

Sorcerer's Handbook

Chapter 281: Broken Home Firm

Moonlit Harmony Home Firm!

Information about this firm swiftly flowed through Ashe's mind—the Azura Mission Ranking: 2nd place, National Mission Ranking: 9th place!

It's one of the two firms in the Azura's notorious 'One Palace, Two Firms, Three Families, Four Major Companies'!

Despite the seemingly friendly name of this firm, it is quite the norm. After all, firms belong to the service industry; they can't afford to put on a standoffish front, especially in the last fifty years as industries evolve rapidly. Previously, there were less than ten firms per region, but now dozens of firms are competing in the same market. The shift from a seller's to a buyer's market has naturally led to internal competition.

On the other hand, names like 'Funeral Firm' serve as negative examples. One would instantly think the person in charge is likely a nonsensical Riddler, who might even bring unique and eccentric ideas to their work—indeed, this wasn't a wrong guess.

However, such an attitude towards service no longer suffices today.

Fortunately, having been in operation for over two hundred years, the Funeral Firm can still survive with such a name and service stance. Yet, when it fell into Annan's hands, the firm had already declined to the tenth position in its district, showing that these old-fashioned workshop-style firms are no longer suitable for modern times.

In contrast, Moonlit Harmony Home Firm embodies the enterprise of the new era—memorable name, full-on advertising, thorough service, heartwarming prices, and a complete training process for employing sorcerers. Thus, within just a few decades, it has become a force to be reckoned with in the Azura region.

Moreover, Ashe and his companions realized through accompanying Annan on missions that the firm's strength doesn't lie in the sorcerers themselves, but in...

The positions of the Gospel they had unlocked.

"Why the silence?" Menard spoke, "If you don't make a stance, then I can only assume..."

“You’ve rejected the goodwill of Moonlit Harmony.”

Buzz!

With shattering sounds coming from all directions, everyone sharply realized dozens of drones had broken through from various levels of the building!

“Broken Home Firm’s signature move,” Annan rapidly explained. “Modern smart homes almost entirely rely on data analysis from the Gospel. They can use the Gospel as a medium to invade all drones, mechanical spiders, hovercars, and any other device with an automatic operating system. We must deal with them, or we won’t be able to call a hovercar to leave.”

They resided hundreds of meters up in the inverted layer, which provided great views but limited their mode of entry and exit—they could either fly down directly by hovercar or take an elevator to the ‘ground’ of the double-tiered city and then take a car.

However, both options required an automated transport system. If they couldn’t neutralize these two enemies who could invade any smart device, using any transport would be like voluntarily lying in a coffin and delivering themselves to the enemy!

“Split into two teams, the front team will forcefully make a breakthrough to handle those two, while the rear team provides cover.” Annan, in his pajamas, gripped his beloved Miss Donna’s shotgun: “I’ll provide cover, but I need one more person.”

Nobody thought Annan was shirking his duties because the rear team’s task was even more critical—now, dozens of drones were swarming in from other parts of the floor, and the rear team had to deal with these armed drones with fewer people, ensuring these rogue delivery units didn’t interfere with the front team’s mission!

“I’ll do it,” Harvey patted the coffin beside him, “One for two.”

Necromancers are indeed reassuring when it comes to numbers.

“Move.”

There was no time for discussion or hesitation. The sound of the drones’ rotors, as if ready to strangle someone, was getting very close, and the drones on the other side of the ice screen were also reloaded—within a few breaths, thousands of shot bullets would shred everything in the room!

Banjeet was the first to rush out, his hands already clenched around his dual guns, a misty chill constantly bursting from the barrels.

In the Gospel Kingdom, gun technique was even more prevalent than in the Blood Moon Kingdom. Even a mage like Banjeet, who majored in ice magic, would study gun

technique to enhance his spellcasting—thanks to the great shot bullets, allowing fireballs and ice blasts the chance to break the sound barrier!

Miracle Bursting Ice Spike Shot!

Just as the gun fired, several small holes suddenly appeared in the ice screen, perfectly allowing the deadly Miracle Shot Bullets to pass through and strike the enemy!

This scene caused Ashe and Igor's pupils to constrict—being Sorcerers, they naturally understood the value of this maneuver. It was capable of deploying both a Defensive Miracle and an Attack Miracle simultaneously, and even allowed for a brief Loophole in the defense for the Attack Miracle to take effect... Frankly, with such micromanagement, Banjeet could easily rank among the top combatants of the Two Wings!

In Sorcerer Battle, there are two tactical objectives: self-preservation and inflicting damage on the enemy.

However, for a Sorcerer of the Two Wings Realm, these two goals are hard to achieve simultaneously. One might either use offense as defense, like the Swordswoman Witch, or defense as offense, like Ashe.

Ashe is a typical case of having ample defense but insufficient offense. He can cast Sword Barrier to protect himself, but since the Sword Barrier restricts movement, he must rely on spirit techniques like 'Heart Sword' and 'Substitute' for Long-range Attacks.

Even though 'Heart Sword' is indeed adept at long-range Swordsmanship, its destructive power is not even one-tenth of that of a Swordswoman Witch in close combat.

When attacking, one is in a precarious position; when defending, the damage is almost negligible.

This is even more evident in Gun Technique practitioners—they are safe behind cover, but they can't shoot; once they do shoot, the enemy can retaliate.

Banjeet's ice screen is undoubtedly an excellent Defensive Miracle, yet it also blocked his own attacks. However, Banjeet was able to maintain the integrity of the ice screen while sending out the Shot Bullets... Though it seemed straightforward, this was a tactical system that put him in an unbeatable position!

Until Banjeet's arcane energy was depleted, the opponents could only suffer one-sided devastation from him, unable to reach anyone behind the ice screen!

Snap! Snap! Snap!

The sound of the ice spikes shattering was as crisp as breaking wine bottles, and the unmanned swarm in front was instantly devastated, the electrical sparks screaming as they fell!

Unbeknownst when, Igor was biting on a whistle, suddenly moving close to Ashe's ear, and blew the whistle with all his might!

Whistle!!!!

The whistle sound instantly overpowered all gunfire, turning this sound into the most vile and filthy poison bugs through a Miracle, piercing the enemy's eardrums and burrowing into their brains!

Miracle Mind-Piercing Shriek!

Even though it wasn't specifically targeted, Banjeet, Annan, Lise, and Harvey, among others, were all simultaneously affected. Only Ashe, who was close at hand, felt as if Igor was grinding his teeth right next to his ear.

Ashe's extensive Battle experience allowed him to instantly understand the flaw of this Miracle: the closer the target, the weaker the Mind-Piercing Shriek. Conversely, those enemies trying to distance themselves suffered as if their brains were being hammered by sonic waves.

Ordinary area-effect Miracles distribute arcane energy evenly, ensuring that enemies are damaged no matter where they are; however, superior area-effect Miracles allocate arcane energy to the most likely positions of enemies, maximizing the efficiency of the damage dealt.

The Swordswoman's 'Blood Flower Water Moon' operates similarly. Before casting, she often swings her sword forward not to attack, but to force the enemy to retreat, as the maximum damage of Blood Flower Water Moon occurs just beyond the reach of her sword.

At this moment, the two enemy agents within the optimal attack range felt as though the whistle sound was a sword piercing through their heads!

"Cough!" Menard grunted, feeling as if his brain had turned to mush, bending over and kneeling like a shrimp, with blood dripping from his nose incessantly.

Leman staggered as well, but she managed to maintain her composure and promptly summoned a dozen Drones to shield herself, just in time to block another round of bursting ice spike bullets!

However, it didn't matter. Outside, countless Drones were on standby, many of which were carrying delivery and takeout orders. Unfortunately, these orders would soon be automatically cancelled due to unexpected events, leaving many late-night workers hungry.

But these Drones were not yet equipped with automatic Firearms; they could only serve as a wall of shields.

On the highway directly beneath the inverted skyscraper, hundreds of Drones were lining up to be equipped with automatic Firearms from shipping containers, then taking off to join the Battle above.

The emergency delivery Drones naturally could not carry Firearms, but they were left with installation backdoors, allowing them to transform into airborne firepower at any moment. Therefore, Moonlit Harmony Home Firm only needed to drive an ammunition truck around the city to instantly create an army of Drones.

Furthermore, the exterior walls of the inverted skyscraper were now swarming with hundreds of Mechanical Spiders joining the battle. The elevators inside the building had stopped operating, and all automatic doors in Annan's residence were locked, effectively blocking all escape routes.

Menard and Leman never intended to engage in a deadly fight with the Funeral Firm. Their plan was to use Drones and Mechanical Spiders to slow down their targets, trapping them inside this building at negative fifty-first floor, and simply wait for the arrival of 'Baroness Cicada'.

Even though the Funeral Firm demonstrated considerable combat capabilities, Menard and Leman were still confident about this mission. In this 'big family' of the city, Moonlit Harmony Home Firm acted as the controlling Butler!

Whiz!!

The whistle sounded again, and at the same time, another round of Shot Bullets made of bursting ice spikes came flying.

However, Menard and Leman were prepared this time. They covered their ears and barely resisted the sonic assault, while a swarm of Drones rushed forward to detonate the Miracle Shot Bullets!

'If this is all they've got, they might be overwhelmed by Drones before the Baroness even arrives...'

Just as this thought crossed Menard's mind, he suddenly saw a Sword Shadow emerge from behind the curtain of ice. It did not strike towards them but instead embedded itself in the ceiling.

Hmm?

They looked up at the longsword trembling in the ceiling. The next second, the longsword emitted a pale yellow glow, and then—

Suddenly, a man in a Dark Red Trench Coat emerged from the hilt. He swiftly drew the longsword, kicked off the ceiling with both legs, and like a falling meteor, he plunged alone towards the two!

Miracle Rush!

“Good evening, I’m here to develop your Sorcerer Handbook!”

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

Chapter 282: Coffins and Virtual Wings

The front lines were tense, and so were the rears.

Harvey tore open a Snow White candy wrapper, popped a candy into his mouth, and lit a Catnip Cigarette, exhaling smoke rings that looked like sweet doughnuts.

Candy and smoke, endless joy.

“What pattern do you like?” asked Harvey.

“Violets. What kind of grave do you prefer?”

“Just sell my Corpse for a good price. The value of a Necromancer is reflected in the price of his Corpse.” S

“Alright, you take the right, I’ll take the left.”

Buzz, buzz, buzz—

As Drone swarms appeared from both corners, Harvey and Annan turned and stepped into their defense zone!

The Necromancer gently slapped the coffin, which, equipped with roller fittings, slid to the center of the corridor. He then clasped his hands together and bowed slightly towards the coffin, as if paying homage to the spirits of the dead.

The dark coffin suddenly emitted a bright green glow. From its sides, seven ethereal chains burst forth, connecting to the walls on both sides, the ceiling above, and the floor below. Between the chains, a barrier resembling soap bubbles materialized, instantly sealing off the entire corridor with the coffin and the luminescent barrier.

The coffin closed, and no machine could open it!

Tap! Tap! Tap! Tap! Tap!—

The sound of Shot Bullets filled the air, crisscrossing the corridor like torrential rain. Yet, not a single bullet could harm Harvey behind the coffin. That seemingly fragile fluorescent foam was as solid as a wall of iron and copper—no bullet could penetrate the barrier!

Miracle Immortal Coffin Burial!

Although Banjeet had advised them to spend these days frivolously, Harvey was not so obedient. He had secretly prepared his weapon: this coffin.

The world often misunderstands Necromancers, thinking the Necromancy Faction is just about manipulating Corpses. This is incorrect—compared to Corpses, it is the coffin that receives most of the Necromancer's affection.

After all, good Corpses are rare, and since Corpses are consumables that must be replaced after use, anyone with even a slight knowledge of finance knows not to invest too much in consumables. Resources should be invested in assets that can be held over the long term.

As for the corpses of exterminated dragons, Titans, and Sanctuary mages, these indeed have investment value. However, the problem is that ordinary Necromancers do not have access to such prime assets. Therefore, Necromancers turn their attention to something that can accompany them for a longer time—their beloved coffin.

The disadvantages of coffins need not be mentioned, but their advantages are almost irresistible to Necromancers: finding a good Corpse can be directly stuffed into it for transformation, Ritual Tracks can be set up on the coffin for fast spellcasting, and there is no need to carry a tent during field trips... For Necromancers, a coffin is as indispensable as beauty is to Igor.

Every Necromancer should have a coffin personally crafted by themselves; a coffin is the most worthy asset to invest in and the only fortress that can shelter a Necromancer

from the elements. Without a good coffin, a good Corpse will eventually leave; with a good coffin, even a lesser Corpse can be gradually nurtured into a fine Necromancer.

It's like buying a house when getting married—the logic is the same.

Unfortunately, when Harvey was captured, the coffin that had accompanied him for five years was confiscated by the Blood Mad Hunter, and it's unknown which member of the sacred bloodline got it for a bargain.

After his escape from prison, being homeless under the vast Blood Moon, there was simply no room for a coffin.

It was only after arriving in the Gospel Kingdom that Harvey had time to create his own little world.

The Immortal Coffin Burial is a Miracle performed using the coffin, creating a temporary barrier Area according to the terrain. All damage is absorbed by the barrier, then dispersed through chains connected to nearby structures.

However, as a Two Wings Miracle, the Immortal Coffin Burial has an upper limit to its damage absorption. With such intense shooting by the Drone swarm, the coffin's glowing green light grew increasingly intense, and the walls and floor connected by the chains were on the verge of collapse, indicating that the barrier was about to shatter!

Yet Harvey showed no concern at all, his hands pressed against the back of the coffin, as if feeling the heartbeat within.

“Alice, save me.”

But as the green light reached its limit, the barrier burst open with a loud explosion. And with the barrier, the coffin opened as well!

With a snap, the coffin lid fell, and from it stepped a petite Corpse radiating with necromantic green glow. A second later, a green flash streaked through the air, and the foremost Drones were blasted into oblivion!

Perhaps Shot Bullets could catch up with Alice, but the Drone's gun barrels couldn't turn fast enough!

Combined Miracle: Immortal Coffin Burial, Agony Awakening Ritual!

At first glance, the Agony Awakening Ritual seems utterly useless—a Miracle whose effect is that when a Necromancer suffers an unstoppable attack, they gain a layer of “Agony.” The more layers of “Agony,” the better the overall qualities of the Necromancer become. However, these “Agony” layers have a time Restriction and quickly disappear.

In other words, the more they are hit, the stronger they become.

Normally, even if a Necromancer can efficiently heal a Corpse, the Corpse can only accumulate two or three layers of “Agony,” making the enhancement effect negligible. However, when combined with Immortal Coffin Burial, the Agony Awakening Ritual ascends to the pinnacle of Necromantic Miracles.

During the casting of Immortal Coffin Burial, the Necromancer and the coffin are unified, meaning that any destructive strike against the coffin can add layers of “Agony” to the Necromancer.

The barrage of Shot Bullets from the Drone swarm broke the barrier in just a few seconds, stacking at least 100 layers of “Agony” on Alice! Although this combined Miracle has a short duration and requires specific terrain conditions, it is perfectly suited to counter these Drones.

Thinking about whether to help Annan or not, the Necromancer turned to see Annan deploying her virtual wings.

Silver Wings, Golden Wings unfolded behind her, but their color was not silver or gold, but a profound purple. The virtual wings are not for flying; instead, their tips extend into gun barrels, acting like dense artillery turrets guarding Annan’s sides.

As Annan, along with her assault rifles, opened fire on the Drone swarm, the twin wing turrets silently spewed arcane energy Shot Bullets. The dense barrage of bullets forcefully pinned the Drone swarm against the corner!

No wonder she said she could handle the rear... In a narrow corridor setting, Annan’s firepower alone was enough to suppress the entire Drone Legion!

Squeak!

Suddenly, the light fixtures above shook and fell, dimming the light slightly—such a large house naturally had lights everywhere, and it wouldn’t miss one. However, along with the falling light fixtures came two Mechanical Spiders!

Harvey managed to destroy a Mechanical Spider leaping towards him, but Annan, facing the corridor and overwhelmed by the noise of gunfire, didn’t notice another Mechanical Spider dropping down from above—

Bang!

A Shot Bullet grazed Annan’s hair. She tilted her head slightly and saw Lise, both hands on her Handgun, smoke rising from the barrel. A pierced Mechanical Spider fell at her feet, its eight legs curling up like a dead spider.

“Thanks, Lise.”

“You’re welcome.”

Annan glanced at the calm, white-haired young girl without showing any surprise and continued to maintain her firepower advantage, suppressing the Drone Legion around the corner.

But her arcane energy wasn’t infinite, and Harvey’s Alice couldn’t maintain her frenzied battle state indefinitely, while the Drones seemed endless—now, the entire city’s delivery drones had been turned into killing machines by Moonlit Harmony Home Firm.

Not to mention, every second they stayed here, the ‘Baroness Cicada’ drew closer!

Even without having met her, Annan knew they were no match for the leader of one of the top ten firms in the country!

The Breakthrough in this Battle still lay ahead on the front lines!

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

Chapter 283: You Stare at Ashe, the Observer Stares Back

“Good evening, I’m here to develop your Sorcerer Handbook!”

Planning to deal with us first? A fine idea, as to direct intelligent machinery attacks, we indeed have to use our eyes to lure them, making us the most obvious vulnerability in drone tactics.

But it also sets... the deadliest trap!

Tormented by a psychic screech, Menard’s lips curled into a slight smirk. With a gentle tap of his foot, the concrete ground beneath him burst into countless spikes, shooting up like wildly growing vines towards his attacker!

A victim of “Sorcerer Duel 14,” Menard had specialized in the Earth Faction from a young age, dreaming of someday having a girlfriend like the Earth Empress. It was only when he started working at construction sites as an adult that he realized the harsh environment meant no female earth sorcerers would be found there.

However, his combat skills could not be concealed by merely belonging to the Earth Faction. He was quickly recruited by the Moonlit Harmony Home Firm, primarily responsible for battles within city limits.

For him, a sorcerer who had once moved bricks on construction sites, the urban steel jungle offered countless weapons to exploit!

During the recent drone swarm attack, Menard had already quietly prepared the Ritual Tracks for a Miracle. Although many Earth Faction Miracles that drastically alter the terrain require a long casting time, sorcerers can prepare all the initial Ritual Tracks in advance and trigger the final steps when needed.

This Miracle technique, flatteringly called ‘precognition’ and less flatteringly ‘fishing,’ is specially used for ensnaring enemies.

“Hmph.”

Facing the spiky hell, Ashe showed neither sadness nor joy, not only because Igor had pre-administered him with a stimulant boost but also because he had been through too many battles himself.

Being around geniuses like the Swordswoman and the Witch, even if Ashe liked to stick close to stronger figures, he had honed a sorcerer’s heart through rigorous trials. Perhaps even Ashe himself hadn’t realized that he was a completely different breed from the little office worker who had transmigrated just a month ago. Whether navigating through a barrage of gunfire or facing the threat of Miracles, he handled them as adeptly as he managed his business dealings.

It was life and women that had shaped him into this figure!

Honeyed Blade cut through the air, forming a lethal net of swords that strangled all the menacing earth spikes!

Ashe did not use a Miracle, but simply enhanced his Slash with spirit techniques such as Slash Sword, Heart Sword, and Sword Scar. His sword skills were enough to penetrate the traps—he was, after all, a man with 50% of the Swordswoman’s swordsmanship level!

Watching Ashe elegantly land, Menard and Leman stepped back, preparing to overwhelm him with concrete and Drones.

A mere Swordcerer, he had no capital to contend with them—the age of cold weapons had long passed—

Thump!

Thump, thump!

The next second, Ashe raised his head, and Menard and Leman finally saw the full picture of this bad man, their hearts pounding intensely.

In the eyes of the two agents, the face of this man in a Dark Red Trench Coat began to distort, his form spreading like ink in water, the air dancing around him, and the light singing for him. The concrete walls bowed to him.

It was as if a key had unlocked the explosive sound deep within their genetic material, quietly prying open their skulls, pouring into their brains, stirring their thoughts—

‘He walks above the heavens, with the eternal dusk of day and night chaos behind him, the sun and moon frantically fleeing before him, hailstorms to his left, and the roaring tornadoes to his right.’

‘He walks upon the earth, riding a chariot made of bones, turning the ground he passes into wasteland, the cities into ruins, leaving corpses everywhere, the world he sees turbid and fierce.’

‘He walks upon the sea, riding a raft woven from fingernails, blowing the horn of the apocalypse, the black seas following him and flooding the land, submerging all civilization, destroying all buildings, living beings weeping, the Divine Master silent.’

‘Blood, bones, the red of demonic nature, crumbling buildings, dirty toys, debris, charred corpses, incinerators, hands in the soil, decaying metal...’

One apocalyptic scene after another flashed in Menard and Leman’s eyes, not allowing them time to recover from such a massive influx of information, Ashe’s sword was already impatiently bidding them farewell.

“You—”

When they looked at Ashe, their minds conjured the image of the man walking amidst the apocalypse.

Their images overlapped completely, as if behind Ashe were the Black Sea, the corpses, the eternal dusk!

He brought with him the disasters of the apocalypse!

An indescribable fear choked the two agents, clogging their throats, pinching their noses, and squeezing their hearts!

What Earth Magic, what Miracle, what Drone—they had forgotten these trivial matters, only thinking of getting away, hurrying to escape!

Clang!

Ashe showed no mercy for the fear of his enemies, his sword slicing through Leman's neck—during their brief encounter, this woman had completely ignored Ashe's arrival. Plus, her gestures and gaze indicated that her task was to control the intelligent machinery!

She was the key to this Battle!

Blood, eager to escape its panicked host, nearly crushed her soul under the weight of suffocating fear, causing Leman to pass out instantly.

Even as his companion's throat was cut, Menard had no intention of retaliating. Instead, he hurriedly carried Leman to the Hovercar on the balcony, then kicked the Hovercar fiercely, swiftly retreating in a hurried escape!

Tap, tap, tap, tap...

