

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 11 : Money Is Not Omnipotent, But Without Money You Are Absolutely Doomed - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 11 : Money Is Not Omnipotent, But Without Money You Are Absolutely Doomed

Chapter 11: Money Is Not Omnipotent, But Without Money You Are Absolutely Doomed

“You see! None of them ended well, did they!” Rena finally found something to seize on.

“But at least they enjoyed life while they were alive. You’re already bearing the risk of being a Witch—then you should at least strive for benefits worthy of that risk. Make good use of a Witch’s abilities to live well for a few more days. That way, even if you get caught, you won’t regret it too much.” Leon was still trying to coax her patiently.

“What kind of twisted logic is that?!” Rena did not let herself be led astray.

“You do realize you can no longer rely on Mrs. Hannah Weisland to sell Mana, right? Other than that, do you have any other source of income?” Leon suddenly asked.

Rena was momentarily left speechless.

Mrs. Hannah Weisland had always purchased her goods at a low price; in truth, her income had been very small, with hardly any savings.

Now that her income source had suddenly been cut off, even eating normally in the future might become a problem.

“I’m guessing you’ve been living pretty frugally, huh? Your clothes are worn down like this, and that red shawl is almost faded into rags, yet you still won’t throw it away...” Seeing that this tactic worked, Leon said casually.

“What does that have to do with you?! My grandmother made this for me!” Rena suddenly became unusually forceful, gripping the shawl on her shoulders that had already faded to a pale red.

She glared at Leon, her voice rising.

Leon froze for a moment, then suddenly realized that this item held special meaning for Rena.

The moment she finished shouting, Rena calmed down and was instead seized by fear, worried that her attitude might anger this Inquisitor who, in practical terms, held her life and death in his hands.

“That was my slip of the tongue. I’m sorry.” Leon apologized immediately.

“Huh?” This time it was Rena who was stunned.

She had not expected him to take the initiative to apologize to her—let alone so decisively.

This Inquisitor actually showed her a minimum level of respect?

“All right, maybe you don’t value profits that much, but I need money—desperately! No matter what, I have to earn at least three million. If you want to get rid of me sooner, then cooperate with me to achieve this goal as quickly as possible. We must expand production. On this point, I will not back down!”

Leon gave up on trying to motivate her indirectly and stated his demands bluntly.

“Why do you want money so badly?” Rena asked, then immediately realized something.

“Is it to treat the aftereffects of the Cockatrice venom you mentioned before?”

“Yes. I need money for medical treatment. Money is too important...” As he spoke, Leon looked off into the distance with a trace of melancholy.

“With money, you can secure your livelihood. You don’t have to swallow your pride just to scrape together a meal. Money isn’t omnipotent, but without money, you absolutely can’t survive. With money, at least you don’t have to worry about things that money can solve. Isn’t that right?”

Rena studied Leon for a moment, lowered her head to think, then let out a long breath.

“Breeding pool.”

“What?” Leon did not understand at first.

“We need to find a place and dig a larger breeding pool, then add two layers of breathable covers on top to prevent the Magical Beasts from escaping—like here, for example.” Rena walked back and forth around the camp, stepping on a patch of soft soil.

“As for the workbench, the table left here could be raised a bit and should barely be usable. It’s best to buy a new set of tools—I’ll give you a list later. With such a large space, we also need to solve the lighting issue. And whether this labyrinth is safe—I hope you can help me carefully confirm that deeper inside.”

Leon was surprised by Rena’s sudden cooperation, but since she was willing to work more closely with him, it was naturally exactly what he wanted.

“Alright. Anything else?” Leon nodded.

“Since we’re going to be partners from now on, you can’t keep interacting with me like this, can you, Inquisitor?” Rena looked at Leon and pointed at her cheek with a finger, signaling him to remove his mask.

“At least tell me your name?”

Leon thought for a moment, then raised his hand and removed the mask, revealing his true face.

The poison-proof capability of this bird-beak mask was actually not very good; it mainly served as physical protection, preventing the face from being splashed directly with dangerous substances like acidic liquids or lime.

“Leon Set.” Leon reported his name.

Using the lantern light, Rena examined Leon’s face and gave her assessment.

“You’re younger than I imagined. Judging by your voice, I thought you were some middle-aged man.”

“Do I really sound that old?” Leon frowned slightly and deliberately extended his gloved hand.

“Then can we consider our cooperation officially established now?”

Rena hesitated for a moment, but in the end still reached out and carefully shook Leon’s hand.

“Then there’s no time to lose...” Leon turned around and picked up the shovel.

“Let’s get to work right now!”

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Over the next two days, Leon shuttled back and forth between Hamel Town and the back mountain of Estuary Village, carrying out construction for the new workshop inside the labyrinth and purchasing the items Rena needed.

By the third day, after handling most of the physically demanding labor, he left part of the organizing work to Rena and returned to the Inquisition to resume work—he had been absent for far too long, and if he kept skipping, he might not even be able to keep his job.

“Hey, look who’s back? Five whole days without a word. I thought you were going to die of illness.” The Captain greeted him as soon as he saw him in the duty room.

“Still looking that pale? You didn’t go fooling around with women in back alleys and catch something, did you?”

“If I had that kind of spare money, that’d be nice.” Leon brushed off the joke.

“Considering I just recovered from a serious illness, go easy on me with the workload, Captain.”

“In your dreams! Have you thought about who’s been covering your shifts while you were gone? Today you’re making up every bit of the work you missed!” As he spoke, the Captain pulled out a stack of IOUs and slapped them onto the table.

These were all debt-collection assignments issued by the Church to the Inquisition.

“Looks like this day of fieldwork is going to last until night.” Leon forced a bitter smile at the thickness of the IOUs.

“Here. This one was supposed to be collected two days ago. I saved it especially for you—don’t say I didn’t look after you!” The Captain took out the top IOU and handed it to Leon.

Leon froze when he saw it.

On the signature and seal section of the IOU was a name he was very familiar with: Melissa Hesh.

As for the amount owed, principal plus interest had already exceeded eight hundred Thaler Silver Coins—nearly one hundred and seventy thousand Fenni.

Among this stack of IOUs, amounts this large were rare.

For an ordinary household, this was already an enormous sum.

“Leon, sympathy is sympathy, but you have to tell her she can’t delay it this time. At the very least, she has to pay the interest,” the Captain said earnestly.

“Otherwise, next time I won’t be able to leave it to you to handle.”

“Thank you, Captain.” Leon carefully put away the IOUs, inwardly glad that he had returned to work in time to deal with this.

“I’ll get to work now.”

“Mm. Go on.” The Captain waved him off.

After leaving the Inquisition, Leon quickly arrived at the destination of the first IOU—a modest residence located in an alley near the cathedral.

He let out a long breath.

Instead of knocking, he took out a key and directly opened the door.

Someone inside clearly heard the sound of the door opening.

Light footsteps sounded in the stairwell, and a girl’s still-youthful voice greeted him:

“Brother Leon?”

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 12 : The Landlady and Her Daughter - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 12 : The Landlady and Her Daughter

Chapter 12: The Landlady and Her Daughter

“Mm, I’m back.”

Leon replied softly as he stepped into the house and closed the door behind him.

“You were gone for such a long time this time. You didn’t come back at all, and I started getting worried.” The landlady’s daughter, Melissa, walked down the narrow staircase leading to the attic, holding a bowl with a spoon inside.

Melissa was thirteen this year—an age that should have been full of youthful vitality—but she was very thin, her complexion pale, with the unmistakable look of malnourishment.

Even the smile that should have been lively on her face carried a distinct gloom.

Her hair had grown almost to her waist and had clearly not been tended to for a long time.

Though it was tied up with a thin hemp rope, it still looked somewhat messy.

Only her bangs and side hair had been cut by herself, and the cuts were far from neat.

She was even wearing her mother's old clothes and apron, loose and ill-fitting on her small frame.

"Yeah, I was handling a case and worked overtime for a few extra days," Leon replied casually, making up an excuse.

"Were you upstairs just now?"

"Mm, feeding my mother," Melissa answered in her usual tone.

Leon noticed the small wooden bowl in her hands.

It had probably contained a little porridge before, but it had been scraped completely clean.

Melissa's mother—Leon's landlord in name—Mrs. Hesh, had been bedridden for a long time.

Melissa had always been the one taking care of her.

"Then are you back from overtime to take compensatory rest today? Do you need me to make you some lunch? There's still some of the oat flour and beans you bought last time..." Melissa suggested.

"When I'm not around, you can just eat what I bought," Leon said, then hesitated for a moment before continuing, "This kind of weather makes it easy for bugs to grow. But I didn't come back to rest this time... I came for work."

"Ah!" Melissa noticed the rolled-up stack of parchment Leon was holding in his hand, and her gaze immediately went blank.

The Hesh family, who owed the Church more than a hundred thousand, were precisely Leon's landlords.

Although he was on good terms with Mrs. Hesh and little Melissa, work was work—debts that had to be collected still had to be collected.

If anything, it was precisely because Leon had always been the one handling the debt collection for their family that he had been able to give them as much leniency and care as possible.

"Brother Leon, I... I won't be able to get money from Mrs. Kate and the shop until the week after next.

Could you..." Melissa clutched her apron and spoke cautiously.

