

# **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 71 : Voluntary Surrender - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 71 : Voluntary Surrender**

Chapter 71: Voluntary Surrender

Three days later, early morning, East District Church.

“Now you’ve confirmed everything. I’ve taken care of all the things you requested—without the slightest flaw. You’ve completely bought out the debts of the Hesh mother and daughter. The money they owed the Church has also been settled. It’s all clean money that I handled myself—procedures compliant, paperwork complete. Even the Church can’t find a single issue,” Father Auden said, hands clasped behind his back, to the Leon standing before him.

“This sort of thing should have been done after you resolved your future worries. That Witch is still alive, yet you’re doing all this as if handling your own funeral arrangements. In the end, are you really planning to—”

“That’s enough, Father Auden. Mind your own mouth. From now on, this matter has nothing to do with you,” Leon interrupted him with his back turned, straightened his collar, and walked out the door.

“Farewell.”

“It isn’t worth it for you to do this,” Father Auden shook his head at Leon’s departing figure.

“Goodbye forever, Fenrir.”

After leaving the church, Leon summoned a carriage and rode straight to the Inquisition.

He sat upright inside the carriage, like a knight preparing to march to war.

Today, he intended to bring everything to a complete end.

He stepped down from the carriage, paid the fare, and stood at the entrance of the Inquisition.

He suddenly turned and looked deeply toward the distance once more, then strode inside without hesitation.

“Good morning, Captain.”

Several colleagues were in the main hall.

One of Leon's teammates greeted him in a half-joking tone.

After the assault on Potter Manor, Aaron Dias had used his authority as Director to revoke the disciplinary measures previously kept on Leon and promoted him to Captain of Team Three.

However, the atmosphere between Leon and his teammates had not changed much.

"Mm. Good morning," Leon forced a smile in reply.

"Your injury hasn't fully healed yet, has it? The Director clearly approved you to rest for a few more days. There's no need to push yourself this hard," a teammate said.

"There's something I must deal with today," Leon replied.

"What is it?" the teammate asked casually.

"I'm here to surrender myself."

A new voice suddenly sounded at the entrance.

The noise in the hall gradually subsided, and gazes turned one after another toward the person who had spoken.

Leon also put on a look of surprise and turned his head toward the entrance.

At the main doors of the Inquisition stood a woman in her early thirties.

She wore a black formal dress, with a gray-white knitted shawl draped over her shoulders—attire commonly worn by women of that age at formal occasions, elegant yet solemn, also often seen at funerals, save for the absence of a hat.

Her hair was carefully pinned up, and she wore light makeup.

Her features showed a rather good foundation, but the gaunt complexion and fallow hair caused by long illness had still diminished her beauty.

The sentence just now had come from her mouth.

The Inquisitors, whether on duty or preparing to head out on assignment, revealed looks of surprise.

Hearing such a frail-looking woman say "I'm here to surrender myself," many of them were momentarily confused.

Just as someone was about to step forward to question her, Leon spoke first in a shocked tone.

“Mrs. Hesh?”

The person who appeared at the entrance was none other than Sally Hesh, who had come in full formal attire.

“Hello, Mr. Leon,” Sally smiled back at him.

Seeing that she was someone Leon knew, the other Inquisitors chose to observe for the moment.

“Mrs. Hesh, why would you—” Leon stared at Sally with an incredulous expression.

“I came to surrender myself,” Sally replied calmly.

She took out a Test Tube from her hand, containing what appeared to be dark red blood, and announced to everyone, “I am the Witch you have been searching for—the one who refined Mana for Mr. Griffin, Henry Potter!”

As soon as those words fell, the Inquisitors present exchanged looks.

In the Mr. Griffin case, the Witch suspect was currently being held in the detention cells of the Inquisition.

How could another Witch suddenly appear to surrender herself?

Yet this woman knew that Mr. Griffin was Henry Potter—she was clearly involved!

Some gazes also focused on the test tube in Sally’s hand, not understanding what she intended to do with it, though they instinctively became alert.

Then, in the next instant, the blood inside the test tube suddenly turned Purplish-Red before everyone’s eyes and began to boil!

In a flash, an instinctual sense of intimidation flooded into everyone’s awareness.

All of them clearly felt that the purplish-red liquid carried a kind of danger that surpassed common understanding!

Most of the Inquisitors sucked in sharp breaths and reflexively retreated away from Sally at the entrance, drawing their Guns one after another—including Leon’s teammates beside him.

The moment she saw the gun barrels, Sally’s entire body tensed up, but she held on.

“Calm down! Everyone, calm down!!” Leon raised his hand and shouted.

The others retreated with guns at the ready, not daring to act rashly.

If someone fired here and that liquid shattered on the ground, no one knew what consequences it would bring!

“I’m sorry for deceiving you, Mr. Leon. May I see the person in charge here? I’ve come to surrender myself,” Sally said as she looked at Leon.

Leon seemed to come back to his senses from the shock and turned to his teammate.

“Go get the Director—now!”

The teammate ran into the corridor.

Less than twenty seconds later, the alarm bell rang throughout the Inquisition, and Aaron Dias and Bishop Beckett surged out from the corridor with a group of people.

The moment Bishop Beckett saw the purplish-red liquid in Sally’s hand, his expression changed instantly.

“Cursed Blood?”

He clearly recognized it.

He immediately stepped in front of Aaron, drew the Church’s Silver Dagger, and seemed ready to invoke some power.

“Stop immediately, madam! This is your only warning!” he shouted at Sally.

Seeing so many people appear, Sally was obviously nervous, but she still barely maintained her composure and spoke while suppressing the tremor in her voice.

“Please rest assured, sir. I’ve come to surrender myself. I will properly control my power.”

As she finished speaking, the purplish-red liquid in her hand suddenly stopped boiling and reverted to dark red.

That terrifying sense of intimidation vanished along with it.

“A Witch...” Aaron muttered in surprise.

The others present shared much the same thought.

Watching Sally control the blood inside the test tube so freely, this ominous power was clearly not a Blessing of the Four Gods!

Except Leon.

He alone knew who truly controlled the blood inside that test tube.

What it contained was his blood.

“What are you surrendering yourself for?” Bishop Beckett stared at the “Witch” before him in disbelief.

“I am the Witch who extracted Mana for Henry Potter. I am the Fenrir you’ve been looking for!”

Sally mustered her courage and declared loudly, sweeping her gaze over everyone present, exchanging one final look with Leon.

Three days earlier, beside the Hesh family dining table.

“So you want me to... take her place? And then you’ll pay off our debts?” Sally stared blankly at Leon.

“Yes. I’ve confirmed your debts. This money will clear them all, and I’ll leave the remaining portion entirely to Melissa,” Leon said slowly, staring at Sally.

“That’s the content of the deal.”

Sally processed all the information with lingering fear, thinking seriously.

After Leon solemnly told her that “there’s something I must tell you,” what awaited her was a series of shocking truths: Mr. Leon’s involvement in Mana transactions, Bishop Leona actually being a Witch, the so-called special medicine they used actually being a Magical Potion, the Witch now captured having only three months’ worth of potion left, and so on.

Before Sally could fully recover from the shock, Leon suddenly took out a stack of Church Gold Vouchers and placed them on the table, speaking.

“Mrs. Hesh, I’d like to discuss a transaction with you...”

The transaction Leon proposed was for Sally to confess as the Witch, thereby washing away Rena’s suspicion.

Sally would not only have to strictly cooperate with Leon's script and play the role of the Witch supplying Mr. Griffin Potter, but after completing the confession, she would also have to die inside the Inquisition.

Once the remaining Magical Potion was used up, Sally would soon return to her previous condition.

Even with life extended by expensive potions, her remaining lifespan would not exceed two years, and the debt left to Melissa would only increase, never decrease.

The house had long been mortgaged under contract to offset the debt.

Once the term expired, it would be confiscated.

Melissa would not only be left homeless but would also continue to bear enormous debt, almost impossible to live a decent life.

After much deliberation, Leon decided to use all the money he had on this deal.

If Sally was willing to make the sacrifice, then he and Rena would have at least a slim chance to survive together.

He himself had no idea how big that chance was.

But if Mrs. Hesh refused the deal, or if the plan was exposed, his final option would be nothing more than taking all the crimes upon himself.

He had nothing left to lose.

Even if the odds were small, why not risk it.

After thinking for a long time, Sally finally spoke.

"If I admit to being a Witch, will Melissa be implicated?"

"According to Church regulations, she had no knowledge of it and is not yet an adult. She won't be implicated—she'll only be sent to a Reform Institution for one to three years of education," Leon replied.

"Won't the money used to repay the debts be recovered by the Church?" Sally pressed on.

"I'll go through money-laundering channels. The person handling it is an expert. So far, none of the dirty money he's processed has had any issues or been tracked by the Church," Leon said, not daring to mention that the expert was Father Auden, whom Sally deeply despised.

“...” Sally fell into silence once again.

Leon spoke softly to break it.

“I know you might not fully trust me...”

“No, I trust you,” Sally suddenly interrupted him.

“Precisely because it’s you, Mr. Leon. Everything you’ve done for Melissa and me, I’ve always seen it. That’s why I believe everything you’ve said. I also believe you’ll keep your promise... even though I think you yourself probably aren’t certain whether all this will go smoothly.”

“...” Leon could not refute her.

Sally and Leon held each other’s gaze for a long time.

Suddenly, she revealed a somewhat mournful smile.

“You really are alike.”

Leon froze for a moment, not understanding whom she meant.

“The way you look now is exactly the same as he did back then...” Sally said nostalgically, sorrow filling her eyes.

Leon finally understood.

She was talking about Mr. Hesh from years ago.

Back then, Mr. Hesh, powerless to save his wife and daughter, had also been driven to desperation, and had once shown Sally the same all-or-nothing expression.

“...I accept your deal, Mr. Leon,” Sally said softly after a long while.

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

## **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 72 : I Wanted to Die with Dignity - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 72 : I Wanted to Die with Dignity**

Chapter 72: I Wanted to Die with Dignity

Hearing Sally's response, Leon voiced another of his concerns: "But I think Melissa probably wouldn't agree."

If not for Melissa's desperate insistence, Sally would never have held on until now.

Based on Leon's understanding of Melissa, she would definitely not agree to such a deal.

Leon could not even imagine how Melissa would look at him once she learned of his true identity and intentions.

Yet this matter ultimately could not bypass Melissa.

Melissa knew that Rena was providing treatment to Sally.

Without Melissa's consent and cooperation, this plan could not be carried out.

"I will persuade that child," Sally said.

She had long anticipated that Leon would bring this up.

Leon still wanted to say something, but Sally added another sentence: "I will definitely persuade her!"

Leon was somewhat surprised.

Sally's resolve to accept the deal seemed firmer than he had imagined.

As if she had noticed his surprise, Sally let out a soft chuckle.

"I am not afraid of death, Mr. Leon. Rather, I stopped wanting to live a long time ago. Every day in this world after falling ill has been torment for me. If not for that child's insistence, I should have left long ago. I have accommodated her for far too long..."

As she spoke, Sally turned to look out the window.

"I actually considered many ways to repay the debt. Even selling my body and dignity, I would have been willing. Unfortunately, my illness did not give me that chance. Now, I can finally die with dignity. This time, I will not compromise."

