

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 111 : First Visit to the Viscount's Daughter - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 111 : First Visit to the Viscount's Daughter

Chapter 111: First Visit to the Viscount's Daughter

Eastern side of Arend Island, the residence of Viscount Arend.

Leon stood side by side with Father Auden before the courtyard's barred gate. Father Auden rang the doorbell at the entrance and waited together with Leon.

"Is it really necessary for me to show up personally for this kind of thing?" Leon cast the priest a glance.

He had originally thought that after purchasing those ships, Father Auden would go directly to negotiate with Viscount Arend about leasing the pier. Yet Father Auden had insisted that he come in person.

"You're not planning to operate that Labyrinth for just a year or two and then stop, are you? If you're going to act long-term within Viscount Arend's territory, sooner or later you'll have to deal with this family. It's not a bad thing to get acquainted early," Father Auden said.

Through the gate, Leon observed the mansion and courtyard. The residence was large and imposing, and it did not look old. Presumably, when the previous Viscount Arend purchased this territory, he had truly been wealthy.

However, the courtyard had clearly gone without maintenance for a long time, and weeds overran the garden.

After waiting for quite a while, he saw the mansion door open beyond the courtyard gate. The female attendant hired by Adele stepped out of the house. Upon seeing Father Auden, she immediately showed a guarded expression.

Adele's attendant had no personal grievance with Father Auden. Her vigilance was purely because Adele had repeatedly instructed her to be wary.

Leon remembered that the last time this woman had appeared alongside Adele, she had seemed to be her bodyguard. Now she was also the one answering the door. Most likely, the Arend household could no longer afford a steward or servants.

Soon after, the attendant noticed Leon as well. Clearly, she did not recognize him—after all, when Leon had pressed a gun to Adele’s forehead that day, he had been wearing a mask.

“Good day, Miss Hayley. I have an appointment with the Viscount,” Father Auden greeted Adele’s attendant, Hayley.

“My apologies, Father. Viscount Arend is not currently at the residence,” Hayley replied sternly.

“Oh, he’s often late,” Father Auden said without surprise. “That’s fine. May we come in and wait? If Miss Adele is present, I believe she’ll be interested in what I intend to discuss with Viscount Arend. Please inform Miss Adele that this Mr. Set intends to lease the pier on Arend Island.”

Hayley glanced at Leon in surprise, adjusted her expression, and replied, “Very well, sir. Please wait here for a moment.”

Not long after entering the residence, Hayley returned, walked over to open the courtyard gate, and beckoned them inside. “Please follow me.”

They passed through a garden overgrown with weeds due to neglect, then through a corridor stained from lack of cleaning, and finally arrived at the mansion’s study.

“Young Lady, Father Auden and Mr. Set have arrived,” Hayley announced after knocking on the door.

“Come in,” Adele responded from within.

Hayley opened the study door and led the two inside. Adele, seated behind her desk, stood up.

“It has been some time, Miss Adele,” Father Auden greeted first.

“Please, have a seat, Father Auden, and——Mr. Set.” Miss Adele examined Leon briefly, likewise failing to recognize him at first glance.

In fact, this was the first true “meeting” between Leon and Adele.

Leon nodded to her: “Thank you, Miss Adele.”

The moment he spoke, both Adele and Hayley froze.

In an instant, the psychological shadow of that pitch-black gun barrel aimed at her forehead resurfaced in Adele’s mind.

“You are—the Inquisitor from that day?” she asked, her pupils trembling as she stared at Leon.

“Yes, we have met once before. I didn’t expect you to remember my voice. I’m truly honored.”

Leon replied calmly.

“For someone who pointed a gun at my head, how could I possibly forget——” Adele said, forcing herself to remain composed.

She actually wanted to complain about it, but in Leon’s presence, she did not dare reveal even a trace of such emotion.

Father Auden observed Adele’s reaction from the side, suppressing the urge to laugh, and said, “Since everyone knows each other, business should be easier to discuss. Miss Adele has probably already heard our purpose?”

“You mean——leasing that pier?” Adele quickly grasped the matter.

“Yes. Miss Adele, you should already know that the Hamel Inquisition of Hamel Town, South Harbor County, has applied to the Church for authorization to investigate the Arend Island Labyrinth. Recently, you must have noticed the ferries traveling back and forth from South Harbor County?” Father Auden said.

“If those are Church vessels, then the Church wants to lease the pier? Does that mean the Church wants us to repair the pier first before it will conduct the Labyrinth investigation?” Adele’s expression turned grave.

Ever since learning that the Church might investigate the Arend Island Labyrinth, she had been worrying about how to pay the donation required for the Church to seal the Labyrinth. Now that the Church intended to use the pier for its investigation, logically, the local lord should cooperate.

Since the pier still belonged to Viscount Arend, they were technically obligated to repair it for the Church.

But at present, they truly could not afford such expenses.

“Please rest assured, Miss Adele. This time, a private fleet is providing transportation services for the Church. The fleet’s owner—namely, this Inquisitor Set—wishes to lease the pier on Arend Island. The rent will be offset by the cost of repairing the pier. For you, this is an excellent bargain.”

As Father Auden spoke, he took out the prepared contract and stepped forward to hand it over.

Hayley took the contract from Father Auden and turned to pass it to Adele.

Adele first cast Leon a surprised look, then cautiously reviewed the contract. “A provisional lease term of three years? In a personal capacity?”

Since the ships had become Leon’s assets, the contract naturally listed him as the individual leasing the pier.

Father Auden knew the case Leon and Rena had experienced and knew Leon’s true name and identity. But in front of Leon and his recruited subordinates, he still addressed him as Fenrir—partly out of habit, partly out of caution, to prevent unnecessary listeners from overhearing Leon’s real name.

However, in a business setting—especially one involving money laundering—Leon had to use his real identity so that the laundered funds could rightfully be attributed to the name Leon Set.

“Yes. It is this Mr. Set who wishes to lease your pier. Today, he is not here as an Inquisitor, but in a personal capacity. Mr. Set serves in the Church and is willing to use his own assets to provide services for the Church.

The Viscount’s pier has gone unrepaired for years; even the Watcher Merchant Consortium considers it to have no collateral value. But if you sign the pier over to Mr. Set for three years now, you will gain a fully repaired, usable pier. It is a very favorable arrangement,” Father Auden explained.

“In other words, you personally own one cargo ship and two ferries, lease them to the Church for use, and also pay to lease the pier for the Church?” Adele sought confirmation from Leon.

“Yes,” Leon replied.

“Inquisitor Set is young and promising. Outside of his duties, he has invested and accumulated certain assets, and he is well regarded within the Church. He is willing to make some contribution,” Father Auden added. “If this cooperation succeeds, he may consider further investing in this island in the future. Miss Adele, haven’t you been searching everywhere for someone willing to invest?”

Adele stared at the priest, frowned deeply, and pondered for a moment before speaking. “Father Auden, what role are you playing this time? What scheme are you laying against our family now?”

Her suspicion toward Father Auden was anything but light. After all, he had been one of the main culprits who had pushed her family into the fire pit.

“The one leasing the pier this time isn’t me—it’s Mr. Set. I’m merely here as a representative of the Watcher Merchant Consortium. If Mr. Set repairs your pier, you can either operate it or mortgage it. That benefits the healthy recovery of our loan,” Father Auden said.

“Stop trying to toy with me!” Adele’s expression grew stern. “Last time at the mine, you led the way for him. This time, you accompany him to visit my home. Do you really think I can’t see that you’re working for him? He’s your client, isn’t he? And these ships—they’re assets you helped him launder money through, aren’t they!”

Leon silently glanced at the priest.

The trick Father Auden had devised to deceive the Viscount’s daughter had been seen through at once. Clearly, Adele possessed considerable professional knowledge in this area—she even understood the concept of money laundering.

Last time, Leon’s gun had prevented her from thinking calmly. But this time, Adele was not so foolish.

Leon was in no hurry. Resolving this issue was Father Auden’s responsibility. If mishandled, Leon had ample grounds to hold him accountable.

Father Auden, however, did not appear flustered. He replied evenly, “You must understand, Miss Adele, that accusations without evidence are slander. You are defaming a gentleman who has generously offered to invest in your family. Do you truly wish to repay your family’s debts?”

“This isn’t a courtroom. You have no right to interfere with my personal views,” Adele retorted firmly. “And what kind of benevolent gentleman could possibly be your client? Don’t joke with me! I don’t care whether you intend to use the repaired pier for money laundering or to set another trap for our family—abandon that thought!”

From the outset, she had held no good impression of Leon, who had once threatened her with a gun. Now, because of his connection with Father Auden, she despised him all the more.

She did not know Leon’s rank among the Inquisition, but if he could associate with Father Auden and possess assets tied to money laundering, he must be corrupt and unscrupulous!

“Don’t overestimate your family, Miss Adele. With your current debts, there is virtually no hope of full repayment. Who would expect to squeeze money out of a pauper? Your assets don’t even qualify as collateral—let alone as instruments for laundering money.

Mr. Set is willing to pay to repair the pier. That brings you nothing but benefits, and it even comes with the Church’s backing. What exactly are you worried about? If you can’t

even weigh the pros and cons, I'm afraid repaying your debts will be quite difficult," Father Auden said sarcastically.

"The operating rights of the pier are still in our hands. We don't need your concern!" Adele replied seriously.

"And if the Church needs to use the pier for its investigation, do you not intend to cooperate?" Father Auden asked.

"If the Church truly requires it, I will find a way!" Adele said earnestly.

"Find a way? Hah. You said you would 'find a way' for the more than thirty million in debts your family owes as well. Do you really have a way?" Father Auden shook his head. "If you even reject this method, then I suppose there is only one way left for you to repay the money—marry a wealthy man!"

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 112 : The Surface Area of Adele's Psychological Shadow - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 112 : The Surface Area of Adele's Psychological Shadow

Chapter 112: The Surface Area of Adele's Psychological Shadow

The moment Adele heard the priest's words, obvious displeasure surfaced in her eyes. However, she knew the priest was deliberately provoking her into losing composure, so she forced down the anger in her heart and said, "Father Auden, I don't require your advice on how I choose to handle this debt. If you dislike the way I am trying to resolve it, then the money can simply remain unpaid. In any case, the debt still belongs to my father for now."

In truth, Viscount Arend had long since given up on the debt entirely. Only Adele, driven by a sense of responsibility to preserve the family estate left behind by her grandfather, was still making an effort.

If Adele adopted the same indifferent attitude, it would clearly be unfavorable to the priest and the Watcher Merchant Consortium he represented. She was using that fact to warn the priest not to push too far.

"In the future, it will be your problem. Very well, you are correct. The debt is the Viscount's matter. Then we shall discuss the contract after the Viscount returns."

Seeing that Adele would not yield, Father Auden simply reverted to his old method—bypassing her interference and preparing to finalize the agreement directly with Viscount Arend.

“Are you avoiding me again, Father Auden? You should know that every time you sidestep me and go to my father instead, it only proves you have no way of dealing with me.” Adele stared at him as she spoke.

“Interpret it as you wish, Miss Adele. I am merely following procedure,” Father Auden replied shamelessly.

However, this time Adele had no intention of stepping back.

“This time, I am not without options. Of course, you may sign a dock rental agreement directly with my father. But as Viscount Arend’s heir, and as a direct stakeholder, if I suspect that you are renting the dock for illegal purposes, I have the right to exercise supervisory authority—for example, bringing people to inspect the cargo on your ships. I imagine that would be rather troublesome for you, wouldn’t it? You knew this, which is why you came to negotiate with me, didn’t you?”

Father Auden clicked his tongue inwardly and frowned. This was the most troublesome scenario he had anticipated. It was precisely because he feared that, after securing a long-term dock lease, Adele would grow suspicious of their operations on the island that he had staged this maneuver. Yet she had not been fooled at all.

Regarding the Labyrinth, they possessed a Church investigation warrant. Adele could not interfere, nor would she likely dare to visit the Labyrinth herself.

