

Sorcerer's Handbook

- Chapter 221: And Listening the Day Is Even More Formidable

"Ha, ha..."

Ashe had just escaped the golden mist of the Area when he collapsed to his knees on the grass, gasping for breath.

He watched as his withered arm slowly regained its flesh tone, his breathing, once like a broken bellows, became smooth, and his sluggish thoughts sharpened as if rust had been removed, feeling a sense of relief like escaping from the jaws of death.

Only now did he realize how blissful it was to be able to think continuously and seriously about an idea.

When the Soul ages, thinking becomes a luxurious indulgence. Your mind is like a severely lagging machine; not only is executing a task process a challenge, but even attempting to summon the task manager to organize your thoughts only reveals that the task manager is stuck as well.

After trying it once, even Ashe couldn't help but feel a touch of fear.

Aging is truly an indescribable terror.

Suddenly, footsteps approached from behind. Just as Ashe was about to look back, he heard a hoarse, aged voice scream, "Don't look back!"

Ashe obediently stared at the grass for a few seconds before hearing the Swordswoman's voice, "It's okay now."

He turned around and, naturally, his gaze met the still young and beautiful Swordswoman and Witch.

"Actually, I wouldn't mind seeing you aged," Ashe shrugged. "On the contrary, I'm quite curious."

"But! !! Mind!" Sonya said through gritted teeth. "I'm never going back! The books are all lies, who says you can get rich picking through trash on the Time Continent? Whoever wants that money can have it!"

Ashe and the others had just entered one of the most famous Adventure areas of the Time Continent—the River of Flowing Gold. The vicinity of the River of Flowing Gold is home to Wild Time Spirits, including rare varieties such as ‘Retrograde Year,’ ‘Fixed Month,’ and ‘Listening the Day.’

‘Retrograde Year,’ as mentioned before, can reverse a person’s bodily time by one year, essentially a life extension without side effects, always a priceless treasure.

Fixed Month is an enchantment that locks the current physical state of one’s body for a month. Although one can still be injured, aspects like skin, appearance, and hair quality remain unaffected by external factors. When combined with beauty miracles such as “Bare-Faced Level Makeup,” “Radiant Glow,” and “Lustrous Hair,” one can effortlessly maintain a top-tier appearance for a full month, impervious to the elements and even able to bathe or dive without issue. It is acclaimed as the ultimate in cosmetic products.

The Time Spirits of the Listening the Day series are even more formidable, but let’s not delve into that for the moment.

In summary, the River of Flowing Gold is a place on the Time Continent specifically designed for bestowing fortunes, an Adventure spot of sorts. And the Time Spirits nearby do not flee; instead, they approach Sorcerers—the invading species—with less caution than a kitten would, actively seeking affection.

Logically, such a prime location would have Sorcerers digging deep and reaching high, reluctant to leave once they find it. Yet, Ashe and his companions fled in less than ten seconds, and even a fearless rustic girl warrior like Sonya now looks back at the golden mist surrounding the River of Flowing Gold with fear in her eyes.

Had they been any slower, they might have collapsed by the riverbank, aged to death in real-time.

The River of Flowing Gold is able to gather and nurture so many Time Spirits because the Area around it has the characteristic of accelerated time.

For Time Spirits, the River of Flowing Gold is akin to an all-you-can-eat-and-play hydrotherapy buffet, with the accelerated time acting like a Thai spa massage. Not only do they enjoy top-tier indulgence by staying there, but over time they can even evolve into Two Wings Time Spirits, making it something of a spa resort for them.

For Sorcerers, however, the River of Flowing Gold is more like a branch of hell on the Time Continent.

Just as the Areas without the River of Flowing Gold are known as Static Domains—where the stillness of time crystallizes a Sorcerer into a painting—the Areas near the

River are called Dynamic Domains. Sorcerers bold enough to enter the Dynamic Domain age and wither under the acceleration of time, which can range from ten thousand to a hundred million times the normal rate. The tumultuous time in the Dynamic Domain decomposes a Sorcerer into dust.

And unlike the silent and dignified death of the Static Domain, death in the Dynamic Domain is vivid and merciless.

If the normal passage of time is like a drug test, then the accelerated time near the River of Flowing Gold is akin to a dam gushing open. Sorcerer's souls are nearly shattered by this rampage of time, leading to the physical decay, difficulty breathing, and sluggish thinking that are the hallmarks of aging, much as steel rusts when corroded by air.

That's why Ashe and the others were so terrified.

Because this time, they truly smelled the scent of death.

They had come to understand many forms of death, such as being killed by a Knowledge Creature, struck down by a Sorcerer Projection, drowning at sea, or becoming petrified in the Static Domain. But these are all unnatural deaths, unlikely to occur in reality, and even if they did, they believed in their ability to avoid them.

Aging is different because all that exists will eventually decay, stars will one day burn out; this is the Rules of all things. Even the likes of the Blood Saint Moonshadow, with their extended lifespans, will see their souls reach an endpoint.

As Ashe looked at his own fair and strong arm, his mind couldn't help but return to the withered, decayed hands he'd seen moments before. He knew that if he was lucky enough to live long enough, he would inevitably see those hands again.

Aging represents an unstoppable death. They are like ants before a rolling wheel, only able to watch helplessly as the juggernaut of time approaches.

It is this inability to struggle, this vulnerability, that is the source of their deepest fear.

"Feeling any better?"

Ashe and Sonya's hands were taken up by another pair of soft hands. Turning around, they saw Deya looking at them with a gentle smile.

Feeling the warmth in her hands, their fear quickly dissipated.

They had only been momentarily frightened by the illusion of aging, like school children just starting summer break who dream of being caught by their teacher for not doing their homework. But Deya's tenderness was like a friend calling early in the morning to

invite them out to play, reminding them that they still have wonderful days ahead, pulling them out of the mire of fear. Even if the day to face the teacher's scolding inevitably comes, it's not a concern for the present. For now, the priority is to relish in their youthful moments.

Ashe asked, "Witch, have you been to the River of Flowing Gold before?"

"This is my third time," Deya nodded. "The first time I escaped from the River of Flowing Gold, my complexion was even worse than yours. Aging is indeed terrifying, and time deserves our respect, but there's no need to feel inferior or to give up because of it."

"We are Sorcerers, born to conquer everything. And there are those who have successfully conquered time."

Divine Master!

The term simultaneously sprang to mind for both Ashe and Sonya—as the supreme beings who control the destinies of countless lives, whose will becomes the heavens' decree, who create and rule over various Kingdoms, the lifespan of a Divine Master surely exceeds the existence of any Kingdom, perhaps living for thousands or even tens of thousands of years.

If there were Sorcerers who have conquered time, the Divine Master would certainly be one of them.

A desire that could only be described as a wild fantasy began to quietly sprout in their hearts.

Not just for Sonya, the rustic girl who inherently craved fame and wealth, but also for Ashe, the office worker who had been softened by society into cotton candy, it was as if they were back to the days just after graduating from college, filled with impractical dreams of making it big in the city and buying an apartment with their own efforts.

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

Chapter 222: The Greedy Swordswoman

"Speaking of which, while perusing some documents, I came across a Sorcerer who referred to the River of Flowing Gold as the 'River of Ambition.' I couldn't understand it at the time," said Sonya with a sudden laugh. "Now, I finally get it."

“Fear can overwhelm courage, just as it can also fuel ambition,” the White Queen agreed wholeheartedly. “Sorcerers capable of transmigration into the Virtual Realm are the freest beings in the world. When faced with aging and death, they realize that the chains known as ‘rules,’ ‘reason,’ and ‘common sense’ in reality are nothing but trivial illusions.”

“There were never any chains to begin with. Sorcerers are born to conquer everything.”

Boom!

A sudden explosion thundered from the distant sky, followed by the roar of countless monsters. Clearly, someone was flying in search of the Rainbow Tail again.

The trio looked in the direction of the noise for a while until Ashe suddenly said, “You both need to work hard. As soon as one of you promotes to Sanctuary-Level within the Faction Realm, the other two can also climb to the Distant Skies, even without the Rainbow Tail and trespass into a higher layer of the Virtual Realm.”

So there really was such a benefit... Deya had faintly realized this teaming strategy of “one advances, all benefit,” when, without opening the Gate of Truth herself, she was brought into the Virtual Realm. If an Observer could directly open the gate to the fourth layer of the Virtual Realm, wouldn’t they instantly become legendary Sorcerers?

However, the Observer’s power was only at Two Wings, and according to the Swordswoman, memory had been lost, so everything had to start over... Yet the Observer they encountered in reality didn’t seem to have lost any memory or power, but rather appeared even more diabolically charming and unruly than a legendary Sorcerer.

The one in the Virtual Realm, though somewhat eccentric, was overall more amiable and approachable, like a cake in an afternoon tea.

If not for her character being largely unchanged, the White Queen might have thought the Observer had siblings, just like herself.

So, was the Observer the type to intimidate newcomers in order to command them? From a management perspective, her approach wasn’t wrong...

Or perhaps... the White Queen glanced at the Swordswoman.

Could it be because the Swordswoman was present, the Observer dared not be too arrogant?

“You’re not planning to search for the Rainbow Tail anymore?” Sonya asked.

“Of course I am, but you two can’t slack off either. If I don’t find it, we’ll have to rely on you two,” Ashe said as he stood up, patting his behind. “The Divine Master is still too far out of reach, but the Distant Skies are worth considering.”

“After all, if the Time Continent is this fascinating, what kind of scenery must be waiting for us in the Distant Skies?”

Watching them get completely invigorated, Deya felt their energy and said, “Our trip to the River of Flowing Gold seems to have consumed about a third of our Soul Energy. We could probably make one more trip, what do you think—”

“Let’s go tomorrow night.”

“We’ll talk about it next time.”

Ashe and Sonya instantly chickened out, and the White Queen couldn’t help but cover her mouth as she laughed.

Entering the River of Flowing Gold does not require the expenditure of Soul Energy, but restoring their aged and decayed souls back to normal does.

If willing, a Sorcerer can enter and exit the River of Flowing Gold multiple times. In fact, many do just that, especially since Sorcerers like Ashe, who are able to ensure a nightly haul with the help of a Virtual Realm Map, are in the minority. Most Sorcerers wander the Time Continent to chance upon fortunes, and even if they stumble upon a Resource Point, they might not be able to defeat the fierce Gregarious Creatures there.

For most Sorcerers, as long as they don’t die of old age, a round trip to the River of Flowing Gold is a profitable venture.

Ashe and the others only spent a third of their energy because it was their first time and they weren’t skilled. If they were expert scavengers, they could potentially reduce their energy consumption to one-fifth or even one-sixth.

The trio began to check their scavenging results. Ashe had the worst luck, picking up five spirits, none of which were high-value and didn’t belong to the coveted Fixed Day, Fixed Month, or Fixed Year series, but rather the cheapest series: seconds, minutes, and hours. These spirits can’t be used on their own but only serve as Casting Materials for Miracles.

Sonya was a bit luckier; among the four spirits she picked up, one was a ‘Fixed Day,’ which fixes one’s physical state for an entire day.

Although ‘Fixed Day’ is not as sought-after as ‘Fixed Month’ or ‘Fixed Year,’ Sonya could use it herself. She could use this spirit to set her makeup for an important event, and she wouldn’t need to touch it up for the whole day.

And the luckiest among them was Deya.

She had picked up only three Time Spirits: 'Retrograde Day,' 'Ten Years,' and 'Listening the Month'!

'Retrograde Day' needs no further elaboration; it can be used directly as a Healing Spirit, allowing one's physical state to revert to that of a day earlier. 'Ten Years' is a Two Wings Spirit, not low in value, and even Sonya wouldn't dare to buy it for casual use. 'Listening the Month' is even more impressive, its value just a bit lower than that of 'Listening the Day.'

Facing the envious gazes of the others, Deya said, "Observer, could you give me the Time Spirits you picked up in exchange for 'Retrograde Day'? Swordswoman, you need 'Ten Years' for your Sharpening Miracle, right? It's yours."

Sonya instinctively refused, "But those are your spoils of victory—"

Deya smiled, "But we are a team now, and I have no use for 'Ten Years.' Keeping that Spirit would be a waste. However, I do need the seconds, minutes, and hours Spirits for my 'Fast Forward' Miracle. So, I'll take those you've picked up. I don't have a way to purchase Time Spirits right now; my only option is to rely on what we find in the Virtual Realm."

Ashe promptly handed over the five Time Spirits he had collected but declined the 'Retrograde Day': "I'm not likely to encounter Battle in reality anytime soon, nor face any danger, so Witch, you keep it."

Watching this, Sonya suddenly said, "If he doesn't want it, then give 'Retrograde Day' to me. Witch, consider it a favor you're doing for me."

Deya looked at Sonya with some surprise but, seeing no objection from Ashe, handed both 'Retrograde Day' and 'Ten Years' to the Swordswoman, saying, "There's no need for that. In a team, it's normal to take what we need. Just prioritize giving me the resources I need later on."

But Sonya was insistent, "I will repay this favor in the future."

Curious, Ashe asked, "Swordswoman, are you preparing for an upcoming Battle? Is that why you need the Healing Spirit in advance?"

"Mind your own business," Sonya muttered, "I never said I needed the Spirit for myself."

"This woman is too much, wanting this and that. I, the Princess, despise such greedy people the most."

The White Queen watched as the Swordswoman tucked the ‘Retrograde Day’ spirit into her bosom and thought to herself, “Princess, there’s something I’m not sure if I should say.”

“What is it?”

“Although you’re mostly adorably foolish, sometimes you can be annoyingly so.”

“You shouldn’t have said that!”

“Too late.”

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

Chapter 223: The Flaw of Bond

Although they intended to scavenge a second Resource Point, they encountered an old acquaintance along the way, the Slaying Fish-Dragon. Thinking it serendipitous to meet an old friend in a foreign land, they decided why not seize the day and engaged in a friendly exchange on the spot.

Despite the absence of the sea, the Slaying Fish-Dragon was not to be underestimated on land, and it was not at the Juvenile Stage or Growth Stage, but a Large Creature very close to the Maturity Stage, with a body length of more than twenty meters, half of its scales transformed to a dark red hue.

Once all its scales turned dark red, it would fully evolve into a Maturity Stage Rampage Dragon, capable of challenging the peak Two Wings Swordcerers. However, for now, it was at best half a step away from full maturity, just a little shy of evolution.

What’s that? Why am I offering such a detailed introduction of this Slaying Fish-Dragon?

Because it’s really quite wealthy.

After a fierce Battle, the fortunate Slaying Fish-Dragon exploded into a trove of spoils, and the trio, well-prepared, simultaneously struck, capturing all the fleeing spirits.

First, it dropped Two Wings “Slash Sword” spirit and Two Wings “Sword Scar” spirit. Sonya, who wished to follow the traditional path of a Swordcerer, needed to upgrade the spirits of slash, pierce, and cut herself to lay a solid foundation in swordsmanship, so the “Slash Sword” was claimed by Ashe, who cared little for foundations.

“Sword Scar” was compatible with most swordsmanship spirits, and Sonya, not lacking in Sword Scar’s output augmentation, but Ashe, currently only capable of Long-range Attack with “Heart Sword”, could attempt to combine “Heart Sword” and “Sword Scar” to form a new Miracle, possibly creating a stable and efficient output method.

Aside from swordsmanship spirits, the Slaying Fish-Dragon also dropped a Two Wings “Water Erosion” spirit.

This spirit was claimed by Deya, whose “water thread” was already an attack method based on Water Art spirits and expressed through the Fist and Claw Faction. The “Water Erosion” spirit could perfectly Fuse into her combat system, potentially creating a new Miracle.

Besides these spirits, the other spirits of the Slaying Fish-Dragon were hardly worth mentioning and were all collected by Ashe’s spare Processor.

But aside from spirits, the Slaying Fish-Dragon also dropped a Swordsmanship Orb!

The orb was undoubtedly welcomed by Sonya, though she feigned reluctance at first, asking Ashe if he wanted it, all the while firmly grasping the orb in her hand, which Ashe couldn’t be bothered to call out.

A single Slaying Fish-Dragon brought benefits to all three of them.

Slaying Fish-Dragon, you are quite gentle.

But the Slaying Fish-Dragon approaching Maturity Stage wasn’t nurtured on seaweed alone; it boasted a robust constitution, high defenses, and ferocious combat prowess. Unfortunately for it, Ashe and Sonya had slain nearly a dozen Slaying Fish-Dragons in the Sea of Knowledge, able to predict its every move. When its tail lifted slightly, they knew it was about to relieve itself; when its head rose, they anticipated the forthcoming screeching roar. The strategies of old fitted perfectly.

Even if an error occurred, the trio could compensate for each other, denying the Slaying Fish-Dragon any chance to unleash its fury, playing it until the very last second.

Although they successfully slain this Knowledge Creature on the cusp of Maturity Stage, the Battle lasted a full half hour, leaving Ashe and the others’ arcane energy and Soul Energy significantly depleted, making further exploration impossible. Search the [NôveFire\(.\)net](http://NôveFire(.)net) website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Arcane energy is akin to a mana bar, which can be replenished with Rest in the Virtual Realm; Soul Energy is like a combination of a health and stamina bar, depleted by injury and activity, and cannot be restored in the Virtual Realm. Once depleted, one must exit the Virtual Realm, or the soul could be damaged.

After arranging their loot in the sports car, Ashe stated, "Everyone performed well tonight. Let's keep up the good work tomorrow night. Tonight's achievements set the benchmark for tomorrow; let's strive to improve a bit every day! So now we—"

"Observer," Sonya suddenly interrupted. "There's something I want to discuss with you."

"Sure, go ahead," Ashe replied readily.

Deya, being considerate, stood up: "I'll go and integrate the new spirit. Just let me know when you're done talking."

Once the Witch's figure vanished into the Reverse Golden Rain, Sonya turned to Ashe, her throat full of words that ultimately condensed into a single sound: "Hmph!"

"You're still upset?" Ashe said, half amused, half exasperated. "Didn't you just accept the Witch into the team?"

"It's not that... It's not just... Never mind."

Sonya waved dismissively, her mood visibly downcast. She suddenly asked, "Can't you hear my Inner Voice in the Virtual Realm?"

Ashe seemed puzzled but answered, "Of course not."

Not only in the Virtual Realm, but never at all.

Wait, is there a feature in the game that allows listening to an Operator's Inner Voice? Is that why the Swordswoman believes I can hear hers?

In these types of collection and nurturing mobile games, there indeed exists a mechanism where tapping on an Operator's portrait prompts them to utter a few lines of dialogue. As the trust level of the Operator increases, their dialogue becomes more intimate and revealing.

However, Ashe, during his downtime in Shattered Lake Prison, had thoroughly combed through the game's system without finding any other functional modules. Damn, could it be that this feature was lost a while back and was never repaired?

Sigh...

Sonya, leaning against the rear seat, gazed out at the Golden Rain and let out a soft sigh.

This was the first time Ashe had seen the Swordswoman looking so troubled. In his memory, she was always full of vigor and aggression, even in the face of setbacks, she would only become more determined to fight back. She was like a proud and imposing

flower, holding her breath, determined to bloom brightly and outshine all others, beyond anyone's control.

But now, she seemed like a hidden flower blooming quietly in a secluded corner of a garden, self-pitying and quiet, yet possessing a strangely captivating charm.

However...

"Your face really doesn't match contemplation," Ashe teased, poking her forehead with his finger. "Are you troubled by something? Share it with me; it might cheer me up."

"It should be 'sorrow' that doesn't suit me!" Sonya retorted, protecting her forehead. "How are you doing now?"

How did the topic switch to me? Ashe blinked, "Thanks to you, I'm getting by."

"Be more specific," Sonya glanced at him with mock annoyance. "Have you left the Blood Moon Kingdom? Is your current residence safe? Are you in danger often? Do you have any pressing difficulties? I might not be able to help, but at least I could offer some advice."

Sonya had wanted to ask these questions much earlier, but her attention was swept away by the Witch joining the team as soon as they entered the Virtual Realm, followed by the Observer bringing in a sports car for their Exploration in the Virtual Realm. With the Witch always at their side, Sonya couldn't find a chance to speak privately with the Observer.