With the loss of the sorcerer's on-site control, the Drones quickly fell, emitting weak cries like broken cicadas. Everyone looked at each other, realizing not only was no one missing, but there was even an additional petite and cute girl—though Harvey quickly sent her back to the coffin to continue sleeping.

"They escaped? What's the casualty situation?" Annan's hand flashed with purple light, and the Gun transformed back into an Amethyst Earring hanging on his ear.

"The man is fine, the woman's throat was cut by me; it should take some time for her to recover," Ashe pondered. "I don't know why they suddenly became so frightened, could it be because I am a Swordcerer...?"

Igor wiped the cold sweat from his forehead and chuckled palely, "Are Swordcerers untouchables that should not be touched here?"

"Well done!" Annan's voice carried a hint of joy. "With Leman injured, we can take this opportunity to leave in the Hovercar... Banjeet!"

"Coming!"

A large Hovercar appeared outside the battered balcony. As its automatic doors opened, Ashe and the others realized that once again, it was time for a hasty escape. Due to the urgency, not only did they lack time to pack their bags, but Ashe was even still wearing slippers.

He had little to complain about, however, as Annan was still in his pajamas.

"Luggage—"

“No time!”

“Wait, what about my coffin?” Harvey looked distressed. “That’s crucial equipment for me.”

That was the biggest drawback of the coffin—it was terribly inconvenient to transport.

“Mr. Harvey, please leave it to me.” Banjeet went over with a suitcase, opened it, stuffed the coffin inside, and then closed and lifted the suitcase. “All set, let’s go.”

Hmm?

Hmmmm?

Wait, was there something off about that...

Everyone glanced at the suitcase, but their bodies, governed by a dictatorship of survival instinct, allowed no room for curiosity. They could only keep their questions to themselves for the moment and squeezed into the Hovercar.

The Hovercar quickly descended to the ground and drove off, allowing everyone to relax a bit—now, if the car exploded, they would at most burn or blast to death, rather than die from falling.

“What’s next?” Igor asked. “If the rival firm dares to attack directly in the city, it means they are utterly indifferent to the law—”

“Then let’s make them care!” Annan declared. “We’ll go to Red Cap. Red Cap is Azura’s strongest enforcement agency, and as law-abiding citizens, we can apply for special protection. Broken Home Firm wouldn’t dare attack Red Cap unless they want to risk total annihilation.”

Ashe spoke up, “I’ve been wanting to ask for a long time, why are they called Broken Home Firm?”

“Because their name is Moonlit Harmony Home, but the jobs they take usually end up ruining people,” the Butler Youth explained. “Though they’re not normally so violent, with their control over intelligent machinery, they have many ways to achieve their sinister goals without alarming the Gospel.”

“Will Red Cap protect us?” Harvey, naturally distrustful of law enforcement agencies, asked, “Are you sure they won’t cut a ‘big deal’ with Annan like Broken Home Firm?”

“Red Cap is the most law-abiding group. Any slight misstep is immediately reflected in their Ranking List standings,” Annan responded confidently. “As long as we don’t break

the law, Red Cap is our best protection. Not to mention, I'm friends with Cleos from Weeping Red Cap—"

Suddenly, everyone's Gospel popped open automatically and turned to the same page:

"Wanted Notice"

"Ashe Heath"

"Reward: 500,000 Points (alive) / 100,000 Points (dead)"

"Witnesses can contact Red Cap to report, rewards based on the validity of the information"

"Issuer: Empire Red Cap Headquarters, Signatory: Ewart Higgin."

Only Ashe's page was slightly different—

"Red Cap Azura Golden Eagle Street Headquarters: ..."

"Red Cap Azura Sea Soul Street Branch: ..."

"Red Cap Azura Bear Wolf Street Branch: ..."

Damn, is this their way of persuading me to turn myself in?

Lise spoke softly, "Annan, you just mentioned Cleos..."

"Yes, Cleos is my friend," Annan said. "So she has already been hinting around in Curtain messages asking about my whereabouts. For a higher Ranking List position, she would definitely betray us."

"Fortunately, you are already accepted as citizens by the Gospel... Even the Imperial Royal Family can't use the Gospel to track you. In this game of cat and mouse, at least everyone starts from the same line."

"So, we're not only being hunted by the underworld firm but also wanted by the lawful Red Cap?" Ashe sighed, rubbing his forehead. "I didn't even get this kind of treatment during Blood Moon... Characters in crime thrillers who offend both the underworld and the law usually don't live long, right?"

"There are exceptions, like the producer."

Igor's sarcastic remark turned out to be the warmest words of the evening.

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

Chapter 284: Red and Black

The former office of the Funeral Firm was now in complete disarray.

Cleos, the ‘Weeping Red Cap’, gently landed on the balcony, the blue flames of her Yuheng Boots quickly extinguished.

Although as a Sanctuary Sorcerer she had long been able to soar the skies with her wings, Red Caps start their Training with Yuheng flight from One Wing. Cleos, with over thirty years of experience in Yuheng, naturally preferred to tread the heavens with her feet.

Azura, the foremost Red Cap, strode into the living room, parting the Moonlit Harmony Home Firm’s agents to make way for her.

Several Red Caps followed her inside and saw the firm’s agents rummaging through everything. They immediately shouted, “What are you doing? According to—”

“According to the ‘Public Safety Management Regulations’, when citizens apprehend a fugitive in an act of valor, we have the right to search the fugitive’s belongings for intelligence.”

On the only red leather armchair in the living room, which had not been completely destroyed by Shot Bullets, sat an elderly woman. Her gaunt figure, minimal makeup that did not conceal her wrinkles, dark circles under her eyes, dry thin lips, and a plain red shawl over a simple cloth dress... Despite her negligent appearance care, her presence was undiminished.

She closed the Gospel she held and said, “Now that the Red Caps are here, you may hand over the scene to them. Children, put down what you are holding and do not disturb the work of the Red Caps.”

“Ina Aldo.”

Cleos spoke coldly, “When you attacked the Funeral Firm, the warrant had not yet been issued; even if you can search the fugitive’s belongings, the majority of the property here belongs to Annan Dolan. Your Moonlit Harmony Home Firm has already committed the crimes of illegal entry and destruction of property.”

“Is that so?”

Ina slowly stood up, facing the tall Red Cap Elf, the gaunt elderly woman lifting her head to meet Cleos' gaze.

The atmosphere in the living room instantly tensed, filled with the scent of gunpowder. The firm's agents and the Red Caps subtly unlocked the safeties of their Handguns, searching for the best shooting positions. This battered living room seemed poised to endure a second, even more brutal, assault.

If anyone despised firms the most, it would undoubtedly be the Red Caps.

For the Red Caps, firms were nothing but pests who often exploited loopholes in the Gospel, engaging in unsavory wet work, and frequently requiring the Red Caps to clean up their messes—such as the recent case of the Orc Sorcerer's murder, which was clearly the handiwork of a firm.

Among them, Ina from the Moonlit Harmony Home Firm, known as Baroness Cicada, was particularly loathed by the Red Caps.

Unlike other more low-key firms, Moonlit Harmony advertised all over the city and had committed several shocking mass murder cases in Azura using their unique exploitation of legal loopholes. It was like spitting in the face of the Red Caps, yet the Gospel could not pin them down.

The most law-abiding Red Caps couldn't find a single clue or even let off steam, and it would be odd if Cleos ever showed them a friendly face.

But Baroness Cicada, Ina, was also a Tri-wings Sanctuary Sorcerer, and with her mastery of the Gospel's loopholes, she had dominated Azura for decades starting from scratch. Despite having no official title, she was revered as 'Baroness'... Indeed, the Moonlit Harmony Home Firm was no lesser than the Red Caps.

In the tense standoff, Cleos stood her ground, but the mist in her eyes thickened, as if she was about to burst into tears at any moment.

Seeing this, Ina stepped back and flipped open the Gospel to a page: "This is a compensation contract between the Funeral Firm and the Moonlit Harmony Home Firm, which has been overdue for 26 years. Therefore, I am here as a creditor to enforce collection, not as an illegal intruder destroying property."

Cleos glanced at it, her expression darkening: "Lex Dolan in July 1631 subscribed to the 'Communication Message' service of Ashe Communication Company, and has failed to clear the service fees on time, now owing... Hasn't Ashe Communication Company gone out of business? It's quite something that you managed to dig up this debt."

"Adhering to the law is the foundation of our firm's operation," Ina stated. "If you'll excuse me."

“Wait,” Cleos said. “Bring in the person who ordered the attack on Ashe. The Red Caps need their cooperation for the investigation.”

“It is their honor.” Ina did not refuse, beckoning Menard and Leman to come over: “However, their spirits have been severely traumatized, and they need to go home to Rest. Therefore, they cannot return with you for the investigation. Ask your questions here—unless you can produce a warrant to assist in the investigation right now.”

Cleos looked at the two men and realized that Ina was not merely stalling her.

Menard and Leman were both draped in hot towels. Leman’s throat showed significant discoloration, clearly having just undergone emergency treatment. Yet, beyond their physical appearance, the terror deep in their eyes was the most glaring wound.

They did not look at Cleos, their gazes locked on some distant, intangible point, still immersed in their inner worlds, utterly unable to attend to the changes in reality.

“What happened to you?”

It was like they had been pricked by a needle; the two shivered like frightened hamsters.

They were not resisting Cleos’s questions, but were desperately trying to contain the monsters struggling to break free within them—monsters that had already corroded their minds, warped their worldviews, and tainted their nerves. The bloodshot in their eyes was a distress signal sent to the outside world from their self-awareness.

Fleeing had not taken them out of danger; it had only plunged them more quickly into a nightmare.

“Ashe Heath...”

“What?”

“Ashe Heath!”

Menard clutched Cleos’s shoulders, and the Weeping Red Cap did not push away this nearly hysterical young man: “Kill him, you must kill him, or it’ll be too late, too late!” Search the [website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Leman collapsed weakly to the floor, and then a foul smell began to spread—she had urinated.

Cleos’s expression remained unchanged: “...the influence of the Demonic Trench Coat and Twisted Mask?”

“Most likely,” Ina said. “But according to the Art Ranking, the Demonic Trench Coat is supposed to prevent malice, and the Twisted Mask enhances first impressions and disrupts probing... However, as you can see, there is a significant discrepancy between the Item descriptions and their actual effects.”

“Perhaps the Ranking List did not fully explain the rewards, or perhaps... the Coat and Mask indeed have only those functions, but the presence of the holder has caused their power to undergo a qualitative change.”

“I was uncertain of which possibility it was,” the elderly woman said. “But since the Empire has issued a warrant, it means that the capital, Nabistin, already knows the correct answer.”

Cleos gestured for Menard and Leman to be taken away and spoke calmly, “Ina, what are you suggesting?”

“Let’s cooperate.”

The Baroness’s voice was deep yet clear, rich but not muddled, slow yet compelling: “The Mermaid adheres to neutrality and will never break the rules. Miss Dolan has been running the Firm for many years; dealing with Red Caps is a basic Occupation skill for us... You need us, and we need you.”

“What do you want?” Cleos’s expression conveyed more disgust than her words.

“To exploit the Loophole Annan has discovered, to gain access to those foreigners, to have a hand in the Weaving Festival,” Ina explained. “I have no intention of hiding my motives, just as you have never concealed your desire for the rankings—but we both know, these are merely our personal interests.”

“The Gospel is our common interest.”

The city’s most formidable elderly woman enunciated every word: “Without the Gospel, we are nothing. We are all children of the Gospel, thriving only because of its nourishment.”

“Now the Gospel is calling for our help, why should we not do our part?”

“Now it’s our turn to repay the Gospel.” Cicada extended her hand to the Weeping Red Cap. “Let’s save the world together.”

Cleos was silent for a moment, then suddenly summoned her Gospel.

The Baroness realized something: “I’ve heard that Miss Dolan and the Weeping Red Cap are friends...”

“She is my best friend,” Cleos declared. “I cannot make this decision alone.”

Soon, Cleos heard the answer from the Gospel.

Tears quickly gathered in the eyes of the Weeping Red Cap, streaming down her cheeks, yet her smile was both sorrowful and joyful.

“Did the Gospel tell you to kill your friend?”

“No.”

Cleos gently shook her head, grasping Ina’s hand.

“The Gospel only told me that if I could fulfill the Empire’s warrant, I could directly top the national Red Cap rankings.”

“As my best friend,” Cleos sniffled, “Annan will understand.”

“Because the Gospel says she must understand.”

For the first time, the red and black of Azura blended into a new color.

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

Chapter 285: You Wont Even Call Me Dad

“Lise, stop moving around, or we’re all going to crash!”

On the outskirts of Azura, the team from the Funeral Firm was embarking on a heart-pumping night ride.

Yes, they were riding bicycles.

After leaving the core urban area of Azura—also known as the edge of the Double-tiered City—Annan instructed everyone to dismount and then set the Hovercar free to escape in a different direction.

“Don’t get caught by those evil Humans again,” Ashe thought as he watched the Hovercar disappear into the distance.

It was understood, even without saying, that continuing to drive would only expose their exact location; they might even blow up while on the move.

Although the secrecy protocols of the Gospel prevented direct tracking of Ashe and the others' locations, it was possible to attempt tracing their vehicle. And since all automated vehicles utilize the Gospel's data analysis, it was only a matter of time before things went awry, especially with the Moonlit Harmony Home Firm's enthusiasts who loved meddling with others' vehicles.

Switching transportation was inevitable. However, now in the seventeenth century, not just in the Gospel, but even the Blood Moon Kingdom was pushing for transport automation. Thus, when they prepared to flee Azura, the only safe mode of transportation available was—bicycles.

Aside from single-rider bikes, there were options for two or three riders, and with a Holographic Screen mounted on the bike canopy showing images of Orc and Elf families enjoying a trip, it was clear these bicycles were meant for leisurely countryside excursions, not for escaping danger.

It begs the question, is the Orc and Elf couple the officially endorsed model family by the Gospel?

This turned the scene rather comical: everyone riding bicycles to escape the pursuit of the Red Cap and the firm, with Annan in pajamas and Ashe in slippers...

Fortunately, there weren't many vehicles on the highway outside the city core at night; otherwise, anyone seeing them might think they were some bizarrely assembled family.

Ashe was responsible for carrying Lise. Although there were children's bicycles available, they were slow, and besides... Lise couldn't ride.

So Lise had no choice but to sit on the back seat of Ashe's bike. However, she seemed to think this was a spontaneous outing and couldn't keep still, squirming around constantly. After scolding her, Ashe finally felt her settle down and he could breathe a sigh of relief. As he rode into the brisk night air, his mind wandered to their current predicament.

Undoubtedly, the reason they had abruptly switched from a peaceful working life to a fleeing drama tonight was because of him.

Although he hadn't done anything, his very existence had been branded by the Gospel as a violation of public decency.

Ashe still couldn't figure out why he had appeared on the Art Ranking, and as an art piece no less—he could only be thankful that the creator was Annan and not Harvey. Although the Gospel had ranked his portrait first, making it look like it was from a fanatical admirer, it actually seemed more like a backhanded compliment.

Even though the Gospel didn't explicitly write that Ashe had done anything, the nine artworks ranked before him all depicted the Kingdom facing calamity. With his portrait ranked first, anyone with a bit of imagination wouldn't see Ashe as a mere innocent bystander.

He was either seen as a salvational Angel or the root of all evil—there were no other options. [search the novelFire.net website](#) to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Clearly, the Imperial Core believed the latter, and Ashe tended to agree—not that he thought he had the mettle to save the world.

But he didn't really believe he was destined to leave behind a legacy of eternal infamy either; he simply felt his resume had been tainted by Annan and Eternal Calamity.

Yes, Eternal Calamity—Ashe still remembered that colleague who didn't know how to clean up after herself, leaving him with the new Occupation of 'Calamity Walker'. Ashe strongly suspected his appearance on the Art Ranking was probably due to 'Calamity Walker' finally taking effect, triggering a "critical moment Luck Check -50", which led the Gospel to label him as a disaster of this world.

It was like a project going so badly that it split open, and an angry boss wanting to randomly fire someone to vent, so he just pointed at Ashe.

Moreover, Annan was also highly suspect. According to her, to disrupt the future narratives woven by the Gospel, she had been embellishing the resumes of Ashe and others. Although it was unlikely that the Gospel would believe it, what if it did?

Now was that unlikely scenario.

Who knows if Annan had added something like "This is a never-give-up, passionate Sorcerer who is good at rallying partners and whose ideal is world peace and mutual understanding among all people"—If that was the character setting, then Ashe being wronged by the Gospel wouldn't actually be unjust at all.

However, Ashe now had another problem to consider.

Would Annan turn him in to ensure her own safety?

Despite Annan's rapid escape, she actually didn't need to flee. If she agreed to cooperate with Moonlit Harmony Home Firm to develop Igor and others, the firm would immediately back her up.

She had an exit strategy.

But Ashe had nowhere to retreat. Now that the Imperial Core believed the Gospel's slander, convinced that Ashe, a zero-star nobody, could indeed bring disaster to the land, once caught by the Red Caps, it would be a dead end for him. Even the Gospel's talk of human rights wouldn't help.

Imprisonment? After a few years, he would surely harbor resentment and bring disaster!

Exile? Being cast out would certainly breed anger and a desire for revenge!

Once it was believed that Ashe's future would only bring disaster, any path leading to that future would be seen as nourishing. The only way to save Ashe was to ensure he had no future.

If it were someone else, Ashe would surely agree to sacrifice one for the happiness of many, but since the sacrifice was himself, he naturally wouldn't just surrender.

He needed to prepare for the worst...

Snap.

Ashe heard the sound of a safety being released, and then felt something hard pressing against his lower back.

"...Is this how intense kids' rebellious phases are these days?"

But Ashe quickly realized why Lise was being so aggressive—the sound of an approaching Hovercar was putting a severe psychological burden on the escapees.

They rode along a tree-lined path at the very edge of the highway. Even though it was night, the infrastructure of the Gospel Kingdom was so well-maintained that every ten steps there was a light, making the highway as bright as a cemetery during the daytime.

However, Annan and the others didn't make any special moves, waiting until the Hovercar passed. Banjeet then explained, "That was a cargo truck, fully automated and unmanned. We haven't been spotted yet."

"But what about the travel monitors on the truck?" Igor asked. "If our movements were recorded..."

Annan's decision to flee the city rather than stay and conduct guerrilla warfare in Azura was largely due to the abundance of surveillance cameras in the city. Both the Red Caps and the Firm preferred to use the Gospel to access surveillance footage rather than directly pinpointing targets—after all, surveillance cameras don't have the same high level of confidentiality as natural persons.

Once any traces of them were captured by the cameras, others could simply spend some Points to access their last known locations legally and legitimately, which was considered a right of citizens.

“This vehicle is heading to the second-tier city of Omidor. Even using the Gospel, people from Azura can’t cross cities to access surveillance data from Omidor. By the time they trace us, it will be the day after tomorrow at the earliest.”

“By then, we’ll already be in another city.”

Annan rode her bicycle off the main road and onto a side path, with the others following. They quickly reached a small hill, or rather a slope, which was even shorter than the fir trees on either side of the road.

“This should be the place...”

Annan signaled for everyone to dismount, then she and Banjeet started searching the area.

With nothing else to do, Ashe glanced at the handgun Lise was holding: “Where did you get that?”

“I bought it from the Curtain,” Lise replied. “The ‘Child’s Play Armament Gift Pack.’ It came with ten boxes of shot bullets, a box of kitten shot bullets, a box of puppy shot bullets, and a very rare box of Lala Fatty shot bullets! Only one in ten packs contains them!”

“Do the special shot bullets serve any purpose?”

“They’re pretty! Biubiubiu! If you shoot someone with them, they’ll probably be happy, right?”

“Kids can buy guns from the Curtain and even have them delivered to their homes... That’s more liberal than during the Blood Moon.” Ashe reached out to lower the muzzle of her gun. “Remember, don’t point the gun at people, and your safety is off... Let me keep it for you.”

“No!”

Lise showed a protective, animal-like expression, shaking her head firmly and clutching the handgun tightly. “Lise needs the handgun to protect herself!”

“I will protect you. Have you forgotten our Contract—”

“But you’re not really sincere, Dad.”

As Ashe's hand was swatted away, he blinked, the camaraderie built over the past few days of fun and leisure shattered with that single gesture.

The young girl with white hair showed a trace of sadness on her face, looking down at her toes and whispering, "You actually hate me, don't you? It was me who insisted on pulling you into signing the Contract to protect me... Who would want a daughter who only brings trouble?"

"If there was no danger, we could continue playing our father-daughter game," she said, gripping the handgun tightly. "But the game is over now."

Harvey and Igor glanced at them before turning to keep watch over the surroundings.

Ashe looked at the small hedgehog in front of him, not particularly surprised.

As Lise had said, their relationship was merely a charade. Initially, Lise had only wanted to maintain a superficial father-daughter relationship to deceive Miss Annan, but the days had been so peaceful that Ashe would turn his head whenever he heard the word 'Dad.'

The illusion of peaceful times was shattered, and it was time to return to the harsh reality of survival.

Nevertheless...

Ashe crouched down in front of Lise, meeting her gaze.

"When you go to Aunt Bukin to get your hair braided, be nice," he advised. "The trick is to tie an ugly braid yourself first; then she can't stand it and will fix it for you."

"Mm."

"When you want to play games, Banjeet is your best choice, followed by Harvey. But remember not to go into his room when you pick Harvey."

"Mm."

"And when you approach Miss Annan..."

Lise couldn't listen anymore; she grabbed his sleeve, tugging and twisting it.

"Aren't you going to care about me anymore?"

Ashe raised an eyebrow. "Didn't you say the game was over? From now on, we are strangers, at most bound by the Contract to come to your rescue if you're in danger."

"I didn't mean it was over forever," Lise muttered.

"So what are you saying? Ashe when you need something, Daddy when it's convenient, a comrade in danger, and a father when things are calm?"

Lise fidgeted and pouted, "Can't it be like that?"

Ashe responded, "You already said you think I hate you, so why should I cooperate with you? You don't listen to me; why should I listen to you?"