But the dock ultimately belonged to the Viscount’s family. If Adele insisted on interfering, it would inevitably cause them some inconvenience.

They were operating a massive illegal enterprise on Viscount Arend’s island—so massive that it was nearly impossible to conceal entirely. Therefore, they had to find a way to manage the local lord, especially the restless Adele.

Adele had already keenly realized that they intended to use the dock for something improper. That realization had merely come sooner or later.

Though at present she could not possibly imagine that the man before her was turning their territory into the largest Mana production site within the Empire.

Just as the priest was about to speak, Leon, who had remained silent until now, suddenly opened his mouth.

“Are you about to do something foolish again, Miss Adele?”

The moment he spoke, the air in the room seemed to freeze.

“Wh-what do you mean?” Adele looked at Leon’s expressionless face and felt an involuntary pang of dread.

“Do you believe that by doing this, you will cause us trouble, and therefore we will abandon renting your dock?” Leon asked.

“I merely wish to confirm whether you intend to use my family’s property for illegal business. Is there a problem with that?” Adele summoned her courage and asked.

“Have you already forgotten the consequences of questioning me like this last time?” Leon suddenly smiled.

But to Adele, the smile on Leon’s face was as cold as meltwater seeping through cracked ice. Of course she remembered—after questioning him before, he had pressed a gun to her head.

“Your bodyguard is rather unprofessional—allowing strangers into the house without thoroughly searching them for weapons first,” Leon continued.

Adele and Hayley tensed simultaneously. Hayley immediately placed her hand on the grip of her gun and warned, “Please refrain from any improper actions, sir!”

Leon made no threatening move. Instead, he looked at Hayley and asked, “Miss Hayley, correct?”

Are you merely employed by Miss Adele, or do you share a personal bond? How much does she pay you? Ah, no need to tell me—I’m just curious. If I offered you double, would you resign immediately and accept my employment instead?”

Adele and Hayley both revealed astonished expressions. Hayley shook her head. As a guard, betraying one’s employer rashly would be unwise.

Before Hayley could voice her refusal, Leon continued casually, “Five times?”

Hayley’s expression shifted slightly, but she still gave no response.

Seeing this, Leon felt reassured and added, “Or perhaps I could simply pay you a large sum outright. How about three hundred thousand?”

Hayley stood dumbfounded. Adele, meanwhile, had gone pale.

“W-wait!”

She paid Hayley only a market-rate salary. Hayley was merely a novice guard; her wages were not particularly high. Yet this enormous sum—this man before her likely could afford it.

If Hayley were poached here and turned against her, it would mean that she would be alone in this room, without protection, at this man's mercy.

Leon suddenly laughed. "Just a joke. I have no need to go that far."

Hearing this did not ease Adele's heart; instead, it tightened further.

She glanced at Hayley, who had clearly shown a flicker of disappointment. This terrifying man had spent not a single coin, yet with just a few sentences, he had already created a subtle rift between her and her hired guard.

And his final declaration—"I have no need to do so"—explicitly implied that he had other methods to deal with her.

"Miss Adele, let me ask you—suppose you discovered that I was using your dock for illegal activities. What would you do? Report me to the Church?" Leon looked directly into her eyes. "Have you considered the possibility that doing so might get yourself killed? For instance, what if the Church suddenly found a heap of contraband in your home and charged you with suspicion of blasphemy?"

"I—I would defend myself. I studied law! Your threats—" Adele stammered.

"Oh? Then why don't you defend your family yourself and invalidate your father's gambling debts outright? Do you still believe that, when facing those more powerful than you, you can protect yourself through the law?" Leon countered. "Let me put it another way. What if one day you were suddenly stuffed into a sack and thrown into the sea? Would you defend yourself before the fish and shrimp at the ocean floor? The waters surrounding Arend Island are rather cold this season."

Adele was too frightened to speak.

"Don't be so tense. Just a joke. I don't need to go that far either." Leon still smiled.

Now, whenever Adele saw that smile, she felt herself teetering on the brink of collapse. In the future, she might very well awaken from nightmares startled by that very expression.

"I merely wish to know—have you truly considered the consequences of opposing me, Miss Adele?" Leon stared at her.

"I only—I only don't want my family entangled in illegal affairs—" Adele stammered in defense.

“Your family is nearly finished, and you still wish to preserve dignity without taking any risks?” Leon raised a brow. “Miss Adele, do you truly intend to save your family? How great a price are you willing to pay?”

Adele stared blankly at him, unable to respond at once.

“Would you marry some wealthy man in exchange for clearing your family’s debts? Or would you risk committing a crime to earn a fortune? Oh, and your father’s gambling addiction is severe, isn’t it? A gambler cannot control himself. No matter how much money you earn, it will be useless. So are you willing, for the sake of preserving your family, to kill your father?” Leon spoke lightly.

“Wh—” Adele suffered a tremendous shock.

“Of course, there are gentler methods. You could confine him—ensure he can never go out to gamble again. Starve him for a few days and force him to sign over management of the family estate to you.” Leon continued.

At this point, Father Auden, listening from the side, had initially intended to remind Leon that advising Adele to replace the Viscount would not benefit them. But upon reconsideration, even if Adele seized power, she posed no threat to Leon whatsoever. As things stood, Leon had already pressured her to the point she scarcely dared breathe.

This Fenrir truly countered the Viscount’s daughter perfectly.

Seeing that Adele could only stare at him in shock, Leon understood clearly.

“It seems you can do none of it. Then I can assert that you will never have the opportunity to save your family. Are you still hoping to encounter some fool willing to invest in your estate without seeking returns?”

You lack resolve. You stand on a sheet of ice about to collapse, yet you still worry that swimming will ruin your pretty dress. How many people struggle desperately to carve out a path to survival, willing to lose limbs if necessary? Compared to them, what does your so-called effort amount to?”

Sally had sacrificed her life to repay debts and secure a future for her daughter. Melissa had borne enormous debts and labored tirelessly to save her mother. Rena had risked becoming a Witch and facing capture by the Church to save her grandmother. Compared to them, Leon found it difficult to feel any respect for the Viscount’s daughter before him.

The Arend family had once been prosperous. Adele had likely grown up in luxury, never truly experiencing despair. She did not understand how one ought to struggle when facing utter hopelessness.

“I will sign the dock agreement with Viscount Arend. The dock will be mine to use. Three years later, I will return it intact. With the Church’s involvement, you need not worry about legal issues. If you refuse, I can proceed through Church requisition instead—you have no right to supervise. If you still wish to stop me, you may try. But prepare yourself.”

Leon met Adele’s gaze directly, causing her to shiver.

Then he suddenly stood and patted Father Auden on the shoulder.

“Old friend, wait here for the Viscount and have him sign the agreement. I’ll be going back first. After all—” he glanced at Adele, who sat as silent as a frightened cicada, “—there’s no one here qualified to negotiate with me.”

With that, he left the study without bidding farewell to anyone, leaving behind a silent Adele and Father Auden.

Father Auden watched Leon’s departing figure as he opened the door, then glanced at the shaken Adele and sighed inwardly.

Originally, he had hoped that a meeting might deepen the impression between Adele and Leon, laying groundwork for Leon’s future purchase of a noble title.

Well, in essence, it had been something akin to matchmaking.

The impression had certainly deepened—but it was hardly a favorable one. Only the surface area of Adele’s psychological shadow toward Leon Set continued to expand.

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 113 : Promotion and a Raise—Becoming the Director - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 113 : Promotion and a Raise—Becoming the Director

Chapter 113: Promotion and a Raise—Becoming the Director

Two months later, at the Inquisition.

Leon was summoned to the Director’s Office by Bishop Beckett. When he entered and locked the door behind him, he saw Bishop Beckett take out an exquisite small wooden box and place it on the desk.

“Sir, what is this?” Leon asked.

“A gift Baron Turner asked me to pass on to you. Open it and take a look.” Bishop Beckett gestured toward the box.

“Baron Turner?” Leon was slightly surprised.

Baron Turner was an old aristocrat of considerable wealth and connections in Caster Town, highly influential throughout South Harbor County.

At the same time, he had once been one of Mr. Griffin Potter’s longtime clients and protectors. However, during the Earl’s move to have Bishop Beckett infiltrate South Harbor County, he chose to accept the Earl’s terms and abandon Potter.

The Inquisition’s eventual control of Potter Manor had also been thanks to the intelligence he provided.

Now, through Bishop Beckett’s introduction, he had become Leon’s client, and Leon had met him once before.

Baron Turner’s only son had died in battle. Ever since, he had hoped to produce another heir but had been hindered by age and declining vitality.

Thus, he had long placed his hopes on a fertility-enhancing Magical Potion brewed from Labyrinth Mandrake Grass.

“Baroness Turner has been confirmed pregnant. Baron Turner paid me a special visit yesterday to share the joy. He originally wanted to visit you in person, but you were still on the island yesterday, so he asked me to deliver the gift instead,” Bishop Beckett explained.

Leon carefully opened the box.

Inside lay a gleaming gold-plated pocket watch, finely crafted. He picked it up and examined it, noticing the engraved dedication on the back along with the signature of its maker.

It was a pocket watch crafted by a renowned master artisan.

In aristocratic circles, such a piece held high collectible value—a very respectable gift indeed.

“That is truly congratulations to him,” Leon said, putting the pocket watch away.

Aside from the fertility potion, Baron Turner had also continued purchasing Longevity Potion from them. He would remain a steady client.

“From what I’ve gathered, the quality of the Magical Potions you’ve been supplying seems to have improved significantly. Our influential clients all say that your goods far surpass what Mr. Griffin used to provide. Your shipments have greatly enhanced the Earl’s reputation.

“Taking territory is one thing; establishing a firm foothold locally is another. I had my concerns at first, but it seems you’ve handled matters far better than I expected,” Bishop Beckett said with a smile.

“As long as the clients are satisfied. I’m grateful they’re willing to give me face,” Leon replied.

“No need to be modest. I also obtained some of your Magical Potions through certain channels and examined them. The Mana purity you’re using should be around eighty percent. Finished products of that grade—even among the Earl’s cadres—few can supply such quantities so consistently.”

At this point, Bishop Beckett abruptly changed tone. “But I do have a question. You haven’t forgotten the quota the Earl assigned you, have you?”

“Of course not. Two hundred grams of Mana,” Leon said.

“Of which fifty grams must be above eighty percent purity,” Bishop Beckett added. “You’re now using such high-purity Mana extensively in your Magical Potions. Are you certain it won’t affect your delivery?”

Leon understood. Bishop Beckett had summoned him mainly out of concern that expending too much Mana on the local Magical Potion market would prevent him from fulfilling next year’s shipment.

“Production has been going smoothly. I expect no problem meeting the deadline. It’s just that the low-purity Mana has been completely used up. At present, I temporarily have no Mana below eighty percent purity,” Leon answered.

“What did you say?” Bishop Beckett showed a hint of surprise. “How much have you produced now?”

“The current stock is about one hundred and twenty grams, with purity between eighty and eighty-seven percent,” Leon thought for a moment before replying.

He had actually understated a small portion of the highest-purity stock—the part given to Rena for preparing medicine to treat Sally.

“Only three months have passed, and you’re already close to finishing?” Bishop Beckett grew even more astonished.

“Not exactly. Over forty grams were extracted from that Drake,” Leon replied.

“That still means you produced roughly eighty grams—during an entire winter?” Bishop Beckett’s gaze turned doubtful.

He knew that Magical Beasts slowed their life activities in winter and did not reproduce.

Normally, these three months should have been Leon’s most strained supply period, relying only on Mana refined from hunting Magical Beasts in the Arend Island Labyrinth as a stopgap.

But one hundred and twenty grams of Mana—this was clearly not an amount achievable solely from the existing Magical Beasts in that Labyrinth, even if it contained a Fourth-Level Magical Beast like a Drake.