As the team was about to disband and disconnect from the Virtual Realm, Sonya had no choice but to take the initiative to ask the Observer for a private conversation. She didn't have to ask, really; the fact that the Observer could enter the Virtual Realm implied that he was safe in reality and even had a stable place to live. After all, a homeless person sleeping under a bridge wouldn't dare to undertake Exploration in the Virtual Realm.

But she wanted to ask.

Ashe glanced at Sonya thoughtfully and then suddenly let out a chuckle. Sonya, unnerved by his laughter, pouted, "What's so funny?"

"Nothing, I'm just happy that you care about me."

"I, I was just—"

"No need to explain, it's nice to hold onto this feeling of being moved," Ashe said with a smile. "While I was on the run, I thought about how you were doing too. I figured you

must be missing me as well, and now it's proven that our sacred Bond truly connects us."

Sonya paused for a moment, "You thought of me while you were fleeing?"

"Yeah," Ashe nodded. "It's a shame that the deeper our Bond becomes, the less we can meet in reality. From now on, we can only meet in the Virtual Realm."

If the Witch hadn't told Ashe about this rule, he might have been secretly resenting the Swordswoman for not coming to visit him. It seems that apart from the Pay-to-Win aspect working perfectly, the game system has many other peculiar flaws.

"So that's how it is..." Sonya nodded thoughtfully.

No wonder the Observer hadn't visited her dormitory for so long. It turns out that he could only appear before her when their Bond was still weak. As their relationship grew closer, he could no longer enter her private space, nor could he hear her Inner Voice... Thinking about it, this Restriction seemed to actually be considerate of her.

However, I'm not that concerned about him entering my private space anymore...

And I've also learned how to hide my Inner Voice...

This Restriction... it really came at the wrong time.

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

Chapter 224: Retrograde Day

"As for my current situation," Ashe began, "I've already escaped from the Blood Moon Kingdom, and then—"

He cut off there.

From the first second he arrived in the Gospel Kingdom, Annan became an unavoidable key figure. Ashe had barely set foot on the ground before Annan picked him up from the wilderness talent market.

However, due to the Contract, Ashe couldn't reveal any information about Annan. Even an unintended slip would be prohibited by the Contract, let alone that his current predicaments, new residence, and new job were all closely linked to Annan. He was so

tied up in secrecy that even his underwear, purchased with Annan's money, was classified information.

He had a plethora of complaints he wanted to share with the Swordswoman, but everything ultimately pointed back to Annan, so there was nothing he could say. Any piece of information might unveil the secret of being supported by Annan.

"And then?" Sonya blinked.

"I can't tell you," Ashe said helplessly. "I signed a draconian Contract that forbids me from divulging any details. All I can say is that I'm safe for now, preparing for a grand plan that would desecrate the Divine Master, and I've also gained a daughter..."

"A daughter!?"

"Shouldn't you be more concerned about the plan to desecrate the Divine Master?"

"Well, you're not going to tell me anyway..."

Sonya's lips moved slightly, then she suddenly remembered the Observer was a revived powerhouse. He must have been entangled in past causes and effects. Given his propensity for indulgence, he might have had a dozen partners in the past. Looking down, she said, "That makes sense, given your age, you're bound to have children..."

What does she mean 'given my age'?

I'm only in my twenties. Do I look like someone with kids? Although, to be fair, quite a few of my middle school classmates already have their second child...

"It's actually just a pitiful kid who insists on calling me dad. I haven't agreed to it, but looking after her is part of the job, so I had to accept. Don't get the wrong idea, alright? I'm not married yet."

"What misunderstanding? I don't care whether you're married or not."

Sonya snorted, thinking to herself, could it be that the Observer became a teacher after transmigrating to a new kingdom? And he's taking care of a child?

How is he taking care of her? Surely he's not using his powers to force the child to study, is he?

"Anyway, you don't have to worry about me; I'm safe for now."

Ashe said, "What about you? Are you still enjoying life at the academy?"

"It's okay, I guess. There are just a lot more admirers now, and I have to sign autographs every time I step out. I was even interviewed by reporters recently. Seems like a lot of people are calling me the top Swordsmanship Genius of Gales. I've received so many party invitations, it's a lot of pressure, and I feel like I've lost weight..."

"You think I'm going to say I'm envious? Because I really am." Ashe almost sounded sour. Sonya's fulfilling college life made this out-of-date college student, whose only social activity was gaming in the dorm, very envious.

"All of this is because of you. Just over twenty days ago, I was just an unnoticed, pure, pretty, and cute college girl," Sonya shrugged. "So... thanks."

"Didn't I say we don't need to talk like that? And what does it have to do with me? It was all your own storyline development. I just told you to train properly," Ashe shook his head, leaning back in the chair and said irritably, "And this kind of verbal thanks without any benefits, it's like praise without a raise. It doesn't stir any feelings in me, it's even kind of nauseating—"

A pair of fair arms gently wrapped around his neck from behind.

Not with a choking strength, but with a tender, careful one, yet with a force that seemed to want to meld him into herself, like the ambiguous warmth of the sun after a nap.

The arms were resilient. The Virtual Realm body is a reflection of the real one, and in reality, the Swordswoman practiced her swordsmanship diligently. Even without intentional exercise, her hands would inevitably be strong, probably with biceps stronger than Ashe's. Ashe liked these healthy lines.

The warm breath brushed through his hair and tickled his earlobe, making him feel a bit itchy. He had just turned his head when Sonya immediately let go and stepped back, looking sideways at the Golden Rain outside as if she couldn't get enough of it: "For you."

For me?

Ashe was startled, then realized that when the Swordswoman had hugged his neck, she had slipped a Healing Spirit into his embrace.

It was the highly efficient Healing Spirit 'Retrograde Day' that even a fool Sorcerer could use.

Sonya had obtained the spirit but hadn't bonded with it, so it remained unclaimed and available for any Sorcerer to use.

"I—"

"If you don't need it, just recycle it. Don't give it back to me, and definitely don't give it to the Witch."

"You—"

"I've thought it over, and I realized I don't really need this spirit, that's why I'm giving it to you. No other reason."

Ashe cocked his head at her, "If you wanted me to take 'Retrograde Day', why didn't you just say so earlier? The Witch was planning to give it to me anyway."

"But if she gave it to you, wouldn't you owe her a favor?"

"That's just normal resource distribution, how does it become a favor—"

"If it's normal resource distribution, then why did you refuse 'Retrograde Day'? Because you know, the temporal spirits you found can't compare to 'Retrograde Day', and that's why you were embarrassed to accept it. If the Witch insisted on giving it to you, you'd definitely feel obligated by the favor!"

"Even if it's a favor, it's useless. I'm quite fair and won't be bought by one or two bribes."

"What about ten times or a hundred times? The Witch started pleasing you from day one, and if she keeps accumulating favors, she'll eventually make you lean towards her!"

"Hmm, you have a point..." Ashe had to admit the Swordswoman was right: "But if you take 'Retrograde Day', don't you owe her a favor too?"

"I'll repay what I owe her. My relationship with her is purely transactional; favors won't affect it," Sonya said. "More importantly, even if I don't repay her, I won't feel any burden about it, unlike you who might crumble under such sugar-coated shells."

"I can't believe I'm actually starting to think this spirit of only taking money without doing favors is some kind of righteousness..." Ashe quipped. "You don't have to be so wary of the Witch, though. We may not be that close to her now, but eventually, we will become partners with a strong Bond."

"We'll see about that," Sonya replied noncommittally, her eyes fixed on 'Retrograde Day' in Ashe's hand. "Are you going to take it or not?"

Even though Ashe felt he really didn't need 'Retrograde Day' to save his life, how could he refuse after the Swordswoman had put it that way?

He couldn't help but think that if he refused one second, the next second the Swordswoman might chop him to the point where he'd actually need 'Retrograde Day' to save his life.

Harnessing arcane energy to dominate 'Retrograde Day', Ashe suddenly said, "Wait a minute, by your logic, you took 'Retrograde Day' from the Witch and then handed it over to me, so you want me to owe you a favor?"

"Yes, you should remember this favor, and never forget it for the rest of your life."

"But if I owe you a favor, won't I be biased towards you?"

"Aren't you already biased towards me?"

Right, resources were being prioritized for the Swordswoman, so that was not an issue.

"While I'm flattered that you both are trying to please me, and I must admit it's quite gratifying, your real competitiveness comes from your own strength, not my attitude towards you. Once or twice is fine, but please don't focus on that," Ashe said, scratching his head. "We are just three people; infighting would be suicidal."

"I'm not trying to please you..."

"Aren't you trying to please me?"

"Yes."

Sonya looked away from Ashe's gaze, speaking softly, "But that's not the only reason."

Not far from the sports car, on the lawn, Deya was rolling around playfully. Tired from her frolicking, she lay down on the grass, spread out like the letter 'big', completely lacking her former poise and grace.

"Finally got some time to have fun." She stretched lazily, murmuring, "Rolling around on the grass is a must-do activity when you're on the Time Continent!"

Out of the blue, the White Queen said, "The Swordswoman should give it away too."

"Give away what?"

"The 'Retrograde Day' spirit. The reason she took 'Retrograde Day' is to give it to the Observer."

"What?" Deya sat up in shock. "She took our stuff to give to the Observer? How despicable, the world of adults is so disgusting, no wonder she wanted us to leave, she didn't want us to interfere with her currying favor with the Observer!"

"It's not that despicable or disgusting, she's not doing it just to please the Observer."

"Then what else is it for?"

“Princess, ‘Retrograde Day’ is a highly efficient healing spirit. We thought of trading it to the Observer, but after he refused, the Swordswoman took the initiative to take it. Even though the Observer believes he doesn’t need something like ‘Retrograde Day’ at his side, the Swordswoman may not agree with his opinion.”

“She might just be worried about the Observer’s safety.”

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

Chapter 225: Harvey

“Ahhh...”

Lise was awakened by the sunlight streaming through the window, clutching a teddy bear in her left arm and rubbing her eyes with her right hand as she sat up, clearly having had a restless night. Her sisters had come back in the middle of the night and, instead of sleeping, they had chatted away, forcing her to get up to use the bathroom.

After peeing, her sisters were still discussing matters related to the Virtual Realm, and Lise had become so captivated by the conversation that she ended up sleep-deprived and exhausted.

In fact, if Lise hadn’t taken control of her body, she would have had sufficient rest.

When a Sorcerer links to the Virtual Realm, their body is effectively put into a state of automatic sleep by the realm, entering directly into deep sleep.

Most creatures alternate between light and deep sleep, with the restorative effects of deep sleep being the most beneficial, despite it being a small proportion of the overall sleep cycle.

Sorcerers able to voluntarily enter deep sleep only need to spend 2 hours in the Virtual Realm for their bodies to recover enough energy to last the next 22 hours. And unless they are extremely unlucky, most Sorcerers’ explorations in the Virtual Realm average around four hours, which replenishes their energy to nearly overflowing levels.

This is one of the reasons why Sorcerers are part of the elite class in various Kingdoms. Not all Sorcerers wield violent power, but they all have more real-world time and ample energy throughout the entire day without fatigue.

Simply put, Sorcerers not only possess higher Talents than ordinary people, but they also work harder, have more time – even moving bricks they would do it faster,

stronger, and more vigorously. Not to mention, Sorcerers benefit from a more rewarding feedback mechanism—ordinary people may not succeed despite their efforts, but Sorcerers are certain to reap rewards for their efforts, growing stronger day by day even by just going through the motions in the Virtual Realm.

Though playing the same game, only Sorcerers are truly players, while ordinary people are merely NPCs there to enhance the atmosphere.

When Deya entered the Virtual Realm and let Lise take over the body, it was akin to sacrificing the benefit of “sleep assistance from the Virtual Realm.” Moreover, since their bodies had turned into children’s, they couldn’t recover without a solid nine hours of sleep.

As for why they would endure such an arduous and thankless task... it was, of course, to conceal the fact that they were Sorcerers.

Being able to immediately enter a deep sleep state is both a privilege and a symbol of Sorcerers. That is to say, if someone falls asleep and remains utterly still, with no bodily movements, and sleeps for less than five hours, that person is most certainly a Sorcerer. Conversely, someone who gets up in the middle of the night, kicks off their blankets, drools, and sleeps for more than seven hours, could not possibly be a Sorcerer.

While at the Tower, even though Princess Deya had summoned her ‘Mask’ spirit and began her Virtual Realm Adventure three years prior, she managed to deceive everyone with this trick, even the Sanctuary Sorcerers couldn’t see through her disguise. To everyone else, she always appeared as the innocent and naive Lise Deya, who could only fall asleep while hugging her teddy bear.

Now, although she was no longer a princess, it was still necessary to conceal her Sorcerer identity. If Annan were to discover that Lise was a Sorcerer, all her efforts would be wasted. Moreover, Deya had become accustomed to leaving a sister behind to watch over her body in reality. Without doing so, she felt as uneasy and distracted as if she were not wearing underwear, unable to focus on Exploring the Virtual Realm.

Yawning, Lise freshened up in the Restroom and upon returning to her room, she saw Ashe, Igor, Harvey, and Banjeet all enjoying breakfast, all of them looking energetic and clearly having spent the night in the Virtual Realm.

At that moment, Annan came out of his room. Lise thought for a second, loosened her hastily tied pigtails, and holding a hairband, she tugged at Ashe’s sleeve, “Daddy, braid my hair.”

Ashe, who was indulging in a custard Lala Fatty, blinked and glanced at the approaching Annan. He didn’t reject the presumptuous request, instead, he scooped Lise into his arms and began a series of ferocious maneuvers.

In the matter of dressing up, Ashe was a professional—albeit in a destructive manner. With nothing but a messy hairstyle, he completely ruined the potential beauty of little Lise, akin to preparing the finest Lala Fatty ingredients into the most unpalatable dish. Lise's forehead hair was pulled taut, causing her eyes to be drawn upward by the hair's tension, turning her pretty, large eyes into an unattractive squint.

However, Ashe wasn't picking on Lise intentionally; he was genuinely unskilled at hair braiding—his mother had short hair, and his brother had maintained a crew cut for over twenty years. Where would he have had the chance to learn hair braiding?

But Ashe's lack of hair braiding skills wasn't a big deal. As long as he made Lise look unattractive, it would trigger the aesthetic auto-correction mechanism in the room.

Ashe held Lise in his arms, both of them staring intently at Igor across the table.

Stare (=◉ω◉=)~

Stare (=^ω^=)~

One second, two seconds, three seconds. As soon as Annan sat down, Igor couldn't take it anymore. "Come here, I'll braid your hair. Ashe, your hands are only fit for carving flowers in crap."

"Next time you want your hair braided, just go straight to Aunt Bukin. She won't refuse your request to protect her own eyes," Ashe said with a chuckle, setting Lise down.

While Igor took out his own little comb to tidy Lise's hair, Harvey, who had finished breakfast, walked to the living room balcony and lit a Catnip, asking, "Annan, what's the plan for today?"

"There could be one, or there could be none."

The Scarlet Gold Dragon Lizard suddenly appeared on Annan's shoulder. As Annan tore a piece of a bagel to feed it, he said, "Today is May 4th, and the official start date for your job is the 10th. Before that, you are free to move around and don't need to accompany me."

"Free?" Harvey squinted his eyes. "You call this 'freedom'—not being able to contact the outside world, not being allowed to go out for air, or even forbidden to research Magical Factions?"

Although Harvey didn't and couldn't make an aggressive stance, the Butler Youth stealthily stepped forward to stand between the Necromancer and the Miss.

Ashe glanced at Igor, who was focused on braiding Lise's hair, only sharing a brief eye contact with the Cult Leader—it's not my business, I didn't conspire with Harvey, this is his own sudden move.

"So, what kind of freedom do you want?" Annan turned his chair to face the balcony, tilting his head slightly as the amethyst earring sparkled in the sunlight. "I don't think you would just want to go out to smell the flowers, bask in the sun, and experience the exotic atmosphere, right?"

"I want to go to the Sewer on the lower level."

The sunlight seemed to take on a purple hue, and a chilling cold filled the space like mercury spilling everywhere. Ashe put down his Lala Fatty, and Igor held Lise in his arms.

They almost forgot—although Annan had used despicable means to recruit them, Annan was himself a Two Wings Sorcerer. Compared to the Mind Sorcerer who was not adept at direct combat, the Necromancer who heavily relied on the battlefield environment, and the rookie Sorcerer who had just set foot on the Time Continent last night, the Purple Moth who dared to negotiate with the Four Pillars Cult was likely the most powerful among them.

Not to mention the over-sixty-year-old expired youth, Banjeet.

"...Found in the Gospel?" Annan flicked his earring, producing a 'ding' sound: "Let me guess how you searched for this information—'Where in Azura can someone kill without attracting the attention of the Red Caps'?"

"Actually it was 'Where in this city are corpses most likely to appear,'" Harvey said. "I was expecting the name of a shoddy hospital to come up; it seems Azura's healthcare environment is quite good."

"I may not have said it, but—whether or not one adheres to social norms and morals is a very important factor in the Gospel ranking list," Annan's eyes seemed to be covered with a layer of purple: "Without my order, you are not allowed to kill anyone, not even a Lala Fatty."

"I didn't say I was going to kill anyone," Harvey finished his last puff, flicking the cigarette butt over the balcony: "Necromancers have plenty of 'legal' means to obtain a Corpse—"

The Butler Youth stretched out his hand, and an icicle formed at his fingertip, instantly piercing the ten meters distance and freezing the cigarette butt in mid-air, then with a slight curl of his finger, the frosty cigarette butt arced into his palm.

“It doesn’t matter at home, but throwing a cigarette butt outside violates the ‘High-Rise Residential Security Regulations’ and the ‘Public Security Management Measures’.”

Banjeet spoke calmly: “Please do not engage in actions that diminish your own value. The Gospel is watching you.”

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

Chapter 226: You Were a Woman All Along?!

So fast!

Ashe gasped in surprise. Harvey’s act of flicking away his cigarette butt was incredibly sudden. The butt fell to the ground in less than a second, yet Banjeet not only reacted in time, but also shot out an ice spike with speed that was almost invisible to the naked eye, and with alarming accuracy—considering it was aimed at a falling cigarette butt that was already burnt out, smaller than a fingertip!

If Banjeet were to use this move in a close-range assault, Ashe was certain he wouldn’t be able to react in time and would have to rely on “Primal Instincts” to dodge.

He also had a hunch about Harvey’s intentions. Harvey’s outburst first thing in the morning was naturally not just about the Corpse—after all, he had spent over a year in Shattered Lake Prison without indulging in carnal desires. Arriving in the Gospel Kingdom just a few days ago, it was unlikely he would be so impatient. He was a pervert, not a Bewitcher; his desires weren’t that strong.

Harvey’s real aim was to tear apart Annan’s hypocritical facade.

Annan claimed to respect and care for them, but his actions were effectively imprisoning them, cutting off all their communications, and blocking all their exits. Ashe and the others had taken note and could understand the reasons, but that didn’t mean they accepted them.

The Con Artist hadn’t lashed out yet because he wanted to gather more information. In his day-to-day interactions, he even maintained a superficial relationship with Annan, waiting to catch him off guard before making his move; while the Cult Leader hadn’t lashed out simply because he hadn’t grown tired of the food here yet. However, having the same dish for breakfast two days in a row, the former Death row inmate who hadn’t

repeated a meal for half a month in Shattered Lake Prison was starting to have some complaints.

Harvey brought their conflicts to light, effectively cornering Annan. Annan had only two options: the first was to tear away his 'good boss' Mask and reveal the true face of a Slave master. Search the novelFire.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

No more pretending, it's all out in the open now, all three of you will become my dogs!

And the second option...

"Mr. Harvey wishes to select fresh Corpse materials, what about you? Do you have any requests?"

Igor was unapologetic: "This Kingdom also has a Curtain for the exchange of knowledge. I desire access to log into the Curtain, and preferably, a large-screen multimedia Curtain login device."

