

Sorcerer's Handbook

Chapter 421: Sudden Downturn

Main City!

The headquarters of the Heroic Soul Legion, the most perilous and mysterious area of the Time Continent!

Even the Sword Princess couldn't find a single mention of the Main City in her school. For the majority of spellcasters, encountering the Heroic Soul Legion is the extent of their abilities. Without killing a commander and obtaining a map, they would have no clue about the location of the Main City.

As for stumbling into the Main City area by accident—impossible. Both the Blood Tomb Map and the Star Shrine Map that Ashe possessed clearly indicated that the Main City area was patrolled by at least three legions, and the patrol legions were equipped with “flying” and “scouting” attributes. Any ordinary spellcaster who crossed the boundary would instantly die and be expelled back to reality. It's a “try it and die” scenario.

Knowing the location of the Main City, Ashe's team never had the urge to explore it. Firstly, exploring the Main City offered no guaranteed benefits apart from satisfying their curiosity. Secondly, the risks were absurdly high, not to mention they were still being hunted by the Heroic Soul Legion.

Exploring the Main City would be like voluntarily running into a fire with a gasoline can, trying to act as firefighters.

Wouldn't it be better to steadily climb to the third level of the virtual realm? Wouldn't it be more enjoyable to follow the map and search through the area? Why leave the comfort zone?

Thus, when Ashe realized he was in the unfamiliar Main City area, his feelings were akin to those of a terminally ill patient—“Why is this happening?”

Under normal circumstances, he would never venture into such a place. Even without a detailed map, he would immediately turn back upon seeing the Heroic Soul Legion ahead, just as one would seek shelter upon seeing storm clouds gather.

However, the Shopping Book's random curse of “eye contact” made it difficult for him to focus on the virtual realm map. In any other situation, the “eye contact” curse would

pose no threat at all to them. They could simply sit and stare at each other for an hour, and it might even increase their Bond Level.

Even in the worst case, encountering lethal danger would only lead them to death. During the curse, they couldn't voluntarily exit the virtual realm, but once outside, the random curse would automatically end, effectively exchanging one death for a blessing.

But Ashe and his companions happened to be continuously hunted by the Heroic Soul Legion!

And they had reasons they couldn't afford to die!

Unfortunately, the speed of the sports car was enough to break through the patrol defenses surrounding the Main City!

Ashe couldn't tell if this was due to the bad luck from the "no toilet paper" curse, the Eternal Presence curse acting up again, or perhaps the Empress's curse taking effect—of course, it wasn't just a single-choice question—but with multiple coincidences aligning perfectly, Ashe managed to break into the unfamiliar Main City area unscathed!

However, the spellcasters were not excited by the "great sight" they witnessed; instead, an overwhelming sense of fear surged in their hearts.

"Roar!"

On the walls of the Giant Wood Barrier, several pitch-black dragons unfurled their Twin Wings and roared. The sound almost took on the form of tangible black lightning, spreading continuously through the space, even affecting the sports car at the edge of the area, causing ripples on the Refracting Wall!

As if triggered, Ashe's spirit suddenly jumped out by itself, the dual-colored crystal hovering in the air emitting a blinding purple light, almost as if shouting at the dragons, 'Come on! Dare to kill my master!' And he couldn't withdraw it, scaring Ashe into quickly tucking the spirit into his trench coat.

Spirits sometimes burst out on their own, most commonly when they're hungry. But if they encounter something interesting, they might sneak out to "touch fish," like when Ashe would play Spellcaster Duel 14 with Lise, the Heart Sword and Earth Sword would appear on his shoulder to watch.

"There's actually a mature Evil-Eyed Shadow Dragon!" Sonya's voice trembled. "Isn't this an Upper-tier species from the Distant Sky Domain? How could it appear in the Time Continent?"

"A knowledge creature from the Distant Sky Domain?" Ashe was stunned. "So, that means..."

"It's young form already has the power of a Sanctuary spellcaster, its growth stage can rival Sanctuary spellcasters, and a mature Evil-Eyed Shadow Dragon is one of the 'Top Ten Deadly Calamities' of the Distant Sky Domain!" Sonya tightly grasped Deya's hand. "My professor... she once challenged an Evil-Eyed Shadow Dragon, and couldn't enter the Virtual Realm for half a year afterward."

Not a commander, not a troop type, but a single knowledge creature that the Main City kept, with the power to crush Sanctuary-level forces!

Only a fool would approach the Main City!

However, the relentless pursuit of the Heroic Soul Legion gave Ashe no choice at all!

The sports car roared nervously, speeding desperately on the peridot-green grassland, trying to circle around the perimeter! The air was filled with the fresh scent of green leaves, and the unobstructed grassland, free from any Rain Curtain, stretched out seamlessly before them. The beautiful young female operator glanced at him with expectant eyes. If not for the thunderous roars around them, this could have been a pleasant joyride.

"I can't help it," Ashe shrugged. "My Virtual Realm plan didn't include breaking through the Main City as a minor objective."

"So, what do we do?" Deya asked anxiously. "If this keeps up, we'll definitely get surrounded... huh?"

Suddenly, Deya paused, adjusted her plain glasses, and then her hair turned completely white, and her outfit transformed into a silver-white dress armor.

"White Queen?"

"It's me." The White Queen nodded. "Sword Princess, I need to explain something first."

Sonya, who had been staring at Ashe in thought, turned to look at her. "What is it?"

"The Observer cannot die," the White Queen stated firmly. "In a few days, it's Spider Tower's turn. If he dies, we will definitely breach the Pact, and the soul summoning spirit will have to be handed over to the Empress. Without the soul summoning spirit, we can only hope for the Empress's immense mercy—which is clearly wishful thinking. The Empress hasn't even reclaimed her emotions yet; even if she had, she wouldn't possess such feelings."

Ashe didn't argue. Even if he created several bottles of Scorching Soul Essence Elixir, it would never be enough to recover in just three days unless he could draw out a more powerful item. But he had just purchased the bad luck curse.

Although Ashe could use the Gospel Book to amplify his will and increase his winning probability, it would be akin to finding hand sanitizer when there's no toilet paper. Rather than relying on a gamble, he might as well expect the ranking list to update tomorrow, immediately promoting him to Sanctuary level and rewarding him with several wives—that would actually solve all problems thoroughly.

In truth, after losing the soul summoning spirit, logically speaking, the Empress had no reason to continue hunting them. There were no benefits to be gained. But the Empress was not a species governed by logic. Moreover, leaving their fate in someone else's hands was a foolish move. Ashe didn't want anyone else to decide their fate, which is why he had escaped the Shattered Lake Prison.

"Having three people maintain eye contact is too restrictive," the White Queen continued. "But with only two, it becomes much easier. We could even attempt to cross the Golden Flow."

"But the curse is already in place," Ashe pointed out. "Even if we wanted to break it, we..."

Ashe trailed off mid-sentence.

This curse could indeed be undone, and the method was exceptionally simple.

"Self-mutilating one's eyes can break it," the White Queen said. "However, since our spellcaster souls will automatically heal injuries, we must continuously damage our eyes to maintain blindness."

"What's more likely to happen is that the curse will prevent the healing to ensure the spellcaster doesn't regain the ability to 'see' during the curse's duration."

The "eye contact" curse was quite interesting. At its core, it aimed to keep the spellcaster in a constant, unchanging state. When a spellcaster forcibly changes the state through self-mutilation, the curse's principle remains the same—"maintaining eye contact" will transform into "maintaining blindness."

"If two people maintain eye contact while carrying a third blindfolded operator, we could regain some mobility," Ashe contemplated. "If we can find a way across the Golden Flow, we might just escape this alive..."

Boom!

Fiery balls resembling meteors erupted into flaming lotuses on the Refracting Wall. The piercing screeches of flying creatures drowned out their voices as another contingent of the heroic soul legion emerged from the Rain Curtain outside the main city, blocking Ashe and his companions' escape route once again!

Faced with such encirclement, the sports car had no choice but to veer towards the main city, but this was merely a stopgap measure. Their maneuvering space was shrinking rapidly, and at any moment, a commander from the main city could come out and claim them as a convenient delivery!

Just over half an hour ago, they had been elated over encountering the “Chaotic Shopping Book” special mechanism.

Half an hour later, the situation had sharply deteriorated. Although they were driving across vibrant grasslands, death was eagerly approaching them!

This impending demise would directly lead to losing the bet with the Empress. After losing the soul summoning spirit, their future lives would depend entirely on the Empress’s mood on that day.

Defeat was imminent, and survival seemed impossible!

“If this continues, we’ll become fodder for the knowledge creatures long before we reach the Golden Flow,” the White Queen said. “It’s time to make some tough decisions.”

“What do you mean?” Ashe asked.

“Arm the one who’s blind and have her stay behind to buy us some time,” the White Queen suggested calmly. “She might only delay them for a second, or she might successfully confuse the heroic soul legion. Either way, it’s better than sitting here waiting for death.”