“That Labyrinth extends deep into the mountain. The environment inside is relatively warm, and there’s also a Temple ruin dedicated to Moilai within it. The Mana levels are high, and the Magical Beasts have been thriving there even through winter,” Leon replied casually.

Magical Beasts that would normally cease reproduction and enter dormancy in winter were now growing and breeding in the Arend Island Labyrinth just as they did in other seasons.

The primary reason, however, was not the Labyrinth’s Mana level, but rather that Rena’s abilities had improved.

They had discovered that Rena’s Blood Pact ability, compared to before, now also enhanced the life activity and fertility of Magical Beasts.

As a result, these creatures had reproduced normally even in winter, when they should have been resting.

This meant that compared to their originally estimated maximum output, they could now harvest an additional season’s yield, increasing production by another quarter to a third.

“All above eighty percent purity? Did you improve the process? Or did you kill another Blessing Recipient somewhere?” Bishop Beckett asked in confusion.

“We suspect it’s because the Mana in the Arend Island Labyrinth is more refined. Perhaps it’s related to that Temple,” Leon offered.

He certainly had no intention of revealing that both his and Rena’s abilities had evolved.

“In just one winter, you’ve prepared one hundred and twenty grams? Oh, then that works out perfectly.” Bishop Beckett nodded repeatedly.

“Works out perfectly how?” Leon asked cautiously.

“It seems you can report completion to the Earl ahead of schedule. I’ll contact him shortly,” Bishop Beckett said, a smile returning to his face.

“But I haven’t reached two hundred grams yet,” Leon said, somewhat surprised.

“You already have. What you signed with the Earl was six million worth of Mana. One hundred and twenty grams of Mana above eighty percent purity already fully meets the value requirement!” Bishop Beckett added in a half-joking tone, “Of course, if you’re exaggerating to me, you’d better clarify now. Once I report it upward, it won’t be easy to clean up.”

“That’s not the case,” Leon replied calmly. He had even underreported slightly.

“Very good. Then I should congratulate you in advance.” Bishop Beckett nodded. “The timing couldn’t be better.”

“What timing?” Leon recalled that Bishop Beckett had also said “perfect” just now.

“Johnny is preparing to leave River Valley County. The Earl is still considering who will take over there—and you’ve just completed your task.” Bishop Beckett spread his hands toward Leon.

“Does that mean—I’ll be taking over River Valley County?” Leon asked tentatively.

“That was the plan from the start. Of course, the prerequisite was that you complete the task. Now that you’ve exceeded expectations, it’s only natural for you to take over. Don’t worry. River Valley County was originally the Earl’s territory. It’s full of our people, and the business has long been laid out. You only need to meet a few local minor cadres to assume control. I’ll also assist for a while longer,” Bishop Beckett said matter-of-factly.

Leon silently drew in a deep breath.

South Harbor County, River Valley County—he would suddenly possess the territory and markets of two counties.

Previously, the cadre Jero in River Valley County and the local power Mr. Griffin in South Harbor County had been locked in constant struggle. Now, this vast territory had fallen into his hands.

“In that case, we should accelerate our side as well. It’s time to bring this out.” Bishop Beckett placed an appointment letter in front of Leon. “Sign this, and I’ll submit it afterward.”

Leon glanced at the document. “You’re appointing me as Deputy Director now?”

“Time waits for no one. To fully take over the territory, you must become the Director here as planned. Only then can you safeguard the business across the territory. We aim to complete this within half a year,” Bishop Beckett said calmly.

“Half a year? Is that really feasible?” Leon felt uneasy.

He had only just been promoted to Captain. Within a single quarter, he would become Deputy Director. The pace was already suspiciously fast.

Still, it could barely be justified.

During this time, he had accumulated merit within the Inquisition—primarily by dealing with the remnants of Mr. Griffin’s forces.

Those under Mr. Griffin who were useful had, through Father Auden’s introduction, transferred into his command.

Those unreliable, of questionable loyalty, or unwilling to submit had been eliminated by Leon using internal intelligence and, under Bishop Beckett’s instruction, the power of the Inquisition to sweep them away in one stroke.

He had also dealt with scattered minor dealers.

The Earl’s demand for control over the territory far exceeded that of Mr. Griffin, and Leon himself did not want competitors secretly developing within his domain.

Yet these minor merits were not enough to justify a leap across social ranks.

Deputy Director of a local Inquisition was the highest position attainable for a Lower-Ranking Inquisitor—the peak Leon had once foreseen for his career, the pinnacle of his social class, and even reaching that had seemed extremely unlikely.

Yet in less than a year in this line of work, he had achieved it—and it was merely a transitional step. The irony was almost absurd.

But to advance further and become Director was a different matter entirely.

The Director of a local Inquisition held the formal rank of a mid-level Inquisitor—a Church position with an official title, publicly on par with a Fully Appointed Knight and a Bishop.

At the same time, it also meant he would have to accept a Blessing from the Church.

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What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 114 : Do You Have to Take the Civil Service Exam in Another World Too? - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 114 : Do You Have to Take the Civil Service Exam in Another World Too?

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“You don’t need to worry too much about the merits required for promotion. I’ll arrange that properly for you.” Bishop Beckett raised his hand to signal Leon to sit down, then lowered his voice and said, “Let me explain the script first. You know Jay Sid, the original cadre of River Valley County, right?”

Leon nodded. “People on the street all called him Jero. I heard he was dealt with internally.”

The cadre of River Valley County within the Earl’s sphere of influence, Jero—whose real name was Jay Sid—had already been mentioned to Leon by Father Auden when the latter recommended himself as Leon’s advisor. The priest had told him that the man had most likely been eliminated by the Earl.

After Leon joined the Earl’s faction, he had also discovered that the cadre position in River Valley County was currently vacant. River Valley County was temporarily being managed by Johnny Wellman, who had originally been in charge of maritime transport.

This largely confirmed what the priest had said.

“That’s right. Do you remember the assassin you encountered at Potter Manor?” Bishop Beckett prompted.

“Of course,” Leon replied.

“That man was actually an assassin trained by our organization. He worked under Jay. Jay had always been worried that after the Earl took over South Harbor County, he would subdue Potter and let him continue managing it. So Jay privately sent an assassin to kill Potter, nearly causing a conflict with our arrangements.”

Bishop Beckett carefully explained the events of that day to Leon.

“So that was it!” Leon suddenly understood, finally piecing together the origins of that mysterious assassin. “So Jero was purged by the Earl because of that major mistake?”

“More or less. The corpse of the Blessing Recipient the Earl gave you—that was him. The Earl had originally given him another chance. He was the Earl’s own nephew, and

the Earl had trusted him quite a bit. You should take this as a warning as well,” Bishop Beckett said.

“Then what does this Mr. Jero have to do with our plan?” Leon asked.

“After Jay disappeared in River Valley County, the local Church forces became aware of it. The Inquisition in Helenburg believed he was either dead or on the run, so they started investigating his assets everywhere,” Bishop Beckett said.

“Even cadres under the Earl get investigated by the Inquisition?”

The Earl had always given Leon the impression of someone with vast influence, even keeping the local Church forces firmly under control.

“We don’t control every local Church force. While most cadres are alive, there’s usually no problem. But if they die or lose power, the Church will move as soon as they catch wind of it, digging up their crimes one by one and using them as grounds to trace and confiscate their assets. For the local Church, that counts as a huge source of income.

“Jay was still relatively young and hadn’t been a cadre for very long, but he had still accumulated assets worth tens of millions.

“These assets were handled by experts in money laundering and normally wouldn’t be discovered. Or even if discovered, they couldn’t be touched. But what if, at this moment, an Inquisitor happened to arrest one of Jay’s subordinates who had handled the laundering operations?”

Bishop Beckett guided him step by step.

“So you’ve already prepared a scapegoat?” Leon roughly grasped the arrangement.

“Of course. He’s one of ours. When the time comes, we’ll use a plea deal to secure him a lighter sentence. Afterward, he’ll receive a generous reward. His task is to provide plenty of evidence that Jay’s assets were connected to the underworld, allowing the Church to confiscate them with justification.

“And the Deputy Director of the Hamel Inquisition, who just so happens to arrest this man and successfully uses a plea deal to make him talk, will naturally have rendered great service. With my recommendation, you’ll then qualify for evaluation as an Intermediate Inquisitor,” Bishop Beckett explained the plan.

“So essentially, we’re trading Jero’s remaining assets for merit—buying a position with tens of millions?” Leon said.

“No. We only need to release a portion—around ten million Fenni in assets. That’s already enough merit. We’ll sort out those assets that were already risky and difficult to

handle and hand them over to the Church. If we don't let the Church taste some sweetness, they won't stop pursuing Jero. It's a reasonable sacrifice," Bishop Beckett said.

Intentionally leaking ten million in underworld-linked assets to the Church to deal with the investigation, while also creating an opportunity for their planted insider within the Church to earn merit—such tactics truly existed.

Leon felt that from the Earl and Bishop Beckett, he was always learning new methods.

"So with this, I can obtain a rank and receive a Blessing?" Leon asked tentatively.

"If everything goes smoothly." Bishop Beckett paused. "However, after obtaining merit, you technically only gain the qualification for evaluation. There's still one more hurdle."

"What hurdle?"

"How's your level of education?" Bishop Beckett suddenly asked.

"You mean to say that obtaining a rank also requires passing an academic test?" Leon was surprised.

"Yes, that's right. The Church has scholarly requirements for fully appointed personnel. There will be a written exam," Bishop Beckett said, looking at him. "If you're weak in that area, you'd better start cramming early."

"What will be tested?" Leon immediately felt nervous.

He hadn't expected that even becoming an Inquisitor in this world required taking a written exam.

It felt like the nightmares from his student days in his previous life were about to be awakened again.

"More than half the questions are theological knowledge. The rest cover various disciplines—history, medicine, mathematics, military affairs, natural philosophy, and so on. But they're fairly basic.

"You don't need to worry too much. The standards are stricter for bishops and Fully Appointed Knights, but a bit more lenient for Inquisitors. As long as you pass the minimum score, some Church will take you. After a simple interview, you'll receive your rank," Bishop Beckett said.

Leon blinked.

Why did this sound so much like a civil service exam?

He had come to another world, and he still had to take the civil service exam?

“You’re making me feel a bit uncertain,” Leon said with a wry smile.

“Just study diligently for the next few months. It won’t be a big problem—oh, by the way, I believe we have past exam papers here. Why don’t you try one now? Fill in your gaps while you can.” Bishop Beckett glanced toward the locked filing cabinet. With a raise of his hand, a scroll suddenly appeared.

“Bishop Beckett, that was—” Leon only saw the space in his hand distort slightly before the scroll appeared out of thin air.

It seemed the Secret God’s Blessing he possessed was far more than just something like long-distance communication.

“Just the power of the Secret God’s Blessing.” Bishop Beckett handed the scroll to Leon. “Give it a try.”

“Right here?” Leon was caught off guard.

“Of course. I happen to have time. Once I finish grading it, I can give you some advice.” Bishop Beckett handed him a pen. “Write here. I’ll contact the Earl in the meantime.”

Leon had no choice but to sit down in the office and reluctantly begin working on the paper, while Bishop Beckett walked to the corner and used his Blessing to attempt contact with the distant Earl.

Leon picked up the test and scanned it. He actually had a decent understanding of theology in this world.

After transmigrating here, how could he not understand its background?

Not to mention that he had once yearned deeply for supernatural abilities. To study the knowledge surrounding the Blessings of the Four Gods of Origin, he had gathered relevant materials everywhere. It was only after entering Church service that he realized that knowledge without connections was useless.

After scanning the initial theological questions, he found he could answer most of them.

After all, this was merely a threshold examination.

As long as one had read the Church’s orthodox legends about the gods and seriously studied the publicly promoted teachings in the holy scriptures, there wouldn’t be much difficulty.

The Supreme God governed endless time. The God of War dominated absolute power. The Creator brought forth all material things. And the hidden Star-Night Secret God ruled boundless space.