Tears welled up in the little girl's eyes as she pulled out a small mirror and looked down without speaking. After a while, she reluctantly handed over the handgun. Ashe reached for it, but it didn't budge at first; he had to pull harder to take it from her.

While examining the handgun, he asked, "Have you learned any Gun Technique?"

Lise didn't reply, or rather, she refused to speak, her nose twitching. It wasn't until Ashe asked a second time that she unhappily exclaimed, "I haven't learned!"

"Hmm—do you want to learn?"

"Hmm?" Lise looked at Ashe, puzzled. "Will you teach me?"

"I haven't learned either; I can't teach you."

Lise didn't say anything, just gave Ashe a 'are you picking a fight?' look. Ashe shrugged, "But we could learn from Banjeet. Once things settle down, how about we go learn Gun Technique from him together? I wonder if Banjeet has any tricks marked 'definitely teach the kids someday'..."

Lise also remembered Banjeet's cabinet full of games labeled "to play with the kids someday," and couldn't help but giggle. "Banjeet might let us play Gun Technique games."

As he ejected the Shot Bullets from the chamber and checked the safety, Ashe handed the handgun back to Lise under her astonished gaze. "Unless it's really an emergency, don't use the handgun. Even if you don't trust me, you should trust the Contract. Anyone who wants to harm you has to get past my Corpse first."

"...Aren't you going to take it away?"

"You just said I wasn't sincere, but in fact, it's you who has never shown your true heart." Ashe reached out and ruffled Lise's hair. "You never trust that adults will protect you; you only trust yourself."

"That's really sad," he said softly. "Just like Igor and Harvey."

Lise blinked in surprise, then shook her head forcefully. “I am not pitiful!”

“Since you refuse to trust adults, then keep the weapon that can protect you. Lise, you are a smart kid, and I believe you know what’s important.” Ashe smiled, “But you’re too smart sometimes, so you might get things wrong.”

“What did I get wrong?”

“You said no one would want a daughter who only brings trouble. In fact, that’s true.”

Watching Lise’s mood quickly drop, Ashe flicked her forehead gently: “But there isn’t a single child who only brings trouble to adults.”

Ashe couldn’t help but remember when he went back to his hometown, his older brother would always complain about the mischievous kids at home, hoping Ashe would discipline his nephew a few more times since visits were rare—after all, his brother’s wife and parents lived together, and with grandparents around, his nephew was as cocksure as a crab, walking sideways. His brother had been blocked several times from disciplining him, and a new belt bought for the purpose had never been used.

However, when the two sat down for a late-night snack and chat, his brother couldn’t help but boast about his nephew entering some competition, and showed Ashe photos from a family outing. Last Father’s Day, his nephew had given him a gift, and he was as thrilled as if he had drawn a rare card in a mobile game.

Although Ashe had long become a cold, money-making worker, seeing the joy that he couldn’t hide on his brother’s face, he felt he could empathize.

“What do you mean?” Lise, covering her forehead, was still puzzled.

“It means you won’t even call me ‘Dad’,” Ashe said, standing up with a smile.

What used to be a casually spoken title now made Lise feel embarrassingly shy, but she kept clutching at Ashe’s sleeve.

“We’ve found it.”

With Banjeet’s joyful voice, a doorway suddenly appeared on the hillside, leading to a staircase that went underground. Everyone quickly pushed their bicycles inside, and as they stepped down the stairs, the lights flickered on one by one, like a belated knocking that woke the sleeping host.

When they reached the end, a fully equipped basement appeared before them.

“At last, we can rest.”

Annan let out a long sigh of relief, went over to lie on a makeshift sofa, lazily rolled around a few times, then sat up and addressed everyone: “Welcome to my grandfather’s tomb.”

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

Chapter 286: The Safe House Tomb

Water trickled down a flawless body, meandering through the grooves of the tiles, flowing into the Sewer.

There was no shower gel, no shampoo, no conditioner, not even a facial cleanser—nothing at all, not even a showerhead, just a pipe spraying water downwards.

It felt less like taking a shower and more like being caught in a downpour for Igor.

Moreover, the bathroom was so small it couldn’t even accommodate Igor with his arms extended. Even in Shattered Lake Prison, Igor had never been so destitute.

However, Igor, who was fond of cleanliness, wasn’t too bothered at the moment. He quickly rinsed off the sweat from his body, then dried off with a rough towel and changed into casual clothes. The clothes didn’t fit perfectly, but it was not a situation to be fussy about.

He returned to the main hall of the basement to find Harvey applying makeup to a coffin, using a brow pencil made of bone and a lipstick with a base of blood ink; Ashe was blow-drying Lise’s hair with a remarkably inefficient hairdryer; Banjeet was cooking a late-night meal by the stove, while Annan was flipping through the Gospel with a cup of hot milk in hand.

“Ha ha, everyone’s chatting, eh? I just dozed off and dreamed that Ashe and you, Annan, topped the Art Ranking. Then we had to flee Azura after an attack. I’m just waking up from it... such a strange dream,” Igor said as he picked a chair to sit on. “And here we thought we were just here for a tomb excursion.”

Annan closed the Gospel: “Are you trying to hypnotize us?”

“Or maybe just myself,” Igor replied. “Escapism is the last tear of a Mind Sorcerer.”

At that moment, Banjeet turned off the portable stove, brought over a plate loaded with thick-cut steaks, white bread, cream sauce, mashed potatoes, and more — quite a lavish spread for a late-night snack.

“Is there any wine?” Annan suddenly asked.

Banjeet nodded, opened his suitcase, and took out a bottle of wine along with five glasses. He then added a slice of lemon to some water to make ice cubes and quickly mixed five glasses of drinks.

“I tend to buffer my brain with a bit of alcohol when I encounter troubles,” Annan said. “I think you’ll enjoy this feeling—shut up if you have any objections, and let’s toast now!”

“This is workplace harassment...” Ashe muttered, holding Lise’s head down as he took a glass and drank it in one gulp.

The drink was smooth, fruity, and not at all spicy, leaving a pleasant aftertaste that was very enjoyable.

“Is there more?” Harvey asked.

“Yes, but no more for you,” Annan replied, his mood visibly lifted after a drink. “This is a local craft beer from Azura called ‘Pink Rabbit’. It’s very easy to drink too much because it goes down smoothly and tastes sweet. But you have to be careful, it can knock you out unexpectedly, so don’t overdo it.”

Lise suddenly became anxious. “I want some too!”

“Kids should stick to milk,” Ashe said, slapping Lise on the head.

“So, after we’ve bathed, drunk, and rested, we should also sort out our situation,” Annan said, tossing his long hair back and sitting cross-legged on the couch. “You all must have a lot of questions now. I’ll start by answering them.”

“First,” Igor pointed to the suitcase next to Banjeet, “is that an item of space?”

It was impossible to ignore the ordinary-looking suitcase—during their escape, Banjeet had stuffed Harvey’s coffin right into it; after arriving at this tomb, he had taken out the coffin, a portable stove, a large amount of food, dishes, utensils, and even a six-person set of clothes including underwear from it!

Nobody would be surprised if Banjeet pulled an armored vehicle out of the suitcase next.

No wonder Annan wasn’t concerned about them packing travel gear; the suitcase alone was enough to meet all their needs.

“Yes,” Annan nodded, “but it’s not what you think. Banjeet isn’t skilled in the space Faction... This is Banjeet’s exclusive reward.”

“From the last Weaving Festival?”

“Yes,” Miss Annan nodded. “The suitcase isn’t as useful as you might imagine. It can’t hold items heavier than Banjeet’s weight, it can’t contain unsealed liquids, and there’s a cooldown time for putting things in and taking them out... Decades ago, it might have been practical, but in this era of greatly developed transportation, a simple mobile storage doesn’t have much use.”

She paused. “It only really shows its value in a situation like fleeing.”

“So you had already prepared for escape,” Igor noted keenly. “But you weren’t planning to flee right now; you were waiting for the second Ranking List in Ten Years to be announced—anticipating that once we newcomers appear on the list, we would become targets. Fleeing was indeed the first movement in your plan.”

“Correct. Around the 14th, I was planning to take you out of Azura and then quietly wait for the moment when the entire Kingdom of Gospel would be shocked by your four names,” Miss Annan exhaled. “But plans can’t always keep up with changes... Ashe, although I don’t usually blame fate or others, this time it’s really...”

Ashe immediately retorted, “Don’t forget, Miss Annan, that you are the creator here, and I’m just your portrait model. If you round it off, I’m the real victim here!”

“This isn’t a tomb, is it?” Harvey suddenly said. “Tombs are for the dead, and this place isn’t meant for the dead—I haven’t even smelled anything of the dead.”

“Of course you haven’t,” Miss Annan shrugged. “My grandfather was cremated long ago. But this place is his tomb—at least nominally.”

The Necromancer didn’t understand the intricacies here, but the Con Artist quickly caught on. “To mislead the Gospel?”

“Seriously, given some time, Mr. Bukin could surely build an empire from scratch that rivals the Broken Home Firm,” Miss Annan remarked. “Indeed, while the Gospel knows everything about the Gospel Kingdom, there’s some leeway with specific names—like how I bought a residential house and turned it into an office space for the firm, but in the records of the Gospel, it’s still registered as ‘Annan’s Residence’, not ‘Annan’s Office’.”

“If you build a safe house without any approval, the Gospel will label it as a ‘personal basement.’ But if I buy the land under the guise of a tomb from the city planning bureau and transform it, it will be recognized by the Gospel as a tomb.”

“Even if I transform this place into a safe house, in the database of the Gospel, it will still be shown as a tomb—after all, there’s no rule saying a tomb can’t be converted into this form. Now, the Red Cap and the Firm are certainly scouring the safe houses I prepared earlier, but they definitely won’t find this place in the short term. For them, the priority of searching tombs is too low.”

Speaking thus, Annan clasped her hands together devoutly, praying, “Grandfather, please bless this tomb with your fatty liver and pungent urine, drive away the beasts of civilization, and keep us away from danger.”

It was evident that Annan’s grandfather did not have a peaceful life, his health was so poor that even the Medics did not bother to patch him up.

Annan’s words were not difficult to understand, and her plan was not complex, but everyone was still amazed by her meticulous thinking—only someone like Annan, who spent all day studying how to exploit loopholes in the Gospel, would know such bizarre methods.

“So,” Igor clasped his hands, “what’s the plan next?” S

“It’s 2:11 AM now, and we need to move before 6:00 AM, which means we have about four hours to rest,” Annan said. “We need to split into two shifts for night duty.”

“The shift on duty needs to stay alert and must open the Gospel every five minutes to check for people within a 300-meter radius. Those off duty should enter the Virtual Realm and try to restore their spirits within two hours, as we need to continue on our journey early tomorrow morning.”

The Gospel is not just a chaser’s blade but also a fugitive’s iron shield. As long as you have enough Points, the Gospel does not care about your goodness or evil, fairly providing services that are worth more than they cost to anyone.

Igor and others summoned their own Gospels, pondering— their mode of operation was still stuck in the Blood Moon Version. If it weren’t for Annan, a member of the guide team for the Gospel Version, leading them, they would have been hit across versions by the Red Cap and the Firm long ago.

Reconnaissance, attack, defense, logistics... in the Kingdom of Gospel, almost all functions can involve the Gospel, and its power is no less than that of Sorcerer miracles. How to make good use of the Gospel is indeed the core essence of battle in the Gospel Version.

Annan spread her hands, “If there are no questions, then—”

“What about Ashe?”

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

Chapter 287: Ive Been Waiting for You

Igor's sudden question made Miss Annan slightly raise an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

"Miss Annan," Igor said leisurely, "from the beginning, we accepted your invitation, which is why we became members of the Funeral Firm. From the start, you never clearly explained to us the significance of the Weaving Festival—you didn't even tell us that it was a life-risking adventure."

Miss Annan narrowed her eyes. "I didn't expect the first Ranking List to turn out—"

"But now, Ashe's interests have been compromised because of your plan."

Igor straightened his back, his gaze fixed on Miss Annan. "His status as a foreigner is well-known, he is wanted by the Kingdom of the Gospel, and he's even mistaken by the Gospel as a party to future calamities—Miss Annan, you surely aren't suggesting that Ashe is to blame for his current predicament, and that it has nothing to do with you?"

Banjeet couldn't help but interject. "But our plan hasn't even started, and Ashe—"

"It certainly has to do with me."

Miss Annan raised her hand to stop Banjeet, speaking calmly, "If I hadn't involved Ashe in this plan, perhaps none of this would have happened—Mr. Bukin, is that what you mean?"

Igor smiled slightly. "I bear no resentment, Miss Annan, after all, I am not Ashe. But now a new problem has arisen, shouldn't we discuss a solution?"

"How would you solve it?" Miss Annan's mouth curled up. "Should I cancel the warrant for Ashe's arrest? Or should I remove him from the Art Ranking?"

The basement was silent. Banjeet and Harvey remained quiet, and Ashe and Lise clung to each other, shivering—the aura around Miss Annan and Igor's negotiation was too intimidating; they dared not interrupt.

“How could I possibly force you, Miss Annan, to do these impossible things?” Igor tilted his head. “But since the problem can’t be solved, shouldn’t you at least... compensate Ashe for his losses?”

What, could there be compensation?

Ashe blinked, silently cheering for Igor.

Miss Annan suddenly asked bluntly, “If the person concerned here is Ashe, and Ashe hasn’t even spoken yet, why, Mr. Bukin, are you so eager to advocate for Ashe’s interests?”

Ashe was taken aback, thinking, indeed, why would the Bewitcher plead on my behalf?

Con Artist Igor lowered his eyelids. “This time it’s Ashe, next time it might be me. If I don’t speak up for this fool now, who will speak up for the smart ones later?”

“Oh...?”

Annan’s expression was subtly amused: “You think you are the smart one? I don’t think so; I think you are the fool.”

Even Ashe thought that Miss Annan was a bit too harsh—You could say that Igor is as ugly as an Orc, eats like an Ogre, and bathes like Goblins, but you should never question his intelligence because that is his core strength!

However, Igor did not retaliate but just quietly looked at Annan, seemingly disdainful of engaging in pointless arguments with her.

...

Ask for the moon, settle for the earth.

Naturally, Annan couldn’t actually compensate Ashe for his injury. Not only was Ashe’s arrest warrant unrelated to her, even if it were, it wouldn’t be as simple as Igor saying so—status is like a seesaw, one side goes up, the other must go down. If Annan bowed now, she would always have to bow.

Kindness and weakness are difficult to distinguish twins, and Annan was more than willing to show her kindness, but not at the expense of appearing weak. Igor, Harvey, and Ashe were fugitives who had fled from other kingdoms; even if they hadn’t shown any brutal traits before, it didn’t mean they were good people.

In the eyes of those working at the Firm, everyone is a potential murderer. Just a slight test of their humanity will reveal how fragile the rational daily life they maintain is. When they embrace reality, the harsh reality will pull them into the deep sea.

Interestingly, this also reflects the Con Artist's understanding of human nature: unless you are a god, you can be deceived, because Con Artists and gods share the same essence—they possess the ability to fulfill any wish.

Thus, Annan and Igor had an understanding in their negotiations—do not test each other's limits, and quit while ahead.

The final result was that Annan signed a new contract with her employees. This contract contained only one clause: under any circumstances, Annan must regard Ashe, Igor, Harvey, and Lise as importantly as she regards herself.

The sole purpose of this contract was to completely eliminate any possibility of Annan betraying Ashe.

Now, at least they didn't have to worry about Annan leading Red Cap to Ashe.

As for the duty shifts, since they needed to use the Gospel for surveillance, Annan and Banjeet were each responsible for a shift. Ashe wanted to take the first half of the night, but Lise, who was the only one off duty, insisted on sleeping cuddled up with Ashe.

"Isn't it usually about sleeping cuddled up with mom?" Ashe complained while lying on the wooden bed: "Why are you clinging to me..."

"And where is my mom?" Lise's straightforward question was as sharp as ever.

"If you want a good experience, you can go to Annan; if you like them tall, you can go to Aunt Bukin. Lise, you're a grown-up kid now, you should learn to find your own mom... Sigh, do you want me to tell you a bedtime story?"

"No!" Lise shook her head firmly, holding onto Ashe's hand: "This is fine."

Ashe looked at Lise, her eyelids drooping, feeling a bit envious—he had long outgrown the age of falling asleep whenever he wanted.

Speaking of which, it was time to go to the Virtual Realm... Hm?

Wait!

How do I go to the Virtual Realm?

All my spirits are spoils of war, none of them are a childhood sweetheart pure love spirit!

Ashe, who had never opened the Gate of Truth, was like a playboy with many lovers; it was great to be taken care of during the day, but at night, he couldn't find his way home.

And it was only now that he remembered—he had skipped tonight's Exploration in Virtual Realm.

Ashe quietly summoned the Gospel, turning to the page of the Sorcerer Handbook to see if the Witch and Swordsman were already Exploring the Virtual Realm. But when he opened it, he found that the exploration team had already disbanded.

"Operator detected in story mode, team exploration temporarily suspended."

Operator in story mode... Wait, am I an Operator too?

With the team exploration suspended, everyone naturally went their own way. Ashe glanced around and noticed that the Witch was not in the Virtual Realm, probably having finished her exploration and left; however, the Swordsman was still there, so Ashe could also enter to have a look.

But why is the Swordsman's exploration time longer than the Witch's? Without a car, both the Swordsman and the Witch could only walk. Logically, with more exploration experience, the Witch should last longer...

However, Ashe didn't overthink it and quickly chose to enter the Virtual Realm through the Swordsman's Gate of Truth.

The Gate of Truth does not move with the Sorcerer, so Ashe could only arrive at the location where the Swordsman was over two hours ago. He had no idea where she might have gone by now...

As consciousness descended into the Virtual Realm, Ashe opened his eyes and found himself sitting in a sports car.

Indeed, without team mode exploration in the Virtual Realm, the Swordsman couldn't borrow his sports car. This time she really had to measure the Time Continent on foot.

He opened the Virtual Realm map, wanting to see the Swordsman's exact location. If she wasn't too far, he'd drive over immediately.

If she was far... he'd still have to drive there. After all, he had flaked tonight, and he owed her an explanation. Plus, Ashe alone couldn't undertake an exploration of the Virtual Realm.

For this Trespasser who had been illegally teaming up from the start, exploring the Virtual Realm with two people could be called an adventure, but doing it alone was more like wandering.

However, as Ashe opened the map, he saw two Sorcerer icons close together.

One was him, the Observer,

And the other was...

Ashe turned his head to look behind and saw a young girl on the lawn behind the car, sitting with her legs hugged to her chest, her body rhythmically swaying as she hummed a song.

The girl on the lawn, Sonya, seemed to sense something and looked back.

“Why are you still here?”

“Because I was waiting for you.”

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

Chapter 288: Small Horn

Trampling through thorns, transmigrating through the Golden Rain.

The sports car jubilantly roared across the Time Continent. Ashe glanced at the new block appearing on the Virtual Realm Map. Whenever a “Worth a Visit” or “Time for a Clan Annihilation” Battle block appeared ahead on the road, he immediately steered clear, keeping the sports car firmly on the “Wasting Time” route.

Only if a Sorcerer Projection, an easy target, appeared on the road would Ashe reluctantly run it over.

Tonight, it was just the two of them, not suited for Battle. Even if they fought, it would consume a lot of Soul Energy, better to broaden their exploration and see if they could encounter any special Virtual Realm structures.

Besides, they weren't in the mood for Battle tonight.

The atmosphere in the car remained silent, but it wasn't the awkward kind of silence. It was like someone who arrived hours late, only intending to pass by, but found their date still waiting for them—awkward, yes, but not uncomfortably so. Instead, there was an unspoken warmth in it.

“Small Horn,” Ashe suddenly blurted out after a long silence.

“What?” Sonya couldn't believe her ears. “What did you say?”

“I said you’re a Small Horn.”

Having been through numerous heated debates on the School Forum, Sonya had elevated her Faction in arguing to a higher level: when someone insults you, never just deny it, hit back; and hitting back had three levels—the lowest is tit-for-tat, the middle is tailored comeback, and the highest...

Act rather than talk!

Sonya immediately grabbed Ashe’s ear, “Oh, so you dare to insult me today, what dare you do tomorrow, I can’t even imagine!”

“Hey, hey, I’m driving, there’s a Slaying Fish-Dragon crossing ahead!”

“Why are you insulting me!”

“How’s calling you stupid a problem?”

“How am I stupid?”

“You’ve been waiting here for over two hours, isn’t that stupid enough?” Ashe raised his voice. “Lucky for you, the Time Continent doesn’t have ‘Eviction Secret Poison’. If this were the Sea of Knowledge, you’d have been devoured by Knowledge Creatures by now!”

“I’m not stupid!” Sonya retorted, “Do you think I’m like you, jumping into the Virtual Realm without any common sense? Since the day we parted, I’ve been studying the knowledge of the Time Continent every day, memorizing the critical aspects of the Time Continent, the mechanisms of the Virtual Realm, and various strategies for dealing with Knowledge Creatures... Of course, I knew it was safe to wait for you!”

“How could it possibly be safe?” Ashe almost laughed in exasperation: “I was just looking at the Map, and the White Bull is already far from you, and the Static Domain will catch up with you in less than an hour!”

“I would definitely leave the Virtual Realm before the Static Domain arrives!”

“What if you didn’t notice it? You’ve said before that the Static Domain is silent; by the time you realize it’s there, you won’t be able to escape!”

“I can still get away.”

“But you didn’t have to take such a risk!” Ashe complained. “I didn’t ask you to wait; you could have just continued Exploring the Virtual Realm normally. Why put yourself in danger? Am I wrong to call you foolish?”

Thump!

This time Sonya really got angry and gave Ashe a solid thump, making him feel his Soul Energy scatter a bit—You're a Swordswoman, not a boxer, why do you hit so hard!?

"You still have the nerve to criticize me," Sonya said fiercely. "We agreed to meet at 12:30, and I was the only one who showed up! You didn't even leave me a car or a note!"