For Sally, continuously burdening her daughter was actually more painful than death.

The biggest reason she had forced herself to hold on until now was that she wanted to think of one more way out for Melissa.

Now, the deal Leon offered was, to her, the last opportunity fate had left her to preserve her dignity as a mother and leave.

She would not let go of it.

“Thank you, Mrs. Hesh,” Leon said softly.

“You don’t owe me anything.” Sally shook her head and looked at Leon.

“Mr. Leon, allow me to ask—if I didn’t agree, were you planning to turn yourself in?”

Seeing Leon as he was now, Sally could see the shadow of her late husband.

She could vaguely guess what choice Leon would make.

“...” Leon remained silent for a long time.

In the end, he said nothing and simply nodded.

He had promised Rena that, if absolutely necessary, he would take responsibility for this matter himself.

“That money—you would still leave it to us, wouldn’t you?” Sally continued.

This time, Leon did not speak.

If he turned himself in, he would surely die.

Even if Rena, as a Witch, survived, she would never gain freedom.

His money would become meaningless and might even be confiscated by the Church.

In fact, no matter what, the money would ultimately still be left to them to repay the debt.

For Leon, who was already prepared to give up everything, this was the most meaningful use for it.

As for the rest, he no longer cared.

For the sake of concluding the deal, Leon did not say this to Sally, but she could still discern a hint of it.

“Don’t worry. No matter what, I will still do as you said. I don’t want Melissa and myself to keep living on the charity of others. That way, between us—and between me and that Witch miss—we will owe nothing anymore. Is that acceptable?” Sally said seriously.

To Sally, dignity did not only mean fulfilling her responsibility as a mother; it also meant repaying the kindness of others.

Now, she no longer had to survive by parasitizing on others' goodwill.

She could leave without owing anyone anything.

For the first time, Leon felt such deep respect for this sickly woman.

He nodded solemnly.

"I will look after Melissa properly."

At those words, hesitation suddenly appeared on Sally's face.

After quite a while, she spoke with some reluctance: "Mr. Leon, I have no other intentions... but if you truly have even a little regard for what I am doing, then aside from leaving the money to Melissa, could I ask you to avoid having any further contact with her as much as possible? Please."

Leon froze, left speechless.

He could not refute Sally's concern.

Even if she trusted that he would look after Melissa wholeheartedly, he was ultimately a criminal.

Any association with him carried risks.

Taking Leon's reaction as tacit agreement, Sally continued, "Tell me what I need to do."

As the former leading actress of the troupe, the Witch in this script would be the final role she performed.

...

In the interrogation room, Sally was handcuffed to a fixed iron chair against the wall.

Aaron and Bishop Beckett stood side by side in front of her, keeping some distance.

Having already witnessed the power of the "Witch" when she wielded Cursed Blood, they naturally remained wary.

Leon stood stiffly to the side, seemingly as a guard.

Ordinarily, someone who had ties to Sally would not have been suitable to remain in such an interrogation, but Sally had requested that Leon be present before she would give a complete confession.

Aaron and Bishop Beckett ultimately chose to agree.

They discussed it among themselves and questioned Leon privately first, before beginning to listen to Sally's testimony.

"...So, what you mean is that the reason you became a Witch was because Henry Potter selected you, used your family's debt to coerce you into accepting the ritual to become a Witch, and then had you produce Mana for him?" Bishop Beckett confirmed with Sally.

"Yes," Sally replied.

"According to the timeline you provided, you were already suffering from Saltification Disease at the time. Why would he choose a woman who was not long for this world?" Bishop Beckett raised a doubt.

"I don't know. Perhaps he just wanted to try, or perhaps he had chosen others before and failed. Or maybe only someone like me, who didn't have long to live, would agree to something that might end with being burned at the stake.

"Besides repaying the debt, they gave me some Magical Potion formulas, saying they might be useful for Saltification Disease, and told me to research them myself. Later, they discovered that I had value and began helping me research Special Medicine, trying to prolong my life.

"In any case, last year I participated in the ritual as they instructed and became a Witch. After that, I continuously produced Mana for them. I heard them say that, as cover, they referred to me as their supplier under the name Fenrir," Sally said.

"According to Inquisitor Set's testimony, he lived in your home, and you had a daughter who took care of you. How did you manage to work?" Bishop Beckett continued.

"The house next door had long been taken by Potter due to the debt. They set up a Workshop for me in that house's cellar. It was separated from our cellar by just one wall. They dug a lockable hidden door and covered it with clutter. At intervals, they would deliver potions refined from Magical Beasts to the Workshop. I only needed to go there at those times to complete the Mana extraction.

"At home, I always pretended to be bedridden. Mr. Leon worked almost from morning to night every day and wouldn't casually enter my room. My daughter had part-time work every day. I only needed to choose the right timing to work," Sally answered.

Over the past three days, Leon had made many preparations.

Given Sally's condition, it was impossible for her to complete too many procedures.

But having handled the breeding grounds together with Rena, Leon actually knew that Magical Beast breeding, slaughter, and potion extraction did not necessarily have to be handled by a Witch—doing so was simply more convenient.

The only indispensable part that required a Witch's power was the final step: Mana extraction.

"So, the tools you used, including the altar, were all in the cellar of the empty house next door?" Aaron caught the key point.

"Yes. You can find the evidence if you go now, along with the medicine I researched to treat Saltification Disease," Sally nodded.

Bishop Beckett immediately left the interrogation room, summoned personnel, and began ordering them to search for evidence.

Once Moilai's Altar was found and filed, this case would have decisive evidence sufficient to close it!

Aaron remained where he was and looked at Leon.

"Inquisitor Set, did you really... not notice anything at all?"

Leon was about to answer when Sally spoke first.

"Sir, I heard from my daughter that you also visited my home, didn't you? At that time, did you have any suspicions?"

"...No," Aaron replied.

At the time, seeing Melissa, he felt only sympathy.

Even if he had seen the bedridden Sally, it would have been impossible for him to suddenly suspect that this woman was a Witch.

He would only have felt even more sympathy.

It was no wonder Leon had never harbored suspicion.

Such pitiable circumstances were like a layer of camouflage.

No one would suspect that she was the Witch capable of producing Mana worth a million.

“So, you were using Inquisitor Set’s sympathy all along?” Aaron asked, looking at Sally.

“Sir, both my illness and my debt were real. May I ask in what way I used him?” Sally retorted.

Aaron was left speechless.

After a moment, he continued, “By your account, you were only responsible for producing Mana. All other procedures were handled by Henry Potter’s people? As for where the Magical Beasts were bred, you knew nothing at all?”

“They didn’t need me to know,” Sally shook her head.

“The purity of the Mana Potter possessed kept increasing. Do you have any idea why?” Aaron asked.

“I don’t know. The purity of the Mana did increase—it seemed the raw materials changed—but they didn’t tell me the reason. However, before that, there was something I noticed,” Sally said.

“What was it?”

“They had me refine and purify the venom of a Magical Beast called a Cockatrice according to a formula. After activating it with Mana, they conducted animal experiments. After that venom was taken away, the purity of Mana extracted from the raw materials began to rise sharply,” Sally said.

Hearing this, Aaron fell into deep thought.

So, was it to preserve his market that Henry Potter took the risk of opening a Workshop inside the Labyrinth?

How did Potter know the location of the Labyrinth entrance? Could it really be related to Caron?

According to former Captain Martin’s testimony, Caron had always laundered goods through an informant, who was a cadre under Potter.

When Caron disappeared, that man vanished as well.

Caron’s corpse was confirmed to have been poisoned by Cockatrice venom.

So Caron and Potter colluded to run a breeding operation inside the Labyrinth, then, for some reason, fell out, and Potter chose to assassinate Caron with poison?

Leon quietly observed the changes in Aaron's expression from the side.

In his script, all issues aside from the Witch were pushed onto Henry Potter—including opening the breeding grounds in the Labyrinth and killing Caron.

After all, he was a dead man who could no longer speak.

For Leon, it was not necessary to provide a complete truth.

The truth would be pieced together by Aaron and the others themselves.

He only needed to make the suspicion against Rena as a Witch insufficient and shake the investigation warrant—that would be enough.

The door to the interrogation room opened again.

Bishop Beckett entered with a grave expression and leaned close to Aaron, whispering, "Sir, just as she said—we found the evidence."

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

## **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 73 : Unrealistic Fantasies - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 73 : Unrealistic Fantasies**

Chapter 73: Unrealistic Fantasies

"Have you found the altar?" Director Aaron Dias confirmed with Bishop Beckett.

"Yes. It has been fully confirmed—an altar, tools for extracting Mana, and Magical Potions. At the labyrinth site, potions of the same color and smell were also discovered," Bishop Beckett said.

Aaron recalled that at the labyrinth site they had once found several Laboratory Mice used for experiments.

Some had developed Saltification Disease, and there were also some Magical Potions with a mint-like scent.

The investigators had already formed a hypothesis that those medicines were used to treat Saltification Disease.

For someone producing Mana for profit, a special medicine for a rare illness like Saltification Disease held little value.

But if someone closely connected to them suffered from Saltification Disease, it would be a completely different matter—and Sally Hesh seemed to be that crucial person.

“Additionally, I obtained records from the treasury. The Hesh family’s debt to the Church has already been settled—two days ago. The funds came from a charitable organization subordinate to a merchant consortium connected to Potter. This organization had appeared before when we investigated Potter’s asset flows,” Bishop Beckett said.

In other words, Sally’s debt had been resolved after Potter’s death through Potter’s money-laundering channels.

This also indirectly confirmed the transactional relationship between Sally and Potter.

It was most likely handled by whoever took care of Potter’s aftermath.

Potter’s money-laundering routes were extremely sophisticated.

It would be very difficult to seize and verify those fund flows as illicit gains.

“So that means she really was the Witch supplying Potter? Then what about Rena Lothark?” Aaron asked in confusion.

All the collected evidence seemed to point to Sally as the Witch, yet the entire matter still felt clouded, making it hard to see the full picture.

Bishop Beckett thought for a moment, then turned to Sally and asked, “You already paid off your debt through your work. Why did you suddenly turn yourself in?”

“Potter’s people left me an Anonymous Letter in the workshop, telling me that Potter was dead. After Potter died, I had no way to obtain the materials and Mana needed for the medicine anymore, so it ended there,” Sally replied.

“When your life is at stake, did you not think of trying other ways? Besides, didn’t you still have some medicine left? Why not at least wait until it was used up and spend the final days with your daughter?” Bishop Beckett said with a faint smile.

At that moment, both Leon Set and Sally became tense.

Bishop Beckett clearly seemed to have grown suspicious of Sally’s motive for surrendering.

"I once heard Mr. Leon mention in passing that the Church had arrested a Witch... I don't know the details, but I felt that if innocent people were to be dragged into this because of what I did, then I should bring it to an end myself," Sally continued.

Bishop Beckett glanced at Leon and nodded to Sally with a smile that did not reach his eyes.

"Very well. A noble thought. But with all the evidence pointing to you, the Church would not wrong an innocent person."

Aaron looked at Bishop Beckett in surprise.

He could also sense that Bishop Beckett harbored doubts.

