your heart's content!"

The voice roared.

The turbulent waters suddenly calmed.

But at the moment the river calmed, Hui Lijing and Ryosuke's faces changed drastically.

They felt as if they were being targeted by some ferocious beast.

Without hesitation, the two drew their guns.

The next moment—

Splash!

Accompanied by a splash, a thin figure leaped onto the boat.

The figure was all in dark green, with a fierce face, fanged mouth, and limbs like a toad, immediately lunging at Hui Lijing.

Bang!

Hui Lijing raised her hand and fired.



The monster fell with the shot, plunging into the river.

But Hui Lijing had no time to be pleased.

More monsters sprung out from the river.

Splash! Splash! Splash!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The sounds of emerging from the water and gunshots were continuous.

The voice in the sky was disdainful.

"Tongshou Temple, aren't you going to save someone?"

"Why aren't you taking action?"

"You don't think mere bullets are going to scare off my 'water ghosts,' do you?"

"Or are you conducting some kind of test?"

With that, the voice scoffed disdainfully.

"Human hearts can't withstand tests!"

"You already failed once decades ago!"

"Now?"

"You're just repeating the same mistakes!"

"Whether it's the two on your boat or the one on the shore, none can withstand the test—especially that guy on the shore named Jason, who is but a stray dog who has journeyed from afar, living in perpetual unease, his heart full of obsessions. If not for him, how could I possibly have found out about this? You might have already successfully rescued people."

"Do you think he, such a person, could pass your so-called test and inherit Tongshou Temple?"

The voice asked.

"Why not?"

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple answered.

Unlike the angry, sharp voice,

The Monk's words were calm and indifferent.

But this tone further irritated the other party.

"Just him?"

"He wants to pass those narrow tests of yours?"

"Unless..."

"He drinks dry this 'River of Ghosts'!"

The voice said ferociously.

However, at the end, it let out a light laugh.

Although his 'River of Ghosts' was just a projection of a tributary.

Even as a projection, it originates from the 'River of Ghosts.'

Ordinary people falling in are dissolved to skeletons in a breath, their essence feeding the water ghosts.

As for the skeletons?

He would modify them slightly to become new skeleton samurais.

Or simply immerse them in this 'River of Ghosts' to become new 'water ghosts.'

Jason to drink his 'River of Ghosts' dry?

How could that be possible?

Thinking this, the mysterious figure felt even more like laughing.

"If Jason really drinks dry the 'River of Ghosts,' not only will I concede defeat, but I will also join your camp, help you guard the 'Xin' flag, and become a member under your 'Xin' flag."

The figure said directly.

Very straightforward, without any hesitation.

Because, he thought it was impossible.

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple did not respond.

He also thought it was impossible.

But at this moment, Jason, who had eaten a 'roasted ghost,' stood up, shouldered his bag, and just like that, walked towards the 'River of Ghosts.'

The 'roasted ghost' was a bit salty, he felt... thirsty.

Chapter 976: Drinking this Bowl of 'Ghost River

The ghosts of this instance world appeared different from the spirits Jason had encountered before.

Although both were generically termed the same, the latter were intangible and tasteless, whereas the former were not only tangible but also had a rather good food aroma.

Thus, upon the appearance of that ghost, Jason promptly returned to the shore and started to cook simply.

The convenience of [Charles Burning Technique] prompted Jason to choose grilling first.

The meat was firm, salty without any seasoning, and had a hint of spiciness.

It tasted to Jason like gnawing on spicy duck neck.

[Devouring Ghost (Small)]

[Physical Strength, Energy, Moderate Wound Recovery!]

[Satiety +30]

[Satiety: 1068]

...

Compared to previous 'food,' the ghost significantly raised the satiety level.

Moreover, the notation of 'Small' within the brackets excited Jason.

If there is Small, there must be Large.

The Small has a satiety of 30, so the Large should at least be 3-5 times that amount.