“The benefits are too low!” Ashe retorted immediately. “And staying behind is certain death!”

“But this isn’t the Spider Tower. They aren’t the Empress. They won’t go out of their way to consume our souls. The soul of the one who stays behind will be heavily damaged, but at least they’ll have a chance at life,” the White Queen explained. “If we do nothing, we die for sure. At least this way, there’s a chance for some benefit.”

“That’s true,” Sonya suddenly agreed. “The Witch’s analysis makes sense. It’s the only option we have, so...”

“I’ll do it.” “I’ll do it.”

The White Queen was somewhat surprised. “Sword Princess, you’ve been teamed up with the Observer the longest. You work well together. If I stayed behind, I wouldn’t be able to utilize much strength with him. It should be you.”

“No,” the village girl shook her head. “Our combat power is insignificant compared to the heroic soul legion. If we end up fighting, it would be a futile struggle. But Witch, you

have a sharper time ability. We managed to cross the Golden Flow last time thanks to your help. If we need to cross it again to escape, then it's more appropriate for you to stay behind."

"Sword Princess," the White Queen said, "we volunteered to stay behind. You don't need to feel any psychological burden or prove that we're equals. During our last time travel across the Golden Flow, we already trusted you." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"I'm not... okay, let's not talk about you staying behind to be effective," Sonya responded. "But as you said, I have to prove that we are equals! I usually take the most spoils of war and consume the most orbs. I've also been in the team longer than you. So at this moment, I have to bear more responsibility; otherwise, how can we be equals?"

"You saying you don't mind doesn't matter. You might not mind today, but what about tomorrow or the day after? I don't want to test human nature because every test turns into an Abyss, becoming a monster. With others, taking advantage might be fine, but we have countless days and nights to spend together in the future. I can't let you look down on me!"

"Sword Princess, your pride is too strong. I wouldn't look down on you for this."

"It's not about pride; it's just how I see things," Sonya replied.

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

Chapter 422: The Virtual Realm War!

As Ashe watched the two operators tussle over who would stay behind, he suddenly felt a sense of disorientation.

He knew they were right.

He also knew that his life was the most critical, because only by preserving the soul-summoning spirit could they all have a chance of survival.

The situation was dire, and the idea of escaping unscathed was utterly unrealistic. Sacrifice was inevitable, and they were, after all, a team—the primary function of a team was to sacrifice the interests of some, if necessary, for the greater good.

Therefore, their optimal decision was to leave someone behind to buy time. If the heroic soul legion still caught up, another person would stay back. Ashe himself, even if he had to gouge out his eyes to resist the curse, would continue driving in search of a slim chance of survival.

Returns.

Probabilities.

Expectations.

This was the method with the highest success rate; it was an unavoidable strategy. Sacrifice was necessary, abandonment was expected. Facing an unstoppable flow of fate, only the foolish would try to reverse it, while the clever would strive to keep losses within acceptable limits...

Ashe felt his self-awareness slowly detach from his body, calmly observing everything from a third-person perspective, blocking out unnecessary emotions and stray thoughts. He even regarded himself as a mere pawn, all for the greater—

“In short, I’m staying behind!” Sonya forcefully pinned the White Queen down to keep her still, then reached out and grabbed Ashe’s hand. “Observer, give me an armed troop type!”

The warmth of her soul conveyed through her touch. Honestly, the Sword Princess’s hand wasn’t soft; as a swordsmanship practitioner, her hand was steady and firm, a bit plump, giving the feeling of being gripped by a cat’s paw.

Whether from fear or excitement, she held on tightly, her thumb pressing against his forefinger, her index finger holding down the back of his hand, and the other three fingers firmly clasping his little finger, as if trying to meld his hand into her own palm.

In that moment, Ashe sensed a strong sense of anomaly!

“Okay.”

As soon as Ashe finished speaking, he abruptly stabbed one of his own eyes!

Before the Sword Princess and the Witch had time to react in shock, the sports car suddenly came to a screeching halt, carving a donut shape into the grass, stopping beneath the fortress walls!

“What are you doing?!”

“The city gate has opened, and the heroic soul legion is flanking from the front,” Ashe exhaled heavily. “No need to discuss who stays behind; we can’t escape anymore.”

“Then why did you gouge out your own eye?!” Sonya asked anxiously.

“I saw you both fighting to be the one blinded, so I thought I’d give you a preview of what it feels like.” Ashe withdrew his finger, and his eye quickly healed. “Trust me, you won’t have fond memories of it.”

“Observer Mode.”

The intense stimulus finally snapped Ashe out of “Observer Mode.” He only just realized that he had entered this state of absolute calm during a non-combat situation—though, Ashe might not have considered it combat, his nearly wrecked sports car might have thought otherwise.

Based on past experiences, “Observer Mode” only activates in the most critical moments, ensuring no mistakes and allowing him to perform at theoretically 100% efficiency. Consequently, Ashe didn’t mind entering “Observer Mode”; it felt like a special physiological response similar to an adrenaline rush.

This was indeed a critical moment, but Ashe hadn’t expected “Observer Mode” to aid him not only in combat but also in making decisions.

Decisions that were absolutely correct, with the highest expectation and theoretically optimal outcomes.

Reflecting on it now, Ashe didn’t think there was anything wrong with his decision-making process. It’s just that in this world, not all ‘correct things’ are things one should do.

For example, enjoying solving advanced math problems was borderline masochistic.

Or, treating your teammates as mere pawns.

Ashe knew he should do that.

He initially wanted to do that.

But he couldn’t do that.

“From now on, don’t say such wasteful things about life,” Ashe said. “You’ve already destroyed my ability to endure loneliness. I’m not interested in exploring the Virtual Realm alone.”

Sonya was slightly taken aback and instinctively tightened her grip on his hand.

The White Queen shrugged. “Then it looks like we’re really not getting away this time.”

The “Refracting Wall” was completely shattered by blazing fireballs, and a juvenile Evil-Eyed Shadow Dragon swooped down. Its elders seemed uninterested in the intruders; it alone fancied a midnight snack.

The three of them, Ashe, Sonya, and the White Queen, had no intention of resisting. With their vision completely locked, they couldn’t even aim at the enemy.

“If we die here, and the Spider Tower round is missed in a few days, the soul-summoning spirit will lose to the Empress.”

“No worries,” Ashe said confidently. “Even without the soul-summoning spirit, I will make sure she pays!”

Thinking about the culprit who had trapped them in this dire situation, even Ashe couldn’t help but grit his teeth. “Empress, just you wait!”

“Alright,” a charming and haughty voice suddenly echoed from behind them. “I’m waiting~”

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Suddenly, the sound of thunder and fire erupted behind them. With a shriek, the Evil-Eyed Shadow Dragon crashed next to the sports car, its grotesque body melting and riddled with holes as if it were an umbrella in a storm, torn apart!

Hearing that familiar voice, the three of them—Ashe, Sonya, and the White Queen—trembled, seeing astonishment in each other’s faces.

Even without seeing, they knew who had arrived!

But the question was, how could that person be here!?

They glanced sideways and noticed that as the sports car traversed the main city’s area, it left a vivid purple aura behind. It looked as though someone had painted the scene with watercolor, the purple color spreading and eroding large sections of green space!

Meanwhile, white dots began to emerge from the depths of the purple areas, spreading and weaving webs within the purple patches. Then—

Fully armed spiders descended along the webs.

The heroic soul legion chasing Ashe and his team fell into chaos instantly. They were not yet equipped with their troop types and were as fragile as paper before the Spider Tower legion, getting torn to pieces!

Red Hats, Bluebeards, giant spiders, The Girl of Secret Gaze... The Spider Tower legion continuously crawled out from the spiderweb, launching a fierce assault on the Greatwood Fortress under the commander's will. Initially, the Greatwood Fortress was caught off guard, and the Spider Tower legion swiftly took over the walls. But the fortress creatures quickly armed themselves and engaged in brutal combat on the walls, trying to regain control of the battlefield!

The aftermath of the legion clash splashed into the sky, turning half the sky into a thick purple and the other half a burning green. Every minute, shattered corpses fell from the walls, and every minute, new soldiers crawled out from the spiderweb to join the fight from within the city!

There were no preliminaries, no parley—both sides immediately launched an all-out assault at the highest level. Their strategies were as coarse as barbarian hunts, yet their tactics were as intricate as those of master artists.

Danzel sat atop an Eight-eyed Weaver Spider, crawling out from the spiderweb not far behind Ashe. Today, she wore the appearance of The Girl of Secret Gaze, her eyes covered by a blindfold as she 'looked' at Ashe and the others, raising an eyebrow.

"Not even sparing me a glance, huh? You only have eyes for each other?" Danzel huffed. "Fine, when you become my commanders, I'll assign you to the same unit, so you can get sick of each other over a few centuries."

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

Chapter 423: Divine Intervention Spiderweb

Virtual Realm, Spider Tower Main City.