“I’m sorry, Melissa. Not today.” Leon sighed.

“You need to at least pay two months’ worth of interest, or penalties will be added.”

“Th-then how much is it?” Melissa asked uneasily.

Leon spread open the copy of the debt note and took a look before saying, “...About twenty-one Thaler.”

The actual amount even included some odd change—four thousand two hundred and forty Fenni in total.

Even Leon himself felt that the number was absurd when he said it aloud.

That sum was almost equal to his entire monthly salary.

Yet for Melissa, it was only interest.

Even if she managed to produce that much money, her family’s debt would not decrease in the slightest; they would merely gain another two months of grace.

Leon clearly saw the suffocating sense of embarrassment appear on Melissa’s face.

It was obvious that she could not come up with such a sum right now.

Leon opened his mouth, but in the end said nothing.

There was nothing he could do to help Melissa at this point.

He had been renting here for two years, and this situation was not happening for the first time.

In fact, under the pretense of paying rent in advance, Leon had lent Melissa money several times already.

By now, he had effectively covered a full half year of rent in advance.

He had done all he reasonably could.

Over the past several days, he had not gone to work and had been staying outside, incurring expenses for food and lodging.

He had also purchased medicine once.

After reaching a partnership with Rena, he had additionally paid out of pocket to buy things for setting up a new workshop.

The eighteen Thaler he had extorted earlier were almost completely spent.

The business of selling Mana would not generate income for at least another two or three months.

Daily living expenses, medicine purchases, and further investment into his operation would continue to pile up.

Meanwhile, the Hesh family's debt kept accruing interest endlessly—it was a bottomless pit.

Sympathy was sympathy, but in the end, he simply did not have the ability to keep helping indefinitely.

“It—it's fine!” Melissa suddenly seemed to have adjusted herself.

“I can still get money in advance! Could you wait for me at home for a bit? I'll go out and come right back.”

“Is that so...” Leon responded, though he felt some doubt in his heart.

He knew that Melissa had dropped out of school long ago and was working several part-time jobs.

Two days a week she worked as a helper at Mrs. Kate's place at the end of the alley, and she also did part-time work as a shop assistant at the bakery and the fabric store on the street.

When she was at home, she used an old spinning wheel kept in the house to spin thread to help support the household... But even working herself to the bone like this, her income still could not compare to that of an adult.

At a time like this, where could she possibly get more than four thousand in advance all at once?

“I'll go get ready first.” After saying that, Melissa climbed back up to the attic.

Before long, Leon saw her come back down again, now holding a comb and her mother's headscarf.

Then she hurriedly went out the door.

Leon stood idly in the room.

After thinking for a moment, he turned and stepped onto the narrow staircase leading to the attic, deciding to go up and check on Mrs. Hesh.

When people rented out their homes, they usually kept the main living area for themselves and rented out the attic or basement.

But in order to rent out as much space as possible, the Hesh mother and daughter had left the more convenient main floor to him and moved themselves into the cramped attic.

They only kept a small room downstairs to store the spinning wheel for spinning thread to support their livelihood.

Leon paid them four Thaler in rent every month.

For the Hesh mother and daughter in their current situation, this was an extremely important source of income.

Leon would occasionally buy daily necessities and food to share with them.

When he was at home, Melissa would help him cook and wash his clothes.

The floorboards creaked as Leon climbed the steps and reached the attic.

The space was small.

There was a bed, and Melissa's mother, Sally Hesh, lay on it on her side with her back facing Leon.

Beside the head of the bed was a rolled-up floor mattress that belonged to Melissa.

In its usual place now stood a small table.

When Melissa fed her mother, gave her medicine, or wiped her down, she would place the tableware and washbasin there.

At the foot of the bed stood an old wardrobe, with Melissa's and her mother's clothes mixed together inside.

The small attic window was open to allow ventilation and remove odors.

Sunlight shone onto the foot of the bed, dust motes continuously dancing within the beam of light.

Seeing Sally breathing evenly with her back turned, Leon thought she might still be taking her afternoon rest and did not want to disturb her.

Just as he was about to turn around, he heard her weak voice call out to him:

“Mr. Leon?”

“Mrs. Hesh,” Leon replied.

“Sorry, did I wake you?”

“No, I wasn’t asleep. I was just looking out the window to pass the time. If I sleep during the day, I won’t be able to fall asleep at night at all...” Sally paused here for quite a while, taking several breaths to steady herself before continuing, “If you don’t mind chatting with me for a bit, could you help me turn over?”

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 13 : Rapunzel - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 13 : Rapunzel

Chapter 13: Rapunzel

“Alright.”

Leon stepped forward, extending both hands to grasp the other’s shoulders and arms.

Through the clothing, his palms immediately felt the rough, granular hardness beneath.

But he did not pay it any mind.

He merely applied his strength with great care, helping Sally turn over.

“Mm...” Sally let out a pained groan as she rolled over on the bed, struggling with Leon’s assistance to turn her body, shifting from facing the window to facing the interior of the room.

“Are you okay?” Leon asked softly, observing Sally’s condition as he spoke.

Sally Hesh had once been the star actress of a small theatre troupe.

In a small town like this, she had been a rare beauty.

Now, however, she lay on her side on the bed, haggard and emaciated, like a withered rose trembling on the verge of collapse.

At the corners of her eyes and along her cheeks were crystal-like formations, as though fragments of crushed diamonds were stuck to her skin.

In truth, these crystals covered her entire body, with large crystal masses even forming at her joints.

Saltification Disease, also known as Crystal Syndrome—an extremely rare illness Leon had only ever seen in this world.

Patients would begin to precipitate clear crystals starting from their legs, while their joints and muscles gradually stiffened.

The condition would then spread upward, leaving the patient effectively paralyzed.

The crystals fused with the skin caused persistent pain, and with her back already covered in crystals, Sally had long since lost the ability to lie flat on her back.

In the final stages, even breathing and chewing would become difficult, until death followed.

After death, the body would not rot; instead, the flesh would continue transforming, ultimately becoming a sculpture composed entirely of crystalline granules, before slowly turning to dust.

The cause of this bizarre disease was completely unknown.

There were only rumors that patients appeared exclusively in regions where labyrinths had emerged, leading some to attribute it to the curse of the Primordial Witch Moira.

“I’m fine. It only hurts for a little while. Compared to the discomfort of lying in one position all the time, this is nothing,” Sally replied after adjusting her breathing.

“Is that so?” Leon said, then fell silent.

He had said he wanted to chat a bit, yet for a moment he did not know where to begin.

He should have politely asked whether Sally had been feeling any better lately, but seeing her like this, he already knew the answer.

Asking would only be inappropriate.

He still remembered that two years ago, when he had first moved in as a tenant, Sally had only needed a cane to walk.

She still had some strength in her upper body, could take care of most daily tasks herself, sit on a chair to work, and even comb Melissa’s hair.

Back then, Melissa had not been as worn down and gloomy as she was now.

She had dressed with a bit more care.

Her naturally smooth, beautiful hair inherited from her mother would be styled into various hairstyles by Sally's deft hands.

Sometimes, when Melissa smiled and leaned out from the attic window to greet Leon standing by the door, her long, lovely golden hair would spill down, always reminding Leon of Rapunzel from fairy tales.

But as the illness progressed, Leon watched with his own eyes as Sally gradually lost the ability to walk, then as her hands grew stiffer by the day, until she could only lie paralyzed in bed, cared for by Melissa.

As Sally's condition worsened, Melissa's life grew increasingly difficult.

She had to work to repay debts while also caring for her mother, and the smiles and hope on her face dwindled with each passing day.

In the end, it was Sally who spoke first.

"Mr. Leon... tell me, what is the point of living, really?"

Leon's heart jolted, but he still spoke to comfort her.

"Please don't say things like that."

It seemed that Mrs. Hesh was in a low emotional state today—something that could already be considered normal for her.

"My biggest regret... is that I didn't kill myself the moment I fell ill... In the end, I caused my husband's death, and dragged Melissa down with me... I..." As Sally spoke, tears rolled from the corners of her eyes.

"You being alive is very important to that child. Being able to live together with you again is her hope. Carrying that hope together with her is something only you can do," Leon said, offering hollow comfort as he took a towel from the side and wiped away Sally's tears.

In this era, Saltification Disease was a clearly incurable illness.

The Holy Healing Monastery's current research progress amounted to nothing more than discovering that medicines made by mixing certain holy waters could slightly slow the disease's progression.

Most patient families chose to give up treatment altogether.

Yet there were also people like Melissa, who clung to the hope that perhaps one day the Church would develop a miracle cure, and so continued borrowing money to buy medicine to prolong her mother's life.

But Leon had always known that this hope was exceedingly slim.

Especially after his last conversation with Bishop Weiss, he had become even more certain of it.

In this country and this era, the Saint Rosalia Research Institute and the Holy Healing Monastery were essentially like pharmaceutical companies and hospitals—both operated with profit motives.

Even for relatively common magical beast toxins such as Cockatrice venom, the Church had no direction toward developing a miracle cure.

Saltification Disease was an extremely rare illness.

Developing a specific cure to sell would make it difficult to recoup research costs through sales volume alone, making the likelihood of investment even lower—unless some highly powerful and influential figure suddenly contracted this strange disease.