"I used to think you at least kept your word, but now I'll never trust you again, you big liar!"

"This was an accident within the margin of error!" Ashe countered. "I suddenly had something come up tonight; it wasn't intentional. It was two hours later by the time I settled everything, and here I am, joining you right away, aren't I?"

"So what happened? Tell me something that will make this Swordswoman happy?"

"I can't say."

Annan's Contract sealed Ashe's lips like a gag.

"Will there be a next time?"

"Most likely," Ashe thought about the current situation at the Funeral Firm. "I might even be unable to come to the Virtual Realm for several days in a row."

"So you mean," Sonya squinted her eyes, "you can't explain the reasons, but you need to keep taking leave?"

"...Yes."

Ashe answered, feeling quite aggrieved—what a world this was! He was the financier of the team, after all. How had he come to be scolded by an Operator? As an investor, wasn't it natural for him not to do the work, especially since he had a legitimate reason, albeit one he couldn't disclose?

He quietly awaited the next round of scolding from the Swordswoman, but after a while, she remained silent.

"I'll try to leave the car for you next time..." Ashe said, "Though I can't lend out the Map, having the car should help you maintain a rapid increase in arcane energy..."

Suddenly, Sonya asked, "Is it more dangerous than escaping from prison?"

Ashe paused for a moment: "A bit more dangerous, yes."

“Huh.”

With Sonya’s indistinct chuckle, the atmosphere fell silent again.

After they finally defeated their first Sorcerer Projection of the night, Sonya commented, “This is so boring.”

“Why don’t you sing a song?”

“Don’t you have any life experiences to share?”

“I do, but I can’t talk about them,” Ashe shrugged. “If I must, I can only speak in the manner of the Riddler.”

“Oh?” Sonya’s interest was piqued, “What’s the riddle method?”

“Let’s say, for instance, I’ve become somewhat famous,” Ashe pondered and then continued, “Not only do I have to deal with the risk of being sexually harassed by a boss, but there’s also someone new in my life who I need to protect with my life…”

“Who is this person?”

“Can’t say.”

“A woman?”

“…”

“A woman under 30?”

“…”

“A woman under 22?”

“…”

“A woman under 18?!” Sonya was shocked, “Observer, how old are you even? It’s disgraceful, and you even—”

“It’s not what you think!” Ashe was exasperated, “And why aren’t you asking about the boss harassing me? Don’t you care about that at all?”

“Because that’s definitely not the same as you described,” Sonya was quite certain.

"In any case, although I really want to share with you the things I've been dealing with recently, I just can't," Ashe said. "Once all this is over, I'll slowly tell you the stories from these past days."

"Then I'll look forward to it."

Sonya, gazing at the Reverse Golden Rain outside, suddenly mentioned, "A couple of days ago, Wind Crane reached out to me—you can think of them as a guild that produces songs for Songstresses—they want to tailor a battle song specifically for me. If there's enough time, it might even become the theme song for this year's Intercollegiate League!"

"And then there's Senior Sister Sylvia—you might have forgotten who she is—thanks to her recommendation, I've successfully landed a role in a prime-time drama. It's not the lead role, and it's a villain role, but it's roughly equivalent to the second female lead!"

"Looks like your big break is coming!" Ashe exclaimed. "If you play it well, a villain's impact on the Audience can be just as memorable as the hero's!"

"I think so too!" Sonya nodded and scoffed, "Hmph, those Nobles really aren't up to any good. My reputation has been rising, and while they want to capitalize on my fame, they look down on my background and are unwilling to offer me any good roles. So, they stick me with a villain role, hoping I'd embarrass myself and earn a bad name... But no matter, disappointing my enemies is something I never fail at!"

Ashe never doubted the Swordswoman's capabilities—her rebellious spirit, born from humble beginnings, radiated an indomitable confidence, as if there was nothing in the world that could crush her spirit. [Search the NovelFire\(.\)net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

Perhaps that might have been the case in the past, since the Swordswoman was ultimately a lone Weakling. But now, her weaknesses had been compensated for by Ashe.

She would neither be weak nor alone.

Ashe suddenly remarked, "Feels like it's been a long time since we've had a moment alone like this, hasn't it?"

"...Yes." The rustic girl lowered her eyelids, "With the Witch around, there are some things I just don't feel comfortable discussing with you. It's not that I want to keep secrets from her, it's just... it would be a bit embarrassing."

"Ha!"

"What's so funny?"

“No, I’m not laughing at you; I actually understand how you feel quite well,” Ashe said with a smile. “It’s like a delicate, blooming flower. The Witch only sees your beautiful petals, so you want to keep up your dignity around her. But I’ve seen your roots hidden in the soil before you bloomed, not beautiful, so you feel more relaxed around me.”

In simpler terms, it’s like the label that fits everyone once you get to know them: ‘cold on the outside, chatterbox once you’re familiar’—most people are indeed like that, maintaining a good image when they first meet someone until they know each other well enough to reveal their quirks.

“So you’re saying I’m just a pretty girl with no substance?”

“You make ‘pretty girl with no substance’ sound so worthless...” Ashe muttered. “But I don’t think you need to be so stiff around the Witch... First of all, the Witch isn’t the type to look down on you because of your background.”

“Secondly, those muddy roots you want to hide are actually quite cute.”

The Swordswoman looked at him without saying a word. Ashe shrugged and said, “Of course, I’m just making a suggestion. I’m already very satisfied with the atmosphere in our small team; it doesn’t matter if we don’t continue to strengthen our bond. If you prefer the time we spent together in the Boat on the Sea of Knowledge, I can understand that—”

“Alright then.”

“Huh?”

“Thinking about it, talking about girly stuff with a smelly man like you does seem a bit inappropriate,” Sonya said, resting her chin in her hands. “It’s about time I found a new best friend.”

“First of all, I’m not smelly, and second—”

“You’re not a man?” Sonya instinctively used debate tactics from the School Forum.

After a bit of Small horn-level bickering, the rustic girl emerged victorious.

Watching the driver’s disgruntled face, Sonya suddenly said, “We’ve already left the Sea of Knowledge.”

“Huh?”

“So, the time of just the two of us teaming up is over. Next, it’ll be teams of three, four, five... The team will grow bigger, and we’ll become stronger.”

“...Yes,” Ashe replied, looking at her in the rearview mirror. “That’s exactly my plan.”

“I’ll help you,” Sonya said. “Although I might not be too keen on it, I will help because the stronger our team gets, the more efficient our explorations will be, and the more benefits I’ll gain.”

“And you’ll gain more benefits too.”

Ashe looked at Sonya, surprised, while the Swordswoman stared at the Reverse Golden Rain outside, her eyes sparkling.

“My life is full of color—singing, acting, competing. Don’t come to me for help with real-world problems; I’m neither free nor capable,” the rustic girl said softly. “However, if you really must, and you’re willing to kneel and beg, I guess I could help you out more in the Virtual Realm.”

“Kneeling is out of the question. In my world, we only kneel when Praying for a Miracle,” Ashe replied with a smile. “But I’ll reluctantly accept your grudging offer of help.”

“Hmph, now we’re really in cahoots.”

“Just remember not to do something foolish like waiting for others in the Virtual Realm again—it really lowers our average IQ.”

“Mind your own business, Small horn.”

Lise felt her cheek wet and wiped away the drool, turning over to continue sleeping. Through her haze, she saw the corners of Ashe’s mouth slightly turned up.

Lise mumbled to herself, “Dad’s smiling so happily. Is he having a good dream?”

“Maybe it’s the training before going to Prison,” Deya suggested. “He knows the Red Cap will catch him sooner or later, so he wants to keep a positive attitude...”

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

Chapter 289: Escape

Buzz!

A sports car thundered across the highway, its engine howling like a husky as it shredded the scattered sunlight filtered through the treetops. The wild rush contrasted sharply with the elegant silence of the passing Hovercars.

“Are we really not going to draw attention like this?” Igor, sitting in the passenger seat, was visibly anxious. “It’s like a disheveled old man going through withdrawal suddenly appearing in a rose-colored university campus—do we have to take the highway?”

Annan shrugged as he drove, “Taking back roads makes it easier to be spotted, unless you’re covered in crap; nobody walks them. Besides, driving in non-motorized lanes violates traffic laws. The Baroness and the Red Caps would just need to check who’s been muddying up with their cars to find us.”

“Driving this old clunker will indeed draw attention, but not in the way you imagine.”

“In an era dominated by automated Hovercars, manually operated vintage cars are still cherished by many. Nothing screams ‘noble taste’ quite like nostalgia.”

“Plus, this Uz Extinguishing Dragon is a special model modified by my father,” Annan added with a slight smile. “At night, the dragon patterns on its exterior flicker and light up, making anyone who sees it think the average age of its passengers is under twenty.”

Igor raised an eyebrow, “Your father’s modified sports car, why was it in your grandfather’s tomb?”

“Because my grandfather despised my father’s fascination with sports cars, and my father’s favorite pastime was to piss on his enemies’ corpses—I don’t mean that literally, but you get the idea.”

“Say, rather than worrying about how stylish we look, could we first consider the comfort of the passengers?” grumbled Ashe from the back seat, grimacing. “We’re practically squeezed in here!”

At 6 a.m., the group from the Funeral Firm departed promptly from Annan’s grandfather’s tomb. This time, however, they were not on bicycles, as the tomb housed a Uz Extinguishing Dragon sports car, which served as their escape vehicle.

As an escape tool, they couldn’t be too demanding of the sports car. After all, it had been decades, and the mere fact that the car could still run was a testament that deserved a three-second silent tribute to the automakers swept away by the tide of automated vehicles.

However, the ancestors of the Dolan Family, seemingly confident in their dwindling numbers, had the sports car designed as a standard four-seater, leaving no room for anyone even slightly overweight.

With six of them, Annan, always keen on appearing approachable, couldn't possibly squeeze in with laborers; she took the wheel. The co-driver seat was determined by a dice game, and Igor, who "never cheats," managed to outplay everyone.

Initially, Lise was supposed to be held by Aunt Bukin, but Lise, with her eyelids drooping, insisted on clinging to Ashe, who ended up holding her and squeezing into the back seat with the Necromancer and the Butler Youth—unfortunately, lacking the aroma of leek buns, otherwise Ashe could have dreamt of rushing for the subway at 8 AM.

"Endure it," Igor said. "You're the biggest here and still complaining, while these two haven't even spoken."

"Banjeet, can you fit a person in your suitcase? I suggest we start with the one with the foulest mouth to clean up the air inside the car..."

Compared to Ashe, who only knew how to complain, Harvey had a zest for life: "The sun is quite nice today."

"Indeed," Banjeet nodded. "It's a good day for a big cleanup."

"Could we stop around noon? I'd like Alice to get some sunlight."

After a brief silence, Annan spoke up, "There's something I've wanted to ask Mr. Harvey since last night, just wasn't sure if I should."

"Go ahead," Harvey seemed in a good mood despite the escape. "Just don't ask what I do during showers."

Putting other matters aside, Ashe felt Harvey had a natural Talent for storytelling—how could he effortlessly pique someone's curiosity with just a remark?

"The... partner you were commanding yesterday, was that the Corpse I took you to buy last time?"

"Yes, Alice was a gift from you."

"But I remember," Annan's expression was complex, "the Corpse I bought... was male."

At this revelation, Ashe, no longer minding the cramped space, urgently squeezed towards Banjeet, attempting to establish a no-contact boundary with Harvey.

"It was indeed male at first," Harvey nodded. "But after listening to Ashe's advice, I made some last-minute modifications—being a Necromancer, a bit of Bio-modification makes sense, right?—and so Alice was born."

Ashe was taken aback. "What advice did I give you?"

“Sexual Function and Functionality,” Harvey replied. “I realized I had previously focused too much on the functionality of my partner, neglecting the potential of the Corpse’s sexual functionality.”

“For example, typical Corpses are menacing in appearance, pale-faced, oozing from their bodies, and massive in size, which can intimidate and pressure enemies on a sensory level. However, this style of intimidation only really scares ordinary people; normal practitioners, like you Ashe, aren’t frightened by Corpses, right?”

“How could I be!” Ashe’s voice rose an octave: “I’m not even afraid of the living, why would I be scared of the dead?”

“Ashe is afraid of terrifying Corpses” — Annan, Banjeet, and Igor quietly noted to themselves.

“But after hearing your thoughts, Ashe, I was deeply inspired and decided to take a different approach — dressing the Corpse in a way that could arouse desires. The allure of the Corpse, contrasting sharply with its combat abilities, would then...”

Ashe understood: “Stir up fear in the enemy’s heart?”

“No!” Harvey’s voice was buoyant, sunlight reflecting in his pupils, making it unclear whether he was fanatical or radiant: “The enemy will surely be captivated by this beautiful power, realizing that Necromancy is the Magical Faction that will bring happiness to everyone, and then become the minions of Haagen-Dazs—”

“Who is Haagen-Dazs?” Ashe asked.

“A legend passed down among us Necromancers, a great being that imparts souls to the dead,” Harvey looked at Ashe. “Interested in learning about the benevolent and great Haagen-Dazs? Our Necromancy Faction isn’t a religion, but it’s definitely more thrilling than any religion—”

Igor explained calmly, “Historical Magical Factions all tend to create a ‘great being’, which might be an evolution of a Legend sorcerer’s tale or perhaps the past glory of a lost Divine Master. For instance, in our Mind Faction, there’s said to be a great being called Madara, a collective consciousness of all living beings, whose vertical pupil on his forehead can make the world dance at his will. However, Mind Sorcerers generally don’t fall to the point of following a cultural symbol.”

Necromancers didn’t care about the Con Artist’s provocations; they had been squabbling now and then since the Escape Plan—really, everyone had argued with Igor at some point, as only customers could enjoy the spring breeze of his attentiveness—if Igor was burning ice, Harvey was a cold flowing fire, who disliked hurting others, preferring instead to set others ablaze, making them torches like himself.

“So, you mean to use a beautiful girl to spark interest in the Necromancy Faction?”

“Yeah, isn’t that what you taught me?”

Although that wasn’t exactly what Ashe meant at the time, Harvey’s “beautiful girl → attract attention” strategy subtly fit the mobile game model.

“Then why turn men into beautiful girls?” Annan expressed politically correct dissatisfaction. “Can’t beautiful boys work?”

“I personally think men playing women are more charming.”

“Why is that?”

“Because I have a living example right by my side.”

Everyone looked towards Igor, the co-pilot. The Con Artist hadn’t expected this to turn on him, but he wasn’t flustered: “You’ve got some taste.”

After all, if the intended target doesn’t feel humiliated, then the attempt at humiliation loses its effect.

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

Chapter 290: Information Barrier

At this moment, the Uz Sports Car had completely left Azura’s city circle and ventured into the suburban farm areas. On both sides of the road lay vast expanses of fertile farmland, already bustling with agricultural machinery tilling the soil early in the morning.

Ashe glanced over and saw a village composed of low, flat houses in the distance—though there were some that reached two or three stories, they seemed like remnants of an old era compared to the advanced Double-tiered City. However, the fields were vibrant with young Orcs operating machinery akin to tractors, exuding a youthful vigor.

“Are there so many young people in the countryside?” Ashe wondered aloud. “I thought most young people would head to big cities to work.”

“How could that be?” Annan replied nonchalantly. “In the Gospel Kingdom, 80% are production villages. Even with advanced alchemical machinery, industries like livestock,

fishing, and mining still require human hands. The prosperity of the top ten cities is built on the support from all these other villages.”

“Why don’t the young people leave then?” Igor asked. “Rural life can’t possibly be better than the cities, right? There’s not even a Drone in the sky here.”

Ashe frowned, “Don’t mention Drones; Lise would be scared.”

Annan raised an eyebrow, “Curious, are you?”

“Not exactly curious, just that Blood Moon also went through such a phase,” Igor said calmly. “Aspiring for prosperity is a natural instinct. To make the labor force understand their place, the Blood Moon Kingdom has indeed expended much effort.”

Pondering for a moment and as they passed a field, Annan slowly pulled over and called out to a young Orc working the land: “Hello.”

Annan, who could rank in the top ten of any Beauty Ranking across Races, transcended racial boundaries with his charm. The Orc youth scampered over, scratching his head sheepishly, too nervous to even greet properly.

“Do you watch JoyHeart?” Annan asked.

At this, the young Orc relaxed, “Yes, I do! I even have the rank of Count with three thousand Heart friends!”

“That’s great. I’m from Culture Limited Media, and I’m conducting a field survey on JoyHeart user preferences to research advertising segments. Could I take a look at your recent JoyHeart video history?”

The Orc youth readily agreed and summoned his Gospel to show the exiles.

“Clean and Sanitary”

“Handsome Orc Spends a Day Making Big Bone Sauce”

“13 Life Hacks You Can’t Miss”

“Top 10 Attractions in Moro Village”

“ ... ”

“Thank you very much for your cooperation,” Miss Annan said as she took out the bottle of wine they had drunk the previous day. “Here’s a little gift for you.”

“Thank you,” the Orc youth curiously took the bottle. “What kind of wine is this, Pink Rabbit? I’ve never seen it before. Can I exchange it for Throat-Piercer from our village?”

“I’m sorry, I’ll remember that, and next time I’ll bring your preferred brand,” Miss Annan replied with a smile, leaving the Orc youth utterly enchanted. “Goodbye, and may your day be blessed by the Gospel.”

Watching the Orc youth who lingered for a long time, Ashe teased, “Miss Annan, you’ve easily ruined another person’s marriage.”

“Did you all understand?” Miss Annan asked.

“Understand what?” Ashe couldn’t keep up with Miss Annan’s train of thought.

“The Barrier of Information?” Igor asked thoughtfully. “But we’re not far from Azura. You could almost see the Double-tiered City on the horizon. Could they really be trapped by an information barrier?”

“It’s much easier than you think,” Miss Annan stated. “The Gospel’s Barrier has no Loopholes.”

Knowing the others in the back hadn’t understood, Igor explained, “The videos the Orc usually watches are all from other villages and towns, none about the big cities like Azura. Plus, the Pink Rabbit beer that Miss Annan was drinking is a well-known brand in Azura, yet the Orc farmer had no idea about it. This leads to a conclusion — although the Orc has received a medium level of education, his worldview is completely limited to his village; he is totally unaware of the bustling city life.”

“Perhaps in his eyes, Azura, just a few dozen kilometers away, is nothing more than a slightly larger village, not worth aspiring to. He feels his current life is already good. To him, those richer and more powerful than he merely don’t have to work in the fields and can afford to spend their days playing JoyHeart in bed.”

“By the way,” Annan said, “people in the city don’t use the JoyHeart app. Even farmers from regions outside Azura use locally customized information apps. JoyHeart is exclusive to areas below the second-tier cities of Azura.”

Information gulfs, information curtains, information cocoons.

Perhaps there are many names, but the meaning is the same — blocking your channels of information access, allowing you to receive only partial and biased information, thus shaping your shallow and narrow worldview.

The principle is simple, the method uncomplicated, but the consequences are terrifyingly chilling.

Ashe couldn't help but shake his head, "How is that possible? It would be one thing if they were uneducated, but doesn't every citizen here receive a middle-level education? How could they be so easily deceived—"

At this moment, Lise had woken up and was hanging on Ashe like a koala, quietly listening to their discussion.

"I don't know what it's like in your Blood Moon Kingdom," Annan said calmly, "but don't forget, we have the Gospel."

The Gospel.

A term they had heard countless times over these days, again demonstrating its importance as vital as air, sunlight, and water.

"The class barriers that you exhaust all your wisdom to establish are merely sandcastles to the Gospel. In the social system of the Gospel, it's not just between classes, but there should be information gulfs between every region, every village, every family, and even every individual."

"As long as I don't know about your extravagance, and you don't know about my vulgarity, everyone can happily collaborate within the Kingdom of the Gospel, and the regional, racial, and class conflicts that should erupt are dissolved by the Gospel."

"Everyone has their own social position and must adhere to it. Perhaps greed, fear, jealousy, anger, these emotions might lead to irrational decisions, but that's okay, the Gospel teaches everyone from a young age to be rational and to overcome temptations."

"Even if you truly can't do it, it doesn't matter, the Gospel will help you 'block' those pieces of information that might contaminate you. As long as your world is narrow enough, that faint light can illuminate everything for you."

"What better lubricant for the social machine than lies and ignorance?"

At that moment, a highway bridge resembling a road to heaven appeared ahead. This was no mere concrete structure; the surface of the bridge glowed with a pale blue halo, exuding a high-tech, avant-garde feel. The halo formed words representing three directions: "Hemera," "Astra," and "Fanmula."

"Hold on tight, we're about to speed up."

Annan said cheerfully as he drove the old sports car onto the bridge. As the distance increased, the passengers noticed the car's speed accelerating rapidly, almost as if it were going to fly off the bridge!

“A miracle?” Ashe exclaimed.

“This is a miracle constructed by a team of civil sorcerers,” the Butler Youth said with a smile. “This Skybridge leads to other first-tier cities. Once you drive on it, the speed increases to the point of breaking the sound barrier, as if the bridge itself is moving forward. It’s the fastest mode of transportation in the Gospel Kingdom.”

Ashe held Lise, looking through the car window at the land below.

The farmlands were neatly organized, and houses were densely packed. However, raising one’s gaze a little, one could see the bustling double-tiered city of Azura. search the NovelFire(.)net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

The sun was high in the sky, with sunlight so brilliant it was dazzling, heralding another day filled with hope.

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

Chapter 291: Everyone on the Street is Watching You

As the sun set, the vintage car also descended from the Skybridge.

The Double-tiered City was now within reach on the horizon, but it was different from Azura.

If Azura’s double-tier resembled a large umbrella standing on the earth, this Double-tiered City looked like it was still under construction, with several smaller umbrellas scattered about. The entire city appeared to be loosely assembled.

Yet, more than its architecture, another detail caught the attention of outsiders.

When the sports car stopped at the edge of the city, Ashe couldn’t help but comment, “Is it quite foggy here?”