In this black-and-white woven tapestry, the irregular, three-pronged, eight-cornered knowledge creatures swiftly organized into uniformed Spider Tower soldiers behind the armed troops. However, under the constraints of the static domain, they were mere stagnant shades of gray. Without the protection of the main city and the nourishment of the Golden Flow, they would have to wring out every bit of time within themselves to take a single step forward.

Only native knowledge creatures could move freely within the static domain. Knowledge creatures from armed troops were not recognized by the Virtual Realm—they could not

transform into the shape of a spellcaster! “Transform back! If you don’t, I’ll freeze time for you!”

No other force aside from the Spider Tower would arm their troops during the static domain phase because armed troops had a duration limit and generally moved slower than knowledge creatures. Thus, most commanders adhered to the basic principle of ‘travel in original form, arm before battle.’

Naturally, the Spider Tower wouldn’t violate this principle.

When they armed their troops within the static domain, it meant—

The Spider Tower legion intended to strike directly into the turn of other forces from the suspended time!

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Countless threads descended from the spiderweb canopy in the sky, connecting to the Spider Tower soldiers, cocooning them, and then pulling them into the web. Upon first glance, it seemed as though they were ascending to heaven or descending into hell.

In the next moment, countless cocoons appeared within the spiderweb outside the Greatwood Fortress. The cocoon threads quickly condensed into armor, and the Spider Tower soldiers, stepping into time, regained their colors. Their minds instantly linked to the commander’s central control, corrosively infiltrating the land like venom, breaking through to strike the enemy main city like bayonets!

As sudden as thunder, as enigmatic as shadows!

This was the Spider Tower’s warfare, its divine intervention!

Danzel observed as the Spider Tower soldiers barely breached the walls, now embroiled in a grueling street battle. The Greatwood Fortress was now fully operational. The heroic soul legion outside swiftly returned for support, while the auxiliary troops inside fully armed themselves for combat. The Spiderweb legion was mired like quicksand, struggling to make progress.

She couldn’t help but sigh, “If this were the fully formed Spiderweb, we would have captured the fortress by now.”

Spiderweb: A War Miracle Left by the Omniscient Weaver for the Spider Tower.

According to common knowledge, a Divine Intervention can only be initiated by a Divine Sovereign, with the minimum requirement being at least an Angel. Asking a mere two-wing commander on the Time Continent to launch a Divine Intervention is like expecting

a 2D character to jump out of your phone and marry you—completely different dimensions of reality.

In a certain sense, the Time Continent is like a closed kindergarten. No matter how fiercely the heroic soul legions clash, to the Divine Sovereign it's just child's play. However, the Divine Sovereign cannot step in to help; thus, the only option is to smuggle prohibited weapons into the kindergarten through special channels.

The Omniscient Weaver devised a special system to achieve this: it dispersed the Divine Intervention into the Gospel Kingdom, then let the Spider Tower gather the fragments and reweave them. It may seem simple, but it is actually a highly complex mechanism with a very long cycle—at least 50 years.

The Great Appointment of the Six Nations happens every fifty years precisely because the strategic miracles of all factions require 50 years to complete. This is not a stability achieved overnight but a balance refined over millennia. When Danzel first became a commander, the Great Appointment of the Six Nations occurred every hundred years, but as all factions engaged in an arms race to speed up the recovery of their strategic miracles, the interval stabilized at fifty years in recent centuries.

With each iteration of war and negotiation, commanders have become increasingly adept, factions' troop types have grown stronger, and strategic miracles have become more refined.

What if your strategic miracle isn't ready when an enemy attacks?

Then, you'd better flee and preserve your remaining forces, and obediently withdraw from the current Appointment War.

In her long heroic career, Danzel has both crushed those whose strategic miracles lagged behind the current version and been beaten by those who optimized their miracles ahead of her. From these experiences, she derived two insights:

First, strategic miracles truly determine the outcome of battles.

Second, if you're certain you're going to lose this time, don't wait for a strategic miracle!

Losing a conceptual Incarnation, Danzel knew that the Spider Tower was essentially out of the running for the top three this time. Since that was the case, the Spider Tower might as well initiate the Appointment War early, dragging all factions into the quagmire, triggering their Strategic Miracles ahead of schedule and leveling the playing field. Amid the chaos, they might actually have a chance!

However, saying this is easier than doing it. If the Spider Tower tried to make a swift assault on other factions following the white bull's footsteps, it would be nearly impossible.

After all, the other factions weren't fools. Once they detected a massive incursion by the Spider Tower legion, they'd immediately pull their main forces back to the core city and likely set up ambushes around it. The moment the Spider Tower legion attacked, they'd be encircled—turning a surprise raid into a full-scale battle. Fighting a total war on someone else's turn, in their territory, outside their main city, would be a foolish waste of the Spider Tower's forces.

Thus, when Danzel realized that it was virtually impossible to reclaim the Secret Incarnation by herself, given Ashe and company's ability to traverse the Golden Flow, she made the positioning method of the Secret Incarnation known to all factions.

Firstly, even if the Secret Incarnation was destroyed, it could eventually be reborn. However, if Ashe managed to ascend to the Sanctuary with the Secret Incarnation in hand, the Spider Tower would lose it forever.

Secondly, Danzel despised those who neither surrendered nor consigned themselves to death. She relished actions that, while harming herself, would also hinder others.

Thirdly, Danzel wanted to gamble that Ashe and his group would head toward the main city area.

And she won the bet.

She knew full well that a regular spellcaster couldn't even approach the main city area. Yet, Ashe's group not only had the ability to form a team but also possessed a mechanical construct with a speed far exceeding that of ordinary knowledge creatures, giving them the strength to enter the main city area.

Danzel disseminated the intelligence that Ashe and his group were harboring the Secret Incarnation, hoping that other factions would provoke them. This would not only draw out the core city's forces but also force Ashe to flee in all directions, increasing the likelihood of him breaching the main city area.

Of course, the ideal scenario would be Ashe and his group, driven by rage from being pursued, storming into the main city area on their own initiative.

However, Danzel was just gambling for fun, not really expecting much. She often doodled circles and cursed them to take the bait, but she never anticipated that before even a full cycle of the white bull was complete, the spellcasters would begin to stage the scene she most eagerly awaited!

They breached the main city area with the conceptual Incarnation! S

The moment the Oasis was smeared by the purple of secrecy, Danzel immediately applied to activate the Divine Intervention: Spiderweb, and requested total commander authority!

“Spiderweb”

“Active Effect: Weave – In areas smeared by the purple conceptual coating, weave subnet teleportation arrays. The main city legion can consume spider silk to teleport from the main web to the subweb.”

“Active Effect: Entangle – Upon consuming spider silk, soldiers gain 3 additional layers of armor and the ‘Entangle’ buff. All enemies attacking entangled soldiers will suffer a 30% speed reduction and a 30% cognitive slowdown as a persistent debuff. When the entangled soldier’s armor shatters, it will splash 3 layers of venom on all targets within a 3-meter radius. Enemies caught in the venom will receive continuous damage (the number of venom layers can stack infinitely).”

“Active Effect: Corrode – The subweb will continuously expand at a rate of 3 meters every 10 seconds. Any enemy units stepping on the subweb will be bound, have all their troop type skills nullified, and lose 3 layers of armor every 10 seconds.”

“Passive Effect: Omniscient Veil – Spider Tower commanders can ignore the Reverse Golden Rain, extending their observation distance up to 300 meters.”

“Passive Effect: Trap Shroud – In the main city area covered by the Spiderweb, the effects of ‘Weave’, ‘Entangle’, ‘Corrode’, etc., are always active.”

“Ultimate Weapon: Fate Weave (incomplete) – Within a designated area, sever all Fate Threads of enemy units, completely erasing their existence and preventing any resurrection; repair all Fate Threads of friendly units, fully restoring armor status, and instantly reviving units fallen in this round. Using this skill will consume the entire Spiderweb and can only be activated when the web’s quantity exceeds 50%.”

By gaining total commander authority and activating the powerful Spiderweb, Danzel aimed to turn the tides of this unexpected confrontation.

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

Chapter 424: Urging the Gospel Explosion

In the divine realms of the Six Nations, only the spiderweb possesses the regular teleportation effect!

Scenes like the Spider Tower legion’s surprise attack on the Greatwood Fortress have played out countless times over the past centuries! Even Danzel herself has meticulously planned dozens of such surprise assaults!

The significance of the conceptual Incarnation lies in its dual functions: not only does it enhance troop types, but it also serves as an extension of the divine miracles!

In the wars among the Six Nations, without the protection of divine miracles, the heroic soul legion would be as defenseless as being naked. Danzel's painstaking efforts to eradicate the Incarnation of the Stars were definitely worth it, because in this Appointment War, the Star Shrine could only form large legions around the remaining three concepts, meaning they could conduct battles on a maximum of three fronts simultaneously, but no more!

Each additional conceptual Incarnation provides a strategic advantage, introducing another deployable unit and allowing divine miracles to influence another battlefield!