"I want money," Ashe said bluntly. "I played a virtual game yesterday and realized that without spending money, there are no experience boosts, increased drop rates, starter sets, or daily check-in rewards. You need to put in at least a bit of money for a good gaming experience."

"I want lots of clothes, plushies, candies, and, and—more," Lise counted on her fingers, making her wishes.

"I've heard all your requests," Annan said. "Some are reasonable, others are outrageous, but as your boss, I can fulfill them all—"

"As long as you can beat me in the game."

"Game? What game?" Igor speculated with maximum malice about Annan's plot. "A complex local game unique to the Gospel Kingdom?"

"No, no, no, this game is not complicated at all, and it's very favorable to the side with more people."

Purple Moth lightly flicked her earring, making a crisp sound.

"As long as you know your companions well enough."

That's it, everyone thought.

At Kaimon College Affiliated Hospital.

As the light in the operating room switched from red to green, a slender Crow Medic came out, and the assistant who had been waiting outside for a long time immediately went up to meet her: “Dr. Sivirin, how did the surgery go?”

“The surgery was a success.” Sivirin removed her Crow Mask and hood, pulling out her long hair that was tucked inside her coat. “His failed life is over now.”

“I’ve preserved the vital organs with a Miracle, let the Department of Corpse Management know to come pick up the Corpse. Speaking of which, there are really a lot of people who have no social value while alive; I’ve only been here a few days and have already performed three Life Restart surgeries.”

“Dr. Sivirin, you’re surprised because you’re young,” the assistant said with a smile. “There are far too many people like that. They’re neither willing to undergo bio-modification to work nor willing to take risks to earn money. They don’t even have an acquaintance to borrow money from, just loiter in the park all day, wasting time, licking the flavor off candy wrappers they find in the trash... Only a small portion get the chance to be sent to the hospital. These vagrants are quite cunning, and the volunteers can’t keep up with cleaning them out.”

Following the “Fernand Snow incident,” Sivirin decided to end her Blood Embrace Ritual and leave Shattered Lake Prison. However, she didn’t plan to return to the Grand Research Institute immediately. Instead, she chose to intern at a hospital with the goal of advancing both her Water Faction and Blood Magic practices to the Gold Tier before going back.

This time, she didn’t hide her identity. She presented her Scholar credentials from one of the four major institutes with confidence. The hospital was naturally eager to assist a Princess in her studies and placed her in the hospital’s most popular position—the Fourth Emergency Department.

Each hospital has four emergency departments, categorized by patient type. The first three are not the focus here; the Fourth Emergency Department specializes in catering to individuals with poor social credit, past criminal records, and who are unable to have low emergency fees deducted from their bank accounts.

Like the Department of Corpse Management, the Fourth Emergency Department is a ‘privileged department’ that only Medics of the sacred bloodline can join. The job of the Fourth Emergency Department is simple—determine if the patient has any value to save. If they do, they are treated; if not, they are sent to the Department of Corpse Management.

How is a patient’s value determined? Through Memory Extraction.

As you may have surmised, the Fourth Emergency Department isn't just for training Medics in medical skills; it's also an effective study room for rapidly training in the Mind Faction.

This is why in the Blood Moon Kingdom, there are no training methods for the Mind Faction—sacred bloodline Sorcerers don't need those slow conventional learning methods. They use spirits to forcibly extract memories from others. Even if it damages the patient, the Sorcerer gains a wealth of mind experience, allowing the Mind Faction to progress rapidly.

It's like not learning any driving knowledge and going straight to driving a car. After totaling a few dozen vehicles, you'd essentially become a professional hitman on the road. While the Fourth Emergency Department isn't as extreme, merely after three Memory Extractions, Sivirin's Mind Faction abilities had significantly advanced into the Silver Rank, showcasing the efficiency of her learning.

However, don't be mistaken—the Fourth Emergency Department isn't a department that kills; most of the time, it operates as a normal emergency ward without causing death.

Because Sorcerers of the sacred bloodline must not only extract but also browse and analyze the memories of patients, there are many dimensions to consider. For instance, does the patient have the ability to work, could they become a burden to others thereby reducing their work efficiency, or could they become an object of disdain to elevate someone else's sense of superiority in life... The analysis is multifaceted. Sometimes, even if the patient is deemed worthless, as long as they can enhance the gaming experience of others, the Fourth Emergency Department may opt to save them.

It is only when an individual's social ties are utterly destroyed and they hold no value to others or to society that the Fourth Emergency Department will perform a 'Life Restart' procedure on them.

There is no risk in doing so.

Those who are uncared for naturally have no one concerned about their life or death.

Evidently, Sivirin was lucky, encountering such 'rare specimens' three times in a row, allowing her to use Memory Extraction without any reservations.

Due to these benefits, Sorcerers eagerly flock to the Fourth Emergency Department. However, there is a Loophole in this efficient waste disposal system—homeless individuals don't just wander into hospitals of their own accord. Who is responsible for picking up this 'garbage'?

The 'Volunteers' that Sivirin mentioned are those eco-conscious individuals who willingly take to the streets to pick up trash, driven by a zeal for public welfare.

Perhaps there is some encouragement from the sacred bloodline or perhaps not, but there is always a segment of the population that chooses to venture out at night, specifically to seek out homeless individuals unwilling to take out loans for work and use them for violent catharsis. Unfortunately, they often cannot cross the psychological barrier and stop short of killing, hence the existence of the Fourth Emergency Department.

The presence of these Volunteers has significantly cleaned up the city environment. However, the more astute homeless individuals have learned to strategically relocate, resulting in the Sewer rats being hit with a demotion in status.

Nevertheless, the Government Affairs Hall will soon install iron barriers and a series of Restriction measures in the sewers—deserters are not tolerated on this urban battlefield.

“Dr. Sivirin, there is a patient waiting in your office for a scheduled Biological Prosthesis transformation.”

“Biological Prosthesis transformation?” Sivirin was puzzled, “Aren’t there better qualified individuals in the hospital... Oh, I see now.”

Certainly, the hospital harbored Bio-modification physicians with more expertise than Sivirin, so this patient was specifically presented to the Princess of the sacred bloodline for practice—if patient assignments were truly based on technical proficiency, wouldn’t Sivirin be left sitting on the bench for a year?

Should the hospital dare to leave Sivirin benched, it wouldn’t be long before her Senior Brothers and Senior Sisters would have the hospital’s upper management hanging from the rafters.

However, as soon as Sivirin entered her office, she immediately discarded her previous conjecture—the hospital wasn’t paying her a courtesy, it was clearly tossing a hot potato her way!

Inside the office sat two people: a tall man dressed in a hunter’s coat, his right hand adorned with a Sin Hunter Half-sleeve, white-haired and blood-eyed, his face etched with age and indifference; and a lovely girl in a wheelchair, dressed in an elaborate gown, lacking hands and feet, resembling an unfinished doll.

“Hello, I am Gerard Wessminster, Hunter Number 307791,” the white-haired man said. “This is Selina Bright.”

“I am Sivirin Gwenn.” Sivirin squatted down, looking at Selina: “May I ask why a Blood Mad Hunter is bringing a minor for treatment? Or are you, Mr. Hunter, also moonlighting as a Guardian from the Nursery?”

Selina spoke timidly, "Hello, Senior Sister."

"Hello, Selina," Sivirin said, gently patting Selina's head, her eyes brimming with pitiful tenderness. "Your name is as beautiful as mine."

Selina thought to herself, this woman is shameless.

"She is not a child from the Nursery."

"Then whose child is she?"

"My child."

Sivirin turned to look at Gerard, stepped back to close the office door, then leaned against it, her forehead in her hand, her face full of confusion.

"(☹_☹) Wait, are you saying... you used to be a woman?"

Gerard stood up: "May I request a different doctor?"

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

Chapter 227: Guess the True Heart

"The game is called 'Guess the True Heart.'"

"Right now, you all have one Gold Coin and six Silver Coins in your hands. After the game is over, you don't have to return them; use them to feed the spirits."

"The rules of the game are as follows: First is the answering phase. Each person asks a yes-or-no question in turn, and everyone uses the Gold Coin to provide a truthful answer. The head side of the Gold Coin means 'yes,' and the tail side means 'no.'"

"Next is the guessing phase. Everyone must guess how many people answered 'yes' and wager the corresponding number of Silver Coins. Players who guess correctly earn one point. The person with the most points at the end wins."

"However, neither before nor after the game can anyone ask others for information, nor can they reveal what they themselves have answered."

"It's a simple game, isn't it?" Annan smiled. "Anyone who scores higher than me will have their wish granted, whether it's retrieving a Corpse from the Sewer or wanting to spend money in the game."

The game did sound straightforward at first, but Harvey quickly found a Loophole: "But how can you ensure that everyone will give a truthful answer during the answering phase?"

"It's simple," Annan said. "Banjeet, Mr. Harvey, Mr. Bukin, and Ashe, you must give truthful answers in the upcoming game. It's your turn, Ashe."

Ashe bowed his head and spoke to the little girl: "Lise, you must answer honestly in the game. If you lie, then all your dolls will be handmade by Uncle Harvey."

Lise turned pale with fear: "I will not lie!"

Harvey looked at Ashe curiously: "How do you know that I make dolls?"

"After all, making dolls sounds very much like a pervert's hobby..."

"Wait," Igor narrowed his eyes. "We are bound by the Contract and naturally wouldn't intentionally lie, but what about you, Miss?"

"Isn't there a clause in the Contract that binds me as well? As long as I recite the binding spell, then the words that follow will also become an oath that binds me. If I break the oath, our Contract will end. And the binding spell is..."

"By the name of Dolan," Annan lifted her head. "I will uphold the virtue of honesty in the game to come."

"No, that's not right!" Ashe suddenly became shrewd, "There must be some spirits or Miracles that can detect the state of the Gold Coins, right? Maybe even directly read the thoughts in other people's minds! Wouldn't such cheating be undetectable?"

Annan was very amenable: "I swear I will not use any Sorcerer's power during the game."

Then everyone turned their gaze to the Con Artist who ranked second on the Two Wings Mind Ranking, who had just brushed his teeth and still had the taste of lies in his mouth. He put his hands together as if wanting handcuffs, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "It seems my promise won't win your trust, but you really don't respect me enough."

"It's precisely because we respect you that we must restrict your cheating methods," Ashe stated.

“That’s the utmost disrespect—You actually think I need to cheat to win against you in such a game,” Igor raised his head, a mocking smile curving his lips, “The rules are but the hem of the skirt lifted by the goddess of victory for me.”

“Why would she lift her skirt? Aunt Bukin, do you want to see the goddess of victory’s panties?” Lise asked, puzzled.

“Lise, you don’t understand,” said Ashe, “It is said that Bewitchers, as well as men with Bewitcher Bloodline, like to lick—”

Before Annan could speak, Igor had already flipped the table and covered Ashe’s throat with his hand to prevent this zero-star trash from spouting lewd nonsense in front of the child.

“What are you doing—”

Annan seriously said to Lise, “If you want to change your dad, I’d be happy to help.”

“I don’t want that!” Lise went over and pulled Igor away, “Aunt Bukin, stop bullying dad!”

“Really, I’m the most normal adult here, do you think I’d say something perverted? I’m not Harvey!” Ashe struggled to pry Igor’s hand away, “I just wanted to say that people with Bewitcher Bloodline like to lick legs, that’s all!”

“That’s already perverted, okay?!”

After the commotion, not only Igor, but everyone else was ordered not to use any Sorcerer methods. The six people sat around the coffee table on the sofa, with Banjeet thoughtfully bringing over drinks and a snack fruit plate, giving off quite the party atmosphere.

“Do I get to play too?” the Butler Youth asked.

“Of course, you’re part of the Firm as well,” Annan replied cheerfully. “This is the Funeral Firm’s first team-building activity since we expanded. If you beat me, I can also fulfill a request of yours.”

“You must be joking.”

“You know, I feel like this is a bit unfair,” Annan suddenly said. “If you guys win, I reward you, but if I win, shouldn’t you also reward me?”

“But we’re already at your beck and call,” Igor scoffed. “What could we possibly offer you that you couldn’t just command us to do?”

Harvey chimed in, "Our Contract does allow us to refuse sexual advances, so we could actually say no to that."

"Come on, don't be so gloomy," Ashe interjected. "Maybe the boss just wants us to show we care. And we do have gifts we could give. For instance, Lise, you're a young girl, you could make a flower crown; Harvey, you're a Necromancer, you could fashion a charm out of one of your ribs; Igor, as a Mind Sorcerer, you could... carve out your own heart..."

Harvey looked puzzled, "How did you know I've taken out my own rib to make a gift before? Although not to make a charm..."

Igor wanted to retort fiercely, but Harvey's comment caught him off guard—Ashe's whimsical imagination couldn't keep up with Harvey's strong follow-through.

"It doesn't need to be that serious," Annan said with a smile. "How about this: If I win, I'll still fulfill your wishes, but you'll have to do something for me. Something that may not be work-related, but I'd like us all to do together."

"What is it?"

"We can talk about that after the game," Annan said, releasing the Scarlet Gold Dragon Lizard. "I know you don't trust me. Which is normal, who would trust a super beauty who enslaved them with tricks and plots?"

Igor's face showed disdain, while Ashe and Harvey had no reaction—their looks weren't enough for them to dispute that statement.

"But I truly have no intention of enslaving you. In my eyes, you are all equal partners, and the profits from the Weaving Festival will be shared among us. We are colleagues striving together. The Funeral Firm is just a platform for you to advance further, and these 101 days will become a valuable experience in your life."

"Let this game be the proof of my sincerity," Annan continued.

"Since it's my game, I'll start with the first question."

"Do you wish to obtain the Divine Master's Wish?"

A ripple of emotion went through the group.

"Hide a Gold Coin in your hand and then place it in this handkerchief." Annan slid his hand inside the handkerchief on the coffee table, depositing the Gold Coin from his palm: "It's your turn now."

They looked at each other, but had no choice—bound by the Contract, they were compelled to answer truthfully, unable to deceive.

“Now for the guessing part,” Annan said. “I think everyone answered ‘yes,’ so I’ll wager six Silver Coins.”

Everyone, including the loyal Butler Banjeet, also placed six Silver Coins. When the handkerchief was lifted, there were indeed six Gold Coins facing up, indicating everyone’s affirmative answer.

“What wish would you make after receiving the Divine Master’s Wish, Banjeet?” Annan asked curiously.

“I haven’t decided yet,” Banjeet shrugged. “Probably something like ‘please fulfill Annan’s wish’?”

“I don’t believe that. You must have your own desires,” Annan said, turning to the others. “It’s natural, everyone has desires. I do, Banjeet does, and so do you. As long as you can breathe, you definitely covet the Boon of the Divine Master that can fulfill any wish.”

“I might be selfish, but I’m not so selfish as to believe others are without self-interest.”

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

Chapter 229: Its Not Necessarily Me!

As everyone guessed that only Igor would choose “no,” even Igor himself wagered on five people during the guessing round. Everyone guessed correctly, so the question was immediately invalidated.

“You all...” Igor gritted his teeth.

Harvey spread his hands: “Can’t help it, Igor. I’m bound by the Contract and can only answer truthfully. I don’t want to fail you, but my conscience won’t allow it. Even in my view, only a slim figure in a short skirt and the solemn dignity of black stockings can match up to your Corpse.”

“Annan, I think someone is lying!” Ashe raised his hand and said: “How could anyone choose ‘no’? Even Igor himself couldn’t possibly choose ‘no’. He must be cheating!”

“How do you know it was Igor who chose ‘no’?” Annan shook his head: “Don’t go seeking the truth now.”

Lise frowned tightly at the six coins on the table.

The session was still hosted by Igor. He drew a slip of paper from the black box, showing obvious surprise on his face.

“Your question.”

“Would you give everything for the one you love?”

Ashe abruptly raised his hand: “Objection!”

“You didn’t object to the previous question, what are you objecting to now?” Igor cursed.

“Because the ones I love are not in this world, the question is too hypothetical for me. I don’t even know my own heart,” Ashe said, clearly very proud of his single status: “How about a question that’s a bit more single-friendly?”

Suddenly Annan said: “Just because your loved ones are not in this world doesn’t mean you don’t have loved ones.”

“But if they’re not here, how can I give anything?”

“Then why not make them exist?” Annan smiled: “Those who are gone, bring them back to life; those who left, bring them to your side. If they don’t exist, then let them exist. The Divine Master’s Wish can fulfill all your thoughts.”

Ashe was taken aback, a bizarre idea suddenly dawning on him: “Suppose I fell in love with a virtual character in a video game, and I wish she could appear in reality and be with me—”

Annan shrugged. “I think your wish is far easier to fulfill than raising the dead.”

Ashe blinked, having never considered using a wish in such a manner. Summoning a Swordswoman or a Witch to start a shameless, fantastical journey together? Engaging in adventurous escapades thrice in the morning and four times at night?

However, this thought vanished as quickly as it appeared in Ashe’s mind. Using a wish to find a wife felt too embarrassing, and if he ever dared to do such a thing, the Swordswoman’s first deed upon arrival might be to chop him into a situation where only the Retrograde Day spirit could save him—wasting a Divine Master’s Wish on finding a woman? Even for me, that’s too extravagant! I’ve never seen such a foolish Small horn!

But Annan’s words did remind Ashe of something.

The people he loved in his past life were naturally not present.

But did he truly have no loved ones in this world...?

As the guessing round began, Ashe pondered and first concluded that Banjeet and Annan, being somewhat normal individuals from a civilized society, would at least produce one “yes.”

Then, considering Harvey’s escape from prison and his vendetta against Fernand Snow stemmed from the death of his lover, he would likely choose “yes.”

As for Igor, it wasn’t that Ashe was projecting the mindset of a victim onto a Con Artist; rather, the idea that “Igor would give up everything for someone else” was as unimaginable as Freya practicing abstinence.

And Lise, at her age, was in the ‘what’s mine is mine’ phase. There might be sweethearts in the world, but recalling Lise’s divisive behavior the night before, she was at best a black-hearted cotton.

Thus, Ashe bet 2 Silver Coins on Igor and Harvey each, Banjeet placed 3 coins, and, most shockingly, Annan and Lise: they bet 4 coins!

Ashe wondered if they had given up—how could there possibly be so many romantically selfless individuals among the six of us?

But when the handkerchief was lifted, Ashe was stunned.

4 “yes” and 2 “no”!

Without a doubt, Ashe had chosen “no,” which meant that aside from him, the self-pitying singleton, there were four hopelessly romantic, kind-hearted individuals among the remaining five!?

“An interesting number,” Igor raised an eyebrow. “In the first question, exactly two selfish individuals from the evil alignment emerged; in this one, four selfless individuals from the good alignment appeared, which is precisely the total number of us.”

“Could it be that the ones who chose ‘no’ this time are the same as the potential traitors who chose ‘yes’ before?”

“You’re not allowed to inquire about others’ answers,” Annan reminded. “Guessing is what makes this game interesting.”

If Ashe hadn’t chosen “no” himself, he might have agreed with Igor’s speculation. But he is just an ordinary Human who is neither willing to give everything for his loved ones nor to do whatever it takes for a Divine Master’s Wish!

Do all you Sorcerers have some serious sickness? To love so recklessly, to hate so fiercely, as if all of you are mad beauties?

“Daddy, you would give up everything for me, right?”

Lise cooed while shaking Ashe’s arm, making him think how this girl had just been so cold, and now she was clinging again. Human children really are incomprehensible creatures. He answered perfunctorily, “Of course... of course not.”

“Daddy, you won’t even indulge a child. I feel sad for my future mom.”

“Let’s not assume you will have a mom in the future. Are there really no girls in this world who don’t need pampering?”

“Dad, you look so cool with that confidence!”

“Ah? Hahaha, indeed, you have good taste.”

“You see, even a big man like you needs coddling, and you have the nerve to ask if others need it?”

“The final question.” Igor pulled out a slip of paper from the black box and said calmly, “If there were no Contract restrictions, could you sincerely cooperate with the other five?”

What a meaningless question, thought the Con Artist.

