

## ABNORMALITY IN TYPE-MOON: MADNESS OF ANIMEVERSE

Chapter 71: Chapter 71: Aoko and Touko



"You're here."

Touko Aozaki stepped into the backyard of the mansion.

Aoko Aozaki stood in the open space, her gaze fixed on the overcast night sky.

"What's so fascinating about a sky this dreary?"

"It really isn't much to look at."

Aoko nodded, pouting a bit as if annoyed.

"The night sky was better in the old days. But unfortunately, bringing back that sky would be... well, a bit difficult now."

"A bit difficult?"

Touko chuckled in amusement.

"With the power of a Magician, altering something like the sky's appearance should hardly be a challenge, no?"

Although she phrased it as a question, her tone was quite confident.

After all, it had been twenty years since Aoko had become a Magician. Even if she had once been young and naive, by now, she was bound to have left that innocence behind. Touko preferred not to think about just how powerful her younger sister might be now—it would only end up demoralizing her.

And who needed that?

"Yes, very true!" Aoko nodded with a frank smile. "Breaking up the clouds overhead is easy. But if I wanted to bring back the world of the past, that's beyond my say."

"You think the past was really better?"

"At least it was better than now. You of all people, running a business, should feel the same, right?"

"Haha, you're not wrong there!"

Touko let out a laugh.

Back then, she could still make a decent living through her craft. But now? It was a struggle just to scrape by.

Even though her Sealing Designation had been lifted ten years ago, she had no intention of working under the Mage's Association, living a somewhat lonely, hand-to-mouth existence.

Luckily, she could occasionally "borrow" from Roy's savings.

"But this 'world you can't change back to'—is that because of some limit to your power?" Touko asked, casually revisiting the topic.

"Who could have that kind of power?"

Aoko sighed, waving off the notion as if it were absurd.

Touko nodded in agreement. Turning back time on the entire world was indeed a fanciful idea.

She took a pack of cigarettes out of her pocket—an old-fashioned Taiji brand. After a moment's hesitation, she took one out and lit it.

"Then let me put it another way: is it that you don't want to, or that you're simply not allowed to?"

Her tone sharpened suddenly, the casual banter between sisters giving way to a probing exchange between magi. The shift left no room for warmth, making it hard to believe they were even related.

"Hmph..."

Aoko gave a casual, dismissive laugh.

"To a magus, does it really make any difference?"

"Well said. Magi are creatures who accept reality as it is, not ones who reshape it to their liking. Even if they learn the truth, it rarely changes anything in the end."

Touko's voice held a hint of melancholy.

"If they confirmed that the Counter Force no longer exists, they'd probably be overjoyed... no, they'd definitely go mad with glee."

As magi delved deeper into magic, they lost pieces of their humanity. Many were even obsessed with experiments that defied the prohibitions of the Counter Force. Knowing the proverbial Sword of Damocles was gone, they would surely celebrate with some world-threatening experiment or another.

Touko took a drag from her cigarette, blowing a ring of smoke that partially obscured her expression.

"Aoko... has this world been abandoned?"

"What, you're interested in the answer to that now?"

Aoko's face lit up with a teasing smile.

"I didn't care much before. Now... well, I care a little more."

A touch of frustration crossed Touko's face as she cast a complicated look toward the sky.

"Ten years ago, when the Corrupted Servants emerged from that black mud and aimed their swords at the world, you must have known what was happening. But you didn't intervene to stop them."

"For the past decade, I've traveled far and wide, encountering the same troubling question everywhere I went. At that time, besides national armies, only local magi stood against the black mud. The ancient True Ancestors, lingering spirits, and mystical creatures all stayed out of it—even beings like you, a Magician, chose to stand by."

"Though the Wizard Marshal Zelretch did appear once, all he did was set up a simple ward in Fuyuki City before vanishing without a trace. To top it all off, the Counter Force should have prevented such a calamity... yet, the world still fell apart."

"After everything I saw, I began to wonder if our world had been abandoned, reduced to a pruned event. But I couldn't grasp why."

Touko's voice held a deep frustration as she spoke.

This question had weighed on her for years. The same doubts haunted her, gnawing at her each time she traveled to new places. But an answer always eluded her.

"You want me to tell you the answer to all this?"

Aoko scoffed, her gaze sharpening.

"What changed? Since when do you care about the truth? That's not like you, Touko. Or could it be... that you're asking for someone else's sake?"

"...Maybe so."

Touko fell silent for a long moment before nodding reluctantly.

"Let me guess—it's for Roy, isn't it?"

She didn't reply, only gave a slight shrug.

Which was answer enough.

"Ha!"

Aoko let out a long sigh, as if venting a frustration that had been building within her.

"If you'd asked for your own sake, I'd have stayed silent. But if it's for Roy, then... fine. I'll tell you. To cut to the chase, the idea that this world was abandoned? It's wrong."

"So, what's the right answer, then?"

"The truth is, this world was chosen."

Aoko took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

"It's the exact opposite of what you've been thinking."

"No... maybe it's not entirely the opposite. I did wonder if that might be the case but dismissed it as too far-fetched to be true."

Hearing this revelation, Touko's expression finally softened, a faint smile forming as a long-held weight seemed to lift from her.

"Then, everything happening in this world now—is it all according to the Counter Force's plan? Is that why beings like you haven't intervened?"

"The Counter Force?"

Aoko cast a weary look in her direction, rubbing her temples in frustration.

"If only it were that simple..."

"What do you mean by that?"

Touko's expression froze, a hint of confusion creeping in.

"Wait—are you saying the Counter Force isn't behind all of this?"

"Of course not."

Aoko's answer came without hesitation.

This shattered Touko's assumptions completely.

For the past decade, she had considered countless possibilities, all revolving around the workings of the Counter Force.

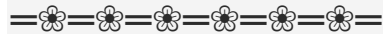
If it wasn't the Counter Force, then... who could be behind everything?

"There is someone, isn't there? The one who dictates all cause, who manipulates all effect..."

Aoko's words came with a resigned shrug, mirroring Touko's own mannerisms.

But her gesture was tinged with bitterness.

"It's the Root."



Chapter 72: Chapter 72: Ichika's Late-Night Visit



[👉 Shoutout to Inferi & Stealthkug for joining patreon. Thank you very much.□]

Hayasaka Ai reheated the midnight snack.

After Roy finished eating, he returned to his room, picked up a change of clothes, and headed to the bathroom.

Inside the bathroom, Roy undressed, standing before the mirror and removing his glasses.

He didn't need them for vision—taking them off didn't affect his sight.

The young man reflected in the mirror had delicate, almost sculpted features, but his frame was so thin it seemed fragile, his limbs almost like wires. Yet more striking than his gauntness were the scars scattered across his body. Dozens of them, both large and small, etched into his skin in fixed patterns as though following some grim design.

"Bang!"

Roy suddenly struck the mirror with his fist.

The glass shattered, cracks splintering across the surface.

Through the fractured mirror, his blood-red eyes glared back at him, a gaze filled with raw hostility and a hint of unhinged ferocity.

"Lord Roy, is something wrong?"

Hayasaka Ai's voice came from outside the bathroom.

"Nothing."

Without pressing further, Hayasaka bowed and withdrew.

As always, her professionalism showed. Despite living in Roy's home for quite some time, she'd never overstepped her bounds or pried into his affairs.

Inside the bathroom, Roy crouched down, tracing runes onto the shattered mirror, which reassembled itself, the cracks vanishing as if time had reversed.

Roy shook his head, feeling a heavy pressure throbbing in his temples.

"Too tired, or... is the curse about to flare up again?"

He massaged his forehead.

Tonight had been especially grueling, having used his Mystic Eyes repeatedly. A resurgence of the curse wouldn't be surprising at this point.

Better to finish up quickly and head out.

Maybe he'd spend the night in Shiina's room.

