

Sorcerer's Handbook

Chapter 41

On a small island in the Sea of Knowledge within the Virtual Realm, the battle was drawing to its final conclusion.

"The difference between swordsmanship and butchery lies in precision."

Professor Trozan's teachings seemed to echo in her ears as Sonya strove to maintain steady breathing to prevent any distortion in her movements. Holding the wooden sword quietly in her hand, she channeled the arcane energy to its boiling point and thrust with all her might!

The wooden sword pierced through Ashe's back and out his chest!

"Ugh!"

Ashe grunted, the intense pain nearly causing his hands to lose their grip. The Virtual Realm didn't shield sorcerers from pain; in fact, because it was a direct contact with the naked soul, the sensation of pain was generally 10% to 20% higher than in reality. Hence, it was not impossible for a sorcerer to die from excessive pain in the Virtual Realm and carry that death back to the real world!

As the wooden sword impaled Ashe, a faint purple glow emanated from the tip, and then—

"Inner Vibration Sword!"

With Sonya's delicate shout, the Vibration Sword Qi burst forth from the wooden sword!

The green-skinned orc, whose waist had been pierced by Sonya's sword while it clutched at Ashe's shoulders, let out a hysterical roar. Its burly body burst open like a punctured balloon, and its lower half was blown away.

However, the ferocity in its eyes intensified as its hands clutched tightly at Ashe's throat, almost twisting his neck as if wringing out a wet towel—

Sonya decisively pulled out the wooden sword and made a swift cut. The orc's neck, which had seemed nearly impervious to cuts just moments before, now parted like a slice of cake. As the orc's head flew off, Ashe also sat down heavily on the ground, gasping for air.

“Are you okay?”

“Other than reliving a brief life in my mind and hearing what seemed to be the call of kin, nothing much.”

Ashe coughed twice, looking down at the spot where Sonya had stabbed him. Naturally, not even his windbreaker was damaged, and the injury had instantly healed.

He knew from the first battle that any injury sustained in the Virtual Realm was illusory. As long as one didn't die on the spot, the sorcerer could almost instantly recover.

Of course, all miracles come at a price. Ashe saw that the opacity of his palm had significantly decreased, indicating that a lot of his Soul Energy had been consumed.

If he were to suffer such severe trauma again, he might truly have to concede his first blood in the Virtual Realm.

He glanced at the dissipating orc's head, still feeling a shiver of fear.

This green-skinned orc was the strongest enemy they had encountered in the Virtual Realm. Had it not been for Ashe's willingness to sacrifice himself as a decoy and Sonya seizing the opportunity to strike, the outcome of their battle would still be uncertain.

To be honest, in terms of combat ability, this green-skinned orc was not much different from the gunners they had encountered before, both being low-rank sorcerers with very superficial battle modes.

And that was precisely why the “Exploration in Virtual Realm” had deemed it a ‘Worth a visit’ adventure target, giving Ashe a misconception.

Then the Virtual Realm taught Ashe a lesson: everything in the Virtual Realm carried risks, the waters of the Sea of Knowledge were deep, and if you couldn't grasp them, you'd be in over your head, child.

Even among low-rank sorcerers, the gap between them could be greater than racial differences.

Ashe and Sonya easily defeated the gunmen, but were overwhelmed by the green-skinned orc because its specialized faction was the perfect counter to their Physical Faction! Its green skin took on the color of wood, hard as if it were clad in natural armor!

Not just Ashe, but even Sonya could do no more than scratch it, unable to truly hurt it.

More importantly, the orc's battle experience was abundant, and it seemed to have also learned boxing techniques. Every time Sonya tried to seriously wound it with the

Vibration Sword, the orc would either entangle with Ashe or charge directly at Sonya, effectively forcing her to hold back out of caution.

After a prolonged battle, both Ashe and Sonya's energy was greatly depleted, while the orc fought more fiercely as time went on, which naturally boded ill for them. After a brief discussion, they decided Ashe would actively engage the orc to block its line of sight, creating an opportunity for Sonya to attack.

The tactic was successful: the orc perished, Sonya's skills improved, and Ashe experienced an unusual trip down memory lane. Everyone grew from the experience.

Naturally, after the battle, it was time to search for spoils of war. The orc left behind two fang ornaments, each with a spirit:

"Oak Skin"

"One Wing Spirit"

"Restriction: The Sorcerer must have skin that wraps around muscle tissue."

"Basic Effect: Transforms the skin into a bark-like material. When on the ground, 10% of kinetic energy impact on the skin can be transferred and dissipated into the earth."

"Passive Effect: Through daily exercise, the skin can be transformed into that of tree bark."

"Note: Frostbite, sunburn, deep cold—all the trials gifted by nature will only make you more indestructible."

Both spirits were "Oak Skin," and Ashe found it odd, "Why does it have two of the same spirits?"

Sonya explained: "Because the Physical Faction values not the active effects of the spirits but the passive effects, which can be stacked. Therefore, to quickly train their bodies to the extreme, Physical Sorcerers often seek to acquire multiple identical spirits to speed up their training."

"Do you need them?"

"No, Oak Skin isn't valuable, and it doesn't suit me. Even if I wanted to use Physical spirits to enhance my physique, there are better options. Besides, Oak Skin is just too ugly."

The focus is on being too ugly, huh... Ashe recalled the orc's skin that looked like a piece of paper crumpled hundreds of times then unfolded, and he felt some aversion.

He wasn't overly concerned about his own appearance, but that level of ugliness could indeed affect the aesthetics of the city.

Thus, those two spirits naturally went into Ashe's bag as reserve funds for Recharge.

Sonya picked up a scroll that burst out of the orc, glanced at it with disdain, and tossed it to Ashe, muttering, "You can't possibly absorb even this type of Sorcerer Handbook, can you?"

Ashe took a look and was immediately taken aback.

That scroll left by the orc was indeed a... Well, to put it elegantly, it was called "Flora's Compendium," more formally "Research Material on the Customs of Another World," and crudely, "The Recommended Guide."

The scroll started with a dozen or so artistic shots of orcs. Although the aesthetic was rather rough, Ashe, who hadn't indulged in such visuals for a couple of days, could appreciate the wild beauty within.

The scroll really started to get interesting in the middle; there were Humans, Elves, Ogres, creatures with long fuzzy ears, ones with scales, winged beings, horned figures, and even spiders—no wonder this Orc was a Physical Sorcerer, who else could conduct such a detailed and diverse survey!

But one thing Ashe found less satisfying was the Orc's single-minded aesthetic, which only pursued 'size.' Big was good, big was beautiful, and there wasn't a single female in the scroll under two meters tall—they were all giants that Ashe could only look up to.

"If you like it, why not take it back and peruse it at your leisure?" Sonya held her arms, barely concealing her disdain, "Ha, men..."

"I'll be quick, I'll finish it in no time, just wait for me."

Though he said this, the scroll was very long, documenting at least several hundred females, more than Ashe knew in person—it was a case of the drought-stricken envying the flood-stricken...

When Ashe reached the end of the scroll, he saw a photo of an ordinary Orc female, quite special—her photo was the only one in the entire scroll where she was clothed.

Based on previous information, this likely meant the Physical Orc Sorcerer hadn't engaged in procreation activities with her.

She was depicted holding two Orc children, with a wooden hut in the background. A bit short and plump, she looked kind, and even her fierce-looking fangs when she smiled didn't seem threatening. She wore a dirty apron, clearly an Orc farmwife.

With no textual information, Ashe could only guess: Had the Physical Orc Sorcerer fallen for this Orc farmwife? But why hadn't they become a couple? Was it because the Sorcerer was close to death, or had he contracted some disease from frequent self-care?

What a strange Orc Sorcerer indeed...

As the scroll turned to light smoke and dissipated, Ashe gained two new skills.

"Secrets of Bliss (Effective only for females over two meters tall)"

"Primal Instincts"

Ashe looked at "Secrets of Bliss (Effective only for females over two meters tall)" with some bewilderment.

How to put it... Although he had no driving experience, he somehow managed to get an A1 class driver's license. Starting today, he was a licensed cloud driver.

The second skill, "Primal Instincts," was quite useful. It wasn't an Orc Race trait, but a combat skill honed by the Orc Sorcerer over years of Battle, allowing for effective evasion of sudden attacks from outside one's field of vision in close combat.

Having absorbed the Sorcerer Handbook, Inheritance Island was about to sink again. Sonya sat at the stern of the boat, raising her eyebrows at him: "You really managed to absorb that Sorcerer Handbook... It seems you have quite a broad perspective..."

"Not really, I just have a flexible set of principles."

Actually, Ashe also felt something was off. Swordswomen couldn't absorb the handbooks, but he could absorb every one he encountered—it was clear that the problem wasn't with the conservative Swordswomen but with Ashe, who was as open as a public bus.

Ashe suspected it was a hidden feature of "Aurora's Sorcerer Handbook" the game, but since the game hadn't popped up any related prompts, Ashe could only fob off the Swordswoman.

"Let's move on to the next area. I'm hoping we'll encounter an Inheritance Island for a Swordcerer... or even Adventure Island with a spirit of Swordsmanship would be fine... Just as long as it's not an Inheritance Island for a Physical Sorcerer," Sonya complained lazily as she leaned against the boat's hull.

Ashe nodded, finding it hard not to agree with the suggestion. Facing enemies that bounced off their swords at every strike was a truly terrible experience. He'd rather deal with a Mud Fish Jiao and finish them off quickly.

He opened the “Exploration in Virtual Realm” to check the surrounding area for any hints and suddenly noticed an orange alert beneath the right-hand area that he had never seen before—

“Wait a moment.”

Sonya waited for dozens of seconds, and when she noticed the boat showed no sign of moving, she couldn’t help but ask curiously, “Why aren’t we moving yet?”

“We have to wait a bit before we can go.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

“How long?”

“I don’t know.”

“...Fine, we’ll wait then,” Sonya stretched lazily, “Speaking of which, I have something I wanted to discuss with you, I had almost forgotten.”

“What is it you want to talk about?”

“It’s about my Daily Training,” Sonya crossed her arms. “Can you cancel my Forced Training schedule?”

The Paper people of today, how come they’re so unwilling to generate surplus value?

This has to be the laziest bunch of Paper people I’ve ever seen.

I’ve never encountered such a thing when I played mobile games in the past.

Many thoughts crossed Ashe’s mind, but outwardly he intertwined his fingers and assumed a posture of listening to the people’s will, “Of course, there’s no problem, I respect the wishes of a Swordswoman like you—but I’d like to hear your reasons.”

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Chapter 42

“I barely have any personal time left in my day now.”

Sonya vented her frustrations, “I start with Required Courses or General Education Courses at 8 in the morning because I’ve switched to the Swordsmanship Department. Even though I no longer have to attend the Water Art Department’s classes, I still have to take Swordsmanship Introduction and Swordsmanship Practice. On top of that, Professor Trozan checks on my swordsmanship progress and spars with me almost every day; there’s hardly a moment to rest.”

It seemed odd to Sonya herself, as Professor Trozan was no idle professor tending to flowers and plants in retirement. Instead, he was the renowned Hidden Hand Sword Saint, the star Sorcerer of Swordflower College.

Although Trozan had taken Sonya and Felix as Research Apprentices, it didn’t warrant his daily concern for them. After all, Trozan had seen plenty of talents, and time for a Tri-wings Sanctuary Sorcerer wasn’t so cheap.

Yet Professor Trozan not only visited them every day but even took the time to spar with Sonya — a privilege solely hers, as Felix could only watch enviously from the sidelines.

Felix was the senior student, but Professor Trozan’s blatant favoritism towards her made Sonya feel awkward and secretly thrilled.

She had considered the possibility of an Observer’s manipulation, but that seemed unlikely — this was the Hidden Hand Sword Saint, after all!

If an Observer could control her, that might be the limit; how could they possibly control Professor Trozan?

And if they could control Professor Trozan, why on earth would they have him beat her up?

“I know you want me to achieve something in swordsmanship,”

Sonya tried to persuade him with as much politeness as she could muster, “but my daytime study load is already heavy enough; I don’t need to be forced into two more hours of Swordsmanship Training at night.”

“Besides, that training isn’t very meaningful. Now that I have the Vibration Sword, I should be focusing on summoning other supportive spirits based on the Vibration Sword, not continuing with basic training...”

Sonya felt somewhat guilty as she said this.

Although she was right, after becoming a Sorcerer, she should switch from swordsmanship training to ‘spirit training’, to improve her skills in using spirits.

Some might find it odd, as wasn’t the Vibration Sword spirit something Sonya had summoned and fully understood? Why was there room for improvement?

This was because Sonya fully grasped the ‘theory’, but she hadn’t completely deciphered the ‘reality’. Using spirits was a practice where theory and reality intersected, naturally presenting a vast potential for discovery.

For instance, the ‘Inner Vibration Sword’ Sonya used to kill the Orc sorcerer was the result of her recent studies.

This move no longer treated the Vibration Sword as a Long-range Attack but concentrated it at the tip of the sword, exploding within the enemy’s body upon stabbing, causing devastating damage instantly.

There were many more variations of the Vibration Sword to explore, and training in spirit usage was undoubtedly essential.

Furthermore, if Sonya perfected her Vibration Sword techniques, she could even summon corresponding supportive spirits.

For instance, once Sonya had fully mastered the Inner Vibration Sword, there was a high probability that she would be able to summon the Inner Spirit. The Inner Spirit could compress the power of the Vibration Sword spirit to a hundred percent and even temporarily store it within an enemy or an object, waiting for the Sorcerer’s mental command to suddenly detonate.

Because two spirits were used, the Inner Vibration Sword had now become the more powerful and unpredictable ‘Miracle Inner Vibration Sword.’

Of course, this was just a rudimentary Miracle, not even worthy of being included in the Sorcerer’s Miracle Catalog, with no commercial value.

But this reflects the normal growth process of a Sorcerer: summoning one spirit and then, based on this spirit, summoning other supportive spirits to extend an entire Miracle system.

So Sonya's request was quite reasonable.

However, the problem was that she was a Swordcerer.

Among Swordcerers, there is a saying: If you only want to be an ordinary Swordcerer, then follow the school's curriculum; but if you aspire to become a Golden Two Wings, Tri-wings Sanctuary, or even reach higher realms of Swordcerers, then mastering the three spirits of Slash Sword, Thrust Sword, and Cleave Sword is essential.

All Swordsmanship spirits, in essence, are derivations of these three fundamental spirits: slash, thrust, and cleave. While mastering these three does not guarantee strength, not mastering them certainly means you have weaknesses.

Therefore, it was considered reasonable for Sonya to continue her basic Swordsmanship Training these days, and even Felix had not fallen behind in training—any ambitious Swordcerer Apprentice would take this time to solidify their foundation.

So why did Sonya propose to the Observer to cancel her Training?

Apart from the minor issue of being genuinely exhausted and lacking any time for Entertainment, the main reason was, of course, that she wanted to test her own influence.

It wasn't about conducting a compliance test with the Observer, but Sonya was not content with being controlled by others.

Even if the Observer rejected her this time, it wouldn't matter. Sonya could gradually probe and strategize, reminding the Observer every day of her great efforts and hard work. After all, the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

Someday, Sonya would figure out the Observer's psychological bottom line and thought patterns.

By then, who controls whom would be up for debate...

"You make a good point,"

Ashe nodded, seemingly convinced by the Swordswoman's argument.

Sonya was momentarily taken aback, thinking: Is the Observer that easy to persuade?

“But I want to ask you—if you had an extra two hours at night, what would you plan to do?”

“Probably... read some books, watch a play, attend a dance to meet more friends?”

“So in other words, all Entertainment, fun and games, right?”

Ashe tapped his fingers on the ship’s hull, recalling how his old boss used to sweet-talk people.

“Have you ever met someone from a wealthier background than you?”

“Yes.”

“Have you ever met someone from a wealthier background who also has Talent equal to yours?”

“Yes.”

“You know what’s the most terrifying thing in this world? It’s someone who comes from a better background than you, has Talent that’s not inferior to yours, and works harder than you!” Ashe said earnestly. “When you can’t help but want to stop for Rest, others will take the opportunity to widen the gap between you.”

Sonya felt a slight stir in her heart, remembering Felix leaving in his silver luxury sedan.

“Don’t waste your life at the age when you should be working the hardest, don’t long for pleasure when you should be struggling. There are so many people in this world whose starting point is our finish line. Are you content to only be able to look up at others’ backs in the future, content to be just an ordinary person, with no mark left in the Sea of Knowledge or anywhere else?”

Sonya’s lips moved, and she finally shook her head, “Not content.”

Ashe continued with gravity, “So, Swordswoman, your thoughts are not good, and don’t blame me for criticizing you. You feel tired? Good, comfort is for the elderly. You want to enjoy life? Sure, but enjoyment is for the successful.”

“You, in your prime, should bravely step out of your comfort zone and fill your life with struggle. Don’t let other people’s lives blind you. Do you want to be just an ordinary person like them in the future? Don’t let your inner desires cloud your reason; hedonism will only slow your sword-drawing speed.”

“If there’s something you like, strive for it, so in the future if you fail, you can blame the world to your heart’s content, not yourself.”

“We Sorcerers do not dwell on the past or wish for the afterlife; we only seek a spectacular life in the present, full of passion and rivalry!”

Sonya was silent for a long time, then nodded heavily: “Observer, you are right!”

Alright, got through that... Ashe breathed a sigh of relief. He was still a bit uncomfortable with this kind of work; after all, it used to be his boss doing the motivational speeches, and now it was his turn to build someone else’s psyche.

And you know what? This job of inducing anxiety in others is quite interesting; no wonder the boss often shared anxiety-inducing articles with friends.

“Then changing two hours of Training to one hour shouldn’t make a big impact, right?”

Ashe blinked, suddenly noticing that the area prompt in the ‘Exploration in Virtual Realm’ changed from ‘Wait a moment’ to ‘Right now,’ he quickly changed the subject: “No more idle chat, brace yourself, we’re about to enter a Dangerous Zone!”

The boat passed through layers of white mist, and a small island appeared before the two of them.

On the island was a huge white-furred fox, its fur reflecting purple and white arcs of light, as if the moon had fallen there, so beautiful it was hard to look away. It lay under a tree, its body and tail curled up into a fluffy ball, making one want to stroke it.

“It’s a fox dragon,” Sonya whispered, her voice filled with excitement, “It’s asleep!”

The boat silently neared the shore; they tiptoed to the fox dragon’s head, exchanged a look, and readied themselves to strike.

Sonya assumed the posture of drawing her longsword, while Ashe summoned a Substitute spirit to create a Substitute. The two, holding blunted longswords, aimed at the fox dragon’s head—in the Virtual Realm, Ashe’s consciousness was free from the confines of the body, naturally no longer bound by the neck chip, allowing the use of spirits.

After some testing, Ashe discovered that although a Substitute could easily be destroyed with a poke, it could still attack before being destroyed. In situations like the current one, it made sense to let the Substitute join in to add to the damage.

As for the unsharpened longsword, just as Sonya could produce a wooden sword, Ashe could also summon the weapons he had used in previous Deathmatches. Actually, Ashe would have preferred to summon a Gun, but the problem was that he had never handled any firearms in real life, so he couldn’t imagine it...

Prepared, the two nodded at each other, and silently counted down—three, two, one—and attacked simultaneously!

“Laidō Vibration Sword!”

“Double Slash!”

The sleeping fox dragon was instantly decapitated by three swords at the same time, letting out a sharp roar that nearly deafened Ashe and Sonya for a moment. The Substitute was directly shattered by the roar.

But the fox dragon seemed to be dazed by the attack, unable to even stand up, and could only struggle and snap wildly on the ground.

Ashe and Sonya, not ones to adhere to any sort of chivalry in this scenario, took advantage of the fox dragon’s weakened state, picked up their weapons, and relentlessly bludgeoned its head. Ashe even took the opportunity to stroke its fur.

After a dozen seconds or so, the fox dragon let out a cry of unwillingness and dissipated into a cloud of white smoke.

It left behind three slumbering spirits, which seemed confused and stared blankly at the unfamiliar Sorcerers. But Sonya wasn’t looking at the spirits; instead, she reached for a bright Orb on the ground.

“What is this?”

“An Experience Orb,” Sonya said, her eyes revealing an unmistakable desire as she focused on the orb. “There are no Restrictions, no requirements. As long as a Sorcerer absorbs this Experience Orb, they will gain all the insights of a Knowledge Creature and instantly master a Magical Faction!”

“If it’s a Faction they already know, it could even significantly elevate a Sorcerer’s realm of knowledge, paving the way for Promotion and eliminating any bottlenecks!”

“Exploration in the Virtual Realm is the accumulation of thousands of miles.”

“The Experience Orb is enlightenment in an instant!”

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Chapter 43

Human effort is finite, but truth is infinite.

In a world where knowledge can summon spirits and spirits can give birth to miracles, the pursuit of knowledge by Sorcerers is almost an instinct etched deep within the soul. Yet, as Sorcerers tirelessly chase knowledge, they encounter a formidable barrier—the efficiency of learning.

Regardless of their race or realm, Sorcerers all learn the same way: through memorization, understanding, and mastery. Sorcerers of different races have their own advantages; the Skydancers, with their naturally sharp vision, excel at memorization; the Elven Race, with their powerful souls, excel at understanding; and the intuitive Orcs excel at mastery. Although these advantages are not equal, all races have the potential to become Sorcerers.

However, once a Sorcerer steps into the Virtual Realm, they realize just how laughable their racial advantages are in the face of its immeasurable Sea of Knowledge.

No matter how gifted they are, their efficiency in acquiring knowledge is akin to draining the Sea of Knowledge with a straw—the only difference being the thickness of the straw.

Sorcerers have devised many methods to increase this efficiency, such as inventing miracles like Eidetic Memory, Thought Acceleration, and Telepathy, or by extending their lifespans to compensate for the inefficiency in learning with time.

The ever-increasing pursuit of knowledge and the lagging learning efficiency form an existential contradiction that Sorcerers can never fully resolve.

But the Virtual Realm has long prepared a solution for Sorcerers.

“This is an Experience Orb from the Radiance Faction.”

Sonya gently held the bright and translucent orb, her voice light, as if afraid that speaking too loudly would harm it: “By absorbing it, even someone completely ignorant of the Radiance Faction can instantly possess Silver Rank Radiance knowledge and become a Sorcerer specialized in Radiance.”

“After returning to reality, with just a bit more research and organization of the knowledge, one could even summon a Radiance Spirit with their own strength. Because what the orb provides is not merely ‘illusory’ knowledge, but ‘actual’ experience—the experience that the fox dragon possesses.”