So, after losing the Secret Incarnation, Danzel knew that under normal circumstances, their chances of victory were non-existent—Spider Tower now only had two concepts left, allowing for only two large legions to operate externally, which couldn't form a strategic depth and could only barely protect themselves!

When the white bull circles back again, if Ashe and his team still refuse to surrender, Danzel must dispatch an elite legion to raid the Blood Tomb or the Star Shrine, igniting the war through the spiderweb. Otherwise, once everyone completes their Strategic Miracles, Spider Tower would be left in the dust, watching other forces take the spotlight.

Although Ashe and his companions were unaware of the true nature of the divine miracles, seeing the purple glow emanating from the soul-summoning spirit and observing the trail of purple stains left by the sports car, they immediately realized that they had been used by the Empress during a trial period.

"Why didn't she use this tactic to capture us earlier?" Deya asked, having switched back at some point, likely due to the intense pursuit by the Empress. She seemed to exhibit Stockholm Syndrome, trying to find some shred of humanity in the Empress: "Could it be that she actually spared us?"

"Perhaps the cost of using this tactic is significant, making it unworthy for just hunting us down," Ashe speculated. "More likely, it's because only when we stepped into the main city did it activate the concealed painting function of the Secret Incarnation... It's the first time I've seen a spirit relieve itself everywhere."

"Purple, green, the mutual repulsion between concepts..." Sonya mused, "The conceptual Incarnations might be more important than we imagined, perhaps even determining the outcome of wars in the Virtual Realm. No wonder the Empress insisted on shattering the Incarnation of the Stars, and was so relentless in hunting us down... Observer, why did you get your hands on the conceptual Incarnation and still don't know how to use it?!"

“Good question. I’d also like to know why I can’t get married just because I got a girl’s number and became her friend,” Ashe replied. “I have a theory, though not necessarily correct—isn’t there supposed to be some genuine mutual understanding in between?”

Buzz!

Before the sword Princess or the Witch could say anything, the Sports car sprayed Toxic Mist and sped off again. It was at this point that Danzel finally sensed something was off—she hadn’t planned on actually capturing Ashe and his companions because the Sports car was ridiculously fast, and the Spider Tower legion could only materialize behind Ashe, making interception impossible.

When she saw them stop, she didn’t bother dividing her forces to capture them. However, when Ashe sped off again, she felt something was wrong—why did those two women keep looking back at that man? Was he performing some kind of bizarre act?

Though Danzel didn’t know exactly what was happening, her expertise in sabotage and her knack for exploiting vulnerabilities made her quickly realize they were in a unique bind. In an instant, Danzel decisively allocated one-seventh of her forces to chase them down—if she could seize the Secret Incarnation, the mission would be complete!

Meanwhile, directly in Ashe’s path was a heroic soul legion returning to the Greatwood Fortress. The commander of this unit had no idea why their small squad suddenly attracted the attention of such a large force, but quickly made the right call—sacrifice his team to delay the Spider Tower troops as much as possible!

The squad swiftly fortified their positions, preparing to hold the line!

From above, it looked like a Sports car was leading a massive army past the small squad!

“Get down!”

Ashe lowered the front seat back, instantly transforming the interior of the Sports car into a bed where the three of them lay flat, staring at each other wide-eyed. With their peripheral vision, they could see the Sports car navigating through a barrage of fire. Occasionally, an explosion nearby would make the car groan under the pressure. The Refracting Wall had completely shattered; if they dared to poke their heads out, they’d certainly be shot.

The Sports car’s Evil Blade had leveled up to Level 6, awakening a special effect: “reduces the friction coefficient of any object it hits to zero,” meaning that no matter what they collided with, even if they didn’t slice through it, the object would simply slide away, no longer obstructing their path—allowing them to navigate smoothly!

As the Sports car seemed on the brink of being blown up, Ashe and his companions instinctively held hands. With wide eyes, they stared at each other, finding that the fear of death seemed less overwhelming—as if facing it together made all the difference.

Suddenly, the Sports car seemed to collide with something, followed by a deafening thunder and fire. A wisp of green smoke floated in from outside and was absorbed by the soul summoning spirit, transforming into a green glow.

“This spirit has successfully absorbed a fragmentary spirit of the same name, unlocking new troop types: ‘Temple Apprentice’ and ‘Tri-tone Anchor.’”

“Oasis-Temple Apprentice: +10% melee soul damage, restricts enemy escape, 3 layers of armor, humanoid creature, equipped with a scimitar and lasso. Each unit consumes 1 point of soul power.”

“Tri-tone Anchor: 3 layers of armor, 40% anchoring effectiveness, each unit consumes 3 points of soul power.”

Ashe was stunned for a moment, then quickly realized that a commander nearby had died. Perhaps it wasn’t their direct hit, but it definitely happened shortly after their collision, allowing the soul summoning spirit to absorb a trace of the commander’s power.

It really was just a trace, unlocking only one troop type. Even Demilo hadn’t been this stingy. However, the upgrade from Two-tone Anchor to Tri-tone Anchor, with a 40% anchoring effectiveness, gave them much more confidence in crossing the Golden Flow!

Before long, Ashe and his companions realized they were safe—they had returned to the Reverse Golden Rain!

Seeing the familiar scene of Reverse Golden Rain flowing from below into the sky, Ashe and his friends were moved to tears and couldn’t help but hug each other and cheer!

This was where spellcasters truly belonged—none of that Oasis-Spider Tower entanglement. Stick to your webs and leave us spellcasters alone!

Inside the Oasis, Danzel watched as Ashe and his crew successfully escaped back into the Rain Curtain. She ordered her legion to continue their assault. It was frustrating; an Oasis squad had appeared just as Ashe and his crew were escaping, mistaking the Spider Tower forces for their attackers and erecting a temporary defense line. Although the Spider Tower soldiers swiftly annihilated the squad, the battered Sports car managed to wobble away to safety.

These spellcasters had incredible luck.

Or perhaps, the Spider Tower's luck had started running out.

Seven holes still needed mending, rendering the spiderweb incomplete. Not only could they not activate the ultimate weapon "Fate Weave," but other effects were also significantly weakened. If the spiderweb were whole, the effects of 'Entangle,' 'Corrode,' and 'Omniscient Veil' would increase by 2.33 times.

More crucially, since the Fate Threads wove the spiderweb, an incomplete web meant destiny itself had flaws. The more the Spider Tower used it, the stronger the backlash from fate would be, manifesting as a gradual decline in luck across their entire force. Even commanders gathering resources might get ambushed by passing spellcasters. S

Boom!

Suddenly, a spiral structure within the Oasis Fortress erupted in flames, illuminating the entire battlefield. Every plant in the main city area began to grow wildly, almost sentiently ensnaring Spider Tower soldiers. Oasis soldiers gained a massive boost, nearly pushing the Spider Tower front lines back!

Danzel, far from being frightened, actually smiled, her eyes full of anticipation.

Finally, the Oasis had unleashed their Strategic Miracle: Silent Spiral!

Now, neither side could complete their ultimate weapons!

Regardless, this move had dragged the Oasis down with the Spider Tower. Now, they only needed to capture this fortress, forcing the Oasis to prematurely engage in the war alongside them!

"We've already deployed the spiderweb. Although the ultimate weapon can't be completed, the other effects can still be enhanced," Danzel said, surveying the battlefield, though it wasn't clear who she was speaking to. "Now we must use the information gap and our local advantages to expand our gains... You need to accelerate the updates, complete the remaining seven holes as quickly as possible. Don't worry about quality—if they break later, it won't matter. The key battles will occur in the next few rounds. As long as it holds during that time, we'll be fine!"

After a brief pause, Danzel seemed to hear a satisfactory reply, and her face flushed with joy. "Rest assured, just like the past millennia, I will continue to secure victory for you—my light of life, my fire of desire, my original sin, my... Yisuo."

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

Chapter 425: Im Allergic to Humans

When Ashe jumped up from the bed, his first reaction was to keep rubbing his eyes, almost wishing he could dig out his eyeballs and wash them a few times.

“Ashe, you’re awake? Then I’ll open the curtains.”

Harvey’s voice came from the top bunk, and then the bay window’s curtains were pulled open, letting the piercing morning light wake up the dust on the desk. The pure golden text echoed in the cramped, dim room.

Igor was sitting on the opposite bottom bunk, reading the Gospel Book. Sunlight, scattered by the small flower-patterned curtains, trickled down onto his pajamas, making the scene look serene and tranquil. Speaking of which, Ashe remembered that the Con Artist’s Gospel Book used to be dazzlingly golden, almost engraining the word “gold-digger” in its title. However, recently, the Con Artist’s Gospel Book had started to change. Although it was still in gold and silver tones, the pattern style had become quite similar to Ashe’s Gospel Book.

What does this indicate?

It indicates that Ashe has better taste, so much so that even Igor couldn’t resist copying his social media cover.

“Where’s Banjeet?” Ashe glanced at the opposite top bunk, noting the neatly folded quilt and pillow.