Roy sat under the shower, washing himself.

Just a few minutes later...

"Clink."

The bathroom door slid open ever so slightly.

It paused, and then slid shut again.

Roy turned around.

There, by the door, was a girl with short, pink hair, closing the door quietly behind her.

She wore only a towel, loosely wrapped around her figure. The cloth barely covered the essentials, exposing her shoulders and thighs. Her pale skin, delicate collarbone, and the curve of her legs were all bathed in the soft light.

Ichika? What is she doing here? When Ichika glanced back, her eyes met Roy's.

Roy's gaze, sharp without his glasses, made her jump.

A bit of nervousness flashed across her face, but after a brief hesitation, she bit her lip and lowered her gaze, loosening the towel so it revealed even more skin.

"Lord Roy, your arm isn't in the best condition... would you like me to help wash your back?"

Her voice was tentative as she looked up at him.

She knew Roy's demeanor could be quite cold when he took off his glasses, but she'd never seen it herself.



Steeling herself, she had mustered all her courage to sneak in here tonight.

Roy glanced down at his right arm.

It had only recently been reattached, and the shoulder was still wrapped in bandages.

Indeed, it wasn't very convenient for him.

And besides...

Was helping with a bath really all that was on Ichika's mind? "Come on, then."

Roy nodded, motioning her over.

"Understood."

Ichika let out a sigh of relief, gathering her courage as she approached him.

Taking the towel he handed her, she began to wash his back.

As she moved, her breaths came faster, her heart thudding wildly in her chest.

Finally, she let go of the towel, letting it fall to the floor.

Pressing her body closer, she began to use herself to wash him.

"This way... it's much cleaner."

Whether to convince him or herself, she murmured softly.

Roy remained silent, the feeling of her soft skin against his back stirring something within him, his breath quickening slightly.

"Lord Roy... shall I wash the front now...?"

Her voice trembled as she spoke.

Roy turned to face her.

She settled into his lap, pressing herself against his chest.

He looked at her, face-to-face.

Her cheeks were flushed a deep red, her eyes glistening, lashes trembling. She looked up at him with the vulnerable, wide-eyed gaze of a fawn.

"Where would you like me to start, Lord Roy?"

She whispered into his ear, her tone soft, carrying a hint of allure.

"Everywhere," he replied, lips curling into a wicked grin that was altogether different from the look he wore in battle.

Hearing his answer, Ichika let go of her reservations, her arms wrapping around his neck as she pressed herself against him, determined to make this bath unforgettable.

Soft, breathy sounds soon echoed throughout the bathroom.

When all was quiet again, the bathroom door opened just a crack as Ichika peered out, cheeks still flushed. Confirming no one was around, she slipped out quietly.

"What are you doing here?"

A sudden voice startled her.

"Miss Hayasaka..."

Ichika turned around, finding Hayasaka Ai standing just out of sight. She could feel her face heating up.

"Oh, it's nothing, I just came to... take a bath..."

She offered a wide smile, though her gaze avoided Hayasaka's, whose clear, blue eyes seemed to pierce through her every thought.

"Is that so? Lord Roy is still inside; perhaps it's best not to go in just now."

"Ahaha, I just realized. I'll be more careful next time."

Ichika chuckled awkwardly, slipping past Hayasaka and hurrying off.

Thankfully, she'd taken the time to change clothes before leaving.

Ichika silently sighed with relief.

Behind her, Hayasaka watched her retreating form, noting the odd stiffness in her gait, her gaze contemplative.

She sure is bold.

Well, she does have younger sisters to think about—guess that explains her urgency.

I wonder how Shiina would react if she found out? That could be... interesting.

"Clink."

The bathroom door slid open once more.

Roy stepped out, steam trailing off his skin, his face flushed from the heat.

"Hayasaka, what are you doing here?"

"Just passing by."

She offered a slight bow.

Glancing up subtly, she noted that he wasn't wearing his glasses.

A small shiver ran down her spine.

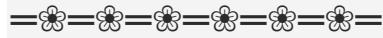
"I happened to be passing through, that's all. I didn't see anything... unusual."

Roy said nothing, slipping on his glasses.

The sharp aura around him seemed to soften instantly, like snow melting under the sun.

"You're doing a lot of work around here. With a house this big, you don't need to be so meticulous," he said with a smile, offering her a rare word of appreciation before heading back to his room.

[T/N: Make sure to join Discord through the link below for major announcements & giveaways.]



Chapter 73: Chapter 73: Hayasaka Ai Urges, "Miss Rin, Just Go for It!"



"Lady Aoko?"

In the courtyard, Aozaki Touko stood with furrowed brows, her face twisted in an uncharacteristic display of unease and frustration. She bit her lip as if wrestling with some vexing thought.

A voice called out tentatively beside her.

"Hm? Oh, it's you, Ichika. What brings you here?"

Touko glanced over at the pink-haired girl before her, noticing her damp hair—a clear sign she'd just come from the bath.

Touko instinctively gave a small smile, reaching for a cigarette, only to realize that at some point she'd been smoking down to the butt.

Unaware of how long she'd been standing there, lost in her thoughts, she let out a self-deprecating chuckle.

For someone who constantly advised others, like Illya, to face reality and use it to their advantage, she herself had lost her composure after hearing an outrageous claim earlier.

"Um... I was wondering if you could help me awaken my magic circuits," Ichika asked, her voice cautious.

She avoided meeting Touko's gaze, fearing she might be buried on the spot if her request annoyed her.

"That's easy enough."

But Touko didn't seem upset. Instead, she smiled knowingly, placing a hand on Ichika's shoulder, channeling her mana to activate Ichika's circuits.

Ichika exhaled in relief.

As she suspected, Lady Touko had been aware of her plans all along and had mercifully chosen to let it slide.

In moments, Ichika felt a distinct flow running through her body, a warmth that surged within her.

Feeling the energy, she couldn't help the grin spreading across her face.

Suddenly, the sound of knocking echoed from the front courtyard.

"Looks like you have a visitor."

Touko set aside her prior thoughts and headed towards the front entrance.

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"Where should I put my bags?"

Standing at the doorway of the Aozaki residence was Rin Tohsaka, a mountain of luggage strapped to her back.

"Why are you carrying so much stuff?"

Roy, who had come to open the door, stared at her, his expression bewildered.

"Well, my house was destroyed, so I'm looking for a new place to stay," she replied, using a reinforcement spell to hoist her bags inside.

She looked... oddly excited. There was a certain thrill in her eyes.

"Didn't you claim your house was more secure than City Hall? Well, since we're allies, I figured it'd be safe to crash here, right? Especially since my Servant's already working under your roof."

"No, it's not that you're unwelcome. Just, the house is kind of... full right now."

But before Roy could finish his sentence, Rin's eyes had already settled on the unusual group of women gathered around the residence.

Shiina Kasumigaoka, Ai Hayasaka, Illya, Ichika Nakano, and her sister Miku. And then, of course, Aoko and Touko Aozaki.

Upon noticing Rin, the women exchanged glances, gave a brief nod of acknowledgment, and went about their business.

Just like that, Rin's earlier enthusiasm vanished, replaced by a chilly feeling.

A few days away, and there's even more competition? Each one of these women had a unique charm, a natural grace. From sisters and maids to literary prodigies and an adorably precocious Illya, all accompanied by the dignified Aozaki sisters who were practically royalty to Roy.

While Rin was beautiful herself, she felt she couldn't outshine this crowd.

An intense sense of defeat welled up within her.

"Where's your Archer?"

"He's still recovering from his injuries. It'll take at least two or three days," Rin replied, sulking.

It wasn't clear if she was more upset about Archer's condition or the bitter taste of defeat.

