

Stay At home 361

Chapter 361: I Have A Request

Michael sat in a wooden chair in an intricately crafted wooden cabin. He wore a nervous expression as he looked at the old man with his hand resting on Vivian's shoulder, and he asked, "Master Adams, how is Vivian's condition?"

"City Lord, the frosty energy within Young Mistress's meridians has indeed almost completely disappeared. Even the frosty energy in some of her smaller meridians has receded significantly. I don't know what she did, but it's much more effective than using my fire magic to treat her body. If this type of treatment can continue, there's a chance that all of the frosty energy could be expelled from her body," Adams replied with a surprised expression on his wrinkly face. He then asked, "Could it be that you found a more powerful fire-type magic caster? Or you fed Young Mistress a fire-type spirit fruit?"

"Is that true, Master Adams?" Michael's eyes immediately lit up with excitement upon hearing that.

"Can it really expel all of the frosty energy in my body?" Vivian was also very animated. Her life had been a constant struggle, in which she could never sleep well, and wasn't allowed to eat many of her favorite foods.

Living like that was more painful than death to her.

"You know that I never lie, City Lord." Adams shook his head with a smile. He then turned to Vivian, and said, "But I really want to know just which master was able to provide such effective treatment? I'm a little embarrassed for wasting your time for so many years when there was a better alternative out there."

"There is no better fire-type magic caster in Chaos City than you, Master Adams. She didn't eat any high-level spirit fruit, either. Instead..." The excitement on Michael's face was replaced by a peculiar expression as he tried to explain the situation.

"Grandpa Adams, I didn't eat any spirit fruits or find other magic casters. All I did was eat a spicy grilled fish tonight, and my entire body was drenched with sweat afterward. Then, I went back home, and immediately felt better. The only possibility is that the spicy grilled fish did this," Vivian answered in her father's stead. Ever since she was 10, she had to come to Adams once per month to be treated using his fire magic. If it weren't for the fact that she didn't have much aptitude in the way of magic, she would have probably been taken in as his disciple. Even so, they shared a very close relationship, and she would often come to visit him, even outside of their monthly appointments.

"Spicy grilled fish?" Adams looked at Vivian with a perplexed expression, and asked, "Why does it sound like some kind of dish? Could it be that that dish was responsible for this?"

"It is indeed a dish, and it's a super delicious spicy dish." Vivian nodded vehemently. Her face was glowing with excitement as she confirmed, "Grandpa Adams, does that mean I'll only have to eat a spicy grilled fish a day, and my body will slowly recover?"

“If it really was this spicy grilled fish dish that alleviated the frosty energy in your body, then it shows that the dish is a very effective remedy for you. If you keep eating it every day, it should be able to slowly eradicate the frosty energy in your body. Even if it can’t completely cure you, as long as it can rid your meridians of frosty energy, then you’ll be able to lead a normal life.” Adams smiled, and nodded.

“Yay! All I want is to be able to sleep well every night, and live like a normal person. I finally have a chance to make that dream come true! I’m going to eat a grilled fish every day until I’m cured!” Vivian was jumping for joy. She had completely relinquished her facade as a cold and aloof young mistress; her mind was entirely filled with the delicious taste of the grilled fish, as well as the bliss of waking up after a good night’s sleep.

A smile also appeared on Michael’s face at the sight of her elation. He had already forgotten how long it had been since he had seen such a joyful smile on her face.

“Father, I feel like it’s very necessary for you to stand up for that restaurant! Their food is delicious, and can cure my condition. It’s simply not fair that they can’t even make it onto the Aden Square food competition rankings board!” On a horse-drawn carriage that was heading for the city lord’s castle, Vivian was looking at Michael with an indignant expression.

“I’ll take care of this.” Michael was silent for a moment before seemingly making up his mind as he nodded with a firm expression.

“Alright.” Vivian nodded, and said, “Tonight, I also saw the president of the Catering Association go to that restaurant. If he still insists on keeping it off the rankings board even after tasting their food, then he’s definitely corrupt.”

“Alright, go to bed when we get back. I hope you can sleep well tonight.” Michael looked at Vivian with a doting smile.

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Tonis was regretting his words as soon as they slipped out of his mouth. He had just said that the grilled fish wasn’t anything special, and then immediately given himself a figurative slap to the face.

A scorching sensation spread through his entire body. He didn’t eat much spicy food normally, and he felt as if he had been plunged into a spicy hell.

This type of spiciness was unlike anything he had ever tasted before. Coupled with the delicious fish, the dish was taking him back and forth between heaven and hell, and he simply couldn’t stop eating.

His mouth and tongue no longer belonged to him, and his sweat poured like rain. Despite that, he was struck by a profound sense of satisfaction.

Tonis could sense the mocking smiles directed toward him by the customers, but he couldn’t be bothered to respond to them. Nothing was more important in that moment than feasting on the grilled fish.

“They can pretend like the other dishes weren’t delicious, but there’s no way they can explain themselves now, right?”

All of the customers wore smiles on their faces as they looked at the two fatsos, who were basking in both pain and pleasure. Only Mag could cook a dish that could evoke such a spectacular reaction.

If they have any shred of integrity and humility left, then they would surely reinstate Mamy Restaurant on the rankings board, Mag thought to himself.

When it came time to pay the bill, Warren made his way over to Mag with a smile on his face. His clothes were drenched with sweat, and his hair was quite disheveled, but he had a look of approval on his face as he said, “Mag, right? You truly are a culinary genius.”

Mag smiled, and replied, “You’re far too kind, President Warren. I actually hope that I can also be a genius among restaurant owners.”

“Perhaps you’ll become one in the future.” Warren nodded, and placed some money on the table before departing from the restaurant.

“This fish...! It’s way too spicy!” Tonis pointed at his swollen lips before hurriedly departing behind Warren.

What a sly old fox. Mag’s eyes narrowed as he returned to the kitchen. Throughout their interaction, Warren hadn’t mentioned anything about whether Mamy Restaurant would be reinstated onto the rankings board.

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At 9pm sharp, Mag began to turn away customers in a euphemistic manner with a smile on his face. He turned off the lights on the advertisement panel outside, and prepared to close for business.

Right at that moment, a voice suddenly sounded beside Mag. “Hello, looks like you’re closed for the day, but I have request; can you cook a spicy grilled fish for me?”

Chapter 362: A Father

Mag didn’t even turn around as he responded, “My apologies, our restaurant is already closed. If you would like a spicy grilled fish, please come back for our lunch service tomorrow.”

There were many customers who tried to come in even after closing time every day, and he was already used to turning them away.

However, the man refused to give up, and continued, “I’m Michael.”

Mag faltered upon hearing that, and he finally turned around as he replied, “I’m Mag.”

The man standing before him was very tall and broad. He wore a set of black golden robes, with a black long-sword hanging from his waist. He appeared to be about 40 years of age, and evidently kept himself very fit. His eyes shimmered with the sharpness of a brave knight, but also the wisdom of a brilliant tactician, and he gave off an unfathomable air.

Michael also faltered upon hearing Mag's reply. That was the first time that he had received such a response after bringing up his name. It appeared that this young man didn't recognize him, nor his name. A smile appeared on his face, and he began to examine Mag with a hint of curiosity in his eyes.

He wore a black and white chef's suit and stood as straight as a sword, with a lithe and graceful body. A hint of surprise appeared on his face as he made those observations. Mag's disposition reminded him of a swordsman who was hiding his sharp edges rather than a chef. The sight of him reminded Michael of a young man from many years ago.

That young man also reminded him of a sharp sword, but that sword was too sharp and unyielding. In the end, it became the sharpest sword in the world, but was forcibly snapped in half.

Michael smiled at Mag, and announced, "Let me introduce myself. I am the lord of Chaos City."

"Oh, my apologies, I didn't recognize you just then." A hint of surprise and apology appeared on Mag's face.