Together, they formed the origin of this world and created humanity as the primates of all beings to carry out the will of the gods and govern the world—

Leon wrote swiftly, soon moving on to general knowledge questions from various disciplines, discovering that he could still answer most of them.

Especially mathematics and natural philosophy—which encompassed physics, chemistry, and biology—the classroom knowledge from his previous life represented the crystallized essence of thousands of years of civilization.

Given this world's level of development and education, he was practically considered highly educated.

Bishop Beckett quickly finished reporting to the Earl and strolled back to Leon's side, observing him answering with a faint smile.

As he watched, his expression shifted to surprise. "Hold on a moment."

Leon paused his pen and looked at him questioningly.

Had he written something he shouldn't have?

That seemed unlikely—these were mostly basic short-answer questions.

Bishop Beckett took the paper and glanced at it twice, then looked at Leon in surprise. "Did you attend a district Church school?"

After just two glances, he realized the score on this paper wouldn't be low. This level of knowledge far exceeded that of ordinary people.

"I've always been studious. I often borrowed books and looked up materials. That's all," Leon replied.

"With your level, you could qualify for a priest position at a district Church school. Becoming an Inquisitor is almost a waste of your talent." Bishop Beckett laughed. "My apologies. It seems I worried unnecessarily."

Seeing that the exam wasn't as difficult as he had imagined, Leon finally relaxed a little. "So if the exam also goes smoothly, I'll obtain a rank and a Blessing?"

"That's right."

“Then what Blessing would I receive? Do I get any choice?” Leon asked tentatively.

“Generally, no. It depends on which Church finalizes your appointment. That relates to position allocations and your written exam results. Whichever Church is willing to take you—once you transfer there, you’ll receive the corresponding Blessing.

“Though that’s not absolute. Churches sometimes exchange limited quotas. For example, I’m a bishop of the Church of the God of War, but I was exchanged to receive the Secret God’s Blessing. Such quotas are limited,” Bishop Beckett said.

“What if no Church wants me?” Leon asked.

“That won’t happen. With our internal connections, if no other Church is interested, the Church of the God of War will at least take you.” Bishop Beckett smiled faintly.

“However, if you can join another Church, try to do so. The more departments we infiltrate, the more intelligence we gain—it will be more convenient for our organization.”

“Sir, may I ask—can a person possess only one type of Blessing?” Leon suddenly asked.

After all, he already bore the Witch’s Blessing.

Whether he could add one of the Four Gods’ Blessings remained unknown.

“Not necessarily. There have been precedents of people possessing two Blessings, though they’re rare. It depends not only on talent but also on status. I doubt you need to consider that,” Bishop Beckett said with a smile.

“When I saw the ruins in the Labyrinth, I thought of something. In the past, besides worshipping the Earth Mother Goddess—who was actually Moilai—the Islanders also worshipped the Four Gods of Origin. Did they also wield the Blessings of the Four Gods?” Leon asked.

“Though the Church doesn’t like to admit it, war records can’t erase so many accounts. Yes, they did,” Bishop Beckett replied.

As a bishop of the Church of the God of War, he was quite familiar with war history.

“Then were there ever witches who possessed both the Blessings of the Four Gods and Moilai at the same time?” Leon asked casually.

From theology, history, and his own research on Magical Beasts, both Moilai and the Four Gods of Origin could grant Blessings, yet there seemed to be some form of opposition between them.

He felt he needed to clarify whether there was conflict between Blessings.

It was a rather niche question, but surely it wouldn't arouse suspicion. After all, who would imagine that a man could bear Moilai's Blessing?

"Such cases did appear in war records involving the Islanders, though the Church does not acknowledge their authenticity." Bishop Beckett paused slightly. "However, in present-day Moirland, there are indeed witches like that."

"Wouldn't two Blessings conflict?" Leon asked.

The Earl's faction maintained smuggling ties with Moirland, so this information should be reliable.

"I'm not sure. However, after receiving a Blessing from the Four Gods, one cannot consume Magical Potions. The side effects would be severe. The Church won't remind you of this, but you should know it," Bishop Beckett said casually.

"After accepting the Church's Blessing, one can't use Magical Potions? Is that the real reason the Church prohibits Magical Potion trade?" Leon was startled.

"I think that's one of the reasons," Bishop Beckett nodded.

Leon thought it through carefully. If Magical Potions that used Moilai's power were widely applied, people might grow wary of the Four Gods' Blessings instead.

Magical Potions produced side effects, yet Blessings could coexist. That meant they might not necessarily conflict—or if they did, perhaps it was within controllable limits?

But no matter what, to achieve his current goal of rescuing Sally Hesh, a Church rank was essential.

Reinvesting himself in this endeavor was already a risk. Necessary risks, it seemed, still had to be taken.

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 115 : Settlement of the Transaction with the Earl - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 115 : Settlement of the Transaction with the Earl

Chapter 115: Settlement of the Transaction with the Earl

Helenburg, Mountain Villa in River Valley County.

The Earl Foyle sat upright behind the desk, while Johnny leaned lazily against the wall behind him with his arms folded.

Leon and Bishop Becket stood side by side on the other side of the desk, watching as the apothecary brought by the Earl carefully assessed the purity of the Mana and weighed it.

The apothecary divided the Mana crystals Leon had brought into three purity tiers: eighty to eighty-two percent, eighty-three to eighty-five percent, and above eighty-five percent. After the final weighing, the total weight came to exactly one hundred and twenty grams.

“Beautiful!”

Seeing the result, the Earl Foyle’s face revealed an elegant smile as he looked up at Leon. “When Bishop Becket first contacted me, I had my doubts. In just one quarter, you have achieved what we expected—no, you have far exceeded our expectations!”

“It was all thanks to your support,” Leon replied.

“This year alone, your output should reach three to four hundred grams. Just your production will be enough to satisfy the high-end markets of five surrounding counties. After that, perhaps I may even expect your scale to expand further,” the Earl said.

“This kid’s production model really works. Do we even need to keep dealing with those witches in the east anymore?” Johnny suddenly interjected. “Should I cancel the voyage in the second half of the year?”

“No, our relationship with the Witch Gathering must still be maintained for now,” the Earl replied after a moment’s thought.

“Alright then.” Johnny ended the topic decisively.

Hearing this, Leon realized that the Witch Gathering that had been supplying the Earl was likely located on the Moirland archipelago across the sea. Johnny was responsible for the transport.

They had probably been relying on the Earl’s cross-sea import and export business all along, hiding Mana and Magical Potions among cargo shipments, bringing them back, and then distributing them across the eastern territories through domains managed by their respective cadres.

After the apothecary finished weighing, another middle-aged woman quickly calculated the account on paper and handed it to the Earl for verification. The Earl merely glanced at it before signaling with his eyes for it to be given to Leon.

The woman passed the slip to Leon. After seeing the final amount, he confirmed with the Earl, “Six and a half million?”

“Different purities naturally command different purchase prices. You produced Mana with a purity of eighty-eight percent. Such a rare raw material holds strategic value for our business. I said before that the surplus portion would be settled separately. What do you think of this purchase price?” the Earl asked for Leon’s opinion.

“I am very satisfied,” Leon replied.

“Then we will follow this purchase price from now on.” The Earl smiled faintly and beckoned with a raised hand.

The middle-aged woman who had calculated the account earlier brought out a locked chest and took out gold vouchers of different denominations from inside.

Leon noticed that some of the gold vouchers did not bear the Church’s Four-Pointed Star Emblem, but instead the emblem of a merchant consortium bank. The issuer of these vouchers was the Foyle Merchant Consortium Bank.

“Is this a bank you operate?” Leon asked.

“Yes. An Empire-certified bank. These gold vouchers can be used directly in fifteen eastern counties. If you wish to exchange them for cash or other equivalents, there is a branch of ours here in Helenburg,” the Earl Foyle replied casually.

Leon had learned about the Earl Foyle through other channels as well. The Earl had only become a noble fifteen years ago. Before becoming an Earl, he had been an apprentice knight.

The previous Earl Foyle had been a distant relative. Through some kind of transaction, he had legally transferred the inheritance rights to him.

After obtaining the title, he quickly became a fully appointed knight and at one point reached the rank equivalent to Knight Commander, serving as deputy commander of a knight order under the Church of the God of War.

In the war ten years ago, he retired due to injury and began focusing on managing his territory.

Before long, Foyle had become a commercial center of the east. He owned numerous industries across the eastern counties—plantations, factories, real estate, shops—and even a private armed fleet capable of cross-sea transport, conducting large-scale import and export trade.

For a man like this to establish a private bank and issue gold vouchers that circulated in place of paper currency across the eastern Empire did not seem particularly surprising.

Leon took the gold vouchers and counted them, preparing to settle the remaining payment with Johnny on the spot. But he realized the total here was exactly six million Fenni.

He looked at the Earl in surprise. "My lord, isn't this amount incorrect? You already prepaid two million."

After deducting the two million, the Earl only needed to pay four and a half million for this batch.

"I heard about the deal you reached with Johnny. Johnny asked for three million to kill that Drake. Since you secured the Labyrinth's production to supply us, the cost of slaying the Drake should be borne by me. The one and a half million you prepaid to Johnny, I am compensating you here. As for the remaining payment, I have already settled it with Johnny. You need not pay any more," the Earl replied.

Leon looked at Johnny. Johnny said nothing, merely raised his brows and nodded once, indicating that the Earl had already cleared the entire account.

"Thank you for your generosity." Since the Earl had settled everything so clearly, Leon did not stand on ceremony and expressed his thanks directly.

"Other than me, you are the second person who can get Johnny to work," the Earl said with a chuckle.

"If this kid wraps things up and takes over River Valley County sooner, I can get back to my ship sooner. That's all," Johnny shrugged. "Can I leave the handover to Becket? Can I go now? My ship is waiting at the foot of the mountain."

"In such a hurry? Won't you stay for a meal?" the Earl turned to Johnny.

"Forget it. Southern cuisine doesn't suit my taste," Johnny replied.

"At least have a drink to celebrate our success." The Earl persuaded him, then picked up a bell and shook it.

The butler waiting outside opened the door. Behind him, a maid carried in an ice bucket with a fine bottle of liquor inside.

Another maid brought in glasses and arranged them on the table.

As the amber liquor was poured into the glasses, the usually stern-faced Johnny finally lifted the corners of his mouth. "Rare for you to bring out this treasured bottle."

“You have your share of the credit. Naturally, I must bring out something that satisfies you.” The Earl smiled and lifted his glass first. “By the way, how did your toast go again?”

Johnny raised his glass, deliberately adopting a bold tone and declared, “Only comrades and fine wine must never be betrayed!”

Everyone present laughed softly.

The Earl raised his glass toward Leon and said, “To the new cadres of South Harbor County and River Valley County—cheers to our success!”

Leon and Bishop Becket raised their glasses together. Leon echoed, “To our success!”

They drained their glasses in one gulp. The spicy liquor felt like a ball of fire rolling into the stomach, leaving behind a lingering aftertaste of flowers mixed with yeast.

“This stuff’s excellent. Mind if I have another before I leave?” Johnny pointed at the bottle in the maid’s hands.

“If you like it, take it with you,” the Earl said decisively.

“Haha, Mastan, that’s what I like about you—so generous!” Johnny laughed heartily, snatching the bottle straight from the maid. “Until next time, gentlemen.”

“Thank you, Mr. Johnny,” Leon said to him.

“Do your job well, kid.” Johnny raised his brows, then left with the bottle in hand, passing through the courtyard and the main gate before heading down the mountain on his own.

“Since business is concluded, let us begin the meal.” The Earl sat down again.

“Mr. Johnny said the handover could be left to me. I suspect he did not even inform the local minor cadres. I will go check on the situation first,” Bishop Becket requested of the Earl.

“Johnny does have a tendency to handle matters that way—very well, go ahead.” The Earl nodded.