For Servants, recovering from injuries was usually straightforward, as mana supply would help them regenerate far faster than humans. If their Masters had healing spells, it would be even quicker. But Archer had held off the

Berserk Saber for several minutes, surviving by sheer luck alone. Hoping for a quick recovery was unrealistic.

"And your arm... how's that?"

As she spoke, Rin's gaze drifted to Roy's right arm.

"It's fine, more or less."

Roy rotated his shoulder experimentally. There was still some soreness, but Touko's work was nothing short of miraculous. His arm moved as if it had always been attached, and he was confident it'd be back to normal by morning.

Despite his reassurances, Rin's eyes lingered on his shoulder, filled with guilt, regret, and perhaps... gratitude.

She couldn't deny her admiration.

Back then, Roy hadn't had a moment to think. He'd saved her purely on instinct.

Reflecting on the night's events, she realized he'd rescued her not once, but three times in total.

Rin couldn't help but be moved by his actions.

"...Why didn't you hesitate back then? Why'd you save me without a second thought?"

Rin looked down, idly kicking at a pebble, as if the question were casual.

Yet her ears stood tall, a visible red blush spreading across them—though she herself seemed unaware.

"If you had died, the exorcism barriers would've collapsed, letting a horde of vengeful spirits and curses flood into Fuyuki City. There'd be a lot of casualties... what's wrong?"

Roy's puzzled gaze met Rin's.

"N-no, nothing..."

Rin slumped her shoulders, looking thoroughly dejected.

"You're right. And, well... thanks."

Right, thanks... sure! Is that really his answer? How does he manage to have so many women around him with zero emotional intelligence?! Roy chuckled softly, seeing the frustration on her face.

"To be honest, I didn't think that much. I just wanted to save you. By the time I realized it, I'd already pushed you away. It wasn't for any particular reason."

"I-I see. Well... thank you. I... I'm happy."

Rin replied earnestly, though a hint of a smile betrayed her efforts to keep a straight face.

As a way of repaying him, she decided to prepare a meal. Since her specialty was Chinese cuisine—something she knew Roy liked—she resolved to give him a proper feast.

"Miss Rin, is this really enough?" Hayasaka Ai, who was assisting her in the kitchen, suddenly spoke up, her voice calm but with a hint of amusement.

"You... you can't be serious, Hayasaka!"

Rin turned, eyes wide, a deep blush coloring her cheeks as she looked at the girl.

"If you're fond of Lord Roy, why not take the initiative?" Hayasaka suggested with a slight smirk.

"Take... the initiative?"

"Precisely. Just look around. This house is filled with beautiful women. If you don't step up, you might not get another chance."



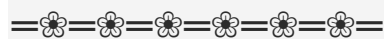
Hayasaka's tone was as polite as ever, but her eyes hinted at a mischief she rarely let show.

She could sense the tension between Rin and Roy, but without a push, nothing would come of it. And with figures like Touko Aozaki, Kasumigaoka Shiina, and Ichika Nakano already making advances, Hayasaka believed that Rin's best chance was now.

While Roy's gentleness could be deceptive, that side of him was genuine—only, he had an equally unyielding and darker side.

And with his enigmatic charm, only more admirers would follow.

Rin needed to act now, or the distance between her and Roy would only grow.



Chapter 74: Chapter 74: Hayasaka Ai: This House Can't Function Without Me



Truth be told, Tohsaka Rin actually had a fair chance.

After all, while Kasumigaoka Utaha and Nakano Ichika had their own unique charms, they were ultimately just Roy's attendants. Despite gaining magical abilities, they still had a long way to go before they could even be considered magi.

Aoko Aozaki might have been a real challenge. If she truly held romantic feelings for Roy, Utaha and Ichika would be completely outmatched, and even Rin might find it difficult to get close. Fortunately, Aoko had already made it clear that she harbored no such sentiments for Roy, nor did she care about anyone else's pursuit.

With that, Rin stood out as the most suitable partner for Roy—she was both a skilled magus and someone Roy had known for years. As the mayor of Fuyuki City, she was also Roy's peer in status.

If she were willing to take the initiative, it wouldn't be hard for her to surpass Kasumigaoka Utaha and Nakano Ichika and claim her place by Roy's side. She'd become his most legitimate partner, in the center position.

And when that happened...

Hayasaka Ai could finally stop living in constant vigilance, wondering if she'd unknowingly step on Roy's landmine and lose her life. Or worse, end up being forced onto his bed as a tool to break his curse.

Yes, she was thinking of her own future.

It was obvious that Roy and Tohsaka Rin were a perfect match. Whether she served Roy or Rin, the outcome would be the same. Naturally, she had to think ahead for her own security.

Pushing her master into Roy's arms was just her way of staying safe.

"But... how am I supposed to do that?" Rin's hesitant voice shook slightly.

Roy's house was practically overflowing with beautiful women. If she wanted to win his affection, she couldn't afford to be passive. With the Tohsaka family down to just her, it wasn't like anyone could complain if she ended up with a homunculus husband.

"Just take him to bed."

Rin's eyes went wide.

"Ai... what are you even saying?"

Hayasaka Ai remained expressionless.

"This is the most effective approach. If you're thinking of going through all the typical dating steps before getting together with him, who knows when that'll happen? Might as well be in the next century."

Seeing Rin's reluctance, Ai sighed and continued firmly.

"Or are you saying that, after all Roy's done for you, you don't think he deserves your commitment?"

"Shh! Keep your voice down!" Rin pressed her hand over Ai's mouth.

The kitchen and the living room were connected, and if Ai kept talking that loudly, someone was bound to hear. She'd die of embarrassment if that happened!

"I'm not saying that. It's just... well, doing that right away is... a bit much..." Rin muttered, clearly uncomfortable with the idea.

Ai nodded to herself, observing Rin carefully.

It wasn't that Rin didn't want to take action.

She just felt like her relationship with Roy wasn't quite there yet.

In that case, Ai only needed to give her a little nudge in the right direction.

"I've seen Kasumigaoka Utaha and Nakano Ichika practically throwing themselves at Roy these past few days."

"What?" Rin's eyes narrowed, her gaze sharpening.

"They're his attendants, you know. Close at hand and ready to act whenever an opportunity arises," Ai said, her tone light but calculated.

"Hmm..."

"Besides, those two have... well, let's just say, pretty impressive figures. A lot of men are into that. And Roy is a normal guy. Who's to say he won't find himself tempted?"

Ai smirked to herself. If only Rin knew—Roy had long since crossed that line. Rin, now visibly troubled, bit her lip. Ai leaned in close, her voice lowering to a near-whisper.

"Honestly, Rin, you don't have to go all the way right off the bat. There are... other ways to get close."

Rin's face instantly turned scarlet.

How does Ai know so much about this?!

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Roy massaged his forehead, feeling a throbbing ache that was getting worse by the minute.

His eyes stung with a strange weariness, and he found it difficult to keep them open.

"Is this some kind of reaction to the arm transplant?"

He rubbed his temples, trying to alleviate the discomfort. He'd just had an intense time with Ichika in the bath earlier, so if this strange ache was a result of his curse acting up, that should have been enough to dispel it. The fact that the pain was intensifying suggested that it wasn't from the curse.

But then, it couldn't be a complication from the transplant either. Aoko's work was top-tier; no one else could match her skill. Just reattaching an arm wouldn't cause these symptoms.

So, what was happening?

Roy inspected his body from head to toe but found nothing out of the ordinary.

Maybe it's just fatigue, he thought. It was late, after all. He decided it was time to get some rest.

"Master, if I may speak with you for a moment."

Just as he turned to head for bed, a voice echoed in his mind.

"Saber? What's the matter?"

"I led you into danger on multiple occasions today. I am ashamed to face you."

"No need to worry about that."

Roy squeezed the bridge of his nose, his tone reassuring.

"Honestly, the enemies we faced today were just too powerful. If it had been any other opponent, you'd have handled it fine. You managed to take down Caster, didn't you?"