But Melissa was stubbornly persistent about this matter, and Leon, as an outsider, was not really in a position to say much.

“I'm already like this. There's no possibility anymore. I'm begging you—please help me persuade Melissa...” Sally looked at him with pleading eyes.

This was not the first time Sally had begged Leon to convince Melissa to give up on treatment for her, or even to let her starve to death.

Sally had once refused to take medicine and even gone on hunger strikes, but in the end she could never withstand Melissa kneeling by the bedside, crying and begging her.

Leon lowered his gaze, thought for a moment, then looked at Sally seriously.

“But even if you die, Melissa's situation won't improve. Do you really think that if you leave without leaving her even a shred of hope, she'll be able to go on living?”

“...”

Sally could not answer, and only began crying again.

“Don't overthink it. Get some good rest,” Leon said, wiping away her tears once more and offering a few simple words of comfort.

In truth, the greatest predicament facing the Hesh family was not Sally's illness, but their enormous debt.

Melissa's father, Mr. Hesh, had once brought his wife and child from the countryside to the city to make a living by forming a theatre troupe.

Sally had been the troupe's lead actress.

It was said that in the beginning, the troupe operated fairly well.

Mr. Hesh bought this single-story house in the city, and later even took out a loan to purchase an old theatre to run.

But a suspicious fire burned down the theatre, and everything took a sudden turn for the worse.

Mr. Hesh fell into debt, and the troupe's situation deteriorated.

To make matters worse, it was around that time that Sally contracted Saltification Disease.

Walking became difficult, she could no longer perform, and she required large sums for medical expenses.

Later, rumors spread that gold had been discovered in a mountain range in the north.

Mr. Hesh, staking everything on one desperate gamble, joined the ranks of gold prospectors.

Not long after, however, that mountain range experienced a large-scale labyrinthization disaster, resulting in many deaths.

Mr. Hesh was among them.

In addition to owing the Church over a hundred thousand Fenni, the Hesh family also owed substantial sums in private loans.

Leon did not know the exact total, but he could roughly estimate that it was no less than five hundred thousand.

The interest alone each year was staggering, and the debt was likely increasing year by year.

Now that Mr. Hesh was dead and Sally had lost the ability to care for herself, under Imperial law—where a father's debts passed to his children—all debts had effectively fallen upon Melissa.

The Church's annually updated IOUs now bore Melissa's name as the debtor, since Sally could no longer even sign her own name.

Even if Sally died, Melissa's desperate situation would not change.

In fact, Sally herself knew this.

Leaving everything behind would solve nothing.

If Melissa could not accept it, she might even be driven by despair to follow her.

Leon suddenly heard the sound of the door opening downstairs and said to Sally, "Melissa's back. I'll go take a look."

After bidding farewell to Sally, he got up and went downstairs, secretly feeling relieved that he could finally leave this oppressive place.

The moment he reached the first floor, he saw Melissa with her head wrapped in a scarf, and froze on the spot.

"Brother Leon, I scraped together the money!" Melissa said, holding a small pouch of coins and forcing a somewhat strained smile at him.

"Melissa..." Leon suddenly felt his throat tighten.

"Your hair?"

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 14 : Kindness ≠ Selflessness - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 14 : Kindness ≠ Selflessness

Chapter 14: Kindness ≠ Selflessness

Melissa's hair was gone.

Even with her head wrapped in a scarf, Leon could tell at a glance that Melissa had sold her hair.

Hair naturally fetched a higher price the longer it was.

From the look of it, Melissa had almost had it cut right down to her scalp.

Beneath the headscarf was the outline of the top of her head, making it impossible to hide the fact that her hair was gone.

“I’d been growing it for ages and had already decided to cut it anyway. It just happened to be the right time,” Melissa said with a deliberately relaxed smile.

“Honestly, I’d long felt it was troublesome to take care of—hot and stuffy, too. This way it’s much easier!”

“.....”

Leon had no words in response.

He truly had no idea what he could say.

When Melissa had been embarrassed over this sum of money earlier, he had not offered to help.

Now, to express sympathy would only seem hypocritical.

“After selling my hair, I also withdrew a little from the bakery. This should be enough, Leon, how much is it exactly?” Melissa placed the money pouch on the dining table, preparing to count the money out.

“Just twenty-one Thaler, that’s about right,” Leon replied softly.

“If there’s any odd change, you should just say it outright. This is our family’s debt, after all—we can’t keep letting you cover it for us...” Melissa first counted out two gold shields and one Silver Wolf.

“Aren’t you afraid the amount I reported was actually higher?” Leon asked.

“How could Leon do something like that?” Melissa shook her head repeatedly.

“Don’t trust people too easily, you’ll suffer for it. I taught you about interest—you need to learn to calculate it yourself too,” Leon sighed.

“The total was twenty-one Thaler and forty Fenni.”

Melissa likely could not imagine at all that the “Leon” who had always looked after them would seize every opportunity to extort others when collecting debts, skim fines for himself, and now had even gone so far as to cooperate with a Witch and get involved in Mana trading.

“Alright, Leon, check it,” Melissa said as she handed the counted money to Leon.

“Mm, it’s correct.” Leon carefully put the money away, then wrote out a receipt and handed it to Melissa.

“Then I’ll head back and continue working.”

“Leon.” Melissa suddenly called out to him.

“What is it?” Leon turned back.

“Will you... come back for dinner tonight?” Melissa looked up at Leon and asked.

“No. I’ve been a bit busy lately, I’m afraid I’ll be coming back very late,” Leon replied.

From now on, aside from handling the Inquisition’s work, he also had to make time to continue setting up the Mana production business.

This period was bound to be the busiest.

A flash of disappointment passed through Melissa’s eyes, then she quickly hid it deep down.

“Oh, I see. Then take care of your health, don’t get so busy that you forget.”

Taking care of a seriously ill and depressed mother alone at home, it was inevitable to feel stifled.

At times like that, even having one more person in the house to exchange a few words with would make the atmosphere very different.

During these days when Leon did not come back, Melissa still felt quite lonely.

“You’re the one who needs to take care of yourself. Remember to eat properly. I’ll find some time this afternoon to buy a few things and bring them back,” Leon said as he patted Melissa’s thin shoulder.

He decided inwardly to buy some eggs and put them in the kitchen.

After saying goodbye to Melissa, Leon returned to the street and continued running around for today’s debt collection work.

The plight of the Hesh mother and daughter was pitiable, but he himself was also suffering from injuries now and truly did not have much spare strength to help others out of their predicament.

If he was still struggling to crawl out of the Abyss, then Melissa and her mother could be considered to have long since fallen to the very bottom of the valley.

He had no extra strength to pull them up.

All he could do was sprinkle a bit of food down into the valley so that they could barely survive.

Kindness did not equate to selflessness.

He could look after the mother and daughter as much as possible in terms of his duties and daily life, but in the end, he could not pour everything he had into helping them repay their debts.

However, if he truly accumulated several million or even tens of millions in enormous wealth, and had a stable means of obtaining such wealth, such that taking out a few hundred thousand to help them break free of their debts would be no great loss, then he would not mind lending a hand.

But for Sally and Melissa, money alone was not enough.

The Saltification Disease was, after all, an incurable illness.

At that moment, he suddenly thought of what Bishop Weiss had once said to him—Witches sometimes possessed secret formulas that the Church did not have.

Since Saltification Disease was called Moilai's Curse, could it be that some Witch held a method to treat Saltification Disease?

Leon did not think that a young Witch like Rena, who clearly lacked seniority at a glance, would have such a formula or any related clues, but...

He might as well ask without holding out much hope.

.....

That night, at the temporary encampment of the original Church Knight Orders in the Hamel region Labyrinth, Leon struggled to set down a huge ceramic jar tightly bound with rope, panting heavily from exhaustion.

"Eight Slimes are actually this heavy!" he said as he wiped his sweat.

Inside the large ceramic jar were the Slimes that were being prepared for transfer into the Labyrinth for breeding.

Several fire pits he had installed along the walls burned fiercely, illuminating the empty space.

Just last night, they had finally finished setting up the workshop in the Labyrinth more or less.

Leon had dug out a breeding pool here, about the size of a small swimming pool.

That very night, Rena had used her ability under cover of darkness to relocate the Head-Hunting Rabbits from her home's cellar into the Labyrinth.

But Slimes crawled far too slowly, so they could only be transported using containers.

"Alright, that takes care of transferring all the Magical Beasts. Next, we'll observe them for a period of time. Remember to deliver the required food according to the list every day," Rena said without turning her head, busy mixing potions at the newly set-up workbench.

"What have you been mixing all this time? Magical Potions?" Leon asked after watching for a while.

He noticed that whenever Rena had free time, she would tinker with those chemistry-like instruments, using materials collected from the Head-Hunting Rabbits and Slimes, along with a few herbs, to concoct potions.

As she worked, she also recorded things down, looking exactly like a graduate student rushing to finish a thesis project.

"That has nothing to do with you, does it? You only need to care about the Mana that will make you money," Rena replied coldly.

"How could it have nothing to do with me? What if you're brewing poison to kill me?" Leon probed half-jokingly.

"If I were to brew something like that, I'd definitely do it somewhere you couldn't see!" Rena snapped irritably.