“You two eat first,” Bishop Becket said to Leon, then gave a respectful bow to the Earl and withdrew.

Leon had no choice but to sit alone with the Earl at the table.

The Earl glanced at the butler, who immediately understood and instructed the maids to serve the dishes.

“Recruiting you may well be one of the most correct decisions of my life. I did not expect even Johnny to appreciate you. That is truly rare,” the Earl said with a smile.

“You overpraise me,” Leon replied.

“How does it feel, having your enterprise finally set on the right track?” the Earl asked, glancing at the gold vouchers beside Leon’s hand.

“I’m not sure how to put it—” Leon thought for a moment before answering. “When I first started making money, I was genuinely excited. At that time, my goal was to earn three million. Now that I’ve suddenly reached that goal, I feel surprisingly... not as excited as I thought I would be.”

With this sum, combined with the profits from their Magical Potion operations over this period, even after splitting the earnings fifty-fifty with Rena, Leon’s assets far exceeded his original target of three million Fenni.

And the injury that had troubled him had healed on the spot after he gained the power of Beastified Form.

He now possessed a healthy body, substantial wealth, and even special powers. Yet he found he was not particularly happy about it.

After everything he had experienced this year, his current goal was to save Sally Hesh and Melissa Hesh. Money no longer seemed so important.

“In this world, I am perhaps the one who understands that feeling best,” the Earl said with a soft laugh. “I was most excited when I sold my first batch of Mana, earning only one hundred thousand. At that time, prices were roughly equivalent to two hundred thousand now. Later, millions, tens of millions, even hundreds of millions flowed through my hands, yet I could never recapture that feeling.”

“When a person is hungry, everything tastes good,” Leon nodded.

“That is the truth. At different stages, one’s desires are always different. Being easily satisfied is not necessarily a bad thing. Did you ever think about what you would do after earning three million?” the Earl asked.

“Stop. Live a life where I no longer have to worry about money,” Leon answered.

Even now, the thought still lingered in his mind—once he achieved his goal, he would withdraw as soon as possible and live quietly with Rena.

The smile on the Earl's face grew subtle.

"In your view, that sounds somewhat lacking in ambition, doesn't it?" Leon gave a self-deprecating smile.

He wanted to test the Earl's attitude.

After all, once he proved his value, if he truly wished to withdraw in the future, the Earl might not necessarily agree.

"No. It is rare. Being able to control one's desires at the appropriate stage is very important." The Earl's smile faded. "When I earned my first fortune, I began wanting vast sums of money, a territory, the revival of my family, countless things—my desires expanded beyond my control, and I failed."

"But haven't you achieved them all?" Leon said.

"But I sacrificed the love of my life for it. In that regard, you are more fortunate than I," the Earl said, looking at Leon.

"Thanks to your magnanimity," Leon replied.

"If I had not shared your experience, I would never have guessed what you did. My failure differed from yours. I was too eager for quick success and made some decisions that could only be called foolish. That is how I caused her death. Some things can never be undone. No matter how much money I earn afterward, no matter how much power I gain, the ending remains the same." The Earl spoke with a trace of melancholy.

Leon listened silently. Then he suddenly heard the Earl murmur in a low voice, "However, even if the outcome cannot be reversed, there are still some things that can be reclaimed."

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 116 : The Fallen Icarus - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 116 : The Fallen Icarus

Chapter 116: The Fallen Icarus

"Take it back?"

Leon did not understand the meaning of that sentence for a moment and instinctively asked.

But this time, the Earl merely smiled without explaining, continuing on his own, “Knowing what you want is more important than possessing something. Desire is like a pair of fragile wings—they can shatter at any moment. The higher you fly, the more miserable the fall. That is the lesson I learned.”

Hearing the metaphor, Leon suddenly recalled a famous myth from his previous life and nodded in agreement.

“The sun will destroy those wings.”

“What?” This time, it was the Earl who was confused.

“It was a fable I once came across in an old book. It said that a master artisan, in order to escape an isolated island with his son, crafted two pairs of wings that could fly. The two of them crossed the sea with those wings. The father warned his son not to fly too low, or the seawater would dampen the feathers—but also not to fly too high, or the sun would destroy the wings. But the son, young and impetuous, lost himself in exhilaration and flew high into the sky. In the end, the scorching sun melted the sealing wax and burned away the feathers on the wings, and the son fell into the sea just like that.” Leon explained briefly.

It was the story from Greek mythology about the master artisan Daedalus, who built the Labyrinth that imprisoned the Minotaur, escaping Crete with his son Icarus.

It happened to coincide perfectly with the Earl’s metaphor, and Leon had naturally made the connection.

“Not bad. I like this story.” The Earl’s eyes brightened.

“Just as Bishop Beckett said, you are quite knowledgeable. It seems the Church’s examinations truly won’t be able to trouble you.”

“Please stop putting pressure on me.” Leon smiled helplessly.

The maid began serving the prepared appetizers and table wine to the two of them.

However, the Earl did not begin eating immediately.

Instead, he glanced out at the river scenery beyond the window and continued, “At this stage, there are some things you should come to understand. Do you know why I spoke to you earlier about the Witch Gathering?”

Leon shook his head lightly.

Earlier, when the Earl had mentioned his former supply sources, he had revealed that his long-term goods had come from an organization across the sea called the Witch Gathering.

At the time, Leon had felt that the Earl had disclosed slightly more than expected.

“Because this matter is somewhat related to you—especially now. You should have sensed it. The Witch Gathering is in Moirland. It is, in fact, the core organizational body of the Great Witches. Moirland’s state religion is the Abyss Church, devoted solely to Moilai. The Witch Gathering’s status within the Abyss Church is similar to that of the College of Cardinals within the Four Gods Church—though the structure differs somewhat.” The Earl looked at Leon as he spoke.

Leon nodded.

Moirland—the island nation beyond the Sea of Behemoths—was said to have been established by Princess Isis of the Islander Nation, the exiled princess of the fallen Islander Kingdom destroyed by the Empire.

As an Inquisitor, he was aware of that intelligence.

“How much do you know about the war with Moirland ten years ago?” the Earl continued.

“I heard that Moirland had secretly supported restorationist forces among the Islander people along the Empire’s eastern coast, inciting a joint uprising and harassing the Empire’s colonies established on the Eastern Continent. The royal family and the Church joined forces to suppress the rebellion and even launched an expedition against Moirland to intimidate them. Because the war spanned the eastern and western coasts of the Sea of Behemoths, it was also called the Maritime Conquest War,” Leon replied.

The war had not greatly affected the western regions of the Empire.

But in Leon’s memory, it had plunged many eastern areas into turmoil for nearly two years, altering the fates of many.

One of Hannah Weisland’s sons had died in battle, the other had been left crippled.

Caron Eso had earned military merit in the war and become an Intermediate Inquisitor.

Baron Turner’s son had also died in battle.

Johnny Wellman had participated in naval combat, been declared killed in action, and afterward defected from the Church.

Even the Earl himself had taken part in the war as a Fully Appointed Knight before retiring due to injury——

“Other than successfully intimidating them, that is roughly correct.” The Earl smiled.

“Was your cooperation with the Witch Gathering related to that war?” Leon ventured to ask.

The Earl nodded.

“Moirland has always smuggled Mana and Magical Potions into the Empire. It was one of their major sources of income. Initially, they relied on restorationist factions they had cultivated among the Islander people within the Empire. During that war, I formed a connection with a Great Witch. At that time, I was already engaged in smuggling, though not on such a large scale. By then, the war’s outcome was essentially decided. The Empire had nearly purged the resistance forces among the eastern Islanders. However, the Empire could do little to Moirland itself. The Moirland Archipelago was easy to defend and difficult to attack, and at one point inflicted considerable losses on the Imperial Navy. Correspondingly, having lost the Islander restorationists within the Empire, Moirland also lost its large-scale smuggling channels. At that moment, through that Great Witch, I proposed cooperation to the Witch Gathering. I established entry and exit channels with the Eastern Continent, purchasing large quantities of Mana, Magical Potions, and Magical Beast materials from them and smuggling them into the Empire. Relying on this unique channel, I defeated numerous competitors over the past decade—those who could only smuggle Mana on a small scale from scattered heretical forces in the south and west—and achieved what I have today.”

“Then why are you considering a new source of supply? You mentioned before that there were some problems with your cooperation with them?” Leon asked cautiously.

The Earl had touched on the topic previously without elaborating.

Bringing it up again now likely meant he intended to explain.

“The Witch Gathering is the core of Moirland’s Abyss Church.

The current ruler of Moirland, Queen Alice, is the leader of the Witch Gathering—hailed as the Queen of Witches.

It is she who has been orchestrating revenge against the Empire and the restoration of the Islander Nation,” the Earl said.

“But they did not succeed, did they? That was their approach ten years ago, and the forces they cultivated in the Empire’s east were wiped out,” Leon asked in confusion.

The Earl Foyle clearly did not concern himself with accusations of treason or apostasy—otherwise he would never have connected with the Witch Gathering in the first place.

What worried him should have been his own situation.

“To call it a failure would be premature. The war ten years ago was merely groundwork for them.” The Earl shook his head lightly.

“Groundwork? What are they still planning?” Leon pressed.

It sounded as if the witches were playing a long game—seeking to stir an even greater storm across the lands in the Empire’s east that had once belonged to the Islander Nation.

“At present, I do not know. But they did attempt to persuade me to join them, saying that with their power, I might have the chance to become Emperor of the Empire. Heh.” The Earl suddenly laughed, as if amused by the witches’ attempt to deceive him.

“Regardless, those lunatics will sooner or later overturn the table against the Empire again. And we must not be swept into that chaotic vortex. Our interests must be built upon the continued balance of the Empire’s existence.

That is non-negotiable.

Cooperation with them is destined not to last.

But before we sever ties, we must possess a new source of supply.”

“So that is why you supported my attempt to establish production within the Empire’s Labyrinths.” Realization dawned on Leon.

“Wait—if that is the case, if what is happening here becomes known to them——”

The Witch Gathering was currently profiting from smuggling into the Empire through the Earl.

If they learned that he had established a new source of supply within the Empire, would they not perceive it as a threat?

That would mean Leon, who managed the new supply for the Earl, might also attract the Witch Gathering’s attention.

A sudden sense of crisis surged within him.

Leon realized that this was the true meaning behind the Earl's earlier words—"somewhat related to you."

"Rest assured. At this stage, I will maintain my dealings with them. My influence is preparing to expand westward, and I still require a great deal of goods. They will not detect any problem. For now, we need only manage our domestic supply well. When they choose to take action, we will then sever ties completely. At that point, no matter what, there will be no possibility of cooperation between us and them. If they move against the Empire, they will not have much strength left to move against us," the Earl said.

"Hopefully so." Even after hearing this, Leon did not feel entirely at ease.

If the Witch Gathering wished to profit from Mana smuggling into the Empire, whether or not they had the Earl made little difference.

As long as enormous profits existed, there could always be a second Earl to smuggle for them.

But other production sources within the Empire would inevitably compete with them.

That was a fundamental conflict of interest.

"I am quite satisfied with the present situation. And to maintain it, the most important thing is to preserve balance on all sides." The Earl raised his table wine toward Leon.

"Your fable was excellent. One must not fly too low, nor too high. It is important—for you, for me, for everyone."

Leon raised his glass in response, and the two each took a sip of wine.

After speaking at length with the Earl, Leon unexpectedly discovered that the Earl Foyle was not as wildly ambitious as he had imagined, but rather more steady and pragmatic.

He had never intended to truly challenge the Empire's order.

Instead, he preferred to preserve that order while exploiting its loopholes for profit.

In truth, the approach was not contradictory.

Precisely because order existed, its loopholes contained immense profits intertwined with risk.

If the Church had not prohibited it, the Mana trade would hardly have been so lucrative.

The Earl seemed to genuinely appreciate his lack of excessive ambition.