“If spirits are priceless, then Experience Orbs are truly beyond any price.”

There was an endless fascination in Sonya’s eyes, “Even the poorest Sorcerer would not sell an Experience Orb, and even the most generous Sorcerer would covet it. Although it’s possible to bring Experience Orbs out of the Virtual Realm, almost no Sorcerer does so—because the instant they obtain an Experience Orb, they’ve already absorbed it.”

Nearly every legendary Sorcerer has absorbed a multitude of Experience Orbs. It is the existence of these orbs that makes it possible for Sorcerers to master knowledge from various factions simultaneously, thereby renewing faction knowledge, creating new miracles, summoning new spirits, and even founding new factions.

The contribution of Experience Orbs to the development of Sorcerer civilization to its present state is immeasurable.

Ashe could understand the wonder of the Experience Orb, but he could not grasp Sonya’s excitement.

“The orb you’re talking about seems very precious, but didn’t we just get one quite easily?”

Sonya took a deep breath and silently repeated three times, “The Observer is a foolish Small Horn,” before calmly explaining, “Indeed, obtaining an Experience Orb theoretically isn’t difficult; defeating any Knowledge Creature might result in one dropping.”

“However, let’s not mention that Knowledge Creatures often have the power to defeat Sorcerers of the same level. Let’s assume you find a Knowledge Creature you can defeat, but what often happens is—just as you’re about to defeat the Knowledge Creature, it runs away.”

“They run away?”

“Since they’re creatures, they naturally have the instinct to seek benefits and avoid harm. How could they not flee?” Sonya retorted. “Would a Knowledge Creature capable of birthing a spirit be so foolish as to not understand basic common sense?”

Ashe always felt like the Swordswoman was scolding him, but he had no evidence. “Then isn’t that a huge loss for the Sorcerer?”

“Not necessarily. Knowledge Creatures also understand the concept of self-preservation. When they try to escape, they will intentionally throw out a spirit to distract the Sorcerer. As long as you can defeat the Knowledge Creature, you’re guaranteed at least one spirit.”

“Well, at least it’s not a loss if you win.”

“Sometimes winning can be more painful—if the Sorcerer kills the Knowledge Creature, they might also destroy the Experience Orb.”

“Ah?”

“Experience Orbs aren’t created upon the death of a Knowledge Creature, but rather they exist within the creature.” Sonya explained, “Due to the Knowledge Creature’s characteristic of dissipating upon death, nobody knows where within the creature the Experience Orb will form, and the location might differ for each Knowledge Creature.”

“If the Sorcerer isn’t careful when attacking, it’s very possible they’ll destroy the Experience Orb as well.”

“Every Sorcerer will experience the situation where they kill a Knowledge Creature and no Orb drops. They can’t know if the creature didn’t have an Orb or if they accidentally destroyed it.”

“Do you understand now how fortunate we are to have obtained this Orb?”

Sonya looked towards where the fox dragon had disappeared, “If the fox dragon hadn’t been asleep, if we hadn’t focused our attacks on its head, if the Experience Orb just happened to be in the fox dragon’s head, if the fox dragon had the strength to struggle with us... Without any one of these ifs, this Orb would almost certainly not have ended up in our hands.”

With that, Sonya couldn’t help but look at the Observer with an astonished gaze—the Observer’s recent halt was undoubtedly to wait for the fox dragon to fall asleep. This unheard-of, underhanded tactic was really... fantastic!

“Indeed.”

Ashe nodded, his eyes fixed on the Experience Orb.

Sonya gripped the Orb, her body slightly trembling. But soon, she exhaled and handed the Orb to Ashe: "Here."

"You're willing to give it to me?"

"Aren't you in a dangerous situation and in urgent need of something to increase your strength?"

Sonya pretended to be nonchalant, "I'm not in a hurry. You can have this Orb. Just don't compete with me for a Swordsmanship Orb next time."

"Deal!"

Ashe reached out to take the Orb, but couldn't move it.

"Let go!"

"I am letting go, I am! But my fingers won't listen to me!"

Ashe had no choice but to pry Sonya's fingers off one by one, and amidst her reluctant gaze, he finally got hold of the Orb.

As a warm flow entered his palm, a Holographic Screen popped up with a message:

"Radiance Orb"

"Essence of Truth left by the fox dragon, containing secret knowledge that a common Sorcerer cannot obtain through normal means. Upon absorption, one can gain a large amount of Radiance experience."

"The moonlight is a frolicking fox; the fox is moonlight in motion."

The moment Ashe touched the Orb, he also felt a stirring in his soul, an indescribable hunger spreading from his heart to his entire body. It was his first time experiencing such an intense desire for knowledge—it was affecting his reason.

It was an indescribable experience, more intense than the urge for knowledge when a novel stops abruptly at a crucial point, more urgent than the anxiety of finding an exam's answer sheet half missing, more exciting than the thrill of an important image loading only to freeze. It felt as if every crease and pore of his body urged Ashe to absorb this Orb.

Prison, danger, survival—all these were cast thousands of miles away at this moment; knowledge became Ashe's only desire.

Just as Ashe could not resist absorbing the Orb, his reason flickered with a flash of wisdom—

Wait, I smell the scent of surplus value.

Ashe took a closer look at the introduction of the Radiance Orb, which undoubtedly stated, “Upon absorption, one can gain a large amount of Radiance experience.” That means...

“Swordswoman, you absorb it.”

Watching the Orb being tossed to her, the usually nimble Sonya caught the Radiance Orb in a fluster, a mix of anger and shock directed at Ashe.

“Could it be that your Radiance Faction level has already reached Silver Rank or above?”

“No, I don’t understand the Radiance Faction at all.”

“I see, does the Radiance Faction conflict with the Faction knowledge you’ve already mastered? Like the Abyssal Faction perhaps...”

“Not at all, I don’t know anything, as you well know.”

“Then why won’t you absorb this Orb?”

“Because there’s a Bond between us,” Ashe said matter-of-factly: “You getting stronger is me getting stronger.”

Sonya had heard the Observer talk about ‘a Bond between us’ before, but she always thought it was just a more polite way of saying ‘I can control you’—until this very moment, she couldn’t help but marvel: Is this what a Bond is?

As for the Observer’s words, ‘You getting stronger is me getting stronger,’ Sonya took it as mere courtesy, similar to ‘If you’re well, I’m well, and that’s the best for us all.’

Sonya didn’t hesitate, directly crushing the Experience Orb. Her body trembled slightly, her cheeks flushed with a touch of red, and she let out a long, melodious sigh.

Although the scene was very enticing, Ashe had no time to appreciate it, as he was in a similar state to Sonya.

This feeling, rather than ‘absorbing knowledge,’ was more like ‘memories flooding to the surface.’

Just as one might suddenly recall a teacher's instruction when facing a tough math problem, Ashe naturally mastered a wealth of related knowledge. He went from a newbie who didn't even know about the Radiance Faction to becoming a Specialized Sorcerer within it.

It really worked!

From the Experience Orb absorbed by the Swordswoman, 30% of the Radiance Faction experience could be shared with Ashe!

This is why Ashe had the Swordswoman absorb the Orb: while he would gain 100% benefit from absorbing it himself, letting the Swordswoman absorb it meant a 130% benefit!

Moreover, as long as the Swordswoman continued to advance in the Radiance Faction, Ashe would reap an endless stream of long-term benefits. Isn't the surplus value created in this way much stronger than if he had monopolized the Experience Orb?

That's why Ashe wasn't blinded by the temptation of the Experience Orb: it's merely a tool, like a hoe, and no matter how cool the hoe is, it needs to be in the hands of someone who knows how to cultivate the field to be truly effective. For someone with little Talent like Ashe, it was enough to wait and reap the benefits.

Sonya gradually recovered from being filled with knowledge, looked at Ashe with gratitude on her face: "Thank you!"

"You better not let me down, make sure to diligently study the knowledge of the Radiance Faction, and don't neglect your Swordsmanship Training either!"

"Understood!"

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Chapter 44

The interlude with the Experience Orb made the allocation of the remaining three spirits much more relaxed and enjoyable.

Even though Sonya insisted that all three spirits should go to Ashe, after careful consideration, Ashe chose to take two of the less valuable ones, 'Foxfire' and 'Lighting', and gave the most useful 'Moon Silk' to Sonya.

****Foxfire****

****One Wing Spirit****

****Restriction: The Sorcerer must possess a tail.****

****Basic Effect: Flick a variable number of blue flames with the tail, which can attach to specific objects to burn for a while, causing no pain to the target, and may even induce pleasure.****

****Passive Effect: The body's fur becomes more lush and flammable.****

****"Pain and pleasure are but illusions; when you burn away the facade, the truth within is revealed."****

****Lighting****

****One Wing Spirit****

****Restriction: The Sorcerer must hold a luminous medium or be near a light source.****

****Basic Effect: Emit a floating light that moves flexibly at your will.****

****Passive Effect: You become more spirited in well-lit areas.****

****"It's not the light that dispels the darkness, but the darkness that chases the light."****

****Moon Silk****

****One Wing Spirit****

****Restriction: The Sorcerer must hold a luminous medium or be near a light source.****

****Basic Effect: Create multiple temporary, taut, suspended moonlight silk threads.****

****Passive Effect: You become lighter under the moonlight.****

****"Listen, the moonlight weaves the veil of the night."****

Clearly, 'Foxfire' and 'Lighting' were meant to be the fox dragon's main methods of attack, attaching the Foxfire to the Lighting to create a continuous and flexible flame attack.

It was fortunate that they had beaten the slumbering fox dragon senseless; otherwise, just the 'Foxfire Lantern' would have given them a hard time, not to mention the 'Moon Silk'—Sonya tried it out and was able to create silk threads in the air as hard as steel and suspended taut. Anyone bumping into them would be instantly sliced by the threads, a perfect Bumping Scam trap.

Ashe had wanted 'Moon Silk' too, but it was useless for him in the Prison as he couldn't use spirits there. Having a good spirit with him would be meaningless, so he chose 'Foxfire' and 'Lighting' to Recharge with—neither of them had a tail, which was a prerequisite for using the 'Foxfire Lantern'.

The stronger 'Moon Silk' was given to the Swordswoman as research homework; after all, her learning experiences would be shared with Ashe, and he couldn't leave her without a single workbook in her hands.

At that moment, Ashe suddenly realized a problem: "Can we exchange spirits in the Virtual Realm?"

Sonya immediately knew what he was up to: "You want me to help you find the Slay Me Miracle spirit and then exchange it in the Virtual Realm?"

"Yes, after all, you—"

"It won't work."

"Huh?"

"Never unlink your connection with a spirit in the Virtual Realm, it would cause serious trouble."

Ashe gulped.

“What kind of trouble?”

“The spirit would run away instantly.”

“...Can't we catch it back?”

Sonya shook her head, “No Sorcerer can catch it back—perhaps you haven't realized, we Sorcerers are foreign travelers in this Virtual Realm, where the spirits are the real masters.”

“Even though spirits are not exactly living creatures, and it's questionable whether they can think, they undoubtedly have certain instincts—such as the desire for freedom.”

Ashe nodded as he remembered the spirits they encountered on Adventure Island quickly fleeing, but he was still somewhat puzzled.

“Spirits escape slowly, right? Why can't they be caught?”

“Because those are spirits that haven't been caught before. Do you think a mouse that has been caught once is more vigilant than one that hasn't? Learning is also an instinct of a spirit.”

“But even if a spirit is highly vigilant, it can't run fast.”

Sonya nodded and then shook her head, “In reality, what you're saying is correct. In reality, when you unlink from a spirit, although it will try to escape, it has little influence on reality and can be easily caught.”

“But the Virtual Realm is the home of the spirits; this is where Miracles originate.”

“As long as the spirit wishes, the entire Virtual Realm will assist it.”

“Although I don't know what price the spirit pays, countless records state that if you unlink from a spirit in the Virtual Realm, it will disappear instantly, and to date, no Sorcerer has been able to catch one back.”

Another avenue closed off, Ashe sighed, ready to leave, but Sonya stopped him, “Don't be in a hurry to go; there's still something to be divided here.”

Sonya walked towards the small tree where the fox dragon had been perched and picked two unripe little fruits. Ashe took one, unable to discern its variety.

“Virtual fruit, soul fruit, mysterious fruit—this thing has many names and comes in different shapes, but the effect is the same—eating it replenishes depleted Soul Energy, extending your exploration time in the Virtual Realm.”

“And just so you know, it tastes awful.”

Ashe gagged while looking at the Swordswoman, taking several seconds to overcome the nausea. It was as bad as eating dirt, “Could you maybe lead with that next time?”

“I think it’s quite alright; I certainly don’t want to eat a second one,” Sonya said, her face contorted in disgust.

Perhaps the Experience Orb had exhausted their luck, as Ashe didn’t find any ‘Worth a visit’ or ‘Welcome’ areas afterward; it was either ‘Seeking death’ or a ‘waste of effort’, and there were even ‘run quickly’ warnings.

After leaving the Virtual Realm and returning to the Prison, Ashe took the ‘Foxfire’ and ‘Lighting’ to Recharge. Both spirits were worth 10 Points each, and together with the ‘Rapid Fire’ spirit he sold before, Ashe now had 30 Points.

That was just enough for a ‘set of source crystals’ in the game, valued at 30 Points.

Even though Ashe could continue to save up for something bigger, after hearing from Valcas about Professor Sylin’s manhunt, Ashe felt an increasing sense of pressure—Prison was not his shield, danger was everywhere!

If you don’t spend when you need to, you might not get the chance later!

Spending all 30 Points to buy a ‘set of source crystals’, he acquired 6 Source Crystals, but due to a first-time purchase bonus, Ashe actually received 12 Source Crystals.

Over the past few days, Ashe has accumulated 15 Source Crystals through daily Check-ins, which means he can now indulge in Card Draw five times!

After three days, Ashe prepares for another round of Card Draw. He washes his hands, clasps them together, and prays to any deity whose name he can muster, not even sparing the miracles of this world: “Oh Virtual Realm, I use your spirits to Recharge and draw cards, which is, in essence, drawing on your behalf. What’s yours is mine, and what’s mine will eventually be yours. By granting me fortune, you favor yourself. I won’t say much more; you know what I mean...”

Card Draw!

Without enough for a ten-pull, Ashe goes for consecutive single draws, believing that faith itself is the magic of miracles!

White light, “Energy Potion”!

White light, “Primary Combat Card”!

Excellent, the Swordswoman won’t have any Rest next week either.

Purple light, “Virtual Realm Telescope”!

Orange light, “Death Maniac Swordswoman’s Silver Coin”!

Purple light, “Awakening Battle Record”!

Could the charm of single draws be the appearance of three new items in a row?

“Virtual Realm Telescope”: When used during Exploration in the Virtual Realm, it increases your observation distance by +1.

The shorter the description, the stronger the effect, or so Ashe quickly realizes. His current observation distance in the Virtual Realm is only 1, meaning he can only see the surrounding 8 squares. With this telescope, his observation area expands from 3×3 to 5×5, increasing the number of visible squares from 8 to 24!

A significant reason Ashe has struggled to find a suitable exploration area is his ‘myopic’ view in the Virtual Realm, where he could only take the safest routes before him. With this item, their efficiency in exploring the Virtual Realm will increase by at least 50%.

“Death Maniac Swordswoman’s Silver Coin”: One of three Silver Coins long treasured by the Death Maniac Swordswoman, lost over many years. If someone brings this Silver Coin to the Death Maniac Swordswoman, they will receive a reward—or death. The coin also expands the Bond functionality.

Though the description is vague, Ashe instantly spots the scheme: It’s just like the full potential mechanism in mobile game card draws. When you draw the same character, you can unlock more postures for the character, tempting players to Recharge more.

Using the “Death Maniac Swordswoman’s Silver Coin,” the information for ‘Death Maniac Swordswoman’ changes.

“Death Maniac Swordswoman”

“Human Race Female 18 years old”

“Bond Level: 1 (35% Experience Sharing)”

“Bond Resonance – Greediness: When acting together, there’s a chance of obtaining better loot.”

“Occupation: One Wing Swordcerer”

“Occupational Traits: Reduces energy consumption by 10% when using Swordsmanship spirits”

“Items: Training Wooden Sword”

“Controlling Spirits: Vibration Sword, Moon Silk, Rapids”

“Swordsmanship Faction: Silver Rank”

“Radiance Faction: Silver Rank”

“Water Art Faction: Not Initiated”

“Exploration in Virtual Realm: 0.002%”

Aside from the increase of Experience Sharing from 30% to 35%, the most significant change is the addition of “Bond Resonance – Greediness.”

It’s clear this is a negative trait of the Swordswoman and not related to Ashe, but the effect is promising. From now on, the Swordswoman will take the last hit in battles.

As Ashe looks at the last item he drew, the “Awakening Battle Record,” he knows it’s not a common item. It was accompanied by a purple light, indicating it’s as valuable as the “Virtual Realm Telescope.”

The “Awakening Battle Record”: Schedules a high-difficulty battle for an Operator, allowing them to enter an Awakening State. In the Awakening State, Operators receive 250% battle experience and are more likely to perform miracles, summon spirits, and achieve breakthroughs (Risk Level: Medium).

“I barely have any personal time these days...”

“I’m so tired...”

“Can we reduce the training to just one hour...”

The Swordswoman’s complaints seem to echo in his ears, and Ashe’s face shows his struggle. It’s at this moment that the Prison’s morning song starts on schedule:

“If hurt enough, use both hands, joyfully sever yesterday’s curse. Await the daylight as night falls, leaving only scars behind...”

The song seems to solidify Ashe's resolve, and he resolutely uses the "Awakening Battle Record"!

He selects the Death Maniac Swordswoman as the target.

"Swordswoman, I'm doing this for your own good!"

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Chapter 45

In the Stars Kingdom, in Gales, at the Sword and Rose Sorcerer College.

"...When facing a Turbid Heart Monster, unless a Swordcerer can pierce its brainstem at the first instance—decapitation is useless; as long as the Turbid Heart Monster has a brain, it can launch an attack—the sorcerer will be affected by its spirit 'Rampage.' When one starts to feel agitated, the Swordcerer must pierce their own thigh with a sword to maintain clarity through pain, allowing the other ranged sorcerers in the squad to kill the Turbid Heart Monster..."

Only the voice of the teacher droning on filled the stepped classroom. Sonya, seated by the window, watched the three bright stars in the sky outside, the warm sunshine spreading over the lawns, the pathways, and the benches, making every part of the world gleam.

“Sonya!” Engulite whispered urgently, “Don’t get distracted during class.”

Sonya, resonating with the real light, smiled faintly, “It’s not like it’s an important class. My Bracelet is recording the notes anyway, even if I get distracted...”

“This is the most important ‘Swordsmanship Introduction!’” Engulite said sternly, “Don’t you plan to venture into the Abyss in the future? Aren’t you afraid of danger? What use are recorded notes from a Bracelet? This is the most crucial class for knowledge against foes, and one can never be too attentive when it comes to safety!”

“Cough, cough!”

The teacher on the podium coughed twice, and the two students quickly straightened up and listened attentively.

‘Swordsmanship Introduction’ is not about teaching hollow theories but about discussing the responses a Swordcerer must make against various enemies in different environments. The reason for this course’s existence is its direct relevance to the future career paths of Swordcerers.

Swordcerers are, without a doubt, pure Battle Sorcerers, unlike Water Art practitioners who can become Healing Sorcerers or mechanical sorcerers who can become Creator Sorcerers. If it were a time of absolute peace, Swordcerers would undoubtedly decline and might even face the extinction of their Inheritance.

The prosperity of swordsmanship in the Stars Kingdom is because the world is not safe, constantly threatened by the Abyss.

The Abyss is not a fixed place but a randomly appearing Monster Nest. It’s said to be random, but there are patterns: it only appears in populous cities, or rather, the more sorcerers there are in a place, the more likely an Abyss is to appear.

As the core city of the Stars Kingdom, Gales naturally suppresses the largest Abyss.

To date, no scholar has been able to explain the cause of the Abyss’s formation, but the threat it poses is one that must be addressed. The Abyss cannot be eradicated; the deeper it goes, the more powerful the monsters become, and it’s even possible for Deep-layer Monsters like Tri-wings Sanctuary or Quadruple wings Legend to emerge. However, surface monsters are also problematic.

Since the Abyss undergoes significant geographical changes periodically, sorcerers can’t build permanent camps within it. Also, the Abyss has outbursts at intervals, during which time legendary monsters may venture to the surface, forcing sorcerers to retreat from the Abyss during these times.

Due to various Restrictions, 'periodically clearing the Abyss' has become a crucial societal role. Apart from a few individuals who can become Nobles or 'Riot Consultants' for corporations, most Swordcerers form squads with other sorcerers, embarking on regular Abyss Adventures to clear out the monsters.

This wasn't a dirty job and was, in fact, a very good career path because, in addition to the Extinguishing rewards given by the state, the various trophies dropped by the Abyss monsters were extremely valuable. Sometimes, scarce resource points could even be found within the Abyss.

Countless Nobles originated from Adventure Teams in the Abyss, and an innumerable number of Sorcerers had found Adventure within its depths.

But the risks were proportional to the rewards; nearly all Abyss monsters were possessed by spirits, making their combat power no less than that of Sorcerers. Every day, many Sorcerers perished in the Abyss, and sometimes entire teams would be wiped out, becoming nourishment for the Abyss itself.

That was why Engulite was so dissatisfied with Sonya's attitude: every extra second paid attention in the Swordsmanship Introduction class could add a measure of caution in the face of danger during an Abyss Adventure!

But Sonya had just absorbed an Experience Orb and was excited like a child with a new toy, her mind preoccupied with validating the knowledge of the Radiance Faction. Besides, she didn't see herself venturing into the Abyss for Adventure—there might have been a possibility before, but now with her talent, plus the support of the Observer, she could progress methodically and achieve the status of Tri-wings Sanctuary. Why bother struggling and risking her life in the Abyss with others?

The Swordsmanship Introduction class ended, and next was Swordsmanship Practice, a sparring class among students of the Swordsmanship Department. While walking to the Combat Hall, students observed Sonya along the way and whispered among themselves.

Sonya wasn't surprised by this; she had become the focus of her fellow students after Professor Trozan had her bypass all procedures to transfer into the Swordsmanship Department, a hot topic of daily conversation.

But today was a little different—aside from Sonya, the students were also observing Felix.