Although Aaron held a higher position, when it came to investigative experience, Bishop Beckett was clearly more seasoned.

Yet Bishop Beckett did not continue to apply pressure or press for answers.

Instead, he said to Sally, "Then regarding the case, is there anything else you wish to add?"

Sally thought for a moment.

Instead of turning to Bishop Beckett, she looked at Aaron and asked, "Sir, does your previous promise still stand?"

Before giving her confession, Sally had first brought up Melissa's situation, claiming that Melissa knew nothing.

She asked Aaron to promise that Melissa would not be implicated because of her actions, and Aaron had agreed.

"Before your conviction, she will be placed in the Church's welfare institution and will be taken care of. After your conviction, she will only need to spend some time studying at a Reform Institution. There will be no implication," Aaron replied.

"Alright. Thank you," Sally nodded.

"Aren't you concerned about your own fate? Don't you want to know what kind of judgment the Church will pass on you?" Bishop Beckett asked.

"I am close to dying from illness. My end has long been decided. Fate has already judged me. The gods have never shown me mercy," Sally said with a mournful smile.

Hearing this, Aaron suddenly felt a tightness in his chest.

“The gods are indeed merciful. It’s just that the form of that mercy is not something mortals can easily comprehend,” Bishop Beckett said.

He then turned to Aaron.

“Sir, since she has nothing further to add for now, let us end the interrogation here and go verify the evidence first.”

“Alright,” Aaron nodded.

“Inquisitor Set, could I trouble you to transfer the suspect to Cell Four of the detention area?” Bishop Beckett handed a ring of keys to Leon.

Leon was somewhat surprised, but he still reached out to take the keys and responded, “Yes.”

Leon went over, removed Sally’s shackles from the chair and cuffed her wrists, then led her out of the interrogation room.

Only Aaron and Bishop Beckett remained in the room.

“Bishop Beckett, what do you think?” Aaron asked for his opinion.

“I was thinking...” Bishop Beckett replied thoughtfully.

“We could close the case here.”

“What?” Aaron was taken aback.

“I thought... you still had doubts about this matter.”

The suspicious attitude Bishop Beckett had shown during questioning had made Aaron believe there must still be something left to investigate.

He hadn’t expected the conclusion to be closing the case outright.

“There are indeed some details that remain unclear. But compared to that mysterious killer who murdered Potter—that matter might warrant a separate investigation. I’m inclined to believe it may have been directed at you. However, regarding Henry Potter’s trafficking of contraband and the death of Caron Eso, with the evidence we have, we can already piece together a truth sufficient to close the case. That is enough, Your Highness!” Bishop Beckett said.

Potter and Caron had colluded to raise Magical Beasts in the labyrinth and forced Sally to become a Witch, attempting to produce Mana locally.

They may even have used silenced corpses to feed the Magical Beasts.

Later, the two fell out, and Caron was assassinated by Potter.

His corpse was then used as feed, which led to the increasingly high purity of the locally produced Mana.

Such a truth was already complete enough for a case-closure report submitted to the Central Authority, and sufficient to count as an achievement for His Highness the Prince.

As for the killer, it could be explained as an assassin targeting His Highness.

The Church might open a separate case—or it might not.

Either way, it would not be a negative mark on Aaron's record.

On the contrary, it might even improve his evaluation.

With Sally's surrender and the provision of key evidence, their objective of closing the case had already been achieved.

"Then what about Rena Lothark?" Aaron suddenly asked.

"Release her... no, put her under Investigation Pending Trial first," Bishop Beckett said.

Investigation pending trial meant imposing no coercive measures on a suspect or key witness, only requiring them to report periodically to ensure cooperation with the investigation until the case was closed.

In other words, this was effectively releasing Rena.

Aaron froze.

"Are you sure she's not a problem? She was caught during your mountain-sealing search. Do you really think she was just gathering herbs?"

Earlier, Bishop Beckett had been extremely suspicious of Rena, to the point of wanting to apply for a Supreme Investigation Warrant.

Yet now, he suddenly seemed to have dismissed all doubts, overturning his previous conclusions with ease.

"Perhaps she has issues. Perhaps she was a compound pharmacist hired by Potter. But we can no longer obtain evidence, and there is no need to continue expending effort on

her. The longer she is detained, if we ultimately fail to convict her, it will look bad in the case file and reflect poorly on your evaluation.”

Bishop Beckett said solemnly, “Your Highness, after what has happened, we must report and supplement the records in accordance with procedure. The Supreme Investigation Warrant is now impossible to obtain. Having Cardinal Stuart spend effort on such an unnecessary matter would turn it into a farce. That risk is one we cannot afford—and do not need to take. It is best that I proactively contact them now to withdraw it, and then release Rena Lothark.”

“Bishop Beckett, do you only care about the evaluation I’ll receive, and not about the truth?” Aaron vaguely felt that Bishop Beckett’s way of handling cases was somewhat off.

“We do not possess the Miracle of Omniscience. We can only pursue the truth in the legal sense, Your Highness. The truth obtained through legal procedure is the truth we need,” Bishop Beckett said slowly.

“If you approve, I will go handle it.”

.....

Cell Four.

Leon brought Sally inside, closed the door, then stood by the small window and looked back to confirm that there was no one nearby.

“When?” Sally stood by the small window and asked Leon.

She was asking when Leon would let her die within the Inquisition.

She neither wanted to be burned at the stake nor to endure the pain of her worsening illness.

It would be best to die quickly.

Moreover, the fact that she herself was a Witch could not withstand close scrutiny.

It had to be resolved before anyone grew suspicious and launched another investigation.

“Don’t rush it yet. We still don’t know what decision they’ll make,” Leon said softly.

Before Rena was released, there was no guarantee that things wouldn’t change midway.

They had to wait until the necessary moment to act.

“Alright.” Sally gripped the bars of the small window, her knuckles trembling.

She suddenly laughed at herself.

“I clearly prepared myself mentally, waiting for my death, yet I still can’t help being afraid... I already said my goodbyes, but now I want to see Melissa again.”

Leon lowered his gaze.

That morning, during their farewell, Melissa had cried in his arms until she was soaked with tears.

Ever since the night Sally persuaded Melissa, Melissa had remained depressed and had not spoken a single word to Leon again.

The look in her eyes when she first learned of their deal was something Leon felt he would never forget in his lifetime.

“I could ask Director Aaron...” Leon began.

“No, don’t.” Sally shook her head repeatedly.

“Don’t let that child suffer any more unnecessary pain.”

“Alright,” Leon replied.

“Mr. Leon, if Miss Rena is released and still intends to continue researching medicine for Saltification Disease, please tell her that I wish for her to save all the others who suffer from this illness,” Sally said softly.

“I understand.”

As Leon answered, a sudden thought inexplicably surfaced in his mind.

In Sally’s confession, she claimed she had been coerced by Potter.

If that testimony were accepted, she might not necessarily be sentenced to death.

If Rena could continue researching the special medicine for Saltification Disease outside, and if there were some way to secretly deliver the medicine to Sally in prison, perhaps...

No. What was he thinking?

Leon immediately cut off his unrealistic fantasy.

How could medicine possibly be delivered to Sally in prison? And Sally herself could not withstand close scrutiny.

Once it was exposed that she was not actually a Witch, all their efforts would be for nothing.

Unless he sat in Aaron's position, this would be utterly impossible.

He and Sally had long since prepared themselves for this outcome.

"Wait for my word," Leon said.

Sally nodded and returned to sit inside the detention cell.

Leon let out a long breath, stood guard for a while, and then, after the shift change, left the detention area beneath the Inquisition.

When he emerged from underground, he unexpectedly saw Bishop Beckett standing right at the stairway entrance, seemingly about to head down.

Before Leon could react and salute, Bishop Beckett suddenly smiled at him and said, "Inquisitor Set, your timing is perfect. Come help me handle some paperwork—we need to process an investigation pending trial for the previous suspect."

"Investigation pending trial? Who?" Leon didn't react immediately.

"Rena Lothark," Bishop Beckett replied calmly.

"After the procedures are complete, can I leave it to you to escort her back?"

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

## **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 74 : Let's Stop Together - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 74 : Let's Stop Together**

Chapter 74: Let's Stop Together

Rena walked out of the gates of the Hamel Inquisition.

The dazzling sunlight outside fell onto her face, and at that moment, everything felt slightly unreal.

Three minutes ago, she had still been in the dark, cramped detention cell.

Now, she was seeing daylight again.

She felt uneasy, yet did not dare to turn around to look at Leon behind her, because Bishop Becket was standing right beside him.

Leon had told her that action would be taken today, but neither of them had expected her release to come so quickly.

According to Leon's original estimate, even if the evidence and testimony provided by Sally could significantly reduce Rena's suspicions and obstruct the application for a Supreme Investigation Warrant, Aaron and Bishop Becket would still have detained Rena for a period of time for several more interrogations—possibly even up to the maximum thirty-day limit.

That was under the assumption that nothing unexpected happened in their plan.

Yet in the end, on the very day Sally was imprisoned, Rena was released from the detention cell under the pretext of being released pending investigation.

"Rena Lothark," Bishop Becket called out to her from behind.

"Do not forget—this is release pending investigation, not a true release. We are only choosing to believe, based on your attitude, that you will actively cooperate with the investigation.

"For the next period of time, you are not permitted to leave Hamel Town. You must remain reachable at all times. Starting the day after tomorrow, you are required to report here once every three days until we close the case. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," Rena replied with her head lowered.

"If there is anything else you do not understand, you may ask this inquisitor. He will escort you home next," Bishop Becket said as he looked toward Leon.

"I leave her to you, Inquisitor Set."

"Yes, sir," Leon saluted, watching Bishop Becket return into the building.

Bishop Becket did not look back, but as Leon stared at his retreating figure, he felt deeply unsettled.

Leon could tell that although Bishop Becket ranked below Aaron in position, when the two worked together on investigations, Bishop Becket was the one taking the lead.

Bishop Becket had shown a trace of suspicion while interrogating Sally, yet he had ended the questioning with surprising ease.

Then, all of a sudden, he had processed Rena's release pending investigation.

Whether it was sending Sally into detention or escorting Rena home, Bishop Becket had specifically assigned Leon, which made him feel even more uneasy.

Leon then turned back and exchanged a glance with Rena, speaking in a strictly official tone.

"Let's go, miss."

Rena cooperated and walked onto the street with Leon.

Leon hailed a carriage, and they traveled all the way to River Mouth Village in silence.

After disembarking on the village road, they passed through the village and arrived at an uninhabited path.

Just as Rena was about to speak, Leon immediately stopped her with a look.

Leon turned his head slightly, carefully scanning their surroundings.

The visibility along the path was fairly open.

At the moment, there was no sign of anyone hiding nearby, nor any indication that they were being followed.

After entering the small woodland, Leon became even more cautious.

He did not take Rena directly to the cabin but instead detoured slightly to observe their surroundings.

Finally, upon returning to the courtyard of Rena's home, Leon turned around and said, "For investigative purposes, we conducted a search of your residence. Some items were taken for evidence collection. Would you like me to accompany you to confirm everything? If there are any issues, you can inform me immediately."

Rena understood Leon's intent—he was worried that someone might be hiding inside the house to eavesdrop.

"I will follow your instructions, Inquisitor," Rena replied carefully.