“He’s gone to prepare breakfast.” Igor noticed Ashe looking thoughtfully at him. He raised an eyebrow, “Can you stop looking at me like that? It’s kind of gross.”

“No, I was just looking at beautiful women for a long time, and I feel like I’ve thoroughly understood all their features.” Ashe offered a very professional suggestion, “Igor, if you let your blonde hair grow a bit longer, your hardware would be perfect... No, you don’t need to grow it long, just cut it a bit more stylishly, and that should be enough... Igor, you get what I mean, right?”

Having watched sword Princesses and Witches for a full hour, Ashe now saw remnants of them in everything he looked at. He began overlapping their images with the Con Artist and quickly found room for improvement in Igor’s appearance.

“I get it, absolutely. You just woke up and want to pick a fight, trying to trick me into shaving my head, right?” Igor said. “Harvey, why don’t you show Ashe your spoils from tonight?” S

“Hm? Ashe, do you want to see?”

Harvey handed down a box from the top bunk, and Ashe took one look at it. The lingering images of the sword Princess and the Witch in his eyes instantly vanished, leaving only the horrifying scene of densely packed cockroaches entangled together in his mind!

Bang!

Honey Sword pierced directly into the opposite wall. The next second, Ashe transformed into a streak of light and fled to Igor’s bed, sticking to the wall like a startled cat, eyes fixed unblinkingly on the necromancer with the cockroaches, as if ready to teleport away at the slightest movement.

“You’re afraid of cockroaches?” Igor couldn’t help but laugh, his mouth twitching. He threw a blanket towards Ashe.

Ashe immediately pulled up the blanket to form a three-dimensional defense: “Anything in large quantities can scare me, even Lala Fatty and gold coins... Harvey, could you please use your invincible Frostfire to burn them to ashes! What are you keeping them for, a midnight snack?!”

“First, Frostfire can’t ignite any material,” the necromancer said, closing the cockroach box. “Second, you are on the right track; I’m going to pickle them in venom and turn them into food.”

“I-Igor, I feel a bit weak. Could you inform the Red Hat and report this perverted necromancer here...?”

“Calm down,” Harvey replied with a look of exasperation. “It’s not like I’m feeding them to you.”

“Why does that sound so much like a threat... I’m still trembling with fear!” Ashe said. “Can’t you do something more normal?”

“They’re for Alice,” Harvey shrugged. “I’m preparing her for a ghoulish enhancement. One of the necessary steps in the Ritual Track is to consume decomposers. Ideally, I should use scarabs, blood maggots, or corpse beetles, but given our current situation, cockroaches will have to do.”

Ashe looked at Igor in bewilderment. The Con Artist explained, “Scarabs can burrow into bodies and crawl to the brain, blood maggots can squeeze into blood vessels and flow to the heart, and corpse beetles have extremely potent corpse poison... They are common scavenger pets under the Blood Moon.”

"Pets?" Ashe was genuinely shocked. "Are... we Blood Moon people that incredible? Why don't we keep cats or dogs as pets?"

"The result of self-destruction, worshiping the grotesque, and seeking filth, all entangled and corroding each other," Igor said as he tucked his hair behind his ear. "In a Kingdom where everyone has a psychological disorder, you need to lower your expectations of them."

"I've already lowered them to the ground!"

"If you had worked as a psychologist for just a few days, you would know to dig the ground with a shovel, unearthing those rotten, foul-smelling, twisted plant roots. Only then would you see the true Blood Moon."

"So, Igor, what pet would you keep if you had one?" Ashe suddenly asked.

"Hmm?" Igor was slightly taken aback. "Probably... a cat?"

"Aha, just as I thought," Ashe said, looking triumphant, which made Igor feel a bit confused.

"See, collecting cockroaches is considered normal for me," Harvey sighed. "Ah, why can't cockroaches be as big as my palm? Their current size is simply not enough to eat."

"If cockroaches were as big as my palm, they still wouldn't be enough to eat—I mean, I wouldn't be enough for them to eat," Ashe suddenly realized something. "Wait, Harvey, how did you catch so many cockroaches?"

"I have a spirit specialized in gathering scavengers. I returned from the Virtual Realm around midnight tonight, and since I had nothing else to do, I collected them. This amount is from the entire building," the necromancer said. "After all, the Ritual Track in the Necromancy Sect requires the consumption of a lot of scavengers."

"W-wait, when the cockroaches were being gathered," Ashe swallowed hard, "did they... crawl over us?"

"No."

Igor said calmly, "I returned early tonight as well and watched Harvey collect the cockroaches. They all moved along the ceiling and dropped into his box, without coming near our beds."

"Exactly," Harvey said, waving his hand. "Despite appearances, I'm actually careful. I wouldn't let food come into contact with you guys."

“Watched all night...?” The Cult Leader looked at the Con Artist with awe.

“Self-destruction, worshipping the grotesque, seeking filth.” Igor closed the Gospel Book with a slight smile. “Take a guess which ones apply to me.”

“Breakfast is ready!” came Banjeet’s voice from outside.

Ashe saw Harvey coming down with the cockroach box and immediately shouted, “If you dare bring that box outside, I’ll fight you to the death!”

The necromancer gave him a strange look and nodded. “As you wish.”

He summoned a dark green spirit, which squeezed murky purple-blue liquid from the air into the box. Then he covered it, sealed it, and stuffed it under the bed—since Harvey and Ashe had bunk beds, it meant it went under Ashe’s bed.

“The transformation process needs to connect to the floor. I was going to put it on the balcony, but under the bed works too,” Harvey shrugged.

Looking at the quiet box in the shadow under the bed, Ashe felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. “Igor, how about we trade beds?”

“No way.”

“Your bed looks pretty big, how about—”

“You can either squeeze in with Banjeet or sleep with Annan and Lise,” Igor firmly refused. “I’m allergic to humans.”

“You weren’t this picky when you were in prison!”

“Getting to know you gave me this allergy. Reflect on that.”

The three of them left the bedroom and entered a roughly twenty-square-meter living room. The kitchen was separated by a wall, and Banjeet, not wearing his butler attire but casually donning an apron, was placing six breakfasts on a folding round table. He looked like the gentle high schooler from a dating sim.

Lise, wearing oversized pajamas, was yawning and sitting on a stool, her long white hair all tangled. Ashe and Harvey were about to go to the bathroom to brush their teeth when Annan chased them out: “Boss first.”

The Cult Leader walked out to see the Con Artist brushing his daughter’s hair and asked curiously, “Igor, why aren’t you brushing your teeth?”

“I’ve already had my bath.” Igor pressed Lise’s shoulders to keep her still. “Avoiding doing things with you all is a simple technique to improve my quality of life.”

Ashe and Harvey had no choice but to brush their teeth on the balcony. Just three meters away, across from them, was the balcony of a typical mixed-race family: an orc grandfather, an elf grandmother, an orc dad, a siren mom, and a siren son. The siren son seemed to be refusing to get out of bed, while the orc grandfather sat in a rocking chair on their balcony, sipping tea and reading a Gospel Book. When he saw Ashe and Harvey, he raised his teacup slightly in greeting.

Ashe and Harvey nodded in return, then took big gulps of water, gargled noisily, and spat directly into the balcony drain.

Although roaming the Virtual Realm was equivalent to resting, the latest Ritual made Ashe feel even more alert. He looked up and saw the bright sky fragmented by the wires strung between the residential buildings. Early-rising office workers stood on balancing scooters, weaving through the streets. In the distance, chaotically expanded residential buildings created an uneven, post-modern forest. Drunken goblins lay on the far streets, stripped of their clothes, as everyone walked around them while stray dogs urinated on them.

The morning light poured over the city like oil paint, coloring this chaotic yet vibrant metropolis. Here, advanced technological gadgets were ubiquitous, but so were the grotesque, distorted cityscapes and disorderly public safety. It looked like a golden-edged toilet bowl.

This was Fidrola, a chaotic city that had consistently ranked last in every city ranking, yet boasted one of the top five populations in the nation. Known as ‘The Noise of the Gospel,’ it was a city famous for its freedom.

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

Chapter 426: Extra Update of the Gospel

After leaving Mephila, the Funeral group changed multiple modes of transportation and safely arrived at their destination, Fidrola.

Ashe thought Annan had some local connections here because the only entity in the Gospel they hadn’t offended was Lala Fatty. If no one was to welcome them, they’d either face betrayal or bullets.

According to Annan, “This is a city where even if you’ve offended the whole world, you can still stay hidden safely.”

In fact, it was true.

Fidrola was the region with the weakest Gospel influence. It’s not because this place is some forbidden magic zone where the Gospel can’t take effect, but simply because the people here are too poor to listen to the Gospel.

Listening to the Gospel requires Gospel points, which can only be earned by being on the ranking list. Geniuses naturally climb the rankings themselves, while ordinary people can only earn points by piggybacking on their city’s points or collective points, meaning the city distributes points to all its citizens, and companies share points with their employees.

But there’s a catch: the ranking list spots are limited, so there are bound to be cities and companies that don’t make the cut.