"That was only thanks to you, Master... But I'm grateful for your understanding. I'm truly blessed to serve under someone like you."

Her tone grew lighter, the shadow of guilt lifting slightly.

"Actually, Master, I wanted to tell you that... I do have another form."

"Another form?" Roy's interest piqued, the fog in his mind momentarily clearing.

She must mean her Berserker form.

It was said that her demonic form was fused with someone else's power, creating a formidable fusion.

Does she know how to access that form?

"You're telling me this because you know how to transform?" he asked, his curiosity mounting.

If she could assume her Berserker form, that would significantly bolster their side.

"I... vaguely remember the method. It was almost impossible before, but now... well, it could be done."

There was hesitation in her voice, but she sounded resolute by the end.

"To be honest, Master, I don't know much about that side of myself. Instinctively, I feel a bit afraid of it. But if it's for your victory, I'll gladly lend you that power."

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After finishing his conversation with Saber, Roy returned to his room.

He shook his head, trying to shake off the mental fatigue. His vision blurred slightly as the heaviness in his mind continued to grow, weighing him down more and more with each step.

"Sleep... sleep..."

He thought he heard a whisper near his ear.

But he couldn't tell where it was coming from. Overwhelmed by a wave of exhaustion, his mind felt sluggish, almost paralyzed, and the ability to think drained away.

It felt unnervingly similar to when the curse overtook him.

Roy steadied himself on the edge of his bed, just about to climb in when—

His vision went black.

His body went slack, and he crumpled by the bedside, falling into a deep, heavy slumber.

The door creaked open quietly.

Rin, dressed in nothing but a thin nightgown, slipped into the room.

Her cheeks were flushed, but she froze upon seeing Roy lying by the bed. Quickly, she hurried over, bending down to examine him.

"Nothing seems wrong... he's just asleep..."

But if he was merely asleep, why was he lying by the side of the bed instead of on it?

Sensing something off, Rin hurriedly left the room, her expression clouded with worry.

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Chapter 75: Chapter 75: Nightmare



[👉 Shoutout to Mitsogon & Ibrahim\_Amami for joining patreon. Thank you very much. □]

When he opened his eyes again, Roy found himself in a vast yet dark underground chamber, where shadows clung to every corner, casting an oppressive, eerie atmosphere.

His gaze swept across the room, taking in rows upon rows of massive glass tanks. Within each tank floated the form of a "person" being grown from nothing, each with almost identical features. Male or female, they were all strikingly similar, with snow-white hair and placid expressions, suspended in a green, translucent fluid that shimmered like some alien amniotic sac. Their eyes were shut, and they slumbered peacefully, oblivious to the occasional bubbles that rose around them.

Roy stood amongst these tanks, his face expressionless, silent.

Suddenly, the door to the chamber creaked open, and two young men entered, pacing among the tanks with the casual disdain of shoppers picking vegetables, eyes filled with disdain, disapproval, and indifference.

After a few minutes, they settled on one of the tanks, swiftly manipulating the controls to release the "person" within.

The figure slowly opened its eyes for the first time, staring out in confused wonder at the strange world around it, like a newborn seeing light. Without a word, the young men lifted him out and took him away.

The chamber fell silent again.

The others in the tanks continued to sleep, oblivious to everything happening outside.

Days passed.

The two youths returned to the chamber, selected another tank, and repeated the same process, carrying the figure out.

Time and again, the tanks emptied one by one, only to be refilled as new "people" emerged from nothing within days.

Then, one day.

In an unassuming tank tucked in a corner, a figure's brow suddenly twitched as if struggling against something, and then slowly opened his eyes.

Unlike the others, who were blank and unaware, this one's eyes showed a hint of something more—a trace of bewilderment, as if he were questioning why he was there.

Instinctively, he tried to move, thrashing against the confines of the tank, but his mouth only filled with the thick, translucent fluid.



The disturbance caught someone's attention. Moments later, the two young men rushed in, extracting him from the tank with a mixture of shock and curiosity.

As they spoke to one another in hushed voices, the figure tried to lift a hand, but he was far too weak. Even breathing felt like his lungs were on fire. His ears and eyes, as if not fully formed, struggled to make out any sounds or details.

After a short discussion, the men made up their minds and carried him towards the exit.

"No! You can't take him there!"

Roy watched from the sidelines, helpless. He wanted to intervene, to shout, to stop them. But his voice fell silent in the empty air, not even reaching his own ears.

It was as if he were a mere observer, forced to witness a past event play out like a hollow hologram, powerless to alter anything.

The scene shifted.

Before him now was an elderly man wrapped in bandages, clad in tattered armor.

"Ainzbern's homunculus technology is certainly remarkable," the old man mused aloud. "Every so often, one of them develops self-awareness while still in the 'womb.' These rare cases often carry unique gifts. Looks like he's one of them."

"Handle him with care; he's a valuable test subject."

The two youths nodded in understanding, transferring him to a laboratory.

From that moment on, he entered a living hell.

"Handle with care" did not mean any sort of kindness or respect. It merely meant preserving his body in peak condition. They made sure he was fed, prevented him from getting sick, and forced him to consume minimal sustenance, even when his underdeveloped stomach ached or he had no appetite. Refusal was not an option. And when he was deemed ready, he was strapped to a gurney and wheeled into the lab.

Roy's expression grew darker as he watched, a fierce malice gleaming in his eyes.

The experiments began with sensory tests.

They tested his sight, his hearing, his taste—and, of course, his pain.

Blades sliced into his skin, cutting through muscle and even piercing bone, just to ensure his nervous system functioned like a normal human's.

He screamed on the operating table, his cries falling on deaf ears, ignored by the researchers who observed him with sick delight.

Once they confirmed that his sensory responses were intact, they moved on to studying his anatomy. They probed his organs, compared his tissues to other homunculi and normal humans, and investigated the origins of his unique traits.

First, they stripped his skin, then sliced away his muscles, drilled into his bones, and, finally, carved into his organs. Each new experiment brought a fresh level of agony.

They had countless ways to keep him alive, ensuring he endured every moment of pain.

From the moment he left that chamber filled with tanks, he'd realized he was trapped in a nightmare. He pretended to be compliant, adopting a stoic

demeanor, barely speaking, and following orders without question, hoping that, if he seemed like just another homunculus, they might ignore him.

But the day they cut through his flesh, shattering his bones, his restraint snapped.

"It hurts! Stop, please stop!"

"Don't hurt me anymore! I'm just like you, a person with feelings! Don't you have any conscience at all?!"

The researchers merely exchanged pleased smiles as he pleaded on the table.

Even his capacity for fear and suffering was intact.

Such an ideal subject deserved even more intensive testing.

"Conscience, you say?"

The armored old man approached him, his voice thick with scorn.

"No one has a stronger sense of duty than we do. We are on a sacred mission to save this world from itself. We will purge every curse and restore humanity to the peace it once knew. Our purpose is grand, noble!"

"In the pursuit of salvation, sacrifices must be made. You, too, will be a stepping stone toward saving the world! And that is an honor for you, one future generations will remember in their vague acknowledgments as 'benefiting from the experiments conducted on an unnamed homunculus.'"

"Consider yourself fortunate to be a subject of worth, unlike those who were discarded after only a few days of study."

The old man, aiming to intimidate him further, led him to the disposal pit.

There lay the bodies of countless homunculi, twisted and broken. Some still showed faint signs of life, weakly struggling despite the lack of aid or hope, abandoned as if already dead.

Among the remains lay real human children, some as young as four or five, lying silently in the pit, their breaths forever stilled.

He knelt down, paralyzed.

Even dying was not an option for him.

The magi could hypnotize him with ease, stripping him of all autonomy. Even the desire for death was beyond his reach, leaving him as little more than a puppet, kept alive only to suffer.