Even at dusk, the city was enveloped in white mist, making the warm yellow lights even more ambiguous. However, this mist didn’t feel creepy but rather added a blurry filter that gave the city a dreamy beauty.

Harvey sniffed and placed an unlit Catnip Cigarette in his mouth.

“The mist is a local specialty of Fanmula. I wasn’t used to it either, but we’re only here for a few days, so let’s bear with it.” Annan signaled everyone to get out of the car and then sent the antique vehicle to its rightful place—the nearby dump.

In the city, continuing to use the vintage car was unthinkable. In a city highway dominated by Hovercars, a vintage car was like dissonance in classical music, jarring enough to attract Red Caps to knock on your window and accuse you of maliciously disrupting city traffic.

“Are we going to ride bicycles again?”

“No, this time it’s an automatic scooter.”

Like in Azura, there were rental transport sheds in the outskirts, but unlike Azura’s healthy cycling, Fanmula seemed to prefer stylish outdoor Entertainment. Thus, everyone stood on scooters and leisurely entered the misty city.

“By the way, Ashe, put on your cloak,” Annan suddenly remembered. “Without my order, you are not to take off the cloak unless you’re bathing, and you must wear it even when Meditating into the Virtual Realm.”

“Do I need to wear it in the safe house too?” Ashe asked, puzzled. “I understand the need for a cloak to conceal my identity, especially since I’m the only one wanted by the Empire’s Red Caps... but once we’re settled, shouldn’t I be able to take it off?”

“No, have you forgotten your Demonic Trench Coat?” Miss Annan shook her head. “I’ve thought it over, and the two from Broken Home Firm retreated too quickly last night. It’s unlikely that they were scared off by you, so it must have been because of your Demonic Trench Coat.”

“Miss Annan, promise me, don’t turn into a Riddler like Igor,” Ashe pleaded.

Igor responded softly, “If you don’t understand, just say my riddles are confusing... Maybe Gospel is right, letting you immerse yourselves in blissful ignorance isn’t such a bad thing.”

Miss Annan shook her head again: “What I mean is, your Demonic Trench Coat might intimidate those who see you for the first time. The effect depends on the difference in Realm levels within the Mind Faction, meaning even Sorcerers with Two Wings or Tri-Wings might be at a disadvantage.”

“Therefore, your Demonic Trench Coat could be a crucial ace up your sleeve, and you mustn’t let anyone easily see your true face under the cloak until the critical moment.”

“How come you make it sound like I’m some femme fatale who resorts to stripping when in trouble...” Ashe muttered as he put on the fully covering cloak, looking more like a fugitive than ever.

Lise gleefully rode the scooter, although she had never used one before. Clearly, scooters were more appealing to children than bicycles, and she quickly mastered how to use it, joyfully leading the way as if on a picnic.

As she passed two pedestrians, both suddenly turned to look at her.

One was a dark-skinned Human and the other a green-skinned Lizard Person. They seemed not to know each other, but they simultaneously turned their gazes toward the white-haired little girl.

Lise immediately retreated to stand next to Ashe, but as their group passed, the two locals still performed a salute of attention.

In the eyes of the locals, there was no emotion of disgust, happiness, or curiosity, but rather a look resembling that of seeing an unfamiliar classmate suddenly join the class.

As they delved deeper into the city, this type of attention became more frequent. Pedestrians on the streets stopped to look, customers at outdoor cafés put down their teacups, and passengers in Hovercars stuck their heads out.

From all directions, above and below, unavoidable and unignorable.

The six of them seemed to possess a mesmerizing charm that drew the eyes of everyone wherever they went.

Not only Lise, but also Harvey and Igor felt uncomfortably haunted. Walking down the street under the quiet stares of everyone could spawn many cruel fantasies in one’s mind. The gazes felt as heavy as lead, making it hard to breathe, as if even the air had thinned.

“Harvey, I’m sorry.”

“Hmm?”

“You were right,” Igor whispered. “Corpses are indeed better than the living, at least they don’t stare at me like this.”

Harvey hesitated, “Actually, corpses can stare at you too.”

“What a pity, one less advantage for the dead, I’m giving up on the Necromancy Faction.”

However, unlike the strangers, Annan and Banjeet remained emotionally stable throughout, seemingly indifferent to other people's gazes. They arrived at the free city rail subway station, and Annan even signaled everyone to get on, voluntarily entering the narrow space of the train car to endure the scrutiny of all the other passengers.

Lise timidly hid her head in Ashe's arms, and Ashe wished he could bury his face in Annan's arms—he was scared too!

He dared not look inside the car, instead, casting his gaze toward the warm sky outside the window. However, the fog inside the city did not dissipate but became even thicker and sweet, sticky. The competing sun and moon for the dominion of the sky appeared ambiguous through the light fog filter, like they were fighting at the bedside.

However, Fanmula's aerial logistics system seemed weaker than Azura's. If Azura's Drone swarm was like a school cafeteria bustling with students right after noon classes, then Fanmula's Drones were like the Restroom during class breaks: sparse and few, leaving one to wonder whether it was due to a downgrade in Fanmula's consumer level or if people here simply didn't favor online shopping.

The Railcar halted at the station, and as new passengers entered the car, Ashe and the others immediately sensed something amiss—the locals, who had been subtly observing them, suddenly shifted their attention to two new passengers.

Even without knowledge of local customs, they quickly understood what this meant: These two newcomers were not locals either!

Sure enough, the two new passengers looked towards Annan's group and walked straight over to them. One was a robust Orc and the other a slender Goblin. Their appearance revealed no weapons, but most Sorcerers using Firearms tend to keep them hidden under coats, and from the way their waistcoats draped, it was clear they were up-to-date with the latest Version trends.

They stood next to Annan's seat: "Purple Moth, the Baroness sends her regards. I am from the Moonlit Harmony Home Firm—"

"You must have been active in Fanmula these past days," Annan said, his expression unchanging. "Do you like this city?"

"Fanmula is the City of No Return of the Six Emblems, we are not part of the Six Emblems, so how could we possibly like this place?" the Goblin chuckled. "We were on a mission near Ariendo and were about to head back when we received the Baroness' orders to wait for you in Fanmula. We didn't have high hopes and planned to return soon, but luck was on our side—we discovered from the Gospel that the number of outsiders in Fanmula had increased by five, exactly matching your group."

Using the Gospel to track the number of outsiders to determine their whereabouts?

Ashe and his companions quickly gathered two pieces of information: first, the number of outsiders in Fanmula was extremely low; second, the Broken Home Firm indeed couldn't directly obtain information about them, only able to indirectly track their movements.

But...

Weren't there 6 of them? Why had the number of outsiders only increased by 5?

"Are you sure luck is on your side?" Annan touched his Amethyst Earring, smirking coldly. "This is Fanmula, not Azura. You dare make a move?"

Annan spoke without lowering his voice. Upon hearing this, the surrounding locals' gazes became sharper and heavier, yet they remained quietly seated, indifferently observing the unfolding conflict among the foreigners.

"Why not try and see?" the Goblin said with a slight smile, summoning his Gospel. Then, suddenly, the Railcar braked sharply, and the strong inertia almost threw the passengers forward. Prepared for this, Ashe and his companions quickly steadied themselves, ready to fight the mixed breeds from the Broken Home Firm—

"Don't move."

Annan's words kept the men's killing intent visible but unacted upon, strangely enough. The Orc and Goblins didn't take this opportunity to attack; instead, they stood nonchalantly to the side as if taunting them to 'come on, hit me'.

The Railcar began to move backward, speeding towards the city's exit.

Other passengers straightened their clothes and sat back down, showing no complaint about the sudden disruption. They looked at Annan and his group with a gaze reserved for the dead, as if they were beneath speaking to.

Suddenly, Igor asked, "Is it illegal to strike first?"

"In public, whoever strikes first and causes harm will be marked as a criminal by the Gospel, which even prompts the Red Caps to apprehend them," Banjeet explained. "Moreover, from the moment a crime begins, everyone else automatically gains the unlimited right to self-defense against the criminal. So, who acts first is crucial—of course, this only applies in public areas. In private areas, although the Gospel is aware, it doesn't intervene; it's up to the Red Caps to investigate on their own."

Therefore, even though Annan's house was dismantled last night, the Gospel would not report the Broken Home Firm for it. The Gospel only prohibits Player vs. Player (PVP) actions in public areas; PVP disputes within private areas are considered internal player disputes and are outside the Gospel's jurisdiction.

The plan of the two was simple—control the Railcar to leave Fanmula and head back to Azura, with the rule that whoever strikes first is the loser.

Although Ashe was already wanted, Annan and the others were still innocent. Logically and morally, the Red Caps could only target Ashe and not do anything to them as law-abiding citizens.

For instance, if they were sitting in a Railcar, to ensure the safety of Annan and the others, the Red Caps could only stop them and force Ashe to come out; they absolutely could not attack them with a flame blast. Even with advanced medical capabilities, sacrificing the interests of lawful citizens is a line the Red Caps cannot cross.

But if they were to give the Red Caps a reason to act, their hands would not be so tied; they might even kill them first and then use medical treatment to revive and slowly judge them.

The plan essentially tested whether Annan had the resolve to stake everything on one throw of the dice. If Annan couldn't give up her status as a lawful citizen, she would have no choice but to accept the 'Azura One-Day Tour' prize from Broken Home Firm.

Of course, there was another option: letting Ashe, who was already a wanted criminal, handle the two of them.

Setting aside whether Ashe could defeat them, his mere appearance in public would immediately trigger the imperial warrant, and Red Caps from across the city would converge to claim the bounty that had literally fallen from the sky.

Moreover, Ashe probably couldn't defeat the two Two Wings sorcerers unless he once again activated the special effect of his Demonic Trench Coat—but what if that failed?

The safest method would be for Annan and the others to overpower the two firm agents with a thunderous force and then make a quick escape, but...

Igor looked at Annan and saw no hint of any plan on her beautiful face; she seemed quite content with the situation.

The Con Artist made a gesture to the Necromancer, and Harvey raised his eyebrows.

Since Annan was unwilling to make the first move, they would simply force her to do so.

From the beginning to the end, Igor and Harvey's attitude towards their boss remained unchanged—they didn't want a boss.

Being a fugitive was almost more familiar to them than their own identities. If they could use this opportunity to draw the young lady into their camp, they saw no reason to refuse.

At that moment, the Railcar crossed a street that clearly marked the boundary between the city areas. To the north was the core of Fanmula's double-tiered city, and to the south lay the newly developing districts.

Just then, Ashe and the others felt as if something was being drawn out of their bodies, leaving them feeling empty inside. Even their thoughts slowed, and they could hardly muster the energy to do anything.

The other passengers showed even clearer signs of this, their heads drooping like wilting flowers, lacking even the strength to watch the outsiders.

Suddenly, the Railcar screeched to a halt, not because it was forced to, but due to the hesitation of the controller.

Within just a few breaths, the Orc and Goblins turned pale and listless, their arms and legs trembling uncontrollably. The Orc was slightly better off, merely gasping for air, while the Goblins knelt on the ground, drooling uncontrollably, their heartbeats loud enough to echo throughout the car.

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

Chapter 292: Fanmula

"Rapid breathing, dilated pupils—these are symptoms of adrenaline intoxication."

Annan spoke leisurely, "You've been in Fanmula for over four hours today, haven't you? You're neither from the Six Emblems nor have undergone Demon Extraction Therapy. How could you possibly leave the City of No Return?"

The Goblin's face turned exceedingly grim. With a flick of his finger, the Railcar returned to the core Area. The passengers inside revived like parched earth after a rain shower, and even Ashe and the others felt a significant lift in their spirits, as if every cell in their bodies was dancing—

"Sugar Addiction?"

The Con Artist, who had encountered countless Sugar Addicts, was the first to realize, his face growing incredibly sullen: "It was withdrawal symptoms! We've caught a Sugar Addiction!"

“No wonder,” Harvey, with a Catnip Cigarette in his mouth, remarked, “I was wondering why my Smoking Addiction seemed so much weaker. It turns out it wasn’t that my willpower had strengthened, but that my addiction had already been satisfied.”

Ashe, holding Lise, paused in confusion. Sugar? They hadn’t eaten any sugar—how could they possibly—

Everyone suddenly realized something and looked towards the faint mist outside.

By now, the sky had completely darkened, and the city’s neon lights were shrouded in an ever-present thin mist, like the coy joy of a maiden’s boudoir, yet also like a nightmare filled with hidden threats.

“Don’t worry,” Banjeet said. “While it does cause psychological dependency, it does no physical harm, and it can be completely eradicated through Demon Extraction Therapy.”

“What exactly is this mist...?” Igor murmured.

“Below Fanmula is a citywide underground farm where Mermaid’s Stinkweed is cultivated,” Annan explained. “It is the primary material for Catnip Cigarettes, an indispensable component of various hallucinogenic drugs, and a major industry in Fanmula.”

“The biggest issue with growing Mermaid’s Stinkweed is that it constantly emits ‘Beauty Mist.’ Beauty Mist cannot be dissolved by any Magic, and when highly concentrated, it turns toxic. The only solution is to rely on people to inhale it.”

“However, Sorcerers soon discovered that the processed Beauty Mist not only lacked any toxicity but also provided a long-lasting, pleasurable mental state that was more comfortable and healthier than smoking Catnip Cigarettes.”

“So Fanmula transformed into the mist-covered city you see now,” Miss Annan explained. “It boasts the highest average lifespan, the best public safety, the highest work efficiency, and the highest levels of happiness among its citizens. It is known as the ‘City of No Return’—Fanmula.”

“The two individuals standing before us now are travelers who couldn’t resist Fanmula’s allure.”

The Orc and the Goblin regained their composure. “No worries, I’ve already notified the Baroness. We can wait here at our leisure—”

“You’re out of time,” Miss Annan said with a smile.

It was as if she had uttered a summoning spell. The next second, a sound like that of a flying machine swooshed through the night sky. A dozen Red Caps, wearing Yuheng Boots, surrounded the Railcar, and a warning echoed through the compartment: "We suspect that criminals are maliciously controlling the Railcar to disrupt traffic. Please, all passengers must disembark immediately for inspection. I repeat, all passengers must disembark immediately!"

"We're surrounded by Red Caps!" Ashe exclaimed, panic rising. "What do we do? Fight our way out?"

"No need to fight. Just surrender," Miss Annan said cheerfully.

Igor squinted his eyes. "Miss Annan, have you forgotten the new Contract we just signed? Or does the Contract mean nothing to you?"

"That's not it," Banjeet explained. "The reason we came to Fanmula is that there are people here who can protect us—Miss Annan's Aunt is a Red Cap in Fanmula."

"Don't worry, I've already informed Aunt. These people are here to pick us up," Miss Annan said with a smile.

Ashe and the others sighed in relief and gave the Purple Moth a thumbs-up.

True to those who dare to defy the Divine Master, she had planned everything meticulously—

Snap!

As Ashe and the others stepped off the Railcar, they were immediately restrained by the Red Caps. Not only Ashe but even Miss Annan and the others were firmly shackled with Magic cuffs, and everyone was pressed to the ground!

Everyone silently looked at the young lady. They said nothing, yet it seemed they said everything.

"Don't lift that person's cloak," came a message from Cleos. "It seems that person's appearance could cause a severe mental shock to Sorcerers."

Ashe felt utterly dismayed by this rumor—was it shaping him into some sort of ultimate, supremely ugly demon lord?

He noticed Annan's face turn pale upon hearing this, thinking a major demon had arrived. When he followed the direction of the voice, he only saw a pair of long legs clad in thigh-high boots.

A Beautiful Elf in a Red Cap appeared before them, radiating mature charm. Her waistcoat lifted her impressive peaks, and her extremely short skirt just barely covered the splendid scenery beneath. Her thigh-high boots stepped elegantly as she approached Annan and the others, looking down at the group of fugitives from Azura.

She waved her hand, signaling the Red Caps to drag away the official from the Broken Home Firm. “Rough them up as much as you’re allowed. Otherwise, every rat from the gutter will think they can sneak into Fanmula.”

Then the Beautiful Elf in the Red Cap turned to the group. Ashe and the others shivered, even Igor dared not act rashly—even without releasing any arcane energy, her gaze alone was enough to impose a heavy pressure on the Two Wings Sorcerers!

Sanctuary Sorcerer!

They had actually been captured by a Sanctuary Sorcerer!

Now everything was truly over!

Only Annan defiantly raised her head and shouted, “Where’s Aunt!?”

Ashe and the others were instantly impressed—only Annan could do what we couldn’t!

“Nona Senhaeser has been abusing her authority, colluding with outsiders, and betraying Red Cap intelligence. She has been arrested, suspended, and is awaiting punishment,” said the Beautiful Elf coolly. “You won’t be seeing her.”

“But you can’t arrest us!” Annan shouted back. “We are law-abiding citizens—”

“The Red Caps now suspect you of being involved in transient crimes and are formally detaining you for an Interrogation,” the Beautiful Elf said, borrowing a piece of Scribble Note Paper and a pen from someone else. She scribbled a few lines, then tossed it to Annan. “If you like, I can write a few more—shall I skip writing one for that fugitive?”

Annan gritted her teeth and said, “Qenna, you—”

Snap!

The Beautiful Elf in the Red Cap kicked Annan’s face with her thigh-high boot, the force sending Annan flying several meters away. This elf showed no mercy or tenderness typically given to fair maidens. “Impolite,” she stated coldly.

Upon seeing this, Banjeet quickly pleaded, “Lady Qenna, it wasn’t intentional disrespect from Annan, she just—”

“Enough, Banjeet. No need to defend that girl. After all these years, she still hasn’t changed—she’s become a complete Dolan: good for nothing and a cause of trouble.”

Aside from Banjeet, everyone else was stunned by the volume of information in her words.

“You all must be the junk my daughter picked up,” the Beautiful Elf in the Red Cap said, looking at Ashe and the others as if they were just a collection of toys.

“Welcome to Fanmula.”

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

Chapter 293: Prison is My Home

“Coming to Prison feels just like coming home.”

Ashe patted the iron bars and sighed, “It’s just that the environment is much worse than Shattered Lake.”

“This is just a detention room, of course the environment isn’t great,” Igor commented. “I’ve seen documentaries; the prisons in Gospel are more luxurious than the Blood Moon, and without the Blood Moon Tribunal, too. You can look forward to that.”

“That’s good, as long as the prison food includes Lala Fatty, I’ll be satisfied.”

Listening to their boundless chatter, Annan raised an eyebrow. “You guys don’t seem too worried about your situation?”

“Ah, who would have thought, Annan, that you actually have a mother who is a Sanctuary Sorcerer. How can we afford to worry?” Ashe spread his hands.

“Right,” Igor added, “From what I understand about ‘parents’, your mother, even if she can’t give her life for you, will at least meet most of your demands. Covering for us falls within the parental duties.”

“That’s debatable.”

Everyone’s gaze shifted to Lise, who was looking down at a small mirror, swinging her legs back and forth, and said, “Not all parents love their children...”

Then everyone’s gaze shifted back to Ashe, with a hint of reproach in their eyes.

Ashe grimaced in response—they were blaming him, and yet, this was his first time being a father. Lise hadn't faced any life-threatening dangers for so many days, which was already him being responsible!

Ashe could never forget the days when he was cared for by his father as a child, which were more thrilling than a roller coaster... There was even a photo in the family album of Ashe on the parallel bars, and aside from the fact that he wasn't taller than a fire hydrant in that photo, there wasn't any other issue.

"If you were to categorize the parents of this world, 99% have feelings for their children, 1% do not," Annan spoke illogically, "Qenna belongs to those parents who wish their children were emotionless marionettes they could manipulate. If you expect her to cover for you because of me, you might as well hope Banjeet could arouse her desires."

Everyone turned their gaze to the youthful Butler Youth, Banjeet, who sighed, "Miss Annan, I know you feel upset when you see Lady Qenna, but it's one thing to insult me; you shouldn't insult your mother."

"I didn't insult her," Miss Annan responded. "Isn't my father quite similar to you?"

"That doesn't mean you can insult me either," Banjeet retorted.

Ashe curiously asked, "Miss Annan, your mother is an Elf, and you are a Human?"

"Have you forgotten? After the elimination of reproductive barriers, children born from different races randomly inherit one of the parent's traits. The Human genes of the Dolan Family overpowered the Elven blood of the Senhaeser," Miss Annan explained coolly. "Lady Qenna would love to stretch my ears just to prove the genetic superiority of the Senhaeser lineage."

Igor inquired, "Is your relationship with your mother that bad?"

"Our relationship isn't about 'good or bad'; it's more about 'existent or non-existent.' I don't want to recount my negligible childhood to you, nor do I want to feed your sympathy with my tears. You just need to know that old woman has no concept of family. The only thing she cares about is the Senhaeser surname," Miss Annan said with a cold laugh. "I'd rather ask my Aunt for help than have anything to do with her. In fact, our encounter just now was our first meeting in ten years... Look, Lady Qenna was quite warm towards me."

She pointed to her swollen face, unable to heal the injury inflicted by her mother's high boots due to the Magic shackles restricting her arcane energy.

Ashe and Igor exchanged glances, their eyes reflecting a shared sentiment.

Miss Annan twitched her nose, "I smell your silent criticisms..."

“Has your nose been modified like Harvey’s too?” Ashe teased. “Harvey is sensitive to Corpses, are you intolerant to unspoken thoughts?”

Purple Moth scoffed, “You’re not thinking that Lady Qenna actually cares about me, but she’s just a mother who’s bad at expressing her feelings, so there are many misunderstandings between us... are you?”

Igor and Ashe blinked, clearly hit by the accuracy of Miss Annan’s assumption.

“I wouldn’t even console myself with such naive fantasies when I was six,” Annan said calmly. “Back then, I even thought I might be the reincarnation of a Divine Master, that Qenna treated me that way to foster my growth, to nurture my hatred, and ultimately, she would serve as a Sacrifice to guide me to slay her. This would free me from hatred and elevate me beyond the mundane, ascending the ladder of the Gospel... Oddly enough, such dramatic plot twists did provide some comfort to my younger self.”