Azura, Vamora, and Mephila are all top-ranking cities. Their cities and companies accumulate a good amount of points each year, which they then reinvest into further production. This creates an unshakable advantage in their respective fields, leading them to rapidly modernize and build city on the second level.

Fidrola, on the other hand, doesn’t rank on any list. Its primary existence serves to highlight how outstanding the ranking cities are.

Why don’t these cities strive to catch up and create a nationally civilized city? It’s just like asking why single people don’t find a partner, why authors don’t update their works, or why people don’t dodge bullets.

Public safety, organization, GDP, and education levels—these factors don’t operate independently but are interconnected.

Excluding the cities like Mephila and Vamora that cheat with miracles, let’s take Azura as an example: because everyone listens to the Gospel, public security is good, and everyone actively seeks education. Companies have a favorable environment to grow, raising the overall standard of the city. As a result, the city gets a good ranking, its citizens receive Gospel points, and they are even more motivated to listen to the Gospel...

So if a city can’t make it onto any ranking list, it means it’s not just slightly behind; it’s completely in the mud—because it’s not in a positive feedback loop at all!

Fidrola is the perfect example of this. As one of the top five most populous cities, its competitors are first-tier cities like Azura. The difference between it and Azura can be summarized in one sentence: Fidrola has no schools.

Public schools in Azura have educational pods, where everyone can receive custom-tailored education just by lying down inside. Such welfare facilities don't exist in Fidrola. It's not that the empire doesn't grant them; it's that any resources sent to Fidrola get dismantled and sold for money.

This leads to Fidrola's second characteristic: Red Hat only manages the wealthy central district. Crimes occurring in other parts of Fidrola are completely ignored by Red Hat.

Lack of order, lack of education, and lack of government—these are the three main features of Fidrola.

It's not that Fidrola's citizens yearn for freedom, but rather the result of intricate and complex power struggles—simply put, the empire annually allocates points support based on city population. Fidrola's upper echelons initially believed Fidrola couldn't compete with other cities. Hence, the points subsidy would be wasted, so they preferred to spend it themselves.

Without points to aid governance, Fidrola deteriorated day by day. However, this kind of ulcerous city attracted special attention: companies wanting to conduct shady business in lawless areas, and chaos-seekers yearning to break free from Gospel restraints.

Bribery, corruption, negligence, collusion... what would have been exposed by the Gospel Book in other cities, flourishes here in this mire through mutual cooperation. As for Red Hat, they pretend to know nothing—being the lowest-ranked Red Hat in all of the Gospel, their non-involvement in crime is already the result of their professional pact constraints.

After decades of gestation, Fidrola has completely devolved into a city of free chaos. Annan's choice to take refuge here was indeed a brilliant one—don't forget, although the people here are too poor to listen to the Gospel, Annan herself is a wealthy little lady who can afford to pray for the Gospel blessings!

Given the wealth of her mother and Yvaren, Annan indeed seemed like a little rich girl in Ashe's eyes. However, even a little rich girl can bring about a significant impact in Fidrola, which is like an archaic society.

Ordinary people without Gospel points couldn't even investigate their identities. Annan prayed for a fixed "random avatar blessing" for the room; as long as they moved within it, their appearances would be replaced with different looks in the eyes of outsiders, thus preventing any identity leaks.

In a normal city, Annan wouldn't dare to pray for such a blessing. In a typical Gospel spellcaster's detection package, there are dozens of items, including miracles, spirits, blessings, etc., and for just 10 points, they can scan a hundred-meter radius for any anomalies. If Purple Moth dared to pray for a fixed blessing, it would be like openly signaling to others, "Look at me, I'm super suspicious here!"

But in this impoverished place like Fidrola, this blessing was incredibly practical.

Ashe had no doubts that they could remain safely hidden here until the Weaving Festival ended.

However, Annan coming to Fidrola wasn't just for seeking refuge.

After washing up, Ashe and Harvey returned to their seats. The room was small, and the table was tiny, making it a bit cramped for six people, but they had gotten used to it over the past few days. Once everyone was seated, Annan said, "We can start eating now."

Only then did everyone start eating. Today's breakfast was creamy macaroni, egg and bacon sandwiches, and milk tea. Banjeet said, "This breakfast cost 32 brass

1

in total, and I have 73 brass left. Ashe, here you go."

"Alright." Ashe took over the household's finances.

Annan asked, "Harvey, what's your job today?"

"Still working at the construction site," Harvey replied. "You need to know someone to get into the morgue here, and since we won't be staying long anyway, I'll take it easy."

"What about you, Igor?"

"I made friends with Miss Marsha yesterday. She agreed to let me run her fortune-telling club for a few days," Igor said. "I'll try my hand at being a fortune teller."

"I plan to change jobs," Banjeet suddenly announced.

"Why? Weren't you doing well at your current odd jobs?" Annan asked.

"But the boss's youngest daughter seems to have taken a liking to me," Banjeet said calmly. "Staying there longer wouldn't be good for her."

"Isn't that a good thing?" Igor chuckled. "If you settle down, get married, and have kids here, that's exactly the 'happiness' we're supposed to be pursuing, right?"

"Exactly," Annan concurred with a smile. "Is she good-looking?"

"Stop teasing me," Banjeet said, remaining unemotional. "My happiness is for Miss Yvaren to attain happiness; I desire nothing else... Plus, after staying in the Gospel for so many years, I can't deceive it, I can only cooperate with you all."

As soon as they arrived in Fidrola, Ashe and the others immediately asked Annan what the next ranking list would be.

Though Igor found it entertaining, for Ashe, Lise, and Harvey—who had no interest in intellectual games—the Ranking of Schemes left a psychological scar on them. They wouldn't give Annan the chance to repeat the same trick.

However, there was no need to hide the fourth ranking list. Annan told them directly that the theme of the fourth list was: Happiness.

Under normal circumstances, Ashe and his group wouldn't have the slightest chance of making it onto this ranking list.

Even as outsiders full of countless possibilities for work, it wouldn't be enough.

No matter how happy they could be, they couldn't compete with people like Yvaren, Qenna, and Mercury, the ruling class wielding power and wealth. Although the Gospel implies that Ashe and his group would dominate the Gospel in the future, even then, the happiest wouldn't be Ashe and his group, but Ashe's children.

What could be happier than being born with a silver spoon in your mouth?

As for the saying, "wealthy people aren't happy," it's a lie rich people tell to deceive the poor. After all, if everyone goes around saying, "being rich is fantastic," then it's only a matter of time before the poor hang the rich and squeeze them dry.

However, under the premise of an inevitable Doomsday in the future, this definition of "happiness" takes on a different meaning.

In a Doomsday scenario, happiness is definitely not about power or wealth. After all, society has collapsed, and everyone is struggling to survive. What good is power or influence? Can you order takeout? Can you find eight people to play Extreme Cutting Carp Overlord Lord?

So, they quickly realized the true definition of "happiness" here: living.

If a group of people can support each other, maintain a dignified life, and even keep their quality of living close to what it was before Doomsday, that's the greatest happiness.

That's why Annan didn't rent a big house in the rich district of Fidrola. Instead, she rented a small place in a chaotic urban village. Ashe and the three other guys shared a bunk bed room, while she shared another room with Lise, aiming to simulate a Doomsday-like environment. In the Kingdom of Gospel, the lives of the poor are indeed the closest to Doomsday conditions.

To better role-play and deceive the Gospel, Annan set three rules: everyone must work and labor for a better life; living expenses should come from work income, not savings; save as much as possible without affecting the quality of life.

It's not that Annan didn't want to give them money, but her money was too easy to use. Just the interest from the Dolan Family's bank could allow Ashe and the others to live comfortably in Fidrola without lifting a finger. They might feel happy like that, but they would definitely be eliminated by the Gospel!

And it's precisely because of these three rules that they barely ate anything on their first day in Fidrola until Harvey and Banjeet found jobs and got them back on track.

"Lise," Annan asked, "How's your studying going?"

Everyone had to work, and Lise was no exception. Though she didn't need to go out and work, she had to stay at home and study the Gospel Book. The results weren't as tailored as the "exclusive custom" from an educational pod, but at least the textbooks in the Gospel Book were free and professional. They even assigned homework and practice exercises. Studying them wasn't a loss, but it did require strong self-discipline.

"It's all... going well," Lise said hesitantly.

Annan raised an eyebrow. "Let me see your homework evaluations."

"It really is going well—"

"Stop wasting time!"

The Purple Moth still held significant authority. Reluctantly, Lise opened her Gospel Book to the homework page and turned it around for Annan to see. Annan frowned, "How come all your other assignments are fine, but your math is a complete mess? The Gospel feels that your mathematical thinking, as reflected in your homework, has serious deficiencies. It even suggests you give up on this subject altogether."

"What!?" Ashe was shocked, completely unable to believe this startling revelation. "Did the Gospel really say that? That can't be true!"

"Yes, it did," Annan said, blinking. "If you care so much, have you ever helped her with her homework? How could it be this bad?"