Or even more.

Of course, most importantly, there's a high probability of 'Excitement of Feast.'

Thinking of this, Jason couldn't help but grin.

Although his current 'Excitement of Feast' was already enough to elevate [Protection Against Evil] to Transcendent, Jason certainly wouldn't mind having a bit more of it.

But, that's for later.

Now?

Jason stared at the 'Ghost River' before him, his eyes shimmering.

He had resisted the hunger the first time he saw this 'Ghost River'.

The entire 'Ghost River' emitted a faint food aroma.

Though near imperceptible, it was something Jason couldn't afford to pass up.

After all, wasting food is disgraceful!

It's only right to finish everything!

At that time, the situation was unclear and Jason couldn't confirm the danger.

And now?



No need.

The appearances of the old monk from Tongshou Temple and the puppet master revealed clear insights.

Jason didn't care about things like 'Fear' flags.

Nor about being in the same faction.

What he cared about was the taste of the 'Ghost River.'

And the next moment, he tasted it—

Splash!

Jason jumped right into the 'Ghost River.'

Instantly, the cold touched his taste.

Utterly chilling, exhilarating to the heart.

Hints of sweetness, with a bubbly texture that brightened Jason's eyes.

Too bad it wasn't plum juice.

Jason thought so, but he quickly immersed himself in 'drinking.'

Barbecue and plum juice go together well.

But Sprite isn't bad either.

So does a fat man's drink.

The most important thing was he could 'drink'!

Never let choices make you forget the essentials.

You know, it's children who prefer to choose.

Adults should want it all.

If not available, then grasp what is before you.

Jason was such a man.

Whoosh!

He abruptly opened his mouth, and at the bottom of this 'Ghost River,' an uncontrollable Jason created a flow in the surrounding water, an invisible suction emitted from his throat.

Whoosh!

The water around immediately formed a whirlpool, passing through the throat into Jason's stomach.

"Jason!"

When Jason jumped into the 'Ghost River,' Hui Lijing cried out in alarm.

Then, she wanted to jump down to rescue him.

"Calm down!"

"Jason isn't someone who acts without reason!"

Ryosuke grabbed Hui Lijing's shoulder, but the strength disparity was too much, causing him to be pulled down onto the deck, landing exactly on his injured arm.

Ouch!

Ryosuke took a sharp intake of breath.

It was because of the pain, but also surprise at Hui Lijing's strength.

How could a woman be so strong?

Even if she is tall, it shouldn't be, right?

Could it be... a demon?

Are there tall female demons?

Ryosuke paused, his thought process instinctively twisted.

The environment, the recent experiences, had unconsciously twisted the thinking of this middle-aged detective.

"Officer Ryosuke, are you okay?"

Hui Lijing helped him up.

"I'm fine."

"Ms. Hui Lijing, are you an eight-foot-tall person?"

Ryosuke asked subconsciously.

Tall, strong demons were numerous, but when adding the prefix 'female,' such demons were rare, with the most famous being 'eight-foot-tall person.'

"Do you know what cow dung smells like?"

Hui Lijing asked with a displeased expression.

Ryosuke: ???

What kind of question is that?

A demon quiz?

If you answer it wrong, will you be eaten?

Ryosuke hesitated for a moment.

At that time, Hui Lijing threw Ryosuke onto the deck and looked up at the dim sky, yelling loudly, "You, the covert creature, show yourself!"

"Heh."

A scornful sneer responded.

Bang bang bang!

Angered, Hui Lijing pulled out a gun and began shooting at the sky.

Naturally, it was futile.

Instead, it only caused the already calm river surface to churn again.

More dark green 'water ghosts' charged towards the boat.

Hui Lijing and Ryosuke immediately retaliated.

The old monk from Tongshou Temple stood with his hands together.

He didn't want to not help.

But he really couldn't help.