He was naturally aware of the city lord's name, but he had thought that this was just an ordinary customer with the same name. Who would have thought that it would actually be the city lord himself?

He took a glance at the black horse-drawn carriage parked outside the magic potion shop, as well as a young man in a black jumpsuit inspecting his surroundings with a cautious expression. It appeared that this Michael was indeed the city lord.

"That's alright, I'm coming to you as just a customer anyway." Michael shook his head with a smile. He didn't take offense despite the fact that Mag hadn't recognized him. He looked into Mag's eyes, and said, "I wanted to visit your restaurant during your opening hours, but I don't have any time tomorrow, so I decided to come now. Would you be able to cook a grilled fish for me?"

Amy was already close to falling asleep with her head resting on the counter. Mag took a glance at her, before shaking his head with an apologetic look. "I would be happy to cook any dish for you, but only during opening hours. Those are our rules, and our service staff have already gone home for the night as well. I also have a young daughter who needs to attend lessons tomorrow morning, so I have to get her ready for bed. As such, I can only apologize, and ask you to come back another day."

"So you have a daughter as well. Looks like you're a good father." Michael's brows were initially furrowed with displeasure in the face of Mag's rejection, but that was immediately replaced by a look of approval as he caught sight of Amy. A good father was much more difficult to find than a good chef.

He was very rarely rejected in Chaos City, and he didn't think that he would be rejected twice in a row by the same person, even after mentioning the fact that he was the city lord.

"I'm not a good father; I just want to be with her as much as I can, and do everything that I can possibly do for her." Mag turned to Amy with a gentle look in his eyes.

"I'm actually here as a father to sample your grilled fish. I also have an adorable little daughter. I'm always very busy, and rarely ever have time for her; I owe her a lot. Perhaps the heavens are punishing me for neglecting my daughter, afflicting her with an incurable type of frosty energy. She has been living in constant pain for the past few years, and I'm powerless to help her. Perhaps you can understand the torment that I'm going through." Michael looked at Mag with a sincere expression as he spoke. He

paused momentarily before shaking his head with a wry smile. "I've never said those words to anyone. Perhaps I feel like confiding in you as we're both fathers."

Mag felt as if he were seeing the city lord through new eyes. The city lord was renowned for being a tough and courageous warrior, but who would have thought that he would have such a gentle and mellow side to him beneath his hard exterior? With that in mind, Mag opened the door to his restaurant, and smiled as he said, "Well, it's a good thing that our grilled fish is not just delicious, but is also great for combating frosty energy. As a father, you can have a grilled fish on the house today."

"Then I'll take you up on that offer." A smile appeared on Michael's face as he strode into the restaurant.

"Boss, who's this?" Yabemiya had just finished cleaning up, and was about to leave when Mag strode in through the door with Michael. As such, she was quite confused as she knew that Mag had never made an exception for anyone when it came to his rules.

That's the city lord! Sally bowed her head slightly after catching sight of Michael. She had seen his portrait once. In order to prevent their young family members from offending powerful characters, her family kept a collection of portraits of the most powerful and prestigious beings on the Norland Continent, which they were forced to memorize before stepping out into the world.

Mag smiled, and replied, "You two can go home. This is a friend of mine; I'll take care of this myself."

"Alright, see you tomorrow, then." Yabemiya gave Michael a smile before leaving with Sally.

Michael also smiled, and nodded at them in response. His eyes rested on Sally momentarily, and a hint of confusion appeared on his face, but he didn't say anything.

"Please have a seat, City Lord. You can choose the spice level of the spicy grilled fish; we have mildly spicy, medium spice, super spicy, and insanely spicy. If you want to sleep well tonight, then I suggest you don't pick the insanely spicy level." Mag closed the blinds as he gave an introduction to his dish. He had made an exception for Michael not because he was the city lord, but because of his words as a father.

Being a father himself, he could imagine the despair and frustration that he would feel if Amy were to be afflicted by some kind of incurable condition.

Of course, Mag also wanted to have his restaurant reinstated onto the Aden Square food competition rankings board. He was planning to pay a visit to the city lord's castle the following day, but seeing as the city lord had turned up on his doorsteps, it was a perfect opportunity for him.

Michael inspected the menu momentarily before placing his order. "Then I'll get a medium size super spicy grilled fish."

"Alright, please wait for a moment. I have to tuck in my daughter." Mag nodded before making his way over to the counter. Amy was already sound asleep, as was Ugly Duckling, and he cradled both of them carefully in his arms before slowly going upstairs.

"This is the first time I've been left hanging at a restaurant. He is indeed an interesting man." Michael shook his head as he chuckled. He began to look around the restaurant, and his eyes lit up with interest at the sight of the crystal chandelier overhead.

Chapter 363: City Lord, What Are You Doing?

“President, what do we do now? It looks like that restaurant really did make it onto the rankings based on actual merit. They have a huge customer base and high prices; if we don’t provide a legitimate reason for removing them from the rankings, we’ll receive a lot of backlash.” On the way back, Tonis turned to Warren with a concerned expression. His lips were still swollen, and he drank another large mouthful of ice water before heaving a long sigh of relief. The grilled fish really was spicy; even the ice water was unable to provide much relief.

“20 years ago, I would’ve ranked the spicy grilled fish, braised chicken and rice, Yangzhou fried rice, roujiamo, and sweet tofu pudding from number one to number five on the rankings board.” Warren shook his head with a smile, and said, “Unfortunately, this is no longer 20 years ago, and the rankings board isn’t just controlled by me anymore. Countless customers and restaurants have come together to form a massive net. Even though I’m no longer the one hauling in the net, I still have to look out for some big fish that want to break out of the net. In contrast, if a pretty little fish escapes, I would want to save it, but watching it being eaten by the larger fish is a better option.”

Tonis hesitated momentarily before suggesting sheepishly, “President, I feel like the savory tofu pudding can be placed at number six on the rankings.”

Warren glanced at Tonis, and shook his head with a smile as he said, “Release the rankings as usual tomorrow, but delay the release of our explanation for removing Mamy Restaurant from the rankings. When a shooting star first appears, it’s very dazzling, but it will quickly disappear. All we need to do is watch. There will be many people looking up into the sky, waiting for the arrival of that shooting star.”

“Oh.” Tonis nodded with a contemplative expression.

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Within an office in the Chamber of Commerce, Mars had his head bowed in a respectful manner, and said to Cyril, “Young Master Cyril, the Catering Association has already confirmed that Mamy Restaurant won’t appear on the rankings again. They will assess the rankings that we have specified, and try to get their rankings to match ours as closely as possible.”

“Very good, Mars, thanks for your hard work.” Cyril nodded with contentment. He wrapped his little colorful snake around his wrist, and asked, “How are you doing with Devoe and Goodenia’s case? Is the Bastie Prison still unwilling to release them?”

“Young Master, that’s really not something that we should be meddling in. The two of them have been swept up in a 4th-tier incident, and there’s almost no way for anyone to save them. Bastie Prison is unwilling to reveal any information to us, either, so I suggest we leave this matter untouched. Otherwise, we could get embroiled in the mess as well.” Mars shook his head with a serious expression.

“So what if we get involved? No one can do anything to our Moreton Family in Chaos City anyway.” Cyril pursed his lips in a dismissive manner. He looked at Mars, and said, “I’ve already taken their money, so we have to sort this out for them. Otherwise, if our reputation gets ruined, it’ll hurt our profits.”

“But—” Mars tried to reason with Cyril, only to be abruptly cut off.

“A 4th-tier incident isn’t a minor event, right? If I recall correctly, Devoe and Goodenia were detained in that little restaurant, right? Just make the restaurant the scapegoat. Bail them out, and frame the owner instead. There won’t be any issues, then.” Cyril smiled as if he were very pleased with his resourcefulness. He stroked his little snake’s head before getting up to leave the room.