"Then let us confirm it. This is your house key," Leon said as he returned the key to her.

Rena opened the door.

After entering the house, Leon began leading her around to inspect the rooms.

He not only checked places where someone could hide, but also examined everything for any unusual objects or markings.

After all, the Church possessed certain transcendent powers that he himself did not fully understand.

Rena's house was not large, and there were not many belongings.

He finished checking the interior quickly, then proceeded to the backyard and cellar for another thorough inspection.

Finally, Leon circled the exterior of the house once more before roughly confirming that there was no third person nearby.

He let out a small breath of relief and returned indoors, looking at Rena.

"Then, Miss Lothark, is there anything you need to report to me?"

"No," Rena replied softly.

"That's good," Leon nodded.

The two stood facing each other inside the house, momentarily speechless.

After a long while, Rena cautiously stepped closer to Leon, looked up at him, and asked in a voice only the two of them could hear, "Is it... all over?"

"It should be," Leon answered.

Though he still felt somewhat uneasy, the fact that Rena had been released through the pending investigation process at least meant that Aaron and Bishop Becket had abandoned the Supreme Investigation Warrant.

There was no longer any need to worry about Rena being sent to the Imperial Capital for trial.

"Miss Sally, she..." Rena asked hesitantly.

"She has been detained. I will handle it," Leon replied with a dim expression.

Rena swallowed the rest of her words.

Leon had told her the plan from the very beginning.

She had worried, hesitated, yet in the end, she had not opposed it.

She did not want Sally to sacrifice herself in her place either, but upon learning that Sally had insisted on accepting the deal, she ultimately did not voice her opposition.

She did not want to die, nor did she want to be monitored by the Church for the rest of her life.

She wanted to live.

In the end, she was not that noble.

In this matter, she and Leon had once again become accomplices.

And this time, they had committed an unforgivable, monstrous crime—one with no excuse to be found.

“What should we do after this?” Rena asked softly.

“Do nothing. Once the case is fully closed, it should be fine,” Leon replied.

“That’s not what I meant. I mean, after everything is truly over—what should we do? What are your plans?”

Their business was already completely ruined.

The entire trade chain had been destroyed, and this territory would soon be taken over by a new underworld giant.

All of their things—including the most important Moilai Altar—had been confiscated.

After regaining her freedom, Rena found herself unexpectedly lost.

She could not imagine what she should do once everything settled.

She wanted to know Leon’s plans for the future.

“Do you still want to continue?” Leon asked softly as he looked at her.

“Mrs. Hesh said that if you still intend to continue your research, she wishes you the chance to save others. Of course, that still depends on whether you yourself have the will to continue.”

“I...” Rena hesitated for a moment, then shook her head.

“Without the altar, the research can no longer continue. And I have already...”

After walking once more along the edge between life and death, she no longer had the courage to go on.

Her fear of the Church, her guilt toward Sally—everything weighed down on her until she could barely breathe.

Leon examined Rena, then nodded lightly.

“That’s fine. Then give it up. Take that money and live well. If everything truly ends, move somewhere else and forget everything that happened here. I’m sorry—for making you go through all of this.”

This business had been led by him, and the deal with Sally had also been his idea.

The money originally promised to Rena—Leon had no intention of touching it.

Rena felt as if a bucket of cold water had been dumped over her head.

She abruptly looked up, staring at Leon in disbelief.

“You... are you still thinking of continuing?” Rena asked, locking her gaze onto him.

“I’m not sure,” Leon shifted his eyes into the distance.

“Maybe, if there’s an opportunity...”

The Moilai Altar, the source of magical beasts, customers, territory—everything was gone.

But that did not necessarily mean there would be no chance to resolve these issues in the future.

“Are you crazy? It’s all over! We barely escaped with our lives, and you still want to?” Rena felt it was utterly incomprehensible.

“Yes. Barely escaped with our lives. And so now, I need to find a way to live. Which means... I need money. But I have no money left,” Leon shook his head lightly.

“Don’t worry. This time, I won’t need to drag anyone else into my affairs.”

After making the deal with Sally, he had almost no money left.

What remained, he needed to keep for Melissa as promised.

He had survived, but his injuries still required a large sum of money for treatment, and Rena was no longer in a position to help him research medicine.

In just a few short days, he had lost everything he had accumulated.

He was like Sisyphus from myth—the one who had tricked the gods and was punished to endlessly push a boulder up a mountain, only for it to roll back down each time he neared the summit, rendering all his effort meaningless.

Yet Leon was not entirely without gain.

He now possessed a witch's power himself.

Though he was not as proficient as Rena when it came to business, he at least had a basic foundation.

He had already mastered the full process—from raising magical beasts to extracting mana.

If he could gather the other conditions, he could, in fact, support the business on his own.

Of course, he did not need to cling to the mana trade.

Any line of work that could earn money was something he was willing to try.

Once, he had fully prepared himself to die.

Now, he felt that continuing to risk his life was no great matter.

Since Rena no longer had the heart to continue, he had no intention of forcing her.

At the thought of bidding Rena a complete farewell, his chest felt tight.

Yet if Rena wanted a peaceful and safe life, then the best option was to have no further entanglement with someone like him.

After thinking it over, Leon could not find anything more to say.

In the end, he nodded to Rena.

“Farewell. Take care of yourself.”

Rena stared blankly as Leon turned around with a desolate expression.

She seemed to see a thin thread connecting the two of them—one that was about to snap.

In the empty house, boundless loneliness seemed to catch up to her once more.

Suddenly, she reached out and grabbed Leon's hand.

Leon turned back in surprise.

"I still have money!" Rena looked straight into Leon's eyes, her lips trembling uncontrollably.

An unrestrained thought suddenly surged up from the depths of her heart, and finally burst from her mouth.

"Leon, let's... leave this place together!"

"Together?" Leon repeated instinctively.

"Yes, together! Once everything is truly over, we'll leave this place—together! Take the remaining money and do whatever business you want. Don't take risks anymore! We... we..." Rena's voice suddenly choked up.

"Let's stop together!!"

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

## **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 75 : A Way to Save Everyone - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 75 : A Way to Save Everyone**

Chapter 75: A Way to Save Everyone

Gazing into Rena's tear-filled eyes, Leon froze in place, even forgetting to blink.

In that moment of eye contact, he finally understood that Rena felt exactly the same as he did.

To Rena, he was the only person in this world who bore the same sins as she did.

What had already happened could no longer be changed.

Before time could dull the torment brought by it all, only he could share this burden with her, holding each other close for warmth.

Leon cast an inquiring look at Rena while slowly raising his hand, tentatively brushing her cheek.

The girl's face trembled slightly in his palm, but she did not resist.

"All right, we'll stop," Leon said, his voice trembling despite himself.

"Once all of this is over, we'll leave this place!"

"Mhm!" Hearing Leon's answer, Rena nodded repeatedly, tears spilling from her eyes.

.....

Enough! No more of it! None of it!

Leon once again stood before the doors of the Inquisition and strode inside.

The position of Inquisitor, the power of a Witch, the business of dredging gold from blood—he no longer needed any of it.

Both he and Rena would stop completely from this point on.

Just as he was preparing to give himself over to despair and continue trudging through the Abyss, Rena had pulled him back from behind and given him a future they could share together—no more risks, no more hurting others, leaving this place behind and letting time wash everything away.....

For someone like him to receive such salvation, what more could he possibly ask for?

But before that, he still had to wait patiently—wait for the case to settle, wait for everything to come to an end.

He returned to the Duty Room belonging to his team, preparing to write the final report for Rena's pretrial procedure.

At this hour, the other team members were all out on assignments, leaving the spacious Duty Room with only him seated alone at the desk.

Leon let out a long breath and adjusted his state.

Just as he was about to put pen to paper, he suddenly heard footsteps stop at the doorway.

He turned his head and saw Bishop Beckett appear at the door once again.

“Sir?” Leon hurriedly stood and saluted, forcing himself to remain calm as he asked, “Is there something you need?”

The moment he saw Bishop Beckett, his entire body tensed.

This was the second time today the Bishop had suddenly appeared before him—something was clearly off.

“Nothing much. Has the person been sent back?” Bishop Beckett asked.

“Yes. I escorted the suspect back to her home in River Mouth Village,” Leon replied.

“Is that so? Good.” Bishop Beckett nodded calmly, then suddenly stepped into the Duty Room and closed the door behind him.

“Regarding the Witch, Sally Hesh, who turned herself in today, there are a few things I need to say to you.”

“Please go ahead.” Leon’s heart rate spiked instantly.

“You knew that Witch and even lived under the same roof without discovering or suspecting anything... Ah, of course, I also know that this is asking a bit much. Director Aaron was very understanding about this as well. Still, once this is written up in the report and submitted, the higher-ups may hold you accountable.

“So we plan to go through the proper procedure and give you the lightest possible disciplinary action in the submitted report. I hope you understand—this is to protect you.” Bishop Beckett said kindly.

“Of course. I completely understand,” Leon nodded in response, though he did not let his guard down.

“This may still have a slight impact on your future performance evaluations, but only for a short while,” Bishop Beckett continued.

“I don’t mind. Thank you for informing me, sir,” Leon replied.

“As long as you don’t mind.”

Bishop Beckett smiled and nodded, then paused for quite some time before suddenly lowering his voice.

“After all... your objective has already been achieved, hasn’t it?”

Although Leon had long prepared himself mentally, at the moment when the blade was finally revealed, he still felt as if his entire body had fallen into an ice cellar.

Bishop Beckett had indeed seen through the problem—and had even pointed directly at him!

“Sir, what are you talking about?” Leon put on a confused expression.

There was no evidence whatsoever regarding his having Sally take Rena’s place.

Even if there were suspicions, nothing could be investigated.

Unless Sally confessed and admitted it herself—but she would never open her mouth.

“Just listen to me first...” Bishop Beckett said with a smile, raising a hand to signal Leon to calm down.

“I’ve always trusted my intuition. From the moment we captured Rena Lothark, the outline of the case had already taken shape in my mind. Yet despite mobilizing so many resources and striking preemptively, I still couldn’t obtain the key evidence, forcing me to even use the final trump card of the Supreme Investigation Warrant.

“Then, just as we were applying for the Supreme Investigation Warrant, Sally Hesh suddenly turned herself in. The evidence practically delivered itself to our doorstep, and when pieced together, it formed a truth that completely overturned my original deductions. My intuition told me something was wrong, but I couldn’t see through it at the time. Fortunately, when I reported to that person, he gave me a hint.”

As Leon listened, a chill crept up his spine and spread through his entire body.

“In fact, we only need to make a single assumption,” Bishop Beckett continued.

“Assume that there is someone trying to mislead us. That person must be connected to every incident, like a hidden thread in the dark, linking every point of suspicion together.”

Bishop Beckett looked at Leon and nodded as he spoke.

“And you are that hidden thread. You came into contact with the informant who disappeared along with Caron. You had the opportunity to move the evidence before we did. Director Aaron once told you about the investigation warrant. And the Hesh who turned herself in just so happened to be connected to you.”

“Forgive me for saying so, sir, but if the premise of your assumption is wrong—”

Just as Leon was about to argue, Bishop Beckett raised a hand to stop him.