Apart from 'Substitute Hair' and 'Boat Traversal Technique,' he was good at only a couple of secret techniques, none of which could handle this situation.

If used, not only would they not help, but they would directly expose his cover.

Letting that Tsuchimikado initiate a full-scale attack.

Then?

Naturally, it doesn't need to be said.

Being able to die painlessly would be considered a great fortune.

A more likely scenario is a fate worse than death.

Chapter 977: Drank this bowl of 'Ghost River' []~()\*~\* (2)

As soon as he thought about this, the expression of the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple became even more composed and composed.

Since worrying is useless, it is better to silently observe the changes.



Perhaps...

A miracle might truly occur after all.

"Tongshou Temple, aren't you going to make a move yet?"

While the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple stood there quietly waiting, the voice of Tsuchimikado echoed once again in the sky.

As Tsuchimikado made use of the opportunity provided by 'Omogatoki' he had created, he could clearly see the calm and composed look on the elderly monk's face from Tongshou Temple, which made Tsuchimikado increasingly wary.

It was certain that the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple was stronger than him.

Even with the help of 'Omogatoki' and using bait to pressure the elderly monk, if the two genuinely fought, the outcome would likely be evenly matched.

Therefore, unless absolutely necessary, he definitely didn't want to start a fight.

What he wanted was to overpower by situation!

Threatening the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple with the lives of Jason, Hui Lijing, and Ryosuke.

Although Tsuchimikado didn't understand why the elderly monk would care about the lives of a few ordinary people, this was a rare and invaluable opportunity for him.

With that thought, Tsuchimikado spoke.

"Although this is only a projection of the 'Ghostly River' branch."

"But as soon as ordinary people enter here, they would dissolve into skeletons in an instant, and then their spirits would become nutrients for the water ghosts—this Jason is quite impressive, the exorcist training seems quite effective, he hasn't died yet."

"But this is only temporary."

"Eventually... he will also die."

"Do you want to just watch him die?"

"Or are you planning to save him yourself?"

Tsuchimikado pressured the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple with his words.

The well-being of Jason wasn't Tsuchimikado's concern.

What he truly cared about was how the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple would act.

If the elderly monk actually chose to dive into the 'Ghostly River' to save someone, then it would truly be... better than expected!

With the 'Ghostly River' as a distraction, even if he had to fight, he would have a much greater assurance.

"The rise and fall of causes, happens in a blink of an eye."

The elderly monk from Tongshou Temple brought his hands together and bowed slightly.

He wanted to say something else, but at this moment he really didn't know what to say.

He could only respond with the words that the real elderly monk from Tongshou Temple said when facing death.

In fact, whenever he didn't know what to say, the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple always did this.

And every time, it worked quite well.

This Tsuchimikado, utilizing the power of 'Onmyodo', seeing such a placid expression on the face of the elderly monk from Tongshou Temple as he said these words, felt inexplicably nervous.

If it were another scenario, he definitely wouldn't have felt this way.

But he had obviously gone all out in organizing.

The other party truly fell into the trap.

However, the composed expression on the other side made him feel as if it was himself who had fallen into the trap.

Could it be...

That I really fell into the trap?

Impossible!

I have already grasped the overall situation!

Tongshou Temple is merely bluffing!

"Tongshou Temple, elderly monk, I..."

When Tsuchimikado was about to say something else, his voice suddenly stopped.

His eyes widened as he stared at the 'Ghostly River'.

In fact, not just Tsuchimikado, but Hui Lijing and Ryosuke too.

They finally noticed something amiss!

A whirlpool!

A whirlpool appeared at the shore!

It was not a normal underwater current; the entire whirlpool was like a 'tornado', except not on the water surface, but downward towards the water, similar to when a bathtub's plug is pulled out.

But this whirlpool was far more terrifying than a bathtub's.

What's more horrifying was that it was continuing to enlarge.

Soon, the 'water ghosts' inside the 'Ghostly River' were affected.