“If it were the eldest young master, he definitely wouldn’t be so rash and bullish. What a pity...” Mars sighed, and shook his head in resignation as he looked down at the files that he had placed onto the table, which remained completely untouched. The Moreton Family was indeed a colossus, but the city lord’s castle and Gray Temple were still the main powers in Chaos City.

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“City Lord, what are you doing?”

Mag had only just come back downstairs when he was greeted by the sight of Michael fiddling around with his chandelier, upon which a peculiar expression appeared on his face. It appeared that the city lord was perhaps not as cultured as he was rumored to be.

Michael had also realized that what he was doing was a little unbecoming of a man of his status, but he still turned to Mag with an inquisitive expression. “I’m just curious about the light source in your chandelier. It’s not an oil lamp, nor is it a magic crystal. Also, it’s emanating a lot of heat, but it hasn’t lit on fire, so I was very curious.”

“This is a type of stone that I discovered by chance. It could emit light, so I decided to use it for lighting purposes. It’s more convenient than oil lamps.” Mag lied like a seasoned veteran. He didn’t have a good way to explain electricity to Michael. Furthermore, if Michael asked him to provide electricity for the entire city, then this world would skip the steam era, and advance straight to the electrical era. If that were to happen, the system would probably explode with rage.

Michael nodded before getting down from his chair. He turned to Mag, and asked, “This is indeed a very peculiar type of stone. Do you have any more of them?”

“Sorry, I only discovered a few of them, and all of them are being used in my restaurant.” Mag shook his head with an apologetic smile.

“What a shame.” Michael sat back down in his chair with a wistful expression.

“Please wait for a moment, the grilled fish will be served soon.” Mag hurriedly changed the subject before heading back into his kitchen.

Even though he didn’t know how Michael had heard about the spicy grilled fish’s ability to combat frosty energy, Mag could see that Michael was very fond of Vivian, and was a very good father, so he immediately developed a good impression of Michael. Thus, if the spicy grilled fish was satisfactory to him, Mag would perhaps be able to bring up the issue of the food competition rankings board.

In Chaos City, the only person aside from Warren that could influence the Aden Square food competition rankings was Michael.

After all, the Catering Association was a subsidiary to the city lord's castle, and even though the association was given a lot of autonomy and freedom, that still didn't change the fact that Michael was the boss of their boss.

As such, what Mag had to do now was very simple: he had to conquer Michael's stomach with his delicious food!

Michael was staring at the kitchen with a hint of nervousness and anticipation in his eyes. Soon, the delicious aroma of fish wafted out from the kitchen, and he couldn't help but swallow.

That smells really good. Due to the changes in Vivian's condition, Michael hadn't eaten yet that night, and his stomach immediately began to rumble as he caught a whiff of the alluring aroma of fish.

After waiting for about 15 minutes, Mag emerged from the kitchen with a medium-size spicy grilled fish, underneath which was an alcohol stove. He placed it gently in front of Michael, and smiled as he said, "Here's your spicy grilled fish. Enjoy."

"Mm-hm." Michael only gave an offhand response as his attention had been completely drawn to the grilled fish in front of him. However, he didn't dig in immediately. Instead, he began to carefully examine the dish.

In contrast with the grilled fish that was served straight after being roasted on fire, this grilled fish was instead placed into a steel platter.

What was even more eye-catching was the dense layers of chili peppers that covered almost the entire fish. Just the sight of it made his throat feel dry and scorching hot.

Chapter 364: Thanks For the Meal

Chili peppers can indeed warm up the consumer's body, but normal chili peppers are ineffective against the frosty energy in Vivian's body. In fact, eating too much of it will instead cause discomfort for her. Could it be that aside from the chili peppers in this dish, there's something else that's able to combat the frosty energy? Michael thought to himself as he picked up his chopsticks, and took his first bite of grilled fish.

So spicy!

Michael's eyes immediately widened. The spicy juices enveloping the fish immediately erupted in his mouth. These were definitely not ordinary chili peppers!

He felt as if countless tiny needles were piercing his taste buds, making his tongue instantly go numb!

This numb yet spicy sensation was completely different from what he'd experienced when eating spicy foods in the past. It was a very special and certainly not unpleasant feeling.

He bit down through the crispy fish skin, and then into the succulent flesh, upon which an incredibly fresh flavor spilled onto his palate. This was the flavor of saltwater fish!

Due to the fact that Vivian was quite fond of fish, he would often order saltwater fish to be delivered to him. However, most of them were dried fish, and only when employing a flying steed could fresh fish be delivered. It was very difficult to keep the fish fresh, and even with his lofty status, he was still only able to dine on fresh saltwater fish once a month at most. After all, he couldn't ask someone to make the trip for him just because he wanted to eat fresh fish.

Furthermore, this grilled fish didn't have any small fishbones, and it was even more delicious than the saltwater fish he had tasted in the past. Just having a saltwater fish of such quality transported from the ocean to Chaos City probably cost more than the dish's 1600 copper coin price tag.

He had initially thought that the grilled fish was a little expensive, but he felt like it was well worth the price now. He would be happy to buy a raw fish of this quality at this price, let alone one that had been cooked into such a delectable dish.

The spicy flavor erupted in his mouth, and as he swallowed, he could feel a surge of scorching heat flowing down his throat. After entering his stomach, that scorching sensation spread through his entire body, and he felt as if flames were incinerating the excess frosty energy and humidity in his body. All of his sweat glands opened up in unison, and sweat was expelled from within. A cloud of water vapor rose from his body as if he was in a sauna.

So this dish really can expel frosty energy! Michael abruptly opened his eyes. Even a normal person like him had so much humidity and frosty energy expelled from his body, so he could imagine the effect that regularly consuming this dish would have on Vivian.

He'd initially been skeptical about the dish, but he was a true believer now. The rush of heat wreaked havoc within his body, but it wasn't a painful feeling. Instead, it felt as if he was being bathed in warm water, making for a very comfortable experience.

If Vivian can eat this spicy grilled fish every day, then her body should be able to slowly recover. She won't have to undergo the painful magic treatment again, and she won't have to continue suffering from her condition, either. This restaurant... It has to keep operating. Michael looked up at Mag as if he were looking at his savior. The despair and powerlessness that he had been burdened with for many years were suddenly lifted from his shoulders.

Mag met his sparkling gaze with a smile. From Michael's expression, it appeared that he was very pleased with the spicy grilled fish. In that case, it would be easier for him to bring up the issue about the food competition rankings. There was only one day left, so if he couldn't make it back onto the rankings board tomorrow, then his food competition mission would end in failure.

"Boss, get me some rice. This grilled fish is so delicious, it must have some rice to complement it." Michael laughed heartily as he turned to Mag.

"Alright, please wait for a moment." Mag went back into the kitchen, and quickly re-emerged with a pot of rice.

Michael scooped himself a large bowl of rice, and ate it along with the fish as a blissful smile appeared on his face. This flavor was simply irresistible.

Throughout the past few years, he had constantly been living under a shadow of self-criticism, unable to forgive himself. After shedding that heavy burden, he felt like he was floating on a cloud, and the meal was all the more enjoyable for it.

Mag stood off to the side and looked on in silence. The lord of Chaos City—one of the men who stood at the pinnacle of the entire Norland Continent—was sitting in his restaurant, and eating his grilled fish. There were probably very few people that would believe him even if he tried to tell this story.

He was the lord of Chaos City, but also a father.

From his expression, Mag could deduce that the spicy grilled fish would most likely benefit his daughter, and that made him feel quite good about himself as well.

I'm a chef, but I feel like a doctor, Mag thought to himself.

After eating an entire grilled fish and a large pot of rice, Michael put down his chopsticks and burped with contentment. It had been a long time since he had taken that long to eat a meal. However, the food was simply too delicious to be in a rush—it would be a waste if he hurried through it.