Leon shrugged and said nothing.

Although they had reached a basic cooperation, his relationship with Rena had not actually eased much.

Facing him, a strange man who had suddenly barged into her space, Rena merely handled the Magical Beast breeding matters in a strictly businesslike manner.

For anything beyond that, she mostly ignored casual conversation, clearly maintaining a sense of distance from him, evidently waiting for Leon to earn a satisfactory amount before cutting ties with him cleanly.

Leon did not really mind this.

As long as Rena handled her part of the work properly and allowed him to make money, that was enough.

Carrying a lantern, Leon strolled over to the breeding pool.

He removed an iron barred gate that the Knight Orders had installed nearby and covered the breeding pool with it, pressing it down with heavy objects so that the Head-Hunting Rabbits would have difficulty escaping.

Although Slimes could crawl along smooth walls, according to Rena, as long as a circle of salt was sprinkled around the edge of the breeding pool, the Slimes would not leave it.

A salt concentration that was too high would make their bodies difficult to maintain form, so Slimes disliked salt.

At the moment, only Head-Hunting Rabbits were in the breeding pool.

Leon took a glance and was somewhat surprised to find that there were precisely two pairs of adult Head-Hunting Rabbits mating inside, with the male rabbits constantly trying to climb onto the females.

“Rena, come take a look at this. The Head-Hunting Rabbits seem to have started mating already!” Leon turned his head and called out to Rena with some delight.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 15 : Impersonating a Cleric - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 15 : Impersonating a Cleric

Chapter 15: Impersonating a Cleric

Rena stared at Leon in disbelief when she heard that, then immediately blushed and frowned.

“Vulgar! What do you mean by asking me to watch this kind of thing with you?!”

“Copulation means they’ve started reproducing. The faster they reproduce, the closer we are to profit. What else could I mean?” Leon raised his eyebrows.

“You’re the one in charge of breeding. Isn’t this something you should be used to? It’s not like I was teasing you just because I mentioned it once, right?”

Rena was left completely speechless.

After a moment, she cleared her throat and deliberately changed the subject, pretending to be calm.

“Well, I already noticed it yesterday. The Head-Hunting Rabbits started showing signs of going into heat again as soon as they were moved here—much earlier than before.”

“Does that mean the entire reproductive cycle will shorten? I’ve seen in some materials that Magical Beasts have more active life functions inside labyrinths,” Leon asked, confirming with Rena.

“That still needs to be observed for a while before we can draw any conclusions.” After saying that, Rena lowered her head again and returned to compounding her potions.

“Oh right, Rena, have you ever heard of Saltification Disease?” Leon abruptly changed the topic, bringing up a thought that had flashed through his mind that morning.

Rena’s hands suddenly froze mid-motion as she mixed the potion.

She turned to Leon with a look of astonishment.

“Do you have any secret formula for treating or alleviating that disease?” Leon asked casually, without much hope.

“How did you...” Rena stared blankly at Leon.

“How did you know that I’m researching this?”

“You’re researching what? Saltification Disease?” Leon looked at Rena in surprise, then suddenly thought of something and widened his eyes.

“Don’t tell me all these potions you’ve been preparing... are meant to treat Saltification Disease?”

Rena hesitated for a moment, then silently nodded.

“You have medicine for it? These can cure Saltification Disease? That’s an incurable illness!” Leon found it hard to believe.

“At present, I’m only experimenting on animals. It has some effect, at best, but it’s still far from a cure.” Rena gently shook her head.

“Could it be that you became a Witch in order to research magical potions to cure Saltification Disease for someone?”

Leon had always been puzzled about Rena's reason for becoming a Witch.

Now, he felt that he had finally found the answer.

".....It was my grandmother." Rena fell silent for a while before answering softly.

"Then she..." Leon asked instinctively.

He had always been certain that Rena lived alone in that wooden cabin.

Could it be that her grandmother had been bedridden inside, like Mrs. Hesh?

"She passed away three years ago," Rena replied gloomily.

"At that time, I hadn't managed to produce any decent results yet."

"And you've continued this research ever since?" Leon asked.

"This is an incurable illness. I personally witnessed the suffering my grandmother went through, and I personally experienced that kind of powerless despair. So I thought, since I've already become a Witch, I might as well continue this research. Maybe one day, I'll be able to completely eradicate this disease." Rena spoke slowly.

"From what you're saying, does that mean the medicine you've compounded now counts as having achieved results?" Leon asked tentatively.

"At least it has some effect on the mice I use for experiments. As long as you feed mice food mixed with Saltification Disease crystals over a long period of time, there's a certain probability of inducing Saltification Disease. I then use those diseased mice as test subjects. The most effective formula so far can alleviate joint stiffening symptoms and restore mobility to the affected individuals..." Rena explained to Leon.

Leon listened in a daze.

He hadn't expected that Rena could actually provide a secret formula for treating Saltification Disease!

Once he came back to his senses, he immediately proposed, "Then do you want to try it on a human?"

"You..." Rena scrutinized Leon carefully.

"Do you have a family member who has this disease?"

"It's my landlady. She's already reached the point where she's completely bedridden and unable to move. Besides her, there's only her thirteen-year-old daughter left in the

family. Because of this illness, they've accumulated a huge debt and are living very hard lives." Leon sighed involuntarily as he spoke, then continued persuading her.

"If you're really researching a specific medicine for Saltification Disease, then testing it on patients is also a very important step, right? It's rare to have such an opportunity. Why not... try using your medicine?"

"Well..." Rena hesitated a little at this point.

"Would they be willing to use a Witch's medicine? And I've never used my potions on humans before. I'm not sure if something might go wrong."

"Their situation can't get any more miserable than it already is. If it works, what's wrong with using a Witch's medicine? That lady has long been seeking death as a release. Relying only on the Church's holy water just slightly prolongs the suffering—it's already completely hopeless. Your medicine could at least give them a glimmer of hope, right?" Leon tried his best to persuade her.

Rena was somewhat moved.

Testing medicine on humans was unsettling, but it was an inevitable step in developing a specific cure.

Still, she had her concerns.

"If I'm going to prepare medicine for a person, it would be safer to diagnose them in person first. If people find out that I'm a Witch, that would be very troublesome for you too, wouldn't it?"

Leon frowned deeply.

Indeed, even if they could persuade Sally and Melissa to accept treatment from a Witch in advance, there was no guarantee that there wouldn't be an accidental leak.

If Rena were discovered to be a Witch, she would be arrested for a serious crime.

It was normal for her to be concerned about such a risk, and Leon—who was currently pinning all his hopes of making money on her—naturally didn't want anything to happen to her either.

"Speaking of which, you're really strange. You're an Inquisitor, yet you actually believe that a Witch's medicine can cure diseases?" Rena looked at Leon as if she were examining a freak.

In this world, the vast majority of people were extremely wary of Witches, let alone those who served the Church.

“What’s wrong with believing it?” Leon replied casually.

He came from another world, so his views were naturally different from those of this world’s natives.

Not to mention that the idea that a Witch’s medicine could cure illnesses also had the endorsement of an authoritative figure like Bishop Weiss...

At the instant Bishop Weiss’s figure flashed through his mind, a spark of inspiration appeared in Leon’s head.

“I’ve got an idea!” He snapped his fingers.

.....

The next evening, on a street near the Hamel Town Cathedral, Leon and Rena walked side by side.

Rena looked extremely uneasy as she glanced toward the church bell tower that rose far higher than the surrounding buildings in the distance.

As a Witch who lived alone in the mountains, she rarely even came to town, let alone near Church facilities.

“You’re insane. You’re really insane!” She started muttering complaints again in a low voice.

“Impersonating the Church’s... what were you even thinking?!”

Leon was wearing his usual clothes for fieldwork, while Rena had changed into a robe commonly worn by devout believers of the Church of the Four Gods when attending rituals or going on pilgrimages.

It was said that many clergy members who concealed their identities while embarking on pilgrimages also chose to dress this way.

Leon’s idea was to have Rena disguise herself as a bishop of the Church who was traveling incognito on a pilgrimage and happened to pass through Hamel Town.

When visiting the local Church, she would coincidentally hear from Leon about Mrs.

Hesh’s situation and, by chance, be researching Saltification Disease, thus coming over to diagnose her.

As for the magical potion Rena had compounded, it could be passed off as “holy water still under development,” allowing them to test it on Mrs.

Hesh openly and legitimately.

“Then why did you still go along with it? Instead of complaining, you might as well adjust your acting and look a bit more holy,” Leon replied in a low voice.

“What does ‘more holy’ even feel like?” Rena was dumbfounded.

“Just be natural,” Leon answered casually.

He wasn’t expecting Rena to display the kind of aura Bishop Weiss had; as long as she could fool ordinary people, it would be enough.

“How much farther?” Rena still looked around uneasily.

As a Witch, disguising herself as a cleric while walking down the street—this kind of utterly upside-down situation made her feel like she was sitting on pins and needles.

“Just turn into the alley over there...” Leon said as he led Rena through an intersection.

Suddenly, a mix of crying shouts and loud laughter came from straight ahead.

“Give it back to me, give it back!!” A frail girl cried as she chased after two loudly laughing boys.