“It’s fine. This is all just my speculation, without any evidence. As long as no one suddenly testifies against you, the Church’s procedures pose no threat to you.”

Hearing this, the unease in Leon's heart did not diminish—instead, it swelled even further.

“But if it's a force outside the Church, then no evidence is needed. For us, suspicion alone is enough,” Bishop Beckett continued, hands clasped behind his back.

Leon's heart lurched.

He suddenly recalled how Father Auden had mentioned that Bishop Beckett, like the Priest and Caron before him, had once been subjected to an internal Church investigation.

Even then, Leon had suspected that Bishop Beckett was not as clean as he appeared.

A name—one he had long known could influence powers beyond the Church—surfaced in his mind.

That force truly had no need for evidence.

They stood in opposition to the law itself.

Once suspicion fell upon a target, it was sufficient reason for them to act.

They could be even more dangerous than the Church!

Leon's heart sank as he sharply realized that if those people turned their suspicious gaze toward him, Rena's situation would be the same!

In an instant, he prepared himself for battle, though his expression remained calm, betraying no hostility.

Bishop Beckett was undoubtedly a Transcendent.

The fact that he had dared to stand in front of Aaron while Sally was holding Cursed Blood proved that he had methods to deal with it.

However, Bishop Beckett did not necessarily know that the blood was actually Leon's power.

After all, a Witch's Blessing on a man was profoundly counterintuitive.

If used properly, that lethal ability might still find a breakthrough.

Yet there was still a question lingering in Leon's mind.

If Bishop Beckett truly represented that force, and suspicion alone was enough reason for them to act, then there was no need for him to come here to confirm anything.

For them, this conversation only added unnecessary trouble.

Bishop Beckett continued to watch him with a half-smile, hands behind his back, showing not the slightest hint of tension.

“Do you want to save them?” he suddenly asked.

At that moment, Leon felt as if his heartbeat stopped for an instant.

“Them”? Did that mean not only Rena, but also Melissa—and even... Sally?

He could not be sure whether Bishop Beckett was deliberately provoking him into revealing a flaw, or if there was some other purpose behind it.

But if such a possibility truly existed... even if it meant gambling with his life, he would not hesitate in the slightest!

Vaguely, the future that Rena had painted for the two of them together faded from his mind, replaced by a narrow, perilous path stretching along the edge of a cliff, extending endlessly forward with no end in sight.

His expression darkened as he fixed his burning gaze on Bishop Beckett.

“What do you want?”

At this moment, he was no longer Inquisitor Leon Set, but the fugitive Fenrir speaking.

And the man before him was no longer Bishop Beckett, but the agent of some supreme lord of the Underworld.

“More than twenty years ago, someone once faced the same choice as you, sir. His ending, however, was different from yours. My master greatly admires your approach, and thus specifically instructed me to extend to you a sincere invitation—”

Bishop Beckett straightened his posture with hands behind his back.

The smile on his face was courteous and impeccable, like a butler conveying his master’s words to a guest.

“Mr. Fenrir, the Earl... wishes to see you.”

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

# **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 76 : The Earl - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 76 : The Earl**

Chapter 76: The Earl

North of South Harbor County, River Valley County, Helenburg.

Inside a villa built on the mountainside, the young Jay Sid sat beside a square dining table, gazing out through the window.

This side of the villa's outer wall stood right at the edge of a cliff, from where one could see a great river flowing into the sea.

South Harbor County and River Valley County lay on opposite sides of the river's mouth, north and south respectively, facing each other across the water.

Helenburg was the largest port city on the River Valley County side.

At the same time, this place marked the southernmost boundary of the Earl's sphere of influence—but very soon, that boundary would cross the river and extend into South Harbor County on the opposite shore.

Jay was a senior operative managing the Earl's businesses within River Valley County, and he was also the Earl's own nephew.

Over the past few years, while overseeing operations in River Valley County, he had constantly tried to expand into South Harbor County.

However, that expansion could hardly be called smooth.

The local kingpin, Mr. Griffin, had established extremely solid relationships with the local elite.

At his side was also a seasoned professional who handled his operations and offered advice.

Jay had even suffered several losses at their hands.

It was not until the past year that the Earl began to truly value the territory of South Harbor County and personally poured resources into it.

Only then was the local kingpin finally dealt with.

Mr. Griffin was gone, but the local elites' demand for magical potions remained.

The market there was now a massive cake, urgently in need of someone to take it over.

By all logic, this business should have been handed to Jay, whose territory was closest.

Yet Jay felt no confidence at all.

Over the previous years, his performance had not been particularly outstanding.

There had even been one incident where he was carelessly investigated, forcing the Earl to pull strings to clean up after him.

After the Earl personally sent people to handle the struggle over South Harbor County, Jay was no longer allowed to take part.

This left him deeply uneasy.

At one point, he even suspected that the reason the Earl had not informed him of the progress was that he planned to stabilize South Harbor County first, then force Mr.

Griffin to submit and appoint him as a new subordinate in charge of that territory.

The Earl had done this sort of thing—turning enemies into subordinates—more than once.

He possessed that kind of magnanimity.

As long as someone was useful, even if they had once been an opponent, he was willing to take them under his banner.

Conversely, if someone was deemed useless in his eyes, they would be discarded without mercy.

If another operative took over South Harbor County and managed it better than Jay had managed River Valley County, Jay's position would become extremely awkward.

Now that the situation in South Harbor County seemed to be settled, the Earl had taken the initiative to come to Helenburg to visit him and arrange a meeting here.

As for how the Earl would announce the outcome, Jay felt anything but certain.

At that moment, the villa's elderly butler entered and formally announced, "Mr. Sid, the Earl has arrived."

Jay hurriedly rose from his seat.

Moments later, a middle-aged gentleman entered the room with a cane, handing his hat to the butler who had come to receive him.

He appeared to be in his forties, tall and solidly built.

His hair and beard were neatly trimmed, and he had a kindly face, with what seemed like an elegant smile permanently resting at the corners of his mouth.

In the Empire's underworld, there was almost no one who had not heard of the Earl's name.

Yet nowadays, apart from a few surviving old-timers and those within the Earl's own organization, very few people had ever seen him, or knew his true identity.

Few knew that the "Earl" was in fact truly an Imperial Earl—Isaac Mastan, an Earl of the Empire enfeoffed in the eastern Foyle region, and one of the most powerful lords in the eastern part of the Empire.

"Jay, my child, it's been a long time," he said, breaking into hearty laughter the moment he saw Jay stand up, and warmly pulling him into a strong embrace.

"It has been a long time, Uncle," Jay forced a smile as he returned the embrace of the Earl Foyle.

While they hugged, Jay took a glance outside before the butler closed the door and withdrew.

The Earl Foyle seemed to have brought only a single burly attendant, who had found a spot in the courtyard to sit down and rest on his own.

"How has Celia been? I haven't contacted her in a long time," the Earl Foyle said with a smile as he sat down.

"My mother is recuperating at a monastery in Arzna. She's in much better health than last year..." Jay replied, sitting down across the square table.

The two chatted amiably about family matters and then about the business here, and the atmosphere seemed very harmonious.

Yet Jay's unease did not diminish in the slightest.

Looking at the Earl Foyle's face, where the smile never faded, he could not guess the man's thoughts at all.

Finally, seizing an opportunity, he steered the conversation back on track.

“Speaking of that, Uncle, there’s been quite a bit of news coming from South Harbor County recently. Have the people you arranged there been handling things smoothly?”

“Very smoothly. They’ve basically completed their task. The local suppliers have already been uprooted by the Church. The Mr. Griffin you often mentioned is dead,” the Earl Foyle said calmly.

“He... is dead?” Jay blinked, clearly taken aback.

“Why are you so surprised?” the Earl asked with a smile.

“You were the one who killed him, Jay.”

Jay’s expression stiffened.

He realized that the Earl had indeed learned of his little maneuver.

Earlier, when extremely high-purity Mana had suddenly begun appearing in South Harbor County, the Earl had attached great importance to it.

That was why he personally made use of his connections within the Church, allowing the local Inquisition to put pressure on Mr. Griffin.

Jay had heard some internal rumors.

The Earl’s people there seemed to have approached matters through local clients and successfully grabbed hold of Mr. Griffin’s tail.

Jay had also learned of Mr. Griffin’s identity and the location of his estate.

But the Earl, who was usually decisive and swift in action, had suddenly slowed his move against Mr. Griffin at that point, making Jay extremely nervous.

Jay guessed that the Earl might have taken an interest in Mr. Griffin because of that high-purity Mana and was considering absorbing him.

If Mr. Griffin were successfully absorbed, not only would Jay lose any chance of taking over South Harbor County, but there would also be a former adversary stationed right next to his own territory.

If Mr. Griffin’s business performed even better, Jay’s standing would become dangerously unstable.

After much deliberation, Jay sent out his most trusted assassin, intending to kill Potter ahead of time.

But several days passed, and the assassin never returned.

Instead, news of Potter's death came through other channels.

Jay had not yet fully figured out what had happened when the Earl suddenly paid a visit to Helenburg.

"It seems you still don't fully understand what happened, so let me explain," the Earl said with a smile.

"Your man successfully took out Mr. Griffin, but on that same day, the people I planted in the Inquisition also raided the estate. They ran into each other. Your assassin was captured on the spot and had no choice but to commit suicide." Seeing Jay's expression change drastically, he added reassuringly, "But don't worry. Bishop Beckett will handle it properly. Even if the Church opens a separate case, they won't be able to investigate anything."

Yet Jay's face fell even further.

His assassin had actually run into the Earl's people inside the Church—and been captured on the spot!

His unauthorized action had been caught red-handed by the Earl's people.

His man had interfered with the Earl's plans.

And he had caused the organization to lose an excellent assassin for nothing.

This was nothing short of a catastrophic blunder.

"Uncle, I only wanted to help. I just thought I should contribute somehow. I knew nothing of your plan, so I had no idea things would turn out like this!" Jay hurriedly explained.

"Jay, did I ever tell you not to do unnecessary things?" The Earl interlaced his fingers on the table and scrutinized Jay's eyes.

"You are my own nephew. Between us is a bond of trust thicker than blood. In this line of work, the people one can trust at their side are as important as one's own fingers. I let you manage River Valley County precisely because of this. But it seems you don't trust your uncle that much."

Jay realized that the Earl had already seen through his reason for killing Mr. Griffin, and a chill ran through his heart.

This special meeting the Earl Foyle had arranged was indeed to call him to account.

“Uncle, I...” He desperately searched for an excuse, but could not think of a single word.

“Since we’ve come this far, you should be mentally prepared. A mistake, in the end, still calls for punishment.” As the Earl spoke, he took out a small bottle, placed it on the table, and pushed it toward his nephew.

“Jay, drink this.”

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

## **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 77 : I’ll Give These Corpses Away as Gifts - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 77 : I’ll Give These Corpses Away as Gifts**

Chapter 77: I’ll Give These Corpses Away as Gifts

Jay saw the bottle of medicine and stood up on the spot, his face draining of all color.

“Uncle! Is it really necessary to go this far over something so small?” He glared at the Earl Foyle, his face filled with disbelief.

Although he had indeed taken action behind the Earl’s back, Potter had still been their competitor at the time.