Without the Restriction of a Contract, who would dare to sincerely cooperate with others? Not to mention that several of them are foreign Prison Escapees; it’s not just that others can’t trust them, but there is also a deep-seated mistrust among themselves. And both Annan and Banjeet are veteran kidnappers. There’s hardly a single lawful individual among the six; when they come together, it’s like a trash can meeting a dung bin—even if they’re not exactly in cahoots, they’re at least worthy adversaries.

They could work together, but they must always be prepared for betrayal, keeping a close watch on their allies’ actions. If everything goes smoothly, fine, but at the slightest sign of trouble, they must be ready to betray before being betrayed.

Igor had five partners in the past; two died in the gutters, and three were locked up in Feimeng City’s Blood Moon Prison. If it weren’t for Igor’s knack for disguises and sacrificing them early to divert attention, he would have been implicated long ago.

An important reason why Igor had to leave for Kaimon City to expand his market was that there were too many acquaintances of his in Feimeng City’s Prison. Those three former partners were probably rubbing their hands together, eagerly awaiting his incarceration. Thus, Igor decided to strike out on his own in Kaimon City, where even if

captured, he could start anew in Prison—without partners to sacrifice, he was indeed clumsily caught.

Annan and Banjeet couldn't possibly trust them, and they couldn't trust each other, so everyone would choose "no"... No, that's not right, there's the unpredictable factor of Lise.

But in Igor's view, Lise was clearly a very sensible little girl, and 'sensible' here is the antonym of 'naive'.

The answer session ended, and it was time for everyone to enter the betting phase.

"Zero," Igor declared succinctly.

Harvey, Annan, and Banjeet also bet zero. Just when Igor thought this question would be invalidated too, Lise pulled out a Silver Coin—

She bet one.

Everyone looked at her, and the little girl proudly raised her head, showing off a smile brighter than the sunshine.

Even if it might be an attempt to curry favor, even Igor was moved by the little girl's innocence.

Lise's bet of one had only one possibility—she answered "yes". With her cunning, she must have guessed that everyone else would answer "no," so the only person who answered "yes" was her alone.

As a lonely girl with amnesia, she still managed to trust others. That kind of sincere honesty, devoid of any deceit, felt somewhat blinding to the hearts of Con Artists, so calloused they could grow mushrooms.

It seemed the others shared a similar sentiment with Igor; the Necromancer voluntarily stubbed out his Catnip Cigarette, the Purple Moth's eyes brightened, and the Butler Youth's gaze softened.

As for Ashe—

He bet two Silver Coins.

Everyone was stunned.

Then, they checked under the handkerchief and saw four "no's" and two "yes's." Search the NôvelFire(.)net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Now, everyone stared at Ashe, Lise included.

Feeling somewhat embarrassed under their gaze, Ashe protested, “What? It’s not necessarily me who voted ‘yes’!”

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

Chapter 230: Igors Solo Kill

Without a doubt, the two who chose “yes” were none other than Lise and Ashe.

That’s why everyone was so shocked—after all, it was one thing for Lise to be naive; she was still young. But Ashe, how old are you to still be so innocent?

Annan and Banjeet were somewhat resigned, as they didn’t quite understand the past of Ashe and the others, but Igor and Harvey felt the strongest about it—Ashe knew their histories all too well.

One was a Necromancer who played with corpses, the other a Con Artist harvesting a stupidity tax by selling wishes. Without any Contractual Restrictions, Ashe was really willing to cooperate sincerely with them?

No wonder Eternal Calamity refused to acknowledge you as a peer. If the Four Pillars Cult had someone like you, they might have been uprooted by the Divine Master... Oh wait, they already have been uprooted.

The Four Pillars Cult really shot themselves in the foot by taking in a talent like you.

In the look Igor gave Ashe, there was both scorn and admiration, mixed with emotions that were hard to define. Harvey glanced at Ashe, then closed his eyes, puffing on a Catnip Cigarette, deep in thought.

“...The three questions have ended. Lise has 2 points, Ashe and I have 1 each,” Annan announced, clapping her hands. “This means that aside from Lise, who can have her wish granted for free, the rest of us need to work to earn our reward.”

“If it weren’t for Ashe’s surprising answer, Lise would have had all of them right,” Igor commented, his tone intriguing.

“Kids always have better luck than adults. It’s only natural that a cute little girl like Lise has better luck than us.”

At first glance, there seemed nothing amiss with the statement.

But it was Harvey who spoke.

Ashe, bound by a Contract to protect his daughter, immediately hugged Lise close, while Annan and Banjeet watched the Necromancer warily, even Igor kept his distance.

Harvey sighed with a hint of resignation, “My praise isn’t the same as coveting, and besides, my hunting range for Humans is from 18 to 88 years old. Lise doesn’t qualify yet.”

“88 years old!?” The others took a step further away from him.

“You don’t understand the exquisite beauty that decay exudes, the somber charm of death... Time rusts every cog, and the noise of aging plays the march of death. The elderly are like the last Curtain between us and death, and I need only to reach out gently to lift the veil of the Grim Reaper... To forever capture the vibrant youth in a single moment is certainly a stunning form of beauty, but to eternally imprison death within an old body is an art worth savoring in detail.”

Before, everyone felt that Harvey smoking wasn’t great since Catnip could have significant effects on both lifespan and sanity. But now, they thought—just keep smoking.

“I’ll fulfill my promise now. Banjeet, please prepare a gift for Lise.” Annan looked towards Igor and the others: “So, are you willing to obtain your compensation by completing my tasks?”

“As long as it doesn’t damage our credit,” Igor said indifferently. “There’s no harm in it.”

“If not personally acting doesn’t harm one’s credit, then I can accept tasks that are a bit larger in scale,” Harvey said. “After all, work is often rare Entertainment for me.”

“In that case, can I delegate my work to Harvey?” Ashe raised his hand and said. “As the saying goes, the capable should labor more...”

“After you complete the work, I will fulfill your requests.” Annan took a pink Bracelet from the box Banjeet handed over and gave it to Lise: “Waterproof and temperature resistant, it binds upon wearing, unusable by others, and can directly connect to the Curtain. There’s already a balance of 10,000 copper coins in the account. Although the speech function is restricted, Lise can still use it for shopping. Hmm, it can also be used to open the Gospel.”

Watching Lise happily wear the Bracelet, Igor touched his own ring and asked thoughtfully: “Our rings... have most of their functions been castrated?”

Their rings could only be used to open the Gospel; other features, like connecting to the Curtain or shopping, were completely absent.

"I haven't treated you unfairly; your rings are expensive luxuries," Annan glanced at him. "This should be the same in every Kingdom; the more expensive the luxury, the more singular its function. Conversely, the cheap items used by ordinary people tend to be very versatile."

"Indeed, only the Wealthy would buy sports cars that can't handle most road conditions, while the common person's car is fuel-efficient, durable, spacious, and has strong impact resistance," Igor nodded. "Giving us, who live in the mire, such pointless sports cars is truly a despicable shackle."

"I prefer to think of it as employee benefits," Annan said with a sly smile. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I wish you all a pleasant life."

Once Annan left, Ashe immediately wrapped his arm around Lise's neck. "Lise, you don't need that much money to buy clothes. How about you give it to me first? I'll save it for you, and when you get married, I'll give it back—"

Lise didn't reject the dirty adult's proposal, tilting her head she said, "But daddy, you don't even have an account right now, how can I transfer it to you?"

"Right." Ashe looked a bit dejected but quickly perked up. "Then would Lise be willing to buy a gift for daddy?"

"Of course," Lise said under Ashe's expectant gaze. "As long as daddy finds mommy, I will give a gift!"

"Hmph, if you don't want to, just say so."

Ashe waved to the departing Necromancer: "Harvey, give me a box of Catnip."

Igor immediately asked, "You also think life's too long?"

"No, I just happen to have some free time recently, and I want to test the Substitute's resistance to poison. Also, doesn't mastery of the spirit increase with use? I feel that using the Substitute for chores has almost stopped improving my proficiency, so I need to research deeper into the uses of the Substitute..."

Poisoning a Substitute to increase control over a spirit?

Is this some kind of unconventional training method from the Four Pillars Cult?

Igor shook his head nonchalantly and followed Lise, who was about to enter the library.

Lise, noticing the Con Artist trailing behind, immediately became alert and guarded her Bracelet, “The Bracelet is already bound, so it’s useless if you try to take it. And I’ll call Daddy to come beat you up!”

“If you don’t mind, I wouldn’t object to you calling Ashe over.”

Igor pushed Lise into the library and then closed the door, like an evil queen plotting against a little Princess.

“Lise, it’s time to settle accounts.”

Seeing this, Lise immediately backed away in fear, hiding behind a desk, tremblingly she said, “I-I’m sorry, I won’t call you Aunt Bukin anymore...”

“Hmm, that is indeed a big problem, but that’s not what I’m here to talk to you about today.”

“I’m not even here for you.” Search the novelFire.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Igor crouched down to be face-to-face with Lise.

“The one I’m looking for is the other person hiding inside you.”

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

Chapter 231: The Mirror

“Others?” Lise blinked, looking around suspiciously. “But it’s only us here...”

“Although I don’t find it something to boast about, I am the second place holder in the ‘Two Wings Mind Ranking Azura Sub-Ranking’.”

“My nose smells emotions, my eyes see thoughts, my ears hear desires.”

Igor walked over to the phonograph, picked out a record from the cabinet below that looked like it depicted the end of the world—a memory of a dream he had a few days ago—placed it into the machine and played it. As expected, it was very noisy, but surprisingly quite pleasant.

He took a serious look at the cover, oh, it turned out to be an Angel destroying the world, no wonder it sounded so good.

“Though this music might be before your time, it’s enough to mask our voices,” Igor said as he sat down. “Let’s have an honest conversation, Lise.”

Lise sat down nervously at the spot farthest from him, close to the mirror, “But I don’t want to talk to you...”

“Is it the mirror?”

The little girl blinked, and the expression on her face was no longer the deliberately feigned tension, but genuine astonishment. The Con Artist was very pleased with this reaction—since that damned Cult Leader, he hadn’t had a successful swindle, and Igor was beginning to doubt his eloquence had dropped to the level of a drunken councilor.

“I’ve been watching you, Lise. Not just during the game just now, but last night, when you played ‘Sorcerer Duel 14’ with Ashe, you showed a different side of yourself: competitive, impolite, direct, almost childlike...”

“I am a child!” Lise protested loudly.

“If last night I had some doubts, then during the game just now, you completely revealed your secret.” Igor stepped closer, positioning himself to be in the mirror with Lise. “Your ‘switching’ medium is the mirror. Every time you look into it, it means that something inside may have already changed.”

“A clever bondage, very clever indeed. Others might think of it as a weakness, but I have seen patients tormented by multiple personalities to the point of wishing for death or craving life—with no doubt, those with multiple personalities are valuable research subjects for Mind Sorcerers. And fortunately, mental illness is practically a specialty product of the Blood Moon Kingdom. Mind Sorcerers have a locational advantage there.”

“Workers in the entertainment industry, Sin Hunters, Psychotherapists—these professions continuously produce the psychological samples I favor—especially Psychotherapists. Those peers who stare into the Abyss for too long will inevitably go mad, eventually finding themselves metaphorically ‘dropping their trousers’ for the Abyss.”

“Those with multiple personalities are severely affected in their lives due to different personas taking over the body, entangling and tormenting each other because they cannot break free. In the end, they either become Sugar Addicts, living a life of oblivion, or they are reborn, washing away all emotional memories to become a blank slate.”

“But you won’t have this worry. The mirror, this bondage, minimizes the impact of multiple personalities. Even if other personas cause trouble, you can keep them ‘in the mirror’, at least they won’t affect reality—”

“My sisters are not locked in the mirror!” Lise said angrily.

“Do the personalities refer to each other as sisters?” Igor asked with interest. “A very common example, but in the cases I’ve seen, there’s a high probability that female patients will develop male personas, or rather, male personas based on a woman’s impression of men. Similarly, male patients almost always develop female personas—the longing for and closeness to the opposite sex seems to be an instinct etched into our biology. Do you have any brothers?”

Lise seemed about to say something more but stopped as if she heard something, reluctantly looking toward the mirror.

When she turned her gaze back, her cute visage was overlaid with a calmness that did not match her appearance. It was less like she was tearing off a Mask and more like she was putting on another one, a mask beneath a mask.

Igor raised an eyebrow. “How should I address you?”

“Just call me Lise,” ‘Lise’ said calmly. “It’s only among ourselves that we’re different. When facing others, we are all Lise.”

Igor thought to himself that this was a very rare case of multiple personalities acting in unison, making collective decisions. Generally, multiple personalities differ greatly, with dominant personalities often looking down upon the weaker ones. Therefore, the stable organization of multiple personalities usually takes the form of a “monarchical dictatorship,” where the monarch personality leads the other subject personalities, which are further divided into noble and commoner personalities, each with a clear hierarchy. This is akin to creating a feudal society within the confines of a snail shell, establishing feudalism within a single human body.

Lise’s type of multiple personalities, which mutually respect each other in a “democratic republic” manner, is practically the ideal template for multiple personalities. Even after Igor had perused the psychological patient database, he had not seen such a perfect specimen. Moreover, the fact that she had voluntarily added the mirror bondage made him vaguely speculate.

“Lise, in the first question earlier, ‘Would you murder the other five present here to obtain the Divine Master’s Wish,’ you voted ‘yes,’ didn’t you?” Igor asked, his tone quite certain.

‘Lise’ admitted frankly: “Yes, that’s right. How did you figure it out?”

"I noticed it when Ashe interacted with you," Igor said coolly. "The way you looked at Ashe was like looking at a piece of wriggling rotten flesh. I'm quite familiar with that look—it's the same way Harvey looks at others."

"I apologize, in order to control the voting outcome, we had to let a more aggressive sister cast the vote," 'Lise' nodded slightly. "That sister has that attitude towards everyone; we had no intention of harming Ashe."

"For the second and third votes, you cast votes that didn't fit your persona, right?" Igor continued. "I originally thought you wouldn't sacrifice everything for a loved one, yet you voted 'yes'; I thought you couldn't possibly trust others, yet you still voted 'yes'... Why did you want to control the voting results?"

"Mr. Bukin, if you already know the answer, why bother asking?" 'Lise' said, shaking her Bracelet. "Firstly, naturally for the reward; secondly, to turn the tables and go along with Annan's arrangement."

"Annan..." Igor savored this name as if tasting a barely ripe Lala Fatty.

"A very beautiful open conspiracy, isn't it?" 'Lise' said, spreading her hands. "She restricted our ability to lie and granted us the right to ask questions anonymously... It's as if she has locked us in an arena and thrown down swords. She doesn't need to use verbal enticement because we will voluntarily pick up weapons and harm each other."

"She wants to undermine the foundation of our cooperation, and coincidentally, I have the same intention."

'Lise' placed her hands on the table and sat upright with no small movements, a serious demeanor that prevented Igor from taking her lightly: "Compared to the hardships you have shared, my relationship with Ashe is much too weak. But Ashe is the ally I'm most likely to draw to my side. If I can't even bring Ashe over, it's even less likely that others will cooperate with me."

"That's why I need to tear apart the foundation of your trust first, and only then can I form a true alliance with Ashe. A mere contract is not enough to make Ashe stand with me... On this point, my interests align with Annan's."

"So you helped Annan 'touch fish' in muddy waters, deepening our suspicions through your votes?" Igor sighed. "You almost succeeded. The two 'yes' answers to the first question nearly destroyed all my trust in Harvey and Ashe."

"Yes, I was close to succeeding," 'Lise' admitted, somewhat reluctantly. "If it weren't for the third question."

Igor was puzzled: "But in the third question, why did you choose 'yes'... Ah, you wanted to take the opportunity to improve your standing in the others' eyes!"

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

Chapter 232: I Want You and Ashe

Lise, who could freely change her answers, could completely alter others' perceptions of her through this 'Honesty Game'.

In the last question, Lise wagered a Silver Coin, blatantly stating her choice of "yes", which was almost equivalent to a battle cry effect—"I, Lise, am just a naive and adorable girl who easily trusts others, greatly increasing everyone's fondness for me".

Indeed, she had succeeded, as seeing her willingness to cooperate sincerely with others without any Contract Restrictions, even with those like Igor who had the worst impression of her, naturally fostered a sense of goodwill.

But her success was limited.

Because Ashe had also chosen "yes".

If one were to say that a hundred units of fondness emerged in everyone's hearts at that moment, then only ten of those were directed at Lise, with the remaining ninety going to Ashe.

After all, it was far too normal for Lise, the little girl, to be naive and adorable. But Ashe being the same was both amusing and surprisingly thrilling. It's like a student who normally scores 80 out of 100 getting a 90 is praiseworthy, but another who typically scores 60 and then scores 90 is even more commendable—it may not be a prodigal's return, but it's akin to laying down the butcher's knife to become a Buddha on the spot.

In some sense, in the art of being endearing, Lise lost to Ashe.

And because of Ashe, the schemes of Lise and Annan had utterly failed—perhaps Igor, Harvey, and Lise could still not trust each other, but they could always trust Ashe.

But Lise and Annan couldn't be blamed for this outcome. Who could have predicted that this man, who mingled with Con Artists and Necromancers, would turn out to be a lotus in the mud?

"Since you've discovered that I have multiple personalities, have you noticed anything about Ashe...?"

“No, he has always had the character of a Nursery’s toddler class.” Igor was somewhat frustrated: “Though unexpected, on reflection, it makes perfect sense. Someone like him is truly unique in the Blood Moon Kingdom. Please don’t misunderstand, Harvey and I are the norm in the Blood Moon Kingdom.”

“Lise” could only chalk it up to bad luck. She suddenly asked, “Mr. Bukin, I have a question for you—regarding the question about whether you would cross-dress, I actually chose ‘no’ and bet five Silver Coins planning to get it wrong along with everyone else. Always getting the right answer would be too conspicuous.”

It was a peculiar way of phrasing it; she said she had a question, but she stated a fact instead.

However, Igor understood what she meant—why had Lise chosen “no,” yet there were still five “yes” answers on the table?

There was only one possibility: apart from Lise, the other five people had also chosen “yes,” including Igor himself!

But if Igor had chosen “yes,” why had he bet on five people, not six? After all, in his view, he was the only one who might choose “no,” while the rest were certain to choose “yes.” Now that he had chosen “yes” too, it should have been a unanimous decision. Search the [novelFire.net](http://novelfire.net) website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

“Just like you bet one Silver Coin on the last question to signify your stance,” Igor said somberly, “I didn’t want to bet six and reveal mine.”

Indeed, Igor was gambling.

While it was possible that everyone would choose “yes,” if there was a single “no,” everyone would naturally assume it was Igor’s answer.

Betting on six would likely earn a point, but it would also signify that he had chosen “yes,” which a Con Artist could not afford—a self-revelation he was not willing to make. He was certain that Ashe would bring it up every day as a joke until his Soul fell into the sixth circle of hell.

So, Igor preferred to take a chance, and it paid off. Otherwise, Ashe would probably be pestering Lise to buy him a nice outfit at this very moment.

Lise sighed—they had calculated all the possibilities, yet these men’s unpredictable actions had thrown them off.

Intending to deliberately answer incorrectly, she ended up being right; she wanted to curry favor intentionally, but couldn’t outdo another man.

Men really are complex creatures.

“So, Mr. Bukin...”

Lise glanced at the mirror, giving Igor a sidelong look: “You chose to communicate with me privately instead of exposing my true identity in front of everyone. That means you want to use this secret to threaten me...”

“What are your intentions towards a poor, lonely girl with nothing to her name?”

“You’re not without anything,” Igor shook his head. “There’s still one commodity you hold.”

“Me?”

“Yes, you... and Ashe.”

“Isn’t that two commodities, Mr. Bukin? Your math doesn’t seem very good,” the Secret Princess Deya retorted from the mirror.

In the Blood Moon Kingdom, at the Affiliated Hospital of Kaimon College.

“It’s strange... really strange...”

After a cursory examination of Selina, Sivirin wore a puzzled expression, as if she had seen a sausage wearing a skirt.

“What is it?” Gerard asked from nearby.

“Selina has no limb nerves.”

“What?”