“Thank you, Mag. Thank you for making such delicious and miraculous spicy grilled fish.” Michael looked at Mag with a genuine expression of gratitude.

“You’re far too kind, City Lord. It is the duty of us chefs to present good food to our customers,” Mag replied with a smile. He was contemplating how he was going to bring up the issue about the Aden Square food competition without making it seem too abrupt.

“Thanks for the meal. I still have some things that I need to do tonight, so I’ll be taking my leave now. I’ll be back to taste your other dishes next time.” Before Mag had a chance to say anything, Michael had already gotten up from his chair, and placed a dragon coin along with six gold coins onto the table before departing from the restaurant.

“Eh? City Lord, I told you that this grilled fish is on the house. You’re not a customer; you’re a fellow father.” Mag picked up the money, and ran out after him.

“That’s not my payment for the meal; it’s just a small gift to you so you can buy some treats for your little girl,” Michael responded with a smile before leaving.

“I didn’t even get a chance to talk about the food competition rankings...” Mag murmured to himself as he looked at Michael’s departing figure. However, it appeared that the city lord really did have something important to attend to, so he couldn’t just ask him to come back.

Looks like I’ll just have to give up on this mission, then. If I file a report to the city lord’s castle, it’ll probably take at least a few days before the matter is brought to Michael’s attention. By then, everything will already be too late. Mag sighed, and shook his head in a resigned manner. He had thought that the mission would be simple to complete, but he was stumped at the last hurdle.

After closing the door, Mag had a look at the clock, finding that it was already 10pm. He went upstairs and brushed his teeth before going to bed. He didn’t think too much about the issue. After all, there would surely be more missions in the future, which would provide more opportunities for him to unlock the Haagen-Dazs ice cream recipe.

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As Michael climbed onto his horse-drawn carriage, he instructed, "Let's go to Robert's manor first. He and I will go to the city lord's castle together."

Chapter 365: Revolution

Within a brightly lit courtyard in the city lord's castle.

Robert had a stack of documents and bills which were being sorted through by a few employees of the city lord's castle placed on the table in front of him.

Michael stood off to the side with his hands clasped behind his back and a dark expression on his face.

Many of the city lord's castle officials were sitting in the conference chamber with puzzlement on their faces. They didn't know why the city lord had gathered them so late at night.

However, seeing as the city lord hadn't said anything, no one else said anything, either. Another curious observation was that Robert was also present, and he seemed to be the instigator behind this impromptu meeting. Hadn't he been at the Catering Association for over a year? Was the city lord going to transfer him back to the city lord's castle? Or could it be that the things they were going to discuss had something to do with the Catering Association?

Many thoughts were running through everyone's minds. Some of them were already feeling quite drowsy, but they forced themselves to keep their eyes open.

Robert stood up, and delivered his report. "City Lord, all of the bills have been tallied. They are from the beginning of the year to now, and from them, we have calculated that the Catering Association has made a total profit of 35,600,000 copper coins from selling the food competition rankings, but the balance of their account with Buffett Banks is only 2,000,000 copper coins. After deducting the wages of the association's employees, there are still 30,000,000 missing."

"30,000,000 copper coins?! How much of that went into their own wallets?"

The quiet conference chamber immediately erupted. All of the officials were completely dumbfounded. They had always known that there was a certain degree of corruption taking place in the Catering Association, but they didn't think that it was this bad! They had almost taken all of the money that the association was making.

However, now everyone knew why Michael had gathered them today. It appeared that he was preparing to make a move on the Catering Association. Could it be that Robert was a pawn that had been planted in the Catering Association from the very beginning?

Everyone looked at Robert, and they felt even more reverence for Michael's wisdom and strategic astuteness.

"Aside from that, the higher-ups of the Catering Association share a very dubious relationship with some restaurants as well as the Chamber of Commerce. They've been selling rankings for profit for a long time, and have even established prices of each rank. As long as enough money is given, the restaurant

would be guaranteed to achieve the ranking that they paid for.” Robert picked up a document, and continued, “For ranks 50 to 100 on the Aden Square food competition rankings board, a fee of 10,000 copper coins is taken. For 31 to 50, it increases to 20,000, and for all ranks above 30, an increment of 5,000 copper coins must be paid per rank. For restaurants in the top 10, not only do they have to pay the designated fee, their food has to be of a good standard as well. Thus, from selling rankings alone, the Catering Association can earn around 3,000,000 copper coins per month, but only a small portion of that actually went to the Catering Association.”

“So that means the Catering Association can make 60,000,000 copper coins per year! City Lord, they must be severely punished for this. Detain all of them, and throw them into Bastie Prison!” a heavily-bearded military official roared.

“That’s not all. Their income stems directly from the restaurants, so in order to protect their profit margins, they’d have to charge higher prices and cut more corners to save on costs. Their behavior is completely ruining competition in the gastronomic industry.”

“That’s so unfair to the restaurants that aren’t paying for rankings. What’s the point of having an Aden Square food competition if this is what it has become?”

All of the officials discussed heatedly among one another.

“This is a classic case of a low-ranking official embezzling a huge sum of money, and it’s also why I gathered everyone tonight.” Michael finally broke his silence. He looked at all of the officials gathered before him, and continued, “If the Aden Square food competition weren’t affiliated with our city lord’s castle, then it can do what it wants. However, the Catering Association is a subsidiary of our city lord’s castle. Even though the agreement we had was that Warren still has full control over the Aden Square food competition, and that a large percentage of earnings is to be paid to him as dividends, he has already broken this contract. What he is doing is fraudulent, and he’s able to do this because he has the city lord’s castle as his backer. He is extorting customers and businesses, and bringing the entire restaurant industry into disrepute.

“Hence, I gathered all of you here today so you can work together to control all of the higher-ups from the Catering Association, and then launch an extensive investigation into their shady dealings. Anyone who is related to those dealings must be removed from their position, with no exceptions.” Michael placed his hands onto the table in front of him, and leaned forward slightly as he looked into everyone’s eyes.

“Yes!” all officials responded in unison with serious expressions.

Cleaning up the Catering Association was most likely only the start of a revolution. During the past few years, there had been many officials who abused their power to earn shady income. Many of them paled slightly upon realizing what was about to come upon them, but they didn’t dare to show any dissent.

“Robert will be the leader of this operation, and he has already devised a detailed plan of action. Make sure keep things confidential so the reputation of the city lord’s castle remains untarnished, but return the Aden Square food competition rankings to their rightful owners. Make it something that customers can trust, not a money-making tool for dodgy businesses. None of you are allowed to leave the city

lord's castle tonight." Michael turned around, and made his way out of the conference chamber as he said, "Robert, come with me."

Back in his study, Michael looked at Robert with a serious expression, and asked, "A complete change of the team will inevitably take place in the Catering Association. However, how will you ensure that the association doesn't revert back to its ways even after we get rid of the likes of Warren? Everyone changes over time, and the temptation of potential profits will accelerate that transformation. I've seen many instances of similar things happening in the past."

"City Lord, I think that if we want to completely eradicate corruption in the Catering Association, the key is to begin a revolution. I've thought about a few approaches that we could take to facilitate this:

"One. Diminish the power of those within the Catering Association by introducing a third-party voting organization. At the same time, we should set up a surveillance organization specifically for the Catering Association. They won't interfere with the association's work, but they'll be constantly keeping an eye on the association's dealings. With the introduction of those two organizations, I believe we'll be able to completely eliminate the possibility of rankings manipulation.

"Two. Re-introduce a panel of internal inspectors. This panel should consist of 16 people, who will conduct objective surveys, investigating the restaurants in advance before the rankings are released. Based on their findings, they'll create a preliminary rankings board for internal reference, and if the actual released rankings display a large disparity compared to the preliminary rankings, then something is most likely wrong, and we'll be alerted to that in real time...

"Three..."