Upon reflection, leaders rarely favored subordinates with boundless ambition.

Many people advanced and advanced—only to end up donning the yellow robe.

Seen in that light, as long as someone could eventually replace him, the Earl likely would not care much if he chose to wash his hands of everything and retire.

“Oh, by the way, once you obtain your Church rank, would you mind if someone were to inspect your working environment on Arend Island?” the Earl suddenly asked.

“You wish to take a look?” Leon asked.

“No. I intend to send someone to help you improve your refinement techniques. She once received some instruction from a Great Witch of the Witch Gathering—” The Earl’s expression turned meaningful as he spoke.

“Well, in truth, I simply want you to meet her. I hope the two of you get along.”

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 117 : Visiting Seri - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 117 : Visiting Seri

Chapter 117: Visiting Sally

Two months later, Hamel Inquisition Prison, Women’s Detention Ward of Hamel Town.

The female Inquisitor serving as guard sat at the desk, propping her head up as she dozed off. Suddenly, her view was blocked by a figure.

The guard froze for a moment before reacting. She looked up and discovered a man standing before her, dressed in uniform and wearing a badge.

“Ah! S-Sir!” She sprang to her feet and hurriedly saluted. “I was just ”

Standing before her was none other than Inquisitor Leon Set, who had recently been promoted to Deputy Director!

She wanted to explain that she had been completely unaware of anyone approaching because she had dozed off, but no suitable excuse came to mind.

Within the Inquisition, the ranked Director rarely directly dispatched or commanded the lowest-level personnel.

For most Lower-Ranking Inquisitors, the Deputy Director was in fact more like their immediate superior.

The female guard assigned to the prison department had never had much interaction with Inquisitor Leon Set in the past.

She only knew that he had entered the Inquisition later than she had, yet within just three short years he had rapidly been promoted to Captain and then to Deputy Director. Either he had powerful backing, or he truly possessed exceptional ability.

"I'm done for. Caught dozing off on duty these past few days were for nothing," the guard lamented inwardly.

From her experience, being caught in a situation like this would definitely result in a fine and a harsh scolding on the spot.

"When did you start your shift?" Leon suddenly asked.

"Ah?" The guard did not react immediately and replied cautiously, "I took over at six this morning."

"I saw you here at seven yesterday evening as well. You haven't had time to sleep properly, have you?" Leon said.

"Well... that's just how the schedule is. Everyone's about the same," she replied softly.

"There's still too little manpower. Thirteen hours on duty in a single day who could endure that?" Leon nodded. "How about this I happen to be going inside. Give me the key to Cell Nine, and go rest in the duty room for a while."

"Oh "

The guard was somewhat stunned, uncertain whether Leon was genuinely showing concern or delivering a sarcastic reprimand.

"When I used to work overtime, I often thought if you exhaust people to the point of collapse, they won't even perform their duties well. What's the point?" Leon extended his hand for the key. "Don't worry. I'll keep an eye on the corridor for you while I'm inside. I'll come out and call you afterward."

When he took full charge here in the future, he would certainly find a way to recruit more personnel first.

"Oh, thank you, sir." The guard finally let out a sigh of relief and handed him the key.

Leon took it and walked straight into the corridor of the detention area.

Seeing that he was carrying a basket again, the guard did not pay it any particular attention.

Ever since Leon had been promoted to Captain, he frequently entered the prison carrying baskets or bags.

The shift supervisor had already instructed all rotating guards in advance: when he arrived, they were simply to let him pass and not ask questions.

Leon made his way to the innermost single cell. He peered through the small window and saw Sally sitting beside the iron-barred window, holding a theatrical novel under the light streaming in from outside.

With one hand, she occasionally brushed aside the strands of hair that fell over the page, tucking them behind her ear.

"Mrs. Hesh," Leon called softly.

Absorbed in her book, Sally finally came back to her senses. When she looked up and saw Leon's face at the small window in the door, a bright smile immediately bloomed across her face. "Mr. Leon!"

Leon unlocked the cell door and entered, placing the lunch basket on the small table beside the bed. "I brought pan-fried pork chop and creamy mushroom stew today. Eat it while it's hot."

"All right. Please sit here." Sally carefully rose while steadying herself on the chair, offering the seat to Leon and sitting down on the edge of the bed instead.

Leon did not sit. He first looked around, confirming the cleanliness of the cell, then opened the basket.

Inside were oil-paper-wrapped portions of food and stew placed in a small lidded bowl.

"What are these?" Sally noticed that beside the sliced pork chop were some pieces that looked like thin, fried crisps.

She picked one up and took a light bite. The crisp texture and the roasted aroma of potato blended with saltiness as the flavor spread in her mouth.

"This is quite delicious," she commented.

"They're potatoes sliced as thin as paper and then fried. I call them chips. I recently took over a tavern and had the kitchen try making them as bar snacks to go with drinks. They can be sprinkled with salt and spices, dipped in sauce, or topped with diced fruit salad.

The customers love them, so business has been fairly good lately,” Leon said with a smile.

“A tavern?” Sally looked at him in surprise.

“I bought it to deal with some funds on the books. Business has stabilized recently,” Leon explained.

After delivering the first shipment to the Earl and earning a substantial sum, he had followed Father Auden’s advice and used part of the money to purchase the tavern near the East District Church the very place where he had met with the priest several times before.

That tavern was essentially one of the money-laundering operations.

After Potter’s death, it had, through proper procedures, been transferred as normal debt collateral to another merchant who had business dealings with Potter.

Father Auden had handled the paperwork flawlessly, leaving no issues for the Church to uncover.

Father Auden first falsified records showing the tavern was poorly managed, then had the merchant sign a low-price sales agreement with Leon on that basis. On paper, the purchase funds came from Leon’s fleet revenue and another loan.

In reality, the amount Leon paid for the tavern matched its estimated actual value and was far higher than the price written in the contract.

The portion not reflected on record effectively shifted the dirty money to the seller for disposal.

After acquiring the tavern, Leon renamed it the Gray Wolf Tavern. He hired a chef, bartender, and servers, and used his own knowledge of certain dishes and cocktails to design specialty menus.

He selected a reliable subordinate to manage it and also used the location as a contact point and distribution site within Hamel Town.

Father Auden had told him that it was enough to hire a few people to make it appear operational even if it ran at a loss, it did not matter.

He would fabricate the accounts to show profits, recording tens of thousands of Fenni each month.

Those funds would then legitimately become Leon’s assets.

Yet after reopening, the tavern's business unexpectedly turned out to be quite good, becoming a genuinely profitable enterprise.

"I see." After hearing Leon's explanation, Sally did not know whether she should feel happy for him and could only respond that way.

"How have you been feeling these past few days?" Leon asked.

"Quite well. I haven't had a fever for a long time," Sally said with a smile.

Leon could tell that her complexion was much better than before.

Through the purification of Mana, Rena's medicine was now capable of suppressing the progression of late-stage Saltification Disease, stabilizing her condition.

With his protection in prison, Sally's living conditions were actually tolerable. After all, she had once lived immobile in an attic, accompanied only by bedsores and crystallization spreading across her skin.

Even so, since the internal damage caused by the disease had not been reversed, she still faced the risk of dying from other complications.

"The weather has been damp lately. I'll bring you a set of sun-dried bedding tomorrow," Leon said.

"That won't be necessary," Sally shook her head repeatedly.

"Have you been sleeping well?" Leon asked casually.

"It's all been quite fine." Sally paused, lifting her eyes toward Leon before subtly looking away.

"What is it?" Leon noticed she seemed to want to say something.

"It's nothing. I just had a dream yesterday. For some reason, I dreamed about my childhood home. Melissa was living there with me, the same age as I was then. It was rather strange," Sally said with a faint smile.

In truth, she had also seen Leon in that dream. Somehow, in the dream, he had become a traveling peddler visiting the village.

The village where Sally once lived had been very remote. Every few months, a peddler would pass through, bringing goods rarely seen in the village.

To the children there, the curious toys and candies wrapped in beautiful paper that the peddlers displayed were like treasures.

Some peddlers even performed small magic tricks while setting up their stalls. For the children, the day they arrived was like a festival.

Sally remembered that in the dream she and Melissa had stood among a crowd around Leon's stall, excitedly watching him perform tricks while promoting his goods. His business had been excellent that day his wares nearly sold out. In high spirits, he had scattered the remaining candies to the children.

At the end, she and Melissa had happily thanked him, and Leon had conjured two flowers in his hands with a trick and given them to them.

Dreams were always bizarre and fantastical. She did not voice this part to Leon, feeling slightly embarrassed.

"There will be a chance," Leon said, misunderstanding her words as simple nostalgia for the days she had lived with Melissa.

"Life is unpredictable. Sometimes, it's better not to hope for too much," Sally replied with a lonely smile.

Leon could not refute her. After a moment of silence, he lowered his voice.

"I've recently earned some merit. Once it's reported, the Church will allow me to undergo evaluation for Intermediate Inquisitor. Five days from now, I have to travel out of town to take an examination. I may be gone for three days. I'll leave you extra medicine beforehand. If I pass, I should be able to become Director here. When that happens, I'll have the means to get you out."

"Even if you truly have that ability, I still think it's too risky." Sally said.

Sally's final sentence had been five years of detention, permitted to serve locally.

Afterward, as a Witch, she would remain under lifelong supervision, allowed to live in designated institutions under Church oversight. Compared to prison, it was only slightly more lenient.

Overall, the Tribunal's sentence had already been relatively lenient. On one hand, Aaron had made a special appeal in his report.

On the other, Sally was terminally ill and not expected to live many more years. Whether she was sentenced to five years or one hundred made little practical difference.

But Leon had other plans.

Once he became Director, he would have the conditions to arrange a plan for Sally to leave prison though it would be best executed after Melissa left the Reformatory.

Melissa's term at the Reformatory was set for one year, and more than half a year still remained.

"I'll find a way. Trust me," Leon said earnestly. "It's the only way for you to live together with Melissa again."

Sally looked back into his eyes and, after a moment, smiled helplessly. "All right."

Leon returned the smile. After a brief hesitation, Sally tentatively asked, "Mr. Leon, during this time... have you gone to the Reformatory to see Melissa?"

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 118 : Melissa's Hero - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 118 : Melissa's Hero

Chapter 118: Melissa's Hero

Hearing Sally ask that, Leon thought for a moment before answering seriously, "I have been strictly keeping our agreement."

He had assumed Sally was confirming the agreement they had made earlier that he would keep his distance from Melissa.

His current situation was far more stable than before, yet from another perspective, he had only sunk deeper and deeper into his Underworld enterprise.

From an ordinary person's point of view, now that he had become a cadre in the Underworld, he fit the definition of a dangerous figure even more than when he had merely been a Mana dealer in the past.

He regularly inquired about Melissa's condition through the Reformatory, had sent her things, and had even secretly passed along letters from Sally.

But Leon had never once taken the initiative to contact Melissa directly, nor had he gone to see her.

If one had to be blunt about it, rather than keeping his promise to Sally, it was more that he himself did not quite dare to face Melissa.

Ever since he had told Melissa the truth, they had barely exchanged a few words.

Sally's expression grew somewhat complicated. She set down her utensils, pondered for a long time, then spoke softly, "If you want to go see her, then go."

Leon was startled, not understanding why Sally had suddenly changed her mind.

"Earlier, she sent a reply letter to the prison. In the letter, she asked about you. She asked how Brother Leon has been lately," Sally said slowly.

Sally did not tell Leon that on that sheet of paper, there had been only that single question about him yet it had been crossed out and rewritten several times.

As a mother, she could see that Melissa still cared deeply about Leon.

"You can tell her that I'm doing well, but don't directly mention in the letter that I brought you medicine, or the things I told you before. There's no telling when these letters might be intercepted and examined midway," Leon reminded Sally seriously.

The letters Sally sent to Melissa all passed through his hands. There was nothing in their contents that was particularly worrisome.