"Look, it's her who dumped Sylvia..."

"Sonya will probably be dumped soon too..."

"I knew she was that kind of person the moment I saw her..."

Although she only caught bits and pieces of the conversation, Sonya had a good idea of what had happened—news of Felix breaking up with Sylvia had spread, and as the woman who had recently been seen with Felix, Sonya inevitably became the center of attention.

‘Don’t bring me trouble...’ Sonya thought, wanting only to keep a low profile and accumulate experience without being drawn into these trivial matters.

But women have a strong prophetic ability, especially when it comes to predicting bad things—at the entrance to the Combat Hall, Sonya noticed many unfamiliar faces, and the only one she recognized was Sylvia, her senior.

Sylvia was dabbing her tears, her eyes red and swollen, and dressed in simple elegance, she was the picture of vulnerable beauty. Although Sonya was confident in her own looks, Sylvia had the advantage of temperament, atmosphere, and the ‘tearful makeup’ effect. At this moment, Sonya couldn’t compete with her.

“Engulite, I want to skip class.”

“Okay.” Engulite expressed her understanding.

However, just as Sonya was about to leave the Combat Hall, a loud shout shook the dust from the ceiling.

“Felix, come here!”

A tall, black-haired Swordcerer yelled loudly, “You dare to toy with my sister’s feelings, you wouldn’t dare not to show up, would you!?”

Upon hearing this, everyone’s attention immediately turned to Felix and Sonya. Felix appeared calm, seemingly accustomed to such situations, and entered the Combat Hall nonchalantly. After a brief internal struggle, Sonya also abandoned the idea of fleeing—she couldn’t just slink away silently. To leave would signify weakness, and to run away would be to concede.

In the countryside, weakness and concession only make you an easier target for bullying.

The same is true in the big city.

There’s no essential difference between country mice and city mice when it comes to short-sightedness.

“Good morning, Lorein, Sylvia,” Felix nodded to them, “Shall we have lunch together later?”

“Forget it, your face makes me want to vomit right now.” The Black-haired Swordcerer didn’t mince words in front of Mr. Vlozrada’s son, “Draw your sword, let’s see the backbone of the Vlozradas.”

Whispers spread among the nearby students at his words, and Engulite couldn’t help but exclaim in her mind, “It’s Senior Lorein!”

Thanks to Engulite’s introduction, Sonya learned that this Senior Lorein was also a noteworthy figure—a Swordsmanship genius in his third year. Although not favored by Professor Trozan, he had become a Research Apprentice to a Golden Swordcerer and had achieved the rank of Silver One Wing a year ago. He was a member of the Swordflower College competition team!

Coming from a middle-class Noble Family, Lorein’s future was bright enough to at least reach Golden Two Wings without needing to respect a mere son of the Vlozrada Family. Those who stand on their own two feet have a certain toughness about them.

Lorein and Sylvia were not siblings but cousins, as their fathers were brothers. They also attended the same school and were in the same grade, which made their relationship quite close. It was almost an obligation for Lorein to stand up for Sylvia.

However, Felix didn’t accept the challenge immediately but instead looked at Sylvia, “Senior, is this really what you want?”

Others might have thought Felix was backing down, but Sonya knew he was genuinely puzzled—as someone who could change girlfriends four times a month, Felix naturally didn’t harbor any feelings for them. He assumed other women knew this and approached him with that understanding, so his philandering had never led to serious issues.

But Sonya noticed the way Sylvia looked at Felix and suddenly understood everything.

It was supposed to be just a fling, yet Sylvia had fallen for real.

Only true feelings could explain why Sylvia was being so irrational now—cutting off her last possibility with Felix and engaging in a futile gesture.

Emotions are the most unpredictable things, and even Hunters can fall into their own traps.

Women always think they’ll be the last, while men assume they’re the first. Those who fall into the trap and harbor unrealistic fantasies always end up as the losers.

Without getting an answer from Sylvia, Felix turned to Lorein, “Senior Lorein, are you saying you want to... beat me up?”

“This is the Combat Hall. Let’s have a bout of Combat Training,” Lorein said with a cold smirk. “The Infirmary is right next door, and I’ll try to hold back so the Vlozrada Family won’t lose a promising member. You’re not scared, are you?”

“Alright, very well, how could I possibly be afraid? A freshman versus a junior in a friendly spar, a newly minted Sorcerer against a Swordsman who’s been at it for over a year—why should I be scared?”

Felix flashed a bright smile, his teeth gleaming as he subtly accused Lorein of bullying the underdog. As a Noble’s son, he wasn’t foolish enough to fall for such an obvious taunt.

The surrounding students clearly didn’t approve of a fight where the strength difference was so pronounced; it was no different from bullying. However, Lorein’s expression remained unchanged as he shifted his gaze to Sonya.

Sonya immediately had a bad feeling.

“Felix, I heard you’ve recently taken a liking to a pretty ‘junior sister’. The two of you even summoned spirits during battle, which must mean you’re ‘quite close’ and have a ‘deep private relationship’.”

Lorein emphasized his words with a sarcastic tone, implying: “As the Senior, of course, I won’t bully the younger, but I’ll give you the chance to gang up on me—I’m doing this for Sylvia, so it’s not enough to confront you alone, Felix. Let your ‘junior sister’ join in too!”

“I’ll fight both of you on my own!”

Although Lorein didn’t say it outright, every word he spoke carried an undertone:

I’m here to beat down you two, the lovebirds!

Sonya’s mood was to smash the heads of the Observers—how did she, a bystander who minded her own business, get dragged into this mess?

Now all eyes, including Felix’s, were upon her.

Without moving forward, Sonya stood next to Engulite, her expression one of confusion: “Sorry, Senior Lorein, I’m not sure what you’re implying—I study with Felix under Professor Trozan, but we hardly interact outside of that. This is a personal matter between you two, and I see no reason to get involved.”

Should Sonya jump into the fray alongside Felix just because Lorein was being offensive?

She was no longer a child, and personal likes and dislikes were not the sole basis for her actions.

Her goal was to grow while keeping a low profile, and she had no interest in Felix's friendship. Plus, this was the perfect moment to set the record straight—if she really teamed up with Felix against Lorein, it would only confirm the rumors of being 'lovebirds'.

No matter how she looked at it, stepping away from this whirlpool was the wisest choice.

Lorein turned his attention away from Sonya, sneering, "It seems your charm isn't all that, Felix."

"You're mistaken," Felix replied calmly, undoing his Sword bag and drawing a wooden sword, the atmosphere becoming tense.

Just as Sonya thought she could skip the whole ordeal, a hand suddenly landed on her shoulder.

"This isn't fair—a fight with such a huge gap in strength is no different than bullying. As a member of the Disciplinary Committee, I cannot allow such a one-sided situation to occur."

An impressive orange-haired Female Swordsman held Sonya's shoulder, nudging her forward. Sonya turned to see the Swordsman's badge pinned to her chest: 'Swordflower Disciplinary Committee: Leoni Vickt.'

"It's Senior Leoni!"

"Why is she at the school?"

"It's the Orange Dancer herself!"

The orange-haired female swordsman dragged Sonya to the center of the arena, her grip tight as a vise. Sonya couldn't break free.

"Felix, my junior, and Sonya, my junior sister, you two should really communicate more. Professor Trozan would be so disappointed to know you can't even manage to help and love each other."

The orange-haired female swordsman looked at Sonya with a smile on her face.

"While Lorein may be suspected of bullying the younger students, you are Professor Trozan's research apprentices. If he bullies you, it's like insulting the Hidden Hand Sword Saint. How can you stand for that? You must understand that Felix now

represents not only himself but also as one of only two apprentices to Professor Trozan. You get that, right, Sonya?"

Sonya hesitantly nodded then shook her head, "But this is their personal grudge..."

"When Lorein declared a challenge against you both, even if it's to uphold the reputation of the Hidden Hand Sword Saint, you must accept the challenge. Moreover, with two against one, your odds of winning are huge. If you refuse, it would seem too cowardly."

"As a Swordcerer, you should have the courage to charge forward and the confidence to speak with your sword! Defeat your enemy and you have the ultimate reason!"

"What do you think, Sonya?"

As soon as the orange-haired female swordsman invoked Professor Trozan's name, Sonya knew she couldn't escape this battle.

Regardless of whether Trozan really cared or not, Sonya didn't dare to gamble.

Professor Trozan was her biggest supporter at present. She wouldn't risk anything that might affect his perception of her, especially not with hundreds of people watching. News of her backing down and tarnishing Professor Trozan's reputation could spread throughout Gales in less than ten minutes.

But she detested this feeling: being manipulated, forced, schemed against, and finally having to participate in a battle she didn't want to join!

A strong sense of frustration and humiliation fermented within her, causing Sonya's shoulders to tremble uncontrollably.

Yet, she was the girl who had traveled alone from the countryside to Gales, and her rationality soon took over.

However, just as she was suppressing her discontent, a familiar voice sounded in her ear.

"Do you need my help? I promise to rid you of your dissatisfaction."

"Yes!"

"That's your promise, remember. I'm off then, don't—blame—me."

The Observer walked past Sonya and disappeared into the air after speaking.

The next second, Sonya looked at the orange-haired female swordsman.

“Your decision now, junior Sonya, is—?”

“I refuse!” Sonya decisively shook her head, “I will not get involved in their personal grudge, I will not fight alongside Felix, and I will not battle Senior Lorein!”

The orange-haired female swordsman raised an eyebrow: “But if that’s the case...”

“But!”

Sonya looked at the orange-haired female swordsman, enunciating each word with force and determination.

“As an apprentice to Professor Trozan, I cannot stand you repeatedly provoking me with Professor Trozan’s reputation, cannot stand you trying to incite students and question the quality of Professor Trozan’s teaching, and even less can I stand you using our win or loss to smear Professor Trozan’s character!”

“I didn’t—”

“No need to explain. As you said, defeat your enemy and you are the most reasonable. So—”

Sonya untied her sword bag, pulled out her wooden sword, and pointed it straight at the orange-haired female swordsman.

“Leoni Vickt, I challenge you.”

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Chapter 46

At Swordflower College, in the Combat Hall.

As Sonya pointed her sword at Leoni, a single thought occupied the minds of all the spectators:

What is she doing?

Felix, Sylvia, Engulite, and the others thought the same:

What is Sonya doing?

Even Sonya herself fell into contemplation:

What am I doing?

Leoni, on the other hand, was taken aback for a moment before she couldn't help but cover her mouth and belly, trying to suppress her laughter, which almost seemed to seep through her teeth and lips. It was evident that she was struggling to hold it in.

After a while, she took a deep breath, still with traces of hysterical laughter on her face, and asked with as much seriousness as she could muster:

"Sonya, my junior, are you serious? You want to challenge me, Leoni Vickt?"

It's a lie! I wasn't serious! The Observer took control of me!

Observer, you shameless little horn, controlling a girl's body!

Sonya was practically roaring in her mind, cursing, but she couldn't voice this reason. She also believed the Observer wouldn't show up again—at least not until she had finished this combat training session.

It was only natural for everyone to react this way, given that Sonya's challenge was directed at Leoni.

At Swordflower College, Leoni was the most famous student. Whether it was her talent, her award-winning experience, or her various scandals, everyone talked about her enthusiastically.

She had subdued all the new students in the Swordsmanship Department on her very first day;

In her sophomore year, she was promoted to Silver One Wing and became an apprentice to another Sword saint of Swordflower College, the 'Rhythm Sword Saint' Nidhogg;

By her junior year, she joined an Abyss Adventure Team and formed a squad with geniuses from Truth College, reaping many rewards in the Abyss and encountering constant adventures.

Even Truth College wanted to poach her, and countless people saw Leoni as a seedling of a Sword saint, a preparatory for the Sanctuary!

What's more, Leoni had been intensely participating in Abyss adventures for the past half-year, and everyone knew she was seeking to break through her swordsmanship realm in battle to advance to Two Wings!

This meant that Leoni had fully unfurled her Silver Wings, a complete state for a One Wing Sorcerer!

By comparison, Sonya and Felix had only entered the Virtual Realm a few days ago, not to mention Silver Wings, they hadn't even condensed a single Silver feather. The gap in arcane energy between them was even greater than that between a child and an adult.

Although arcane energy is just an energy resource, the actual battle still depends on the level of the Sorcerer, but no one believed Sonya had the slightest chance of winning, not even Sonya herself.

Leoni undoubtedly had more spirits than her, and certainly, she had mastered Swordsmanship Miracles, on top of her rich Abyss battle experience.

The more Sonya compared, the more desperate she became—why did the Observer have to harm her like this!

She would have been better off challenging Lorein!

Even if she lost to Lorein, people would only think that Lorein was bullying the weak, but losing to Leoni was different. People would think that Sonya was arrogant and presumptuous, not knowing her place!

Not to mention the boastful words Sonya had uttered just now.

If the loss was too humiliating, she wouldn't even be able to face Professor Trozan.

The more she thought about it, the angrier she got. Last time it was the same; the Observer had arbitrarily sent her to challenge Felix, which led to today's trouble. Unexpectedly, the Observer pulled the same trick again, this time pushing her to provoke Leoni!

However, the Observer wasn't wrong.

Sonya didn't actually feel irritated in her heart.

Because all she could think about was going to the Virtual Realm tonight to throttle the Observer.

But once the words were out, Sonya couldn't possibly take them back, so she gritted her teeth and nodded, "That's right."

"Good, I admire your courage," Leoni said with a smile. "As a senior of the Swordsmanship Department, I have no reason to refuse the challenge from a junior."

"But," Leoni continued with a smile, "as a member of the Disciplinary Committee, I can't let a battle with such a disparity in strength take place on campus, so..."

She walked over to a nearby weapons rack, casually picked up a Training Wooden Sword, and said, "Even though I say I'll try to hold back, anything can happen during a battle, so let's set some fair rules for victory and defeat—"

"In actual Combat Training, if my sword even touches you once, it counts as my loss."

"If your sword is knocked from your hand, that means I win."

"Of course, if you manage to knock my sword from my hand, naturally, you win."

Laughter rippled through the surrounding crowd—no one believed Sonya could make Leoni's sword leave her hand; Leoni's words seemed like an impossible demand.

Looking at Lorein and Felix, Leoni said, "The same rules apply to you two. Lorein, either you ensure victory over Felix without harming him, or you might as well give up... As a third-year student, surely you're not lacking that much confidence, right?"

"You can set the rules to be even stricter," Lorein said coldly. "I don't mind."

Felix spoke calmly, "With such easy victory conditions, I have no reason to refuse."

When Leoni looked at her, Sonya suddenly understood the underlying motive.

Leoni hadn't appeared by chance; she and Lorein definitely had this planned, and Sylvia's incident was just a convenient opportunity.

Leoni was the apprentice of the Rhythm Sword Saint, and she and Felix were apprentices of the Hidden Hand Sword Saint... Was this a clash between two Sword Saints of Swordflower College? Or was Leoni testing their mettle?

But regardless, Sonya had no reason to back down now. Moreover, after Leoni proposed such 'generous' rules, Sonya couldn't help but feel a surge of fighting spirit... and the humiliation of being underestimated!

Sonya took a deep breath, gripped her wooden sword tightly: "I have no objections, Senior Leoni."

"Then I declare, the battle... begins!"

Blood Moon Kingdom, Shattered Lake Prison.

Ashe looked around the empty restaurant, eating his braised Lala Fatty, wondering if today was some sort of holiday.

Why hadn't he seen any other prisoners all morning?

Deathmatch Society, Central Hall, Reading Room, Gymnasium, Audio-visual Room... there was no one to be seen anywhere, only a few Prison Guards idly playing with their Holographic Screens, as if everyone had agreed to stay in their dormitories all day and not go out.

But even if you don't go out, you still have to eat, right? It's not like everyone could afford to spend Contribution points to have the restaurant deliver meals to their rooms, could they?

The unease in his heart grew heavier by the minute. Ashe felt like a farmer who had seen the animals and plants uprooting themselves to flee, keenly aware that a disaster was imminent but powerless to do anything but wait for the inevitable.

Midway through his meal, Ashe suddenly froze.

A Holographic Screen popped up automatically, projecting a cold, red message onto Ashe's pupils:

"Dear Mr. Ashe Heath, Prisoner Number 4001623. Shattered Lake Prison hereby notifies you that you are now under Supervision status. Please maintain a clear mood and comply with the instructions of the Supervisor."

He stood up abruptly and walked to the restaurant entrance, standing ramrod straight, without a hint of sway or tremble, like a statue.

After a while, seven other Prisoners made their way to the restaurant entrance one by one, their movements just as stiff, as if controlled by puppet strings, lining up alongside Ashe.

There was a fist's width of space between each person, standing in a straight line like a military drill formation.

Among them was the Elven Swordsman Valcas Uhl, the 'Gourmet' Langna's little boyfriend, startlingly present!

Each person's gaze was complex—fear, resignation, despair, relaxation—but no matter which way Ashe looked, he could see only one message in their eyes:

Save me!

Another minute passed, and a towering Prison Guard arrived at the restaurant entrance. He gave the Prisoners a small smile, revealing his ghastly, pale fangs.

"Hello, everyone. I'm your Supervisor for today, Nago McMillan, pleased to meet you. Now, please introduce yourselves, starting from left to right."

"Archibald Harvey."

"Valcas Uhl."

"Ronat Wade."

"Rudo Enfield."

When it was Ashe's turn, he found he couldn't control his own mouth, which mechanically opened as he said, "Ashe Heath."

After the eight men had introduced themselves, the Prison Guard Nago nodded in satisfaction, "Alright, today's schedule is to finish lunch and then this afternoon I'll take you to watch a movie, go to the Observation Deck to breathe some sea air... Hmm, due to the recent proposal from human rights organizations, we are granting you one hour of external contact time, allowing you to reach out to family and friends outside."

"After dinner, there's not much to discuss regarding the plan. If anyone has any suggestions or questions, you can bring them up now."

Ashe immediately raised his hand, and the Prison Guard Nago looked at him, "Go ahead."

With the restriction on his mouth lifted, Ashe swallowed hard and asked the most crucial question, "I would like to ask, after dinner... what is the arrangement?"

He already had an inkling, but he still hoped for the best.

Prison Guard Nago smiled, familiar with the self-deception of death row inmates, but he didn't dislike crushing their hopes personally.

Instilling despair was both the responsibility and the pleasure of a Supervisor.

"Dear Ashe, the arrangement after dinner is, of course, to take you all to the live broadcast site of the Blood Moon Tribunal."

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Chapter 47

"Hey, forget about class, come to the Combat Hall! Aren't you a huge fan of the Orange Dancer? She's right here!"

"Can people in front please let us through? If you're not from the Swordsmanship Department, get out of here! This is a class for the Swordsmanship Department!"

"This is the school's Combat Hall, the ones who should roll out are you guys from the Swordsmanship Department!"

More and more students gathered inside the Combat Hall, many of them calling their friends to come and watch. The emotional entanglement between Felix, Sonya, and Sylvia was already interesting enough, and now with Lorein and Leoni, two special guest stars, joining in, the students couldn't resist coming to see the excitement, even if it meant skipping class.

The Combat Class instructor simply stepped aside, adopting an attitude of letting them have their dispute—the squabbles between Sword Saint apprentices weren't something he needed to meddle in. Moreover, as long as no one died, the battle was considered a legitimate form of student exchange.

If it had been a fight between two equally matched students, the teacher might have been concerned that they would get too excited and unable to stop themselves, but this was arguably the safest scenario.

Because the difference in combat power was simply too great.

Whooosh!

With a forceful shout, Sonya swung her wooden sword, sending out a whistling wind. The faint purple Sword Qi vibrated in the air, forming a curtain-like shield in front of her, acting like a wall to intercept Leoni.

“Not bad with the Fan Vibration Sword.”

Leoni commented casually, tapping the vibrating curtain with the tip of her wooden sword. Then, with a flick of her wrist, the curtain was flung away as if it were a rag. She stepped forward and swung her wrist!

Clang!

A heavy force traveled through the sword tip, and Sonya was pushed back two steps, her hands almost dropping the wooden sword.

Sweat ran down her face, smudging her makeup, her clothes were nearly soaked through, and she gasped for air with her mouth wide open, unbecomingly like a country bumpkin. However, Sonya couldn't afford to care about her appearance; her eyes were fixed on Leoni, not daring to relax even for a second.

This was the first time she truly felt what it meant to be up against a real Sorcerer.

Both Felix and she were newbies who had just entered the Virtual Realm a few days ago, hardly worth mentioning; the gap between her and Professor Trozan was too large, and their sparring sessions were more educational without putting any real pressure on Sonya.

Coupled with her smooth sailing adventures in the Virtual Realm, Sonya had become somewhat arrogant—thinking that being a Sorcerer was not that difficult.

Her reserve was not out of humility, but rather from arrogance: she believed in a bright future for herself and was willing to endure loneliness for the time being.

It wasn't until Leoni appeared that Sonya's pretense of pride was torn away.

It had nothing to do with spirits; from the beginning to the present, Leoni had only used the basic three spirits 'Slash Sword,' 'Thrust Sword,' and 'Cleave Sword'; it also wasn't about arcane energy, as Leoni's attacks only pressured Sonya but were not undefendable.

The truly fearsome power of a Sorcerer lay in knowledge.

Every second, with every single action, Sonya felt like all her moves were under Leoni's control. It was as if Leoni knew every possible move Sonya could make and had countless countermeasures prepared, easily resolving whatever Sonya did.

This feeling, it's like a child trying to fight an adult, who only has to press down on the child's head to keep them from landing a single touch. Despite sweating profusely, the feeling of powerlessness and defeat grows within, almost enough to make one want to roar in frustration.

"Keep going, Sonya. Use whatever moves you have," Leoni said as she slightly raised her wooden sword, "Don't worry about hurting me."

Her seemingly caring words were more sarcastic than any insult. Sonya gritted her teeth and took a deep breath, "Then, senior, I'm going to give it my all, be careful!"

"I'm looking forward to it."

Sonya assumed the Sword-drawing stance, and Leoni raised an eyebrow, seemingly more interested, "A Laido sword move?"

Step, spin, swing!

A whirlwind rose abruptly, and a wave of Sword Qi swept across the battlefield. Sonya surged forward with the force of a thunderbolt, closing the distance to Leoni in the blink of an eye!

This was Sonya's self-created technique — the Laido Vibration Sword!

"Interesting, but..."

Leoni accurately predicted Sonya's sword path and slashed down, "Just like—"

Just then, Sonya abruptly stopped the Vibration Sword, stepping out in a strange rhythm, dodging to the side, and reorganizing her sword stance for a counterattack!