Michael nodded with approval after hearing Robert's suggestions, saying, "Robert, after sorting out the matters at the Catering Association, you should come back to the city lord's castle. There's a suitable position waiting for you here."

"City Lord, I still want to stay at the Catering Association. I don't think my grandfather would want to see the Food Association that he founded be reduced to such a pitiful state. If he could see the current Aden Square food competition, he would be very upset, so I want to stay at the Catering Association and see things through to the very end." Robert shook his head with a firm expression.

"Alright, then." Michael chuckled in a resigned manner. He patted Robert on the shoulder, and said, "Do what you want to do. I sampled a lot of delicious cuisine under the guidance of Lorry's rankings board, so I hope the next Aden Square food competition won't disappoint me."

Michael paused during his departure, and he turned to Robert as he said, "Oh, and that Mamy Restaurant. It should be reinstated, and given the rankings that it deserves."

Chapter 366: The Heir

The next morning, Mag woke up early as usual to prepare the ingredients for the day. He woke Amy up at 7am, and helped her put on her little magician robes. She had a lesson with Urien today.

Amy chewed on some chicken as she asked, "Father, is our restaurant going to return to the food competition rankings board today?"

"Well... I'm not sure of that myself. It's rather unlikely, though." Mag shook his head. He had missed his opportunity to bring up the issue with Michael the day before, and he couldn't be bothered to make a trip to the city lord's castle. Perhaps Warren would suddenly rediscover his conscience after tasting his food and reinstate Mamy Restaurant today.

Of course, Mag wasn't very optimistic about that. He had ascended to a very high position in his past life, and from that vantage point, he had seen many things. He knew that in Warren's position, there were many things that were already outside of his control. The power of wealth was fuelling the Catering Association, but it had also wrested control from his hands.

It could be said that without a powerful third party's interference, whether Mamy Restaurant was reinstated onto the rankings board or not would be decided by the Chamber of Commerce.

Mag didn't even have to think to know the decision that the Chamber of Commerce would arrive at. From Goodenia to Devoe, then to all of the restaurants that were crushed by Mamy Restaurant on the rankings board, none of them wanted to see Mamy Restaurant rise again. Unless the president of the Chamber of Commerce suddenly lost his mind, there was no way that Mamy Restaurant would be reinstated onto the rankings board.

"They're such bad people! I'm so angry!" Amy grumbled as she chewed on a large mouthful of rice. "I'm so angry that I want to have another bowl of rice!"

"If you still want to have tofu pudding later, then you can only have one bowl of rice. You can't eat too much in the morning." Mag couldn't help but burst into laughter at the sight of Amy's adorable expression, but he still turned down her request.

"Alright... Then I want to have two bowls of tofu pudding: one sweet and one savory." After a brief period of disappointment, Amy quickly extended two fingers. She contemplated momentarily before her eyes lit up, and she said, "By the way, Father, wouldn't it be super delicious if you poured the soup for spicy grilled fish onto tofu pudding?"

"Spicy tofu pudding?" Mag raised his eyebrows, and appraised Amy with a hint of surprise on his face. Children really did have the best imagination.

In his past life, Mag had tasted spicy tofu pudding in Sichuan, but he still preferred savory tofu pudding. Furthermore, the system had only given him two tofu pudding flavor options. Even though there were empty slots reserved for other flavors, no recipe had been given to him for those slots, and he was wary of doing too much experimentation on his own.

"Exactly! I really want to taste that spicy tofu pudding; I think it would definitely be very delicious!" Amy nodded her little head with an expectant look in her eyes.

"Alright, I'll look into it when I find some time." Mag nodded with a smile. His little foodie daughter was getting more and more difficult to satisfy. She was already learning to think outside the box and invent her own dishes.

“I’m sure Father will be able to make a super delicious spicy tofu pudding, just like the super delicious rainbow fish.” Amy nodded with elation as she ate, and she began to tell Mag about the interesting things that had happened at school.

After finishing her breakfast, Amy asked, “Father, I’ve already told Daphne and Ignatsu that they can come over this weekend. Can you cook your delicious grilled fish for them?”

“Of course. What about Little Jessica?” Mag nodded as he reminded Amy about the clever little loli from the last time.

“I haven’t seen Jessica in quite a few days. Her mother ate Father’s braised chicken already, so she’s definitely all better now. If she could help her mother at home, then she wouldn’t have to come out to beg anymore.” Amy shook her head with a hint of disappointment at not being able to see her friend, but it was quite apparent that she was still quite happy for Jessica.

“Then let’s go to their house, and invite them to our restaurant with your other friends,” Mag suggested with a smile. He could tell that Amy really missed Jessica, and he was also a little concerned about the two, so he decided that it would be best to pay them a visit.

“That’s a great idea! Father is the best!” Amy nodded with a joyful expression.

Mag patted Amy’s little head with a smile. His mood would always be lifted by the sight of her smile.

Not long after that, Yabemiya and Sally also arrived at the restaurant. Mag had a rough idea of what had happened as soon as he saw Yabemiya’s gloomy expression. Everything was good about her aside from her inability to hide her emotions. He only had to look at her face to be able to read her like an open book.

“Boss, our Mamy Restaurant didn’t make it onto the rankings board again, but don’t be sad; I’m sure the Catering Association will provide us with an explanation.” Yabemiya was offering words of consolation to Mag, but tears began to well up in her eyes as she spoke, and she appeared to be the one that had to be consoled.

Mag was feeling a little dejected, but he was quite amused at the sight of her pitiable display. He had never seen someone console others in such a unique manner. He hurriedly said, “I’m fine, Miya. You shouldn’t be too sad, either. It doesn’t matter if we make it onto the rankings board or not; we have so many customers already anyway, so it makes no difference.”

“But... But we worked so hard, and gave out so many tickets. All of our customers gave us five-star ratings, and everyone voted so diligently. How could they just remove us from the rankings with no explanation? That’s so unfair.” Miya pouted as tears swam in her eyes. She had witnessed Mamy Restaurant’s steady rise up the rankings board, and was very emotionally invested. As such, the removal of their restaurant from the rankings dealt her a heavy blow.

“Don’t be said, Big Sister Miya. When I become powerful, I’ll place our restaurant at the highest position on the rankings board.” Amy latched onto Yabemiya’s finger with her little hand as a gesture of consolation.

Yabemiya nodded, and she seemed to have also realized that she had let her emotions get the better of herself. Mag should have been the most distraught one, but he was being forced to console her. With that in mind, she hurriedly wiped away her tears, and took a deep breath to calm herself down.

“Do we still keep casting votes today, then?” Sally was also in a foul mood, but she was a lot calmer than Yabemiya was.

“No need. If this is what the rankings board has become, then I don’t even want our restaurant to be on it.” Mag shook his head with a hint of mockery on his face. There was no point in striving for a rank in such a fraudulent food competition.

...

A young woman in a black dress stood before Jeffree Moreton with a resolute expression on her face, and announced, “Grandfather, I want to become heir to the Moreton Family.”

Chapter 367: President!

Jeffree lay in his lounge chair in the garden, and habitually narrowed his eyes as he looked at Gloria.

Gloria still had a black veil draped over her face, and her fists were clenched tightly, with veins bulging on the backs of her hands. She stood ramrod straight, and her purple eyes pierced through her veil as she looked directly at Jeffree. Her voice was very firm, and was a manifestation of her determination.

They were the only two people in the garden, and the atmosphere was very peaceful yet oppressive.

Jeffree was silent for a long time before finally asking, “What gives you the courage to say something like that to me? Or in other words, what makes you think that I would accept a woman as the heir to the Moreton Family?”

“My father gave me the courage. He chose to do something he truly loved, and I feel like I must do the same. Just like how he gave up on becoming the heir of the Moreton Family 20 years ago, I want to fight for something I believe in.” Gloria’s voice was very firm, and she clenched her fists tightly. Her voice rose a few octaves as she continued, “Besides, the heir of the Buffett Family, Scheer Buffett, is a woman, is she not? If she can become the heir of the Buffett Family, then I believe I can also inherit the Moreton Family and lead it in the right direction. I think I’ll do a better job than my uncle.”