Thus began the days without end, an endless cycle of torment. Time became meaningless as he endured every agony inflicted upon him.

Finally, when the experiments hit a roadblock, the magi had new plans.

One day, he awoke in complete darkness, his face wrapped in bandages.

His eyes had been gouged out.

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Chapter 76: Chapter 76: Angra Mainyu



"Aaaaahh!!!"

He swept everything off the table—trays, saline bottles, everything crashed to the floor as he unleashed all the rage he'd held in for years.

For so long, he'd been nothing but a helpless experiment, a living puppet on a surgical table subjected to endless, incomprehensible pain. His anger had smoldered, dark and unquenchable, building in the abyss of his heart until it was impossible to wash away. His hatred was a bottomless pit, an accumulation of fury that even he couldn't cleanse.

And now, with his eyes taken from him, that hatred had finally erupted, his resentment reaching its peak.

"I'll kill them all! One day, I'll kill every last one of them!"

"Save the world? Hah! You want to save it? Then I'll tear it all down instead!"

"Someday, I swear it... someday..."

His face twisted with rage, his expression vicious and animalistic, a predator driven by nothing but raw, savage bloodlust.

A monstrous roar echoed within his mind, like the growl of a demon emerging from the pits of hell.

The room around him faded into darkness, until everything was shrouded in a black void.

Since that fateful moment when they had taken his sight, the world had become a place of shadows, only the hateful voice in his heart echoing back at him in this darkness, his malice radiating outward like a curse, infecting the very air around him.

And then—clap, clap, clap.

The sound of applause filled the silence.

"Oh, what a riveting performance!"

A dark figure appeared in front of Roy, stepping out from the shadows.

This figure was unlike anything else, entirely black from head to toe, his features a complete void that absorbed light like a black hole. Only his eyes, starkly contrasted in black and white, gleamed with a mocking glint, reflecting Roy's seething anger with cruel amusement.

It was as if he had been entertained by the suffering he had just witnessed, his gaze brimming with satisfaction.

"That was your past, wasn't it? Oh my, you're making quite the scary face!" The shadow's voice was playful, dripping with a sickly charm.

Across from him, Roy's face was filled with an almost palpable malice, a murderous intent so strong it seemed tangible, pressing down on the shadow like a blade. The shadow, unperturbed, chuckled quietly.

"Now, now, don't get the wrong idea—I'm not your enemy. Quite the opposite, actually. I'm here to help you. I'm your friend!"

With open arms, the shadow advanced as if embracing him, an almost gleeful grin on his face.

"After all, we've been together for three whole years, haven't we? I know you better than anyone!"

The shadow's words, despite their strange sincerity, only deepened Roy's scorn.

Roy's face twisted into a mocking smile, his expression worlds apart from the gentle one he wore around others. This was a darker, crueler smile, filled with nothing but contempt.

"You call that 'companionship'? Ha! You've tortured me constantly for three years, and now you claim that's some kind of friendship? Angra Mainyu, you're as twisted as they come."

"Oh, come on now, that's a bit harsh, isn't it?" The shadow threw his hands up in exaggerated resignation, his voice light and careless.

"I had to do something, didn't I? Letting you poke around with those Mystic Eyes of yours would've led to you stealing the Greater Grail right from under me! And I'm a pure-hearted warrior—I don't play the victim here!"

He didn't even deny Roy's accusation.

His identity was as Roy had said—Angra Mainyu.

For three years, this embodiment of malice had been sealed within the Greater Grail, continuously feeding Roy a steady stream of curses.

The shadow clapped his hands, as if dismissing the tension with a sigh.

"Let's not dwell on that," he said, his tone shifting to a false friendliness. "So, what do you say, Roy? How about a little partnership? Become my Master."

"No," Roy replied, his face filled with open disdain.

"Didn't even hesitate, huh?" Angra Mainyu blinked, looking momentarily insulted.

"Don't be so hasty! Just hear me out," he wheedled, as if trying to sweet-talk him into compliance. "What I'm trying to say is, I understand you. I know exactly what you went through. Those so-called righteous people tortured you in the name of salvation, pretended they were doing good while tearing you apart. You hate humanity for what it's done to you, right?"

"I'm just like you. Burdened with the title of All the World's Evil, accused of sins I didn't commit, tortured and killed by those who believed themselves righteous!"

"Humanity? Hah! Their hearts are darker than any void, doing unspeakable things in the name of some twisted idea of good. We're victims of their hypocrisy, you and I. I'm the only one who truly understands you, Roy."

Angra Mainyu extended his hand, his words taking on an almost heroic tone.

"So, why not make a pact with me?"

This was Angra Mainyu, the embodiment of all evil in Zoroastrian dualism, a figure forced into the role of the ultimate evil, the Devil. In reality, he was merely an ordinary young man from ancient Persia, chosen as a scapegoat and offered as a sacrifice by those around him. They twisted his life to embody humanity's darkness, torturing him to death in their so-called pursuit of "good."

"Give me your hatred, Roy. I know you want humanity to burn. This world still has over a billion people left. Don't you want to wipe them out? Let's get rid of every last one of them, once and for all. It would be true justice for all the wrongs done to you."

Angra Mainyu's pitch lacked finesse—he was no smooth-talking demon. His speech had no hint of manipulation, no seductive undertone. It was blunt, almost clumsy, spoken with a chilling honesty.

And yet, his words crawled through Roy's mind, trying to unearth every scrap of rage and pain he'd buried over the years.

"So that's why you dragged me here?" Roy's face was unreadable, his voice flat.

"Bingo!" Angra Mainyu grinned, not hiding his satisfaction.

"Too bad that old fool Matou Zouken didn't manage to break down your barriers before he died. Imagine coming out of hiding only to drop dead—it's practically comedy!"

So, this monster was somehow connected with Matou Zouken as well.

But that was irrelevant now.



"Angra Mainyu," Roy sneered, eyes flashing with open scorn, "you say you understand me. But if you truly did, you'd know that none of this would ever work."

"Yes, I want humanity wiped out. That hatred's still in me, buried deep down, a venom that could poison the world itself. One day, I might just let it all out, consequences be damned."

"But here's the thing—killing everyone isn't enough for me."

Roy's voice was a low, dangerous growl. He stepped closer, his gaze piercing, unwavering.

"So stop flattering yourself. You don't know a damn thing about me."

Angra Mainyu took a step back, the mocking smile faltering.

Roy's intentions, as they were now laid bare, exceeded even the scope of destruction. They were an unrelenting storm, a tempest beyond Angra Mainyu's understanding.

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Chapter 77: Chapter 77: Always By Your Side



"I was sent by Lord Chiyomon to take care of you."

The gentle voice echoed softly in the empty hospital room.

It was a spacious, isolated room with a sterile, isolated atmosphere, free from any sharp objects. Its safety measures rivaled those of VIP rooms in major hospitals before the Great Disaster.

The patient lying in the bed wore a special, semi-transparent silk gown, which draped loosely over his slender frame. Through the fabric, the scars covering his body were visible. They weren't random marks but seemed deliberately patterned, each scar etched with cruel precision.

Most striking of all, his eyes were wrapped in layers upon layers of thick bandages.

"They actually did this to you..."

The voice faltered, trembling with shock. It sounded like a young woman, her tone laced with anger, as though biting back fury.

The patient on the bed couldn't see the person speaking, but from her voice, he guessed she was young.

"Don't worry. I'll stay with you. I'll do anything you need. Let me be your eyes."

"Get out."

He lay there, voice as cold as ice, dismissing her.

"Do you want something to eat? Or... would you rather go to the bathroom first?"

The voice came closer, now right by his bedside.

"I brought some food for you. Here, let me feed you. Open wide..."

He felt something being placed on the table beside his bed. Her tone was gentle, coaxing him to eat with patient encouragement.