A swordsmanship skill taught by the Observer — Evade!

Clang!

The two wooden swords collided with a metallic sound, and Leoni was about to say something to Sonya when her expression suddenly changed dramatically!

Ding ding ding ding—

Sounds like the twang of steel wires rang out in quick succession. A faintly visible Feathered Armor appeared on Leoni, with five strands of moonlight formed into threads striking her chest, waist, thighs, and other areas, causing ripples to spread across the Feathered Armor.

“What kind of spirit is that...?”

“I can’t tell, but it’s definitely not from the Swordsmanship Faction, it’s from the Radiance Faction!”

“Sonya has only been a Sorcerer for a few days, how could she have such a spirit? The Hidden Hand Sword Saint hasn’t cultivated in the Radiance Faction either, right?”

“It couldn’t possibly be something she got from the Virtual Realm, could it? She’s only been there for a few days!”

While the crowd was abuzz with speculation about Sonya’s newfound spirit, Leoni suddenly changed her usual demeanor and responded with a fierce offensive to the ‘surprise’ Sonya had given her!

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang!

The barrage of strikes was like a violent storm, leaving Sonya gasping for air, her hands almost numb.

In her rush, she tried to use moves like ‘Moon Silk’ or Evade to block Leoni, but these unvaried attacks didn’t delay Leoni for even a second and were instantly decoded by the Orange Dancer!

“Sonya, to be honest, I was a bit angry just now,” Leoni said as she continued to strike, “When you triggered my Feathered Armor with your Radiance trap, I felt humiliated by you — a Sorcerer who has just been one for a few days managed to activate my Protective Miracle, there’s nothing more embarrassing than that.”

“If Professor Nidhogg finds out, I’m definitely in for a scolding.”

“But I quickly realized that I had no right to be angry. The one who should be angry is you. You invited me with your greatest courage to engage in a passionate Swordsmanship Duel, and I treated you with the condescension of an adult to a child, humiliating you. I was wrong, and I apologize to you.”

“The Radiance Spirit you used woke me up. It showed me that you’re different from losers like Felix — you are a true Swordcerer!”

In the midst of the beating, Sonya managed to squeeze out a few words: “You flatter me—”

“No, I owe you my most sincere apology,” Leoni said, enunciating each word clearly. “Next, I will use all my strength to respond to your burning will to fight.”

“Watch me closely, Sonya.”

Leoni suddenly drew back her wooden sword and took a step back, but before Sonya could catch her breath, Leoni’s figure disappeared from her sight!

A strong sense of crisis overwhelmed Sonya, causing goosebumps to erupt all over her body. Without time to think, she instinctively raised her wooden sword to block to the right—

Clang!

Sonya turned her head, only to see a fleeting orange afterimage!

She couldn’t capture Leoni’s figure at all!

With her eyes rendered useless, Sonya had to rely on her instincts to defend!

Clang!

Around her, Leoni’s voice rang out in surprise, “It’s not luck, but now it’s time to see real strength.”

In the next second, the feeling of crisis came crashing down like an avalanche, and Sonya felt like a little boat in front of a tsunami, where even the aftermath was enough to overturn her and lead to certain doom!

She turned and parried just in time to see a flash of Gold sword light dazzling the venue, descending like a Miracle to punish the world!

Clang!

Sonya was sent flying, hurled several meters through the air, but she immediately counterattacked with her Vibration Sword to halt her momentum, barely managing to land steadily. However, her wrists were already bruised and her body trembled uncontrollably.

And at this moment, Sonya finally realized what move Leoni had just used.

“Miracle: Melody Rhythm!”

“There it is, the real Orange Dancer! A figure so fast it’s almost impossible to catch, with just a blur of orange afterimage!”

“Has senior Leoni already learned the famous Miracle of the Rhythm Sword Saint? But wasn’t that a Miracle created by the Sword Saint after obtaining the Golden Two Wings?”

“This means that senior is not far from achieving the status of Golden Two Wings!”

Melody Rhythm, a Swordsmanship Department Miracle created by Professor Nidhogg, is simple in effect: the first two attacks store energy, and the third attack unleashes it!

It may seem unremarkable, but with the assistance of a Speed Spirit or an Invisible Spirit, Melody Rhythm becomes a deadly rhythm of harvesting, capable of easily destroying all defenses of an enemy in a short time with absolute violence!

Just like how Leoni is currently overpowering Sonya!

Clang!

Another heavy strike, not the third explosive one, but still not something an exhausted Sonya with injured hands could easily withstand. She was forced back several steps, reluctantly glancing at the Moon Silk she had cut through in the air.

“If I couldn’t keep up with the speed, I would have died in the Abyss long ago.” Leoni’s voice rang out again: “Such traps are useless against me.”

Just before, Sonya had secretly activated her Moon Silk spirit in the air, setting a trap she thought Leoni would collide with due to her high speed. But how could a Sorcerer have such an obvious survival flaw? Before attacking, Leoni had already cut through the Moon Silk.

Clang!

Sonya was pushed back several steps again. Leoni calmly said, “Lay down your sword, and it’s considered a surrender.”

Should she surrender?

But if she didn't, the third strike of Melody Rhythm was next. Sonya knew well that she had no chance of withstanding another energy-charged blow; she would inevitably be hit so hard by Leoni that she would be knocked back over a dozen meters, losing in a very unseemly way.

No matter how she thought about it, surrendering seemed like the best choice.

Moreover, surrendering now would not be shameful for Sonya. To have fought with Leoni to this extent, not only triggering Leoni's Protective Miracle but also forcing her to use Melody Rhythm, was an achievement in itself.

After this battle, no one would question Sonya's qualifications as an apprentice to Professor Trozan.

After this battle, Sonya would become the most renowned Swordsmanship prodigy among the first-year students.

She had already gained so much; it was the right time to withdraw.

If she was lucky, she might even develop a relationship with senior Leoni. It was said that Leoni, in collaboration with people from Truth College, formed a team, which could be seen as a channel to connect with more influential circles.

Every rational thread in her mind knew what to do. This rationality was Sonya's greatest asset, the reason she could leave the countryside and come to Gales — she never let emotions cloud her judgment.

However, right now, even if her hands were numb with pain, even if her body was so tired she felt she could fall asleep the next second, Sonya just couldn't bring herself to lay down her sword!

She! Was! Not! Willing!

It wasn't about benefits, prospects, or personal likes and dislikes!

She just wanted to win; she didn't want to lose, that was all!

Rebellious blood was burning in every part of her body, angry thoughts at this moment overwhelmed her rationality. She seemed to turn into a sword, born from death, mad from battle!

"Observer, did you arrange all this just to enjoy my miserable defeat? I'll tell you, I'm not here to serve you!" Sonya roared fiercely in her mind, gripping her wooden sword

tightly, tears welling up in her eyes, her teeth nearly biting through her lips, her whole body tensed up, ready to face the final cadence of Melody Rhythm!

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Chapter 48

Sigh...

In the noisy and chaotic Combat Hall, amid the tense moments of battle, Sonya suddenly heard a melodious sigh.

Then her vision split in two.

On one side were the faces of the other students in the Combat Hall—some sneering, some expectant, some envious, a myriad of expressions all different yet part of the same tapestry.

On the other side, she saw a woman... someone very much like herself.

Although she bore a strong resemblance, Sonya was certain that the woman was not her.

The woman stood on a lake bathed in moonlight. Suddenly, a huge horned monster charged at her from afar. As the beast charged, it stirred up a dark maelstrom, a destructive torrent that seemed to obliterate the sky and could even obscure the moonlight, as if darkness itself was collapsing!

Compared to this, the woman seemed so fragile, so insignificant!

Yet, she didn't dodge in the slightest. Instead, she stood her ground, summoned her spirit, and then—

With a single sword strike!

The darkness was cleaved in twain, and the pure light shone through the creature's split form, illuminating her ferocious and elegant sword posture!

Sonya couldn't make out her movements clearly, nor could she see what kind of spirit she had summoned, but somehow, Sonya felt that she could imitate it.

The desire to mimic was so strong that Sonya's body started moving on its own!

'Not abandoning the sword, huh...'

Leoni, dancing in the air, couldn't help but score her junior high when she saw that Sonya made no move to concede. Conceding in a battle that seemed lost was the logical choice, but it's only through stubborn persistence that miracles could be born.

Without the courage to challenge the strong even in such a safe environment, how could one ever forge a sorcerer's resolute heart to face real-life dangers?

True to the Hidden Hand Sword Saint's reputation, he has taken a fine apprentice...

Though appreciative in her mind, Leoni would not hold back.

It was not just about upholding the dignity of a Rhythm Sword Saint, but also because engaging with full force was the ultimate respect for a Swordcerer!

Miracle Melody Rhythm – Third Movement!

As Leoni launched her attack, she noticed Sonya making a strange move—she performed a Sword-drawing technique.

At the same time, many moonlit threads appeared around Sonya, each one connected to her body, as if she had turned herself into a trap.

A trap?

A mutual destruction?

Many thoughts flashed through Leoni's mind, but she still swung her sword—when faced with an unseen change, a Swordcerer has only one way to respond, and that is to cut through all obstacles with the blade!

Forward, forward, forever forward!

This is the way of life for a Swordcerer!

The golden sword light shone again in the hall, but just as the sword light touched the moonlit threads, Leoni immediately sensed something was amiss—the Melody Rhythm couldn't cut through the threads!

No, it wasn't just the moonlit threads!

Upon closer inspection, each thread had water flowing along it, not only deflecting the impact but also giving the moonlit threads unparalleled tensile strength!

No, the water wasn't just deflecting the impact!

Leoni's eyes widened as she realized that the moment her sword light touched the threads, all energy was being channeled towards Sonya, who was in a Sword-drawing stance. The threads and Sonya formed a spring system, and when impacted by an external force, Sonya, connected to the threads, would unleash the most ferocious counterattack!

Water flow... moonlight threads... and the Vibration Sword...

This was a Counterattack Miracle!

Clang!

As Sonya swung her sword, releasing a Vibration Sword Qi that left only a blur to the eye, Leoni finally emerged, her Feathered Armor visible and her hands empty.

Clap, clap.

When the broken wooden sword hit the ground, the people in the Combat Hall still hadn't grasped what had happened.

"Leoni... lost?"

The speaker's voice trembled, as if fearing they were fabricating facts, spreading rumors, a truth that would demand accountability.

“She lost... The Orange Dancer lost...”

“Leoni has been defeated by Sonya!”

“What was that move? I’ve never seen such a Miracle... A new Miracle!?”

“Sonya, who became a Sorcerer just a few days ago, has beaten the complete Silver Sorcerer Leoni!”

“A freshman has toppled a fourth-year!”

“My god, am I witnessing the rise of a new Sword saint!?”

Amidst the shouts, cheers, and exclamations of the crowd, Leoni looked at Sonya, who was drenched in sweat and barely able to stand, and smiled as she asked, “What do you call that Miracle?”

As if the image of the woman dancing with her sword under the moonlight appeared again in Sonya’s eyes, the name came out without a second thought:

“Water Moon.”

At that moment, Engulite, who was watching the duel with flushed excitement, suddenly raised her right fist and shouted, “Sonya!”

Freshmen from the Swordsmanship Department cheered in unison: “Sonya! Sonya! Sonya!”

Supporters of the Orange Dancer weren’t to be outdone: “Leoni! Leoni! Leoni!”

For a time, only two names echoed in the Combat Hall: Sonya and Leoni!

“After today, you will become one of the brightest jewels of Swordflower College.”

Leoni raised her eyebrows, “Just like me.”

Sonya managed a weak smile, but her body could no longer hold up, and she started to fall.

Leoni reached out to support her, and as their eyes met and they shared a smile, the crowd erupted in applause.

Meanwhile, on the other side.

Felix and Lorein, who had been fighting to a standstill and were out of breath, also gradually stopped as they saw this scene, feeling as if all their strength had left them.

They looked at each other, sharing a wry smile, and helplessly shook their heads.

This strife that had started because of them, in the end, they weren't the protagonists.

For them, natural talents who had always been the center of attention, nothing was more uncomfortable than being ignored.

Suddenly, Lorein threw down his wooden sword, "Stand still, let me land one punch."

Felix was taken aback, but Lorein walked straight over and punched him in the face, sending him flying.

"Remember this punch, Felix, not all women are for you to provoke," Lorein said before turning and walking away.

Felix sat on the ground, looking at the two people in the center of everyone's attention in the hall, and sighed softly:

"Yes, indeed."

At that moment.

Felix was unaware, and neither did anyone else notice, that suddenly two visitors without shadows appeared behind him.

They were invisible to everyone in the venue. When they spoke, all the commotion was automatically blocked out, and the world seemed to exist only for the two of them.

"I remember, losing to 'Orange Flash' Leoni was one of your few great humiliations, wasn't it?" the Observer teased.

The Swordswoman remained calm in response: "Not really, I beat her three years later, and I didn't take it to heart."

"To be able to remember for three years..." the Observer muttered, then turned to look at Felix sitting on the ground. He took out a Handbook from his bosom and flipped to a certain page.

"However, it's unexpected that the Evil Duke, notorious as he is, was once a Swordsmanship prodigy. His handbook doesn't record this experience."

"As a member of the Vlozrada Family, it would be more surprising if he wasn't a Swordsmanship prodigy."

“Could it be that because of this learning experience, the Evil Duke learned how to counter Swordcerers, laying the groundwork for his future title as the ‘Sword Saint Burier’?”

“Who knows? No one can predict how their choices at the moment will affect their future self. All Sorcerers are the same kind of creatures, digging with their hands on the land of fate for the future they want, but inadvertently they might dig their own graves... We are all fools digging our own graves.”

“Why so sentimental all of a sudden? That doesn’t sound like the Death Maniac Swordswoman I know,” the Observer said with a laugh. “Just a touch of the present Sonya causes such a big change in you?”

Clang!

The frosty blade of the longsword kissed the Observer’s neck, and the Swordswoman said coldly, “Don’t take me for a fool like that girl, you’re just another of my defeated, mind your attitude.”

The Observer raised his hands in surrender, “Sorry, I was out of line. If you’re really angry, take it out on Ashe, I don’t mind.”

The Swordswoman snorted and sheathed her longsword.

“Speaking of which, the Water Moon Miracle I’ve seen before wasn’t like this. Could it be that, even in this state, you still have the leisure to improve Miracles?” the Observer asked curiously. “I thought we were all the same, only capable of decline, not of increase.”

“You’re wrong, this isn’t a brand-new improvement, but an outdated remnant,” the Swordswoman shook her head. “What you saw was the most perfect ‘Mirror flowers and water moon,’ before that, I created many different Versions. The ‘Moon Silk’ and ‘Rapids’ combination is one of them. Although it’s not powerful, not fast, and not strong in defense, it is perfectly suitable for the current Sonya.”

“Indeed,” the Observer nodded. “There’s no best Miracle, only the most timely one. Heh, I’m looking forward to seeing what Sonya, who is not deeply resentful, will look like.”

“You might as well worry about Ashe, today is the day of his Blood Moon Tribunal.”

“Why worry?”

The Observer chuckled, but that cold, mirthless, sarcastic laugh made the Swordswoman subconsciously grip her sword’s hilt tighter.

“The Four Pillars are watching him.”

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Chapter 49

Blood Moon Kingdom, Shattered Lake Prison's restaurant.

Ashe looked at the Hibiscus Crab, Lemonberry Milk Cake, divine Lala Fatty, and Golden Pineapple Juice in front of him, his nose filled with the scent of these delicacies. Yet, his appetite was nowhere to be found.

These dishes were no ordinary offerings; they existed only on the hidden menu of the restaurant, usually inaccessible to prisoners regardless of how many Contribution points they spent.

The dishes were said to be exceptionally high-end delicacies outside the prison walls. The Lala Fatty alone, for example, was worth a third of an average person's monthly salary just for the raw ingredients.

Their taste was worth the price as well. Ashe suspected the chef might have used Sorcerer techniques, as he—a city dweller long tested by the trials of monosodium glutamate and chicken powder—almost swallowed his tongue after the first bite, the flavor so exquisite it could make one die without regrets.

But the thought of actually dying soon quenched his hunger.

The other Death row inmates shared similar sentiments, some eating without tasting, some weeping as they ate, and others reversing their forks and knives in a grim parody of proper use, thankfully blunted to prevent triggering the 'suicide prohibition warning' from their neck chips.

Only two Death row inmates ate heartily: a blue-skinned Ogre and the Elf Valcas.

They seemed genuinely indifferent to the upcoming Blood Moon Tribunal, the Ogre eating with his hands, ordering dish after dish, while Valcas demonstrated ten different ways to use a knife and fork, as elegantly as if dining in a high-rise rotating restaurant.

"Having trouble eating? Need some help?"

The seemingly kind voice of Prison Guard Nago was like a salt-coated whip, sending a shiver through all the Death row inmates, who bowed their heads and ate voraciously, Ashe included.

The reason for their fear was that an afternoon of 'supervision' had already worn down their defiance. Facing Nago, who controlled their neck chips, even the most rebellious had to comply—if not willingly, then by force.

To be fair, Nago hadn't done anything overtly harsh to them.

He hadn't laid a finger on them.

He hadn't harmed them at all.

He had simply made all the Death row inmates follow his schedule.

For instance, at meal times, if someone refused to eat, Nago would activate the Chip control system, using voice commands to make the Prisoner eat:

"Open your mouth, put the food in, chew once, twice, thrice, swallow..."

As for watching films, if anyone was not paying attention or fidgeting, Nago would turn them into model cinema-goers:

"Sit up straight, hands on knees, eyes on the Holographic Screen, remember to blink every five seconds."

And when taking in fresh air on the Seaview Terrace, Nago announced that the higher-ups required all Prisoners to take a commemorative photo, with the following stipulations: neat attire, smiling faces, a display of good spirits, and reflecting the harmonious group atmosphere of Shattered Lake Prison...

Undoubtedly, the Death row inmates alone could not meet these requirements, so Nago 'helped' them, in his own way.

Ashe was doing relatively well; he was just lying on the ground with a smile on his head, while Valcas was quite impressive—he sat on the Ogre's shoulder, his hands on his head pretending to be cat ears, and his gaunt, cold face smiled sweetly at the camera.

One picture wasn't enough. They had to take several, showcasing a range of 'spirited' poses from cool and suave to embracing each other with a playful charm.

The Death row inmates, posed in eighteen different ways by Supervisor Nago, had become completely numb, only thinking about quickly and efficiently meeting Nago's demands, even wishing to fast-forward to the Blood Moon Tribunal.

Destroy it, hurry up, I'm tired.

So, when Nago spoke, they immediately abandoned their sentimental sorrows and rushed to eat.

At this moment, the pressure from Supervisor Nago on them surpassed that of the Blood Moon Tribunal.

After all, they hadn't yet seen 'death'.

But a 'life worse than death' was right before their eyes.

Ashe glanced at the empty restaurant and asked the person next to him in a low voice, "Why isn't anyone coming to eat? Skipping lunch is one thing, but it's not like everyone else would also skip dinner, right?"

The Death row inmate next to him was named Archibald Harvey, with dark skin and curly hair, looking like he did heavy labor during the day, but he was actually a night shift worker: a cleaner who specialized in handling bodies.

Some might wonder why dealing with bodies would at most be considered a crime of desecrating a body, how could one end up on Death row?

This naturally has to do with the standards of death: in the Blood Moon Kingdom, a body is only considered a corpse if a licensed Medic has declared it dead.

Without a Medic's declaration, even if your head falls off, legally you are still alive.

Because Medics can really bring a decapitated person back to life, many bodies, although breathless, can still be resuscitated.

Hence, someone like Harvey, who specifically dealt with bodies for underground organizations, naturally wouldn't be treated as an 'accomplice' but was regarded as a 'serial killer of extremely bad nature': having handled over a hundred bodies, if each body is considered alive, few Prisoners in the Prison could compare to Harvey's sins.

However, this doesn't mean that Harvey was some unjustly wronged good person.

Although he didn't reveal much about his dark past during an afternoon chat, the fact that he was a Necromancy Faction Sorcerer and his comment "What's so good about warm women" were enough to judge his preferences as quite unconventional by current Human standards.

But being a bad person has nothing to do with being a good internet friend, and in this afternoon of shared misfortune, Ashe quickly became familiar with him.

Harvey replied, "They came to the restaurant early, before 5 o'clock, to finish eating."

"Ah? Why?"

"To avoid us, of course. Apart from us eight, other Prisoners will try not to leave their dormitories today. Those with extra Contribution points ordered in, and those without also tried to avoid our meal times."

"I get that, but why would they want to avoid us?"

"Traditional virtues."

Ashe blinked.

It wasn't that he didn't understand the term, but using it to describe the Death row inmates here always felt a bit odd.

Harvey said, "First off, the eight selected individuals will be summoned by the Supervisor to gather at the restaurant at noon, so nobody will come out in the morning. Although the selection is based on the Judgment sequence, who knows if you'll encounter the Supervisor on the way and they decide to put you on the list simply because they don't like the way you walk?"

"Do Supervisors have that kind of power?"

"Don't know. You willing to gamble?"

"No, I'm not."

"That's it then," Harvey shrugged his shoulders. "Even after noon when the eight have been chosen, no one dares to wander about. The first reason, of course, is the

presence of the Supervisor. What if they take a dislike to you and swap you with a 'lucky' one? Wouldn't you just regret it till your veins pop?"

Ashe nodded.

Indeed.

What's more infuriating than your own misfortune is seeing someone else profit from it. Just the thought of it makes you so angry you could burst.

"The second reason is a bit superstitious. Prisoners believe that those who are seen by us unfortunates are highly likely to be chosen for the next Blood Moon Tribunal."

That's understandable. Everyone is afraid of catching bad luck. If a jinx looks at you in the afternoon and you can't poop at night, it's surely not a physical issue; it's the jinx messing with gravity.

"And the third reason is that they don't know how to face us."

"Huh?"

"Say hello? Offer encouragement? Comfort?" Harvey wiped his mouth with a napkin. "If it were you... oh wait, Ashe, you're the one facing judgment now. Right at this moment, if you saw the other Prisoners escaping the Blood Moon Tribunal, wouldn't you feel that every single punctuation mark they say reeks of condescension?"

Ashe opened his mouth, thought about it, and realized it was true.

Knowing that I'm going to die while you don't have to, I'd definitely feel like you reek of an offensive stench of decay.

It's not just about speaking.

Just seeing you breathe.