The originally fierce and maddened 'water ghosts', one by one, seemed like they encountered a natural predator, emitting cries of despair and moving away from the whirlpool, but the sucking force of the whirlpool was too strong, relying merely on their own swimming, they were completely unable to resist.

One, two, three...

Quickly, groups of 'water ghosts' were sucked into the vortex.

Just like an impatient person drinking bubble tea, initially using a straw to sip the bubbles one by one, but later, finding it too troublesome, directly tearing open the lid and pouring into his mouth.

Finally, the rumbling sound of the river water couldn't cover up those pitiful screams.

Hui Lijing and Ryosuke stood on the small boat, dumbfounded watching this scene.

"Did Jason cause this?"

Ryosuke asked blankly.

Even though this middle-aged detective had been advising Hui Lijing to stay calm, for Jason who actively jumped into the water, he didn't hold much optimism.

Although he was unaware of the peculiarities of the 'Ghostly River', the swarming 'water ghosts' were enough for this middle-aged detective to make the most direct judgement.

Unless a hundred fully-equipped soldiers, also supported with vessels like gunboats, otherwise facing such 'water ghosts' could only end up as food.

Why had they lasted this long?

This middle-aged detective was quite clear.

It was just the manipulator behind the scenes using the current situation to pressure Master of Tongshou Temple beside them.

If it were a real confrontation?

Just with their two pistols?

They would probably be torn into shreds in an instant.

However, if Hui Lijing is the 'Yao,' then maybe there is still a glimpse of hope.

Chapter 978: Drank this bowl of 'Ghost River' []~()\*~\* (3)

And him?

Naturally, he had become nothing but prey on the platter.

"Of course, it's Jason."

"Is this the power of an Exorcist?"

Hui Lijing's eyes were sparkling.



She had an agreement with Jason; she would help him find those bizarre cases, and in exchange, Jason would teach her some knowledge from the Mystical Side.

Before this, Hui Lijing had already felt the strength of this knowledge.

But it was never as direct as this.

Was it possible to 'drink' dry an entire river?

What kind of secret technique was this?

Or was it some sort of tool?

Hui Lijing was guessing.

The female detective did not believe that Jason literally drank 'Ghost River' dry.

After all, no one had such a big stomach.

It wasn't just Hui Lijing who thought this—the old Monk of Tongshou Temple and Tsuchimikado thought so as well.

"Did Jason detect Tsuchimikado's arrangements, hence making preparations in advance?"

"Yes!"

"Only then does it explain the calmness he maintained from beginning to end."

"So he came prepared!"

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple heaved a sigh of relief.

Being prepared was good!

At least, he had survived again.

Unlike the old Monk's relief, Tsuchimikado was fuming with anger.

"Was it Ichiro Sakajo's prior probe that exposed me?"

"Did that damn Exorcist use divination?"

"The most detestable is the old Monk of Tongshou Temple!"

"No wonder he was so composed just now; my unease was due to him having seen through everything already, waiting for me to step into the trap!"

Tsuchimikado was grinding his teeth in irritation.

But what's done was done.

What could he do?

He could only try to mitigate the losses as much as possible!

Ghost River absolutely could not be drained dry.

Even as a projection of a tributary, it was one of his most significant trump cards; to lose it here... was not worth it!

With that thought, Tsuchimikado waved his hand.

Hui Lijing and Ryosuke disappeared.

Jason at the bottom of the river also vanished.

Only after the old Monk of Tongshou Temple placed his palms together in a sign of respect did he and the small boat disappear.

The next moment—

Everyone appeared in a courtyard.

In the midst of the crisp 'startled deer' sound, Hui Lijing and Ryosuke saw the mastermind behind the scenes.

Both were surprised by the other's good looks.

And Tsuchimikado did not even glance at them; he was scrutinizing the old Monk with a judging look.

He had not forgotten his own words.

To go back on his word?

His pride would not permit that.