Sending people to assassinate him could hardly be considered a betrayal of the organization.

Yet the Earl was now making him take poison and kill himself?

“Jay, what you need to do right now is take responsibility, rebuild the trust between us, and drink it.” The Earl Foyle replied calmly, without the slightest change in expression.

Jay looked at the bottle, his heart wavering violently.

So this was just a test? The Earl did not actually intend to kill him? As long as he dared to drink it, this matter would be over?

He reached out, picked up the bottle, opened it, and sniffed it.

A sweet, delightful fragrance entered his nose, and his expression abruptly changed.

“Uncle, this is... a mana solvent, isn’t it?” he asked, staring at the Earl.

“Yes. Drink it, take responsibility, and this matter will be settled.” The Earl nodded.

Jay’s eyelids twitched.

Potions configured with mana possessed all kinds of miraculous effects.

For example, longevity potions could slow aging and allow a person to return to youth.

However, the Church strictly prohibited potions.

This was not only due to hostility toward Moilai, but also because all potions—strictly speaking, mana itself—had severe side effects on those who had received the blessings of the Four Gods of Origin.

Once a blessed individual ingested a certain amount of mana, necrosis would occur in parts of the body.

Usually it would not be fatal, but the necrotic area might be blindness in one eye, deafness in one ear, the loss of a hand or a foot, or an irreversible pathological change in some internal organ...

And when the Earl had trained Jay in the past, he had personally arranged for him to receive the Blessing of the God of War.

This was the punishment the Earl had prepared for him.

Jay let out a long breath and set the bottle down.

“You’re not drinking it?” The Earl Foyle raised an eyebrow.

“Uncle, I know you’re very disappointed in me. How about this—I’ll give up the business here.” Jay spread his hands.

“If you’re dissatisfied with me, you can replace me. I’ll withdraw.”

He had already earned enough money in this position and had secretly accumulated his own forces.

It was more than enough for him to leave the Earl’s territory and live freely.

Crippling himself by drinking a potion in exchange for forgiveness was simply not worth it.

It was far better to withdraw outright and leave intact.

Staying by the Earl’s side in constant fear was worse.

He had long considered the possibility of the Earl calling him to account and had already prepared a contingency plan.

“Don’t say such childish things. In this line of work, there’s no such thing as quitting whenever you want. Be good, Jay. Drink it.” The Earl’s tone remained unchanged.

This response was exactly what Jay had expected.

As a core operative, he was deeply entangled in the business chain of River Valley County and held far too much information.

If he retired peacefully, that would be one thing.

But leaving under such unpleasant circumstances would make the Earl regard him as a latent threat who might betray the organization at any time.

“Sorry, Uncle. On this matter, I must refuse!” Jay’s attitude suddenly hardened, his voice rising sharply.

At that moment, there was a knock on the door.

A burly, middle-aged man with a full beard pushed it open and poked his head inside.

Jay recognized him as the attendant who had accompanied the Earl.

The attendant looked listless, even somewhat dejected, and Jay caught a whiff of alcohol on him.

“What is it, Johnny?” the Earl asked, turning toward the man.

“Uh... sorry to interrupt you, but a lot of people just rushed in outside. Did either of you invite them?” Johnny stepped aside and opened the door wider so the two of them could see clearly.

Through the half-open corridor outside, the courtyard came into view.

A row of soldiers holding steel shields had appeared, with another row of musketeers behind them.

Using the shield soldiers as cover, they had formed ranks and were aiming in this direction.

Johnny was standing squarely within firing range, yet he seemed completely unconcerned.

“.....” The Earl said nothing and looked at Jay.

“Sorry, Uncle. My people are here to pick me up.” Jay straightened his clothes and poured the bottle of medicine directly onto the ground.

“Please rest assured, I have no intention of doing anything to you. This is purely for my own protection. I know that here and now, you could kill me easily, but whether those people outside would let you leave safely is another matter entirely.”

From the very beginning, he had secretly brought men up the mountain and set an ambush in the nearby forest.

When he shouted loudly, they would rush in to rescue him.

The Earl met Jay’s gaze expressionlessly.

Jay was still extremely tense.

He knew that the Earl Foyle had once been a Fully Appointed Third-Rank Knight of the Church and a powerful Transcendent.

That attendant also looked far from simple.

If a fight really broke out here, his odds of winning were actually quite low.

He could only gamble that the Earl did not want to take the risk and would choose to let him leave after weighing the pros and cons.

Jay had already made all the arrangements for his escape.

Once down the mountain, he would take his packed assets and leave the Earl’s territory for the western part of the Empire—or even leave the Empire altogether.

“Fine. If you don’t want to drink it, then go.” The Earl Foyle suddenly nodded, his demeanor still calm and composed.

Jay froze.

This was the outcome he wanted, but he had not expected the other party to concede so easily.

“Uncle, I’m withdrawing now. I only want to ensure my own safety. Unless necessary, I don’t want to betray you either. I hope you won’t push me too hard.” Jay said seriously.

“Don’t worry, Jay. Since you desire freedom so much, I respect your wishes. After all, you are my nephew. Safe travels.” the Earl replied.

Hearing this, Jay finally relaxed slightly.

He withdrew from the room into the courtyard, took cover behind the formation of soldiers outside, and then, escorted by his men, went down the only mountain path.

Johnny stood at the doorway, watching them disappear.

He pulled out a tin flask from his chest, opened it, and took a sip, then turned to the Earl.

“You’re really letting him go just like that? That doesn’t seem like you.”

“Everyone has their own choices.” the Earl replied, seated in place.

“You just seized South Harbor County, and now no one’s managing River Valley County either. With two such huge pieces of fat meat, which cadre are you planning to hand them to?” Johnny asked while twisting the flask’s cap.

“Those people already have enough territory. When wolves in the pack grow stronger than the wolf king, they start thinking about taking his place.” The Earl thought for a moment before answering.

“I think it’s time to cultivate some newcomers. Bishop Becket encountered an interesting young man in South Harbor County. He’s just like I was back then—he found a Witch, raised Magical Beasts in a labyrinth, and refined mana. I’m rather interested in him.”

“You still have so many promising young people under you. You’re really going to pick some suddenly emerged mana dealer?” Johnny did not quite understand.

“His conditions are simply too suitable. As for whether he can actually be used, that will depend on further observation. This trip, my main purpose is to meet him. Before that, South Harbor County will be handed to Becket to manage. Johnny, can you temporarily help me take over the business in River Valley County?” The Earl looked at Johnny.

For any cadre in the organization, suddenly gaining the profits of an entire county’s business—even temporarily—would be a cause for great joy.

But Johnny instead showed an expression of annoyance.

“Are you serious? If I leave, who’s going to manage the fleet?”

“Have your people temporarily handle transport at the entrances and exits. It won’t be a big problem.” the Earl replied calmly.

Johnny sighed upon hearing this.

After quite a while, he asked, “Then can we leave now?”

The Earl took out a pocket watch and glanced at it.

“Yes. Let’s go.”

The two of them left the villa one after the other and went downhill along the mountain path.

At the foot of the mountain was a small dock, where a large cargo ship was bobbing with the waves in the distance.

There was also a road leading to the urban area of Helenburg.

Both land and sea routes were convenient.

Just as they were nearing the mountain’s base, they saw a convoy of carriages blocking the road below.

People crowded around it—the fully armed soldiers Jay had brought earlier were still waiting there!

They were preparing to go up the mountain.

When they spotted the Earl coming down, the soldiers immediately formed ranks and once again took up aiming stances.

The Earl’s gaze swept over them, and beside the formation he saw Jay being supported by others.

Standing on the steps of the mountain path, Jay shouted down, “What is it, Jay? Didn’t you say you were leaving?”

“Uncle...” Jay’s face was deathly pale.

He clutched his stomach and forced out his words with difficulty.

“Was it you?”

The moment he went down the mountain, he began to feel unwell.

By the time he sat in the carriage, his abdomen felt as if it were being sliced apart, and his hands and feet went numb.

In an instant, he realized he had been poisoned, and that it was inseparable from the Earl.

He immediately ordered the carriage to stop and was just about to bring his men back up the mountain when the Earl came down again.

“Yes. You should know by now that there are my people around you. Poisoning you would have been very easy.” the Earl admitted frankly.

“You poisoned me from the very beginning? Why did you have to do this?” Jay shook his head weakly, gnashing his teeth as he stretched out a hand.

“Give me the antidote! Right now!!”

“I gave it to you. You poured it out.” the Earl replied expressionlessly.

Jay froze on the spot.

“That bottle of medicine mixed with mana also contained the antidote you wanted. If you drank it, you would pay a price, but at least you wouldn’t die. But you made your choice. I said it before—since you value freedom so highly... even above your own life, I respect your wishes. After all, you are my nephew.” The Earl raised one hand expressionlessly and waved it.

“You should have known the price of doing this long ago. Safe travels, Jay.”

Jay trembled with rage.

Suddenly his eyes split wide, and he screamed the Earl’s name at the top of his lungs: “Isaac Mastan!!!”

In the next instant, he was about to order the soldiers to fire in unison when distant cannon fire suddenly roared, drowning out his voice.

The moored cargo sailing ship swung its loaded cannons into position.

At the same moment the Earl waved his hand, it fired a full volley toward the mountain’s base.

Heavy cannonballs crashed down around the musketeer formation, throwing up clouds of dirt.

Two of the shots slammed directly into the ranks, sending flesh and blood flying, screams filling the air.

Amid the swirling dust, a beast-like roar rang out.

Then, the previously feeble Jay actually burst out from the dust cloud.

His entire body was soaked in blood, his muscles swelling until they nearly tore through his clothes.

The Blessing of the God of War allowed him to drastically enhance his physical abilities for a short time, even in a near-death state.

Sword in one hand and a long-barreled musket snatched up in the other, he aimed at the Earl.

His eyes were bloodshot as he stared him down.

Even if it meant death, he would take the other man with him!

The previously languid Johnny suddenly stepped forward.

At blinding speed, he raised his hand and snapped his fingers.

A bolt of lightning shot from his fingertips and struck Jay before he could fire.

Jay's entire body went rigid as he was electrocuted, and he was flung several meters away.

He hit the ground, twitched a few times, and soon stopped breathing.

Johnny Wellman silently lowered his hand.

This time, the Earl had brought only him to the meeting, but as a former commander of a Church Knight Order, he was the Earl's most powerful subordinate.

"So many corpses again..." Johnny put his hands on his hips and shook his head, then turned to the Earl for instructions.

"Same as usual, toss them all into the sea? Should your nephew's body be buried separately?"

"No. Preserve all the corpses properly." The Earl replied without hesitation.

"Tomorrow I'll be meeting the young man Becket brought. I'll give these corpses away as gifts."

"What?" Johnny frowned.

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

# **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 78 : Fenrir and the Earl - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 78 : Fenrir and the Earl**

Chapter 78: Fenrir and the Earl

The next day, at a mountain villa in Helenburg, Leon sat at a square table and turned his head to gaze out the window.

He saw a broad river.

In the distance, the estuary was faintly visible.

One sailboat after another traveled back and forth across the river surface reflecting the setting sun.

The Holden River was one of the busiest waterways for imperial shipping.

River Valley County and South Harbor County lay on the river's southern and northern banks respectively, both having built prosperous port cities along its course.