Makes me feel like you're mocking me.

Encouragement? Irony!

Comfort? Ridicule!

Sympathy? Contempt!

No matter what nice things they say, to Ashe and the seven others, it all sounds like filth.

Because of the fear of death, a tragic, thick wall has emerged between the eight Prisoners and all the others.

“So on the day of the Blood Moon Tribunal, all Prisoners voluntarily stay in their dormitories and don’t go out. It’s to protect themselves, as well as those facing judgment.”

Harvey looked at Ashe, “If you survive, you’ll have to respect this tradition of virtue when the next Blood Moon comes. It’s the only kindness we can and must hold onto. But...”

“But what?”

“I’ve seen your news reports,” Harvey shrugged, “To be honest, you’re likely to be the one who dies tonight.”

“Isn’t it supposed to be a random killing?”

Ashe was a bit nervous; when he learned that the Blood Moon Tribunal was about randomly selecting one person to be executed from among eight, he guessed it had to be a random Ritual—if it weren’t random, there’d be no need to pick one out of eight.

“It’s random, but not entirely random, and sometimes several people die... Have you really never seen a Blood Moon Tribunal?”

“Really haven’t! I have no idea about the rules of the Blood Moon Tribunal!”

Harvey laughed: “Then you’ll find out soon... The first time I watched the Blood Moon Tribunal as a kid, I was deeply shocked by the show. I never imagined such wonderful entertainment existed in this world. I’m not going to tell you the truth because the most despised action of a Necromancer is prophecy. Exploring the unknown is the greatest pleasure for a Sorcerer, and death is the ultimate mystery.”

Ashe clicked his tongue, still a bit puzzled: “If it’s certain that I’ll die, then why are you all nervous?”

Harvey shrugged: “Because the Blood Moon Tribunal isn’t fixed, sometimes there are changes that make the Prisoners nervous, and they might accidentally get themselves killed... You’re right, when I get to the scene later, I’ll just close my eyes and go to sleep. As long as I make sure I’m not the one chosen out of the eight, then by doing nothing, I’ll definitely not die.”

Harvey said this, and it made Ashe nervous even eating his Lala Fatty. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Could it be that I’m done for?

Really no chance at all?

I've been doing so well in Exploration in the Virtual Realm, got the Virtual Realm Telescope this morning, maybe tonight I could even gather all the spirit pieces for the Slay Me Miracle...

The Swordswoman and I are getting stronger, and the world of the Sorcerers has just begun to unveil its mysteries to me...

I've just defeated Valcas and thwarted Sylin's plot...

I'm still in my developmental phase, can't I have a little more time!

Ashe felt like an archer who's saving up for big equipment but is suddenly pulled into a team fight.

Victory seems within reach in the distance, yet the immediate struggle dangles in front of you.

He suddenly remembered the WeChat Moments post his boss made before: Life isn't like cooking; it doesn't wait for all the ingredients to be ready before starting the pot. When you see yourself sprinkled with cumin, you should realize you've become the ingredient—who could have guessed that the next day he'd announce the company was switching from Big and Small Week to a 996 schedule?

"Dinner time is over, wipe your mouth, go to the restroom to take care of personal hygiene, gather in the Central Hall within half an hour."

Note that Supervisor Nago was not 'ordering' but 'inputting commands'—everyone wiped their mouths with their napkins at the same time, then stood up and headed to the restroom.

Before Ashe entered the restroom, he heard Nago's last instruction:

"7:45 PM, arrive on time at the Blood Moon Tribunal site and wait for the show to begin."

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Chapter 50

Kaimon City, Red Mist Research Institute.

“Your matter has been notified by Shattered Lake Prison. Since she has prescribed your punishment, the Research Institute naturally will not defy her demands.”

Within the office, a red-eyed young scholar in a white robe looked at the Blue Scale Merfolk before him, covered in bloodstains, and spoke calmly, “Lorens, how is your Blood Embrace progressing?”

The Blue Scale Merfolk bowed his head and replied, “I’ve managed to condense two drops of Silver Source Blood and two drops of Golden Source Blood, but I’ve made no progress on the third drop of Silver Source Blood for over ten days... This must be the limit for a student.”

“Just a bit more and you could have condensed Rainbow Source Blood, what a pity. But don’t be too disheartened, perhaps you’ll have the chance to purify your bloodline in the future,” the red-eyed scholar sighed, then became serious, “So, are you saying that you were certain you didn’t need to stay in Shattered Lake Prison for the Blood Embrace Ritual, and that’s why you foolishly risked stealing someone else’s Procedure?”

The Blue Scale Merfolk remained silent, offering no rebuttal.

“You’re lucky this time, to have encountered someone compassionate. Next time you might not be so fortunate,” the young scholar sighed. “You’ll just stay in the Institute and do your research for the next ten years, no academic events for you. In ten years, the person you offended will probably have condensed the Rainbow Wings, and you won’t even have the chance to meet her.”

“Yes.”

“Go and rest, I will arrange your office tomorrow,” the young scholar tapped the wooden desk, “Remember to compile your research findings, and submit a report to me in a couple of days.”

“Thank you, Professor. Goodbye.”

The Blue Scale Merfolk respectfully left the office and hastened out of the Research Institute.

It was deep into the night outside, with the Blood Moon hanging high in the sky. The Institute’s campus was deserted, and Lorens’s steps quickened. As he passed by a tree, he suddenly punched it!

Crack!

The trunk dented deeply from the blow, and the wound that the finger shark had torn open bled anew, even his scales cracked.

His hand was in pain, his whole body was in pain, but these tangible wounds were nothing compared to the invisible wound in his heart that tormented Lorens!

He was Medic [176], thrown out of Shattered Lake Prison just the previous night.

His original name was Lorens Tauton, a member of the Blue Scale Merfolk, a scholar at the Red Mist Research Institute.

After a night and a day, he had finally escaped the finger shark’s hunt and returned to Kaimon City. Once back on land, he couldn’t bother to treat his wounds, heading straight to the Research Institute to inquire about his future—if [222] pursued the matter, the Institute would not only strip him of his scholar status but might even reclaim the ‘Sacred Blood’ within him!

Lorens had considered fleeing.

But the chip scan at the security check instantly dispelled this foolish thought.

Unless he went to the black market and paid a hefty price to a Sorcerer to remove his chip, and then forsook society to live as a wild creature, in this era of comprehensive chipping, there was no place that would harbor a criminal.

In the Blood Moon Kingdom, there are only two paths after offending the sacred bloodline: grovel or await trial.

Fortunately, the punishment for [222] ended there, and Lorens still had a bright future ahead of him. He remained the most promising scholar at the Red Mist Research Institute and could live for another one to two hundred years.

Yet, it was precisely because he no longer had to pay a price that Lorens felt an inexplicable indignation!

Others might think this was an act of kindness,

But all he felt was deep contempt!

Indeed, the other party did have the qualifications to look down on Lorens. As his teacher had said, in ten years, they would undoubtedly achieve the status of Tri-wings Sanctuary, while Lorens might not even secure the Gold Two Wings!

Both being of the sacred bloodline, the gap in their bloodline aptitude was like the difference between heaven and earth!

Yes, bloodline!

Originally a Blue Scale Merfolk from the slums' Nursery, Lorens had exceptional learning abilities and was admitted to Kaimon Comprehensive College. Before he even graduated, he was recruited by the Red Mist Research Institute and qualified for the 'Blood Transfusion Ritual,' becoming a member of the coveted sacred bloodline!

Like the Moonshadow race, the sacred bloodline cannot reproduce through normal Mating Rituals. The only way for the sacred bloodline to develop their kin is by absorbing individuals from other races through Blood Transfusion.

Although different races display similar characteristics after a Blood Transfusion, such as crimson eyes, in theory, the sacred bloodline is not a concept of race but a cultural one—everyone agrees they have ascended from a Lower Race to a Higher Race.

Being part of the sacred bloodline has many advantages. The greatest of these is that the body is completely freed from the limitations of lifespan, remaining forever young and never aging, which is akin to being an immortal race.

However, while the body does not age, the soul withers. Each race's soul has a lifespan limit; for instance, a Human of the sacred bloodline would have their soul disintegrate around the age of 150.

Besides, the sacred bloodline have another benefit that Sorcerers eagerly seek: Blood Healing!

By consuming blood, members of the sacred bloodline can accelerate the recovery speed of both their body and soul!

The reason why Sorcerers need several days to cool down after dying in the Virtual Realm is to replenish their Soul Energy. Those of the sacred bloodline who can

replenish Soul Energy through Blood Healing can significantly shorten their death cooldown period and increase the frequency of their explorations into the Virtual Realm.

Blood Healing and immortality are the racial advantages that establish the sacred bloodline's ruling status in the Blood Moon Kingdom.

With such exceptional racial advantages, the drawbacks of the sacred bloodline are also quite severe.

Aside from adhering to many Restrictions, the biggest drawback of the sacred bloodline is that Sorcerers cannot absorb arcane energy in the Virtual Realm.

That's right, they cannot absorb arcane energy!

The Blood Transfusion Ritual is a Miracle that deeply binds the soul to the blood, which is why the body gains the characteristic of immortality, and why drinking blood can heal the body.

However, for this same reason, an incomplete soul cannot absorb arcane energy in the Virtual Realm, which essentially ruins the prospects of a Sorcerer.

But the Sorcerers of the sacred bloodline had already thought of a solution, which is why Lorens sought to work as a Medic at Shattered Lake Prison—newly born members of the bloodline use Death row inmates as sacrifices to perform the 'Blood Embrace Ritual' to congeal source blood!

Source blood serves as a medium to replace the soul in absorbing arcane energy, with various levels ranging from low to high: Silver source blood, Gold source blood, Rainbow Source Blood, and Colorless Source Blood, each corresponding to the four types of arcane energy in the Virtual Realm.

Every three drops of Low-rank source blood can be synthesized into one drop of high-rank source blood, and members of the sacred bloodline must possess corresponding or higher-grade source blood to absorb the respective arcane energy. For example, Silver source blood is needed to absorb Silver Arcane Energy, and Gold source blood is required to absorb Gold arcane energy.

If one wishes to summon a higher-tier spirit, they must possess a higher grade of source blood!

Without Gold source blood, a member of the sacred bloodline simply cannot summon a Two Wings spirit, and naturally, they cannot achieve Promotion to a Two Wings Sorcerer.

This is why Lorens's teacher felt it was such a pity—if Lorens could condense one more drop of Silver source blood, he would be able to synthesize Rainbow Source Blood, and then the gates to the Tri-wings Sanctuary would open for him!

But now, with only Gold source blood, Lorens's future is capped at the Golden Two Wings.

Only when he can purify his Bloodline to condense Rainbow Source Blood will he have the chance to step into the Tri-wings Sanctuary!

Moreover, the higher the grade of the source blood, the more efficient it is at absorbing arcane energy.

In the Sea of Knowledge, compared to a normal Sorcerer, one drop of Silver source blood has a basic absorption efficiency of only 30%, and each additional drop increases the efficiency by 10%.

This is why the teacher said that all Lorens needed to do was hide for ten years—Lorens has a total of two drops of Gold source blood and two drops of Silver source blood, amounting to 8 drops of Silver source blood, which gives him a 100% absorption efficiency;

While the new scholars of the four Grand Research Institutes can at least condense one drop of Colorless Source Blood, synthesized from 27 drops of Silver source blood, giving them an absorption efficiency of 290%!

That's a threefold difference, and even if this is only a temporary advantage in the Sea of Knowledge, ten years of accumulation is enough for them to grow into beings Lorens can only look at from a distance. Search* [The NôveFire.net](http://TheNoveFire.net) website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

To that person, Lorens is merely a fart that can be easily let go, not worth paying attention to.

The future Tri-wings Sanctuary, how could they possibly care about the resentment of a Golden Two Wings?

Nothing could make Lorens angrier—perhaps it's rotten, perhaps no one cares, perhaps others laugh at it, but for him, a Blue Scale Merfolk who fought his way from the Slum to the Research Institute, dignity is the only wealth he has.

Without dignity, he truly has nothing left.

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- Chapter 51

Chapter 51

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As he turned the corner, Lorens bumped into a swiftly walking human scholar.

The two steadied themselves from the slight collision. The human scholar's white robe was stained with spots of blood. His expression darkened for a moment when he saw this, but when he looked up and saw it was Lorens, he controlled his expression and took a step back.

"Lorens? Back from Shattered Lake Prison? Sorry about bumping into you just now."

"It's nothing. Where are you headed now?"

"The tavern. It's the 15th today. The Blood Moon Tribunal is always more exciting when watched together."

"Haven't you seen enough from working at the prison?"

The other let out a laugh. "Did you see the list of prisoners announced this morning? Guess who's on it - Valcas Uhl, the elven scholar from Caimon University!"

Valcas?

Lorens was slightly surprised. Wasn't that the patient he had treated yesterday...

"Want to join us? Everyone hasn't seen you in a while. You showing up at the tavern will definitely surprise them—"

"Sure."

The scholar's expression clearly stiffened somewhat. He didn't seem to expect the usually aloof Lorens to actually agree. He had only invited as a courtesy...

"Um... then follow me. Oh, do you want to change your clothes first, treat your injuries?"

Lorens looked at his blood-stained self. "Don't they serve blood wine at the tavern? That can be used to treat me directly. Or would I be improper entering the tavern like this, would you all mind?"

The human scholar immediately shook his head. "No, of course not! I actually think it looks quite cool on you, very fashionable. Must turn a lot of heads walking down the street like that..."

Lorens sneered inwardly.

As the only lizardman at the research institute, how could he not know the other scholars secretly discriminated against and excluded him?

But he didn't care in the past, focused only on pursuing strength. Being excluded meant more peace for him, never participating in any group activities.

Besides, with the restrictions of the "Racial Equality Act", these people could only keep their grievances bottled up inside no matter how much ill-will they held.

On the surface, they even had to maintain an attitude of 'I respect you very much' and 'I don't discriminate against you'.

Otherwise, if Lorens caught them at it, reporting to the Race Committee would ruin their careers for life.

But Lorens was in an exceptionally bad mood tonight. Faced with his colleague's insincere invitation, he suddenly had a mischievous impulse to play along. So he readily agreed.

But Lorens soon regretted it.

He had never been to a tavern before.

The neon lights in blue and purple, the sultry, melodious music, the scholars of the sacred bloodline clinking glasses, every detail made Lorens feel very uncomfortable, even nervous enough for his skin to start secreting mucus.

"This is... Lorens?"

"Congratulations to Lorens on completing the Blood Embrace ceremony and coming back!"

"Come, everyone, let's drink to that!"

After the initial clamor, everyone returned to their own circles. Even the scholar who brought Lorens didn't show any intention of introducing him to his circle, directly slipping away instead.

Lorens was relieved though. He found an empty table and sat down, ordering a Melancholy Blues. Soon the bartender brought over a cocktail mixing deep blue with crimson.

"The Melancholy Blues you ordered, 20% human infant blood, 30% lizardman infant blood. Please enjoy."

Lorens drank it all in one go, licking his lips. The rotting wounds on them rapidly started healing.

He observed the tavern, feeling it wasn't much different from the fishman bars in the slums - there was a pregnant woman drinking at one end of the bar, at another booth a beastman couple were procreating, some had overdosed on moon sugar, writhing and rolling on the ground like dogs.

But the discussion topics here were different from regular taverns outside. The people here all talked about "have you produced any results", "we'll slaughter the administration someday", "this is the final year for promotion or dismissal". All very depressing adult matters that made drinking unpleasant.

A shadow also passed Lorens' crimson fish eyes - now that he had completed the Blood Embrace ceremony, he would also have to sign a young researcher contract with the institute.

Based on his current source blood quality and the institute's atmosphere, he would most likely have to participate in the "promote or dismiss" competition, producing the required results within the time limit to be promoted to associate professor. Otherwise, he would be fired and expelled from the institute, sent to the Heresy Court or forced to start his own business. In any case, he would have no prospects of advancing further at the institute.

But the problem was there were only so many associate professor positions, and dozens of scholar candidates competing... He heard of an institute in Outer Sea City that was even more outrageous, with 30 researchers competing for 0 associate professor positions. When the 20 year trial period ended, they declared everyone unqualified and just sent the scholars out to society after squeezing their 20 years of labor out of them.

Lorens drank a mouthful of liquor and lowered his head, flipping the drink menu over to the other side. He saw the familiar tavern ads on it. There was a price list for organ harvesting from members of the sacred bloodline, with the recovery institution being the 'Red Fog Organ Trading Company'.

"Humans of the sacred bloodline: hearts 80 silvers, lungs 50 silvers, kidneys 40 silvers, eyes 30 silvers..."

"Lizardmen of the sacred bloodline: hearts 44 silvers, lungs 23 silvers..."

The organ recovery prices for the sacred bloodline were clearly lower than market price. Naturally, this was because after transforming into the sacred bloodline, their organs also mutated. So sacred bloodline organs could only be sold to the same bloodline, a small market.

Besides, the sacred bloodline could recover through blood therapy. Demand for organ trade was low, so prices were low too.

If it was normal races, the prices would be at least 2-3 times higher. But normal races would take far too long to regrow organs, greatly impacting lives.

When he was most desperate, Lorens had sold some of his gills and thousands of ml of blood to earn a bit on the side.

Lorens reconsidered - 'Now that I've lost my prison job, the institute stipend will be much lower. Things are getting harder for Granny Yen's place, I should sell some organs first to send money over...'

Granny Yen was the person in charge of the Lizardman Orphanage, and had raised Lorens.

The Lizardman Orphanage was one of the few willing to accept fishmen.

After Lorens grew up, he would send about half his salary to Granny Yen, to alleviate the orphanage's financial pressures. After all, if it went bankrupt, hundreds more lizardman fry would die each year.

Free economy, free market. Abandoned infants with no orphanage would just have to reincarnate.

He didn't have any hobbies anyway, didn't like trading stocks, buying things. With lodging and food covered at the institute, the money couldn't buy anything good, might as well use it to give the little fishmen at the orphanage better meals.

Just as Lorens was pondering which organ to sell, the central area of the tavern suddenly projected an octagonal light screen, allowing all patrons to see the live content.

"It's starting, it's starting!"

"Boss Snake, come open the betting!"

"Hey, when can we have the 'Battle Royale' mode again? That was so thrilling to watch."

"I think the 'Computer' mode is the best. Seeing the electric currents jump out from their eyeballs is just too good."

"It's not some festival today, how can there be a special mode... Don't dream, it'll just be the classic mode tonight. I love watching the classic mode, ordinary yet still stimulating."

Even Lorens who wasn't very interested in the Blood Moon Tribunal couldn't help but watch when the screen lit up.

The Blood Moon Tribunal begins.

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Chapter 52

Ashe opened his eyes and found himself already outside Shattered Lake Prison.

He had really left.

Because even his light screen had popped up a prompt, "You have now left the Shattered Lake Prison special service area. Welcome to the Caimon service area. Reply 'KM' under this message to receive the latest Caimon City tourist information."

But he had not completely left.

After all, Shattered Lake Prison was just ten steps behind him.

It didn't seem like much, but as mentioned before, the main reason Shattered Lake Prison could become a luxurious hotel for death row inmates was its absolute isolation.

And this absolute isolation was built on the fact that Shattered Lake Prison was a prison on the waters of an isolated inland sea.

So when Ashe looked down, he could see the blood moon's reflection in the pitch-black lake surface dozens of meters below, beautifully dreamlike and magnificently humbling.

This was when one would usually feel compelled to express some thoughts and feelings about the scenic view,

However, all Ashe felt compelled to do was tremble in his legs.

After all, when one stands dozens of meters above the sea surface, and the only place to stand is a one square meter platform, you'd shake too.

"Ah! Ahhhhhhhh!"

Not far away, a death row inmate let out a shrill scream: "How did I get here? Let me go back, let me go back!"

"Didn't I just walk out of the dining room?"

"The Blood Moon Tribunal isn't here!"

"Complaint! I'm going to complain to the council, you are disregarding the human rights of death row inmates!"

As the death row inmates shouted loudly, a familiar yet dreaded voice sounded from behind: "Ladies and gentlemen, death row inmates, good evening, it is 8pm Caimon time, I am tonight's supervisor, Nago McMillan."

The death row inmates looked back to find that it was the Tide Viewing Platform. The platform was now brightly lit, Nago stood at the edge of the platform, but he did not look at the inmates, instead at the six burning eyes floating in the air.

Although it was the first time seeing them, Ashe guessed by instinct that those six eyes were this world's cameras.

"As you can see, the Blood Moon Tribunal has begun. Viewers who wish to check the profiles of death row inmates can focus on the inmate's face, to change viewing angles, focus on the different camera eyes on the left side. Everyone can directly watch this trial

by silently chanting 'Caimon Channel One', and the rules of this trial will be on the right side of the screen."

Everyone...

Ashe's mind moved, silently chanting 'Caimon Channel One', and his light screen did show the live broadcast.

He could even see in the broadcast a person tilting his head back sneaking a peek, looking a bit silly - it was himself.

"The mode this time is the new mode 'Confessions on the Tightrope', specific rules are as follows."

Nago calmly said: "First, it is currently the spawning season for reverse current Finger Sharks in Shattered Lake. According to records from previous years, there are thirty-five thousand Finger Sharks gathered in Shattered Lake now. Any creature that falls into Shattered Lake will be shredded to blood foam and disappear."

"The Fishing Association hereby reminds that due to the rampant and obtainable nature of Finger Sharks this month, Finger Shark points will temporarily not be counted for this month's fishing competition. Members please take note."

As Nago spoke, he kicked a dead pig by his foot into the lake.

The moment the dead pig hit the water with a splash, hundreds of finger-sized small sharks swarmed over, and the surface seemed to boil.

Two seconds later, the pig's corpse had disappeared.

Not just blood and flesh, even the bones were gone!

Seeing this, Ashe's legs didn't just tremble, they also went a little soft.

"Second, the weather mages have announced tonight is a night of storm spirit riots. Northeast Caimon is temporarily a no-fly zone. The Sorcerer Association reminds that storm-type sorcerers should take safety precautions tonight and remove all metal objects before entering the virtual world."

Nago took out an iron sheet and flew it upwards.

Snap!

A sudden clap of thunder on a clear night split the sky, smashing the iron sheet to smithereens!

"Third, when the voting starts, the 'Executioner' will generate on the platform where the death row inmates currently are."

"This time, the Executioner has been enhanced with the 'Purgatorial Flame', which will burn around the Executioner without causing physical damage, but will severely scorch the souls of the wicked and burn away their evil delusions."