“I advise you not to hold any expectations for that old woman,” Annan said with her eyes closed. “That’s advice from someone who’s been through it.”

With such family matters, there wasn’t much room for anyone else to comment, but Igor showed an expression that read ‘as expected’—as a ‘Blood Moon’ adherent who held disdain for the Family System, he found Annan’s strained relationship with her mother to be reasonable.

“Cough, cough, cough!”

Harvey, who had been lying on the iron-framed bed, suddenly began coughing himself awake. He sat up, holding his head, his expression a bizarre mix of excitement and exhaustion.

He picked at the hangnails on his fingers and said, “Don’t you feel it?”

“What feeling?” asked the others.

The Necromancer pointed to his head: “Excessive dopamine secretion... My brain is constantly stimulated by dopamine across five types of receptors. If this continues, the threshold will increase to a dangerous level. I usually have to be careful smoking and eating sweets because once that threshold is raised, it doesn’t come down.”

“Look, I feel nothing even when I tear at my hangnails, it’s actually kind of thrilling; pain has turned completely into pleasure,” the Necromancer showed his hands. “Purple Moth, you don’t feel your face hurting either, right? Just a cool sensation... Has this city gone mad?”

Even the Necromancer thought the city was outrageous.

However, Ashe and the others really didn't feel anything abnormal—though, being so relaxed and comfortable in a detention center was indeed a bit odd.

But given Ashe's past experiences, it was hard for him to feel any real fear about being arrested. He no longer knew whether this was due to an inner confidence or because the fog was overly comforting.

"Ah, unexpected that the first to notice something was wrong was someone with a smoking addiction..." Annan commented. "Makes sense, accustomed as you are to numbing yourself with hallucinogenic pheromones, you're more attuned to changes in bodily hormones than we ordinary folks. If we're talking about the boiling frog scenario, Mr. Harvey, having once been scalded by hot water, you're more sensitive to shifts in temperature."

"But as I mentioned before, that's just the kind of city Fanmula is. Beauty Mist envelops every corner of the city, keeping everyone in a constantly cheerful and pleasant mood—this is what's at the core of Fanmula."

Banjeet explained, "Azura is a new city that developed over the last two hundred years, utilizing all the latest technological advancements from the Gospel Kingdom. It can be said to be the most developed and advanced city in the empire. Other tier-one cities might not be as advanced as Azura, but they retain the cultural essence accumulated over hundreds or even thousands of years of development."

"Essence?" The Necromancer laughed. "If the threshold keeps rising, do you really not realize what's happening? Endless pleasure only leads to a brutal end."

"What will happen?" Lise asked curiously.

"If we say that a person is a machine and happiness is the start button," Harvey said, "normally, an average person might press it four or five times a day—those little moments of happiness that keep our machine running smoothly."

"But for those living in this city, their happiness button is constantly being pressed by this mist, nonstop. While this certainly makes the 'human machine' operate much more efficiently, a machine can wear out, and the button can rust. When the threshold rises, it means the button has rusted and becomes hard to press."

"When the threshold reaches a certain level..."

"The button can no longer be pressed," Igor added. "And then the human machine completely fails to start."

"According to my perception, people living in this city will break down mentally within a year, rusting into a toy that can't function at all," Harvey said, somewhat puzzled. "But it seems like those people on the streets can still live and work normally..."

“Your thinking is essentially correct,” Annan said. “But so-called sorcerers are a group of miracle creators who defy common sense.”

“The button will rust, but isn’t that what lubricant is for?”

“What lubricant?” Ashe asked.

“Fight poison with poison,” Miss said, touching her swollen face, her voice full of disdain. “A pleasure more intense and insane than Beauty Mist, more than dopamine, more than any hallucinogenic drug—”

“Love and Family.”

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

Chapter 294: Family Dream

“Stimulants, excitants, Joy Potion, spirit transmutation drugs, Genius mixtures... long ago, Alchemists have been seeking ways to reconcile with this user-unfriendly, trashy reality.”

“Generally speaking, even if magicians are willing to endure, reality only becomes more demanding and exacerbates. The miraculous drugs they develop either have a very high barrier to use, limited to the magicians themselves; or they possess a strong toxicity that even medical wizards cannot counter, damaging the brain.”

“So, is there a non-toxic alchemical potion that can be mass-produced and benefit everyone?”

“There actually is.” Annan spread his hands, “A special pheromone extracted from Mermaid’s Stinkweed, an absolutely safe component of joy, non-toxic and non-addictive, with no side effects regardless of the dosage. Therefore, various drugs prepared from Mermaid’s Stinkweed quickly circulated throughout the Gospel nation, like the Catnip Cigarette you have in your hand, Mr. Harvey.”

“How can there be such a convenient creation?” Igor frowned. “In the Blood Moon Kingdom, such a miraculous plant that seems to be a fantasy doesn’t exist—”

Purple Moth laughed, “Of course it doesn’t exist there because it is a miraculous plant cultivated under the guidance of the Gospel, unique to the Gospel nation.”

The three were taken aback. The Gospel?

It actually made sense—being a Gospel that could answer all questions, how could it not be used in scientific research? Especially in experimental science, guidance from the Gospel is a tremendous advantage.

Before each experiment, the Gospel could eliminate all potential hazards; when encountering a bottleneck, just opening the Gospel could reveal the next steps; upon discovering an unknown component, asking the Gospel could clarify its uses... Compared to Magical Factions, basic science is the greatest beneficiary of the Gospel, and probably, in these thousand years, the basic sciences in the Gospel nation have never stagnated!

But this also implied a problem...

Igor frowned and asked, “Doesn’t the Gospel prevent the production of Joy Potion?”

“Because it’s not as serious as you think,” Annan said calmly. “In fact, the highest level of Joy Potion available to the general public is the Catnip Cigarette in Harvey’s hand. Moreover, a special ingredient has been added to the Catnip Cigarette to increase the smoker’s aversion, so even the strongest Orc can only smoke one pack a day without reaching the threshold for increased tolerance.”

“Most Joy Potions are sold only to corporations, such as ‘Rosemary’ which is paired with central air conditioning to effectively increase the productivity of an entire company’s staff; or ‘Fourteen Spices’ specifically used in the food industry, which can enhance the dining experience for customers...”

“Nothing exists that is only harmful without benefits, especially since Joy Potion is the ‘Sacred Blood’ pursued by Alchemists. How could they discard it? As long as it is used judiciously and moderately, Joy Potion can be beneficial and harmless to society. And...”

“You also have the Gospel,” Ashe interjected. “As long as the Gospel helps regulate, the harmful effects of Joy Potion can be virtually eliminated.”

“The same goes for Beauty Mist,” Annan continued. “Processed Beauty Mist can become a nutrient for cities, and sorcerers naturally consider whether the city might ‘overeat’. Guided by the Gospel and their own exploration, the sorcerers of Fanmula have found a perfect path—the Family Reincarnation Dream System.”

Purple Moth looked at the Con Artist: “Mr. Bukin, as a Mind Sorcerer, you must be aware that some miracles can directly extract positive emotions from their targets, right?”

“Extracting positive emotions and increasing negative emotions is a rather common assassination technique among Mind Sorcerers,” Igor explained. “If the target happens to encounter a significant setback, it can even induce them to commit suicide.”

“Thank you for your answer,” Annan nodded slightly. “In the world of sorcerers, positive emotions can be treated as a resource. It can even be said that without this resource, a person’s mental state can quickly deteriorate.”

“But too much of this resource can overwhelm oneself. Now, the situation in Fanmula is that everyone has an excess of emotional resources, so the solution is quite obvious.”

“Collecting positive emotions?” Igor looked puzzled. “But—I won’t ask how you collect them, but manipulating emotions requires delving deep into the Soul. Surely you can’t sneak into someone’s mind like I do? It would only be possible if every citizen willingly exposed their Soul, like leaving their house doors open at night for all to see inside... That’s riskier than being physically naked!”

“Of course, it wouldn’t be appropriate among strangers.”

Leaning against the wall, Annan spoke slowly: “But what if it’s among family members?”

“A mother with her son, a daughter with her grandchild, a sister with her nephew, a brother with his nephew... Bound by Bloodline, fortified by family, everyone happily merges into the collective, sharing their joy, lowering the threshold.”

“The concept of Bloodline identity is indeed fascinating. When it’s strong enough, it can suppress individual will to the extreme.”

“This was originally a fanciful idea, but after centuries of development and countless Sorcerers contributing, they have woven the happy emotions of numerous family members into layers of dreams, ultimately creating an indescribable Bloodline Miracle.”

“When family members close their eyes, they can immerse themselves in these dreams at any time, entering a fantastical world woven from countless happy emotions.”

“In the dream, if you crave solitude, it carves out a small world just for you; if you seek someone to share and confide in, a listening family member will meet you; if you seek answers, a wise family member waits beneath a tree; if you desire a passionate romance, perhaps the next person will spark the flames of Love with you.”

“Every action you take consumes your positive emotions. Once these are depleted, you naturally leave the dream and return to reality.”

“As you spend these emotions, you gradually develop a belief in this family. You begin to think your happiness comes from the family, from Love, and all your pleasant

memories bear the mark of 'Love and Family.' You forsake your smaller self, entrusting your spirit to the great family."

"The chronic ailments brought by Beauty Mist will soon disappear, replaced by a more formidable disease: Familial Love."

"Wait a minute!" Ashe exclaimed in surprise. "The reincarnation dream sounds just like—"

"Like the Virtual Realm, right?" Annan smiled. "I haven't finished yet. In the Mind Faction, information is stored in increasing order of magnitude: 'thoughts', 'will', and 'emotions'."

"Thoughts are just short snippets of memory, while will is a group of thoughts that form a memory cluster with a strong directional focus. Emotions, on the other hand, are the accidental byproducts of the collision between will and memory."

"Even if all the positive emotions here are catalyzed by Beauty Mist and are of the lowest quality, they still contain a lot of information. What do you think happens when people actively immerse themselves in dreams woven from these emotions?"

"Pieces of past memories are absorbed and digested by contemporary individuals..." Harvey shook his head. "Disgusting."

Annan nodded. "Yes, in the dream, if you're lucky—or unlucky—enough, you might resonate with other memory fragments, absorbing their knowledge and emotions. As for digestion... well, it's hard to say who digests whom."

"Qenna, a pure-blood political creature, isn't something that can be shaped by reality alone. I suspect she inherited the dirtiest essence of the past several Patriarchs of Senhaeser, which is why she radiates the stale, moldy scent of expired Elves from her hair to her nails."

Beauty Mist, Family Reincarnation Dream System... Ashe and the others felt as if they had been slapped, their minds overwhelmed by a torrent of information.

This could be the setting for a new main stage in the story, right? Isn't Fanmula going a bit too far with such bizarre settings even for side stages?

And Beauty Mist is one thing, but to counteract it with the Family Reincarnation Dream System... It sounds like inventing a machine that transforms poop into stir-fried beef ho fun just to eat a bite of shit.

After all, the Family Reincarnation Dream System is much more significant than Beauty Mist. It's essentially creating a mini Virtual Realm specifically for knowledge Inheritance.

As the reincarnation dreams continue to expand and draw enough emotional nourishment, they might indeed become a family-exclusive Virtual Realm—

“Actually, it’s not as good as Miss Annan described,” Banjeet said. “Knowledge reincarnation does happen, but it’s a rare occurrence, maybe once a year at most. Most people just treat the Reincarnation Dream as a place for leisure and Entertainment, a way to release extra happiness.”

The Butler Youth explained, “The most powerful aspect of the Family Reincarnation Dream isn’t the reincarnation itself, but the Family. All the family members who join the same dream, even if they have never met each other, will find their bloodline bonds and subconscious impressions gradually deepening, eventually forming an almost intuitive bloodline recognition.”

“You must have been wondering why we were surrounded and watched by everyone when we walked on the street just now,” he continued. “Apart from us, all the others belong to ‘the same Family’. They look at each other and feel a close kinship, even if they do not know each other’s names, but they know they are family members who can be honest with each other.”

Ashe and the others immediately understood—their behavior while walking on the street was akin to intruding into someone else’s private family gathering and causing a disturbance, no wonder they attracted such attention.

“So,” Igor, who was responsible for “leading the smart to inspire the smarter,” summarized, “Beauty Mist provides endless joy to the city’s residents, hence work efficiency, resident satisfaction, and the level of public safety are unmatched in the Gospel Kingdom.”

“But to prevent this pleasure from damaging the citizens’ minds, Sorcerers created the Family Reincarnation Dream, allowing citizens to channel their excess joy into the dreams. Over centuries, the dreams and the sorcerer families have grown to completely dominate the city of Fanmula.”

“Almost everyone living here has joined this operational system, and outsiders are accurately identified by the locals.”

“Beauty Mist has catalyzed happy citizens, Beauty Mist has given rise to a vast Family, and Beauty Mist has isolated Fanmula from the Gospel Kingdom.”

“Very well summarized,” Miss Annan said. “There are virtually no omissions.”

The Con Artist was silent for a moment: “...So why did we come to this den of iniquity that devours people without spitting out their bones?”

“Wait a minute,” Ashe raised his hand. “Aren’t you going to discuss why the Reincarnation Dream so closely resembles the Virtual Realm? Could it be that the Virtual Realm—”

“Some Sorcerers have long suggested that the Virtual Realm is a grand dream woven by all beings. This is a well-known theory, though no one can prove it,” Igor said dismissively, waving his hand. “Adults are speaking, children should not interrupt!”

Lise reached out to cover her father’s mouth, while Ashe tapped his daughter on the head.

“For outsiders, Fanmula can indeed be quite dangerous,” Banjeet remarked. “But Miss Annan is not an outsider.”

Everyone turned to look at Miss Annan, whose mouth twitched as if she had swallowed a cockroach. After a moment of silence, she admitted reluctantly, “I lived in Fanmula for a while when I was a child.”

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

Chapter 295: Cunning Daughter versus Cold-blooded Mother

“In this wretched den of iniquity, the only gain I’ve had is meeting Aunt.”

“My relationship with Aunt is strong; she’s not the lunatic Qenna is. My original plan was to bring you all to seek refuge with Aunt, and then continue here to desecrate the Divine Master’s schemes.”

“Due to Fanmula’s highly xenophobic nature, as long as we can hide within one Family, not even the Red Caps can touch us. Even if we all made it onto the future Ranking, we could still rest easy here.”

“Fanmula has six major Families, also known as the Six Emblems of Fanmula. The Six Emblems divide the entire city, each with its own administrative body, and they don’t share information between them, providing us opportunities to exploit any Loophole.”

This plan suddenly seemed flawless, but there was a very obvious Loophole, and even Ashe noticed it.

But they did not continue discussing it.

Outside the detention cell, the sound of high-heeled boots echoed.

Creak—

The heavy metal door slowly pushed open, and a pair of sleek legs stepped into the quiet detention room, their crisp tapping sounds as if stepping directly on everyone's hearts. A tall figure, stunning beauty, and an arrogant demeanor, the Beautiful Elf in a Red Cap appeared in the prisoners' line of sight, stealing all their colors.

Several Red Caps opened the cell, and the Beautiful Elf walked in to scan the room briefly without speaking.

Miss Annan, always calm and composed, seemed to meet her nemesis, completely unable to keep her cool: "When are you letting us out? According to the regulations, without substantial criminal evidence recognized by the Gospel, you can only detain us for a maximum of 48 hours."

"48 hours?" As if hearing a joke, Qenna Senhaeser chuckled: "Yes, typically it is indeed a maximum of 48 hours, otherwise it would be a legal violation."

"But..." she leaned forward slightly, looking down closely at her own daughter: "As the Captain of the Red Caps, I can request the Gospel to determine that you have serious criminal suspicions, extending the detention limit to 170 hours."

"And given that your main activities over the past thirty days were in Azura, coming to Fanmula counts as committing crimes in a different location, which further extends the detention time by 720 hours."

"I can legally detain you for over a month within the limits allowed by the Gospel," the Beautiful Elf in the Red Cap said with a cold laugh. "Did you think only you pests knew how to exploit the rules? The Red Caps don't exploit the rules simply because they disdain to stoop to your level, the level of parasites."

Annan's lips twitched as she restrained her anger. "Qenna, I didn't come here for you, you—"

"But I came for you, you ungrateful wretch."

Slap!

Before anyone could react, Annan was struck hard across the face. She groaned, falling to the ground as her cheek numbed and she spat out a mouthful of blood before Qenna grabbed her, then—

“Ah!”

Qenna delivered a brutal knee to the girl’s abdomen. Annan felt several of her ribs break, her organs squeezed, barely able to catch her breath!

Annan cried out as she collapsed to the floor, struggling to stand up and raise her handcuffed hands in defense. The Beautiful Elf in the Red Cap, seeing this, showed no mercy and delivered a powerful kick with her high boots!

Boom!

The Magic handcuffs shattered under the force, and Annan was kicked against the wall, her whole body numbed by the impact, her vision a blur of colors, her ears ringing almost to deafness!

“Stop.”

Qenna pulled out a handkerchief, bent down to wipe the blood from the tip of her shoe, ignoring the groaning, blood-spitting Annan. She looked at the only person in the cell daring to speak up, raising an eyebrow. “I remember Heath Ashe. You’re the man from her portrait... Are you her man?”

Ashe covered Lise’s eyes, tasted the Honeyed Blade in his mouth, pondering the best moment to act, and responded, “What, you want me to call you mother-in-law?”

“If you were a comedian, you’d probably make the list,” Qenna commented calmly, pulling out an elegantly designed Handgun, reminiscent of black and white piano keys, from her waist. Ashe instinctively covered Lise’s ears—

Bang!

Buzz—————

The shot bullet struck the wall right beside Ashe’s ear, tearing through his eardrum with a violent crack. The buzzing in his ears echoed in his mind, and although his combat training allowed him to maintain some semblance of sanity, the fear of brushing with death gripped his heart like a claw.

Power? His opponent was a Tri-wings Sorcerer of the Sanctuary.

Status? She represented justice as a Red Cap.

Situation? She was the knife; he was merely the fish on the chopping board!

When his hearing returned, he heard Qenna say coldly, “This is your first warning. I’m not warning you about your disrespect towards me, but about your disrespect towards

Patriarch Senhaeser—on this world, aside from the Gospel, no one speaks to the Patriarch Senhaeser in a commanding tone, not even the kings of the earth!”

“Moreover, this is also a reeducation on stupidity. Boy, didn’t you notice that Banjeet hasn’t spoken?”

Ashe glanced towards Banjeet, who had been silent all along.

Yes, the person who cared most about Annan here should be Butler Banjeet, but why hadn’t Banjeet protested even as Annan was beaten so severely? Could it be...

“Because he also knows they are not in the right here,” Qenna sneered. “Don’t be foolishly misled by this wretched girl.”

Ashe, suppressing the fear in his heart, gently pushed away Lise’s hand from his ear, managing only to utter a feeble and pale truism, “Even if you have issues with your daughter, you shouldn’t abuse her like this. She is not your property—”

“Who said I was hitting her as a mother?”

Qenna grabbed Annan by the neck and pressed her against the wall—standing taller than Annan, especially with her high boots—mother and daughter stood face to face, but their eyes showed no warmth, only coldness and resentment.

“Nona has told me all about your plan,” Qenna said coldly. “You came to Fanmula with great fanfare and then revealed your blood relationship with me, making everyone think I was protecting you. Then you secretly joined other Emblem Families. As a result, Senhaeser would have to face the Red Caps, the Firm, the other five major Emblem Families, and the Yisuo Royal Family alone, becoming the target of the entire nation... While you could sit comfortably on the best balcony, watching Senhaeser become the sacrifice in your plan.”

“You said you didn’t want to be my daughter anymore, so why come running back to mommy when you get into trouble? I don’t recall ever teaching you that. Or is this the kind of upbringing you got from Dolan? Hmm?”

Pfft!

Annan spat a mouthful of blood onto Qenna’s face, her voice weak as she said, “You... must not... insult Dolan!”

Qenna glanced at the blood on her cheek with a slight squint in her eyes, her tone unfluctuating: “I am not standing here as your mother or as a Red Cap, but as the Patriarch of Senhaeser, demanding an explanation from you, a traitor who plotted against Senhaeser.”

“I’ll give you three sentences,” she said coldly. “If you can’t convince me, then you will spend two human menstrual cycles here.”

Ashe and the others were stunned—they had no idea about the specifics of Annan’s plan, but Banjeet had not countered Qenna’s testimony, which meant that Annan had indeed planned to use her mother’s Family as a shield. A cunning daughter versus a cold-blooded mother was indeed not a battle they could intervene in.

“After the Weaving Festival... I will join Senhaeser.”

“One.”

“Whether successful or not, I will hand over all of Dolan’s secrets to you, including the loopholes accumulated over centuries, as well as this blasphemous plan woven by generations!”

“Two.”

“That’s it, this is my bottom line!” Annan gritted her teeth. “Hand me over, let everyone know that Senhaeser can’t even protect its own daughter!”

Qenna looked at her, then let go, allowing her to slide down the wall. Then the Beautiful Elf Red Cap pulled a piece of Contract Fabric from her sleeve and unfolded it expertly.

“Sign it.”

Ashe and the others suddenly realized that Annan’s method of controlling employees through contracts, and her mix of intimidation and deceitful rhetoric, might well have been a crucial part of her upbringing.

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

Chapter 296: Deya’s First Doubt

In the Virtual Realm, on the Time Continent, three sorcerers drove away from the nest of the Vassal Spider Dragon, leaving behind a burning mine pit.

It was a perfect raid: the entrance was just wide enough for a sports car to fit through, so they charged in and ran over five juvenile Vassal Spider Dragons, then poisoned and killed another twenty-four.

Facing the overlord creature, the Consort Spider Dragon, whose home and offspring were devastated, they paid the utmost respect—first setting a fire, then surrounding and beating it, giving it a dignified funeral.

Terrain kill, fire attack, mobbing—they were very familiar with this sequence of actions, gradually elevating the grueling battle into a slaughter akin to grinding monsters, to the extent that Deya became somewhat sentimental: “If there’s a god in the Virtual Realm who protects Knowledge Creatures, should we pray to them for forgiveness of our sins?”