“Heh, I’m not an idiot like Ian. Letting a woman inherit my estate is no different from handing it over to someone outside of the family!” Jeffree pursed his lips, and a hint of disdain and mockery appeared on his face. He looked at Gloria, and continued, “I gave him a chance 20 years ago, but he hasn’t shown any hint of remorse. You want me to give his daughter something that he abandoned years ago? If it were Mickey, perhaps I would give it some consideration, but you? I can’t hand my Moreton Family off to a woman who doesn’t even dare to show her face to the world. Also, denouncing your competitor behind their back is not a good habit.”

“Grandfather, this has nothing to do with Father. In fact, he had no idea about any of this. Besides, you know him better than I do; you should know that he would never regret a decision that he has made.” Gloria did not back down. Instead, her voice only became more resolute as she said, “One day, I’ll take

off my veil, and show everyone what I look like. I don't see this as something shameful, and I don't think I'm inferior to any man. On top of that, I'm not denouncing my competitor; I'm merely stating an objective fact. I will definitely be able to do a better job than he's doing. At the very least, I won't lead the Moreton Family to ruin."

Jeffree looked at the young woman before him, and was struck by a sense of nostalgia. He felt as if he could see the young woman in the red dress engaged in a heated argument with him in the conference chamber. Even though their personalities were different, both shared an unyielding nature.

Furthermore, Gloria's final sentence was similar to what Scheer had said that day. Both of them were targeting Cyril.

With that in mind, Jeffree sat up a little involuntarily. He stared at Gloria in silence for a while before asking, "So what you're saying is, your goal is to copy that little brat from the Buffett Family?"

"No, my goal is to surpass her." Gloria shook her head.

"Oh?" A hint of surprise appeared on Jeffree's face for the first time. He looked at Gloria with a serious expression, and asked, "So what is your goal?"

Gloria's voice was as firm as ever as she replied, "I want to be your successor, and become the president of the Chamber of Commerce."

"You sure dare to dream." A smile appeared on Jeffree's face for the first time as he lay back down on his lounge chair, and continued, "One's goal determines the heights that they will ascend to. If you told me that she was your goal, then I would have been very disappointed as you would never be able to reach her level because you're constantly looking up to her. I wouldn't hand over my Moreton Family to someone who's willing to settle for second."

"Then, can I become the heir now?" A hint of nerves and anticipation crept into Gloria's voice.

"No, I still haven't decided whether I want to give you this opportunity. You may go now." Jeffree shook his head, and the smile on his face had already receded.

"Remember, talk is cheap. Running a business is far more difficult than you can imagine. Even that little brat from the Buffett Family took over 10 years to reach her current position," he cautioned in a meaningful tone.

"I know, but I still believe that I'm up to the task." Gloria nodded without any hint of dejection on her face. Instead, she was slightly elated. This was the first time that her grandfather had ever paid close attention to her. It wasn't approval or even acknowledgment, but it was a step in the right direction.

"President! The Catering..."

Right at that moment, Mars rushed into the garden, and a hint of surprise appeared on his face at the sight of Gloria. At the same time, he stopped himself from finishing his sentence.

"You may go now." Jeffree raised a hand to dismiss Gloria.

"Yes." Gloria curtseyed obediently before departing.

After she left, Jeffree turned to Mars, and asked, "What is it?"

Mars replied urgently, "President, we've received news this morning that the city lord's castle has made a move against the Catering Association. Warren, the vice presidents, and all of the association's higher-ups have been isolated and controlled. This morning, a group of people from the city lord's castle was also sent to the main branch of our Chamber of Conference, and they filed away all of the information regarding our subsidiary restaurants. They're currently verifying all of the documents and past transactions."

"Has the city lord finally made a move against the Catering Association? Warren has become too complacent in recent years. He has strayed too far from the right path, so this was only a matter of time." Jeffree wasn't too surprised to hear such news. He turned to Mars, and said, "There should be no problems with our documents. Tell all of our subsidiary restaurants to keep a lid on the situation. The city lord's castle has to protect their reputation as well, so they won't make this into a big deal. After a while, things will slowly die down. Mars, why do you seem so flustered about such a minor event?"

"President, there's something that I have to tell you. Last year, ever since Young Master Cyril took over the catering department, he expanded our cooperation with the Catering Association. He raised the proportion of reserved Aden Square food competition rankings from 50% to 90%, and has auctioned off those rankings to the highest-bidding restaurants. The documents of those transactions have been stored in our Chamber of Commerce." Mars' forehead was dripping with cold sweat at the sight of Jeffree's darkening expression. Despite that, he still mustered up his courage, and continued, "Also, a while ago, Board Members Goodenia and Devoe became involved in one of the Gray Temple's 4th-tier incidents. Young Master Cyril accepted payment from the two businesses, and attempted to bail those two out of Bastie Prison. Along with the group from the city lord's castle, there was also a group of investigators from Bastie Prison that came to our main branch."

Chapter 368: From This Day Forth

"President, this is what happened: almost 20 days ago, Goodenia and..." Mars didn't dare to delay, and immediately gave an account of how Goodenia and Devoe had attempted to cause trouble for Mamy Restaurant, then gotten involved in a 4th-tier incident due to Devoe's ties with his underling, Gabriel. Cyril accepted money from both sides, and tried everything he could do gather information, as well as to bail the two out, thereby leading to the current situation.

Jeffree fell silent for a while after hearing Mars' recount. He then looked at Mars with a meaningful expression, and asked, "Mars, how long have you served me?"

"23 years, President." Mars lowered his head as he didn't dare to look into Jeffree's eyes.

Jeffree then asked, "You've been serving me ever since old Jack died. You father and you have served me for several decades, and how have I treated you two in return?"

"Back when Father was alive, he would often praise the president. He started as a lowly servant, and has always been grateful to the president for elevating him up the ranks. During the past 23 years, you have treated me like family." Mars lowered his head even further.

“If that’s the case, then why are you so eager to pick a side even when I’m still alive? Remember this: as long as I’m alive, I’m still the leader of the Moreton Family and the president of the Chamber of Commerce.” Jeffree smiled with a hint of mockery on his face.

“Yes... Yes...” Mars dug his chin into his chest as he sweated profusely. Even though he had served Jeffree for over 20 years, every time he saw Jeffree, he was still reminded of their first encounter, when the president had hurled a torrent of abuse at his father.

He was like a powerful lion; he demanded awe and veneration even when he was just resting, and when he rose to his feet to let loose an enraged roar, everyone had to bow their heads.

He was the king of this jungle, the jungle known as the Chamber of Commerce.

“Get that idiot to come and see me.” Jeffree turned his gaze away from Mars as he said in an indifferent voice, “From this day forth, do not appear before me again. Among our subsidiary businesses, choose the one that’s farthest away from here, and get out.”

“President...” Mars’ expression changed drastically as he looked up. He wanted to say something, but he swallowed his words in the end. No one could change a decision that Jeffree had made.

“Please take care of yourself.” Mars bowed deeply before departing with a dejected expression. As he left, he took one last look at the old man standing in the garden, and he suddenly recalled his father’s parting words before he passed away: “Remember, there is only one president in this world, and all you have to do is give him your absolute loyalty. That’s all.”

Father, perhaps I should have listened to you. Mars clenched his fists as he turned to leave with heavy footsteps. He knew that he would most likely never be able to return to this lavish manor, and he felt as if a part of his heart had gone missing.

He had seen this manor become more and more prosperous, while the president gradually grew older. The light of the rising sun shone upon the courtyard, but it felt more like the residual light of the sunset, signifying that the end was nigh.