But to fulfill the promise and acknowledge the other as his lord... he was somewhat unwilling.

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple looked at Tsuchimikado and instantly guessed his thoughts.

But at this time, he did not speak.

He knew all too well the nature of these great families.

At this moment, if he suggested not to fulfill the promise, it would be seen as an insult by Tsuchimikado, and there would be unending enmity.

But if he was to actively suggest fulfilling the promise, it would also be considered an insult, continuing the unyielding hostility.

So staying silent was the best approach.

Leave everything to Tsuchimikado.

However, very quickly, the old Monk realized something was amiss.

After Tsuchimikado's gaze lingered on him, it shifted to... Jason.

Tsuchimikado was sizing up Jason.

Hmm?

Why is there a sense of murderous intent?

The old Monk was filled with surprise.

And Tsuchimikado was the most shocked; he not only sensed murderous intent but also felt unprecedented danger.

How could this be?

How could a mere Exorcist, who seemed as desperate as a dog without a home, give me this feeling?

Of course, there are powerful Exorcists.

Not to mention those twelve 'Stellar' Exorcists.

Even some of the renowned Exorcists are worth his regard.

But in Tsuchimikado's opinion, Jason was definitely not included.

Could it be...

Everything I saw was an illusion!

Is there a deeper truth?

Tsuchimikado looked at Jason, somewhat in shock.

His heart filled with another speculation.

Suddenly, sweat appeared on his forehead.

To think, even one old Monk of Tongshou Temple was more than he could handle.

And now, add in a hidden Exorcist?

He was doomed!

What to do?

Stay calm!

There must be a way out!

Tsuchimikado's brain began to operate Swiftly.

As for Jason, it was much simpler!

He only knew that this person in front of him had interrupted his 'drink'!



And that meant bearing his wrath!

Jason was about to take action.

But just at this moment, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple stepped in front of Jason.

"Well done."

"You've passed my test."

"From now on—"

"You will be the new Tongshou Temple, and 'Wei' (Awe) the flag bearer will be entrusted to you."

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple spoke earnestly.

Jason was stunned.

And in that moment of stupor, Tsuchimikado Motoharu rushed down the steps, kneeling straight in front of Jason, his forehead pressed to the ground—

"Tsuchimikado Motoharu greets the lord."

Chapter 979: How to Apologize Properly?

Watching Tsuchimikado Motoharu kneel before him, Jason was taken aback.

In the Nightless City, there were no rules about sparing those who surrendered.

The best enemy is a dead enemy—this was the most genuine rule of the Nightless City.

Jason always believed in this rule.

But...

It seemed a bit of a waste to kill a 'cow' that wouldn't stop producing milk, right?

Jason's hesitation was caught by the elder monk of Tongshou Temple.

As a former street hustler, the elder monk of Tongshou Temple may have been average in other skills, but his ability to read people was exceptional, and with just a glance, he knew what Jason was hesitating over.

"The Onmyoji have the 'Kikyo Seal'. With the seal as their oath, they will not betray."

"Moreover, the lineage of the Tsuchimikado destined them to keep their word."

As the elder monk of Tongshou Temple explained to Jason, he flattered Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

Surviving in current society was not that simple.

Lick one boot?

Too naive!

If you lick one, that's what being a sycophant is!

But I'm different!

I'll lick a thousand!

I am the war god!

The elder monk of Tongshou Temple, with his own philosophy of life, looked indifferently at Tsuchimikado Motoharu kneeling before him.

This Tsuchimikado was also very decisive.

Without any hesitation, he formed a seal—

After biting his thumb and letting the blood flow, he drew a pentagram-like formation on the ground in front of Jason.

"The Kikyo Seal as the core!"

"The clouds of Heian-kyo as the deputy!"

"The foundation of the Yin Yang Division!"

"I, Tsuchimikado, regards the man before me, Jason, as my lord, and will never betray him in life or death, through all generations."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu chanted his oath.