“If there really is one, then it’s them who should be praying to us,” Sonya said, pressing down on Deya’s stray hair. “Let’s hope the sorcerers don’t find them.”

“Speaking of which, I once read a fairy tale book. There was a story called ‘Don’t Let the Sorcerer Find You,’ where the main character was a spirit trying to escape the control of a sorcerer...”

“Did it succeed?”

“No, it got caught again.”

“That’s indeed a good fairy tale.”

As the two friends were deepening their bond through banter, suddenly, a disdainful male voice interjected: “Do you think your mothers are proper mothers?”

Hearing Ashe’s sudden question, Sonya was not polite at all: “What else would they be? Are you suggesting your mother came wholesale?”

After a night of bickering with Ashe, their interaction had become increasingly casual, not to mention that Ashe’s remark dared to touch a soft spot in Sonya’s heart. If it weren’t for the Witch being nearby, Sonya might not have responded so elegantly.

“No, it’s just that recent events have made me reflective,” Ashe said. “Different societies, different regions, different cultural traditions, and different people all give rise to different fruits of kinship.”

Mother, kinship, recent events?

Deya’s ears twitched, observing Ashe through the rearview mirror.

“If relationships were a dish of condiments, my relationship with my mother would probably be three spoons of sugar, five chili peppers, a small cup of bitter melon juice, a slice of lemon, and a few marshmallows mixed into a dry dish. Whenever I’m ready to face hardship, dipping into this dish helps me chew through it.”

Hmm...

Hmm!?

The Witch and the Swordswoman both gave the Observer a subtle look—wait, you have a mother too?

Although everyone has a mother, in Sonya and Deya's minds, the Observer was supposed to be an ancient being who had been sealed for thousands of years and had recently risen from the coffin. To him, the childhood spent with his parents should be nothing more than trivial dust in his long life, shouldn't it?

But they couldn't be sure, after all, they were just young women in their twenties, how could they possibly understand the psychological workings of someone who had lived for hundreds or thousands of years? Perhaps this nostalgic attitude towards life is the norm among those who live forever.

Sonya thought for a moment, "My relationship with my mother is about two spoons of sugar, one spoon of vinegar, one spoon of soy sauce, all brought together with hot oil..."

"Why is there hot oil?"

"I'd like to know why there's hot oil too," Sonya said mildly: "Destiny really is a chef who doesn't play by the rules."

Then both turned to the Witch, and Deya hesitated a bit: "I... I've never met my mother."

After a brief silence, Sonya asked, "Which Resource Point are we heading to next?"

"Let me see," Ashe said. "We're almost back to the Star Hall area with the detailed Map, but there isn't much of interest at the edge of the Star Hall Area. Let's keep moving forward to see if there's anything worth scavenging..."

Although her two teammates were very tactful and quickly changed the subject, Deya didn't want to drop it: "Observer, why are you suddenly reflecting on kinship issues? Did something happen in reality?"

"Nothing much," Ashe thought for a moment and said: "It's just that recently I've experienced some things that made me realize that the relationship between children and adults might not just be about kinship, but could also be a stark alliance of interests."

"Oh." Deya's eyes widened, her body leaning forward subconsciously: "That's a strange relationship indeed."

“I’ve even seen children use interests to threaten adults, forcing them to comply.”

“Wow, really?”

“There’s no trust between adults and children; they trust Contracts more than emotions.”

As the similarities mounted, Deya began to tremble, her suspicions seeming to be confirmed. The Witch, suppressing her inner turmoil, asked casually, “This is actually the first time I’ve heard of this... By the way, Observer, how old is this child you mentioned?”

S

Ashe thought for a moment: “Hmm... about eight years old?”

The Witch was taken aback, “Only eight years old?”

“I didn’t ask in detail, but she should be around eight,” Ashe wasn’t too sure himself.

Deya, suddenly deflated like a balloon, stopped distracting the driver and buried her head in the Swordswoman’s lap, lost in thought.

Although Deya and her sisters had been watching the drama unfold in the mirror, they were also shocked by the peculiar mother-daughter relationship between Qenna and Annan, which had been discussed in Lise’s mind for a long time.

Now that the Observer had brought up the topic of mothers after arriving in the Virtual Realm, Deya naturally began to form peculiar associations—

“Could the Observer actually be Ashe?”

This association wasn’t formed overnight but was the result of several days of accumulation.

After all, Lise spent her days with Ashe, and Deya spent her nights with the Observer. Even if she hadn’t initially thought in this direction, over time, a strange déjà vu emerged: Are your brains damaged in the same place? Why do your thought patterns seem as if they’ve been rotated 360 degrees?

And you both wear the same dark red coat!

More importantly, during last night’s Battle with the Broken Home Firm, the sisters subtly saw Ashe cast a warm yellow barrier to protect Annan.

And the Observer’s most frequently used Sword Barrier happens to be a warm yellow barrier as well!

Of course, most Defensive Miracles related to the Earth Faction are primarily yellow, but the accumulation of these coincidences, along with the catalyst of the mother topic, solidified Deya's suspicion of "Observer being Ashe," prompting her to subtly inquire about the Observer's real-life situation.

Initially, Deya thought the Observer was referring to Annan and Qenna, but the Observer mentioned an eight-year-old child, clearly not Annan who was obviously not that young. Clearly, Deya had made a mistake.

Nestled in the Swordswoman's lap, Deya rubbed her head against her and pondered why she had associated Ashe with the Observer.

It was mainly because of the Dark Red Trench Coat.

If one didn't see the front, Ashe's silhouette in that trench coat was almost identical to the Observer's.

But the issue was that the Dark Red Trench Coat had been a gift from Lise to Ashe! Lise had bought that gift because she thought the Observer looked handsome in a Dark Red Trench Coat, and so she got one for Ashe.

It turned out that Lise had deliberately dressed Ashe in the Observer's style, hence the resemblance between Ashe and the Observer.

As for their modes of thinking and styles of speech, upon further reflection, they weren't that similar.

After all, the Observer spoke very freely, often mocking himself, and occasionally shared jokes with the Swordswoman that Deya couldn't understand—thanks to explanations from the White Queen and the Black Butler, Deya also understood what those jokes were.

Comparatively, Ashe, though mischievous, was gentler in demeanor and more upright in conduct, almost never telling such jokes in front of Lise. Even when Harvey and Igor discussed something frightening, he would immediately cover Lise's ears, showing great care for her.

As for the warm yellow Defensive Miracle... it was probably just a coincidence!

After separating the Observer and Ashe in her mind, Deya found this to be more logical: The Observer could observe her anytime and anywhere, so what need was there to disguise himself as Ashe and stay around her? Not to mention that Ashe was a Contractor specifically chosen by Lise, it was unlikely that the Observer would have planned that far.

Although Deya had not known the Observer for very long, she knew that he was not one to lie. Since the daughter the Observer mentioned was only eight years old, he was definitely not talking about Annan but narrating the story of another parent-child pair unknown to her.

Is Lise around eight years old?

When the Witch suggested this, Ashe realized he actually didn't know the exact age of his adoptive daughter. Lise's appearance was indeed deceptive: her teeth were even neater than Ashe's, which made it unclear whether she had lost her baby teeth yet; she was about as tall as a fire hydrant, seeming under ten years old, but it could also be due to malnutrition.

Indeed, Ashe's reflections were triggered by witnessing the dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship between Annan and Qenna, which made him think about his own unique situation with Lise.

The focus was on himself, not Annan.

After all, Ashe had always been straightforward. Why should he care about a dispute over interests between a capitalist boss and her feudal Noble mother? Initially, Ashe had some sympathy for Annan, who had been harshly treated by Qenna, but it turned out that it was the daughter who had schemed against her mother first. Ashe felt he couldn't meddle in such high-level conflicts.

Once the mother and daughter had reached an agreement, Qenna placed—or rather, confined—them in the Double-tiered City of Fanmula. It was then that Ashe and the others realized that dividing Fanmula's Double-tiered City into six areas was intentional, designed to give each Emblem Family its own domain.

In stories and anime, one often sees three major families in a star city, usually consisting of a 'minority of Family members' and 'a majority of commoners.' However, Fanmula was entirely dominated by six major Families—there were no people outside these six Families in the city. Everyone in the same area belonged to the same Family, and there was a deep Bloodline identification among family members, who also strongly rejected outsiders.

Rather than calling it a city, it was more like a continent formed by the merger of six nationalist countries.

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

Chapter 297: The Virtual Realm Map Surrenders

After resolving the misunderstanding between mother and daughter, the daughter's friends were naturally treated well.

Ashe and the others were escorted to a fully equipped suite, where they were free to do as they pleased, except they could not leave the room. Annan told them to rest well tonight, and if they weren't sleepy, they could take a walk in the Virtual Realm. They would discuss important matters tomorrow.

Throughout the conversation, Annan kept her face hidden behind the Gospel, and even Igor, with his usually suspicious nature, didn't object and nodded in agreement to Annan's requests.

Without a doubt, Annan had not brought them to Fanmula simply to visit her mother or for sightseeing. She had a triple win in mind: seeking refuge here was the first win; pushing her mother's Family forward as a Scapegoat was the second; and then using the special Area advantages here to help Ashe and the others ascend the second future Ranking List was the third.

However, Ashe couldn't figure out how exactly Fanmula was supposed to help them. Was it to forge a heart capable of ostracizing and isolating the entire city?

As Ashe pondered, the sports car was already nearing the border of the Star Hall Area.

On the Virtual Realm's grand map, the light points representing the Sorcerers traced an intelligent path across the boundless Black Lake, rapidly approaching the lush Star Hall Area.

If one were to raise their viewpoint and observe the map of the Time Continent as a whole, they would notice several curved paths in the dark Area outside Star Hall, marking the trails of their explorations over the past few days.

Connecting these paths end-to-end, one could see a twisted, circular shape.

A few days ago, by observing the Virtual Realm's grand map, Ashe and his companions had uncovered a secret of the Time Continent's operation:

The path walked by the Chariot of the Bull was circular.

The White Bull did not walk straight ahead but with a slight arc. When it completed a circle, the Time Continent also went through a time cycle.

This was not unimaginable. According to the Swordswoman, many Sorcerers had speculated that the White Bull was merely circling around the Time Continent, as it couldn't possibly be infinitely large. It was just that other Sorcerers lacked a Virtual Realm Map and could not confirm the exact trajectory of the White Bull.

Although they didn't come to a conclusive understanding, they vaguely sensed that the White Bull's regular circular running mechanism likely concealed even deeper secrets unknown to others.

After many days, Ashe and his companions once again entered the Star Hall Area with a complete Map. Tomorrow, they would be able to thoroughly scavenge the unique resources of the Star Hall Area—

Boom!

Suddenly, a loud explosion sounded in the distance. A violent storm broke through the Curtain of the Reverse Golden Rain, directly triggering the Refractive Barrier of the sports car, causing ripples to spread!

Trees nurtured by the River of Flowing Gold snapped one after another, and bushes half a person high toppled over. Even the haughty Reverse Golden Rain had to avoid the Whirlpool of battle!

Ashe slammed on the brakes, and the sports car skidded across the grass, forming the trajectory of a doughnut as it came to a stop. Sonya and Deya were already prepared for Battle: "Where's the enemy?"

"Outside... our line of sight!"

Ashe looked at the Virtual Realm Map, and within a 25-tile radius around them, all were marked as a "waste of effort" safe zone. This meant that the attack had come from beyond the exploratory range of the Virtual Realm, a long-range strike!

Boom!

Thump, thump, thump!

Not far behind the layers of the Golden Rain Curtain, a massive group Battle was unfolding. The roar of energy annihilation, the mourning churn of the earth, and the rhythmic symphony of blood and flesh were composing a disaster symphony that affected the entire Area.

Even though they couldn't see the traces of their adversaries, the notes splashed out from their Battle were enough to devastate the nearby ecology!

Ashe daringly drove the sports car a bit forward and finally saw a blood-red alert in the corner of the Area:

“Warzone (many, a large group, an enormous amount of Knowledge Creatures)”

No further information was provided, but the three Sorcerers knew the significance of this message—they had encountered a war between heroic soul legions!

Unlike the previous heroic commander who casually strolled the streets with a few dragons, the factions in this war had brought a large number of armed subordinate creatures, making their clash as devastating as a landslide and tsunami in the Virtual Realm!

Without any discussion, Ashe immediately drove away—under such circumstances, even the most adventurous would turn into a conservative Sorcerer!

However, their approach had already drawn the attention of both sides in the war. The dazzling Reverse Golden Rain suddenly parted, creating a pathway in the air. A semi-transparent golden spirit rapidly crossed hundreds of meters, fiercely plunging into Ashe’s body.

[You’ve arrived just in time, Demilo, use your invincible Logistics Magic to escape...]

[...]

[You... are not Demilo?]

[Ah, so cold. I don’t want to return to that colorless world, I don’t want to... No, no, let me sleep, don’t wake me up again, stop... mocking me.]

Before Ashe could even react, his Soul Summoning spirit emerged on its own, explaining the changes that had occurred:

“This spirit has successfully absorbed a spirit of the same name, unlocking new troop types ‘Gryphon Weather Sorcerer,’ ‘Barrier,’ ‘Star Prayer,’ and ‘Meteoric Warrior.’”

“Star Hall Gryphon Weather Sorcerer: Wind Magic, Water Art, Thunder Magic cause +20% Soul Damage. 3 layers of armor, humanoid creature, equipped with a Gryphon mount and the Miracle ‘Star Tide.’ Each unit consumes 4 soul power.”

[Star Tide: Targets a single individual, inflicting mixed damage from wind, water, and thunder.]

“Star Hall Barrier: Any attack causes +15% Soul Damage. 11 layers of armor, humanoid creature, equipped with a shield. Each unit consumes 5 soul power.”

“Star Hall Star Prayer: Long-range Attack causes +45% Soul Damage. 4 layers of armor, humanoid creature, equipped with the special Miracle ‘Starfall.’ Each unit consumes 10 soul power.”

[Starfall: Minimum chant time of 1 second, maximum of 60 seconds, launches a large area attack of falling starlight on a designated Area, which cannot be altered once selected.]

“Star Hall Meteoric Warrior: Melee attacks cause +60% Soul Damage. 7 layers of armor, humanoid creature, equipped with special Miracles ‘Meteoric Strike,’ ‘Starlight Path,’ and ‘Chaotic Starcloud.’ Each unit consumes 15 soul power.”

[Meteoric Strike: Your next strike is augmented with the power of stars, ignoring enemy armor.]

[Starlight Path: You can transmigrate through obstacles, including enemies, city walls, and defensive barriers.]

[Chaotic Starcloud: You have a 30% chance to dodge all attacks. Each successful dodge refreshes the cooldown of ‘Meteoric Strike.’]

“You have absorbed the ‘Blaido’s Commander’s Handbook”

“Please select 2 rewards—”

“Star (Blaido exclusive reward) (Locked selection): You are the embodiment of the will of the stars. Under your command, the chant time for Miracles by Star Prayers is reduced by 50%, Miracle power is increased by 150%, and they gain an additional layer of armor.”

“Command of Archery, Advanced (Optional): You know how to use ranged troops to achieve strategic objectives, and you gain a vast amount of experience in shooting Factions.”

“Offensive Tactics, Advanced (Optional): You are undoubtedly a master of offense, and you gain a large amount of experience across all Factions.”

“Financial Management, Advanced (Optional): When arming troops, the consumption of Soul power is reduced by 50%.”

Incredible!

Both the unlocked troop types and the skills from the Commander’s Handbook indicate that the golden spirit that rushed over is undoubtedly a heroic soul commander of eternal renown!

Yet, even such a formidable commander was driven to flee in panic!

Ashe didn't dare look back, desperately driving the sports car away from the Warzone. Sonya also felt the ominous killing intent approaching from behind, her whole body tensing up in terror, and Witch Deya's hair even started to change color!

At this point, they hadn't even seen the enemy yet, but a deep-seated fear akin to encountering a nemesis had already taken hold!

Flee, flee quickly!

Ashe checked the Virtual Realm Map, only to find that the surrounding 25 Area had already surrendered before him, the cruel red almost spilling out of the screen onto him.

"Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger"

"Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger"

"Danger" "Danger" "I" "Danger" "Danger"

"Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger"

"Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger" "Danger"

"Is it still possible to pray to the Virtual Realm now?" Deya's voice was frightened into a duet.

...

"It's over."

As Banjeet applied a hydrating face mask to Annan after treatment, Annan suddenly sat up, looking even worse than when she had been hit by her mother.

"Although the partner has changed from Miss Nona to Lady Qenna, it should still be within your plan, Miss..." Banjeet was a bit puzzled. "And the injuries are much lighter than expected... It seems Lady Qenna still has some affection for you."

"No, I'm not talking about that old woman." Purple Moth said, holding her head, "Have you forgotten? Our Azura's strongest firm, what we specialize in is..."

"Virtual Realm Assassination."

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

Chapter 298: Virtual Realm Assassination

Where is a place where one can kill without being discovered?

Where is a place where others cannot stop you from killing and arson?

Where is a place where everyone is alone?

Indeed, it is the Virtual Realm!

Humming a tune, Amodo rode his bicycle through the curtain of rain. On the back of his hand was a faint red mark of crossed swords, which grew increasingly brighter as he cycled along.

“I am a thief, fond of Lala Fatty.”

“I am a thief, I kill without shedding a tear.”

“I am a thief, with a heart so dark.”

He is ranked first in Azura and sixth nationally at Bliss and Comfort Firm, specializing in offering exciting services that are illegal in reality—murder.

Compared to the recently risen Moonlit Harmony Home Firm, Bliss and Comfort Firm has a much longer history. In the past, it was one of the two major dark forces in Azura alongside the Funeral Firm. As Azura grew, so did it.

Now, as the old guard gives way to the new, the Funeral Firm has fallen into disrepair and even been kicked out of the top ten rankings, but Bliss and Comfort Firm still firmly holds the top spot in Azura. Customers come from all over the country, drawn by its reputation, and far from declining, it is more flourishing than ever.

The enduring success of Bliss and Comfort Firm lies in its mastery of a core technique: the Art of Murder in Virtual Realm.

When the Gospel first appeared, the initial reaction of the sorcerers wasn't to use it to study grand issues like societal harmony, advances in productivity, how to make Lala Fatty delicious, whether the chicken or the egg came first, or whether they were the most superior race. Instead, they wondered:

“How can I use the Gospel to ascend further in the Virtual Realm?”

Sometimes, it's hard to tell whether the sorcerers are thinking big or small.

And climbing in the Virtual Realm can be divided into two specific goals: Exploration in Virtual Realm, and Realm Faction.

Soon, sorcerers discovered that when they faced bottlenecks in the Faction Realm, they could seek guidance from the Gospel. Theoretically, as long as their Talent was high enough, sorcerers from the Gospel Kingdom could continuously advance their Faction Realm. To put it in writing terms, it meant that everyone could become an author who updates tens of thousands of words daily, rather than one who struggles with just a few thousand words.

However, there were still many highly potential sorcerers who found that despite listening to the Gospel, they could not understand it. Clearly, this was due to their lack of effort, and sorcerers certainly didn't care about those who couldn't keep up.

Why are there so many levels in the Virtual Realm? It's to make sorcerers aware of their class status.

But in terms of Exploration in Virtual Realm, sorcerers found that the Gospel wasn't much help.

The biggest issue was that they couldn't summon the Gospel in the Virtual Realm.

To be precise, the Gospel is a Miracle that exists only within the Gospel Kingdom. Once outside the Gospel Kingdom, not just in the Virtual Realm but even when in other Kingdoms, it is impossible to summon the Gospel.

Unable to ask for a guide in real-time, sorcerers could only Pray for the Gospel's blessing before entering the Virtual Realm, but such blessings were exorbitantly expensive—for example, a simple pathfinding blessing like "Guide sorcerer to the nearest Knowledge Creature" could cost as much as the Points reward for the first place in the National Rankings for a month.

The Gospel certainly had the power to add powerful blessings like "Guide sorcerer to the nearest Resource Point," "Knowledge Creatures automatically avoid sorcerer," or "Wild spirits run over to serve as a sorcerer's dogs." However, these blessings were priced at a national level, affordable only if the entire Gospel supported one person, which was extravagantly expensive.

But the love of sorcerers for the Virtual Realm wasn't something that could be suppressed by mere prices. If the expensive ones were unaffordable, then they would look for cheaper alternatives.

Over the years, sorcerers have gradually found some affordable blessings suitable for the Virtual Realm. Sorcerers who mastered these secrets either established Families,

companies, or some mysterious forces to train their subordinates, or they founded firms to give back to the public.

Bliss and Comfort Firm was one of the latter.

They mastered the Gospel secrets that allowed them to target others in the Virtual Realm, leading to the development of the “Murder in Virtual Realm” service. While other firms also had methods of killing, most were indirect, not daring to take action themselves, and if the target was a wealthy individual with power and influence, most methods would be rendered ineffective.

Money and power are barriers far more formidable than the law itself.

For instance, the second-ranked Broken Home Firm only managed to eliminate lesser families; they lacked the capability to destroy a major Family.

However, “Murder in Virtual Realm” was different. In the Virtual Realm, all external attributes of a Sorcerer became meaningless; the only thing one could rely on was their own strength.

During the era when Bliss and Comfort Firm rose to fame, over 100 Wealthy individuals, Civil servants, Red Caps, and even members of the Royal Family died in the Virtual Realm. Everyone knew they were murdered by Bliss and Comfort Firm, but no one could convict them.

Governing through the Gospel was a fundamental policy of the Yisuo Royal Family, and incidents that happened in the Virtual Realm were not protected by the Gospel. Anyone who dared to attack the law-abiding citizens of the Bliss and Comfort Firm was considered a criminal in the Gospel Kingdom.

The headquarters of the Bliss and Comfort Firm was even located right next to the central office of the Red Caps in Azura.

The lobby of the firm displayed a list on the wall, all names of those who had fallen victim to Bliss and Comfort.