“If she had lost her limbs in an accident, the nerve nodes for her limbs should still be there. It’s like the lines being cut, but the lines themselves still exist; they just can’t be used. But Selina...” Sivirin’s hand gently swept over the doll-like girl’s body: “She has no such lines at all, as if she was born without that function.”

“So... do I need to find a new doctor?”

“Of course not. Don’t underestimate modern biological prosthesis engineering. We can transplant human brains into steel automatons, install spinal columns into buildings, and even enable virtual characters to have children. This is a trivial matter by comparison.” Sivirin said. “However, this goes beyond the coverage of residential medical insurance; it has to be paid out of pocket.”

"I am a Captain of the hunters; I've saved quite a bit..."

Sivirin quoted a figure that left the White-haired Hunter speechless.

Gerard grimaced: "Considering we're both from the Grand Research Institutes, is there any discount?"

"Do you ever see an axe spare its fellow trees just because its handle is made of wood?" Sivirin shrugged. "I don't set the prices. This is biotechnology that the institute has yet to unban; you know the cost."

"But cutting nearly 80 years of my salary is outrageous! Is this a robbery?"

"Going to a doctor not from one of the Grand Research Institutes, you'd have to fork out for at least 100 years," Sivirin said calmly. "Robberies aren't this quick. Plus, the institute has a monopoly. If we don't set the prices high, how can we promote high-level consumption? The price bothers you and me both."

Gerard clicked his tongue and glanced at Selina in her wheelchair. The doll-like girl blinked and said softly, "I'm hungry, Uncle Gerard, can we go home?"

The White-haired Hunter scratched his head and let out a heavy sigh, "Should we proceed with hospital admission now?"

"There's a special channel for self-paying customers," Sivirin said leisurely. "I can arrange a deluxe medical suite for you, free of charge."

"How long will it take?"

"At least a month to observe vital signs and tailor a suitable prosthesis plan," Sivirin explained. "Apart from being expensive, there's nothing lacking in the institute's medical services. And being expensive isn't a flaw."

"I don't have time to come look after her," Gerard said, looking at the doll-like girl, "I have to work overtime chasing a runaway werewolf."

"Neither do I," Sivirin admitted frankly. "But the hospital has nursing staff."

"Uncle Gerard!" Selina suddenly spoke up, "I don't want to be hospitalized. Sister with the pink hair said she'd come to play with me tomorrow!"

"Right," Gerard had an idea. "She lives nearby and could be hired to help take care of Selina anytime."

Sivirin got curious, "Sister with pink hair? Who's that?"

“A Bewitcher college student.”

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

Chapter 233: Shut Your Mouth

Lise had a vague idea of what Igor was thinking.

It was like the story they had seen in the picture book “Orc Slaves and the Elven Empress,” where the orc slave discovered the Empress’s secret but did not report it to the Emperor. Instead, he used it to blackmail the Elven Empress—proud, beautiful, and seemingly untouchable like a deity, she was forced to submit to the despicable orc slave. Stripped of her dignified royal robes, she came under the control of the orc slave and became—

The iron-blooded Empress who executed treacherous officials, eliminated princes, reformed the bureaucracy, and liberated slaves.

It goes to show that once you have leverage over someone, you can really make them do outrageous things.

If Lise were to catch Igor in a similar situation, she certainly wouldn’t report this bewitching man. They were right in the middle of starting their own venture. Aside from Lise, the team leader, and Ashe, the nanny, there were no other subordinates. They urgently needed someone with Igor’s talent to fill the vacancies in diplomacy, finance, and the military.

In Igor’s view, Lise might not have had any special talents, but let’s not forget, Lise was now bound to Ashe. Although Ashe might not have had any talents either, let’s not forget, the two of them together represented half the power of the “Blasphemous Gods Squad.”

As long as Igor could control Lise, Ashe would naturally be in the palm of his hand. Then, this Con Artist could try to persuade Harvey, and their little squad would be completely united—ready to hang Annan from a lamppost or grab a bucket and make a run for it.

However, Igor’s plans were exactly what Lise had in mind.

After the last question, Lise already knew that she couldn't monopolize Ashe. Such a naive slave, even if not particularly useful, was worth keeping as a spare. Since she couldn't form an unbreakable father-daughter alliance with Ashe, she had to consider a secondary option—a beneficial alliance.

Lise even thought it would be good if Igor discovered her secret; it would save her the trouble of having to persuade him. Perhaps if the Little Witch had called Igor “mother,” this day might have come sooner.

“Name your price, Mr. Bukin,” Lise said, not one to easily comply. “And just so you know, don't be too outrageous. This secret is important to me, but its real value isn't that high—Annan wouldn't abandon Ashe, and Ashe can't abandon me. She won't kick us out just because my mood swings faster than a kitten's.”

“You were calling Ashe directly just now, and now you refer to him as your father?” Igor suddenly interjected. “Do you... or should I say, do you think that kinship is the easiest collar to enslave Ashe with?”

Lise fell silent for a moment, then shook her head: “No.”

“Mr. Bukin, you misunderstand. We rarely interfere with Lise's choices, nor do we force her to do anything in the name of sisterhood... At least, when Lise chooses to act spoiled with Ashe, we never gave her any instructions.”

“The Lise you usually deal with is just a six or seven-year-old girl who doesn't know the world. She might be as bad as you imagine, but she's definitely not as bad as us.”

“You may not like her, Mr. Bukin, but don't hate her because of us,” Lise said earnestly. “This is a sister's request.”

Igor paused for a moment, “Those words are useless coming from you. You should know, we come from a Kingdom where everyone is an orphan, without fathers or mothers, brothers or sisters. Kinship was removed along with the umbilical cord the moment we were born. I can't understand your request that involves kinship.”

“But?” Lise probed tentatively.

“There is no ‘but,’” Igor said, his face darkening. “I want control over you and Ashe.”

“Impossible!”

“Then you have no other chips to play with besides yourself and Ashe. If you won't give this or that, then I might just have to share with others the ghost stories about Lise who loves looking in the mirror at midnight.”

"I can't give you control over myself," Lise asserted seriously. "I've only just managed to escape Annan's direct control and reached a deterrent agreement with Ashe, barely maintaining my autonomy. I can't give in on this... At most, I can share a bit of Ashe with you."

Igor looked troubled. "Even without you, I could sway him on my own... Fine then, give me all of Ashe's control."

"Impossible!" Lise shook her head. "I may have control over Ashe, but he also has control over me. During these 101 days, I must maintain my own control to counterbalance that of Ashe, otherwise I'll really become his obedient girl... What I can do is give you control over Ashe after the 101 days."

"After 101 days, the Weaving Festival will be over. What use is Ashe to me then? He'd be a waste of food," Igor said with disdain. "Ashe's value is only within these 101 days... How about this: we split control over Ashe evenly, sharing his control between us, what do you say?"

Lise was sharp. "And if my command conflicts with yours, whose will Ashe obey?"

"Mine, of course!"

"That's not possible!" Search the [NôvelFire\(.\)net](http://NôvelFire(.)net) website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

After a round of intense and thrilling bargaining, the allocation of Ashe's control was finally settled: Igor would gain full control after 101 days, and during these 101 days, Igor would have one instance of "absolute command" over Ashe. Even if it clashed with Lise's orders, Ashe would have to prioritize the Con Artist's demands.

Lise really didn't want to give up even a single instance of "absolute command," preferring to share control of Ashe with Igor at all other times. But Igor clung tightly to this point, which seemed to be his bottom line. Lise felt that if she refused, the negotiation might truly fail. Considering Igor currently had the upper hand, Lise eventually conceded.

"But do you know how to 'transfer contract rights'? I'm no expert in Ritual Factions."

Lise deliberately waited until the end of the negotiations to bring up this issue. Had she mentioned it at the beginning, Igor might have realized he couldn't gain anything from her, which could have led to an abrupt end to their discussion.

Now that the negotiation had revealed a potential for collaboration and given the terms agreed upon, it would increase the sunk cost for Igor if he decided to walk away from the table.

However, Igor just smiled faintly, mysteriously producing two pieces of paper from nowhere.

“Playing with contracts is to the Con Artist what playing with mud is to a child—a fundamental skill that doesn’t require formal learning.”

Of course, it’s not that simple—if “Sign Contract” is arithmetic, then “transfer contract rights” is at least calculus.

The contract was straightforward: Igor agreed not to disclose any of Lise’s secrets to anyone in any way and to help hide her ‘sisters’ from Annan or anyone else who might become suspicious.

In return, Lise would give the latter half of Ashe’s life to Igor, along with one instance of “absolute command” over the next three months.

As the contract took effect and dissipated into points of light, ‘Lise’ suddenly said, “From the beginning, the person you wanted was not me, but Ashe.”

“Correct.” Igor nodded frankly. “I had anticipated that you would not give up your control. I could only hope to scrape off as much of Ashe from you as possible. To trade your secrets for this much of Ashe, I feel this might be the least profitable deal I’ve ever made.”

“Is that the justification you’ve prepared for yourself, Mr. Bukin?”

‘Lise’ glanced at him, “You know, Lise was quite noisy just now. She was very reluctant to sell the future of Ashe to someone like you, a bad guy. She didn’t want Ashe to suffer misfortune in the future. But since I was in charge of the negotiations, I ultimately overruled her wishes.”

Igor snorted, “Oh, are there cracks in the relationship between you sisters? As a Mind Sorcerer, I would be happy to offer my services.”

“Not at all, because I made it clear to her—selling Ashe to you is completely risk-free, in every sense.”

Igor didn’t quite understand what she meant, but ‘Lise’ quickly changed the subject: “I’ve recently acquired an ability called ‘Love Hunting,’ which allows me to keenly sense the emotions of love revealed in the details.”

“Just by looking at Annan and Banjeet, I knew that Annan’s feelings for Banjeet were more than just familial.”

“Even though Annan always commands Banjeet quite naturally, she becomes evasive or slightly stiff when Banjeet initiates physical contact. This indicates the turmoil within her heart, where ethics and genuine feelings twist her heart into a knot of confusion.”

Igor recalled the interactions between Annan and Banjeet and couldn't help but nod. “There does seem to be something there.”

‘Lise’ continued, “When I look at Mr. Harvey, I can tell that he once had a true love, and that this love has passed away.”

“How can you tell?”

“He often falls into deep thought, which could be a side effect of the Catnip Cigarette, but his eyes are filled with tenderness while his fingers constantly tremble. Moreover, he's been frequently looking at photos in the Gospel that bring back memories. Grief is like a stone tied to him, drowning him in the sea of his recollections.”

Igor nodded convincingly. “He did start hanging around with us after hearing about his lover's death.”

‘Lise’ said, “Then, when I look at...”

Igor turned the record player up to full volume: “Shut it, will you.”

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

Chapter 234: Integrity at Its Finest!

In the game room, Ashe and Deya were locked in intense Battle.

The Wandering Sword Saint executed a complex Miracle combo, cornering the Time Witch at the edge of the board, rendering her utterly defenseless.

As Ashe was about to finish off this formidable foe with a chain of combos, he excitedly prepared the Wandering Sword Saint's ultimate Miracle, “Midnight Sun Twilight Turn,” aiming to end the Battle with a flourish!

However, it was the slight pause caused by initiating the ultimate Miracle that Deya keenly captured.

She decisively executed a dodge Miracle, “Reminiscent Years Like Water,” avoiding the Wandering Sword Saint’s ultimate, and then used the throwing Miracle, “Zero Hour Echo,” to turn the tables and pin the Wandering Sword Saint against the edge.

The tide had completely turned. Although the Time Witch was down to a sliver of health, her Talent, the blessing “All Miracle attacks increase the enemy’s stun time by 5 frames,” meant that with a perfect combo rhythm, she could leave her opponent without a chance to resist or escape.

Multiple times, all it took was for Ashe to be hit once by Deya, and then he could practically let go of the controller and watch as the Wandering Sword Saint was endlessly comboed to death by the Time Witch.

In contrast, the Wandering Sword Saint’s Talent, the blessing “Start the Battle with four times attack power, which decreases over time,” meant that if he couldn’t seize the opportunity to finish his enemy right at the start, he stood little chance as the fight dragged on.

Watching the Wandering Sword Saint immobilized, Ashe was frantic with urgency.

If it were just another routine thrashing, it would have been one thing, but this time the Time Witch was on the brink of defeat, and Ashe was so close to avenging his losses. It was like a download progress bar stuck at 99.9% — he couldn’t accept falling at this hurdle!

Ashe cast a steely glance around the room. Only he and Lise were present in the game room; Harvey and Igor had no interest in watching their gameplay, Banjeet did seem interested, but Annan appeared to have plans for him, leaving no time to coach Ashe and Lise’s gaming.

This meant, whatever happened between him and Lise, no one was watching, and no one could stop them.

Lise, it was you who pushed me to this.

I didn’t want to resort to that trick.

But now, it seems like Destiny is making a fool of me.

Ashe kicked away Lise’s stool, and while she was distracted by the fall, he decisively executed a series of Miracles to defeat the Time Witch.

“Remember to game in moderation; too much indulgence is not healthy. Minors should play no more than one hour of games. It’s time for a bath, and with that, let’s call it a night. Goodnight!”

Before Deya could even grasp what had happened, Ashe had already dashed out of the game room, making a quick escape from the scene.

Lise, nursing her sore behind and staring at the door left ajar, heard the announcement from the Holographic Screen stating the outcome of the game. Letting go of the controller, her lips pouted enough to hang a kettle.

Enduring!

But she couldn't hold back anymore!

"Arghhh!" Deya rolled around on the carpet, choking with rage: "Darn it! Don't try to calm me down, I'm going to kill him! I swear I'll get him, not even the Bronze Dragon can save him!"

It took her a while to compose herself, then she stood up angrily, turned off the Holographic Screen, and hit Ashe's controller as if to vent her frustration before heading back to her room to take a bath.

Around 11 PM, as her consciousness connected with the Virtual Realm, Deya entrusted her physical body to Lise and descended into the Virtual Realm with a scowl.

Lise stretched lazily on the bed, feeling sleepy but not ready to fall asleep just yet.

She was at an age full of energy and had been happily 'forced' by the Observer to play hide and seek with Banjeet all afternoon. Interestingly, Aunt Bukin and Uncle Harvey even joined in for several rounds before leaving.

But Banjeet was incredibly skilled, effortlessly finding them no matter how well Aunt Bukin and Uncle Harvey hid, leaving Aunt Bukin with a somewhat sullen expression after her losses.

Lise had wanted to involve her dad in the game, and Ashe, who was in the gaming pod, had agreed readily. However, after searching for a while, Lise discovered that Ashe hadn't moved at all from the virtual gaming pod, claiming that "the most dangerous place is the safest."

That's when Lise realized that this hypocritical adult was definitely a master at slacking off—a true wage thief.

Adults are supposed to go to work, and Dad is definitely the type who would find an excuse to play games openly while at work.

Even though she had a lot of fun, Lise felt it wasn't enough. But at this hour, there was no one else to play with her, and her sisters had all gone to the Virtual Realm, so...

...was she free now?

Lise suddenly jumped up, clenched her little fists excitedly, and all sleepiness vanished.

Right, with her sisters not around, she could do whatever she wanted, couldn't she?

But what exactly should she do?

Suddenly, Lise looked down at the new Bracelet she had received.

It still had 10,000 copper coins in it, which the White Queen, Secret Princess, and Black Butler had discussed all afternoon without deciding how to spend the money.

Buying stuff... Lise wanted to buy stuff too!

She twisted the Bracelet and called up the Holographic Screen, and as if sensing her inner desires, the first page that appeared on the Curtain was the shopping store.

I'm just looking to see what's for sale, she thought to herself.

As soon as Deya entered the Virtual Realm, she realized she was sitting in the back seat of a sports car, with the Observer beside her, and the Swordsman in the front seat. In her foul mood, she failed to realize that this seating arrangement would also upset another young lady who, with her arms crossed, said, "Can we find a Sorcerer Projection to fight tonight? Preferably a male, I need to vent."

Ashe instinctively wanted to say 'tell us what bad luck you've run into to cheer us up,' but he suddenly remembered his promise to the Witch not to inquire about her life, so he swallowed the schadenfreude comment.

He was someone who took promises very seriously, perhaps because his father had kept his promise to buy him a gaming system after he scored dual hundreds for the first time in elementary school, or maybe because he saw his dear elder brother adhere to a promise which resulted in his father standing up to the homeroom teacher's pressure and allowing his brother to date early because he made it into the top ten in his age group.

Ashe's father wasn't what you'd call a traditional good dad. He lacked ambition, sticking to the same job his whole life, enjoying a drink or two in the evenings, and not one to look after the kids. He was obsessed with forging swords—a passion so intense that back in his hometown he even had a forge, where the clang of the hammer on Saturdays mornings was more jarring than any alarm clock. While other kids had sweet dreams, Ashe only dreamed of being hammered down. His brother had it even worse; halfway through a spring dream, as he was about to drop his trousers, he'd dream of the hammer crashing down.

Despite all this, it was hard for the two brothers to speak ill of their father. Not only did they earn bragging rights with their friends by showing off their father's unsharpened swords when they were little, but more importantly, their father respected them.

He was strict when he needed to be and wasn't one to coddle or compromise. He didn't seem to expect much from Ashe and his brother, much like he didn't expect his crafted swords to be used for anything other than wall decorations. But he was still faithful in smoothing out the roughness of their adolescent years with his hammer. Yet if the brothers showed their own 'backbone', he wouldn't skimp on his respect. Young Ashe didn't think much of having a father who respected him until he grew up and met all sorts of people, realizing not everyone had a father figure.

Compared to his father, though, his mother was the real piece of work, but that's a story for another time.

Just when Ashe decided not to delve into the Witch's foul mood, the Swordswoman turned and asked proactively, "Got any misfortunes to share to cheer us up?"

Ashe would never admit he may have been a bad influence on the Swordswoman.

Deya seemed to have a bellyful of complaints, but aside from herself, the other sisters didn't care for such trifles. Even though the Swordswoman's tone was odd, Deya complied and spilled it out: "I met a really despicable man today. In a fair duel, knowing he was about to lose, he still used external factors to throw me off, resulting in my defeat. And he had the audacity to leave without a hint of apology after humiliating me."

Since saying she lost at a game seemed a bit odd, Deya decided to use the term 'duel', considering the game they were playing was "Sorcerer Duel 14".

"That's despicable!" Ashe erupted. "How can there be men in this world who can't handle defeat? I have no respect for him!"

"Indeed." Even Sonya couldn't help but agree. She wasn't against the use of outside tactics, but given her current social status, she was destined to become 'a victim of such tactics,' so she firmly planted herself on the side of 'justice.' "A fair duel should not be compromised."

"Exactly!" Deya found solace in the collective condemnation, excited like she had made a new friend. "That man is just vile..."

Sonya didn't actually have much desire to cozy up to the Little Witch, but Deya was like a fruit can that just needed a gentle pry to open. Sonya's instinct for 'networking' prompted her to skillfully echo Deya—women know best how to charm other women.

Before long, Deya had brushed aside all her bad impressions of Sonya, even thinking that Sonya understood her better than the sisters, and had a very sound set of values.

Values that just happened to align perfectly with her own.

As Ashe drove his car in pursuit of the Chariot of the Bull, Deya adjusted her glasses slightly and engaged in a conversation with the sisters.

White Queen: "Do I really not need to step in for communication and intelligence gathering this time? Last night you were vehemently opposed to contacting them."

Deya: "I can't always depend on you, and it's just the Observer and the Swordswoman, I should be able to handle them. Tonight, as usual, I'll take care of the Virtual Realm."

Black Butler: "Last night you disliked the Swordswoman, and now after a brief interaction, you're chatting away with her like there's no tomorrow. You think you can handle it, but I bet soon you'll sell us out completely... If it weren't for the new Little Witch, Princess, you would undoubtedly be the social nincompoop among us."

Red Death Eater: "Even counting the Witch, the Princess is still the weakest in social skills."

Deya: "Little Red, do you really have the nerve to criticize me?"

Black Butler: "Little Red just doesn't socialize, which is different from having low social skills. It's like not playing games versus being bad at them; they're not the same thing. So she's qualified to judge you."