"But don't worry, death row inmates, as long as you are innocent or truly repentant, you can directly ignore the effects of the Purgatorial Flame."

I see, so either jump down and become fish food, or stay put and die in agony... Hey wait a minute!

Ashe suddenly realized a loophole.

He wasn't the real Ashe Heath, what sins did he have!

He almost got too immersed. He was an innocent otherworldly soul!

"Fourth, there is a steel wire in front of each death row inmate, extending to the safe platform in the distance, on which various weapons have been placed."

When the lights shone over, Ashe saw that there really was a thin steel wire under his feet that looked like it could easily cut a person in half.

And at the end of this hundred-meter wire was the large platform with an array of weapons placed on it, swords, spears, guns, even cannons.

"Fifth, the familiar Blood Moon rule. When the voting ends, the death row inmate with the most votes will have the honor of obtaining tonight's redemption quota; if anyone gets 50% of votes prematurely, the voting will end directly and proceed to the execution phase."

"Each vote will become the power of the Executioner. The Executioner, empowered by the righteous feelings of countless people, will execute the death row inmate and personally send his soul to the Blood Moon Paradise, so that the supremely benevolent Blood Moon Archon can forgive his sins and transgressions."

"That concludes the rules for this Blood Moon Tribunal."

Nago turned to face the death row inmates, snapped his fingers and announced loudly:

"Now, Central Control, please remove the restrictions on the eight sinners awaiting salvation."

Right after Nago finished speaking, multiple notifications popped up on Ashe's light screen:

"Virtual World Access Allowed"

"Arcane Energy Output Allowed"

"Attack Restrictions Lifted"

Tens of such notifications continuously popped up, plus the feeling of relief throughout his body, like cleared constipation. This was exactly what the medic [222] mentioned, the only time death row inmates regain full freedom: during the Blood Moon Tribunal, the prison lifts most restrictions on inmates!

"Sinners, please make an effort to repent. Under the moonlight, repentance is the only path to salvation."

Nago smiled slightly, spreading his hands to loudly proclaim:

"The voting session begins! Esteemed viewers, cast your solemn votes, let them become the power to uphold justice, the kindness to redeem sinners!"

"Now is the time for judgement!"

Ashe suddenly felt a chill, as if the surrounding temperature had abruptly dropped ten degrees.

He lowered his head to see the blood moon's glow on the platform twisting, changing, morphing into a crimson, hideous, spiked monster that appeared behind Ashe!

Its body was entwined with pale blue flames, illuminating Ashe's frightened face!

Ashe instinctively took a step back.

But as he retreated, his heel stepped on the edge!

If not for hastily adjusting his center of gravity, he would have fallen straight into the finger sharks' midnight snack!

Why me... Just as Ashe made the lament of every unlucky person, the information that popped up on the top left corner of the live broadcast on his light screen answered his confusion:

"Current Leader: Ashe Heath, 49 votes."

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

Chapter 53

Red Mist Tavern.

"Eh? Boss Snake, why is his payout rate so high, and there's no cap limit? Aren't you afraid of losing badly?"

The customers looked at the betting for the 'death penalty' in the local channel and found that the payout rate for the 'favorites' was surprisingly 1.65 - based on past experience, the payout for favorites was at most 1.0001 or even lower, and there was a cap limit per person.

Since everyone could basically judge who would die each Tribunal after looking through the death row inmates' information, Boss Snake certainly wouldn't give away money for free.

For popular bets in gambling, it was often things like 'difference between highest and lowest votes', 'can highest votes exceed 150,000 in 15 minutes', 'will there be inmate brawls in 5 minutes' - categories with very high unpredictability.

Boss Snake next to the bar counter stuck out his tongue and hissed, "Yesss, I'm losing badly, what if you all bet on him, I'd be in trouble ss~"

A customer laughed, "Ah, I won't take Boss Snake's money, I just want to lose for fun, eh~ I just want to bet on the one with the lowest payout and limited amount."

Lawrence looked at the betting in the light screen, wondering if he should play a few hands - he hadn't touched gambling for a whole year plus in Shattered Lake Prison.

Almost anyone could open these local bets, there were no restrictions, but there was one prerequisite: the bookie had to first deposit a large sum in the Caimon Commercial Bank, otherwise the bank would not provide the betting service for the gambling, which also effectively prevented malicious incidents of bookies suffering huge losses and welching.

After browsing through the 'highest votes' payout rates of the eight death row inmates, Lawrence already knew who would most likely be the redeemer of this Blood Moon Tribunal.

The lower the payout rate, the more certain everyone thought he would definitely die.

Generally speaking, the one with the lowest payout was often the 'favorites' that could be judged just from the information. But this time...

"Interesting..."

Lawrence smiled and went all in on the bet for the person with the lowest payout rate.

...

...

Ashe finally understood.

Why Harvey could be certain that tonight's "random" draw would have a high chance of landing on him - so the so-called random draw was an audience vote!

The death row inmate with the most votes could win the grand prize of a trip to heaven!

The executioner would send you straight to heaven!

So why was Ashe certain to die as long as it was an audience vote?

Because Ashe was the hot news topic these past few days!

He was the 'monthly hot pick', the 'cover character'!

The news recently had all been focused on Ashe Heath's rise of the heretical Waterism, explained in depth in vivid detail, even Ashe himself read it with great interest, one could imagine most of the audience was not unfamiliar with Ashe now.

What was audience appeal?

This was audience appeal!

Since you're so familiar, then we'll pick you!

Seeing his own vote count rapidly increasing, while the crimson 'executioner' in front also grew increasingly huge and sinister, almost occupying most of the platform space, squeezing Ashe to the edge with both heels over the side.

Every cell in his body was screaming at him to run!

Just as Ashe was about to lose his grip, a sudden shriek came from beside him!

"Ahhhhhhhhhh!"

The cannibal inmate next to him screamed as if scalded by an iron, a shriek as shrill as a little girl's!

It seemed this cannibal was singed by the executioner's dim blue flames, and he shrank back to the edge, hands clutching the steel wires, looking pitiful, weak and helpless!

At this time the other inmates also cried out, each seemingly in excruciating pain.

Though there were no visible wounds, they looked as if nails were hammered into their flesh.

One goblin even walked on the wires despite his light body,

They would rather risk falling into the sea than stand with the executioner!

Was it that painful?

Although he had always known they were on death row, because of the chips restricting the inmates' actions, Ashe did not have a clear understanding of this till now.

Only at this moment did he feel a sense of superiority welling up.

Oh my, how shrill your screams are, how terrifying death row inmates, not like me, I don't feel any pain at all~

"Illegal...illegal!"

One death row inmate burned by the Purgatorial Flame bit through his lips and yelled loudly, "This is a violation of human rights, the Blood Moon Tribunal cannot harm us during the voting!"

"You're torturing us, trampling our dignity, using our torment as a means!"

"Human rights organizations, council members watching the Tribunal, quickly lodge complaints, stop them!"

"That's right, aren't we supposed to be safe during the voting phase!? Shattered Lake Prison violated the Tribunal's rules!"

"Stop this Tribunal now! Hurry!"

Ashe also found it strange, because from various sources, the Tribunals mostly only killed one person, the other seven could return to prison unharmed.

In fact, the vast majority of prisoners Ashe had met were survivors of the Tribunal, some were even frequent veterans who had dared the dangerous edges many times.

Moreover, the Blood Moon Nation was very concerned with race rights and human rights (seemingly), and would never allow any punitive torture using humans as means.

Even interrogational torture had been unified into 'memory retrieval'.

Criminals would not suffer any torture from capture to imprisonment.

You could choose to say or not say, we would not infringe on your human rights one bit.

Of course, whether 'memory retrieval' counted as human rights infringement was another matter.

So the death row inmates' doubts about Shattered Lake Prison were somewhat legally grounded - their current circumstances were undoubtedly purely torture, not aligned with the Tribunal's redemptive spirit, it was blasphemy against the Blood Moon Sovereign, a regression from equal rights!

"No."

Nago shook his head, "The rules for this Tribunal have been approved by the council, human rights organizations, various racial rights groups, there are no inhumane arrangements. Although your current circumstances seem dangerous, as long as you stay put and do nothing, you will not suffer any harm."

"Ah!" Just then, the beastman death row inmate's executioner suddenly grew a bit, singeing the beastman's skin with the Purgatorial Flame, making this big and burly beastman who looked as hardy as iron scream like a little girl.

"You call this no harm!?" The death row inmates trembled with rage, "You...you damned natural born hybrid of cannibals and goblins, only able to spew shit like those green-skinned garbage with boar tusks!?"

"Despicable scum raised on shit in the downtown orphanage!"

"Defiled virgin by a goblin gigolo!"

Only now did the death row inmates remember they had unlocked all their shackles, no longer bound by rules of racial equality, proper speech, and immediately exploded with exuberant fighting spirit, seeming to spew out in one breath all the foul language they had swallowed these days, managing to cram regional discrimination, racial discrimination, gender discrimination in one sentence, even Ashe couldn't help but lend an ear.

Until he heard Harvey yell out beside him:

"Dimwit believer of the Four Pillars!"

Ashe looked at Harvey, although he wasn't, but he still felt it was directed at him, so he also shouted:

"Disgusting necromancer who sleeps hugging corpses!"

Harvey glared back, Ashe glared back unyielding, then heard the other ask in a lowered voice:

"How did you know?"

"Huh?"

He wasn't pushed into the sea by the executioner, instead this line frightened Ashe so much he nearly stumbled back three steps into the sea.

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

Chapter 54

The prisoners soon stopped their cursing - because they realized that whenever they swore, the executioners behind them would swiftly swell and grow larger.

After all, only dim-witted people end up as death row convicts. They had forgotten that hundreds of thousands of Caimon City residents were watching them curse!

The audience thought: Good! Curse more! The fouler and more vulgar the better! We'll reward you with a ticket and help you die and reincarnate sooner!

Once the scene quieted down, Nago said leisurely: "You feel pain not because we arranged it, but because of your own problems. As I said, as long as you are truly repentant, you will not be affected by the Purgatorial Flame. The Purgatorial Flame burns sin and scorches evil."

"Also, not everyone will feel pain. Look at Mr. Ashe Heath and Mr. Valcas Uhl - they are unaffected by the Purgatorial Flame. Please learn from them."

The agonized crowd only just realized that Ashe and Valcas were almost glued to the executioners, yet the churning Purgatorial Flame passed through their bodies and they still stood ramrod straight.

"If you feel pain, you should take this opportunity to accept the Purgatorial Flame's cleansing and repent your sins, making a new start." Nago didn't seem to be mocking them - it was as if he was genuinely advising them to repent: "The Blood Moon Sovereign and Caimon City residents will see your sincerity."

"I admit my wrongs, I admit..." Harvey wailed in pain, tears and snot running down his gaunt face twisted like woodgrain. More than half his body hung outside the platform, his hands clutching the steel wire cut down to the bone.

But even such danger, such torment, couldn't compare to a single lick of the Purgatorial Flame's flames!

"You must thoroughly recognize how unforgivable your past mistakes were, completely sever ties with your former sinful self, in order to obtain the Blood Moon's forgiveness."

Nago's mouth curled up: "Of course, there is also an easy way: just continuously endure the Purgatorial Flame's burning. Your sinful soul will burn to ashes, naturally leaving behind a virtuous soul."

Although it sounded far-fetched, Ashe didn't feel Nago would lie, at least not during this live show watched by the entire nation.

This meant the Purgatorial Flame could split personalities, using tremendous continuous pain to divide the death row convicts into a virtuous persona, then ruthlessly torment the original persona to death!

Upon hearing this, almost all the death row convicts wished they could hang from the steel wire.

Compared to death, they were even more unable to accept their souls being completely destroyed!

"I understand...I understand..."

Ashe looked towards Harvey mumbling to himself beside him. Harvey sobbed and his mouth twitched. "We're all done for this time..."

Ashe curiously asked: "What are you afraid of? Didn't you say only one person dies each Blood Moon Tribunal? Just endure for now and it'll pass."

"Not every Blood Moon Tribunal has the same outcome. This time we met with an occasional exception." Harvey cried as if laughing. "I just remembered, old man Ryan said the Andreim faction would have an important death recently, and many ministers and officials would be purged..."

"What does political turmoil have to do with the Blood Moon Tribunal?"

"Do you think a serial killer, or a minister exposed for corruption and graft, would be more entertaining at the Blood Moon Tribunal?"

Ashe understood.

In terms of entertainment from watching deaths, it was directly proportional to the convict's prior social status.

"Political strife in the Blood Moon Empire is most cruel. Which minister or official that could move up wasn't bloody? The winner takes all, the loser faces trial, draining their last ounce of social value. It's both an explanation to the public, and a warning to other officials - warning them to be even more covert and leave no evidence..."

"You're quite knowledgeable."

"Who do you think the corpses I handled before belonged to?"

"But what does that have to do with the Blood Moon Tribunal suddenly killing more evenly?"

Harvey looked extremely aggrieved. "The dorms are full."

Ashe was taken aback, mentally sprouting countless herbs.

That made perfect sense!

Since the dorms were full, they had to kill some people to make room for the fallen ministers to move in. It was such a realistic yet darkly comedic ruthless logic.

Because the prison was overcrowded, they had to die.

How absurd, how cruel, how bluntly logical.

"Urgh!"

Just then, Harvey gritted his teeth and hung fully from the steel wire, swaying forward towards the main platform.

Each swing scraped his palms on the wire, quickly skinning them to the bloody meat and exposing teeth-clenchingly terrifying hand bones. But Ashe clearly saw that his bones weren't the common pale white, but gave off a silvery sheen!

After scraping his palms bare, Harvey's climbing speed visibly increased. Even as the wire grated his hand bones with a nails-on-chalkboard screech, he seemed unfazed by any pain, his expression very relaxed!

It was a spirit!

A spirit used to enhance bone defense?

The other death row convicts also scrambled to grab the wire and flee. Some had strong skin defense, the wire only leaving a red mark on their skin.

Some excelled in agility, running directly along the wire.

Most bizarre was the cannibal - as a temperature-type sorcerer, he rapidly lowered the temperature to coat the wire in a thick layer of ice, then swung his body and slid across!

The prison really was full of talented people, eloquent speakers, and performers of all sorts of tricks.

Compared to these hastily escaping death row convicts, Ashe who was unaffected by the Purgatorial Flame naturally had more time to think.

He turned and looked towards Nago standing on the viewing platform at the back.

Noticing his gaze, Nago clasped his hands behind his back and smiled slightly. "A great idea - instead of struggling with the wires under the Blood Moon rules, why not break the rules and jump backwards into the prison?"

"Oh!"

The Red Mist Tavern patrons simultaneously realized: "Jump backwards into the prison to dodge all this and escape the Blood Moon Tribunal!"

"Aren't there any other traps?"

"Letting the death row convicts escape torture so easily? How did Shattered Lake Prison mess up this fun tribunal mode so badly?"

"F*cking b*stards, refund our money!"

Lawrence keenly noticed that at this moment, Ashe Heath's odds suddenly dropped from 1.65 to 1.45. This meant the snake boss felt Ashe's chances of 'winning' had greatly increased, so he adjusted the odds in time to avoid losing money.

After a little thought, the fishman understood why the prison had set things up this way.

Besides its extremely entertaining nature, the 'Blood Moon Tribunal' event had enthralled the entire nation for decades because of its high interactivity.

Obvious loopholes like this were left intentionally by the prison, to provide the audience cathartic interactive moments - giving them the hope of personally strangling the convicts!

What entertainment was more thrilling than bestowing despair?

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

Chapter 55

Hearing Nago's words, the other death row inmates also suddenly realized.

That's right, why go forward? Jumping back to the viewing platform would allow them to survive too. It was only a distance of ten steps, insignificant for these death row inmates. Even without their sorcerer powers, they had ways to cross over.

However, when they looked back and saw Ashe's executioner visibly growing larger again, they immediately realized Nago's shamelessness. Cursing him under their breaths while gloating over Ashe's plight, they lowered their heads and continued climbing the steel wire.

Going back was a trap.

Nago's words were the trigger.

Ashe knew he had screwed up as soon as he looked back, because when Nago said those words, he saw his number of votes exponentially skyrocketing.

The audience was anxious, they were anxious!

Because what Nago said was right. If Ashe jumped back, he could break the Blood Moon Tribunal's carefully laid out plans. The steel wire tribulation and purgatorial flames would have nothing to do with Ashe.

However, his good experience was a provocation to the audience - as a death row inmate, not repenting and admitting wrongs in the Blood Moon Tribunal, but instead trying to break the rules even more?!

It was like a student who didn't do his homework, instead of admitting his mistake when the teacher scolded him "Why did you come to school?", he suddenly realized he should just run out of school to play.

As social supervisors, the audience would naturally give such an immature offender the chance to repent - remember not to do this again in your next life!

In addition to the death penalty for the person with the most votes, the voting process would end immediately and the death penalty carried out if someone received 50% of the votes.

The restrictions on the death row inmates were lifted, but the price was that their lives were no longer under their control. On the other side of the light curtain were hundreds of thousands of Caimon City citizens, each holding the bargaining chip for their lives.

Once anyone dared to go against this tide, the audience's bargaining chips would fall, turning into heavy heavenly condemnation, crushing the backbone of their resistance.

So if Ashe jumped back, what awaited him was the heartfelt thanks of the other death row inmates, as well as the terrifying executioner formed by the 50% vote share.

But that said.

If Ashe's number of votes skyrocketed ahead of everyone else, and the audience stubbornly believed that the chance of redemption belonged to none other than Ashe, then Ashe would definitely jump back.

Anyway, he was going to die, so he wouldn't cater to their games.

The reason Ashe was still willing to follow the rules of the game was because the current voting situation gave him hope.

"Ashe Heath, 42,354 votes."

"Valcas Uhl, 31,002 votes."

Ashe glanced at the executioner behind Valcas, just as thick and hideous, only slightly smaller than his own executioner.

Seemingly noticing Ashe's gaze, Valcas glanced at him and let out a cold snort, actually jumping up on the platform and lightly landing on the steel wire, walking towards the distant platform in elegant steps.

This cool and arrogant scene instantly earned Valcas several thousand more votes.

I didn't expect, I didn't expect that you, Valcas, with your thick eyebrows and big eyes, would also be so hateful, almost catching up to me. As expected, you're no good elf... Ashe muttered to himself as he looked at Valcas on the light curtain. The light curtain suddenly popped up some information:

"View Valcas Uhl's criminal record?"

Ashe chose to view it. A small window popped up on the light curtain, showing Valcas' first-person perspective of stealing technical data at his university and murdering a colleague researcher.

His colleague was seen limp on the floor of the hallway, his face full of fear, snot and tears flowing as he retreated and pleaded:

"Spare me, I beg you, Valcas, don't... Ah!"

With a miserable shriek, the colleague was stabbed through the chest by Valcas!

As if the perpetrator's perspective wasn't exciting enough, the second half of the video was actually the colleague researcher's first-person victim perspective!

Facing Valcas' step-by-step approach, the video clearly portrayed the colleague's despair, fear, and the pain of his fading life!

These were memory fragments of Valcas and the person he murdered!

Having watched a memory fragment for the first time, Ashe was deeply shocked by this technology, shocked by the powerful and bizarre sorcerer system, and also shocked that the other death row inmates had dared to commit crimes - how was this any different from public urination and defecation? All crimes were laid bare!

Any crime involving harming others meant you had already been exposed in the eyes of the Heresy Court. Even if you destroyed and erased all traces, the Heresy Court could extract the victim's memories!

No wonder the death row inmates were all masters of secret arts. After all, without formidable abilities, how could they have committed crimes punishable by death before being caught by the Heresy Court?

Weaker criminals were likely captured by the Heresy Court during their developmental stage of petty theft and fraud, and sent for reeducation and rehabilitation.

After watching, a question surprisingly popped up on the light curtain:

"Cast a redemption vote for Valcas Uhl? Each of your redemption votes is a show of support for justice."

Ashe was startled, with countless weeds sprouting in his heart.

These death row inmates could actually vote too?!

Hadn't they been stripped of their political rights for life?

This was simply insulting them. Did the prison think they, these death row inmates, would vote for other candidates just to increase their meager chance of survival?

Ashe was indignant about the prison's disdain for him, yet still cast a vote for Valcas.

However, although Valcas' murder was quite cruel, it shouldn't have earned him so many votes, right? How was Ashe inferior to him?

Ashe looked at his own portrait. Although a small video popped up too, it wasn't his memories, but the law enforcement memories of the Blood Mad Hunters.

The bizarre underground hall filled with blood runes, remains on the altar, twisted piles of corpses... Ashe fast forwarded after watching for a bit, unable to bear watching himself. He even felt a twinge of conscience.

Damn, it really hurt, his soul was reacting to the purgatorial flames.

Ashe repeated 'I'm Ashe not Ashe' three times in his mind before the searing pain in his conscience slowly faded away.

This small episode also allowed Ashe to feel the might of the purgatorial flames - just because he had transmigrated into this body and briefly immersed himself in Ashe's identity, the purgatorial flames had already scalded his mind.

The agony endured by the real criminal death row inmates who had committed those deeds must be thousands, tens of thousands times greater.

Thinking of this, Ashe felt quite delighted. His simple black-and-white worldview made him applaud this punishment.

If he himself wasn't at the live broadcast scene but watching this show cozily at home, it would be even better.

Ashe glanced at the others' criminal records, only reading the text summaries due to time constraints.

As expected, Harvey was guilty of corpse desecration... Although Ashe was very curious whether the 'corpse' was cold or warm, male or female, such visual impact was still too much for him to dare click open the video.

Alright, this one was a serial killer, that one ate people, this one an assassin, that one a violent gang leader...

Ashe quickly browsed through them and found that Ashe's crimes were indeed the most brutal among them. Even without the daily news reports recommending him these past few days, Ashe reckoned the audience would still be able to recognize a hero when they saw one.

Unexpectedly, among the eight of them, Valcas' crimes were the lightest, yet his number of votes was second only to Ashe's.

Although somewhat puzzled, there was no time for him to think about it.

The others were almost at the platform. Ashe had to take action too.

After all, he couldn't just stay here waiting to die while everyone else moved on.

But how could he get across?

He couldn't fall into the sea. It was full of finger sharks, and if he fell in, even his fingernails might not survive.

He couldn't fly up either. There was currently some chaos magic spirits riot party going on, any airborne construct would get struck by lightning.

But Ashe didn't originally have any swimming or flying spirits anyway, so these restrictions meant little to him.