Bishop Becket had arranged for him to meet with the Earl, with the location set in Helenburg of River Valley County.

The journey had lasted a full six hours.

He had gone from carriage to ferry, then back to carriage.

For the final stretch, he had been blindfolded until he was delivered to the foot of the mountain.

After that, he had been led up the mountain and brought to this villa.

The person he was about to meet was a major figure with enormous influence in both the underworld and the legitimate world.

Yet even Leon himself found it surprising that his mind was very calm.

He had already struggled through desperate situations.

Now that the other party had proposed a meeting, it meant there was room for negotiation.

No matter how bad things became, they could not be worse than when he had previously been forced into a dead end by this very person.

Suddenly, he heard movement at the doorway and withdrew his gaze, turning to look.

A middle-aged gentleman stood alone at the entrance, smiling at him.

“This is my favorite spot in the whole house. The view is excellent—especially at dusk, when the entire river turns a beautiful orange.”

In that instant, Leon was basically certain who the visitor was.

From the man’s speech and bearing, it was naturally evident that he was the unquestionable master of this place.

Leon was just about to stand and offer a greeting when the man smiled and raised a hand.

“You’re the guest. Just stay seated.”

After that, the Earl sat down across from Leon and then suddenly asked, “Any dietary restrictions?”

Leon froze for a moment, then shook his head.

The Earl snapped his fingers toward the doorway.

Someone immediately entered the room, spread a tablecloth, and set the tableware for both of them.

Next, a bowl of red soup and a dish of coarse oat flour were served to each of them, and honey-colored lemon wine was poured into their glasses.

“They probably didn’t have time to prepare food for you along the way. Let’s eat first and talk afterward. Foyle’s local cuisine—I hope it suits your taste.”

As he spoke, the Earl was the first to raise his glass in a toast.

Leon also raised his glass in return, and both took a sip.

Then the Earl poured the coarse oat flour into the soup, stirred it with a spoon, and began to eat.

Leon followed the Earl’s example in preparing the dish.

He scooped up a spoonful and put it into his mouth.

The lamb soup, mixed with oat flour and flavored with the sour and spicy taste of onions and tomatoes, had a thick texture.

The aroma of spices lay somewhere between mint and lemongrass, refreshing and invigorating.

The mutton's gamey flavor was very light, sliced thin, and melted in the mouth.

After this soup came deep-fried cheese balls coated in breadcrumbs, then pan-grilled sea eel fillets, and finally apple-and-honey pie cut into pieces.

The dishes could not be called extravagant—by the standards of entertaining guests, they were even somewhat plain—but every dish was executed flawlessly.

The Earl did not say a single word while eating, focusing solely on the meal.

Leon also refrained from starting any conversation.

At first, he ate a little stiffly, but later he relaxed.

After all the travel by boat and carriage, he truly was hungry.

Only after they were fully fed and all the bowls and plates had been cleared away did the Earl wipe his mouth with a napkin and finally raise the main topic.

“Mr. Fenrir, you should have considered the purpose of my asking to meet you, correct?”

“Do you want me to work for you?” Leon looked at the Earl and asked.

The Earl had guessed his true identity but had not touched him.

Instead, he had invited him to meet.

Naturally, Leon would think the Earl intended to recruit him.

“In present-day South Harbor County, Mr. Griffin, who controlled the mana business, is dead. In Hamel Town, Caron Eso is dead. There is now a vacancy in the position of Director of the Inquisition. If there were someone who could conveniently fill both of these vacancies at once, business throughout this region would flow without obstruction.” The Earl stared straight at Leon as he spoke.

Leon revealed a look of surprise.

“You want me to do it?”

In his expectations, the Earl probably wanted him to supply goods for them, just as he had previously produced mana in the labyrinth for Mr. Griffin.

But the moment the Earl opened his mouth, he painted a picture so grand that Leon had never even imagined it.

Leaving aside replacing Mr. Griffin in controlling the underground market, becoming the Director of the Inquisition in Hamel Town in place of Caron Eso? This pie was drawn far too big.

“Imagine such a scene. You become the Director of the Inquisition in Hamel Town. You know the Church’s movements like the back of your hand, and at the same time you firmly control the entire underground market of South Harbor County. You can use your authority to shelter tens of millions in business every year. And moreover, you have a way to protect the woman currently detained in the Inquisition.”

The Earl smiled faintly.

“Sacrificing a woman who won’t live much longer is indeed the most rational choice. But I’ve heard that you seem to be trying to treat her illness. If there’s a chance, you would still want to save her, wouldn’t you?”

Leon’s heart stirred slightly.

If he controlled the entire Inquisition, then after Sairi was sentenced, he would have the opportunity to apply for her to serve her term under local detention.

He could then ensure that Sairi received treatment with magical potions at any time.

Her lifespan could be extended by at least five years.

During those five years, it might even be possible to find a cure for Saltification Disease.

He had even previously considered a plan to rescue her by swapping her out through feigned death.

With the authority of a Director, that plan was no longer completely impossible.

And with both the power once held by Caron Eso and the wealth controlled by Henry Potter being gathered into his hands at the same time, it was impossible for him not to be tempted.

“From your expression, I can tell you’re interested.” The smile on the Earl’s face grew even broader.

“But why me?” Leon quickly calmed down and raised the question.

The Earl certainly had many people under him.

Why would such a good opportunity fall to an outsider like him?

“Because there is truly no one more suitable than you. You have cooperated with Mr. Griffin and have a certain understanding of the local underground market. At the same time, you are an Inquisitor in Hamel Town and meet the basic conditions to rise to that position. Moreover, Aaron seems to appreciate you. If you have the chance to interact with him again in the future, that connection alone is worth my investment in you.” The Earl explained.

“Who exactly is Director Aaron?” Leon asked tentatively.

The Priest had once analyzed that Aaron’s background must be formidable.

From the looks of it, the Earl knew the inside story.

“In the future, you’ll have the chance to know. What you need to know now is that he doesn’t know the true situation on my side, nor does he know yours. In front of him, keep your mouth shut.” The Earl replied.

Leon nodded.

It seemed that Bishop Becket was someone the Earl had deliberately placed by Aaron’s side.

He appeared to be helping Aaron accumulate achievements, but had no intention of letting Aaron know that he controlled underground businesses forbidden by the Church.

“However, the most critical reason I chose you is your methods.” At this point, the Earl smiled with nostalgia.

“I never expected that besides myself, there would actually be someone else who cooperated with a Witch and raised Magical Beasts in a labyrinth!”

“You also once...?” Leon was somewhat surprised.

“Twenty-five years ago, when I was still an Apprentice Knight, I once encountered a Witch during a labyrinth exploration. I didn’t capture her. Instead, I chose to cooperate with her, letting her raise Magical Beasts in the labyrinth and extract mana for me. That was the first fortune I dug up in this business. Later, we lived together. Although for various reasons I couldn’t marry her, she was the only woman I ever truly loved in my life...”

As he spoke to this point, the Earl’s expression shifted from nostalgia to desolation.

“Unfortunately, because of my negligence, she was captured by the Church.”

“Then she...” Leon recalled that Bishop Becket had once mentioned that over twenty years ago, someone had faced the same choice as him, but with a different ending.

“She died.” The Earl’s voice was very soft.

“At the time, the Inquisition had evidence against her and other accomplices. To protect me, she chose to take her own life.”

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

## **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 79 : Mission: Two Hundred Grams Per Year - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 79 : Mission: Two Hundred Grams Per Year**

Chapter 79: Mission: Two Hundred Grams Per Year

“So, the reason you immediately thought that someone was raising magical beasts inside a labyrinth, and that someone was assisting a witch, was because you had personally experienced all of this yourself?” Leon confirmed with the Earl.

“Yes. I suppose you could say it was fate’s guidance.” The Earl chuckled softly.

Leon let out a small breath of relief inwardly.

Bishop Beckett had once mentioned that whether it was the assault on the labyrinth or the suspicion falling on Leon, it had all actually been prompted by the Earl’s hints.

That constant feeling of being seen through had made Leon deeply wary of the Earl.

But now it seemed that the Earl’s accurate deductions were mainly based on his own past experiences, rather than because he was some monstrously omniscient being.

“And you accomplished what I failed to do back then. You actually found a woman on the brink of death who was willing to take the blame and become a witch for your sake. Someone was willing to sacrifice herself for you, and you possessed both the compassion to save others and the decisiveness to make hard choices. All of this gives me a very high opinion of you,” the Earl said with a smile.

From these words, Leon sharply grasped an important piece of information.

The Earl believed that Sally had become a witch in order to take the blame.

This meant that at least one thing had successfully deceived both the Earl and Bishop Beckett—they did not know that Sally was not actually a witch, and that the one who truly possessed the power of that malignant cursed blood was Leon himself.

At that moment, the Earl suddenly changed the subject.

“However, whether you are truly competent still requires a period of observation. I need you to prove your value to me.”

“What do you want me to do?” Leon asked.

“I want to assign you a task first. By this day next year, you are to deliver two hundred grams of mana,” the Earl said.

“Two hundred grams?” Leon was startled.

Even last year, including the mana Rena had initially handed over to Hannah Weisland, their total mana output had only amounted to about a quarter of this requirement.

Raising it all at once to two hundred grams sounded almost unreasonably demanding.

“As for purity, it must reach at least seventy-five percent. Among that, at least fifty grams must be high-grade, reaching eighty percent purity,” the Earl continued, adding further requirements.

“That’s honestly quite difficult,” Leon said truthfully.

They no longer had even a single magical beast on hand, and the labyrinth had now been sealed off.

Just restarting production would be difficult, let alone meeting the purity requirements.

The purity the Earl demanded basically required magical beasts that had consumed human flesh to be reliably achieved.

Moreover, Leon himself found it very hard to refine mana of that level of purity.

Only Rena could do it, which meant he would have to drag Rena into this matter again!

“Don’t worry. I will also provide you with some support,” the Earl said, snapping his fingers.

Immediately, someone carried in a large chest.

When the chest was opened, Leon saw neatly rolled gold vouchers and stacks of gold coins arranged inside.

“There are two million Fenni in here, as my investment in you and also as a deposit for that batch of goods. Take it as start-up capital. Once you meet my required shipment volume, there will be another four million Fenni as the remaining payment. Any surplus beyond that will be purchased separately. In addition, I have some gifts for you. Since we just finished eating, I won’t show them to you now—they are some corpses, all properly processed by me. One of them belonged to someone who had received a blessing,” the Earl explained.

Leon revealed a look of surprise.

He was not surprised by the money, but by the corpses the Earl mentioned.

The Earl clearly knew that feeding corpses to magical beasts could increase the purity of mana.

“I can also prepare Moilai’s altar for you. As for magical beasts, I have channels to help you acquire some, but there will be limits on both quantity and type. Someone will contact you about that,” the Earl continued.

Leon gradually came back to his senses.

With magical beasts, the basic conditions for producing mana were in place, but there were still some difficulties to overcome.

“The labyrinth near Hamel Town has already been sealed off, and the amount you’re asking for requires large-scale breeding. It would be very easy to be investigated by the Church again. Didn’t you say earlier that Aaron doesn’t know you’re involved in these businesses? If he continues serving as Director, the moment he notices anything, he’ll initiate an investigation!” Leon said.