Deya: "White Queen, look at them!"

White Queen: "Since Princess wishes it so, we should respect her desires. After all, we had a clear division of labor from the start: Princess handles the Virtual Realm Adventure, I manage negotiations, Black Butler is in charge of schemes and misdeeds, and Red Death Eater is responsible for battle and carnage... An occasional cameo is fine, but if possible, work should be left to the corresponding person. After all, we all want to feel needed."

Black Butler: "Speaking of which, it's been a long time since I've been active, so are you really not planning to let me take the stage? The bond between Observer and Swordswoman is in a delicate state, and White Queen, your babying approach won't peel back their veil. Let me take over; I can induce a qualitative change in their relationship—perhaps for the better, but I'll strive to guide it towards the worse. Although we can't do much in the Virtual Realm, our bodies are already very sharp weapons."

"No, that's not acceptable!"

"No, Observer and Swordswoman are important allies for us right now."

Deya and White Queen objected in unison.

“Ah, it seems it’s another day I’m kept on ice. But I’m not in a hurry,” Black Butler said.
“My very existence means... we need me.”

“I’ll wait with great anticipation for the day I take center stage.”

Despite some controversy, Deya regained her position as the spokesperson for Exploration in the Virtual Realm.

White Queen gave her a piece of advice: the focus of Exploration in the Virtual Realm was no longer merely about exploring, but about improving her own status within the exploration team.

Now that she was already on friendly terms with Swordswoman, the next step was Observer.

Observer had agreed with her views earlier, indicating that despite his unpleasant nature, his core values were actually quite sound, so getting along with him should be no problem!

“Observer!”

Sonya’s reaction was even quicker than Ashe’s; she turned her head to see what this ‘new sister’ intended to do.

Deya racked her brains for social skills: it was said that the best way to close the distance with someone was to compliment their appearance.

However, Observer’s face was a blur of mist, impossible to discern, and the trench coat covering the body could well befit the self-defeating comic villain in a fairy tale book, so...

“Your hands are so beautiful, may I touch them?”

Ashe blinked.

Sonya was flabbergasted.

Was she being that straightforward? Generally, wouldn’t the usual approach be to say something about having applied too much hand cream and offering to share some?

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

Chapter 235: The Changing Witch

Cornered beasts fight with a crazed desperation, yet the Hunter's threads had silently entangled its limbs. As the creature panicked due to its shifting center of gravity, the butcher's blade swung down with a heavy blow.

Miracle Water Thread, Miracle Evil Light Slash!

Precise and elegant, yet brutal and efficient, the first Overlord Creature the trio encountered, the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon, had its head split open like a watermelon. It possessed a mane of lacquer-black hair as if styled by a beauty salon and a massive body akin to a dump truck. However, now it was destined to dissipate into motes of light, mingling with the Reverse Golden Rain and sinking into the soil as nourishment.

Several spirits took the opportunity to flee but were casually captured by the trio.

"It's not much different from the usual monster hordes."

Sonya sheathed her sword, interlaced her fingers and stretched them forward, flexing her joints to relax, commenting like a Gourmet, "But the last Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon did have its merits. Scales, 2 points; movements, 3 points; meat quality, 4 points. But for the skull, I'd give it 5 points—it's as crisp as a chip—"

"That comment alone will have me remove chips from my menu for at least the next five days; my fats thank you," Ashe said, not amused. "But to be fair, this Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon's strength is no less than other Large Creatures. Plus, it commanded the other fierce wolf dragons—there were three times it almost severely injured you."

"You had my back, didn't you?" Sonya glanced at Ashe and suddenly caught sight of an incredibly cute girl. Her large eyes seemed expectant, a proud tuft of red hair on her head begging to be smoothed down.

Sonya couldn't help but reach out and ruffle Deya's head, "Besides, I have the super impressive Witch by my side. How could a mere Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon escape our exquisite teamwork?"

"Exactly!" Deya said proudly, hands on her hips, "As long as the Swordswoman is with me, even ten more would be no challenge!"

"If you can attract the hatred of ten Giant Fierce Wolf Dragons as firmly as capitalists attract the labor of their workers, I wouldn't mind your enthusiasm for the job." Ashe

clapped his hands. “Alright, now it’s time to collect the bonus. Let’s see what surprises the Fierce Wolf Dragons have prepared for us.”

The Fierce Wolf Dragon’s den was the third Resource Point they had found tonight and was also the first overlord Resource Point they encountered—with not only thirteen Fierce Wolf Dragons but also one overlord creature, the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon.

Of course, the battle wasn’t as easy as these three made it sound, as if they were cheating in a single-player game with a co-op team. An overlord creature has combat power comparable to that of a Large Creature and can also command Gregarious Creatures in combat support. They fight without any sense of honor.

When the boss attacks, its minions will shamelessly sneak attack, and even a Battle Sorcerer who excels in group combat would be as helpless as a student who realizes on the last day of summer vacation that they have yet to do their homework.

Fortunately, Ashe and his companions were just as shameless. They found a narrow passage and blew up the walls on both sides, reducing the space to only allow two young girls to dodge and weave. Ashe then stood behind, stabbing with his Heart Sword, quickly exhausting the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon’s minions. What followed was a one-on-three showdown with the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon.

The Resource Point they had fought so hard to secure was naturally rich in spoils. The den contained three types of resources in production: wood, mercury, and sulfur.

Wood and ore were the cheapest resources; the first two Resource Points they found tonight contained wood and ore. But mercury and sulfur were rare.

“Fiery Sulfur” was the best fuel for Fire Magic and Gun Technique spirits, while “Mercurial Silver” was a universal lubricant for spirits of Poison Magic, Water Art, machinery, and other Factions.

The rarer the material, the wider the range of spirits it could cultivate, and the stronger the effect. Meanwhile, ordinary wood and ore materials were not only picky for the spirits but also yielded inferior cultivation results.

Sometimes Ashe even wondered if he was the servant and the spirits were the masters. How else could he explain going through hardship and risking his life to find cultivation resources for the spirits?

In short, the den of the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon was likely the best haul of the night.

However...

Ashe gazed at the pool of mercury before him, next to which stood a machine that looked both crude and somewhat complex, as if an Orc had drunkenly cobbled it

together from a pile of parts in a once-off artistic endeavor that could never be replicated.

But it was this contraption, which rightly belonged in a heap of junk, that had been driven by the spirits of the Fierce Wolf Dragons, extracting mercury from the pool and refining it into precious materials like “Stoneflow Silver” and “Stonemilk Silver.”

Ashe looked around. The den of the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon was a cave overgrown with wildly proliferating vines, and due to the Fierce Wolf Dragons’ lack of interest in constructing a Sewer system, the natural odors were quite pronounced.

Yet the square edges exposed on the ceiling, the pillars that had crumbled, leaving only their bases, and the corner artifact that once was a fire pit but now served as a urinal for the Fierce Wolf Dragons, all suggested that the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon was merely a tenant here, not the landlord.

Of course, it was also possible that the previous landlords devolved into the appearance of Fierce Wolf Dragons – the idea of enemy and ally being of the same origin wasn’t novel. But since the Swordswoman had just compared their skulls to potato chips, Ashe decided to forsake such tedious conjectures, hoping he’d still be able to enjoy cucumber-flavored chips in six days.

“Observer! Observer!”

The Witch ran up to him, extending her hand: “Here’s some Galewood, and this Purple Sulfur, you can use them!”

“Ah, thanks.”

“You’re welcome!” And with that, the Witch zipped off to scavenge other resources.

Ashe’s gaze followed her retreating figure, and Sonya, unbeknownst to him, had stealthily moved to his side: “The Witch is... a bit odd today.”

Ashe had noticed as well – it was impossible not to. Today, the Witch’s hair was black, her dress too, and it reached down to her knees, unlike yesterday’s white miniskirt that revealed her thighs, a stark change.

In battle, too, she no longer transformed into a fiery red warrior; only her sheer gloves would change to a rose-red hue, and her hair seemed to be highlighted with streaks of crimson, a blend of black and red.

Of course, what Sonya was referring to wasn’t the Witch’s change of clothing, but her personality.

Unlike the composed and calm demeanor of the previous night, tonight's Witch was as lively as the icing on a cake and proved to be quite gullible—after just two Battles, Sonya had easily learned all about the Witch's spirits, Miracles, and her preferred style of combat. Their relationship had progressed at a breakneck pace.

If this were the real world, they would be at the level of going to the Restroom together, holding hands.

Moreover, after the first Battle ended, Sonya couldn't resist patting the Witch on the head as a form of praise when she noticed the red tuft of hair sticking up. Unexpectedly, this gesture opened the floodgates, and after every Battle, the Witch made sure she was in Sonya's line of sight, urging praise with her expressive tuft of hair.

What kind of environment could possibly cultivate such a personality?

Even in Gales, it would be hard to find a girl this easy to bamboozle, right?

However, these were not the main points. The crux was that the Witch was trying to curry favor with the Observer and herself in a very clumsy way. Seeing Sonya's friendly demeanor, the Witch felt that she no longer needed to invest much effort there, so she kept gravitating towards the Observer.

Handing materials to the Observer, asking what colors he liked, complimenting him on his good looks today... it was cringeworthy to the point of making one want to curl their toes.

Yet, this adorably silly Witch made Sonya feel she was even more difficult to handle.

If it were the composed Witch from the night before, Sonya could use all her skills and go all out to deal with her.

While Sonya is now among the upper echelons of Swordflower College, she was no stranger to factional competition, class politics, dormitory hierarchies, and cliques among girls when she first started. Just a month ago, she and Lois were still at each other's throats.

If 'dealing with manipulative women' could be categorized as a Magical Faction, Sonya felt confident she could easily earn a Gold Tier in that discipline.

Sonya initially suspected that the Witch was adopting the 'clueless cute' strategy to win hearts, as the naïve and sweet approach always seemed to be in demand. Even Delarose starred in a few Shadow Dramas with titles like "The Domineering Prince Falls for the Silly Sweetheart," and Sonya herself had taken this approach during her first semester to boost her popularity at the college. She knew all too well the devastating effect of such an innocent and pure façade.

Especially when feigned, the lethality of innocence is strongest since true naivety may lack finesse, whereas a contrived act hits just the right notes, not angering anyone.

But Sonya found that the Witch was genuinely naive.

It was as if the Witch had torn off the Werewolf Mask she used for defense the previous night, revealing the harmless and pure face of a lamb. She seemed to lack experience in interacting with her peers, her way of socializing involved laying her heart out in the open, shouting for attention—'look at me, look at me'—a country kid would have more guile.

Being an expert at feigning innocence herself, Sonya could tell this wasn't an act. But if it wasn't an act, then what about the composed White Witch from the night before?

Ashe seemed to have some guesses, as he knew the Witch's Inherent Talent was a Personality Split, and the Witch from last night was clearly not the same persona as the one tonight.

But should this information be shared with the Swordswoman?

Or rather, should he be the one to tell her?

"I suggest you ask her directly, after all, it should be her privacy."

"Just tell me since you know."

"But if the Witch asks about your secrets, should I be honest with her too?"

Ashe waved his hand dismissively, as if to swat away annoying flies, before Sonya could retort: "I know what you're going to say—yes, emotions are profound because of their depth, and relationships are intimate because of their closeness. You should indeed have more privileges with me than the Witch, such as discussing her gossip behind her back."

"I do enjoy gossip, but the premise is those people don't become colleagues we meet every day. The three of us will be comrades-in-arms who stick together out of a fear of death in the foreseeable future. It's no big deal to whisper and vent about the third person occasionally, but we shouldn't make it a habit to privately discuss the gossip of teammates—it would inevitably lead to you, Swordswoman, thinking we're talking about your secrets whenever you see me and the Witch together."

Sonya immediately countered, "I'm not that sensitive!"

"I think the only thing in this world that's more sensitive than you is Secret Poison," said Ashe in irritation. "Although it's inevitable to form cliques when a team gets larger, right now there are only three of us. I hope we can keep the atmosphere at the level of a

student interest group for as long as possible, before we enter the dirty adult world of gossiping about colleagues all day.”

“Actually, I’ve had a question for a long time—what does gossip mean?”

“You didn’t understand?”

“Given the context, I can guess it probably means speaking ill of others.”

“It’s basically talking about people’s private matters.”

“What does that mean, ‘private matters’?”

“Are you picking a fight?” Ashe was losing his patience. “If you want to know the Witch’s secrets, just go ask her yourself!”

“But asking about someone’s secrets so bluntly can make one seem to have low emotional intelligence...”

“Then let me help you. I’m actually quite curious too.”

Without further ado, Ashe pulled Sonya along to find Deya. Sonya was taken aback by the sudden hand-holding—it wasn’t their first time holding hands. They had clasped hands while soaring through the Sea of Knowledge, and there had been times during battle when they assisted each other. But this casual contact in everyday circumstances was new.

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

Chapter 236: Officially Joining the Team

At this moment, Deya was squatting inside the lumber mill searching for usable materials.

The lumber mill connected to the outside of the nest, where huge, aesthetically unpleasing machines, like fishing rods, plunged into the dense forests of the outside world. Driven by spirits, environmentally friendly trees rapidly induced by time were transformed by the machines into cubic logs that fell into the nest.

Logically speaking, Fierce Wolf Dragons wouldn't use lumber, and with lumber taking up so much space, the nest should quickly become overcrowded. However, the lumber mill didn't actually have much lumber.

While searching for materials, Deya was also taking lessons from her sisters:

White Queen: "Princess, you can't just hand things over so directly."

Deya: "Should I throw them instead?"

White Queen: "That's not what I mean... You'll make the Observer feel awkward."

Deya: "(͡° ͜ʖ ͡° ;) I don't understand."

Black Butler: "Please, just let White do it. I can't stand to watch this."

Deya: "I think I'm doing great. The Swordswoman likes me, and the Observer will like me soon too!"

Black Butler: "Who gave you the courage? Little Red, say something to her!"

Red Death Eater: "Something."

At that moment, Deya heard footsteps and turned her head to see the Observer pulling the Swordswoman over.

"Why is your personality so different today compared to yesterday, witch?"

"Ah? That's because yesterday was the White Queen, and today is the Secret Princess."

Deya didn't hide anything and spoke very frankly.

Black Butler: "I knew she would sell us all out."

"The Observer has known about the existence of the Little Witch and the Secret Princess for a long time, we couldn't have kept it a secret." White Queen tried very hard to find excuses for Deya.

"Huh?" Deya blinked vigorously, as if pricked by a needle: "Don't you know? Did I say something wrong? Observer, didn't you tell her?"

"I don't know the details myself, that's why I came to ask you." Ashe spread his hands: "Witch, do you want to share your secret with us? If you don't want to, you can refuse, just like I've never asked the Swordswoman what 'Small horn' means."

Deya adjusted her glasses, quickly receiving advice from the sisterly council: “Actually, it’s not a big deal...”

Just like Sonya could freely vent to the Observer about the roommate academy and society, the Witch sisters also considered the Swordswoman and the Observer to be virtual friends with whom it was safe to share secrets—firstly, because the Observer already knew their secrets, so concealing them was pointless, and secondly, because the Swordswoman and the Observer did not intersect in reality, which was evident from the excitement of their encounter in the Virtual Realm the previous night. White Queen believed they might be from two different Kingdoms.

Furthermore, since the Observer always appeared before them in an illusory form, White Queen speculated that he might also belong to a different Kingdom and wondered through what Miracle he was bound to them.

In other words, they, the Observer, and the Swordswoman, were all strangers from different Kingdoms.

No matter what the Observer and the Swordswoman knew, it could not affect the sisters’ lives.

Therefore, not just Deya, but all the sisters except for the more reserved White Queen, were eager to reveal their existence to strangers.

“I am White Queen, please take good care of the Princess,” said the gentle and composed big sister who had made a brief appearance the previous night in a white suit+skirt+absolute territory.

“I am Red Death Eater.” With red hair and red clothes, her fierce gaze and alert demeanor resembled that of a brown bear living in the wild.

“I am Black Butler, mainly responsible for helping the sisters come up with insults.” Dressed in a proper butler’s uniform, with hair neatly tied behind her neck, her androgynous attire was quite dashing, and her refined yet spirited facial features made one wonder if her mouth could only spout pearls of wisdom.

“And then there’s me, Secret Princess!” Deya returned to her original appearance, proudly standing with her hands on her hips: “However, the Observer has given me the nickname Witch, so you can just call me Witch. I will mainly lead the activities in the Virtual Realm, so I am the Witch!”

It was not just Sonya; even Ashe was amazed—switching personalities could automatically change clothes and hair color, faster than a magical girl warrior. Was this a natural talent that came with several skins?

“Do you have any other sisters, Witch?” Sonya asked curiously.

“There are...” Deya paused: “But they are all busy with other matters and won’t appear for the time being.”

Could it be multitasking in such a cool way?

Ashe suddenly felt an impulse to split personalities as well—creating one to work and train in reality, another to fight and adventure in the Virtual Realm, while he himself would be responsible for Rest and Entertainment. It seemed like a perfect division of labor.

However, it was just a thought. Putting aside the fact that he didn’t have the ability, even if he did, the most likely outcome would be: one Ashe has water to drink, two Ashes carry water to drink, three Ashes have no water to drink... After all, they were all Ashe; why should one get to laze around while the others work?

His current minor goal was still to tap into the potential of the Substitute spirit, so that one day Ashe could live the life of a Sorcerer capitalist exploiting spirits.

“Why are you in charge of Exploration in the Virtual Realm?” Ashe suddenly realized a problem: “Logically speaking, shouldn’t it be the Red Death Eater, who is responsible for Battle, to take on that role?”

“Because I know a little bit about what the other sisters can do, which makes it easier to handle various emergencies. If it really comes down to it, we can switch out,” Deya explained, picking up a piece of raw material from the pile of wood: “Besides, exploring the Virtual Realm is tiring, and among the sisters, only I am interested in the Virtual Realm... Hm? Oh, alright.”

Deya suddenly fixed her gaze on Ashe, asking, “Observer, Observer, what do you think of White Queen, Red Death Eater, and Black Butler?”

Sonya was taken aback by the question—it was a strange way to ask, similar to how her classmates would introduce male Nobles to her with the tone of selling fruit.

“Hm?” Ashe thought for a moment: “White Queen is dignified and impressive, Red Death Eater is sharp and wild, Black Butler is cool and dashing... Witch, you have three very good sisters.”

“What about the Swordsman, what do you think?” Deya then turned to Sonya.

“Basically the same as the Observer,” Sonya, with her undeniable social talents, clapped her hands and said: “But each of you is so beautiful. I like the charm of White Queen, the coolness of Red Death Eater, and Black Butler is exactly my type. Witch, you yourself are so cute... Can I have all of you?”

Deya's eyes sparkled with excitement, and she suddenly jumped to hug Ashe and Sonya, making happy humming noises through her nose. Ashe and Sonya were a bit taken aback by her sudden bear hug, getting pressed to the ground as the Witch rubbed against them like a little bear.

"Witch, this sudden—"

"We're so happy!" the Witch lifted her head, her charming face brimming with an infectious smile: "The White Queen and the others rarely show themselves in public, almost no one knows they exist. You two are the only ones... They've always wanted to know how others would see them, and your approval delights them, delights us all! If you don't believe me, let them tell you—"

Lise Deya adjusted her glasses and suddenly transformed into the persona of the Black Butler.

The Black Butler sternly declared, "That's not true, she's talking nonsense!"

"I am not!" Deya switched back, huffing, "Black Butler, your face was clearly flushed with joy just a moment ago! We all saw it!"

"I knew she would sell us all out!" cursed the Black Butler.

"I rest my case." The White Queen gave up the struggle.

The Witch sat up, suddenly recalling something, "Right, in the picture book 'The House of the North Wind,' the characters became friends after sharing secrets... So, are we friends now?"

"You shared secrets with us, but we haven't shared ours with you," Ashe pointed out.

Deya blinked, her socially awkward circuits overloading in the moment.

Ah, is this a rejection? What to do next? I really want to find a hole to crawl into. Maybe it's time to switch, White Queen save me—

"But we have a long, long future ahead of us in the Virtual Realm," Ashe stood up and dusted off his pants. "We'll find time to share our stories."