Suddenly, the Kikyo Seal on the ground lit up with brilliance.

Eventually, the light dissipated.

A seal appeared on the back of Tsuchimikado Motoharu's hand.

At the same time, Jason could clearly sense the existence of Tsuchimikado Motoharu in his heart.

He could also sense Tsuchimikado's emotions.

The current emotions were respect and fear.

"Is it like a contract?"

Jason guessed according to his thoughts.

Then, he asked directly.

"Can you summon the 'Ghost River' you mentioned before?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Provided the timing is right, I can arrange it in advance and summon it, but... that is not the true 'Ghost River', just a projection of one of its tributaries."

Facing Jason's inquiry, Tsuchimikado Motoharu hid nothing.

"A tributary? A projection?"

Jason became interested.

"Yes, the real 'Ghost River' doesn't exist in this world."

"It is closer to the legendary land 'Yellow Springs'!"

"There are rumors that the 'Ghost River' was once a tributary of the 'Sanzu River', but due to a certain demon's mischief, it was pulled down and thrown out of the 'Yellow Springs', forming the 'Ghost River' we see now."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu answered.

"The 'Ghost River' is a tributary of the 'Sanzu River'... Slurp."

Jason's eyes lit up, and he took a deep breath.

He was tempted.

[Consumed 'Ghost River. Fake' (Large Amount)]

[Physical Strength, Vitality, Injury recovery greatly enhanced!]

[Satiety +400]

[Satiety: 1468]

...

This was his recent acquisition.

Without the Excitement of Feast, his satiety was more than enough.

More importantly: No danger!

Perhaps for ordinary people, entering the 'Ghost River. Fake' meant certain death.

But for Jason, that kind of Corrosion couldn't even scratch him.

And this was just a projection of a tributary.

What if it was the real 'Ghost River'?

What if it was the 'Sanzu River' that the 'Ghost River' once relied on?

Thinking of this, Jason felt a burning desire.

"How can one get to the 'Sanzu River'?"



Jason asked directly.

"My lord, that is a place only the dead can go!"

"Living beings entering there will surely face disaster!"

"Unlike the world we live in, approaching 'Yellow Springs' means death will follow like a shadow."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu earnestly advised Jason.

"Not just that."

"The modern world is already sealed off from 'Yellow Springs' and other legendary lands."

"If they were connected again, it would be the end."

"The 'demons' there are not the ones surviving with difficulty in this world, but true great demons."

The elder monk of Tongshou Temple also spoke up.

He was trying to persuade Jason.

He had just given the 'Fear' flag to Jason, and the elder monk's heart was filled with guilt.

He didn't want Jason to encounter any trouble.

Jason frowned slightly.

He was eager to taste the 'Sanzu River', but being cautious by nature, he was well aware of the consequences of recklessness.

Therefore, he temporarily put aside this idea.

He started to ask instead.

"What about the 'Ghost River' then?"

Hearing Jason's question, Tsuchimikado Motoharu immediately relaxed.

He had just pledged loyalty to Jason with the Kikyo Seal and did not want anything to happen to Jason.

If Jason died, he too would be greatly weakened.

Even worse, it would mean death.

This was something Tsuchimikado Motoharu could not accept.

He, too, feared death.

"The real 'Ghost River' can be accessed through 'Heian-kyo' every year, during the 'Prosperous Moon', when the moon is full, 'Heian-kyo' will be open, and those with invitations can go there."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu said.

"Invitations?"

Jason frowned.

This was when the elder monk of Tongshou Temple stepped forward once more.

"Master of Tongshou Temple, your invitation."

The elder monk handed a golden-bordered, all-black invitation to Jason.

Now that he had taken the blame for him, benefits must follow.

The elder monk understood.

After Jason took the invitation, the elder monk immediately pulled Jason into a corner of the courtyard.