"I know that's why I think perhaps it would be more appropriate for you to tell her about the current situation directly. Even if you wrote to her yourself, it might not be entirely safe, right?" Sally said.

"You don't mind me seeing her?" Leon asked.

"At that time, I made that agreement with you because I thought we needed a clean break. But now, you're taking such a huge risk for our sake. I owe you another debt of gratitude, and yet I was still making such demands of you. It really is." Sally's face showed clear guilt as she spoke.

"You don't owe me anything, Mrs. Hesh. If you hadn't agreed to our deal back then, we wouldn't have made it this far." Leon met Sally's eyes earnestly. "Now that there's a chance to save you, how could I not seize it? I'll do everything I can! As for that agreement, I completely understand."

"But no matter what, Melissa and I are still relying on you. That child has always liked you very much. To her, you've always been like a hero. I can feel that she must have thought for a long time before mentioning you in her letter. So if possible, go see her, Mr. Leon." Sally paused, then added, "The day after tomorrow also happens to be Melissa's fourteenth birthday."

Hearing this, Leon felt even more hesitant.

Sally had given him permission to see Melissa but was that truly a good idea?

What did Melissa think of him now?

Sensing Leon's hesitation, Sally added, "Of course, if you feel it's inappropriate..."

"No, Mrs. Hesh. Actually, thinking about it carefully, what I'm about to do should be explained clearly to Melissa. She has the right to know." Leon let out a long breath. "To be honest, I've been using our agreement as a shield. It's really that I didn't quite dare to see her. The day I confessed everything to her, I thought she must have been completely disillusioned with me. I've been afraid that if I saw her, I'd find out she still resented me."

"You won't know until you meet," Sally said softly.

Leon fell silent in thought, then nodded. "Mm. You're right. You won't know until you meet."

On the outskirts of Caster Town, at the Church Reformatory of South Harbor County.

"That's all for today's lesson. When you return, don't forget to carefully review these two sections of the Holy Scriptures. I'll conduct a spot check on your recitation tomorrow. May the Gods bless you." The elderly nun stood at the lectern, instructing the more than twenty students of varying ages seated below. "Melissa, help me collect yesterday's assignments."

"Yes, Matron," Melissa replied, rising to gather the homework from her classmates one by one.

After handing in their assignments, the other students bid the nun farewell properly, then assembled outside the lecture hall to line up for the dining hall.

The Church Reformatory fell under the Tribunal.

In truth, it was something like a combination of a Church orphanage and a boarding school only with stricter management, more rules, and a firm prohibition against students leaving without permission.

Those who taught and patrolled here were mostly retired Delegate Officers from the Inquisition and the Church Disciplinary Order.

Some even held ranks within the Church. Managing a group of children's discipline was more than manageable for them.

After the other students left, Melissa handed the homework to the elderly nun.

"Thank you." The nun accepted it. "Have you been keeping up with the lessons lately? Is there anything you don't understand?"

“Not at the moment,” Melissa replied softly, shaking her head.

“If there’s anything you don’t understand, you can always come to my office to ask. You study very diligently it’s just that you fell behind before. The workload may feel heavy, but I think in a year’s time, you should still have a chance to be admitted into the District Church School.” The nun spoke gently.

“Yes, I’ll work hard. Thank you, Matron,” Melissa said sincerely.

Among the twenty-five children in this Reformatory, Melissa could feel that she was the most special.

First of all, she was the only one sent here because her mother had been judged by the Tribunal as a Witch and convicted of the Crime of Blasphemy.

The other children’s parents had mostly been convicted for engaging in illegal trades forbidden by the Church actually not much different from Leon, except without the additional charge of the Crime of Apostasy, so their sentences had not been as severe.

Only two students were slightly different. Their fathers were said to have been Inquisitors in the Inquisition, arrested for dereliction of duty.

Logically speaking, in the eyes of the Delegate Officers here, her family background should have been the closest to the word “heretic.” Yet she could sense that she was instead the one most cared for.

The Matron in charge was especially patient with her and would ask from time to time whether she had encountered any difficulties recently.

Honestly, her life here was not bad at all. It was certainly much easier than before, when she had worked all day and still had to go home to take care of her mother.

At that moment, the elderly man serving as the gatekeeper hurried to the lecture hall entrance.

He glanced at the children lined up outside, then looked inside. After bowing respectfully to the nun, he called out to Melissa, “Melissa Hesh, you have a visitor.”

A few minutes later, a bewildered Melissa was led to the visitation room near the gatehouse.

When she saw Leon sitting inside, her eyes widened instantly.

The Reformatory’s visitation room was not separated by bars. There was only a table and two chairs nothing else.

The Delegate Officer serving as gatekeeper would normally remain inside during visits. But after Leon turned to the elderly man and softly asked, "Could you let us talk alone?" the man gestured ten minutes with his fingers and stepped out, closing the door behind him.

After all, Leon held some authority within the Inquisition at Church-controlled grounds.

He could command a bit of respect from ordinary Delegate Officers here especially since he had brought the man a box of decent-quality pipe tobacco upon arrival.

"Melissa." Leon stood up, speaking as calmly as he could. "I came to see you."

Melissa stared at Leon for a long time. Finally, she responded with a soft "Mm," walked over, and sat down across from him, lowering her head without speaking.

The atmosphere was somewhat stiff, though in Leon's view it was still within normal bounds. At least it was better than her turning away coldly at the very moment of meeting and refusing the visit.

Since she had sat down, at least she was willing to hear him out.

"The day before yesterday, I went to see your mother. You've probably already heard the result of the verdict. There have been some new developments recently that I want to tell you about"

Leon organized his thoughts inwardly, then began speaking in a voice only the two of them could clearly hear.

He roughly explained how, through certain dealings, he had obtained some authority that allowed him to look after Sally in secret and provide her with medicine.

When he mentioned that the current medicine could at least help stabilize Sally's condition, Melissa suddenly lifted her head and looked at him with eyes seeking confirmation.

In her gaze, Leon once again saw hope just like when he had brought Rena to treat Sally before.

He nodded to her, then lowered his eyes, carefully selecting his words.

"Melissa, to be honest, I can't give you an absolute guarantee. But right now, I still want to try to save your mother. I have some plans, though I can't explain them in detail yet." He hesitated, then let out a self-mocking laugh. "Well, perhaps in your eyes now, I don't have much credibility left, but.."

As he lifted his face mid-sentence, he suddenly froze.

He saw that Melissa was staring at him with wide eyes staring fixedly at him as tears streamed down from those large eyes, rolling down her cheeks and dripping onto the table.

“Melissa?” Leon looked at her in shock.

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 119 : Becoming Someone Important to Brother Leon - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 119 : Becoming Someone Important to Brother Leon

Chapter 119: Becoming Someone Important to Brother Leon

Melissa had only gotten halfway through his sentence when she suddenly began to cry uncontrollably, catching Leon off guard.

It was as if Melissa herself had only just come back to her senses. Realizing that her eyes and face had become wet, she hurriedly raised her hand and wiped them with her sleeve.

“I’m fine!” Melissa kept wiping away her tears. “This is so strange, why am I...”

After hearing what Leon had said, she did not even know why, but her nose had suddenly stung, and then her tears would not stop flowing.

Leon could only sit there silently, waiting for Melissa to calm down. After quite some time, she finally wiped her tears dry and looked at him. “Mom’s condition has stabilized... does that mean...she won’t die?”

The Church had not sentenced Celie Hesh to death. If the medicine could sustain her life, then in theory, at least her life would not be in immediate danger.

“That can’t be said with absolute certainty,” Leon replied cautiously. “It has only stabilized her condition at its current state. Her body still has many problems, and complications could arise at any time. We still have to find a way to develop a medicine that can reverse the illness.

And your mother’s detention period is five years. During these five years, she can remain in Hamel Town. After that, she will likely be transferred to another institution. If that happens, I won’t be able to secretly give her the medicine anymore. Continuing to sustain her life with medication while she’s under detention could also arouse the Church’s suspicion.”

The Tribunal had only sentenced Celie Hesh to five years mainly because she was not expected to live long. If she survived for a prolonged time under detention, suspicion would inevitably arise.

“Then what should we do...” Melissa grew anxious again.

“I already have a plan for that.” Leon lowered his voice to the faintest whisper. “Before the detention period ends, I will rescue your mother from prison!”

“Is that really possible?” Melissa widened her eyes in disbelief.

The day Celie Hesh had left home to voluntarily surrender at the Inquisition, she had already prepared herself mentally to never see her mother again.

“Through transactions with certain people, I’ve already become the Deputy Director of the Inquisition. If nothing unexpected happens, I may even take the position of Director. Once the conditions are right, I can put my plan into action. Melissa, I will do everything in my power.” Leon spoke with solemn determination.

“Is there anything I need to do?” Melissa asked softly.

“Study well here. Don’t mention what I told you to anyone, and don’t write about it in your letters to your mother either. Your correspondence could be reviewed. Then, just wait.” Leon instructed her. At this point, he hesitated slightly before asking, “Melissa, can you do that?”

Melissa met Leon’s eyes and felt the resolve within them. Her heart stirred.

Without further hesitation, she nodded firmly.

At that moment, she felt another overwhelming urge to cry. She quickly lowered her head and blinked rapidly until she finally managed to hold the tears back.

She finally understood that her earlier tears had not been from sorrow, but from joy. Her mother had a chance to be saved, and at the same time, her “Brother Leon” had returned!

When Leon and Celie Hesh had explained the truth to her, she had been struck harder than ever before.

She knew clearly that she liked Leon liked him very much. To her, he had always been like a hero who saved them, just like a prince from a fairy tale!

But that day, she had learned the truth about her Brother Leon. He was a criminal, and he had persuaded her mother, purchasing her mother’s life through a transaction.

After that, she had not spoken to Leon again. She did not know how to face him, nor what kind of feelings she should hold toward him.

Resentment? Disappointment? Neither seemed quite right. Many nights, she had tossed and turned, unable to sleep because of it.

And now, Leon had once again returned to save them.

She cried tears of joy. Brother Leon had never changed. He was still her hero!

“Thank you for still being willing to trust me,” Leon said with visible relief.

Melissa finally suppressed her urge to cry and lifted her head again. “Since you already had a plan, why did you only come to see me now?”

After calming down, she found herself harboring a faint trace of grievance toward him.

It had been half a year since she had entered the Reformatory. Leon had never visited her during that time, only occasionally sending things.

If she had known his intentions earlier, she would not have suffered so much during this period.

“The plan hadn’t taken shape before. I was afraid that if I spoke too early and something went wrong, you would only be disappointed. Besides, I was worried you might still resent me. When I came here, I was mentally prepared for you to refuse to see me.” Leon replied somewhat awkwardly. “I’m sorry, Melissa.”

“Idiot...” Melissa turned her gaze aside and muttered in a voice only she could hear.

“Hm?” Leon had not caught it.

Melissa shook her head. “I’ve never resented you, Brother Leon. Mom’s illness and our debts were never your fault. On the contrary, you and...”

At that point, the face of Bishop Leona or rather, Miss Rena the Witch flashed through her mind, and her heart suddenly ached.

“On the contrary, you and Miss Rena have always been helping us. In the end, accepting the conditions was Mom’s decision. I didn’t actually do anything.” Melissa spoke softly.

“You endured all of this. That already makes you strong.” Leon changed the subject. “By the way, today is your birthday. I ordered a cake to be delivered. They said it can be shared with the other children during dinner. And I have a gift for you. Since items brought in here need to be inspected, I didn’t wrap it.”

Leon took out the prepared gift. It was a beautiful box of hair accessories, with a comb and a small mirror inside.

Luxurious gifts were not suitable for the Reformatory, so he had chosen something practical for a girl.

Melissa's hair had grown quickly. Since she had sold it last year, nearly a year and a half had passed, and she had grown over twenty centimeters of short hair.

Melissa stared blankly at the opened case.

She took it and slowly held it in her arms. After a long while, she looked at Leon. "Thank you, Brother Leon."