"I... I not only helped..." Ashe was on the verge of breaking down, "She said she was too lazy to do it, and I ended up doing her math assignments for her."

After a brief silence, Harvey was the first to stand up. "I'm done eating, so I'll head to work."

“I’m also done.”

“Ashe, do you need help with the dishes?”

“No, it’s fine,” Ashe muttered dejectedly, nibbling on his egg and bacon sandwich. “I know it’s been a few years since I graduated, but still...”

After Banjeet and the others left, Annan went over and gave Lise a hug, then hugged Ashe from behind.

“Do we really have to do this!?” Ashe protested.

“I’m the head of the household; hugging you before you leave adds weight to your day. Don’t be ungrateful!” Annan clung on, turning it into a playful cross-lock, wrestling with Ashe early in the morning.

After everyone left for work, Ashe began cleaning up the dishes. “Study time starts in half an hour.”

“Yay!” Lise cheered, “Let’s play Spellcaster Duel 14 until then!”

“Wait until I finish the dishes.”

Indeed, Ashe’s job was being a stay-at-home guard and babysitter.

There were two reasons for this: firstly, Lise couldn’t be left home alone and needed someone to watch over her. Secondly, Ashe simply couldn’t show his face outside.

Although they could change their appearance through makeup or even Miracles, as Annan and the others did, the problem was that Ashe’s “Twisting Mask” had a permanent effect. No matter how he changed his appearance, he would always be wearing the mask.

Working while constantly wearing a mask would make anyone with a functioning brain suspicious. Therefore, Ashe was gloriously appointed the stay-at-home guardian.

After finishing the dishes and gaming with Lise, Ashe began his official work.

He used the washing machine to clean the clothes and the dryer to dry them. He moved the ironing board to a sunny spot and carefully ironed each piece. He swept and mopped the floors, cleaned the bathroom meticulously, disinfected the toilet, wiped down the windows, made the beds, and took out the trash.

All of this was done by his Substitute.

Ashe himself sat beside Lise, supervising her studies while also learning about the Virtual Realm, Spellcasting Sects, and knowledge creatures.

After more than two hours, when Lise turned to glance at him for the thirteenth time, Ashe finally closed his Gospel Book. "Let's go out and buy some things."

"Yay!"

Ashe put on his hooded trench coat and took Lise's hand, leading her out of the apartment building.

Although this was a chaotic area, many years of partial order had taken root. Otherwise, it wouldn't be an environment where ordinary people could work. The area they lived in was called the 'Salome District,' named after the company responsible for maintaining its order.

Hospitals, pet shops, restaurants, cafes, e-scooter stores, general stores-these establishments, which might have migrated to online shopping in other cities, still thrived in Fidrola.

Ashe and Lise headed for the supermarket. The luxury interior was modern and impressive, clearly making shoplifting impossible.

Passing by the snacks and sweets section, Ashe covered Lise's eyes. "Don't look, don't look. We only have 73 brass; we can't afford it."

When they walked past the Lala Fatty special section, it was Lise who covered Ashe's eyes, "Don't look, don't look. We only have 73 brass; we can't buy it."

After carefully calculating their budget and sampling some free treats, Ashe and Lise returned home with large bags full of supplies.

Following a simple lunch, Ashe dragged a carpet to the balcony, where he and Lise lazily lay down together.

When they woke up, it was almost 3 PM. Ashe urged Lise to resume her studies. The Substitute started preparing the ingredients for dinner, while Ashe decided to rest a little longer.

Around 4 PM, Banjeet was the first one to return home, immediately heading to the kitchen to help out. Next came Igor, exuding a fragrant scent, probably having swindled quite a bit of money from women. Shortly after, Annan appeared, demanding that Ashe remove her stockings as soon as she stepped through the door, her attitude strikingly domineering. Finally, Harvey arrived covered in dust, getting promptly sent off to the shower.

As night fell, the cacophony of the apartment building increased. The poor insulation did nothing to muffle Fidrola's symphony. From downstairs, there were the sounds of people drinking and arguing; upstairs, someone clomped around in high-heeled boots; across the way, lights flickered on as folks watched TV dramas while eating dinner.

Fidrola's dark streets gradually lit up. Though it couldn't compare to larger cities like Azura or Mephila with their centralized lighting, the diffuse glow from residential homes did provide a sense of warmth.

The six members of the Funeral group gathered around the round table. Once Harvey, freshly showered, took his seat, Annan declared, "Dinner is served."

"Announcing dinner once everyone is present" was a crucial step. According to Annan, it boosted their happiness index by 5%. However, Ashe suspected it was more of a Ritual Track Annan had implemented to emphasize her role as the head of the household.

This was a typical day for the Funeral group, possibly the most mundane period since arriving at the Gospel. There were no immediate threats pursuing them, their safety wasn't compromised, and the initial awkwardness had worn off. In the steam rising from the soup, time itself seemed to soften. Ashe almost forgot about the Weaving Festival, the Divine Sovereign's Wish, and the impending Doomsday.

Until the Gospel Book suddenly popped open.

The glowing bookmark made a dramatic announcement to everyone present.

"The Gospel..." Annan murmured, "has an extra update!?"

Footnote:

1. Brass(铜):

Fedra Universal Currency.

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

Chapter 427: Happiness Ranking

Today is June 4th, only four days after the update of the “Ranking of Schemes”, and still six days until the usual update time.

According to Annan’s statistics, the Gospel Book has always been known for its severe procrastination issues. The “Art Ranking” and “Family Ranking” follow the usual update patterns—they update at the very last second of the deadline.

Historically, there have been five occasions when the Weaving Festival updates were delayed until eight o’clock the next morning. Each delay caused a panic throughout the entire Gospel community. Countless people couldn’t sleep, fearing that the Gospel Book was broken and that the Weaving Festival couldn’t continue. This shows how serious the psychological impact of update delays can be on the devoted readers.

On the other hand, extra updates from the Gospel Book have never happened. Not even once. At least not in the ten Weaving Festivals that Annan has tracked. The best readers could hope for was a punctual update right at midnight. For those eagerly waiting for updates, this punctuality was considered as mercy from the Divine Sovereign, a Boon of fate.

Therefore, when Annan and Banjeet saw the Gospel Book appear, their first reaction wasn’t joy but fear!

Over the centuries, they had seen mountains crumble, rivers dry, thunder roar in winter, snowstorm in summer, even the convergence of heavens and earth, the Virtual Realm opening, and invasions from the outlands; but they had never seen the Gospel Book release an extra update! Search* The novelFire.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Especially for people like Annan, who work at the Firm, they knew the Gospel Book’s workings better than anyone. They understood that the Gospel Book must follow specific rules. If it violated those rules, it indicated an order from a higher authority—an Angel, or even the Divine Sovereign?

Despite the many thoughts running through their minds, everyone swiftly opened the Gospel Book without hesitation to see the latest work.

“Happiness Ranking.”

Ashe and the others looked at Annan with admiration—though the Young Lady had demonstrated her abilities many times before, being able to obtain accurate inside information every single time made them wonder if Annan was a secret daughter of the Gospel Book.

“The Happiness Ranking” 10th place: The Happiest Wedding

Synopsis: Daphne Barnabas and Carlos Barnabas have been lovers for ten years. Over the past decade, they have gone through countless joys and sorrows and many hardships of life. Finally, these paramours became husband and wife. On the day they got married in the Sky Garden, it marked the end of their trials and the beginning of their happiness. They will be together forever, never separated, facing countless difficulties with love... what's this?

The text on the Gospel Book suddenly became blurry, and smudges appeared as if someone were forcefully altering the Weave of history. The more they smeared, the crazier it got. Not only the synopsis and ranking list but the whole page turned into a deep black. Then, red ink spread within the blackness, forming a name everyone was very familiar with.

"Ashe Heath."

"Huh?" Ashe looked bewildered as everyone questioned him, "Why are you looking at me? Look at the Young Lady! Young Lady, why is my name up there? Is this a surprise you prepared?"

"If I could do that, your name would be in the groom's position," Annan replied irritably. "Maybe the Gospel Book was updating and decided your wedding was happier... hmm?"

The ranking suddenly transitioned to video footage. The scene showed the Sky Garden in the city on the second level, with a bright, non-glaring sky overhead. Below was a magnificent and prosperous city, with snow-capped mountains in the distance. The view was as beautiful as a fairy tale. Guests in the garden were dressed elegantly, and children were adorable and well-behaved. As the band played, colorful flowers swayed, spreading rainbow hues. The joy almost seemed to leap out of the image and infect the viewers.

"Looks pretty boring," commented Harvey. "If it were my wedding..."

Ashe thought he was beginning to understand the necromancer's mindset. "It would be set in a graveyard?"

"Of course not, I have some common sense too. A wedding should be held in a lively, thrilling place with lots of people," Harvey replied seriously. "For example, a battlefield after a great war, with corpses strewn about, rivers of blood, soil soaked with blood, and air full of lingering thoughts. It would be the perfect junction between life and death. Getting married in a battlefield would be incredibly romantic."