Chapter 980: How Should One Properly Express Apologies? (2)

To this, Tsuchimikado Motoharu was not surprised.

The rumored 'Tongshou Temple' was a rather peculiar monastery.

Each of its masters was not born of 'Tongshou Temple' itself, but was chosen by the previous master through a series of tests to become the new master of 'Tongshou Temple.'

His lord was undoubtedly the previous Tongshou Temple's target for the trials.

Now?

He had naturally passed.

There were naturally many more matters to discuss.

Including but not limited to succession.

This was good news.

Thinking this, Tsuchimikado Motoharu turned his head to look at Hui Lijing and Ryosuke.

"There's some time left before dawn."

"Do the two of you need to rest or have some refreshments?"

Tsuchimikado Motoharu smiled cordially, making his already handsome face even more striking.

This made Ryosuke feel even more surreal.

Why is it that enemies from before can now sit down and have tea together?

Is this the 'Mystical Side'?

But...

Something crossed Ryosuke's mind, and he hesitated slightly.

"Yan Xia and Ichiro Sakajo..."

"It wasn't me."

"I didn't make a move."

"Even though they got what they deserved."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu flatly denied it.

Looking at the handsome man before him, Ryosuke frowned deeply.

Perhaps it was as the other had said, the other party had not made a move.

But it was surely under the other's guidance.

But what if he knew?

Let alone whether there was evidence.

Judging from the courtyard where the other resided, just that pine tree was worth ten years of his salary, such wealth...

Hah.

Ryosuke chuckled softly.

"I won't need any refreshments."

"I'm particular about my bed, and I can't sleep in a strange place."

"I'll take my leave then."

Having said that, Ryosuke walked towards the outside of the courtyard.

Waiting there, a servant had already been expecting him for some time.

Following the servant, Ryosuke exited the courtyard building, refused the servant's offer to accompany him further, and strode forward.

He didn't even glance back at the courtyard behind him.

He was afraid he wouldn't be able to hold back and would say something excessive.

After all, he was not alone.

He had a sister to support.

If he died, his sister... would not survive.

Out of sight, out of mind.



Indeed, I am no different from those bastards.

Ryosuke sneered at himself.

And then—

Slap!

He fiercely slapped himself.

"That really hurts."

Ryosuke murmured and then finally looked around.

"Have I already reached the top of the mountain?"

"Do I have to walk back?"

Ryosuke somewhat regretted turning down the servant just now.

But still, without looking back, he walked down the mountain path against the wind.

...

"I'd like to have some hot tea."

"And, are there any bean daifuku?"

Hui Lijing didn't have Ryosuke's hesitations.

She immediately stated what she wanted to eat at the moment.

"Of course."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu immediately gestured with his hand.

In less than a minute, a small tea table appeared in front of Hui Lijing.

On it were three bean daifuku, served in a delicate bowl, while the hot tea was prepared by a tea master upon request.

The whole process was pleasing to the eye.

Yet Hui Lijing's gaze was not fixed on this, but she intermittently glanced towards Jason and the old Monks of Tongshou Temple, even though she was usually very observant and alert, for some reason she couldn't hear any of their conversation.

With such a distance, that shouldn't be the case.

"It's a type of secret technique."

"A little trick, really."

"However, for someone like the... Tongshou Temple Monk to cultivate to such a degree, it is quite rare."

Tsuchimikado Motoharu saw Hui Lijing's confusion and explained to her.

But in referring to the old Monk of Tongshou Temple, he dropped the title Master and stuck with the original name—this was because he did not know the Monk's real name, otherwise he should be addressing him by his given name at such a time.

In Tsuchimikado Motoharu's view, only his lord deserved to be called 'Master of Tongshou Temple.'

"So that's how it is!"

Hui Lijing's eyes lit up once more.

She was full of curiosity about that world.

The curiosity grows even stronger now.

Especially when looking at Jason's interaction with the old Monk of Tongshou Temple, she can't help but wish to take Jason's place.