“You don’t need to worry about safety at all. After Aaron resolves this case, he will soon be transferred away. After that, Bishop Beckett will temporarily take over as the local Director for at least a year. During that period, he will manage my businesses in South Harbor County and provide you with many safeguards. At the very least, when you operate in that original labyrinth, there will no longer be anyone from the Church investigating you,” the Earl said calmly.

For a moment, Leon found himself unable to raise any objections.

If Bishop Beckett temporarily served as Director, that meant Leon would essentially not be investigated by the Inquisition at all.

On the contrary, he might even receive protection and assistance from it, allowing him to promptly grasp the Church’s movements.

The risks would undoubtedly be greatly reduced.

Moreover, if his work went smoothly enough, he should be able to secure conditions for Sally to receive treatment while imprisoned.

Funds, magical beasts, location, and even security guarantees—everything was in place.

The basic conditions were already complete.

The only problem he needed to overcome was output.

The conditions provided by the Earl could be said to be extremely comprehensive.

To demand even more, to the point of being spoon-fed, would seem unreasonable.

Two hundred grams of mana, a total payment of six million Fenni—this was his goal for the coming year, and also the first task the Earl had assigned him.

“What happens if I fail to meet the requirements?” Leon asked.

“That depends on the situation. If you can at least supply part of the goods, I am still willing to pay to purchase them. However, in that case, you would only be a supplier. I would withdraw most of my support. The opportunity I’m giving you is merely priority access. If you can’t do it, I’ll switch to someone else. But regardless, there is no option to withdraw from this. I hope you understand,” the Earl said, staring directly into Leon’s eyes.

Leon nodded.

When he came here to meet the Earl, he already understood that he no longer had the option to stop.

“Don’t be nervous. If the production model you test here succeeds, and we expand it, it might allow us to rid ourselves of our reliance on smuggling. The upper limit of the status you can attain is not merely becoming Caron Eso and Henry Potter at the same time,” the Earl said in an encouraging tone.

Hearing this, Leon suddenly felt puzzled.

“You’ve tried this production model before. Now that you have such power, why haven’t you expanded it on a large scale?”

“Ever since I established smuggling routes through the import and export trade of my own territory, I haven’t tried this method again. Compared to setting production sites within the Empire, smuggling carries much lower risk,” the Earl explained.

“Then why suddenly switch back to this method?” Leon asked.

“Our smuggling partners are heretical nations across the sea. A group of great witches established an organization there called the Witch Gathering. They are our primary trading partners. But recently... some problems have arisen between us,” the Earl offered a cursory explanation.

“You’ll have a chance to learn the details later. For now, just focus on the goal of two hundred grams. I’m very much looking forward to your performance.”

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

## **What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 80 : The Mood Had Reached This Point - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 80 : The Mood Had Reached This Point**

Chapter 80: The Mood Had Reached This Point

River Mouth Village, Rena’s wooden cabin.

“...That’s the current situation.” Leon stood in front of Rena and explained their present predicament in full detail, step by step.

Throughout the entire process, Rena’s reaction shifted from shock to bewilderment.

Only at the end did she finally calm down a little.

After listening to Leon’s explanation and thinking it over repeatedly, she spoke to confirm with him, “So we now have to supply two hundred grams of mana within one year?”

“I’m the one who has to do that.” Leon looked at Rena and reminded her, “Rena, you still have other choices.”

“They know I’m a Witch. Will they really let me go?” Rena frowned in confusion.

“The case closure report will be out soon. By then, your release pending investigation will end as well. Without formal suspicion, they can’t mobilize a Church manhunt against you. They can only rely on their own forces, and as long as you leave their territory, they won’t be able to find you, nor will they bother wasting the effort,” Leon said.

“Then wouldn’t the same apply to you?” Rena shot back.

The case was essentially settled.

The Church's investigative procedures no longer posed a direct threat to the two of them.

The real danger came from the Earl's forces.

The Earl would not easily allow them to withdraw, but as long as they escaped his sphere of influence, the likelihood of being caught would drop drastically.

"I have to stay. If I can meet their requirements, there's a chance to save Mrs. Hesh. And if I run away too, if they decide to retaliate against me, Melissa could be in danger," Leon replied.

He still wanted to find a way to save everyone.

And from Leon's personal perspective, the conditions offered by the Earl were actually extremely generous—six million in total payment, plus control over the underground market of South Harbor County and the Church's enforcement power in Hamel Town.

It was undeniably tempting.

"Without me, can you really produce mana of that purity?" Rena pressed on.

The mana Leon refined was generally about five percent lower in purity than Rena's.

"They provided a batch of processed corpses, including Blessing recipients like Caron. After processing, they can be used to feed Magical Beasts long-term. I should be able to refine that batch to around eighty percent purity. I'll think of a way to deal with the rest. As for the medicine Mrs. Hesh needs, as long as I have the raw materials, I can prepare it myself. I can also try to continue the research," Leon answered.

"But what if you don't meet their requirements? What will they do to you?" Rena revealed her worry.

"As long as I can guarantee a certain level of supply, even if I don't meet their target, they won't do anything to me. They'll still purchase my goods—just that the promised conditions will be withdrawn," Leon said.

"Then Ms. Sally can't be saved, right?" Rena confirmed.

"If we both leave, then Mrs. Hesh will have to be sacrificed, and Melissa will also be in danger. So at the very least, I have to stay. In the worst-case scenario, it just means Mrs. Hesh can't be saved," Leon said.

"So you're telling me to leave by myself now?" Rena narrowed her eyes at Leon.

“Rena, last time I forced you into cooperating with me. This time, you have the right to choose. Whatever you want to do, do it. You don’t need to worry about me,” Leon said softly.

“What I want to do?” Rena suddenly stared straight at Leon.

“Yes...” Leon looked at her and suddenly felt a little uneasy.

Rena clearly didn’t look happy.

Rena bit her lip, then suddenly said with a resentful expression, “Right now I just want to hit you!”

Leon was stunned on the spot and couldn’t say a word.

“What kind of feelings do you think I had when I said those things to you back then? And now you’re telling me I can just leave, telling me not to worry about you—how can you even say something like that? To you, do the things I said back then really mean nothing at all?” As Rena spoke, her eyes began to redden.

“That’s not what I meant...” Leon was completely flustered.

Only then did he realize just how much determination Rena had gathered back then to muster the courage to confess her feelings and propose running away with him.

And now he had suddenly changed his mind, even telling Rena she could leave without worrying about him, as if everything between them could be casually discarded.

To Rena, who had made that resolve and confession, this was undoubtedly hurtful.

“Then what do you mean? Say it!” Rena stared unblinkingly at Leon.

“Before asking me what I want, shouldn’t you first make your own thoughts clear?”

Leon stayed silent for a long while before letting out a sigh.

He then looked seriously into Rena’s eyes and finally spoke his true feelings:

“I want you to stay! I’m sorry—I was being stubborn. Without you, this is really difficult for me... I keep saying I’ll think of a way, but the truth is, I don’t know what to do at all. I want you by my side. I want us to save them together! Rena, can you help me?”

Hearing this, Rena sniffed and finally calmed down.

She muttered, “That’s more like it. You’re the one begging me, you know. I’ll reluctantly help you then.”

Hearing Rena's answer, Leon couldn't help but laugh.

When he asked for her opinion, he had actually been very nervous.

Even though he said he wanted Rena to choose for herself, he was really afraid she would actually choose to leave.

But Rena had already made up her mind long ago.

Having come this far together, they still chose to accompany each other in the end.

Seeing Leon's cheeky grin, Rena snorted and turned her head away, "What are you laughing at? So annoying!"

Leon thought for a moment, then tentatively opened his arms toward Rena.

"W-What are you doing?" Rena looked at him nervously.

"Look, the mood has already reached this point..." Leon spread his hands and smiled awkwardly yet politely.

Rena lowered her head, her face flushed.

But in the end, she still carefully stepped closer to Leon.

Leon took the opportunity to pull her into his arms and held her tightly.

Rena wrapped her arms around him as well, pressing her face against his chest.

After a long while, she softly said,

"At this point, I don't dare hope for any kind of stable life anymore. I accept it. But I've ended up like this all because of you, so you have to take responsibility."

"Mm." Leon gently stroked her hair.

The girl in his arms was petite and soft, stirring a sense of affection.

After quite some time, Rena finally pulled herself out of Leon's embrace.

The two looked at each other and smiled shyly.

Then Leon looked at Rena's face and tentatively leaned closer again.

"What are you trying to do now?" Rena was startled.

“Look, the mood has already reached this point...” Leon raised his eyebrows and reused the same trick.

“It has not! Don’t push your luck!” Rena said, both annoyed and amused, as she pushed Leon’s face away.

“This isn’t playing house. How can a hug alone be enough?” Leon caught Rena’s hand, wrapped an arm around her shoulder, and continued to lean closer.

“Don’t... I-I’m not mentally prepared yet...” Rena was so tense that her whole body stiffened, her face turning bright red.

But in the end, she still closed her eyes.

Leon was actually a little nervous himself.

Their lips met only for an instant—a fleeting kiss like a dragonfly skimming water.

After they parted, Leon lowered his head to look at Rena, while Rena kept her head down, not daring to look at him.

After a moment of silence, Rena shyly asked, “Why aren’t you saying anything?”

“It was too fast just now. I didn’t get to feel it properly...” Leon smacked his lips thoughtfully.

“Let’s try again.”

“No way, get away from me!” Rena pushed Leon away in embarrassment this time.

Seeing her reaction, Leon couldn’t help but laugh again.

A moment later, he reined in his smile and said sincerely to Rena, “Thank you, Rena. Really.”

“Who told us to be accomplices...” Rena muttered softly in reply.

After thinking for a moment, she looked at Leon again and asked, “So what do we do next?”

“We wait for now. We have to wait until after the case is closed and Director Aaron is transferred away before we can start working. I also need to find a new place to live first...” Leon said as he thought through the next steps.

“You need to find somewhere to live?” Rena asked instinctively.

“The Hesh family’s house has already been sealed off, and it was mortgaged long ago anyway,” Leon replied.

“Then...” Rena hesitated, as if wanting to suggest something.

Leon sensed it and stared straight at Rena, waiting.

“Then do you want to... just move in with me...”

“Sure!!”

Before Rena could finish, Leon answered eagerly.

“I wasn’t done talking!” Rena was a bit dumbfounded.

“I already heard it. I’ll go back to the team quarters to pack right now!” Leon was already raring to go.

“I—I meant you’d sleep in the empty room my grandmother left behind!” Rena pointed emphatically toward the other room.

“...Of course, that’s exactly what I was thinking,” Leon replied after a brief pause.

Seeing the intense look in the man’s eyes, Rena suddenly felt a sense of crisis.

“Maybe we should forget it...”

Her mind had already conjured an image of this man sneaking into her room while spouting nonsense like “the mood has already reached this point.” Letting someone like this live in her house—wasn’t that inviting a wolf into the home?

“Not the empty room? Then which room would it be...” Leon instantly misinterpreted her meaning, his gaze already drifting toward Rena’s bedroom.

“You’re sleeping in the cellar!!” Rena snapped angrily.

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