Sonya sat up, gently rubbing Deya's stubborn cowlick, letting out a resigned sigh.

"I'm just an ordinary college girl, I don't have any sensational secrets to share with you."

Black-and-White Witch Lise Deya, officially joined the team.

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

Chapter 237: The Civilization of Time Continent

“Have you ever felt that this place is more than just the lair of the Fierce Wolf Dragon?”

After scraping the lair clean and converting all the excess resources into essence, Ashe, the eco-cleaning master, suddenly asked a peculiar question.

Sonya: “What are you trying to say?”

“Actually, I’ve been questioning the manufacturing machines in the Resource Point since last night. The strange construction of these ancient gadgets could frustrate any technical Sorcerer, but they couldn’t possibly have been made by Knowledge Creatures, right?”

Leaning on the hood of a sports car, Ashe showed no fear that a mechanism underneath him might spring a blade to kiss his feet: “Even the most dexterous Knowledge Creature’s claws can’t compare to an Ogre’s pinky finger used for picking its nose.”

“It’s not like they secretly play the piano, make music, and write in script with their claws when we’re not around, only to hide their tools the moment we show up, just to keep us from discovering their civilization?”

Deya also began to expand her thoughts: “Speaking of which, what do Knowledge Creatures do when we Sorcerers aren’t around?”

“There are no Entertainment facilities inside, and they don’t need to hunt, so the only thing they could be doing is... I get it, playing hide and seek!”

Ashe said: “Actually, it could also be inter...”

“Hey!” Sonya chopped at Ashe’s shoulder, “The Witch doesn’t have much experience interacting with others. Don’t spout lewd jokes in front of her!”

“Are you implying it’s okay to do so with you? Besides, I was going to say ‘interaction’. It’s your dirty mind that thought I’d have a dirty mind!”

“What’s a lewd joke?” Deya asked, her face brimming with curiosity.

Ashe questioned: “The White Queen and the Black Butler don’t know?”

“They don’t. We just have different personalities, but our knowledge is shared. What I don’t know, they won’t know either.” The Witch adjusted her glasses: “However, the White Queen said she might guess what it is and will explain it to me when we return to reality.”

“I could give an example, like with the Swordswoman—stop, there’s no need to waste Time Spirits, right? Swordswoman, your financial situation can’t be so well-off to afford that, right?”

Sonya scoffed, stopping the activation of “Sharpening for a Day,” and said, “Observer, are you suggesting that the production machines at the Resource Point, and the ruins in the Fierce Wolf Dragon’s lair, are the masterpieces of another civilization?”

“That’s the only explanation,” Ashe replied. “Could it be that Sorcerers once established a civilization on the Time Continent? However, considering the abstract aesthetic of those production machines, perhaps Ogres are the purebloods of the Sorcerer Bloodline, and we’re all Mudbloods stealing arcane energy.”

This speculation seemed persuasive, yet Sonya shook her head: “But the time of Time Continent migrates with the movement of the River of Flowing Gold. For example, in about two hours, this place will turn into a Static Domain where everything withers, and only Knowledge Creatures can continue to live. Sorcerers would be frozen in time, becoming part of history. How could anyone establish a civilization here?”

“Is it possible that Knowledge Creatures could also become Sorcerers?” Deya suggested. “I read in the fairy tale book ‘New World’ where a Sorcerer was born among the Human race, previously considered lower beings by Elf Sorcerers. As a result, Human Sorcerers launched a counterattack, destroyed the Elf Kingdom, and established a new civilization. Maybe in the past, Knowledge Creatures dominated the world, and the rise of other Race Sorcerers destroyed the civilization of Knowledge Creatures.”

“Can such stories really be included in a fairy tale book?” Sonya couldn’t help but say. “I think it’s more likely that ancient Sorcerers invented some Miracle that allowed survival in the Static Domain, and thus established a Sorcerer empire on the Time Continent.”

They looked at Ashe: “Observer, what do you think?”

“Hmm, the Witch’s guess is full of imagination, and the Swordswoman’s thinking is very prudent, both have their merits,” Ashe said, stroking his chin. “But I think you’re thinking too small. Since we’re guessing, why not start with the entire world?”

Ashe looked up at the sky obscured by the Reverse Golden Rain, gazing at the distant White Bull’s massive hoof: “Maybe there was never a Chariot of the Bull or a River of Flowing Gold, and the Time Continent was just an ordinary habitable land, so there might have been a thriving civilization here once.”

Sonya was instinctively about to argue when Ashe waved his hand: “I know what you’re thinking—maybe a thousand years ago, two thousand years ago, ten thousand years ago, the Chariot of the Bull existed. But what about thirty thousand years ago, or a hundred thousand years ago? Over a long enough timeline, all massive changes become natural Truths that we take for granted.”

“Perhaps one day in the future, the Chariot of the Bull will grow tired and stop moving, and the active areas of the Time Continent will forever be fixed. Future Sorcerers may never believe that their predecessors had to chase after the White Bull.”

The Red-haired Swordswoman had to admit that this possibility existed, “But what practical significance does discussing this unverifiable speculation have?”

“It’s just a casual chat after work, and don’t you think it’s quite romantic? Together, we uncover the mysteries of the Virtual Realm and explore the history of the past, just like the heroes in adventure stories.” Ashe glanced at Sonya: “Besides, you’re undergoing intense Training during the day and Exploring the Virtual Realm with us at night. I’m worried you might not hold up, so I’m trying to give you a break to relax.”

“I’m not that fragile!”

“Who was it that just activated the ‘Sharpening Miracle’ and was ready to take on her companions?”

At that moment, Ashe noticed the Witch’s thoughtful expression and asked, “Do you have any clues?”

“No, I was just recalling that the basic configuration of an adventure team in fairy tales is two males and one female, with many types of love triangles, but typically the second male sacrifices himself, and the first male and female live happily ever after...” Deya said: “But we’re two females and one male, it doesn’t quite match up.”

The fairy tales you read are too diverse...

Ashe continued: “Also, if there really was a civilization, then apart from the Resource Points, there should be remnants of the old civilization on the Time Continent, right?”

Remnants!

The eyes of both the Swordswoman and the Witch lit up.

Whether in fairy tales or fantasy Shadow Dramas, the classic storyline of a lucky individual finding the legacy of a Senior Sorcerer or the ruins of an ancient organization, thus embarking on the path of becoming a Legend, is an evergreen plot. After all, the temptation of getting something for nothing is irresistible to everyone.

Although the civilization of Sorcerers generally spirals upward, with new-era Sorcerers being stronger than those from the old era, resources for Sorcerers are timeless. A spirit from ten thousand years ago or gold and silver from the same period are still valuable today. Even ancient Factions have the potential to sprout anew. It's only the mindset that becomes outdated.

Moreover, since the Virtual Realm itself contains "Sorcerer Inheritance," it would hardly surprise anyone if there were remnants of Sorcerers at the bottom of the Sea of Knowledge, let alone on the Time Continent.

Ashe looked at Sonya, who shook her head: "I haven't found any related information. I can ask the Professor tomorrow, but don't get your hopes up."

"Why not? Did you finally get on the bad side of the Professor by being too arrogant?"

Sonya glared at him: "You... guessed right, halfway. But I haven't been arrogant. The main issue is that I need to conceal my ventures into the Time Continent, so I can only inquire under the pretense of 'pre-studying' with the Professor."

"Besides, I feel that perhaps even the Professor doesn't know much about the secrets of the Time Continent."

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

Chapter 238: Academy Faction vs. Adventurer Faction

"Why?" Ashe expressed surprise. "Isn't your mentor a Tri-wings Sorcerer from the Sanctuary? How could she be unaware of matters concerning the Time Continent?" S

"There are two reasons for this."

Sonya raised her index finger. "First, compared to the volumes of information in the Sea of Knowledge, literature about the Time Continent only constitutes one-tenth. It's not just because there are far fewer Two Wings Sorcerers than One Wing Sorcerers, but more importantly, compared to the Virtual Realm, Sorcerers place a greater emphasis on the Faction Realm and are more inclined to create Silver codices and Gold tomes about how to advance within their Faction Realm."

"For instance, in the library, the Swordsmanship Department's books take up thirty shelves, encompassing various fields like summoning different spirits, combat,

production, and more. In contrast, books describing the Sea of Knowledge only fill two shelves, and those about the Time Continent are even fewer, merely a handful.”

“Sorcerers like us, who make gains in the Virtual Realm every night, are exceedingly rare, rare enough to be considered an exception. For the average Sorcerer, the Virtual Realm is merely a place for absorbing arcane energy and honing combat skills. They don’t expect to gain anything extra in the Virtual Realm; instead, they acquire more spirits by advancing within the Faction Realm and through the trading platform, building a Spirit System that suits them.”

“As they ascend to higher levels of the Faction Realm, they climb to a higher layer of the Virtual Realm and then repeat the process. If it weren’t for the fact that each layer of the Virtual Realm forces Sorcerers to explore and move around, many would be happy to stay in one place, peacefully absorbing arcane energy every night.”

“Second,” Sonya raised her middle finger, “my mentor is a Genius. She left the Time Continent and reached the Distant Skies in just four years. She’s been living on campus for four years and still occasionally forgets where her office is, let alone the Time Continent.”

Ashe sighed, understanding the divide between Academy Faction and Adventurer Faction Sorcerers.

Just as people who have enough to eat won’t rebel, and those who save in fixed deposits far outnumber those who speculate in funds, Sorcerers naturally vote with their feet, finding their own comfort zone.

It’s quite understandable, really. Rather than pin their hopes on the Virtual Realm, Sorcerers prefer to invest in themselves, at least that’s something they can control. For those in the Academy Faction, focusing on advancing in the Faction Realm requires both effort and Talent, but the progression is stable, and as long as one can elevate their Faction Realm, there are no bottlenecks. After all, a fool and a Genius absorb arcane energy with the same efficiency in the Virtual Realm.

By contrast, no matter how well one does in the Virtual Realm, if there is no Breakthrough in the Faction Realm, one will still be marking time.

If the Virtual Realm is seen as a fulcrum and the Faction Realm as a lever, then the Academy Faction is constantly reinforcing and extending their lever to pry more power from the Virtual Realm; whereas adventurers like Ashe are looking for a more suitable and effortless fulcrum, prying here and there, valuing serendipitous and inexplicable opportunities.

Whether at the individual, organizational, or societal level, the Academy Faction is superior to the Adventurer Faction in all respects. The only downside to the prosperity of

the Academy Faction is that it may lead to the neglect of the potential value of the Virtual Realm due to an excessive emphasis on the importance of the Faction Realm.

After all, they are so busy advancing in the Faction Realm that they have no energy left to uncover the secrets of the Virtual Realm, much less organize related information.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the two Factions are incompatible. The Swordswoman, for example, is currently balancing both the Academy Faction and the Adventurer Faction, and her progress is soaring. But for a Sorcerer civilization in development, they can only focus on the knowledge system of the Academy Faction, unable to illuminate the tech tree of the Adventurer Faction.

It seems there's no counting on Swordflower College; they can only rely on themselves to unearth the Treasures of the Time Continent.

"Speaking of which, I just remembered..."

"What, you've got another fairy tale more thrilling than an adult story?"

"No." Deya shook her head and shared her discovery at the lumber mill—the fact that if the wood that didn't deplete kept accumulating, the entire nest would be filled, but the quantity of wood in the factory was not much.

Ashe pondered and said, "Speaking of which, at the Resource Points we searched earlier, if all the common materials kept piling up, they should have been overflowing by now..."

"Could it be that the overflowing Resource Points are blocked, and we simply can't discover them? Only the ones that haven't overflowed are found by us?" Sonya pointed out a blind spot.

"The survivorship bias does make sense, but there's another possibility."

Ashe said, "That is, seemingly useless common materials are also being regularly collected."

Sonya shook her head, "I haven't heard of anyone other than you who can utilize common materials."

"That would mean, those who can use those common materials might not be Sorcerers..."

As they were talking, Ashe had already opened the Virtual Realm Map, ready to drive to the next Resource Point. But at that moment, he noticed an unlabeled red dot on the edge of the Map.

“Wisdom is demonstrated by outnumbering the unknown presence.”

An unknown presence means it's not a Knowledge Creature, and the only entities that roam the Time Continent aside from Knowledge Creatures are Sorcerer Projections!

“It seems there's a Sorcerer Projection taking a stroll ahead.”

“Run it over!” “Hit it!” The Swordswoman and Witch expressed very dangerous suggestions.

Ashe complied smoothly, driving straight at it. Their favorite enemies now were the Sorcerer Projections wandering around because their car's “Evil Blade” could directly hit and kill the other party without needing a Battle, easily earning the other's spirit and Sorcerer Handbook. It wasn't so much taking advantage as it was straight-up robbery.

As the distance closed, Ashe saw more details on the Virtual Realm Map.

Then he slammed on the brakes.

“Why did we stop?”

Ashe rubbed his eyes, making sure he wasn't misreading the prompt on the Map: “Behind the Sorcerer Projection, there's a large group of Serpent-Scorpion Dragons... as well as some Thousand-Feathered Dragons! They seem to be moving in our direction!”

“Does everyone see that? (Some Thousand-Feathered Dragons)”

“The statement below is correct (A Group Serpent-Scorpion Dragons)”

“Wisdom is demonstrated by outnumbering the unknown presence (Unknown Existence)”

A Sorcerer Projection moving with Gregarious Creatures?

Sonya thought of a terrifying possibility: “Quick, get out of the way, don't block their path!”

Ashe quickly steered the car to an adjacent Area and asked, “How can there be a Sorcerer Projection mixed in with Knowledge Creatures? Are they bundling sales now?”

Deya suggested, “Or perhaps it's just on their way?”

“No!” Sonya shook her head emphatically. “It's not like that... They're a whole!”

As they spoke, swift predators rolled across the earth like bulldozers, the moans of the bending grass and the low growls of the bowing trees wove into a catastrophic symphony of nature.

Even with the Reverse Golden Rain providing cover, Ashe and his companions could still clearly hear an army composed of Knowledge Creatures marching unbridled beside them.

The bodies of the Sorcerers were nearly stiff, as if afraid that their own movements would disturb the passing monsters.

Ashe's fingers hovered over the directional keys, eyes glued to the dots on the Map, ready to make a run for it at any moment.

They all secretly Prayed in their hearts for this unknown legion to proceed to another place for their gathering, hoping fervently not to draw the attention of this pitiful group of little wild creatures.

While Ashe and his team could sweep through three Resource Points, they still needed to seize advantageous terrain when facing a horde of monsters, or even create narrow terrains to reduce the numerical advantage of the Gregarious Creatures, often resulting in the three of them ganging up on two creatures in a localized area.

In other words, they actually lacked the ability to engage in group combat.

This was no nest or cave, and the Sorcerers couldn't find any terrain to their advantage. If this Virtual Realm legion attacked them, they could only Pray that their four wheels were faster than the flying creatures.

Only as the wailing of the trees faded away did they breathe a sigh of relief. Although one doesn't sweat in the Virtual Realm, everyone felt a chill of evaporated fear.

"What was that?" Ashe asked.

"I've never seen it before either," murmured Deya. "Lucky it was the first time, or Little Red would have been doomed."

Red Death Eater: "I just knew it would take a battle where death is certain to bring me fully into play."

"That should be the second-ranked threat on the 'Time Continent Danger Ranking List.'"

Sonya whispered, "They are the harbingers of death, the nightmare no Sorcerer wants to encounter, the Virtual Realm's unrestrained malice towards outsiders—"

"The heroic soul legion."

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

Chapter 239: Heroic Soul Legion

The Heroic Soul Legion is a combination of Sorcerer Projections and Knowledge Creatures.

No one knows why the Sorcerer Projections from the Time Continent mingle with Knowledge Creatures.

Even the most adept Mind Sorcerers, who excel at enslavement, can only control one or two Knowledge Creatures for a brief period. To command a large group of Knowledge Creatures goes far beyond the capabilities of any Two Wings Sorcerer. It's like asking a child to drive a heavy truck—it's simply not feasible based on size alone. And if the truck does move, it's not due to the child's ability, but rather the truck's compliance.

Many Sorcerers have indeed attempted to uncover the secret of how Sorcerer Projections control Knowledge Creatures. However, they are usually torn to shreds by the monster legion upon encounter. Forget research; they're lucky if they even catch a glimpse of the commanding Sorcerer Projection. Many Sorcerers die believing they have merely disrupted a family outing of Knowledge Creatures, oblivious that it was the dead who were marshaling an assault on the living.

"The Heroic Soul Legion is invincible on the Time Continent, or at least, it seems invincible to us," Sonya said. "Not to mention the Heroic Spirits that serve as commanders, the Knowledge Creatures within the legion are incredibly difficult to handle. With the command of a Heroic Spirit, even the most enduring Berserker among Physical Sorcerers would be drained of arcane energy."

"A Sorcerer is doubtless a force to be reckoned with, capable of taking on a hundred foes. But that only applies if a powerful Sorcerer faces a hundred weaker beings. Each creature in the Heroic Soul Legion possesses the combat power of a Two Wings Sorcerer; sheer numbers alone could overwhelm any traveler of the Time Continent. And with the Heroic Spirits directing them like extensions of their own limbs... Compared to the command ability of a Heroic Spirit, the recent counterattack by the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon seems like child's play."

"Perhaps only a Sanctuary Sorcerer has the power to overcome the Heroic Soul Legion. But Sanctuary Sorcerers simply cannot step foot onto the Time Continent."

“A Heroic Spirit?” Ashe raised his eyebrows.

“In texts such as ‘Tales of the Time Continent,’ ‘Gold Secrets,’ and ‘Veil of Rain,’ the authors refer to Sorcerer Projections that can command Knowledge Creatures as Heroic Spirits, to distinguish them from the more common Sorcerer Projections. It appears to have become a widely accepted term.”

Sonya watched the heroic soul legion disappear into the distance, “The heroic soul legion is a relatively rare presence on the Time Continent. Although most Two Wings Sorcerers will witness the legion once or twice, encountering this doom that walks the earth the very next day, are we lucky or not?”

“Is this really just the second most dangerous existence?” Ashe blinked, “What’s ranked first then? Sanctuary Sorcerers coming back to the Time Continent for easy pickings?”

“The most dangerous, of course, is a battle between heroic soul legions,” Sonya explained. “It’s said that even the aftermath of their battles can splash across the veil of rain and kill a group of Sorcerers. There’s a saying on the Time Continent: Never chase the sounds of battle, for you are always the innocent third party that gets affected.”

“I remember the heroic soul legion being mentioned in fairy tales I’ve read,” Deya recalled. “A Sorcerer, betrayed by enemies and stripped of their lover, after death, their obsession remained. With the help of seven dragons, they formed a heroic soul legion to return to reality, vanquish their enemies, and after a final kiss with their lover, rested in peace...”

“The structure fits a fairy tale, but the origin is a bit too real...” Ashe commented. “I’d give it an 8 out of 10.”

“Let’s save the fairy tale convention for when we’re further away, the heroic soul legion might come back,” Sonya urged. “Let’s get moving, or if the heroic soul legion kills us, we’re done for. Even with a soul special drink, we’ll be down for a month.”

Just as dying in the den of Gregarious Creatures results in more soul loss, the Knowledge Creatures in the heroic soul legion naturally all want a taste of the rare delicacy that is a Sorcerer’s soul. And after a Sorcerer dies, their soul is defenseless, if consumed completely it leads to true death. But since each Knowledge Creature can only take one bite, the more there are around at the time of death, the greater the loss of soul.

However, unless some Taboo is triggered, such as Eviction Secret Poison, creatures of the Virtual Realm generally don’t consume a Sorcerer’s entire soul. Much like not cutting the roots when harvesting leeks, they let Sorcerers recuperate in reality, to return another time.

However, Ashe fell into contemplation: "Since no one has ever defeated the heroic soul legion, why is it assumed that their commander is a Sorcerer Projection? Perhaps some other Sorcerer has violated a mechanism of the Virtual Realm and thus gained the ability to control Knowledge Creatures."