Her hair was cropped so short that only a thin layer of golden buzz cut remained.

As for the two boys, one of them was waving a headscarf like a victory flag.

The two laughed wantonly, completely unaware as they ran straight toward Leon.

Seeing this scene, the expression on Leon’s face vanished.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 16 : How Could I Possibly Be His Girlfriend? - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 16 : How Could I Possibly Be His Girlfriend?

Chapter 16: How Could I Possibly Be His Girlfriend?

The one whose headscarf had been snatched away and who was being teased by the two boys was none other than Melissa, who had just sold her hair.

“Ha ha, egghead, and you even wrapped it in a flowery cloth!”

The tall boy holding the headscarf looked about the same age as Melissa.

He waved the scarf as he mocked her.

The other boy beside him looked two or three years younger; after running a few steps, he turned back toward Melissa, twisting his body and making an ugly face to provoke her.

The two looked alike—most likely brothers.

Leon did not immediately alert them.

Without making a sound, he slightly quickened his pace and continued walking straight toward the oncoming boys.

Melissa noticed Leon appearing from around the corner and froze on the spot.

Rena took a couple more glances before realizing what was happening.

Just as she was about to scold the two boys, they happened to be about to collide with Leon, who was walking ahead.

With surprising coordination, they split left and right, brushing past him.

At that moment, Leon finally took action.

With lightning speed, he shot both hands out, gripping their hair tightly like eagle talons.

“Ah!!”

The two boys were nearly yanked off their feet and cried out in pain at the same time.

Leon, his face dark, dragged them back and forced their heads down.

“Hey, what are you playing at? Count me in!”

“Let go, damn it! Do I even know you?” the older boy roared as he grabbed Leon’s wrist, trying to kick him as well.

But with his head being pressed down relentlessly by Leon, he was forced to bend at the waist, unable to lift his leg.

The younger boy merely struggled with a twisted expression, clawing at Leon’s wrist with his fingernails.

When he realized he could not break free, he switched to spitting at Leon instead.

Leon had no intention of indulging these foul-mouthed brats.

Grabbing their heads, he slammed them together hard—thud—the sound loud and solid.

Melissa and Rena both covered their mouths in shock.

“Ah!!”

The older boy clutched his head and wailed loudly, while the younger one burst into tears on the spot.

“I’m asking what you were doing with Melissa that made you so happy.” Feeling the resistance weaken, Leon instead grabbed their hair and forced them to tilt their heads up, turning them toward Melissa.

Then he asked her, “Melissa, do you know these two little punks?”

Hamel Town was no bigger than the palm of one’s hand.

Even if townfolk were not acquaintances, at most they were only two connections removed.

“Th-they are... Todd and Colin from the Bernack family,” Melissa replied softly, clutching her wrist in front of her chest.

“Bernack from the block across the street? You’re Benson Bernack’s sons?” Leon frowned as he confirmed with them.

Realizing that Leon knew his father’s name, the older boy, Todd, covered his forehead and threatened viciously, “If you know my dad, then let go! He’s got a bunch of brothers out there. I’ll have him come for you—”

Thud!!

Leon did not wait for him to finish and slammed the brothers’ heads together again, even louder than before.

“Waaahhhh!!”

This time, even Todd cried out in pain.

“Benson Bernack, who owes the Church thirty Thaler Silver Coins—a useless old hooligan who loiters in casinos all day—dares to challenge me? When I go to collect his

debts, your father calls me 'sir' every other sentence, you know that?" Leon sneered, then turned back to Melissa.

"Do these two little punks bully you often?"

He really should have realized it earlier.

A child without a father, with a bedridden mother and no one to stand up for her, was very likely to be bullied in town—and Melissa did not necessarily tell him everything.

"....." Melissa did not dare answer for a moment.

"Don't worry, I'm here!" Leon looked at Melissa with firm resolve.

"They threw stones at me, and..." Melissa hesitated, then continued, "they took my money..."

"They took your money!?" Leon grew even angrier upon hearing this and smashed the two brats' heads together twice more.

The brothers cried even louder.

Stealing Melissa's money—there truly was no bottom line.

Even if the two brats did not necessarily understand her family's situation clearly, Leon still found it hard to suppress his fury.

"How much did they take?" Leon pressed.

"...Five Fenni," Melissa answered after a moment of silence.

In truth, it had only happened once, when she was returning from buying groceries and the brothers had demanded the loose change in her hand.

The brothers were actually younger than her, but having grown up influenced by their hooligan father, they had become extremely unruly, famous as the little kings of this street.

"No matter how little, it's still robbery!" Leon still did not let go.

Pulling the two sobbing boys closer, he leaned in and said into their ears, "You two little bastards listen carefully. Go back and tell your gambling-addict father this: the Melissa you bullied—her brother is an Inquisitor, the same Delegate Officer who comes to your house to collect debts! Tonight I'll pay your place a visit myself. When that happens, I'll take a good look at how he disciplines his sons! And if Melissa has any problems in the future, I'll peel off every single one of your fingernails!"

After saying that, he threw the two boys to the ground like trash.

“Get lost!!”

Todd dropped the headscarf and ran off crying loudly.

Colin also cried as he scrambled to his feet and followed after his brother.

Leon dusted off his hands, deciding that tonight he would go back, change into his uniform, and have a proper talk with the Bernack family.

Naturally, the money the two brats had stolen would have to be returned as well.

He knew Benson well enough—just a hooligan with a few unsavory friends.

He had probably boasted too much outside, leading his sons to truly believe he was some kind of underworld figure.

Melissa stood there blankly, staring at the scene, taking a long while to recover.

Rena looked at Leon’s back in surprise for a moment.

Then she reacted, walked over to pick up the headscarf from the ground, carefully patted off the dust, and went over to put it back on Melissa’s head, gently comforting her, “Here, it’s all right now.”

“Thank you...” Melissa replied timidly.

“If someone bullies you next time, tell me and I’ll deal with it for you. Don’t be embarrassed to say anything,” Leon said, letting out a long breath as he looked at Melissa.

“Mmm...” Melissa answered absentmindedly.

“Heading home?” Leon asked.

Melissa nodded lightly.

“Then let’s go back together. I brought a guest,” Leon said, turning to Rena and introducing her with solemn formality.

“This is the daughter of my landlady, little Melissa.”

“Ah...” Melissa looked at Rena in surprise, then at Leon, only then noticing that the two of them had appeared together.

“Hello,” Rena greeted Melissa with a kind expression.

Melissa’s expression wavered noticeably.

She looked back and forth between the two of them, then cautiously asked Leon, “Brother Leon, could this be... um... your... g-girlfriend?”

For someone her age, the most likely relationship she could imagine for a young lady accompanying a man alone to his home was that of lovers.

At those words, both Leon and Rena froze.

Then Rena waved her hands repeatedly in denial.

“No, no, no! How could that be?”

How could she possibly have that kind of relationship with a man who had once pointed a gun at her head? Even if the sky fell, it would be impossible—she would have to think twice even to pretend.

Hearing that answer, Melissa quietly let out a sigh of relief.

Leon cleared his throat, put on a serious tone, lowered his voice, and delivered the script he had prepared long ago.

“Melissa, this kind of misunderstanding is far too disrespectful to this lady. Though she looks young, this is Bishop Leona of the Creator Church. She is secretly traveling from the north on an incognito pilgrimage to Saint Jura Church, and just happened to pass through Hamel Town...”

“B-Bishop!?” Melissa’s face turned pale at once.

Even at her age, she understood that anyone who bore the title of bishop was an extraordinary figure.

She hurriedly bowed again and again.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I actually said something so disrespectful!”

“It’s fine, it’s fine, don’t worry about it! Let’s keep our voices down first, all right?”

Rena was even more flustered than Melissa.

As she comforted her, she also watched the surrounding pedestrians, afraid that someone might hear their conversation clearly.

“All right, Melissa. This time, the bishop is traveling incognito, so it’s not convenient for too many people to know. Don’t spread it around,” Leon said, making a shushing gesture.

Melissa nodded with lingering fear.

Then she suddenly realized another problem.

“But, Brother Leon, our home...”

Their shabby little house really had nothing to offer a distinguished guest of such status.

“It’s all right. Bishop Leona came this time at my invitation, to treat your mother’s illness,” Leon said with a smile.

“To treat Mom’s...” Melissa murmured, her amber eyes lighting up.

“Her illness?”

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 17 : I’ve Changed My Impression of You - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 17 : I’ve Changed My Impression of You

Chapter 17: I’ve Changed My Impression of You

The setting sun filtered through the cracks of the window into the narrow attic.

Rena, dressed in a nun’s robe, sat at the bedside and carefully examined Sally, who lay on the bed, while Melissa stood nervously on the other side, watching.

Leon waited alone downstairs.

Rena’s examination required Sally to remove her clothes and bare her skin, so he naturally had to avoid the scene.

Moreover, that tiny attic simply had no space for a fourth person.

Rena carefully observed the crystals precipitated on Sally’s body, occasionally asking about the various symptoms that had appeared since the onset of her illness.

Throughout the process, her expression remained grave, making Melissa's heart twist with anxiety.

After finishing her examination of the crystal distribution on Sally's body and the condition of the joints in different areas, Rena leaned closer to listen to her heartbeat once more, then meticulously recorded everything with the paper and pen she had brought.