This was their audacity; no one could touch them.

However, avoiding assassination by Bliss and Comfort Firm was simple: just stay out of the Virtual Realm. Ordinary people would never be targeted by Bliss and Comfort Firm, but it was nearly impossible for Sorcerers not to enter the Virtual Realm. Not only for the sake of increasing their strength, but also because spending two hours a day in the Virtual Realm could keep one energized all day, whereas ordinary people needed at least six hours of sleep. This difference effectively extended the lifespan of Sorcerers by 12.3% compared to ordinary people.

To avoid assassination at the cost of reducing one's lifespan? No one would make such a losing deal.

Thus, Bliss and Comfort Firm developed a second service: the Whitelist.

Once you pay an annual fee, Bliss and Comfort Firm guarantees that they will not target you for that year. The fee varies from person to person; if there were many contracts out on your life the previous year, then your fee for the next year will significantly increase.

From the Yisuo Royal Family down to the major Families, Bliss and Comfort Firm's Whitelist includes almost all ruling classes within the Gospel Kingdom. Of course, there are those who do not subscribe to this arrangement, such as the local Red Cap, Cleos in Azura—who simply ignores them—since no Sanctuary Sorcerer fears assassination.

However, even Sanctuary Sorcerers cannot kill them without repercussions, unless they no longer wish to operate within the Gospel Kingdom. Although Bliss and Comfort Firm generally does not provoke Sanctuary Sorcerers, when they first started the Whitelist service a hundred years ago, one Sanctuary Sorcerer kept provoking them. Instead of assassinating the Sorcerer, Bliss and Comfort Firm killed all of his Two Wings and One Wing relatives.

After that Sorcerer slaughtered the firm's employees, he was wanted by the Gospel Kingdom, becoming a Merit in the eyes of the Red Caps. He was quickly arrested and, following Gospel judgment, executed.

A few years later, Bliss and Comfort Firm resurfaced and continued the Whitelist service, but this time no one dared to challenge them.

They did not bow to the assassins; they bowed to the Gospel.

The Gospel had established fair and just rules of the game; if you can't beat others, then you deserve to lose.

In the past fifty years, Bliss and Comfort Firm has rarely acted, sometimes not killing a single person in a year, yet they have become the wealthiest in Azura by collecting protection money from the rich, proving that earnest labor is inferior to redistributing wealth from the rich.

Recently, Bliss and Comfort Firm finally received a long-awaited large contract. S

"Assassination Target: Ashe Heath"

"Reason for Contract: Ashe Heath"

There were many clients, including the Yisuo Royal Family, Cleos, and other regional Red Caps. Bliss and Comfort Firm accepted all orders.

Although Red Caps generally have a contentious relationship with the firm, no one wants to clash with Gospel Merit. As long as Bliss and Comfort Firm successfully carries out the assassination, the Gospel Merit will be distributed according to the financial contributions made by the Red Caps who invested in the assassination fund, because investing money is also considered contributing effort, and the Gospel is very fair.

Ashe Heath was not on the Whitelist, which allowed Bliss and Comfort to rightfully accept the commission and dispatch all thirteen of their Two Wings assassins, including Amodo.

These thirteen sorcerers all received the “Targeting Ashe Heath” blessing, enabling them to find Ashe easily once they entered the Virtual Realm as directed.

Determining when Ashe would enter the Virtual Realm was simple—they consulted Cleos for the utility usage data at the Annan household, deducing that Ashe Heath’s time in the Virtual Realm spanned from 11 PM to 5 AM.

Having received the contract on May 11, they chose to execute the task at 2 AM on May 12. At this time, Ashe would definitely be in the Virtual Realm, having already used a significant amount of Soul Energy, making it the perfect opportunity to deliver him to his fate.

Amodo specialized in the Mechanical and Earth Factions, both of which are the expertise of the Earth Empress and evidently, he too was a victim of the *Sorcerer Duel* series. However, mastering these factions offered its advantages, such as the ability to construct bicycles on the Time Continent which not only saved Soul Energy but also allowed for rapid movement.

However, Amodo realized that his assassination target had even faster means of movement. As he moved straight towards his target, the guiding mark began to fade, initially leading him to believe he had taken a wrong turn. Upon closer observation, he realized it was because his target was moving faster than him, increasing their relative distance.

Strange, he thought, I am riding a bicycle and I’m already going fast. I am ranked tenth nationally and second in Azura on the cycling Ranking List, reaching speeds of 70 kilometers per hour, almost as fast as a Hovercar.

What kind of transportation could Ashe possibly be using?

An alchemical puppet? An enslaved Knowledge Creature? But none of those should be faster than my bicycle.

Could he possibly be driving a sports car?

Amodo was puzzled, but he would soon find out the answer—as per the guiding mark, he was very close to the target, and the target was moving towards him.

Am I the first one to arrive? he wondered.

No doubt, Ashe's combat abilities were not impressive, as evidenced by his absence from any sorcerer combat Ranking Lists. To Amodo and his fellow prepared assassins, Ashe was like a fish on the chopping block, a practice workbook in front of a top student, just waiting to be dispatched.

The distribution of the bounty was based on contributions to the Battle, so Amodo didn't hold back. He prepared the Miracle "Boiling Mire" and "Thousand Thorns" and planned to give Ashe a warm, blissful hydrotherapy bath as soon as he appeared in sight.

One significant issue with Virtual Realm Assassination was how to annihilate the target's Soul.

In cases of normal death, a Sorcerer would only lose part of their Soul, which could be inconvenient in reality, but a few months of Rest would typically suffice for recovery, leaving them far from actual death.

Therefore, assassins from the Bliss and Comfort Firm used specially developed Miracles for killing. Compared to regular Miracles, these required more arcane energy but didn't significantly increase in power.

The primary effect of the killing Miracles was to damage the target slowly and from all directions.

This was the secret to killing in the Virtual Realm: don't kill the target outright but instead place them in an environment of Continuous Damage. When the target dies in such a condition, their Soul is nearly depleted, leaving only remnants insufficient to support a physical body.

Even if not dead, the target would enter a state of unconsciousness, unable to recover for at least Ten Years. It was rumored that some clients paid extra to ensure their targets were thrust into this prolonged state of unawareness...

The guiding mark grew brighter—it was just ahead!

It was coming!

But Amodo felt something was off—why was the ground shaking?

The Ashe Heath described in the information wasn't a several-ton surprise egg; how could he cause such vibrations?

But there was no time left to think—the guiding mark was at its brightest, and Ashe Heath was right there behind the curtain of rain—

Buzz!

A convertible sports car whizzed past him, brushing shoulders. Although Amodo instantly cast his Miracles, both the thorns and the mire were effortlessly crushed under the wheels of the car.

Not to mention, there was a thin barrier on the car.

“Another one?”

A question was left hanging from the car as it sped away, leaving Amodo to slam the brakes on his bicycle and stand still, inhaling the dark green exhaust left behind.

His mind was a whirlpool of questions.

What did he mean by “another one”?

Why was he driving a sports car?

Why were there two other people in the car?

Why did those two people look like beautiful young girls?

Why did the exhaust from the sports car make my eyes sting and my face feel like it was rotting?

Why is the car gone, but the shaking is getting stronger?

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

Chapter 299: The Man Who Lost His Memory

The assassination expert sensed something and slowly turned his head, just in time to see a gigantic spider emerge from the Reverse Golden Rain.

Its body was like obsidian, with eyes more brilliant than rubies—eight in total. Its mouthparts were densely packed with razor-sharp fangs, capable of instantly paralyzing the courage of all onlookers.

On the fluffy back of the spider, a figure sat crossed-legged. Before Amodo could make out his face, the Octo-eye Spider enveloped Amodo's body with its silk—

“Crumbling Fang Pillar!”

“Mechanical Mind!”

“Earth Barrier!”

Realizing it was a matter of life and death, the expert unleashed several Defensive Miracles in an attempt to prolong his life. However, all attacks and defenses were in vain; the white spider silk, seemingly transparent, effortlessly passed through all obstacles and slowly wrapped around Amodo. It looked less like Amodo was caught by the silk and more like he had willingly fallen into it. S

The moment he touched the silk, Amodo's mind began to scatter.

His thoughts drifted far and wide; he saw himself killing Ashe, earning a substantial amount of Points, finding his destined partner in the Gospel, then getting promoted to a Sanctuary Sorcerer, becoming a shareholder at the Bliss and Comfort Firm, and founding his own Family in Azura...

This was not an Illusion, nor was it hypnosis, for Amodo knew he could break free anytime he wished.

But he couldn't break free.

Because this was his Destiny.

Destiny... weaving...

Amodo's eyes gradually turned lifeless as the spider silk tightly bound him and then threw him to the rear support troops. Bird dragons, fire dragons, and fish dragons joyously devoured this prey. Compared to the native species of the Time Continent, the unrefined Souls of sorcerers, not baptized by hell, were like heavily oiled, salted, and spiced fried food, highly favored by Knowledge Creatures.

The commander on the Octo-eye Spider paid no heed to this unfortunate passerby. He glanced at the tire tracks on the muddy ground, his eyes conveying a sense of frustration.

Really can run, huh? Has he mastered advanced Logistics Magic?

Spectator Danzel gazed at the Reverse Golden Rain before him, his vision seemingly piercing through the curtain of rain, fixated on that frantically speeding convertible.

To set up an ambush for Blaido, the Star Shepherd, they had meticulously prepared for over a dozen rounds.

The Star Hall is not among the strongest forces in the six countries. If they could eliminate Blaido, a leading heroic soul and an Incarnation of the Stars, then the Spider Pavilion could take the opportunity to occupy parts of the Star Hall's Area.

However, if Blaido managed to escape back, the ambush would be a total failure. Even if Blaido lost a large number of troops, it was a peaceful period, and the six countries had abundant resources, allowing the Star Hall to quickly reassemble a force for Blaido.

They had to continue the pursuit and prevent him from escaping back into Star Hall's rounds. They must either kill him during the Spider Pavilion's rounds or trap him in the Spider Pavilion's Area until the next round!

Although they hadn't caught up yet, Danzel had been deliberately limiting the direction of the escape to prevent Blaido from fleeing toward the Star Hall Area.

As long as the opponent remained in the Spider Pavilion Area, defeat was only a matter of time...

Danzel opened the map of the Spider Pavilion and suddenly his gaze sharpened; they were near a special building.

They couldn't possibly...

This "couldn't possibly" thought had just crossed his mind when the 'Red Cap Guerilla', responsible for scouting, saw the car charge into the cabin area, and the three people inside immediately got out and went inside.

Soon, the Spider Pavilion Legion completely surrounded the cabin, but the power of the Virtual Realm prevented Knowledge Creatures from entering the courtyard, leaving hundreds of armed forces to merely spectate from outside.

Danzel fell into thought.

Firstly, a heroic soul would absolutely not seek refuge in a special building, as it would be pointless—once the Chariot of the Bull departed, time would come to a standstill, and staying in the special building would be akin to sitting ducks.

Moreover, heroic souls would instinctively avoid special buildings, which seemed to bear signs that read 'Commanders and Dogs Not Allowed', making heroic souls inherently disinclined to enter.

Although Danzel had retrieved a fragment of his Soul from hell to fill the void within, his way of thinking was still in the mode of a heroic soul, with his mental “double room” only housing two tenants: logical reasoning and absolute rationality.

“Heroic souls would not enter a special building.”

“So, they are not heroic souls.”

“They are Sorcerers who have killed a heroic soul commander and obtained the Soul Summoning spirit, hence mistakenly believing themselves to be heroic souls.”

After shifting his perspective, Danzel noticed several suspicious points: they had no accompanying troops, the three of them moved together, they were riding strange alchemical machinery, and their appearances did not match any other Star Hall commanders... They likely were not heroic souls.

This meant that Blaido was already dead.

But the Incarnation of the Stars still existed, and Spectator Danzel’s orders were to destroy the Incarnation of the Stars, now residing within a Sorcerer. His task was not yet complete.

Moreover, since they were Sorcerers, it meant they could disconnect from the Virtual Realm inside the building and safely return to reality, potentially ensuring his mission’s failure.

However, while Danzel would not enter the Virtual Realm building, the operational rules of all buildings within the Spider Pavilion territory were already marked on the map.

After a brief review, he realized he might still have a chance to rectify the situation.

As he pondered, another Sorcerer blundered into his troops. Naturally, this unwelcome visitor was quickly dispatched by the Red Cap Guerilla and the Bluebeard Breakers.

If this had been another force’s troops, the Sorcerer might have had a chance to escape, but the Spider Pavilion’s armed forces were experts at control and restraint. In Danzel’s long millennium of campaigning, no one had ever escaped the pursuit of the Spider Pavilion troops.

This was the only fish that had slipped through the net.

After reaching his conclusion, Danzel left the Octo-eye Spider and headed towards the cabin alone.

Accompanying troops could not enter special buildings, but a heroic soul commander who was once a Sorcerer still retained the privilege to enter Virtual Realm buildings.

Ordinary heroic soul commanders would absolutely not take such action, as their hollow hearts were not enough to enable them to act opportunistically. Only heroic souls who had retrieved a few seconds of heartbeat from hell, gaining a semblance of humanity, could possess this 'reckless abandon'.

The moment he pushed open the cabin door, Danzel felt lighter, as if something had vanished, and numerous thoughts in his mind fell into silence.

Inside the cabin were six people: a man and a woman confronting each other, another woman shivering in a corner, and three people calmly spectating.

What was impossible to ignore was that the three spectators looked exactly like the three who were confronting and trembling.

As Danzel walked in, the confronting man and woman both looked over and asked in unison:

"Who are you?"

"Just like you," Danzel looked at the three strangers in front of him. "Someone who has lost their memory."

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

Chapter 300: Observer, You Are Truly Despicable Now

Have the Chariot of the Bull step back a few paces, to the moment when Ashe and Amodo brushed past each other.

Although they inadvertently involved another Sorcerer, Ashe and his companions felt no guilt, as they had also seen the Sorcerer trying to attack them by Casting Miracle. With this serendipitous encounter, they felt justified in leaving the responsibility of covering their retreat to him.

As they continued on their journey, they encountered several Sorcerers, almost without exception, each one raising their hand to attack upon seeing them. Ashe and his group, concerned about the average quality of Sorcerers, floored the accelerator and moved on, deciding not to stoop to their level.

"Why are they still after us?!" the rustic girl scratched her head in annoyance upon hearing that the legion's roar showed no sign of stopping: "Didn't they say that a beast, after eating someone else, wouldn't chase anymore?"

“The heroic soul forces are not natural beasts, but a civilized institution, and the essence of civilization is to eradicate completely, not to stop when satisfied,” Ashe casually remarked. “But there’s a problem here—the heroic soul legion wouldn’t specifically target Sorcerers unless the Sorcerers jump in their faces. We’re running so fast, why won’t he give up? We haven’t even insulted him yet.”

Witch Deya speculated, “Could it be because the Swordswoman and I are too beautiful, and he wants to snatch us away? Just like an Evil Dragon would snatch a Princess...”

“The snatching is real, but not of us,” Sonya analyzed calmly. “His target is likely the Observer.”

“Me?”

“Didn’t you say that a powerful heroic soul commander sought refuge in you, only to be absorbed by you? It’s like a little rabbit trying to escape a fox by jumping into the arms of someone picking mushrooms...”

“Are you saying, Swordswoman, that you are skilled at cooking rabbit meat?”

“In short, the fox behind us is actually after the rabbit, not us. But he doesn’t know the rabbit has already been swallowed by the Observer, so...” Sonya’s gaze hardened as she continued seriously, “The only solution now is to hand over the Observer.”

“Indeed.” Deya nodded, her hair split into black and white, but her voice was not harsh: “The fox won’t listen to our explanations, he just wants to bite the rabbit. As for who the rabbit is, the fox doesn’t care.”

“At this point, there’s really no other choice...”

“Yeah, yeah...”

Listening to the two Operators discuss how to essentially sell him off, Ashe remained remarkably calm and even volunteered a plan: “I’ll see if there’s a River of Flowing Gold nearby. If there is, I can dive into it to divert their attention, and then you two can take the opportunity to drive away.”

“However, the River of Flowing Gold is hard to find, and it’s more likely that there are mining pits and Resource Points around here. I can hide in a mining pit to buy some time. If it really comes down to it and we’re about to be caught, then you two should get out of the car immediately, disconnect from the Virtual Realm and return to reality. I’ll drive the car back towards them; that should buy you at least 20 seconds.”

“But I’m actually a bit scared of being killed by a creature from the Virtual Realm. Maybe you two could just kill me to make the fox behind us give up. Swordswoman, you said

that a Sorcerer's injuries at death would affect reality, right? Then you should aim for my stomach when you attack. I've been eating a bit too much lately and wanted to lose some weight anyway..."

Listening to Ashe ramble on about planning his own death, Sonya and Deya exchanged glances, seeing frustration in each other's eyes.

"Enough already," Sonya said, feeling utterly disinterested: "You know we would never leave you behind, so stop flaunting your sacrificial virtue."

"No, I think selling me off here is actually a good option," Ashe insisted. "If we keep going like this, we'll all end up dead sooner or later. Better for one to die than all three. You are my Operators, and your lives are much more valuable than mine. Plus, I am indeed the core issue right now."

"If it's to protect you, dying once is a price I'm willing to accept."

Originally, Sonya was just taking the opportunity to emphasize that the crisis was entirely due to the Observer alone, to highlight her own unyielding noble character, which shone brilliantly enough to make the Observer eternally grateful and speechless, thus indebting him to live his life in repayment of Miss Swordswoman's great kindness.

Unexpectedly, the Observer had seen through her scheme and even turned it against her, which was quite infuriating. Now, not only had she failed to move the Observer, but she actually found herself having a higher regard for him!

"Dying in the Virtual Realm isn't really dying!" the rustic girl fiercely chopped at the Cult Leader's neck: "Why make it sound so grave? Are you trying to make us feel so indebted that we'd sacrifice ourselves? Do you want us to feel guilty every night, come to the Virtual Realm to serve you, then you can rest your head on my thighs while I massage your temples, and have your feet massaged by the Witch, making every night's Exploration in Virtual Realm feel like a vacation?"

"Why even fantasize, and why so detailed—"

Deya sighed, "Observer, you really are despicable right now."

Ashe rolled his eyes; he hadn't intended to please these two masters. He genuinely believed that sacrificing himself was the most cost-effective option. After all, he was originally reluctant to come to the Virtual Realm. Now, he could legitimately request sick leave, lie at home playing games, and the Operators couldn't even blame him. Why not enjoy it?

Moreover, his death wouldn't be a big loss, as the Witch and Swordswoman's gains in the Virtual Realm would still be shared with him. On the other hand, if the Witch and Swordswoman were to die, then Ashe would be at a real loss. He alone couldn't come

to the Virtual Realm, no one else would have surplus to be exploited by him, and his training would completely halt.

“Is there any chance we can escape?” asked the rustic girl.

Ashe opened the map of the Virtual Realm and shook his head: “The fox deliberately drove us into a dead end.”

When they were first chased, Ashe’s initial reaction was to try driving towards the Star Hall area. After all, Blaido was the commander of Star Hall, and his enemies were clearly commanders of hostile forces. Although Ashe didn’t know if the Time Continent had a ‘Homeland Security Act’, just entering the Star Hall area would likely make the pursuers more cautious.

However, every time he tried to turn north towards Star Hall, there were long-range attacks from above thwarting his progress. Not only did they fail to head north, but the distance between them and the pursuing troops had actually decreased.

The enemy had clearly anticipated his moves and dispatched a blocking force.

Compared to these tactically savvy heroic soul legions, Knowledge Creatures like Slaying Fish-Dragon seemed as naive and adorable as Lala Fatty.

“Since you refuse my noble sacrifice, we now have three options,” Ashe said. “First, both of you join me in entering the Static Domain to await death or simply commit suicide. Although it would still end in a total wipeout, it would minimize the damage to our souls. I’ll try to get some potions that heal the soul, and we could be back in the Virtual Realm in no more than ten days.”

“Second, destroy the Soul Summoning spirit. Although I’m not sure which part of the rabbit the fox wants to eat, throwing out the whole rabbit is definitely the safe bet.”

Upon hearing this, both the Swordswoman and the Witch shook their heads. If it had been the old Soul Summoning spirit, they might have let it go, but after Ashe introduced the new troops that could be summoned by it, they were unwilling to give it up no matter what.

Star Prayer! Meteoric Warrior! These units far surpassed the capabilities of Two Wings Sorcerers, and although it was unclear if they were on par with Tri-wings Sorcerers, on the Time Continent, armed with these two units, they would be virtually unstoppable, slaying Slaying Fish-Dragons as if they were mere chickens.

Moreover, these advanced Star Hall units were extremely difficult to acquire. Low-level heroic soul commanders like Demilo were only defeated after the three sorcerers exerted all their efforts, and a high-level commander like Blaido, who traveled with a

large entourage and could even equip himself as a Meteoric Warrior... It would be impossible for even a large group of sorcerers to defeat Blaido.

If not for a stroke of luck, Ashe would never have unlocked these advanced units. It would have been much easier to achieve a Promotion to Tri-wings Sanctuary Sorcerer than to kill a heroic soul commander.

And although there was no clear reason, given the difficulty of acquiring the Soul Summoning spirit, they believed it had to be tied to greater benefits. More importantly, they knew they would likely never get another chance to seize a new Soul Summoning spirit.

Compared to losing this potential opportunity, they would rather have the Observer commit suicide.

"It might not even be about the Soul Summoning spirit," Sonya suggested. "Maybe it's related to the Commander's Handbook you just absorbed... By the way, what skill did you choose?"

"It shouldn't be, because I chose Financial Management."

"Why!?" exclaimed the rustic girl, shocked: "Isn't the technique that increases experience for all Factions better? We don't even have enough soul power to arm our troops! You don't have enough money to manage, do you?" By the end, she was so frustrated that she reverted to her rural dialect.

"But it's Financial Management! It's like investing in the future!" Ashe defended. "Who could resist the temptation of investing in the future?"

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