To inherit the legacy of Tongshou Temple.

Then, to express her gratitude to the old Monk.

Afterward, the old Monk presents her with the true secret technique in face of her sincere gratitude.

Tears of appreciation stream down her face as she thanks him repeatedly.

Later, relying on this secret technique, she rises rapidly to prominence, but due to her shallow foundation, she suffers a severe ambush attack. The old Monk reappears to save her life, and immediately transfers his power to her for a full cycle of sixty years.

But after transferring his power, the old Monk passes away.

She begins her revenge!

Quickly, after the success of her revenge, she becomes the true number one under the heavens.

And moreover, she dominates an era and becomes a true legend.

How wonderful that would be!

Hui Lijing sighs.

But in reality —

"I'm sorry."

"I am deeply sorry."

"Please forgive me."

In a corner, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple apologizes three times in a row.

Then, without waiting for Jason to say anything, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple takes the initiative to say.

"I am willing to compensate!"

"How will you compensate?"

Jason looks displeased at the old Monk who tries to shift the burden onto him.

He doesn't know what has happened, but if the old Monk before him doesn't offer a reasonable explanation, he doesn't mind letting the other party experience the fragrance of the soil that comes after being deeply buried.

"Like I just said."

"Everything of the Tongshou Temple is yours."

"Including but not limited to the legacy, artifacts, etc."

The old Monk of Tongshou Temple says, filled with regret.

He is well aware that his recent selfishness could bring danger to Jason.

But!

He really had no other choice!

He didn't want to die!

He's been wanting to hand over 'Tongshou Temple' for a long time.

But the struggle to hold on until now was due to the fear of bequeathing it to the unworthy.

He was afraid of letting down the faux Monk.

So, he gritted his teeth and persevered, not wanting to casually give away 'Tongshou Temple'!

Until he met Jason just now.

First, Jason is very powerful.

He can't gauge how strong, but at least stronger than him, and stronger than Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

He may not count for much.

But Tsuchimikado Motoharu does have quite a reputation.

Yet facing Jason, Tsuchimikado Motoharu doesn't even dare to resist.

This says enough.



Handing over 'Tongshou Temple' to him, at the very least, could ensure self-preservation.

Second, character.

To stand up without hesitation and cover their retreat in the face of a 'ghost' pursuit is already commendable.

Then, offering help without hesitation in response to his and Tsuchimikado Motoharu's 'bet' made him appreciate the courage and kindness in Jason.

Maybe he doesn't talk much.

But his heart is passionate.

Those who are cold on the outside but warm on the inside are generally not bad people.

Third, identity.

He has heard of Jason's identity as an 'Exorcist'.

Originally from the 'Mystical Side', there's no need to adapt to the 'Mystical Side'.

The chances of survival greatly increase.

It really couldn't get any better.

Good strength, good character, and adaptability, this is the 'successor' he has been looking for.

So, at the first chance, he shifts the burden.

And having shifted the burden, naturally, there should be compensation.

Not just everything inside 'Tongshou Temple'.

In the eyes of the old Monk of Tongshou Temple, that is something Jason deserves since everything inside 'Tongshou Temple' should rightfully belong to Jason once he inherits it.

Therefore, he must express his apologies in his own way.

Should he teach secret techniques as compensation?

That is also a given.

The faux Monk did the same back in his days.

What about teaching to use artifacts?

The same reasoning applies.

But putting all that aside, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple realizes he doesn't have much else to offer.

After much thought, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple comes up with an idea.

When he was wandering in the past, he often used this method to express gratitude.

It's just... that was when he was wandering.

Now, things are different.

But lacking any better ideas in the short term, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple has no choice but to opt for this method.

Sigh!

After taking a deep breath, the old Monk of Tongshou Temple, with a nervous and utterly ashamed tone, says —

"Alternatively... may I invite you to dinner?"