If the eldest young master hadn’t chosen to become a teacher, this manor would only continue to grow more prosperous. At the very least... it wouldn’t fall too quickly, Mars thought to himself, but he quickly smiled, and shook his head. He thought back to how overjoyed the young master had been when he received his employment offer from Chaos School. *Perhaps that’s the kind of life he wants. Even without all these riches, he’s content as long as he’s around the children under his tutelage.*

...

“Father, let me explain. I—” Cyril’s face was a little pale as he arrived at the garden. Mars had just told him about what had happened, and also bade farewell to him at the same time.

Mars was his father’s most trusted subordinate. Even though he only acted as a spokesperson most of the time, he was the one who knew President Jeffree the best, and he held a special position in the Chamber of Commerce.

However, he had been removed, and would never work in the Chamber of Commerce again. He had been banished to one of the Moreton Family's subsidiary businesses, and had truly become a fringe character.

Cyril wasn't stupid; he knew that Jeffrey was angry—very angry.

“Slap!!!”

Before Cyril had a chance to finish his sentence, Jeffrey turned around, and gave him a vicious slap to the face. The crisp sound of the slap even startled the birds in the garden into silence.

“Thud!”

Cyril fell to his knees, and his left cheek was already swelling up as he stared at Jeffrey with shock and horror. He trembled uncontrollably as he said, “Father, I'm sorry, I was wrong...”

“Where did you go wrong?” Jeffrey's hands were trembling slightly as he glowered at Jeffrey. He raised his voice a few octaves, and roared, “Tell me what you did wrong!”

“I...” Cyril opened his mouth, but didn't know how to reply. He scrambled for something to say, but drew a blank in the end.

“Alright, seeing as you're too stupid to know your mistakes, let me tell you where you went wrong.” Jeffrey looked down on Cyril with a mocking expression as if he were looking at a jester. “First, you shouldn't have tried to undermine me. Mars and his father served me for several decades. Loyalty is the paramount trait that a servant must possess; from the moment that you forced him to serve you, you earned yourself a disloyal servant.

“Secondly, you shouldn't have changed my rules. Back then, I established the rule that we can only take 50% of the rankings on the Aden Square food competition rankings board. If too many mediocre restaurants can buy their way onto the rankings, then customers will eventually catch on, and protest against the rankings. What have you done? You took 90% of the rankings, *and* you auctioned them off. You're the second young master of the Moreton Family; are you that desperately in need of money?

“Is money all you can see? Do you know what rules are? Our Moreton Family was able to ascend to such heights because of these rules. Even if we established those rules ourselves, we have to abide by and uphold them. Only in a relatively free market can there be sustainable growth. You've killed off all of the freedom in the market, and what's the point of exerting control over a dead market with no potential for growth?”

“Thirdly, you shouldn't have messed with people that you can't afford to mess with. We businessmen appear quite powerful, but we must take extra care if we want to survive in the business world. A true businessmen knows fear, and knows how to protect themselves. They know that there are certain things that they absolutely cannot do if they want to ensure their safety. But you, you went to mess with Bastie Prison, and involved yourself in a 4th-tier incident, just for some profit. Do you know what a 4th-tier incident entails? Even if you were the city lord's son, you would be handed a life sentence in Bastie Prison if you instigated a 4th-tier incident. Who the hell do you think you are, trying to bail those two out of prison? If you get thrown into prison because of this, I definitely won't be saving you.”

“Father, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry...” Cyril’s face was deathly pale as he crawled forward on his knees in an attempt to wrap his arms around Cyril’s leg.

“Don’t think that you can do whatever you want because you’re the sole heir to the Moreton Family.” Jeffrey kicked him away with a disdainful expression, and said coldly, “From this day forth, Gloria is one of the candidates to become the heir of the Moreton Family. She also has the right to inherit my estate.”

“This...!” Those words dealt a heavy blow to Cyril, and he collapsed on the ground as he looked up at Jeffrey with incredulity etched on his face.

Chapter 369: Everything For Food!

The main branch of the Catering Association had just been renovated a few years ago, and was a very grand and lavish building. However, the atmosphere within the building was currently quite grave. The employees wearing Catering Association uniforms looked on in confusion and panic as people from the city lord’s castle stormed the building. Even though they weren’t detained, they had already been prohibited from leaving the building.

Warren stood on the second floor, and he seemed to have aged 10 years in the span of one night. Robert stood beside him, and asked, “Did you ever think that this day would come?”

“I considered this possibility as far back as 10 years ago, but so many years have passed, and nothing has happened, so I became complacent. Who would have thought that this day would still arrive.” Warren gripped the railing, and looked down at his panicked subordinates. He looked at the Catering Association building, which had been renovated into the exact building that he had envisioned, and a wry smile appeared on his face.

Robert was silent for a moment before asking, “Do you regret what you did?”

“Why would I?” Warren stood up straight, and spread his arms open in a proud manner as he replied, “Look at this glorious building, look at all these employees, and look at the statues outside the building—I created all of this. Countless customers seek out the restaurants on my Aden Square food competition rankings board every day too, so why would I regret anything? Even without backing from the city lord’s castle, I can still achieve all this in five years.”

Robert fell silent again before continuing, “Do you think the old president would approve of a Food Association like this?”

“Perhaps...” Warren’s expression stiffened as he turned to look at Robert. In that instant, he suddenly felt as if Robert’s facial features were a little familiar. He hesitated momentarily before asking, “Who are you?”

Robert looked into Warren’s eyes, and replied, “The former president, Lorry, was my grandfather. I remember meeting you once when I was still a kid.”

“H... How is that possible?!” Warren stared at Robert with incredulity as if he had heard something extremely absurd.

“Back when my grandfather founded the Food Association, my father was not interested in his endeavors, and he didn’t allow me to come into contact with it, either. After that, grandfather passed the Food Association onto you, and passed away the following year. Our family never had any ties with the Food Association thereafter, but my grandfather asked me to keep an eye on the Food Association prior to his passing, so I’ve always been watching it.

“President, you are indeed a genius. The Catering Association developed and grew faster than anyone could imagine. Even my grandfather couldn’t have imagined that the directory he had created to guide people toward good food would become such a powerful organization. However, he definitely wouldn’t want to see the Aden Square food competition become what it has become today. The current food competition has completely deviated from his vision, and it’s not right.”

Warren clenched his fists, and replied, “So you came to the Catering Association last year just so you could bring me down today?”

“No, that was not my intention. I suggested many times that you should change your ways. I didn’t want to have to do this, either. The Food Association is a manifestation of my grandfather’s sweat, blood, and tears, but you have also contributed to it just as much as he did. On top of that, you really did lead the Catering Association to greater heights, and put it through a period of rapid growth. Those are all accolades that cannot be taken away from you.” Robert shook his head, and his expression gradually became more stern as he looked at Warren. “But you never listened to anything I said. The mantra of our Catering Association, ‘Everything for food!’, is carved on the statue outside our Catering Association.

“Don’t you find that ironic? Do you still remember the promises you made to my grandfather? Do you still remember what you set out to do? Do you still remember the promises you made to the city lord’s castle? What have you done these past few years? You’re plunging the entire Catering Association into an abyss, and my duty is to right your wrongs.”

Warren looked at Robert’s firm expression, and his tightly clenched fists slowly loosened. It was as if all of the energy had escaped from his body, and he used the railing to support himself again. He looked into the distance with a pair of soulless eyes, and felt as if the lavish building around him was on the verge of collapse, as if it could be toppled with a gentle shove. The catering empire that he had invested so many years of his life to build was beginning to crumble in front of his eyes.

“To be honest, I didn’t want things to become like this, either...” A self-deprecating smile appeared on Warren’s face. He looked at the statue outside the building, and continued, “In the beginning, I only wanted to build a main branch for the Catering Association, but I didn’t have the money. Thus, I thought about how I could earn more money, and selling tickets was a good option. After that, some restaurants tried to bribe me for rankings. I rejected them initially as I didn’t want to corrupt the Aden Square food competition.