"If you need anything, contact me anytime. I've already instructed the gatekeeper. Just give him your letter and tell him it's for Leon Set, and he'll send it directly to me." Leon took out his gold-plated pocket watch and glanced at it. Visiting hours were nearly over. "Time's almost up. I should go."

"Brother Leon, when will you come again?" Melissa looked at him reluctantly.

"I have to travel out of town to take an examination. I may be away for a few days. I'll prepare your mother's medicine in advance. If nothing unexpected happens, I'll come see you next week."

"Alright. I'll wait for you." Melissa's eyes shone brightly.

"Then I'll be going." Leon smiled and stood up. For him as well, this meeting had eased a knot in his heart.

"Mm..." Melissa also stood up, but suddenly thought of something, her expression shifting slightly.

She opened her mouth to call out to him, then hesitated.

"What is it?" Leon noticed the change in her expression.

Melissa quickly shook her head and forced a smile. "Nothing, it's just...don't forget, alright?"

At that moment, the elderly gatekeeper entered and nodded to Leon. "Sir, time's up."

"Alright." Leon nodded in response and waved at Melissa. "Take care."

"Goodbye, Brother Leon." Melissa waved back.

She watched his departing figure as he stepped out the door, her gaze unconsciously turning desolate.

In that fleeting moment just now, she had actually wanted to ask him something about Rena.

She had always wanted to know what kind of relationship existed between Leon and Rena. After meeting him again, that feeling had only grown more urgent.

But she had not asked. It was not so much that there had not been enough time it was that she did not dare to ask.

She vaguely knew the answer. To rescue Rena, Leon had confessed everything to her and her mother, taking out nearly all his money to make the transaction. How important Rena was to him did not need to be said.

Just thinking about it made her chest tighten painfully.

Leon's past help to them had been out of sympathy. Now, his determination stemmed from a sense of responsibility for her mother's sacrifice at a critical moment.

But what about her? What was she to Brother Leon?

From beginning to end, whether saving her mother or helping Brother Leon, she had done nothing. That left her feeling deeply powerless.

To her, Leon was a hero, a prince from a story, someone incomparably important. But to Leon, how important could she possibly be?

She knew clearly that she was not a princess. To Leon, she was probably nothing more than a younger sister.

She did not want to hear such an answer, so in the end, she did not dare to ask.

Melissa bade farewell to the elderly gatekeeper and walked toward the dining hall.

If she wanted to become someone important to Brother Leon, she had to be like Miss Rena someone useful to him, even someone indispensable!

What if she became a Witch as well?

The thought flashed through her mind, but she quickly realized how unrealistic it was.

No.. her mother and Brother Leon would never agree.

And as for becoming a Witch as formidable as Rena, Melissa simply did not have that confidence.

Suddenly, she recalled something the Monastery Matron had once said in class:

“You study here because it is the Church’s grace bestowed upon you. To demonstrate that the mercy of the gods is equal to you all, students who perform excellently here may receive our recommendation quota. We will recommend you to the district Church academy. There, you may have the opportunity to serve within the Church...”

Brother Leon served within the Church while also engaging in dangerous work. Would he need someone else, likewise serving in the Church, to assist him?

At that thought, Melissa silently hugged the jewelry box tighter in her arms.

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What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 120 : The Emperor’s Illegitimate Son - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 120 : The Emperor’s Illegitimate Son

Chapter 120: The Emperor’s Illegitimate Son

Several days later, in the southeastern diocese of the Empire, at Saint Orlando Cathedral.

Under the guidance of a Priest, Leon entered a small room used for rest.

He had come here to participate in the general knowledge assessment required to obtain an official Church rank—simply put, the written examination for formal Church establishment.

Such assessments were held twice a year in each of the Empire’s seven dioceses.

Just as Bishop Beckett had arranged, he had captured an informant, leveraged a Plea Deal to extract key leads, assisted the Church in successfully confiscating assets worth tens of millions, and rendered a great service.

With Bishop Beckett’s recommendation added on top of that, there had been no surprise in his securing a slot for this assessment.

“Please wait here. When the examination begins, someone will escort you to the examination hall,” the Delegate Officer said, bowing to Leon.

“Thank you.” Leon watched as the Delegate Officer left the room and then surveyed the resting chamber.

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Tea and pastries had already been laid out on the small tea table in the lounge. Before he arrived, two people had already been waiting inside—a man and a woman, about his age.

The man wore a tailored clerical robe over his shirt, while the woman was dressed in the formal attire commonly worn by Apprentice Knights. Before Leon entered, they had seemed to be chatting cheerfully.

As soon as Leon stepped in, they rose proactively, their gazes meeting his.

“Another future colleague has arrived.” The young man smiled and strode forward, extending his hand. “I’m Enrique Davison, serving as a Priest in the Secret God Church in Caster Town. A pleasure to meet you.”

“Leon Set. As you can see, Inquisitor, from Hamel Town.” Leon shook his hand in greeting. He had come today dressed in formal uniform as required by Church regulations. “Mr. Davison, could you perhaps be related to Viscount Locat?”

He remembered that Viscount Locat, who served as a Tax Official in Caster Town, bore the family name Davison.

The Viscount held an important post there and was considered one of the more influential local elites.

“You know my father?” Enrique looked at Leon in surprise.

“Haha, your father is renowned throughout South Harbor County. Who wouldn’t know him?” Leon replied with polite laughter.

Of course, he could hardly explain that he knew the man because the Viscount had been one of their major clients.

Viscount Locat had originally been Potter’s client and had maintained a fairly good relationship with Father Auden.

He had been one of the pillars supporting the Priest’s ability to run Money Laundering Operations smoothly in South Harbor County.

Now that Leon had inherited the Magical Potion business in South Harbor County, he had also become acquainted with many local dignitaries.

He remembered that Viscount Locat regularly ordered large quantities of aphrodisiac and Contraceptive Magical Potion. Clients like him made up no small proportion.

In Leon's assessment, he belonged to the type who played extravagantly. As for whether he played extravagantly with the Viscountess, that was another matter.

Naturally, such matters could not be mentioned to the man's son.

A Viscount serving as a Tax Official—his son had likely graduated from the District Church School, secured a Priest position, and then obtained this assessment slot through internal recommendation thanks to his father's connections.

After Leon finished exchanging pleasantries with him, the young female knight stepped forward to greet him as well. "Bena Vick, Apprentice Knight of the Church in the Southeastern Diocese. A pleasure."

After several rounds of conversation, Leon learned that she was the niece of a Fully Appointed Knight, and her grandfather was a Baron. She too had obtained her slot through internal recommendation.

Enrique and Bena spoke of their family backgrounds without the slightest reservation, and Leon was not surprised in the least.

In the Empire, this was entirely normal. Family background and titles were a form of honor, a kind of capital. Leveraging connections was not shameful; rather, it was something to take pride in.

Personal effort and achievements did not necessarily carry more weight in such social settings than a long-established family surname. It was not difficult to understand—merit might advance a person one step, but background could elevate them step by step.

Bishop Beckett had once told him that the Church was currently heavily factionalized.

Most fully appointed positions were filled by Priests and Apprentice Knights from various regions who served in suitable posts for two years before gaining promotion through internal recommendation—recommendations that largely depended on their fathers' networks within the Church.

Among those promoted through merit, nobles still made up the majority.

After all, assignments that could earn merit were also distributed. Aaron's investigation into the Hamel Town case was one such example.

Someone like him—a Delegate Officer with absolutely no background—achieving a leap to secure a fully appointed position was exceedingly rare.

But strictly speaking, he was not that different. His so-called “merits” had also been scripted through the power and backing of the Earl. In essence, he had not stepped outside the same framework.

When they learned that Leon was entirely of commoner origin, both Enrique and Bena were somewhat surprised, but quickly offered him courteous compliments.

“To handle such a major case single-handedly is truly admirable. The merits you’ve created for the Church in one month of handling cases likely surpass those of my entire Knight Order. After all, you helped the Church confiscate criminals’ wealth, while we’ve only been spending the Church’s money,” Bena joked half-seriously.

“That’s true ability and real accomplishment!” Enrique nodded repeatedly. “Sitting in the same assessment as someone as capable as you makes me feel a bit ashamed of myself.”

Though there seemed to be a subtle class disparity on the surface, decorum still had to be maintained in social interaction.

They would all be serving in the same regional Church in the future—inevitably crossing paths again and again.

“You’re too kind. No matter how fortunate I’ve been, my career will likely end here. When you two rise higher in the future, I fear that when I bow to you, you won’t even recognize me,” Leon replied in jest.

“What are you saying? This isn’t the West!” Enrique laughed and shook his head. “Our family’s title was only obtained in our great-grandfather’s generation through meritorious service on eastern lands. A capable man like Mr. Set might very well be ennobled one day.”

“Speaking of which, my uncle once served in Fogpine County in the West. He said the nobles there are truly overbearing. He struck up a conversation with a Baron, and as soon as the man heard that my uncle was from the East and held no title, he turned away to talk to someone else,” Bena added, picking up the topic.

Enrique and Bena seemed to share much in common on this matter.

Soon the discussion shifted to complaints about western nobles, along with satirical jokes that apparently circulated in the eastern regions.

Leon did not understand much about noble affairs, but he had some knowledge of Imperial history. The territory of the Noren Empire had essentially expanded from west to east.

The eastern lands had a shorter history under Imperial rule, and the noble families born there generally had briefer lineages than those in the West.

The southeastern coastal region in particular had been conquered from the Islander Nation three hundred years ago.

Afterward, the remaining Islanders and the Empire had struggled against one another for a long time. It had taken the Empire considerable time to assimilate the Islander lands.

The families that obtained noble titles on this land did not have particularly long histories.

Viscount Locat, Baron Turner, and Viscount Arend of South Harbor County were all examples.

The Earl Foyle likewise belonged to the ranks of newly risen eastern nobility.

From the content of their conversation, Leon gradually sensed that old-established western nobles and newly risen eastern nobles formed clearly delineated cliques—even their respective forces within the Church appeared to align along those same lines.

“By the way, have you heard about that matter? The three Dukes in the Imperial Capital recently attended the court knighthood conferment ceremony alongside Her Highness Princess Freda. That should count as openly supporting her as Crown Heir, shouldn’t it?” Bena suddenly brought up.

“Yes, after all, Her Highness is the granddaughter of the Duke of Glen. The western nobles will certainly support her,” Enrique said.

“But His Majesty Roland III still hasn’t made a decision, and the College of Cardinals hasn’t expressed its stance either. So could that rumor be true?” Bena’s eyes sparkled as she discussed the gossip.

“You mean that matter about His Majesty’s illegitimate son?” Enrique clearly knew what she was referring to.

“His Majesty the Emperor has an illegitimate son?” Leon was surprised. It was the first he had heard of it.

“It’s just a rumor. Noble circles are always full of them. I’ve even heard people say more than once that my own father has an illegitimate son!” Enrique smiled faintly, clearly not fully convinced.

That one might not necessarily be false, Leon thought to himself.

“But my uncle heard from an acquaintance that that prince has already received secret backing from several eastern lords. If he wants the Church’s support, he would surely need to serve in one of the Church’s Knight Orders, right?” Bena spoke with increasing animation.

“Miss Vick, could it be that you—” Enrique’s smile turned meaningful.

Seeing how carried away Bena looked, anyone could tell she had imagined perhaps encountering the rumored prince in a Knight Order—ideally with something more happening.

Bena quickly coughed lightly and regained her composure. “I’m merely curious about whether the rumor is true. How could I indulge in such unrealistic fantasies?”

As they spoke, more examinees were gradually brought into the resting room. The two of them began exchanging pleasantries with the newcomers, quickly abandoning the topic.

Yet the subject lingered in Leon’s mind. Because from Bena’s description of the rumored illegitimate son of the Emperor, he had thought of someone.

“Surely not?” he pondered inwardly.

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