It took her a full ten minutes to write down every detail.

This was her first time in many years encountering a genuine patient with Saltification Disease, and for her, it was an exceptionally precious research experience.

Once she finished recording, she began flipping through her past experimental notes, comparing them in her mind while thinking about how to administer the medication.

After Sally and Melissa endured five minutes of this unbearable silence, Melissa finally could not hold back any longer and spoke cautiously, as if treading on thin ice: "Um, Bishop..."

"....." Rena did not respond immediately.

"Bishop?" Melissa called softly again.

"Ah? Ah! Wh—what is it?" Rena snapped back to her senses.

She still had not fully adapted to this form of address.

"Is it... very serious?" Melissa asked uneasily, twisting the corner of her clothes.

Rena realized that her prolonged examination and serious expression had only added to their worries.

She wanted to comfort them, but felt it would be inappropriate—Sally's condition truly could not be called mild.

The long course of the illness and the Church's Holy Water were not entirely ineffective, but they were far from enough to completely halt its progression.

"I've seen worse," Rena said after a moment of silence, offering only that answer.

She had personally witnessed her grandmother's condition deteriorate until crystals covered her entire body, all the way to her death.

That pain, steeped in despair, affected not only the patient but also the accompanying family.

“There are some things I must make clear to you first.” Rena looked back and forth between Sally and Melissa and said solemnly.

“I have indeed studied Saltification Disease for some time, but so far I haven’t developed a special medicine that can cure it. In animal experiments, the medicine I’m currently developing... I mean, the Holy Water, can only slightly alleviate some symptoms. It still cannot completely stop the progression of the disease.”

“Then...” By this point, Melissa was already desperate to ask for the medicine.

Watching her mother suffer every day, constantly using expensive Holy Water yet unable to halt the illness—even being able to relieve some symptoms would be an immense luxury for them now.

“Let me finish,” Rena gestured for Melissa to calm down.

“I’ve never tested this medicine on humans, so I can’t be certain it will produce the expected effects in people, nor can I be sure there won’t be serious side effects. I can’t rule out the worst possible outcome... I don’t know whether you can accept that. Therefore, before using it, I must obtain your consent.”

Melissa hesitated and cast a questioning look toward her mother on the bed.

“Please give me the medicine, Bishop. I’m willing to bear the consequences.” Sally did not hesitate in the slightest.

Her weak voice carried a note of resolve as she strained to turn her eyes toward Melissa.

“Melissa, you must remember—if anything happens to me, don’t blame anyone. This is just my fate...”

“I know, Mom!” Melissa reached out and held her mother’s hand.

“After I’m gone, when the house is confiscated... write a letter to your uncle in Norden. There’s always a way to figure things out. You mustn’t do anything foolish...” Sally instructed in a barely audible voice.

To Sally, even dying from side effects would be a kind of release.

The only thing she could not let go of was Melissa.

“You’ll be fine, Mom, you’ll be fine! Don’t think such things!” Melissa clutched her mother’s hand tightly, her voice already choking with sobs.

Rena silently watched this familiar scene.

Melissa looked just like her former self, standing guard by her grandmother's bedside.

"I'll go prepare a full course of the medicine and hand it over to... to Inquisitor Set to bring back. He'll tell you how to use it. I happen to be staying in Hamel Town for a while, so we'll start with the medication and observe." As Rena spoke, she stood up, preparing to leave.

"Bishop." Melissa suddenly thought of something and looked at Rena nervously.

"About the cost of the medicine... how should I pay you?"

"This is Holy Water still under development, and you're taking risks to test it. How could I charge you? There's no need for money." Rena shook her head.

"Ah, may the benevolent gods bless you! Thank you, Bishop... thank you..." Sally thanked Rena with tears streaming down her face.

"However, I need you to keep this matter confidential. To be honest, privately giving you Holy Water under development violates regulations. If it gets out, we could all face punishment from the Church! Can you swear not to tell anyone else?" Rena presented the explanation she had prepared, signaling for them to keep their mouths shut.

"Of course, Bishop. We won't tell anyone!" Melissa replied firmly.

If this got out, Leon, who had introduced them, would likely be implicated as well.

She resolved that even if the Inquisition came to interrogate her, she would not reveal a single thing about Bishop Leona.

"Mm..." Sally also returned a confirming look.

"Then I'll head back to prepare the medicine." Rena rose and bid them farewell.

Melissa also stood up and escorted Rena down the narrow staircase.

Leon was already waiting at the foot of the stairs.

"How did it go, Bishop?" Leon asked.

"We'll use the medicine for a period of time and see. I'll trouble you to come back with me to fetch it."

By this point, Rena had slightly adapted to the identity of "Bishop Leona" and began to naturally use a superior's tone when speaking to Leon.

"Yes." Leon cooperated and gave a salute.

“If anything comes up, just have Inquisitor Set contact me.” Rena looked at Melissa and gently placed a hand on her forehead.

“Take good care of yourself. You treasure your mother so much—don’t forget that your mother surely treasures you just as much.”

“Thank you, Bishop, truly, I...” Melissa sniffed, her eyes still red.

This was the first time since her mother fell ill that she had seen even a hint of hope.

“Let’s see how effective the medicine is first. Farewell.” Rena found it a bit hard to bear the hope in her eyes and turned away as she spoke.

“I’ll escort Bishop Leona back first. I’ll be back for dinner. Stay home and keep your mother company,” Leon said to Melissa.

Melissa nodded vigorously.

Leon and Rena left the alley.

Leon glanced sideways at her and lowered his voice.

“Let’s find a place to change your clothes first.”

“This?” Rena was uncharacteristically unconcerned.

“Weren’t you just feeling restless because of it?” Leon said, somewhat surprised.

“I suddenly feel it suits me quite well. Bishop Leona—it’s not bad if it makes you learn to speak to me more politely, hehe.” Rena smiled, then looked Leon over.

“I’ve changed my impression of you a little.”

“What kind of change?” Leon asked casually.

“To be honest, I used to think you were just a bastard who only cared about money,” Rena replied.

“And now?”

“Seems like you don’t only care about money after all!”

“So the ‘bastard’ part hasn’t changed, huh?” Leon raised an eyebrow.

“That’s what you said yourself.” Rena smiled slyly.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 18 : Mana Extraction - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 18 : Mana Extraction

Chapter 18: Mana Extraction

Half a month later, in Rena's cellar, Rena stood before an altar-styled surgical experiment table and placed a basin of ruby-like, vividly translucent liquid onto the altar.

Earlier, in the workshop inside the labyrinth, Leon had assisted Rena in slaughtering the Head-Hunting Rabbits and Slimes, carefully extracting the Head-Hunting Rabbits' brains and hearts intact, along with the Slimes' cores.

After washing them with limewater, they were added to a medicinal solution prepared by Rena, ground and extracted, then filtered.

New reagents were added, and the mixture was heated to react, producing these red liquids.

Up to this point, Leon could still help a little.

He could even strictly follow the steps and complete the process independently without relying on Rena, even if he did not fully understand the principles behind it.

But what came next was something only Rena could do—she was going to extract Mana here.

Rena placed the basin securely on the gray tabletop engraved with magic arrays, then covered it with a specially made arched glass lid.

A long blowpipe extended from the side of the lid, its end connected to a tadpole-shaped glass container.

A rune was carved into the tabletop directly beneath the container.

This was the distillation apparatus used in alchemy in this era.

Rena did not heat the container as one would in normal distillation procedures.

Instead, she placed both hands on either side of the basin filled with blood-red liquid, closed her eyes, entered meditation, and began to inject her magical power.

The magic array on the tabletop began to glow faintly.

Bubbles continuously emerged in the basin, and the liquid inside began to boil without any heating at all.

Leon stood to the side with his arms folded, watching.

If the previous steps could barely be considered within the realm of chemistry, then this stage had completely entered the domain of mysticism.

He recalled the excitement he had felt when he first crossed into this world and discovered the existence of supernatural forces.

Since it was another world, it naturally had to come with magic, cultivation, and extraordinary powers to make things interesting.

Although entering Church work had involved a certain degree of coincidence, it was mainly a path he had chosen himself.

In this world, extraordinary power was essentially monopolized by the Four Great Churches that worshipped the Four Gods of Origin.

Only the Church and its affiliated institutions possessed the resources that allowed people to receive divine blessings and gain transcendent power.

Reality, however, quickly poured a bucket of cold water over him.

As an ordinary civilian with no special connections, he did not even have the qualifications to participate in the selection for trainee knights.

At most, he could start as a menial Delegate Officer in the Church, then be selected to become an Inquisitor.

After diligently working for another ten or so years, he might be promoted to Captain—this was the career endpoint he could foresee.

Among the Inquisitors, only someone in a position like Director Caron Eso could obtain an official rank within the Church and thereby receive blessings.

Sitting in such a position required additional recommendation—either sufficient background, or the establishment of tremendous merit for the Church.

The former was impossible without starting over in life, while the latter was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that usually required gambling with one's life.

By now, Leon had been tempered enough to gradually accept reality and had essentially given up on the unrealistic fantasy of becoming a transcendent.