"Shouldn't there be some Prophecy conducted by a Sorcerer to gather intelligence?" Sonya was also not sure: "But if it's not the heroic souls being controlled, then when a Sorcerer leaves the Time Continent for the Distant Skies, they should be able to continue enslaving Knowledge Creatures, right? However, I've never heard a Professor mention anything similar happening in the Distant Skies."

"Even in the Distant Skies, there is no Sorcerer who can marshal Knowledge Creatures into legions to conquer in all directions, not even the heroic soul legion... The heroic soul legion is a unique product of the Time Continent, just like the Whirlpool is a boon of the Sea of Knowledge."

"And whether the commander is a Sorcerer or a heroic soul really doesn't matter, the point is we need to hurry... You're not getting any improper ideas, are you?"

"Don't make me sound like a Captain with ulterior motives toward a female team member."

Ashe revealed a mischievous smile: "I'm just interested in trying a more challenging task."

I'd rather you have ulterior motives towards a female team member...

Sonya struggled to suppress her urge to curse and logically analyzed with Ashe: "Let's not talk about whether we can defeat the heroic soul legion or not, the question is, what's the benefit?"

"The challenge posed by the heroic soul legion is greater than that of a Resource Point, but the rewards are less, the cost-performance ratio is too low. If you're just looking to tackle a higher difficulty, then next time you can join me in close combat, with the Witch backing us up."

"We can all join in close combat too," Deya protested, not endorsing Ashe's idea and evidently agreeing with Sonya's rebuttal.

"Perhaps the heroic soul legion might drop a more precious spirit or a more detailed Sorcerer Handbook? The Virtual Realm is a fair and impartial judge, I believe that after defeating the heroic soul legion, the Virtual Realm definitely won't skimp on the rewards we deserve." Ashe said: "Moreover, I always feel that there must be some great secret behind the heroic soul legion, perhaps related to the Rainbow Tail."

“My dear Swordswoman Miss, if you’re willing to work overtime to elevate the Swordsmanship Faction to Sanctuary-Level, I might even give up the idea of adventuring.”

Sonya replied with irritation: “Didn’t we find the secret of the Golden Fish without much adventuring?”

“But that was based on our lucky encounter with Destiny’s Inquiry island, as well as several important Sorcerer Handbooks we consulted.” Ashe spread his hands: “Fortune doesn’t always favor us—not to mention I’ve had a bit of bad luck recently, and at crucial times Fortune might secretly curse me.”

“Why are we able to find the Rainbow Tail that other Sorcerers can’t? Is it because you’re good-looking, or because of my superior driving skills?”

“We take risks that ordinary Sorcerers won’t take; we seize opportunities that ordinary Sorcerers won’t touch; we fight enemies that ordinary Sorcerers won’t battle. Only by doing so can we earn rewards beyond those of ordinary Sorcerers.”

Although it felt like the Observer was spouting nonsense, on second thought, it made a lot of sense.

Sonya was not unaware of the logic that ‘more adventure brings more gain,’ but now she is the typical representative of the Academy Faction, advocating stable returns and disliking risky investments.

Especially after her Promotion to Two Wings, this cautious, petty-bourgeois mentality did not weaken but instead became more entrenched. She was solely focused on maintaining her existing benefits.

It’s not to say that her greed is merely superficial; it’s just that her world is too small—surrounded by classmates who can’t match up to her, the only stronger figure she can interact with is Professor Trozan, who might be jealous of her talent. She is regarded by many as a future Sword saint, with Nobles eager to get close to her enough to crowd a female dormitory. Swordflower Academy is poised to take pride in her...

She has already exceeded her life goals for the next Twenty Years ahead of schedule, feeling like she could retire to enjoy life and pursue her dreams—in fact, she’s already secretly switched her daytime classes to Sound Magic and performance arts, and the actual time she spends practicing swordsmanship is just the two hours scheduled by the Observer.

Her progress has been too swift, and her ambition can’t keep up.

"I agree with the Observer's idea," Deya raised her hand and said. "To be a fairy tale, we must take the road less traveled. A life that never changes will only be summarized by 'many years later.'"

Sonya asked, "Witch, you want to become a legend Sorcerer?"

"Actually, it's Little Red and the White Queen who want that, I'm not that interested in power," Deya said earnestly. "Little Red longs for higher levels of Battle, while the White Queen wants to gain more leverage through power... But since we're sisters, their dreams are naturally mine too!"

"And what is your dream?" Ashe asked abruptly.

"Me? I..." Deya paused slightly, tilting her head and then said, "Of course, it's to live happily ever after with my sisters."

"That sounds even more difficult than becoming a legend."

"Indeed."

The two dirty adults mercilessly tore apart the naive girl's pure dreams.

"Alright, I'll gamble with you," Sonya sighed helplessly. "But the second question comes—can we win? In open combat, I don't think we stand a chance."

"We can win," Ashe said, looking at the Virtual Realm map. "Because they've entered a narrow area—they went into the cave we just scavenged."

Sonya was startled. "Are they relatives with the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon?"

"Maybe it's an employment relationship, but the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon being stationed here to guard the Resource Point might be an unlisted labor dispatch."

On the Virtual Realm map, the heroic soul legion's icons were moving into the cave that was once the lair of the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon. Clearly, among the loot that Ashe and his group had taken was something belonging to the heroic soul legion.

"But even in the lair, there are too many of them," Deya pondered. "Can we repeat the trick and block the cave entrance to deal with them?"

Ashe shook his head and waved his hand, doubly negating Deya's idea. "The risk is too great. If something goes wrong, we won't even be able to run, we'd be doomed to die in the jaws of the beast."

"We are up against the heroic soul legion, the risk is as high as eating some unknown, brightly colored mushrooms. And you still think about running away?" Sonya couldn't

help but tease Ashe, who seemed to have a ‘breeze-through’ mentality: “The world doesn’t work that easily.”

“It does,” Ashe asserted confidently. “I have a plan that can defeat the heroic soul legion and allow us to escape at a moment’s notice.”

The thought barely formed in Sonya’s mind—Is he suggesting we two fight while one stays in the car ready to flee?—when she realized the essence of Ashe’s plan.

“The Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon’s lair is quite spacious; it should accommodate a sports car as a guest. Even the Giant Fierce Wolf Dragon, if aware, would appreciate us holding a grand Ritual of remembrance atop its grave.”

Ashe pulled up the upgrade schematics for the vehicle, his eyes scanning over the list of peripherals that could be activated. “Originally, these resources were intended to upgrade the Alchemical Throne, but when it’s time to use them, then...”

“It’s time to showcase my driving skills that took me three tries to get a license!”

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

Chapter 240: The Toll of Hell

Star Shepherd Demilo, mounted on the Serpent-Scorpion Dragon, directed the Legion to orderly enter Cavern 73, the Compound Resource Point.

Upon reaching the entrance, there was still no sign of the Fierce Wolf Dragon; it must have already been raided.

Was it a passing Sorcerer, or a Crystal Flying Dragon wandering nearby?

Either was possible. After all, the troops sent to guard the Resource Point were doomed to become expendable items on the reimbursement list... How many Serpent-Scorpion Dragons should be left behind to guard this place?

Seemingly aware of the impending personnel shift, the Serpent-Scorpion Dragons grew restless, while the Thousand-Feathered Dragons stood on one leg in Rest, utterly unconcerned, even leisurely preening each other’s feathers—As the only long-range support unit under Demilo’s command, they naturally enjoyed treatment akin to that of lovers.

Arriving at the main hall of the Cavern, Demilo waved his hand, signaling the Serpent-Scorpion Dragons to move supplies.

The clever creatures sensed that their performance in the upcoming task would determine whether their future lay rotting in this Cavern or continuing to indulge in the luxuries alongside the Star Shepherd. Their morale soared as they searched the Cavern with their scorpion tails held high.

Demilo could clearly feel his followers' shift in emotions but remained indifferent, gesturing for his mount to sit down. The Serpent-Scorpion Dragon obediently lowered its body, its tail bending into an arc worthy of a roller coaster track, the tip resting just upon its back, serving as Demilo's pillow.

Demilo closed his eyes, thumbing through his memory album for a diversion. Yet, his gaze returned again and again to a dream he had browsed thousands of times and seemed destined to revisit in the future.

It was when Demilo was 13 years old, the most tragic moment of his life.

Born into the Leba Family, this surname meant nothing, for the family had been exterminated when he was 11 years old due to his uncle's corruption and embezzlement, and his parents were implicated. In that era, the Nobility and the crown played a game akin to cat and mouse, a race between the speed of embezzlement and the swiftness of capture.

Young Demilo narrowly escaped to the maid's house to avoid legal sanctions, then smoothly transitioned from a Noble young master to an orphan taken in by the maid, living in the dirtiest, narrowest storage room. He quickly became sensible, eating less, working more, keeping his head down, and in two years, he endured double the hardships of the previous Ten Years.

Clearly, Destiny is a harsh loan shark, and double was just the interest. At the age of 13, the maid said she had found a suitable Apprentice job for him and had two men, who looked much like blacksmiths, take him away to the locally infamous "Dove Fish Cage."

Which was a place for buying pleasures.

Male workers were called doves, and female workers were called grass carp. At that time, Demilo did not understand the origin of these titles, but he soon learned.

When the ill-intentioned gang boss revealed the truth to Demilo, he did not react with fear or any other emotion, but calmly accepted the fact. Perhaps when he heard the increasing complaints from the maid and her husband, and saw the husband's malicious face and the maid's apologetic eyes, he anticipated that Destiny was ready to collect his principal.

As a fugitive wanted criminal, he had the freedom to choose to agree or to die.

The gang boss also told him about the scope of his upcoming work: As a boy with a hint of beauty, besides selling his body, he could also gather intelligence, assassinate important figures, frame others, and if lucky, might be bought by a Wealthy person enamored with his beauty... Obviously, working overtime was the norm here, and now, even if the Police Department caught him, he could no longer claim innocence.

With the aspiration to survive and become someone's bed ware, the troubled teenage boy walked into one of the top floor rooms of the Dove Fish Cage, which was the staff dormitory.

The walls were a warm yellow, with a fireplace crackling, several tasteless burgundy patchwork sofas, and a low table carelessly littered with snacks and drinks. Because it was the highest floor, the warm light of the Radiant Star shone unreservedly through the balcony's floor-to-ceiling windows, providing a stage for the dancing dust.

But the floor was clean, likely swept often.

Compared to the storage room, the living conditions had leaped forward; at least he wouldn't wake up in the middle of the night due to mice visiting.

"Hey, your skin is so white!" A tall and buxom girl approached Demilo, reaching out to touch the precious legacy left by his Noble life over the previous Ten Years: "So smooth and tender, wow..."

"Is there finally a new guy?" Another cute young boy who seemed even younger than Demilo jumped up, clenching his fists with excitement: "Am I finally going to be a Senior?"

"No, you seem to still be the youngest one." Sitting far away on the sofa, the Quiet Girl put down her book, "Drink more milk to grow tall and big quickly."

Demilo glanced over and saw that the Quiet Girl's book had no text, only pages filled with images that set the Bloodline racing... Still studying diligently after work?

The cute boy made a face: "But milk is so fishy..."

"Ah, I forgot!"

The balcony door was pushed open, and a Pretty Person who looked as exquisite as a sculpture walked into the room. He wore a loose shirt and extremely short shorts, carrying a tray of freshly aired laundry, exuding a domestic vibe yet incredibly seductive.

The warm orange light clung to him greedily, casting a divine glow upon him.

Was he a man? Or a woman? Gender seemed to lose its meaning at that moment.

“The boss only told us this morning that a new person would be coming to the dormitory. Everyone was still half asleep, and we didn’t have time to prepare food. But we don’t start work until the evening, so how about we have a welcome party this afternoon?”

“Is that something to celebrate?” The Quiet Girl voiced the question that was also on Demilo’s mind.

“Yay, a party!” The tall girl and the cute boy cheered in unison.

“Do we have mixed-gender living arrangements here?” Demilo asked his first question after coming in. [search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

“Yeah, the boss said it’s troublesome to have all men or all women, but mixed living means we can keep an eye on each other, at least there’s less nonsense... He also said it’s his secret to management!”

But the risk of mixed living is... right, they don’t care about that risk here.

“Then, it’s time to move on to the next step!” The Pretty Person casually set down the laundry basin: “Let me help you pick a nice and suitable new name for the newcomer!”

“Here we go again...” The other three let out resigned sighs.

“It’s indeed time to adopt a new name to sever ties with the past.” Demilo nodded: “After all...”

Pretty Person shook their head with a smile, “No, a new name isn’t about discarding the past; it’s about embracing the future. Consider this: our first names weren’t chosen by us, yet they’re meant to follow us for life. How unreasonable is that? Choosing a new name signifies taking control of our future, saying goodbye to a Destiny that doesn’t serve us.”

Had Demilo not been in the Dove Fish Cage staff dormitory when hearing this, he might have nodded in agreement.

“So you’re willing to let me name you?”

“Go ahead.”

“Great!” Pretty Person pulled out a frequently thumbed, crumbly-paged book from the bookshelf.

“What book is that?” Demilo asked.

“The Stars Poetry Collection,” Pretty Person replied. “A poet has named every star in the sky, giving each a significant meaning. What better reference for a name could there be?”

“Every single one... isn’t that thousands?”

“More than that! So there’s a good name for everyone. For example, Anlilian, which means the fragrance of ink on a page.”

Quiet Girl tilted her head thoughtfully.

“Or Ruya, meaning the joy of sunshine.”

The cute boy looked up, his whole being radiating warmth even without the touch of the sun.

“Or Cilina, symbolizing a rainbow butterfly.”

The tall girl spun on her toes, her skirt twirling, embodying the name she was given.

“And then... ah, this is it, Demilo! From now on, you’ll be called Demilo,” Pretty Person decided someone’s lifelong moniker rather hastily.

“Does it have a meaning?”

“Demilo,” Pretty Person said with a smile, “symbolizes the rock in the Rapids. It represents that you will never be knocked down by Destiny.”

“What about you? What’s your name?”

Anlilian, Ruya, and Cilina all wore an expression that said, “It’s finally happening.”

“And me? I’m something special!”

Pretty Person leapt onto the sofa, striking an audacious pose as if about to transform: “The ‘Vloz’ that represents dominion, and the ‘rada’ that signifies conquest; my name is Vlozrada, meaning to master Destiny and conquer all!”

It was a level of silliness beyond description. Demilo exchanged glances with the other three, a silent consensus reached among strangers meeting for the first time.

“In any case.”

Pretty Person came over, hugging Demilo closely with a giggle: “Demilo, welcome.”

Two years had passed since Demilo last felt the warmth of an embrace, the face that had been numbed by relentless torment from Destiny softened for the first time.

Destiny had stripped him of all his capital, yet paradoxically granted him a loan despite his negative credit.

This was Demilo's first encounter with Vlozrada, and it would become the most pivotal moment in his life.

Hiss, hiss, hiss—

The sound of the Serpent-Scorpion Dragon scraping against the ground interrupted Demilo's dream. He opened his eyes to find his right hand raised, as if trying to hold onto some ethereal substance.

Soon, he thought, he would understand the emotions that once eluded him.

He was about to reclaim the beat of his heart.

Demilo touched his chest, finding it empty, devoid of anything.

This was the toll for transmigrating through the Sixfold Hell; every Soul must wash away all emotions there, leaving only pure memories to reach the Virtual Realm. Those like him, 'activated' by the Divine Master, were merely deficient lives born from those memories.

Having never possessed a body, they naturally lacked a heartbeat, much less emotions.

Even if he poured over his memories countless times, he could not experience Demilo's true feelings. It was like using a finger to pick someone else's nose, incapable of feeling real joy.

Between him and his memories lay the Curtain of death.

The only solution was to retrieve the fragments left in Hell, to fill the gaps in his Soul, to make the decayed heart beat once more.

And such a Miracle, without a doubt, could only be performed by the Divine Master, which is why from the moment of his creation, he had fought for the Divine Master across the lands.

Sixfold Hell, six fragments, his accumulated Merit was nearly enough to exchange for the first fragment. He estimated that he would soon begin to understand why Demilo so greatly valued his first encounter with Vlozrada.

Soon, very soon, a few more decades and it would be time. After all, more than a thousand years had already passed...

Demilo turned his head and saw that the Serpent-Scorpion Dragons seemed to be contemplating rebellion—not a single ordinary resource had been moved; what audacity.

But something was off.

It was then that the Star Shepherd finally focused and surveyed the surroundings, noticing a thin layer of powder covering the ground, while not a trace of any materials could be seen around the cave. Moreover, with the complete disappearance of the Fierce Wolf Dragon family, there was only one possibility—the materials had been moved.

Had an enemy Legion stealthily swept in to raid? But this was the heartland of their Star Hall. Wouldn't the enemy Legion fear annihilation after such a long incursion? Or was this the prelude to a major invasion?

The closest hostile force was... Blood Tomb!

Could it be those irritating lunatics from Blood Tomb? Demilo had previously dealt with the tomb keepers during the two previous six-nation wars. Even though everyone was a fragmented Soul, for some reason, the tomb keepers seemed to be missing a few screws in their heads, not to mention those ghoul troops from Blood Tomb that seemed as if they were fermented in a Sewer...

Vroom, vroom, vroom!

Suddenly, a thunderous roar of steel, unheard before, came from the cave entrance. Demilo turned to see a steel monstrosity charging like a storm, its sharp blades slicing through the Serpent-Scorpion Dragons' armor as if through warm butter, crushing their rudimentary defense line in an instant and barreling towards Demilo!

Thousand-Feathered Dragons, volley fire!

With a single thought from Demilo, the Thousand-Feathered Dragons took to the sky, their densely packed feather arrows preemptively shot towards the empty ground in front of Demilo. Filled with 'piercing' spirits, each volley was capable of annihilating a large number of Knowledge Creatures!

However, the steel beast suddenly braked hard, the brake pads emitting a whining sound, releasing a fragrance akin to tar. The strong inertia drew an arc like a doughnut, stopping just short of the rain of arrows.

Only a few sparse feather arrows landed on it, but they were also blocked by a transparent protective barrier, guarding the manipulator inside the beast.

Serpent-Scorpion Dragons quickly formed a defensive line in front of Demilo; the most important aspect of Legion combat is to protect the commander.

The Star Shepherd observed the three individuals inside the steel monster, and in the moment their gazes met, both parties recognized each other's identities.

A Sorcerer, perhaps... So is this steel monster a product of a Miracle? Mechanical Department? Alchemy Department? It could also be Biology Department, maybe it's a vehicle modified from a Slaying Fish-Dragon...

Many thoughts surfaced in Demilo's mind, but they did not hinder his command. With a single thought, Serpent-Scorpion Dragons and Thousand-Feathered Dragons formed an assault from all directions, like a surging wave, attacking the three misguided Sorcerers.

He had no desire to engage in conversation with juniors.

Even if the other party was a seeker of the Virtual Realm like himself, and even though the Divine Master did not impose any Restrictions on communication, Demilo still had no interest in uttering a single word to those born a thousand years later. Even though he knew that revealing even a hint of the secrets of the heroic soul would cause a huge stir in reality.

The only desire of the heroic soul is to complete its fragmentary self. Beyond that, it seeks nothing else.

As for the reality above Hell, heroic souls treat it as if it were an ex-lover they've blocked and deleted from their lives, sparing none of their thoughts. No expectations, no hatred, only indifference; they do not care how the world they once lived in has changed.

Go back to where you belong, living ones.

Facing the oncoming tide of monstrous forces, the steel beast roared again, extending five pipes from its rear. Explosive sounds emanated from within, and the pipes spewed a venomous green gas that almost threatened to submerge the entire cave in an instant!

Facing the car's exhaust, Demilo was sprayed directly in the face, his hair blown back!

Buzz—Buzz—Buzz—

Amid the heavy roar of the steel monster, a phrase in the clear and proper language of Sorcerers mingled through: “Ah, the feeling of farting and then running away is truly exhilarating~”

A thousand years after awakening from eternal slumber, this was the first human speech that Demilo heard.

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