For a moment, he remained silent.

Then, without saying a word, he sat up, reaching blindly towards the table. His hand found the food tray.

"I told you to get out. Are you deaf?"

With one sharp motion, he swept the tray off the table, sending it crashing to the floor. Even that simple movement left him breathless.

Though he couldn't see it, the food had splattered everywhere.

The young woman paused, then quietly knelt to pick up the scattered meal, wordlessly placing it in the trash.

"I'll be outside. If you need anything, just call me."

"How about you go die?"

The patient's voice was dripping with malice.

The woman didn't respond. She was silent for a moment, then opened the door and left.

He lay back down on the bed.

With his vision taken from him, his world was trapped in darkness. Anger simmered beneath his skin, and every now and then, he'd violently knock things off the table beside him just to release the pent-up rage.

It was impossible to know how much time passed before the door opened again.

"I brought you a portable music player," the gentle voice spoke again.

Soon after, the unmistakable sounds of a Showa-era song filled the air. He recognized the voice—a famous singer whose songs he vaguely remembered from long ago.

She set the music player at a slight distance, so it wasn't within his reach.

The music drifted through the darkness, softening the silence. It was a small relief, a reminder that he wasn't entirely alone in his shadowed world.

"I also brought you some food. Please, let me feed you. It's been so long since you last ate."

"Leave."

"...If you feel hungry, please call for me. I'll be here."

After a moment of silence, the door clicked shut.

The patient went the entire day without touching a bite.

Later, the magi heard of it and came to check on him.

The next time he regained consciousness, he felt a strange fullness in his stomach.

They had hypnotized him and forced him to eat.

Whatever. It was just another routine.

The next time the young woman brought him a meal, he knocked it over again without hesitation.

"You're only hurting yourself by fighting against the magi. Nothing will change no matter what you do."

Her voice remained gentle, unfazed by his hostility.

"Just think of yourself. Please, eat to stay strong. Living is more important than anything else. As long as you're alive, there's still hope."

Hope? He scoffed.

In the middle of the night, a loud, shrill alarm rang out in the room.

Hearing the sound, the magi abandoned whatever they were working on and rushed over, their steps hurried yet indifferent.

The girl, too, scrambled out of her bed.

"He's tried to end his life again."

"What is that, the fifth time?"

"Who cares? He won't die."

She overheard the magi's cold, callous comments as she arrived outside the room.

Through the open door, she saw him lying on the floor, bleeding profusely, his head smeared with blood. He had tried to bash his head against the wall, but the protective magic circles embedded in the room kept him from succeeding.

This place was a prison, carefully engineered by the magi to trap him. Any disturbance immediately triggered their surveillance spells, alerting them to his every move.

"Locked in this hellhole, only to suffer endlessly. Even at the brink of death, there's no escape... Tell me, where exactly is this 'hope' of yours?"

When he awoke, he sneered, his voice dripping with bitter sarcasm.

The girl clenched her fists tightly, her nails digging painfully into her palms. The sting in her hands was nothing compared to the pain in her heart.

For the first time, doubts crept into her mind about the mission she had been given.

"Don't worry," she whispered, her voice shaking with a strange determination. "I'll be with you... I'll stay by your side, always."

"What good will that do?" He laughed, hollow and cruel.

"Anyone can say that. If you're so sincere, why don't you tell the magi you want to be experimented on too? Then, if you can still say those words with that saintly expression, maybe I'll believe you."

A tense silence hung in the air.

"...Understood."

She stood and left.

Finally given up, have you?

He lay back down, resigned.

He'd been here long enough to stop believing in hope a long time ago.

"Always by my side"? "Hope as long as you're alive"? All just naive words from someone who'd never faced real hell.

No one who had truly suffered would say such things.

The next day.

"I brought you a clock," her gentle voice returned.

"It's alright if you can't see it. I'll tell you the time."

But this time, her voice sounded uncharacteristically weak.

"...What happened to you?"

"They made me undergo an experiment."

"...Are you an idiot?"

He turned his face toward her, shocked.

"You told me to, didn't you? You said that if I went through the same things, you'd believe me."

Her tone was gentle yet unwavering, her sincerity impossible to deny.

"I've kept my promise. Now, will you trust me? I'll stay with you, no matter what."

He was silent for a long time.

Whether he was stunned by her foolishness or something deeper stirred within him, he wasn't sure.

For the first time, he spoke in a calmer tone.

"What's your name?"

It occurred to him he had never even asked her name.

"Eh?"

She was taken aback by the sudden softness in his voice.

"What's your name?" His voice grew impatient.

"If you're really going to stay by my side, I should at least know what to call you, don't you think?"

"You're absolutely right!"

Her voice brimmed with genuine happiness, almost as if she were smiling.

"My name is Jeanne! And yours?"

"...Roy."

The young man replied, his expression cold as ever.

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Chapter 78: Chapter 78: "I'm Sorry."



"Roy, I brought you a music box! These are so hard to find now—I really went through a lot to get it!"

One day, Jeanne came in holding a music box.

"Roy, I brought you a book. Shall I read to you?"

Another day, she came with a book.

"Roy, this is a special Rubik's cube for the visually impaired. It has raised patterns on each side. I'll teach you how to solve it!"

On yet another day, she arrived with a Rubik's cube.

Jeanne was always coming up with new ways to cheer him up, finding little things to ease the monotony of his confined life and soothe his simmering anger.

Most days, Roy would welcome her visits.

Compared to the magi or the other emotionless artificial humans, Roy preferred Jeanne's lively spirit. Her presence had warmth.

Sometimes, though, Roy would lose his temper and unleash his frustration by wreaking havoc in the room. Jeanne never scolded him, nor did she demand anything in return. She would quietly wait until he calmed down before entering to clean up the mess in silence.

She was infinitely patient, accepting him without judgment or complaint.

Her kindness was so boundless that it often made Roy question if she was even human.

"Don't you hold any hatred for those magi?"

One day, Roy suddenly asked Jeanne out of the blue.

Her usual cheer vanished, replaced by silence.

Ever since she had vowed to prove herself to him, Jeanne had subjected herself to the same horrific experiments that he was forced to endure, refusing even her own designated room just so she could continue to be with him each day—feeding him, reading to him, playing music, even assisting with daily tasks.



Despite this, Jeanne had never shown a trace of bitterness. She finally answered him, taking her time to search for the right words.

"No, I don't hate them."

Her response seemed almost to surprise herself.

"I guess normal people wouldn't feel this way, but I can't be sure. I'm not other people. Perhaps I'm just... different. Maybe there are people like me who can't bring themselves to hate."

"Roy, you have every right to feel hatred. Your anger is justified. If you seek revenge, that, too, would be understandable."

"But I hope you remember this—you are capable of more than just hatred. You can experience love as well. Repaying evil with evil may be natural, but don't forget to repay kindness with kindness too."

"Everyone has the right to struggle through life in their own way. You suffer, yes, but so do others. There are people as miserable as you, perhaps even worse off. I hope, when the time comes, that you'll consider that... that you won't take it out on this world, or on others."

"Hmph."

Roy scoffed.

Though her words made sense, he didn't want to hear any of it.

If someone wanted him to follow her advice, they could start by getting him out of this living hell first!

Since Jeanne's arrival, Roy finally had a sense of time again.

With her keeping track of the hours for him, his emotions gradually stabilized.

With Jeanne by his side, time moved on, and the magi's experiments continued to progress.

Then one day, Roy was selected as the sole candidate for a critical procedure. He didn't understand why, nor did he care—he couldn't refuse, after all.

Once again, he was wheeled into the laboratory.

They removed the bandages around his eyes and embedded a new pair of eyes into his empty sockets. Though he couldn't see with them yet, the magi rewrapped his eyes before sending him back to his room.

The following day, Jeanne returned.

"You're here. Let's continue from Chapter Eighteen today."