Ashe looked at the steel wire below.

He squatted down and touched the steel wire. It was very thin yet tough. Ashe touched it and his palm was immediately cut open.

If he grabbed this steel wire, the undoubted result would be his fingers sliced off as appetizers for the finger sharks.

Normal people wouldn't be able to cross it. One had to use spirits.

But Ashe only had one spirit right now!

However, he had to try everything now.

Substitute spirit!

A duplicate of Ashe appeared beside him, further crowding the already narrow small platform, almost shoving the real Ashe off.

Although he had summoned the substitute, Ashe didn't know what the next step of the plan was. He looked at the substitute, then the steel wire, gesturing with his mouth for the substitute to go over.

The substitute naturally had no objections, directly stepping onto the steel wire. Then the steel wire easily tore through its shoes with a pa sound and the substitute dissipated into light smoke.

Even the slightest harm would cause the substitute to instantly shatter and vanish.

But Ashe's eyes lit up.

Although the wire had slashed the substitute's shoes, the substitute had indeed been able to cross over, unfearing and steady like a robot, incapable of making mistakes!

Ashe looked at his own shoes, the standard prison-issued canvas shoes for inmates, breathable and comfy in all seasons, but lacking the durability to walk on steel wires.

Ashe looked around, then turned to look at Nago behind him.

Nago raised his eyebrows: "Want to come over?"

Ashe ignored the rapidly enlarging executioner and looked at Nago's steel-toed boots that clanked when he walked.

"Supervisor, your boots look so cool! What brand are they?"

Happy to be asked about this, Nago perked up: "You have good taste. These are the limited edition Midnight Monarch series by Twilight - I had them on preorder for three months before I could get them."

Ashe looked at him admiringly: "I knew it, the Twilight Midnight Monarch limited edition series! It's the only pair of boots I've wanted in my life!"

"It's Midnight King, Midnight Monarch is another series."

"That's not important!" Ashe waved his hand: "What's important is that I hope to wear this pair of boots before my redemption. This is my one and only request in life, Supervisor. Could you...let me wear them for a bit?"

Nago's expression stiffened.

"That's not very appropriate, I've already worn them..."

"Don't worry Supervisor, I don't mind!" Ashe thumped his chest: "Since you're giving these boots to me, how could I possibly mind such petty details?"

Nago was so angry his face twisted.

I do mind!

And I didn't say I was giving them to you!

Giving you boots? I'd rather give you a kick to send you down! Damn scumbag!

Daring to take advantage of me? Ashe Heath, this is provoking the supervisor's dignity, provoking the bottom line of Shattered Lake Prison!

Nago let out a cold snort and said loudly:

"Alright!"

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

Chapter 56

Nago finally took off his boots, revealing his cute socks embroidered with little golden lions.

He couldn't refuse this request.

Hundreds of thousands of citizens were watching the livestream, and each of them held a vote in their hands. If Nago wanted to leave prison in the future, and further become a city council member, he couldn't do anything that would damage his image.

The role of supervisor that Nago had specifically applied for from the prison was to increase his exposure and make citizens become more familiar with him, laying the groundwork for his future campaign for council member.

If he didn't even fulfill this 'little wish', forget about becoming a council member, even the prison would think he lacked the appropriate image and reputation, and wouldn't let him continue as supervisor.

Without the role of supervisor, the easiest way to pad his resume before Nago advanced to become a two-winged gold rank, he would be stuck as a prison guard in this prison.

Although the cost-benefit analysis was very clear, when Nago held the new boots that he had looked forward to for a whole year but had only worn for less than a month, he still couldn't help feeling heartbroken over having to part with them.

"Hurry up, I'm in a rush!" Ashe urged.

"Can you handle it?"

"I can handle it!"

"When you put them on, slide your feet in vertically so you don't wrinkle the exterior texture."

"Got it, got it."

"I actually have another decent pair of boots, why don't I go grab them for you now-"

"Just toss them over!"

One of the camera eyes let out a heh heh laugh, which happened when the audience currently watching the livestream had the same reaction at the same time, feeding back to the camera eye to let the host know what effect their performance had achieved.

Clearly the interaction between Ashe and Nago had made the audience laugh, they had watched the Blood Moon Tribunal hundreds of times, but had never seen such silly death row inmates and supervisors before.

Nago steeled his heart, he didn't want to become a clown in the citizens' eyes, so he threw the boots over.

Ashe caught the boots and examined them closely, discovering that they really were high quality, with a luxurious texture and high-end stylish exterior, no wonder Nago's expression was as mournful as losing his beloved concubine.

"Ah, don't force it, are yours too big? Don't rush, go slowly, if you force it you'll leave imprints on them! Be gentler okay?"

Even just watching, Nago felt pained, after all he was hoping to get the boots back intact later, it's not like Ashe had long to live anyway.

Ashe ignored him, put on the boots and once again summoned his Doppelganger spirit, creating an identical copy of himself by his side.

Even the shoes changed to the steel-toed boots Ashe was currently wearing.

"Stand on the steel wire for a few seconds."

The doppelganger stood steadily on the wire, which this time could not cut through his boots.

And since it had not been damaged, the doppelganger naturally did not disappear.

"Great!" Ashe said excitedly, "Come back."

The doppelganger came back.

"Crouch down!"

The doppelganger crouched down.

Ashe climbed onto the doppelganger's neck, "Carry me and walk the steel wire to the big platform on the other side!"

However this time the doppelganger did not react, and just peacefully raised its head to look at Ashe.

"Carry me and walk the steel wire to the big platform on the other side!" Thinking it hadn't heard him, Ashe repeated it again.

After three seconds of silence, the doppelganger seemed to finally understand the meaning of this sentence, or its own fate.

Whine.

Whine.

With each step the doppelganger took, the steel wire let out whines and creaks, making Ashe's heart race nervously. He saw the other death row inmates cross so effortlessly, but when it was his turn to cross, just lowering his head to look at the sea below made him feel like peeing himself.

But he succeeded - the doppelganger could completely carry him across.

Ashe vaguely realized another wondrous aspect of the sorcerer system.

If ordinary people operated on 'you can't do anything I haven't explicitly allowed', then sorcerers worked on 'you can do anything I haven't explicitly forbidden'.

The former was total emptiness, the latter was total permission.

The doppelganger spirit's effect was to create an identical copy of himself that would disappear if damaged, and followed his commands completely.

Therefore, as long as he didn't exceed the restrictions, Ashe could order the doppelganger to carry out unimaginable behaviors, even if they were things he couldn't do himself.

Like right now, Ashe himself had no ability to walk the tightrope, let alone carry someone else across it.

Yet the doppelganger could do it.

Because it was Ashe's command,

Because it was a task the doppelganger could theoretically complete,

So it could.

Spirits weren't miracles, they couldn't bend the rules of reality.

They just represented the infinite extension of knowledge, the theoretical best outcome, the optimal result allowed by reality.

They were the limit.

If only he could take the Doppelganger spirit back to his original world...then he could have the doppelganger help take care of his parents at home...

Ashe dismissed the thought after a moment, that would be too mundane a use for it, if he had a doppelganger what narrow vision limited his sights?

That's right, it was capital.

So he should have the doppelganger go to work while he stayed home lying down taking care of his parents, although it was also very likely his parents would end up taking care of him...

While lost in thought, the doppelganger had already crossed most of the way, and by now the other death row inmates had basically all climbed onto the platform on the other side, leaving only Ashe and Valcas still on the wire.

"You two stand there and don't move! Don't come over!"

A death row inmate with knife scars on his face aimed a long gun at Ashe, "If you take another step forward, don't blame me for sending you down to feed the fish!"

The other death row inmates paused briefly, then seemed to realize something and stood silently to the side.

Ashe blinked and asked, "Why?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Valcas called out from afar with a laugh, "Cowards always take advantage of others' peril, scum always judge others by their own petty standards, the weak can only survive through deception."

Although Valcas spoke in riddles as usual, Ashe noticed the death row inmates were not looking at him, but at the executioner behind him, and immediately understood their thoughts - they were afraid he would rush over and use them as human shields against the executioner!

Oh right!

He could do that!

Not bad, the death row inmates' brains worked faster than his when it came to harming others and sparing themselves!

Without a doubt, the one to be saved tonight would be either Ashe or Valcas out of the two of them. If they both reached the platform, it meant the executioner would also chase over.

One look at the executioner's hideous and terrifying form told you its method of attack would not be a clean, non-residual mental assault, but more likely a huge AOE physical damage sweeping attack.

In other words, if it executed someone while others watched nearby, the spectators would very likely be caught in it too!

So the death row inmates who had reached the platform first came up with the idea.

Don't let Ashe and Valcas reach the platform!

Otherwise the outcome would definitely be a party wipe of 8 deaths!

So Scarface threatened Ashe and Valcas not to advance, believing the best outcome would be for the two of them to be executed by the executioner midway on the wire.

"If you don't want to fall and feed the fish, then stay put!" Scarface roared.

"I refuse!"

Ashe righteously stated, "My favorite thing to do is say no when someone threatens me! Step forward!"

Squeak~

The doppelganger heavily took a step forward, stomping on the wire, swaying and crying out!

Bang!

Scarface fired his gun, the scars on his face distorted by fear and fury into centipedes, "I can shoot, stay where you are...stay there!"

"I - don't - believe - you'll - shoot - me!"

With each word Ashe spoke, the doppelganger took another step forward, arrogantly asking for a beating, making onlookers' fists itch to punch it.

Bang!

"Don't force me, I really will shoot, I killed 19 people before I was imprisoned, look at my file if you don't believe me!"

However Ashe had long since seen through his bluffing, unhurriedly saying, "The fact that you threatened me so quickly shows you're smart. But exactly because you're smart, I'm certain you won't shoot."

"On what basis!"

"Because if I die here, the one executed by the executioner will be you!"

Ashe smiled, "If neither of us dies, you can at least be certain the ones executed will be the two of us. But if we die, then the audience will choose one person to vote for out of you six!"

Scarface's mouth twitched, "So what, it's not necessarily me!"

"No, definitely you." Ashe laughed, "Think about it, right now the audience expects the two of us to be executed, but you've ruined their excitement. Guess if they'll use their votes to vent their anger on you?"

"Also, haven't you noticed everyone else has distanced themselves from you?"

Scarface paused briefly, and looked left and right to see he really was standing alone in the center, exposed, while the others had retreated to the edges, carefully avoiding appearing in the same frame as him!

"Why are they avoiding you? Because if you can really force us to stay on the wire, they can reap the rewards. And if you shoot us dead, you'll definitely become the voting target for the audience. Either way, they have nothing to lose."

Scarface's mouth twitched, "Then, then what if it's not me!"

"No, definitely you." Ashe laughed, "Think about it, right now the audience expects us two to be executed, but you've ruined the mood for them. Do you think they won't vent their anger on you with their votes?"

"Besides, haven't you noticed everyone else has distanced themselves from you?"

Scarface paused briefly, and looked around to see he really was standing alone in the center, exposed, while the others had retreated to the edges, carefully avoiding appearing together with Scarface!

"Why are they avoiding you? Because if you can really keep us stuck on the wire, they can benefit without lifting a finger. And if you shoot us dead, you'll definitely become the voting target of the audience. No matter what, they have nothing to lose."

Ashe gave a bright smile, "Or could it be you're a reformed model prisoner who has transcended base desires and attained high moral character, willing to sacrifice yourself to protect your fellow inmates?"

Scarface's hand shook slightly, but the muzzle of the gun gradually lowered.

"So do you know where your path to survival lies?"

Scarface eagerly asked, "Where's the path to survival?"

"Go back, or hang from the steel wire." Ashe smiled, "Since I'm standing here, if you don't want to die, your only option is to stay away from me."

"This is my spot, it's you who should leave!"

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

Chapter 57

Red Mist Tavern.

"Don't be afraid! Hurry up and kill Ashe! How can you tolerate his arrogance?"

"Aren't you a serial killer? How could you be persuaded so easily?"

"This batch of death row inmates is the most cowardly I've ever seen!"

Seeing Scarface put down his hand, many customers let out a cry - they were all smart people who had predicted fighting would break out among the death row inmates. Thus, they had placed bets on "the death row inmates will kill each other."

Now that Scarface had been persuaded by Ashe, it seemed their bets were going down the drain.

"But this Ashe kid is pretty interesting. Can we watch him in a few more Blood Moon Tribunals?"

"I'd rather see his expression when he becomes one of the redeemed! That must be entertaining."

"Can I still place a preorder for his and the elf's full blood? I'm feeling a bit hungry."

"There aren't even enough sacred bloodline members in the prison to go around. How could there possibly be any left for you? Don't even think about preordering full blood....maybe you can preorder some hemorrhoid blood."

Sitting alone with his drink, Lorens looked at Ashe Heath on the light screen, suddenly recalling something from years ago.

It was several years prior, when he hadn't yet undergone the blood replacement ceremony and was still a student at Caimon University. Someone had handed him a flyer in the second cafeteria.

He vaguely remembered it was for a student mutual aid society, with the tenets of "Courage," "Wisdom," "Life," and "Joy." But he had been close to graduating then and naturally uninterested.

Lorens didn't know why he recalled this now.

But when he looked at Ashe Heath again, an ephemeral feeling of...familiarity arose in his heart.

His hand trembled slightly as he prepared to vote.

We should be the ones to go!?

Although it sounded reasonable, seeing Ashe's arrogant face made every death row inmate feel extremely stifled. It was like waiting in line for an hour before someone tapped their shoulder and said, "You're in the wrong line, you should go over there. Let me cut in front of you."

And on further thought, this path didn't seem viable either. After all, there were still executors on their small platform. Purgatorial Flame was just an itch to Ashe and Valcas, but to them it was flaying their brains!

"Or there's an even better way," said another skinny man holding a dagger sinisterly. "After the voting ends and before the executors arrive, we can just kill off you two. Then the executors won't come."

"That's right!"

"Restrain them first!"

"Cut off their four limbs and throw them into the sea after voting ends!"

Ashe thought to himself, damn it, his current combat ability was just a bit higher than a normal person's. He could barely handle deathmatches, let alone uncontrolled fighting against these vicious and ruthless senior sorcerers!

From afar, Nago shouted, "Although the prison can't interfere during the tribunal, I advise you to refrain from suicide and murder. Shedding blood under the blood moon will only escalate your crimes. You can still repent and make amends if you stop now. Don't harm Ashe Heath - just let him wait quietly in my boots for the tribunal's judgment..."

Boots, my boots... Nago stamped his feet anxiously. Fight if you must, but don't get blood on the boots! Search the NôveFire.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Just as Ashe shivered at the edge of the platform while the death row inmates closed in, a sharp sound suddenly came from beside him!

Zheng!

A sword mark slashed between Ashe and the others, penetrating three feet deep as the sword qi cried out!

"You...want to catch me?"

While everyone was focused on Ashe, Valcas had silently logged onto the platform and picked up a longsword, sending out crossing rays of sword qi with a gentle wave!

But Valcas' deterrence did not make the death row inmates retreat. Dagger-man licked his blade, chuckling coldly. "So what if you're a swordsman? There are six of us and two of you... Moreover, who said none of us are sorcerers!"

With a flash of silver, fluttering silver wings unfurled from Dagger-man's back, unleashing intense waves of arcane energy that rippled outward!

Silver Wings!

The arcane medium through which mortal sorcerers touched the principles of law!

Only those who had sailed ten thousand miles in the Sea of Knowledge could possibly condense Silver Wings!

Someone like Ashe now, who had just entered the virtual world, couldn't even condense a single feather - let alone Silver Wings. While Dagger-man's Silver Wings weren't very long, based on their size he must have sailed at least two to three thousand miles in the Sea of Knowledge. He had likely been a sorcerer for quite some time!

Although the scale of one's Silver Wings wasn't directly proportional to combat ability, more complete Silver Wings meant the sorcerer had sailed farther in the Sea of Knowledge, learned from more sorcerer lineages, encountered more island adventures, and slain more creatures of knowledge!

At least Ashe could ascertain he couldn't beat this dagger-wielding man one-on-one!

The other death row inmates scoffed as they each revealed their own Silver Wings. Even the cannibal had a small, chicken wing-sized Silver Wing.

The most complete Silver Wings belonged to none other than the necromancer, Harvey. Nearly fully unfurled, they were probably only a bit away from the ten thousand mile voyage. Noticing Ashe's surprised gaze, Harvey revealed a friendly smile. The way he looked at Ashe was full of enthusiasm.

Ashe blinked.

Could it be that after an afternoon together, Harvey had decided to recognize me as a good buddy?

But upon closer inspection, Ashe suddenly recalled the same look of affinity and enthusiasm on Harvey's face when he talked about handling corpses previously. His face darkened immediately - damn, Harvey probably hadn't gotten to handle fresh corpses for many days in prison, and wanted to indulge using this chance!

But he was truly done for this time. As a sorcerer who had only entered the virtual world a few days ago and whose only spirit was a shadow clone, how could he compete against six silver-winged sorcerers? Even with Valcas, they were still outmatched!

Zheng!

With a cry like ringing steel, a radiant flash of silver-gold pressed down the death row inmates' silver wings!

Valcas' Silver Wings had fully unfurled!

Each feather resembled a dancing firefly. Every flutter seemed to warp the laws of reality!

Compared to Valcas' perfect Silver Wings, Harvey's looked like expired goods taken out of a dusty warehouse - which they were, in fact. Bathed in the silver glow of perfection, Harvey's silver wings instantly wilted as if ashamed of their own shabbiness.

Not only perfect Silver Wings, Valcas even had a short, dazzling section of Golden Wings!

A two-winged golden sorcerer!

Valcas was a virtual world traveler who had completely traversed the Sea of Knowledge, broken through its constraints, summoned a two-winged spirit, and successfully climbed onto the Temporal Continent!

"So do you still think two can't beat six?" Valcas mocked.

Hearing this, Dagger-man forced out an uglier-than-crying smile and tried to hide behind the others, only to find they had all distanced themselves from him. He could only lower his head and say, "Master Uhl, I was just joking earlier. Please..."

"Not funny at all."

"...Please forgive me..."

"Kowtow and I'll forgive you if you split your head open."

Without another word, Dagger-man immediately smashed his head on the ground, looking so pitiful it hurt just to watch. After three knocks, his forehead split open with blood flowing down his nose ridge in two streams.

"Master Uhl, is this enough?"

"Ugly, yes, but your sincerity is adequate. You pass."

Dagger-man relaxed in relief and quickly shrank to the side, not even daring to curse as he cowered submissively.

But everyone understood. After all, the other was a two-winged sorcerer. Although they could probably still defeat him together, was it necessary?

Only Dagger-man had offended Valcas. Why should they risk a bloody battle to the death with the strongest close-combat sorcerer for the sake of a single inmate?

Wouldn't selling out Dagger-man be better?

Dagger-man also knew if Valcas wanted him dead, the others would absolutely stand by and watch, even applaud. Thus, conceding was his only way to survive.

Ashe hurried to Valcas' side, folding his arms as he looked down at these cowardly death row inmates.

Humph, the two of us are so powerful.

"Let's consider this even," said Valcas.

Ashe was baffled by this. "What?"

Without turning his head, Valcas said, "If not for you earlier, I might still be standing on the steel wire."

Ashe blinked. "That? I did it for myself, not to help you specifically."

"Either way, I've repaid this debt. Don't blame me for what happens next."

Ashe was taken aback. "What are you going to do next?"

"What else can I do?"

Valcas let out a cold laugh and flicked his sword.

"Survive like maggots, dance like flies, fight like dung beetles."

Ashe realized something and exited the livestream channel.

"Current highest number of votes: Valcas Uhl, 244,623 votes."

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

Chapter 58

In the light curtain, Nago was still hosting very professionally in his golden lion socks: "...Currently, Valcas Uhl has the most votes. It seems the audience wants this elven criminal to find redemption."

"Let me briefly introduce Mr. Uhl's life story. He was born in 1542 at the Emerald Dragon Orphanage. You may not be very familiar with the Emerald Dragon Orphanage, but it is currently the only dual-first class orphanage in Caimon City, and the predecessor of the 'Emerald Garden' orphanage."

"In the past three hundred years, Emerald Dragon was an orphanage exclusively for elves and never accepted infants of other races. But in 1600, under the promotion of the 'Racial Equality in Childcare Act', Emerald Dragon and many other orphanages merged to become the multi-racial Emerald Garden orphanage, which has nurtured many outstanding talents to date. Its sorcerer training rate is as high as 21%. If not for his crimes, Mr. Uhl would surely have been a famous alumnus that Emerald Garden boasts about."

Although Ashe didn't know what a "dual-first class orphanage" was, he felt it was probably more important than academic background here.

In Blood Moon's society where all childcare was socialized and private parenting was illegal, orphanages were probably equivalent to a child's family.

The more powerful the orphanage, the better the child's background.

If Ashe guessed correctly, orphanages probably had 'selection rights' over infants.

Although many factors influenced a child's growth, in this magician's world full of miracles, it was not impossible to use some methods to screen for infants with better potential, aptitude and temperament, and nurture them in an excellent environment.

Starting from birth, children from outstanding orphanages were like rolling snowballs, far ahead of others.

If Ashe lived here as an ordinary person, he would probably feel despair over this insurmountable gap.

After Nago introduced Valcas' illustrious background, Ashe saw Valcas' votes increase by another ten thousand.

At this point, Ashe was starting to sense why Valcas was more favored by the audience.

"After completing basic education at the orphanage, Mr. Uhl studied at Atson Secondary School and Caimon Comprehensive University successively, obtaining white silver degrees in eleven disciplines including swordsmanship, painting, music and earth manipulation over thirty years. He was appointed by Caimon University as a research

professor in the Biology Department, and served as an academic advisor for the Forest Biotechnology Company."

"In 1645, Mr. Uhl was nominated as a councilor for Caimon City, but lost by 3 votes to another candidate. This makes one wonder - if Mr. Uhl had been elected councilor back then, would he have kept himself in line and been strict with himself? Or would he have committed even more serious crimes?"

"Overall, Mr. Uhl was once a citizen with superior background, good education, and made many contributions to society. But it's a pity he went astray and was blinded by desire, committing unforgivable crimes..."

"There is only 1 minute left before the voting ends. Audiences who haven't voted, please hurry."

"Each vote earns redemption points, which can be exchanged for consumer brands participating in the 'Redemption Program'. The latest brand to join the program is Aiche Jewelry - every 30 points can be exchanged for a coupon!"