“However, I discovered one day that no one would notice anyway. All I had to do was to change one ranking, and I made far more money than I did selling tickets. Part of that could contribute to the association, while I made some profit for myself. I could decide how much I gave, and how much I kept, and the feeling of commanding such wealth was very addictive. After that, the Chamber of Commerce approached me. That President Jeffree really is a sly old fox, and he really knows the rules. He reserved

our rankings in bulk, and even though the money I earned per ranking decreased slightly, it was a safe and symbiotic relationship.

“After that, Cyril took over the catering department of the Chamber of Commerce, and he was a lot more spendthrift than Jeffree. However, he was also more ambitious, and took over almost the entire rankings board. I knew the risks involved, but when I saw the crates of dragon coins delivered to my office, I couldn’t bear to send them back. Thus, the Aden Square food competition was like a ship that quickly spiraled out of my control. I couldn’t control its direction, its speed, or even set any rules anymore.

“I was still the president of the Catering Association, but I knew that I was just a puppet that was being controlled by money. If they needed me to do something, then all they had to do was to deliver money to my office. I couldn’t refuse. I wasn’t able to, and I didn’t dare to, either. Compared to the Chamber of Commerce, our Catering Association was like a defenseless child. After letting them in through the door, we were completely defenseless. I could only discard my conscience. I refrained from looking at the mantra carved on the statue, and told myself that I deserved all of this.

“I knew that... what I was doing was wrong, but once the first step was taken, I could no longer go back.” Warren sighed as he turned to Robert. He patted Robert’s shoulder with an earnest expression, and said, “I remember you now. You’re the kid who always liked to follow the former president, and didn’t want to wipe your mouth after eating grilled beef. If you’re going to guide the Catering Association in the right direction, I hope you can let everyone look at the mantra on that statue with a clear conscience.”

Chapter 370: Are You Kidding Me?

Mamy Restaurant’s inability to make it back onto the rankings board was a hot conversation topic among the restaurant’s customers. Everyone was initially quite furious, but Mag’s positive demeanor blunted their rage.

Harrison looked at Mag, and pleaded, “Mag, are you really unable to serve the grilled fish in the morning? I had one yesterday, and it’s all I could think about for the entire night. Can you please make one for me?”

“The spicy grilled fish is unavailable during our breakfast service. If you want, you can order it for lunch or dinner.” The system hadn’t actually stipulated that the spicy grilled fish couldn’t be served in the morning. However, he wanted to maintain the freshness of the air in the restaurant during the mornings. Furthermore, it was unhealthy to have foods with such strong flavors for breakfast, so it was a health consideration for his customers as well.

Mag had responded with a smile, but sounded implacable, so Harrison could only give up. He said, “Alright, then I’ll get a braised chicken and rice.”

“Master Turtle, is my wand ready? Master Half-beard said it’s almost ready; is that true?” Amy stood with an expectant look on her face beside Urien, who was dining on a bowl of tofu pudding.

"It's almost ready. I'll have it finished in two days at most." Urien nodded with a benevolent smile as he said, "Little Amy, do you want Master to buy you a savory tofu pudding?"

"Yay! I'm finally getting my very own wand!" Amy jumped for joy before shaking her head, and replying, "No thanks, Master Turtle, I already had some earlier. You only have to pay for me."

"Er... Alright." Urien's expression stiffened upon hearing that. He had promised that he would pay for Amy's meals during her lessons, but it still felt a little strange as he was paying for her in a restaurant that her father owned.

A wand that can shrink and expand? Is this the Monkey King's golden staff¹ they're talking about? Mag thought to himself upon hearing their conversation. Back when Amy had first stated that condition, he had brushed it off as an unreasonable request. However, Krassu and Urien had taken it very seriously, and they were close to completing the actual wand. That was a little surprising to him, and he was looking forward to seeing what the finished product would be like.

As the only magic caster on the entire continent that trained in both melee and long-range magic, Amy's first ever wand had been crafted by two powerful 10th-tier magic casters, so it was surely something to look forward to even though Amy had only mastered very few spells up to this point.

Krassu just so happened to walk into the restaurant then, and he smiled as he said, "Arthur will probably arrive from Rodu in the next few days. I heard that there are two other little brats coming with him. They'll be perfect test subjects for Little Amy's new wand."

Amy's eyes lit up as she asked, "Master Half-beard, do you want Little Amy to be a bad person?"

"Err... Kind of. In any case, those guys definitely aren't harboring any good intentions, so let's show them how powerful my disciple is, and teach them a lesson." Krassu nodded with a smile, and he sat down before ordering a Yangzhou fried rice.

Urien took a glance at Krassu, and retorted coldly, "That's *my* disciple you're talking about there. Drill that into your head."

"Heh, there's no point in arguing. The entire Norland Continent knows that you and I are both instructing the same disciple." Krassu looked at Urien. A cold light was also shimmering in his eye as he said, "However, it remains to be seen what kind of magic Amy will use to defeat her opponents. It would be very interesting to see her use melee magic to crush long-range magic."

"Heh, the flames of extreme frost is enough to take care of those small fry. What's so interesting about watching a little girl wielding a large club?" Urien chuckled coldly.

"Master Half-beard, Master Turtle, are you two going to fight? Which one's more powerful between melee and long-range magic? I really want to know." Amy looked at the two of them with anticipation shimmering in her eyes.

All of the customers in the restaurant also turned to look at them. From their observations, it appeared that the two magic casters had been relatively friendly with each other recently. At the very least, that was the case when they were in the restaurant, so they didn't have to worry about the two magic casters erupting into battle without warning.

The feud of fire and ice between the two of them was also widely known among all of the customers. As such, everyone was looking forward to seeing when a decisive result would arise in the feud between their melee and long-range magic as well as fire and ice magic.

“Of course melee magic is the best. I’ll get a sweet tofu pudding.” Krassu placed his order as he gave his response.

“If a magic caster still has to engage in melee combat, then there’s no point in learning magic. Thanks for the meal.” Urien also presented his opinion, and left some money on the table before departing.

“Bye bye, Master Half-beard. I have to go attend my lesson now. Master Urien told me that he would teach me a new spell today.” Amy waved at Krassu before bidding farewell to Mag and the others. She then followed Urien out the door, but she suddenly stopped at the entrance, turning to Ugly Duckling, and said, “Come here, Ugly Duckling, you can come play with Black Coal and Green Pea.”

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling backed away cautiously as it looked at Amy, retreating all the way behind the counter. It poked its little head out from around the counter and shook its head with a determined look.

“Don’t worry, I won’t make you fight today.” Amy continued to usher Ugly Duckling toward her.

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling still shook its head.

“I won’t lock you into the birdcage today, either,” Amy promised.

“Meow~” Ugly Duckling immediately hid behind the counter, and didn’t even dare to poke its head out anymore.

“Tch, scaredy-cat.” Amy shook her head before turning to leave.

Only then did Ugly Duckling poke its head out from behind the counter, heaving a sigh of relief. It then climbed onto a stool, and lay onto its back as if settled down for a nap.

Mag looked at its portly little stomach, and shook his head with a smile. If things continued like this, it was definitely going to become an obese cat.

“System, the food competition mission has ended in failure, so give me a new mission.” After the breakfast service, Mag carried a lounge chair under the sun, and lay in it in a relaxed manner. He tossed out a handful of moonlight rice, which immediately attracted a bunch of white pigeons.

“The mission isn’t over yet, so the system won’t release a new mission. Please try your best to complete the mission, and don’t just give up! There is no punishment for failing the mission, but it will negatively impact your mission completion rate, which will, in turn, affect the difficulty of the upcoming missions and the prizes for completing those missions.” The system’s serious voice sounded.

“Holy f*ck! Are you kidding me?!!”

Mag immediately sprang up from his chair with wide eyes.