Before long, a faintly glowing mist rose from the basin Rena was holding, then spread along the glass blowpipe, beginning to fill the tadpole-shaped container at the end.

After about five minutes, the mist inside the container reached a certain concentration, and Leon finally saw small amounts of crystallization begin to precipitate on the inner walls.

Another ten minutes passed, and the mist gradually faded until it disappeared completely.

Rena opened her eyes and released her hands.

The runes and magic arrays on the tabletop stopped glowing.

She removed the distillation container and gently shook it.

A small amount of cloudy crystallization had already formed inside.

“Looks like quite a lot,” Leon said.

Just from the looks of it, the amount seemed comparable to the batch of Mana he had sold last time, and this time they had only killed three male Head-Hunting Rabbits.

At present, the Magical Beasts they were raising were still in their breeding period and had not yet reached the stage for output.

However, breeding did not require that many male Head-Hunting Rabbits.

Rena also needed materials to research potions and prepare medicine for Sally, so they had taken three adult male Head-Hunting Rabbits from the cages and slaughtered them to produce materials and Mana.

“This is only the crude crystallization from the first extraction. The Mana concentration is only twenty to thirty percent. The rest is useless inert magical power crystallization. It still needs to be prepared like this for two more rounds of purification. The inert magical power will disappear during the process, and the final finished Mana will probably only be about one-third of this amount,” Rena explained carefully, then suddenly changed the subject.

“But...”

“But what?” Leon asked.

“But this really is much more than when I extract it myself—almost double. Your idea was right. Raising Magical Beasts inside a labyrinth really can greatly increase Mana output,” Rena said as she had already begun the second purification of Mana.

“Then will the purity increase as well?” Leon continued asking.

Even a slight increase in Mana purity could cause a massive difference in price.

The higher the purity, the greater the profit margin.

“That depends on the final purification, but judging from how it looks now... there doesn’t seem to be much difference in purity compared to before,” Rena answered after observing the crystals.

“Wouldn’t purifying it more times raise the purity?” Leon said.

“It’s useless. There’s a limit to the purity of Mana each Witch can extract. I can probably refine it to a little over seventy percent. When I’m lucky, it can reach seventy-five. Beyond that is impossible. This should be directly linked to the extractor’s magical power level,” Rena replied.

“By the way, you still haven’t told me why it has to be brought back here for extraction,” Leon asked as he looked around the cellar.

“Oh, you ask so many questions!” Rena clicked her tongue impatiently, but still answered.

“To extract Mana, it must be done on this altar that can connect to Lady Moilai’s source power. The altar needs to be successfully made inside an active labyrinth. This thing is very heavy, and leaving it inside that labyrinth wouldn’t be safe, so it’s better to keep it here in the cellar.”

“No wonder. I used to hear that when the Inquisition arrests Witches, the most valued piece of evidence is the Moilai altar. So it turns out Mana can only be extracted here,” Leon said, suddenly enlightened.

At that moment, another question occurred to him.

“Wait—then where did you get this altar from?”

He had actually already quietly investigated Rena’s background.

Rena had originally come from another village.

It was said that her mother ran away from home when she was young, and after her father remarried, he abandoned her.

In the end, it was her grandmother from River Mouth Village who took her in and raised her.

Rena was only sixteen this year.

Clearly, she had had no opportunity to personally create a Moilai altar inside some labyrinth.

After all, Witches were generally taught through master-to-apprentice transmission.

Without an old Witch passing down the ritual of becoming a Witch, an ordinary girl would have no chance of becoming one.

Rena, who had begun the second extraction, glanced at Leon and fell silent for a moment before replying, "My grandmother left it behind."

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 19 : The First Shipment - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 19 : The First Shipment

Chapter 19: The First Shipment

"Your grandmother was a Witch?" Leon was startled, then immediately realized that this was the most reasonable explanation.

"Yes. When she was young, she was. When the labyrinth appeared here back then, she moved to this place and built this altar. When the labyrinth was sealed, she was nearly discovered by the Knight Order. After that, she gave up her life as a Witch, married someone, and had children. After my grandfather passed away, she moved into the mountains to live. She never used Witch powers again, until she herself contracted Saltification Disease. Only then did she purchase Magical Beasts through old channels and begin making Magical Potions again. I was raised by my grandmother. Back then, I begged her to teach me, to let me become a Witch as well. She refused at first, but later her condition worsened, and she quickly became unable to work. She had no choice but to let me help. In the end, she couldn't win against me, and still presided over the ritual that turned me into a Witch so I could continue researching the special medicine. Unfortunately... in the end, I still couldn't save her. I think that at the very end, my grandmother probably regretted agreeing to let me become a Witch." Rena said with a trace of melancholy.

Leon looked at Rena's profile.

Ever since she had accompanied him to visit Melissa's home to treat Sally, Rena's attitude toward him had clearly softened compared to before, no longer carrying vigilance at every turn.

When Leon asked questions everywhere like a diligent student about the process of Mana extraction, Rena no longer coldly cut him off with “none of your business” as she used to.

Although she occasionally revealed impatience, she still basically answered him patiently in the end.

As the time they spent together in the labyrinth workshop grew longer, the two of them became somewhat more familiar than before.

By now, Rena was even willing to confide such past events to him.

Of course, this was also because the fact that her grandmother had been a Witch was no longer particularly important even if Leon knew about it.

After all, she was already deceased, and there was no need to worry about being accused or having leverage held against her.

“I don’t think so. You still have the chance to save other people now. To continue researching with the goal of eliminating Saltification Disease—if your grandmother could know of this in another world, she would definitely be proud of you,” Leon said softly.

This wasn’t just polite talk.

He truly held a degree of respect for Rena’s perseverance in continuing to research a special medicine for Saltification Disease despite the risks.

Rena turned her head to look at him with an expression of surprise, then turned her face back again.

“Did that really need to be said by you?”

About half an hour later, Rena repeated the process of placing the crystal on the altar and using this method of magical distillation to extract it three times.

Afterward, she dipped a glass rod into the crystal, then placed it into a test tube filled with black reagent and stirred.

As she stirred, the reagent gradually turned red, the color becoming lighter and lighter.

After the color stabilized, Rena observed it against the light for a while.

Finally, she took a scale and carefully poured out the finished product to weigh it.

“Six carats finished product. Purity is roughly seventy to seventy-three percent, about the same as last time,” she turned to explain to Leon.

“Then that makes twenty-four thousand Fenni,” Leon nodded.

“All you think about is money. In your eyes, this thing isn’t much different from a gemstone that can be exchanged for cash, is it?” Rena said.

“Gemstones can’t grow endlessly like crops in a field. At this rate, in three months we should be able to get at least ten carats, right?” Leon narrowed his eyes as he stared at the finished product on the scale.

This was the first batch of Mana he had produced since cooperating with Rena.

“That’s assuming there are no difficulties with Magical Beast reproduction,” Rena reminded him calmly.

Leon roughly calculated it in his mind.

If production expanded like this and they could reach an output of thirty carats in two batches per year, they would be able to net six hundred thousand Fenni.

Split evenly, that would be three hundred thousand Fenni each—barely meeting his expectations.

The key point was that as the scale of Magical Beast breeding expanded next year, Mana output would continue to increase, and there was still room for income to rise.

However, aside from production, he would also need to secure sales channels to achieve this goal.

“Do you need Mana when you prepare medicine?” Leon asked.

“Only a tiny amount as an activator. One carat of Mana is enough to formulate three full courses of medicine. The main ingredients in the medicine I prepare are Slime mucus and Head-Hunting Rabbit blood. The rest are just some herbs and minerals,” Rena replied.

“Then let’s keep one carat. That leaves exactly one carat left—I’ll take it to sell first,” Leon said after thinking for a moment.

“So urgent? Not going to stockpile it first?” Rena frowned.

Every transaction involving contraband carried the risk of exposure, so the number of transactions naturally had to be controlled.

In the past, she only shipped goods twice a year, handing them over to Hannah Weisland to sell.

“I need to test the goods through my own channel first. All those early investments have almost drained my savings. Let me recover some capital first,” Leon replied.

Since starting his cooperation with Rena, he hadn’t actually sold goods through that channel yet.

It was best to probe it as early as possible—if there were problems, they could be discovered sooner.

“Alright.” Seeing this, Rena no longer objected.

“Then when you head back, take the medicine for Mrs. Sally with you.”

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That evening, on Bourbon Street in Hamel Town, within Snake Mouth Alley, Leon once again arrived in front of the recycling shop engraved with an owl.

He carefully observed it and faintly caught a trace of light leaking out through the door crack.

He stepped forward and pushed the door open.

As the bell behind the door rang, he stepped inside.

The shop was shrouded in darkness, with only the oil lamp on the counter illuminating a small patch of dim yellow light.

The gaunt shop owner was holding a pair of double-lens handheld spectacles at the counter, studying an old book.

Hearing the sound, he casually raised his head to glance over, then suddenly narrowed his eyes, his gaze fixing on Leon.

Clearly, he had some impression of Leon, even if they had only met once more than half a month ago.

“Roddy introduced me,” Leon once again reported the passphrase and shook the black bag in his hand at the shop owner.

Hearing this, the shop owner stood up, went to the door, and peeked outside through the small window.

He then locked the door and gestured for Leon to take the items out and place them on the small table.