"During the new year transition, redemption points can even be used for the Blood Moon lottery!"

"Please don't be stingy with your redemption votes - keeping them won't make babies. If you don't use something when the time comes, it loses meaning!"

"Each of your votes represents your contribution towards redeeming sinners and adding light to the Blood Moon!"

"Only 30 seconds left... Ah!"

With Nago's sudden cry, a hideous and brutal Executioner emerged from the ground. It was seven meters tall, with three heads and eight arms, each holding a different weapon. Its three faces wore expressions of compassion, anger and calmness. Its body was wrapped in azure armor made of Purgatorial Flame, like a deity descending, the incarnation of divine punishment!

When the Titan Executioner opened its six eyes simultaneously, it actually made a metallic sound!

Its three mouths opened at the same time, letting out a long breath that stirred the air currents!

The Purgatorial Flame on its body spread like a storm, igniting blue flames on the eight steel wires. The flickering flames turned into a blue flaming path leading to the platform!

An aura of despair, destruction and crushing pressure washed over them. All the death row inmates shivered and hid at the edges, as if afraid of attracting the Titan Executioner's attention.

Ashe looked at Valcas and reflexively took a step back.

"Scram, don't get in my way." Valcas said coldly.

Every cell in Ashe's body urged him to make a run for it. After all, Valcas and the Titan Executioner were so powerful, it made no difference whether he was here or not.

But when he lowered his head, he noticed Valcas' hand gripping his sword hilt was trembling.

After a few seconds, Valcas looked at the shivering Ashe beside him and sneered, "Not to that extent right? Your legs have gone soft and you can't even run away?"

Ashe was also holding a sword. His hands shook, making the longsword tremble, and his teeth chattered as he spoke, "W-when I was in school, I noticed some classmates had no one to play with. They went to the toilet alone during breaks, stood at the side during P.E., and had no one to pair up with for field trips and outings... So I made it a point to play with them, chat with them, play ball together, be in the teacher's group together..."

"Hypocrisy." Valcas scoffed. "You only did it to satisfy your condescending sense of pity, to gain spectators' approval by commiserating them, to obtain psychological fulfillment through patronizing them, or even to satisfy your own pathetic lust for power by controlling them - no different from a slave owner. The only difference is slave owners shackle their slaves with violence, while you shackle them with 'friendship'."

"Yes, I know I'm just a pretentious fraud. I actually dislike some of their traits too, but interacted with them to satisfy those dark desires. That's why I rarely kept in contact with them after growing up..." Ashe said, "But at a gathering, a classmate told me he was very grateful that I was willing to spend time with him back then. If not for me, he might have remained a loner... Now he has a girlfriend and plans to get married, and wants to invite me to be his best man..."

Valcas raised his brows slightly, a trace of confusion on his face. "Marriage, best man?"

"In short..." Ashe's body stopped shaking as much. He looked towards the imposing Titan Executioner in the distance. "Just pretend I'm doing this to satisfy my hypocrisy. Let me stay here for a while. When it comes over, I'll leave."

"Boring, irrational, meaningless. I don't understand why you want to do this, when just yesterday we were still fighting to the death..." Valcas said coldly, "Or could it be you

want to build up a benevolent image before the audience, to pave the way for your next Blood Moon Tribunal?"

"I didn't know there was such an operation, thanks for the heads up. In that case, I definitely have to stay till the very last second before running. Don't stop me later, and don't mind me. A petty hypocrite like me will surely run faster than anyone when danger comes."

Valcas was silent for a moment, calmly watching the oppressive Titan Executioner.

"Do as you wish."

Ashe tried to force out a smile, but a heavy footstep made his scalp tingle.

Boom!

Boom!

The Titan Executioner walked over step by step. The intense vibrations traveled along the steel wires onto the platform, making it difficult for the death row inmates to even stand.

As it walked, it lifted its weapons. Four-winged spirits appeared on each weapon. Space collapsed wherever it passed, time distorted! The entire world seemed to revolve around it!

"The Titan Executioner is different from other executioners."

Nago's voice came clearly from the light curtain amidst this terrifying pressure.

"It doesn't use whips like the Flagellator to awaken the criminal's conscience, or blood like the Blade to cleanse the criminal's sins, or endless nightmares like the Soul Drinker to make the criminal experience the suffering...

"It only uses the most powerful miracles to instantly redeem the criminal. Regardless of gender or strength, it does its utmost to respect every life."

"With solemn death, it forges the immortality of the Blood Moon."

Boom!

Another deafening footstep. Suddenly, dozens of crimson chains shot out from the ground and pulled Ashe down, forcing him to kneel!

"What is this!?" Ashe struggled violently, but couldn't break free at all. The chains seemed fused to his joints - any attempt to stand would viciously wrench his joints and nerves, forcing him to remain kneeling.

Why was only Valcas being attacked while he was fine?

"The first miracle, Earth's Judgment!" Nago announced. "The earth responds to the footsteps of justice!"

Ding! Ding! Ding!

Valcas swung his longsword, severing the crimson chains. He seemed to want to help Ashe, but at this moment long wails sounded from the night sky!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Valcas suddenly danced an agile and graceful elven sword dance on the spot, as if battling invisible enemies. Looking closely, Ashe saw invisible wind blades sweeping in from all directions. Any pause in Valcas' movements would mean being shredded to pieces!

"The second miracle, Heaven's Judgment!" said Nago. "Any stubborn fool unwilling to kneel and repent will receive the heavens' admonishment!"

"With earth and heaven sealed off, next is the third miracle - the Judgment of the Masses!"

"The Titan Executioner will impartially bestow death upon every recipient of redemption!"

Ashe raised his head and saw the Titan Executioner had already covered most of the distance, just two to three steps from the platform!

Kneeling and looking up now, he felt its sheer massive size and horror even more intensely!

That oppressive aura of a colossal being overwhelmed him, almost freezing his thoughts!

The last shreds of rationality screamed wildly in his mind: Run!

Yes, run...?

Ashe looked at the crimson chains binding him, then blinked blankly.

Whoops.

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

Chapter 59

I'm done for!

Ashe looked at the red chains all over his body and was completely dumbfounded.

Forget about how he would break free from these chains, even if he did, the wind blades above his head weren't there just for show. Right now the wind blades were only aimed at Valcas because he was the only one resisting. But it was hard to say the wind blades wouldn't go for this soft persimmon Ashe once he decided to stop playing dead.

Moreover, Ashe had no way of breaking free from the red chains!

Crap, now he was definitely dead. Should he call for the swordswoman? Though other than watching the show she couldn't do much either...

Just as Ashe was trying to empty his mind and comfort himself before his impending doom, he suddenly felt himself move.

No, he didn't move, the ground beneath him did.

Ashe looked down and saw the ground he was on seemed to have 'come alive' and was carrying him backwards. The red chains didn't react at all. After all, the chains were connected to the ground so when the ground moved, the chains naturally moved with it.

Could it be that the earth's intelligence recognized that I'm a kind-hearted environmentalist, so it wants to save my dog life?

But when Ashe was carried to the edge of the platform and saw Harvey summoning earth spirits to control the land, he was immediately moved by the sincerity of this prison buddy.

"Next time you wanna die, come find me. I have great skills and provide after-sales service too. You just need to give me your spirit as payment before you die." Harvey whispered angrily: "If the executioner accidentally kills someone not meant for judgement, it might go berserk and attack indiscriminately. It's happened once or twice before, almost always resulting in the death of all condemned prisoners!"

"....I was just about to broad-mindedly tolerate your fetish..."

"What?"

"Why do you have an earth spirit? Aren't you a death mage?" Search* The website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Nowadays the common burial methods are earth burial, cremation and sea burial. As a death mage, mastery over earth, fire and water magic is a must. How can I call myself a death mage otherwise?"

Damn, Ashe had thought a mortician was just a side gig for death mages. He didn't expect a death mage's main occupation was to work at a funeral home.

Clang!

Valcas suddenly stabbed his sword into the ground. A deep yellow sword aura burst forth, encasing Valcas like a barrier, blocking the turbulent wind blades outside.

"Miracle - Sword Body Barrier. A very impressive defensive sword miracle." Nago appraised: "But it will only buy Uhl a little more time. Pointless struggle, such labor, such humility, but don't worry. The Titan Executor will swiftly relieve his pain... Oh?"

Faced with the incoming Titan Executor like a mountain collapse or tsunami, Valcas did not retreat or cower. Instead, he took on an elven swordsmanship stance, summoned several spirits with flowing radiance around his body. His sword rang out crisp and clear. Amidst the howling winds, sounds of slaughter and grim music suddenly played, as if the reaper had descended!

"If I'm not mistaken, Uhl is preparing to unleash his new sword miracle, Requiem, that he invented as a scholar."

Nago also seemed excited: "His last research report on it was published nine years ago. Back then Requiem was still untested in combat due to its overly complicated invocation. But after nine years, Uhl has actually completed Requiem and is even using it to oppose judgement!"

The elf danced with his sword, accompanied by grim music. The condemned resisted judgement and defied fate!

Seeing that lone figure before the Titan Executor, Ashe couldn't help but ask Harvey: "Why him?"

"Hmm?"

"Why did he get 50% of the votes? Judging by crimes and notoriety, I should've gotten the most redemption votes. No matter how I think about it, Valcas shouldn't have been

the top vote receiver, let alone with an absolute majority of 50%... What crime did he commit to incur such fury?"

Harvey looked at Ashe. "Isn't it obvious?"

"What's obvious? From his criminal record, his crimes seem pretty ordinary. Nowhere near as impressive as yours."

"It's not about the crimes recorded."

"Then what is it about?"

"It's about his appearance, his bloodline, his birth."

Ashe blinked.

"He's an elf. That's his biggest crime."

Harvey said: "In appearance, strength, wisdom and longevity - elves have an advantage over other races in every aspect. Moreover, due to their small numbers, elves tend to band together to protect their own interests. The wise elves never hesitate to help their kin.

"Almost all elves are adopted by the best orphanages and seen as 'stewards of society', widely employed in management positions. With their long lifespans and excellent looks and knowledge, other races can hardly compete with elves for leadership roles. Though it's said managers and employees are equal, everyone knows that's just lip service."

"Who hasn't experienced the arrogance of ogre colleagues, the laziness of goblin colleagues, the sloppiness of beastmen colleagues, and the harshness of elven superiors?"

"In the history of the Caimon City Blood Moon Tribunal, not once has an elven criminal appeared. Not just because elves are mostly the upper class without need of crime, but also because they cover for each other, bound by bloodline into a collective - something other races cannot achieve."

"Goblins are short-sighted, beastmen foolish, ogres deceitful, humans selfish... Before elves, we can only feel...inferior."

"Even I voted for Valcas just now."

Harvey said softly: "This is perhaps the only chance most people have to trample an elf."

Ashe looked at the Titan Executor again, but this time, he did not see a hideous monster. He saw the murky anger, the tremendous pressure formed from the hysterical frustration of countless ordinary people.

Although other than his swordswoman, Ashe had never seen any ordinary people - the prison only contained guards and condemned prisoners - he could understand what ordinary people on the outside felt.

It was the despair born under an orderly society, the anger from gazing upon an uncrossable ravine.

In the Order-raised Caimon, most were separated into castes from infancy. Those with high potential went to good orphanages, those with low potential went to poor ones. Their futures were divided from the starting line.

Those of good birth like elves pursued prestigious careers and becoming mages was no surprise. Ashe saw from the criminal records of goblins, beastmen and ogres that those of poor birth were either manual laborers or gangsters, never rising above their station in life.

Moreover, the lower class didn't even have the right to complain.

Because those above you were simply better than you. Everyone came from orphanages, with no capital beyond their talents.

He just had better aptitude so he could enter a better orphanage, accumulating advantages step-by-step until finally standing over you.

A society divided by talents nearly deprived people of the courage to cross class boundaries.

Ashe completely understood the meaning behind the Blood Moon Tribunal.

Under such suffocating class barriers, the desires of all to live well were thoroughly suppressed, twisted desires breeding nothing but malice and resentment.

When Order dictated they would never make something of themselves, breaking the shackles was inevitable. Moreover, with the complete lack of family in Caimon, everyone was an island. They could do anything with no fear of consequences.

Thus three things must be told to the masses: First, break the law and you will suffer a terrible death; Second, even highly-placed people will die terribly; Third, you who live orderly lives are the most fortunate.

Ashe was a sacrificial lamb, Harvey was one as well, all the condemned were. And Valcas was the most satisfactory sacrifice of all.

Just as the Titan Executor was about to unleash destruction, Valcas suddenly turned and looked at Ashe.

Ashe froze.

Why are you looking at me?

But in the next moment, the condemned prisoners around Ashe rolled and crawled away frantically, with Harvey moving the earth to flee even further. Ashe immediately understood.

Damn it, don't tell me Valcas wants to use me as a meat cushion!?

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

Chapter 60

How long had Ashe known Valcas for?

Just one day, in fact less than an hour all together.

How was their interaction?

They got along well. Ashe was cut all over by Valcas, and Ashe slit Valcas's throat.

Ashe suddenly recalled that when he had asked "What trouble will you get into if you lose to me?" yesterday, Valcas's reply was quite intriguing.

"You'll find out tomorrow."

Theoretically, losing to Ashe in one match shouldn't have mattered much to Valcas, since he had contributed a lot already.

Just look at Igor - he lost to Ashe even more times, yet now he was lying in his dorm room bed, drinking wine and eating steak, perfectly fine.

Therefore, Valcas must have been deliberately arranged onto the judgement list, absolutely not because he was in the bottom eight of contributions. Someone manipulated the rules to send Valcas to his doom!

After all, the judgement list didn't have to be ranked by contributions. There were so many loopholes that could be utilized. The person in charge could send Valcas to his death completely legally and properly!

So why was it arranged this way?

Because Valcas lost to Ashe. This was the consequence of failing to perform his duties, this was Silin's punishment for him!

Moreover, that wasn't all.

The preferential treatment elves received during the Blood Moon Tribunal was almost predictable. As long as Valcas appeared in the judgement broadcast, the outcome was practically destined.

Then, when such an arrogant and vicious elf was about to be crushed into meat sauce, if he noticed that among the death row inmates present was the very person who not only slit his throat yesterday but could be said to be the culprit behind his current plight...

What would he do?

So-called fate was simply inevitable logic.

This was really getting more for the price! ...Ashe smiled bitterly, extremely impressed with Professor Silin who planned everything.

This was precisely an ingenious scheme that took human nature into account. If Valcas hadn't joined the judgement, Ashe naturally wouldn't be able to escape, but some accident might have happened.

However, with Valcas in the judgement, not only were accidents during the voting segment eliminated, but also, because of his resentment, Ashe would surely be dragged down along with him!

The moment Ashe agreed to a deathmatch with Valcas, his fate had already been written by Silin -

Either be crushed into mud by Valcas on the deathmatch stage.

Or be taken down together by Valcas on the judgement stage!

Now no one could save him. Everyone in prison knew about his feud with Valcas. Anyone who approached him now was equivalent to voluntarily freeing up a dorm room for the prison.

Harvey looked at Ashe with regretful yet expectant eyes, seemingly lamenting that such great material was about to be ruined by the Titan Executioner, and now they could only pray that the Executioner killing one more death row inmate wouldn't drive it into a frenzy.

The music in the air suddenly became stirring and rousing. Inside the sword qi barrier, Valcas let out a roar inconsistent with his exterior, and a visible ripple spread from him, making Ashe and the others feel their bodies go numb and weak. Even the Purgatorial Flame on the Titan Executioner receded slightly.

"A very beautiful sonic fluctuation with sound magic!"

While introducing to the audience, Nago tiptoed and craned his neck to look: "Can't determine the specific spirit, but it should be a sound-type spirit. Because of the transmission traits of sound magic, compared to attacking with sound, mages prefer to use sound magic to apply negative status on enemies, lowering their resistance."

"First use sound to intimidate and reduce resistance, then go in for the fatal blow with sword arts - this was Mr. Uhl's commonly used combat strategy in the past!"

"Mercy's End, primarily sword arts supplemented by an amalgamation of different systems of magic! A composite miracle!"

Clang!

With a sword cry, the world was suddenly dead silent.

All sounds vanished - the sound of waves, wind, Nago's voice, vibrations, heartbeats - in an instant, tranquility descended, as if hearing had been completely blocked.

In the extreme silence, Ashe watched as Valcas leapt high into the air like a meteor, stabbing towards the Titan Executioner. The dazzling sword light outshone the crimson moonlight.

The moment the sword tip touched the Executioner's body, all sounds returned, but everyone wished they had gone deaf!

Ding!

As if all the sounds that had disappeared exploded simultaneously, indescribable noise erupted from Valcas's sword, the intense vibrations bursting through the air and erupting with a pressure like a storm, even distorting the light!

Even the Titan Executioner, who had been advancing, was halted, its defense pierced!

"A two-wing...miracle...actually reaching this level of power..."

Nago's voice came through intermittently.

But no one was watching the screens now. All the death row inmates' eyes were wide as they marveled at this shining moment.

Undoubtedly, Valcas's sword strike just now was extremely strong, but the inmates weren't strangers to even grander miracles. For example, if bad weather affected an outdoor promotional event held by a major company, the weather mages would work together to disperse the rainclouds and restore sunny skies - that was much cooler.

What truly shocked and dazzled everyone was Valcas daring to actively attack the Titan Executioner.

Although the death row inmates' restraints were removed, when facing the Executioners, most Redeemers either desperately resisted or completely gave up awaiting deliverance.

The prison allowed them to use force, merely hoping they would add some interest to the show. No one thought they could rebel against the Executioners, nor would anyone allow them to survive judgement - redemption was the only outcome for death row inmates.

Everyone knew Valcas's defiance was futile.

But they were all waiting for a miracle, waiting for a hero.

Villains also wanted a hero who could save villains.

"Just being able to hinder the Titan Executioner demonstrates this miracle's value. If Mr. Uhl released this miracle, he would undoubtedly win this year's Caimon Academic Award." Nago said, "What a pity..."

Whoosh!

The Purgatorial Flame on the Titan Executioner suddenly spun, every wisp of fire flickering like a sharp blade. Valcas was lashed by a blue flame and his sword qi barrier instantly shattered, his body flying out like a snapped kite!

On the screen, Nago calmly introduced:

"The moment the Titan Executioner appeared, it incorporated the Purgatorial Flame into its own miracle system, fusing it into the 'Miracle - Retaliation Storm'."

"Any sinner who tries to challenge justice and resist judgement, the Executioner will retaliate with damage equal to what they inflicted. "

"When you harm others, you must be prepared to be harmed yourself. Sinners often don't understand this principle."

Valcas tumbled several times on the ground, covered in wounds, vomiting blood.

Even so, he still gripped the sword in his hand, never letting go for a moment.

But several damaged spirits suddenly emerged from his body. Each spirit looked riddled with holes and cracks, quickly dissipating into points of light after escaping!

"Shaking the Titan Executioner as a two-wing mage, even with a miracle, the price paid is not small."

Nago said, "The scene just now where space fell silent, the power was almost comparable to a three-wing Saint Domain miracle, but the price was most of Mr. Uhl's sound spirits shattering from overload."

At this time, the Titan Executioner spread its eight arms, eyes wide open, erupting with bloody light, illuminating Cracked Lake for thousands of miles, dispelling the dark night!

When it looked towards Valcas, it was as if the entire world collapsed!

Its eight arms were not arms, but wings formed from the fabric of the world, stretching over the sky, enveloping down!

"It's over." Nago gently clapped, "Let us bid farewell to Valcas Uhl as he ascends to the Blood Moon Paradise. May he continue serving the supremely benevolent Blood Moon Archon in the distant heavens."

"Wah!"

Valcas coughed up muddy blood mixed with organ fragments and broken teeth. It seemed both his leg bones were shattered, his lower body almost completely immobilized, only able to prop himself up with his longsword.

He had never been in such a wretched state before. Half his ear was torn off, one eyeball burst, covered in filth, features twisted, blood flowing down his face...

Silin Dole was appreciating this scene...

Ares was also watching this scene...

No, he wasn't watching. He was only seven, he couldn't watch the Blood Moon Tribunal... Thank goodness...

But he almost made it, almost left this city with Ares to start a new life...

And the reason he ended up in this plight was because...

Valcas did not look at the Titan Executioner. Instead, he swept his gaze across the platform, chasing after Ashe's figure.

Beneath the tangled and bloody hair, the only eye the elf had left flowed with complex emotions no one could comprehend.

"Ashe...Heath..."

He uttered the name through gritted teeth.

Boom!

Lightning, scorching flames, frost, acid, shockwaves, melting heat, voidification, chaos - eight different forces roared forth from the Titan Executioner's weapons, seeming like the end of the world in an instant.

Cracked Lake was boiling, the dark night quaking!

Valcas appeared unaware. Gripping his longsword reverse-handed, he struggled to widen his one remaining eye, staring fixedly at Ashe, his eyeball seeming ready to burst out to bite Ashe!

Moreover, several spirits emerged on the sword's blade, flickering!

As judgement descended, Valcas also threw his sword!

Ashe tried to dodge, but the crimson chains limited his movement, and Valcas's flying sword was empowered by spirits, moving as swift as a flash of light, even changing direction!

After throwing the sword, Valcas seemed relieved, but blood tears suddenly streamed from his muddy eyes as he softly murmured:

"Sorry..."

Snap!

The instant he was swallowed by the light of judgement, Valcas completely vanished from the world, not even leaving a single shred of remains.

Shink!

The sword pierced through Ashe's throat, the tremendous momentum nearly tearing apart his neck!

On the Red Mist netcafe's screen, Ashe with a sword through his throat had his whole body pulled taut by chains, thus he did not fall, but knelt on the ground, head raised to gaze at the blood moon, enacting a scene reminiscent of a martyred saint!

The customers were stunned by this highly shocking scene. It wasn't until an elven Blood Saint stood up and loudly laughed:

"Haha! I bet that Ashe would definitely be killed by Valcas, and I was right! Drinks are on me tonight!"

"Great!" The others stood up, "To Mr. Bell's generosity, to the Blood Moon Tribunal's justice - cheers!"

Lorens also stood up and raised his glass.

"Cheers!"

He saw the snake boss at the counter with an expression like he was enjoying the show, and couldn't help asking: "Boss, you lost a lot of money, how can you still be so happy?"

"Sss, he won this time, but he'll definitely lose it back next time. Besides, this is my bar, the money just goes back to me anyway. Also..."

"Also?"

The snake boss glanced at the screen, "Sss, who said he won the bet?"

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