"...Alright."

Jeanne pulled up a chair next to his bed.

"What's wrong?"

Roy, his eyes covered, turned toward her voice. Losing his sight had heightened his sensitivity, and he could detect a hint of something off in her tone.

"It's nothing."

Jeanne took a deep breath, as if trying to steady herself.

"I heard the experiments are nearing their end and that they were a huge success. The magi are very pleased... Did they tell you when your vision might return?"

"They said around twenty days. Apparently, these eyes are... special."

"I see..."

Jeanne murmured softly, before lifting the book in her hands.

"Let's read four chapters today, all at once!"

"Whatever you want."

Days passed by.

Jeanne came each day, reading four chapters at a time.

But Roy's thoughts were no longer on the story.

He could feel his eyes healing. Soon, he'd be able to see again. He despised the magi, wished death upon them all, but regaining his vision was something to celebrate.

On the fifteenth day, Jeanne read the final chapters of the book aloud.

"Your vision should be coming back soon."

"Yeah, it won't be long now!" There was a lightness in his voice.

"Congratulations."

Jeanne offered her congratulations softly. She paused.

"And... I'm sorry."

She stood up, reached over, and pulled him into an embrace.

"Really... I'm so sorry."

Forgive me... I have to break our promise.

"What's wrong with you?"

Roy was perplexed.

Her embrace was warm.

But strangely, he felt something wet trickling down from above. Was she... crying?

"It's nothing, Roy. Remember, above all else, never stop thinking. Don't ever stop trying to find your answers... I have to go."

"See you tomorrow."

"..."

Jeanne didn't respond.

She raised her hand, and a soft, holy light emanated from her fingers, settling into Roy's body.

The door closed behind her, and he could hear her footsteps fading away.

Roy noticed something different about Jeanne that day, but his thoughts were already consumed by the anticipation of soon seeing the sun again. He paid it no mind.

Looking back later, he would often wonder why he hadn't pressed her for answers then.

On the sixteenth day, morning arrived, and the door opened.

"I am your new caretaker, sent by Lord Chiyomon. My name is Shara."

A cold, emotionless voice filled the room.

An artificial human.

Roy knew her identity immediately.

He scowled.

"I didn't ask for a new caretaker. Where's Jeanne?"

"She is dead."

The cold statement hit him like a hammer, leaving his mind reeling.

Dead?

How? How could she be dead? She'd been so healthy. With his case nearing completion, the experiments had almost stopped entirely. There was no reason... no reason for her to die.

He lay in bed for days, motionless, mind numb and void of thought.

On the twentieth day, Chiyomon arrived.

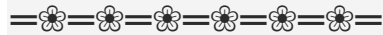
With great care, as if handling a sacred relic, the elderly magus began unwrapping the bandages from his eyes.

"Success! Finally, success!"

Automatically, Roy lifted his hand to shield his face from the glaring light.

Before him, the armored elder was wiping away tears of joy.

Roy looked on coldly at the scene unfolding before him.



## Chapter 79: Chapter 79: The Exit from Hell



"Where is Jeanne?"

"She's dead."

Chiyoemon's tone was utterly indifferent, as though he were speaking of a squashed ant.

"Why?"

"Who knows."

Chiyoemon frowned, perplexed.

"The experiments with the Mystic Eyes had already stopped. She had been reassigned to another project. But just as it began, she mysteriously died. None of the magicians under me could explain why. Not a single anomaly was

found—it was as though her life had simply run its natural course. Truly baffling..."

Another... experiment?

So that's how it is.

The ongoing experiments weren't limited to just the Mystic Eyes. Jeanne had died because of one of them.

"So close... Just a few more days, and I could have seen her again..."

Roy lowered his head, muttering as if talking to himself.

"Kid, don't be so naïve!"

Chiyoemon shot him a sharp glance.

"You accepted the Mystic Eyes we created for you. That comes with the responsibility of saving the world. From now on, you must dedicate yourself to this mission. Your studies in magic must be relentless, and your resolve unwavering. And now, just because someone like Jeanne is gone, you better prepare yourself to make sacrifices too!"

Roy kept his head lowered, as though Chiyoemon's words had gone unheard.

After some thought, Chiyoemon chose not to push him too hard.

After all, this artificial being had only existed for four years. His emotional intelligence was pitifully underdeveloped. To someone who had cared for him for a year, he would naturally grow attached.

It didn't matter.

He could erase those useless emotions later.

All Roy needed to be was a machine designed to save the world.

After all, he was just an artificial human.

"Where's Jeanne's body?"

"Useless things are disposed of immediately."

"What about a photo?"

"None exists."

Roy fell silent.

But the darkness in his eyes grew denser.

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Two days later, Chiyoemon began teaching him magic.

While instructing Roy, he subtly hypnotized him, erasing unnecessary knowledge and turning him into the perfect machine for saving the world.

Chiyoemon was confident the brainwashing would succeed.

At this stage, Roy couldn't yet use the Mystic Eyes and had no means of resistance. By the time he developed the strength to fight back, it would already be too late.

The brainwashing progressed smoothly.

Every time Chiyoemon left, he was pleased with the results.

But every time Chiyoemon departed, a faint, holy white light would flicker over Roy's body.

The light disappeared as quickly as it came, unnoticed by anyone.

But with each flicker, Roy's mind regained clarity.

He became aware of what was happening. His eyes grew colder and darker, though he feigned innocence and harmlessness.

Roy was Chiyoemon's only successful experiment.

Chiyoemon poured all his magical knowledge accumulated over nearly four centuries into Roy without reservation.

He also declared Roy a saint, instructing his clan members and other artificial humans to revere him. Every one of them treated Roy with fanatic devotion, bowing deeply as though worshiping a deity that could grant them salvation.

But Roy felt no gratitude, only a growing malice that consumed him.

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Months later, on an otherwise ordinary day, Roy activated the barrier on the mountain, engulfing it in flames.

"This can't be! Why do you still resist?"

"We gave you the Mystic Eyes! How dare you turn on us!"

"Wait! I was wrong! Please, open the barrier and let me out!"

The magicians within panicked. Some tried to breach the barrier, others cursed him, and a few collapsed to their knees, sobbing and begging for mercy.

"Aren't I your saint? Now your saint commands you to die. Obey me and die quietly."

Roy's face was filled with disdain. He didn't even bother to spare them a glance.

The barrier was sealed tight; no one escaped.

The result?

Over thirty members of Chiyoemon's clan and more than a hundred artificial humans were consumed by the inferno, leaving no survivors.

Even as countless lives perished—some completely unrelated to the madness—Roy's expression remained devoid of joy or sorrow.



Only a deep, inky malice painted his face.

"Traitor!"

"You ungrateful traitor!"

"I gave you everything I knew about magic, and this is how you repay me?"

Chiyoemon emerged from the flames, his voice trembling with rage as he roared at Roy.

Confronted by his creator's wrath, Roy's body trembled—not from fear, but from uncontrollable joy.

He couldn't suppress the grin that spread across his face.

"Haha! HAHAHAHA! Ah, yes! This is my answer, you old fossil! How does it feel? I'm having the time of my life! My only regret is not being able to see the despair hidden beneath those bandages of yours!"

Roy threw his head back, unleashing the most uninhibited, devilish laughter since his arrival in this world.

No matter how Chiyoemon cursed him, Roy didn't bother responding. Instead, he manipulated his magic to burn Chiyoemon alive, watching as his creator was reduced to charred remains.

Once the mountain was completely scorched, Roy descended alone.

He thought it wouldn't take long to find a city.

But hours turned into the dead of night. Snow fell heavily, and even with magic to keep warm, the cold became unbearable. Still, he found no signs of civilization.

To make matters worse, he encountered a magical beast.

Just as he braced himself for certain death, a blazing light streaked across the sky.