After Leon set the items down, the shop owner opened the bag, put on gloves, and began counting.

Halfway through, he suddenly paused and began rummaging through the bag repeatedly.

Seeing this, Leon felt a sense of foreboding.

There were only three processed Head-Hunting Rabbit carcasses and one tube of Mana in his bag—everything was clear at a glance.

There was no need to rummage so carefully.

After turning things over back and forth, the shop owner raised his face again and sized Leon up suspiciously.

“You weren’t introduced by Roddy, were you?”

Leon’s heart skipped a beat.

What he feared had still happened.

It seemed that when the Director handed goods to the shop owner for fencing, in addition to verbal passphrases, there was some unknown mark or token hidden within the goods.

Only if it matched would the shop owner confirm that it was the Director’s merchandise.

Trying to muddle through directly was not that easy!

“If it’s not goods introduced by Roddy, you won’t take them?” Leon still maintained his composure.

This situation was within his expectations.

Even if it was seen through that the goods weren’t fenced by the Director, the transaction could still continue under certain conditions.

This shop owner made his living by purchasing Mana and Magical Beast materials—no one would refuse profit delivered to their doorstep.

“If you touched goods you shouldn’t have touched, I advise you to hurry and return them right now. Otherwise, your end will probably be even more miserable than the worst scenario you can imagine,” the old shop owner said meaningfully as he pushed the items back.

Clearly, he suspected that Leon had privately hidden, or possibly stolen, goods seized by the Inquisition and was now selling them behind the Director's back.

That would be tantamount to stealing money from the Director's pocket right under his nose—purely seeking death.

“Then I understand the consequences better than you do. But what if I say that, aside from me, no one knows the source of this batch of goods?” Leon stared into the shop owner's eyes.

Hearing this, the shop owner remained unmoved and shook his head.

“Young man, if you think that killing the other party when these goods were seized means everything is settled, then I can only advise you to clean it up thoroughly. Otherwise, your trouble will only grow bigger.”

“As long as you keep your mouth shut and I keep mine shut, there won't be any trouble at all,” Leon said firmly.

“You do business in this line—surely you don't lack even this bit of courage? There is exactly one carat of Mana here. Are you buying it or not?”

The shop owner's expression turned serious.

He met Leon's gaze for a long time, and Leon never once avoided his eyes.

Then, the shop owner spoke.

“Eight thousand Fenni.”

“What?” Leon frowned slightly.

“One carat of Mana, including those three rabbits—eight thousand Fenni,” the shop owner repeated expressionlessly.

“Your goods have an unclear origin. Considering the risk of this transaction, that's the only price I can offer. If you want to haggle, please leave.”

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 20 : A Day Worth Celebrating - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 20 : A Day Worth Celebrating

Chapter 20: A Day Worth Celebrating

Hearing this offer, anger began to gather in Leon's eyes.

Mana of this quality, no matter how hard its price was suppressed in the underground market, had never fallen below ten thousand per gram.

The only price lower than this was the acquisition price when Hannah Weisland had slaughtered the completely clueless Rena like a fat lamb.

But the shop owner merely looked back at him with an indifferent expression.

He did not trust the goods this young man had brought, and he was confident that Leon currently had only this single channel through which to sell.

If he could squeeze out a bit more profit for free, he could consider it.

If Leon stormed off in anger, he did not care either—it was only one gram of Mana, after all.

Leon glared at the shop owner for quite a while.

In the end, he slowly suppressed his anger and said in a firm tone:

“The price I'm asking is twenty thousand per gram. Not a single unit less.”

Hearing this, the shop owner let out a snort of laughter on the spot.

“Heh. Who do you think you are? I gave that price to Caron Eso because he can cover the sky with one hand in Hamel Town. You don't know where you snatched a few scraps from, came here to exchange them for some pocket money, and now you think you can be compared to him?” After laughing, the shop owner wiped the smile from his face and pushed the goods on the table slightly back toward Leon.

“This line of work isn't something an ignorant brat like you can touch. This time I'll pretend I never saw you. Please leave, and don't ever appear in my shop again.”

After saying this, the shop owner turned around and prepared to return behind the counter, determined to stop paying attention to the kid.

“Three months from now, I'll bring ten grams of Mana.” Leon did not take back his goods, but suddenly spoke to the shop owner's back.

The shop owner stopped in his tracks, turned around again, and looked at Leon with a face full of confusion.

“And before winter arrives, I'll release another batch. If nothing goes wrong, I should be able to bring out even more,” Leon continued.

“What are you even talking about?” The shop owner frowned.

“Winter will probably make shipping impossible, but next year, I can release two more batches. The year after that, and the year after that... every year there will be more,” Leon continued relentlessly.

“Can Caron Eso provide you with such a stable supply?”

The shop owner blinked a few times, spent two seconds digesting Leon’s words, then laughed again and shook his head.

“You brought one gram and you’re bragging that you can stably supply me with at least twenty grams every year?”

“These are just samples.” Leon pointed downward with his finger, tapping the goods on the table.

“Before starting real transactions, I naturally need to make sure my sales channel is secure.”

“You’ll say anything just to haggle, won’t you? Not bad, kid—that’s a skill too,” the shop owner said, clearly unconvinced.

“So what if I’m bragging?” Leon spread his hands and countered.

“What loss do you suffer? You’re not selling stolen goods for Caron Eso at a loss anyway. At twenty thousand per gram, you still have room for profit. I’m just asking you to buy the samples at this price—this doesn’t even count as a deposit! We’re talking about transactions worth hundreds of thousands every year, and you’re still fixated on that tiny bit of petty profit?”

The shop owner fell into thought, his expression gradually turning serious.

He had begun to seriously weigh the authenticity of everything Leon said, rather than simply treating it as a fabricated tall tale.

Suppressing the price of this batch to eight thousand would only net him an extra ten thousand or so.

Even if it was fake, there would be no real loss.

Come to think of it, this batch of goods was very similar to the batch of stolen goods sold last time.

That batch had also been brought by this young man.

If he followed the trail and grasped the source, it was not entirely impossible.

If what he said was true, then the profits... missing it would definitely make one regret it to the point of slapping their thigh raw.

“Then come back in three months and bring those ten grams with you. Prove your words. At that time, I’ll naturally give you the best purchase price,” the shop owner chose a cautious solution.

Leon thought for a moment and nodded.

“Of course. But I hope you can understand—three months is a long time, and many variables can arise.”

“So your supply isn’t that stable after all?” the shop owner teased with a smile.

“No. What I mean is that three months is enough time for me to find other buyers. When I can prove that I can supply stably, I’ll naturally be qualified to evaluate who is more suitable to cooperate with,” Leon said meaningfully.

The smile on the shop owner’s face gradually faded.

“What I need is a partner with long-term vision. I can choose who to give priority to—but of course...” Leon gave the shop owner a smile, then reached out to take his goods back.

“You also have the freedom to give it up.”

Leon’s hand slowly reached toward the black cloth bag he had brought.

At that moment, a withered old hand beat him to it and pressed down on the bag.

Leon raised his eyebrows and looked at the shop owner who had reached out, deliberately casting an inquiring gaze at him.

“Fine. Twenty thousand per gram. Eight hundred per rabbit,” the shop owner said as he pulled the bag back in front of himself, staring into Leon’s eyes and speaking slowly.

“Three months from now, I hope you’ll keep your promise, young man.”

“Of course,” Leon replied calmly.

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That night, Leon returned to the small flat he rented, satisfied and carrying a pile of things.

The negotiation had gone smoothly.

Now that both production and sales were secured, all that was needed was time and management, and money would start falling everywhere.

With the one hundred and twelve Thaler Silver Coins he obtained from selling the goods, he conveniently bought an entire roasted suckling pig at the market—brushed with honey, paired with potatoes, onions, carrots, and sage, with an apple stuffed into its mouth, roasted until the skin and flesh were crisp, then sliced and placed into a rented dining basket lined with oil paper to be brought home.

In addition to that, there was also a bottle of apple cider.

Even for relatively well-off families, such a lavish dish could only be seen during festivals.

But today truly was a day worth celebrating, and it was also a good opportunity to improve Melissa and the others' meals.

Leon pushed open the door and called out, "Melissa, are you home? Look what I brought—"

Before he could finish, Melissa came pounding down the narrow staircase with rapid thudding footsteps.

Leon glanced up at her and was immediately startled.

"What's wrong?"

"Brother Leon!" Melissa's eyes were filled with tears, and the moment she saw him, she began to sob uncontrollably.

"Mom, she—"

Suddenly, Sally's violent coughing rang out from the attic.

Leon's expression changed.

He set down the things in his hands and rushed past Melissa, charging up to the attic.

Could it be that Rena's medicine had truly triggered some dangerous side effect in the human body?

When he rushed into the attic, the scene before him was Sally lying on the bed, clutching the headboard as she struggled to prop herself up, coughing desperately toward the bedside.

Leon froze in place.

After a moment passed, Sally seemed to finally catch her breath.

With trembling hands, she brushed aside her disheveled hair, raised her face to look at Leon, and forced out a weak smile.

“Mr. Leon...”

“Mrs. Hesh...” Leon blinked, finally snapping back to his senses.

“Your hand... can move again?”

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.