A figure with vibrant, flowing red hair appeared before him.

"Is it you?"

Roy couldn't answer. His body, pushed to its limit, finally gave in. He collapsed into unconsciousness.

When he awoke, he was in the Aozaki residence in New Fuyuki City.

The one who had saved him was none other than the famed Magician of Blue—Aoko Aozaki.

She took him in, allowing him to recover in her home.

Out of respect for Aoko, the magicians in Fuyuki treated him with courtesy, though they barely hid their disdain for his artificial nature.

Roy didn't care.

With his Mystic Eyes, any magician who dared face him was no better than a monkey trapped under Buddha's palm.

One day, Aoko's sister, Touko Aozaki, visited.

"So, you're the boy everyone's talking about—the one Aoko's keeping around?"

She seemed amused and intrigued by him.

"Your Mystic Eyes are fascinating. You're not very adept at using them yet, are you? Let me teach you properly."

Roy's gaze remained cold and silent.

His eyes were filled with loathing for the world, ready to spill over at any moment.

Touko's sharp eyes pierced through his exterior, seeing the scars—both physical and emotional—that marked him. Her expression turned faintly complicated.

"Tell me, Touko Aozaki, what do you think of humanity?"

Caught off guard, Touko raised an eyebrow and then smirked thoughtfully.

"Let me ask you this instead: are you seeking my answer, or are you searching for your own?"

Roy froze before realization dawned on him.

So that's it.

What he truly sought wasn't her answer but his own.

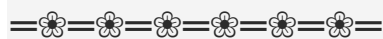
From that day forward, Roy began to ponder.

Jeanne once told him, "As long as you keep thinking, you'll find your answer."

He didn't believe in such idealistic nonsense. It was as foolish as believing the world would one day become a utopia.

But with nothing better to do, he figured he might as well keep thinking.

What was the answer he truly wanted?



Chapter 80: Chapter 80: Into the Dream



[T/N: Starting this Monday(today) I will release 7 chaps every 1st day of the week instead of releasing daily(like I did today). The main reason is lack of

active readers and overload of books. You can join Discord to get notice if this changes.]

Kansaki Residence.

Under the urgent summons of Tohsaka Rin, the household quickly gathered in the master bedroom.

For the Nakano sisters, it was their first time in this room, and they were immediately startled by the grotesque bloodstains on the headboard.

Meanwhile, Kasumigaoka Utaha and the others had their worried gazes fixed on Roy, who lay unconscious on the bed.

"As Tohsaka Rin said, there's no apparent anomaly," Cansaki Touko remarked after conducting a thorough examination. She frowned slightly, her tone contemplative.

"This appears to be a case of being trapped in an inescapable dream. There are no physical injuries, nor does it seem to be caused by magic. Whoever is responsible is likely not a magus."

"Is this... a bad thing?" Cansaki Aoko leaned against the doorframe, her eyes sweeping irritably over the bloodstains on the bed before shifting to her sister.

Her expression was grave. Anyone could see that she was genuinely concerned about Roy.

"Considering he collapsed right at the bedside, it's likely Roy himself didn't anticipate this situation," Tohsaka Rin said, resting her chin on her hand in thought. "This suggests that the other party forcibly pulled him into the dream. He was caught off guard—this doesn't bode well."

"Then we need to wake him up immediately."

"I'll prepare the ritual." Cansaki Touko nodded decisively. "I'll use magic to link your dreams with Roy's. While I maintain the connection, you'll have to enter the dream yourselves. Lie down here; I'll take care of the rest."

Tohsaka Rin agreed without hesitation.

"Do we need to join too?" Nakano Ichika asked, her voice tinged with uncertainty. Realizing how that might sound, she quickly added, "I mean, won't we be a burden?"

"No, your participation might be helpful. I'll need you inside the dream to gather information, since I won't be able to enter it myself," Touko replied. After a moment's thought, she added reassuringly, "Generally speaking, what happens in the dream shouldn't affect reality. However, if any of you are interested in exploring the path of magic, this could be a useful experience. That said, it might leave some psychological scars. You decide among yourselves."

The Nakano sisters, Kasumigaoka Utaha, and Hayasaka Ai huddled together to discuss in hushed tones.

Tohsaka Rin and Illyasviel were, of course, going in. Their determination was evident.

"I'll stand guard," Aoko said, waving off the idea of joining.

Touko simply nodded without comment.

"We'll go," Kasumigaoka Utaha and Nakano Ichika stepped forward together.

Hayasaka Ai and Nakano Miku stayed behind, clearly unwilling to get involved.

Illyasviel shot them a sidelong glance.

Miku's reluctance was understandable; her timid nature made her unsuited for such tasks. But Hayasaka Ai? She had the courage and the skills. If she truly wanted to contribute, she could've joined.

Illyasviel scoffed softly. So much for that demure persona—clearly just an act.

With bedding brought in from other rooms, Tohsaka Rin, Illyasviel, Kasumigaoka Utaha, and Nakano Ichika lay down as Touko began the hypnotic process. Soon, all four drifted into a deep slumber.

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"Saber, you're here, aren't you?"

As Touko completed the dream-linking ritual, she suddenly addressed the empty air.

"Yes."

Miss Okita materialized from spirit form, appearing in the room.

Nakano Miku glanced up nervously but kept silent.

"As Roy's Servant, you'll have an easier time entering his dream than they will. I'm counting on you to protect him—and them."

"Leave it to me, Miss Okita!" Okita's face lit up with a brilliant smile as she prepared to enter the dream with Touko's assistance.

Aoko watched silently, her gaze shifting from Roy's still form to Touko, who remained composed and methodical.

"You seem oddly calm," Aoko remarked.

"In the dream realm, it's a battle of wills," Touko replied with a shrug, her tone unwavering. "I have absolute confidence in Roy's willpower. Even if there's malice buried deep within him, he can control it. My concern lies elsewhere."

"What kind of danger are you talking about?" Aoko's eyes narrowed.

"Normally, dream-related dangers don't translate to reality. But if the enemy has accounted for this..." Touko's expression turned cold. "What concerns me most is the source. There's no external trace of magic, which suggests the power pulling him into the dream came from within. If that's the case... it might be Angra Mainyu's doing."

"That accursed thing... it wouldn't let him go so easily after three years of enmity."

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When Tohsaka Rin opened her eyes, she found herself standing on a desolate hill.

The land around her was scorched black, the sky and earth eerily mirroring the real world's wilderness.

Before long, Illyasviel, Nakano Ichika, and Kasumigaoka Utaha appeared beside her.

"This is... indistinguishable from reality," Illyasviel said, her gaze sweeping across the barren landscape, her tone laced with curiosity.

"So this dream is modeled after Roy's experiences?" Nakano Ichika ventured hesitantly.

"Then... could this be Roy's past?" Tohsaka Rin felt a chill run down her spine.

Roy's past was a forbidden topic, one he never spoke of. For the enemy to recreate it in this dream—it was a bold move. Was Roy holding up? Or had he already lost his mind?

"Let's go," Illyasviel said, her interest piqued as she took the first step forward.

Tohsaka Rin followed, her heart weighed down with apprehension.

Kasumigaoka Utaha and Nakano Ichika trailed silently behind. New to magic, they didn't understand much of what was happening. For now, they stuck close and resolved to observe.

The dream defied logic.

Moments after they began walking, the scenery around them warped, breaking apart to reveal a massive pool.

They stood at the edge of the water, staring at its contents. Their faces turned pale in unison.

The pool was filled with bodies—countless individuals who bore a striking resemblance to Roy and Illyasviel. Like discarded trash, the figures lay motionless, some still breathing, their eyes wide open as they awaited their deaths.

"A disposal pool," Illyasviel said flatly, her voice devoid of emotion. "The Einzbern family has one too. Only theirs is larger, with far more homunculi thrown into it."