Though Ashe wanted to argue, he realized that getting married on a battlefield strewn with blood and valor did sound rather romantic.

“Dad, snap out of it!” Lise rushed over, shaking him. “Don’t listen, don’t feel, don’t think, or you’ll be studying the Necromancy Sect!”

The mention of studying woke Ashe up instantly. He quickly patted Lise’s head to anchor his taste. No wonder necromancers like Harvey, destined to serve deities, could be so persuasive; his mere words nearly dragged Ashe into the realm of the dead.

“The location is fine, but there are too many people,” Igor commented indifferently. “How many of those guests are genuinely offering their blessings? Those kids do nothing but cause trouble. The band is too noisy; replacing them with a pianist would be much better...”

“Are you planning your wedding with Anfel already?” Ashe asked. “Make sure to send me an invite.”

Igor glanced at him. “Rest assured, I will make sure you’re not on my guest list.”

Lise asked, “Dad, what kind of wedding do you want?”

“To be honest, I’d rather skip such a grand ritual. It makes me feel like a sacrificial offering,” Ashe confessed.

“Absolutely not!” Annan and Lise simultaneously denied such a rebellious notion.

“A wedding is a very, very important moment. Most fairy tales end with a wedding as the epitome of happiness!” Lise said earnestly.

“That’s right!” Annan added. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime event. Miss it, and it’s gone forever!”

“Not necessarily a once-in-a-lifetime...” Ashe muttered.

At this point, the footage finally reached the wedding ceremony. The couple, dressed in a princess gown and a mage’s robe, made their entrance. Weddings in the Kingdom of the Gospel also bore the influence of the Gospel Book: the couple wrote each other’s names on their respective Gospel Book covers, and the names were preserved forever.

This step didn’t hold any practical significance; the Gospel wouldn’t grant newlyweds an 80% discount. However, within the Gospel tradition, this gesture symbolized the highest level of commitment. To put it into modern context, it’s like using couple avatars on social media profiles, wearing wedding rings on your ring fingers, tattooing your lover’s name on your lower back, and stamping “approved” on a certified quality pig. Essentially, when you brandish your Gospel Book, everyone knows you’ve partnered up in the game of life.

When this ‘happiest couple’ officially recognized by the Gospel appeared on screen, everyone displayed understanding expressions. Although the groom was handsome and the bride was beautiful, they bore a striking resemblance.

In simpler terms, it was evident to anyone with eyes that they were biological siblings.

Even in the open society of the Gospel Kingdom, a sibling romance was a highly sensitive topic. Unless the family was wealthy enough to use a Miracle to adjust their genes, not even the Gospel would recommend childbirth.

Understanding this, one could see why this wedding deserved to be described as the “happiest.” Not only did others try to intervene, but the Gospel itself would also use every possible tactic to prevent their union. It would arrange for the sister to meet more suitable partners and for the brother to be pursued by more appropriate girls, all in the name of a better life, according to the Gospel’s original plan.

Their suffering stemmed from their desire to break free from the Gospel’s constraints. Had they ever listened to the Gospel’s guidance or followed its arrangements even once, their hardships would have vanished, and happiness would have been easily within reach.

But they didn’t, so the Gospel conceded. This outcome was its pre-emptive compensation.

The bride and groom exchanged eye contact. What lay in their eyes wasn’t an all-consuming, all-melting passion, nor a casual, familial gaze. Instead, their pupils reflected a world where only the other existed, everything else mere dust. The closest comparison might be the fervent look Harvey had when discussing the Necromancy Sect, a passion few others could match.

This was a profound, heart-searing madness. When it was reciprocated, it became a happiness that not even the Gospel could dismantle.

As the newlyweds sat at the stone table, exchanged Gospel Books, and took up pens to sign the covers, the video footage suddenly flickered.

In the next second, a sword abruptly slashed through the stone table in the sky garden, causing everyone to jump in fright.

“To be honest, I don’t like grand rituals like these. It makes me feel like a sacrificial offering. If it were up to me, I’d skip them and fast forward to the more intimate moments.”

Everyone instinctively glanced at Ashe at the sound of those familiar words.

Ashe remained calm: “Confirmed, the Gospel has been copying my real-time reviews.”

The long sword's hilt was gripped by someone who had appeared in the garden's center, clad in a dark red trench coat. Before he even spoke, the surrounding guests began to panic and scream in terror.

"Ashe Heath!"

"The Undying Fiend Heath!"

"Calamity Demon Lord!"

"Source of Calamity!"

"He actually resurrected!?"

Hearing the comments, Ashe and the others felt an incredibly complex mix of emotions. Before they could discuss it, the footage changed dramatically again—

White mist-like spirits enveloped the entire wedding site, even robbing sunlight of its warmth. A mist spirit reached Ashe's side, transforming into a cloaked vagabond.

"Necromancer King Harvey!" The guests erupted into chaos: "If even he is here, then that means—"

A well-dressed guest suddenly approached Ashe, removing his hat and glasses to reveal his sleek, shoulder-length blonde hair and dazzlingly handsome face. The moment he revealed himself, a quarter of the guests promptly drew weapons and changed allegiances. They raised their left hands adorned with crow feather gloves, detaining the other guests.

"Rust Crow!" The guests' voices trembled, "Why, why would one of the Three Great Harbingers of Doomsday appear here?"

Darn it, Three Great Harbingers of Doomsday? Ashe couldn't contain himself anymore.

Here I am, Ashe, an honest young man, having done nothing wrong, and somehow I'm mentioned in the same breath as Igor and Harvey!?

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

Chapter 428: The Culprit

Pffft.

Annan couldn't help but laugh out loud. Banjeet's mouth twitched as he struggled to hold back, while Lise excitedly hugged Ashe, jumping around. "Dad, you're amazing! Calamity Demon Lord! Source of Calamity! One of the Three Great Harbingers of Doomsday... Wait, what about me?"

"I raised you to be a super fatso, so you don't dare to show your face," Ashe said very seriously. "You'd stay in your room all day playing games and watching TV dramas. If I urge you to work, you'd yell at me, and if I disturb your games, you'd call me a stinky old man..."

"Impossible, when Lise grows up, she'll be a super gorgeous beauty!" Lise spread her arms to emphasize that she's not just any beauty but a super beauty. "And how could Lise ever hate Dad!"

"You said something similar when you were young," Ashe looked at Annan. "Like, I'll never hate Mom or something..."

Annan: "Of course not!"

Banjeet: "Yes, you did."

The young lady glared fiercely at the young butler. He shrugged and closed his mouth.

"Enough arguing," Igor frowned. "This ranking list... is very strange."

Everyone nodded. They all noticed that the Happiness Ranking was completely different from the previous three lists-the wedding guests were very familiar with Ashe and the others and could even call out nicknames like 'Three Great Harbingers of Doomsday.' Clearly, they had seen the Future Ranking!

At this point, one has to discuss a question related to the Weaving Festival: Since people can see the woven future, if it's something good, that's fine, but if it's something bad, wouldn't people try to avoid it?

The most obvious example is the Ranking of Schemes. It has many victims, including the ranked individuals themselves. If they've seen the Ranking of Schemes, wouldn't they still fall for Igor's tricks?

Although they would, it isn't because fate forcibly corrects the course. It's simply due to Igor's personal abilities. And even Igor himself can't act strictly according to the Ranking of Schemes. Search the novelFire.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

In other words, the moment the Ranking of Schemes is announced, it ceases to be the future. Therefore, the Gospel would have to weave a Ranking of Schemes 2.0.

However, once everyone sees the 2.0 version, they would naturally avoid the schemes it contains, forcing the Gospel to weave versions 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, and so on...

Clearly, such an infinite loop is impossible. Hence, when the Gospel weaves the future, there is usually an implicit assumption: the people involved have not seen the Weaving Festival.

This is a very reasonable assumption and does not compromise the accuracy of the Weaving Festival. Most of the time, even if there are discrepancies between the future and the ranking list, the differences are not drastic. Out of ten lists or a hundred rankings, at most seven or eight might be significantly off, a quality level everyone can accept.

Moreover, most ranking lists are Character Rankings, which have the smallest margin of error. Event Rankings can easily have large discrepancies, but most events are positive. Thus, people are happy to follow the Gospel, with some even deliberately trying to perfectly replicate the events woven by the Weaving Festival.

Ranking lists like the Ranking of Schemes and the Family Ranking, which are purely negative events, are rare phenomena, likely only possible within the chaotic context of Doomsday. In a stable and prosperous society, Harvey and Igor would have been chased to the Abyss by the Red Hat as soon as they appeared. There wouldn't be any "Top Ten Families" or "Top Ten Schemes."

But the Happiness Ranking breaks this implicit assumption!

The individuals in it have all seen the Weaving Festival. They know about Rust Crow Igor and Necromancy Harvey, they know Ashe died and came back to life, and they even gave them the idol group name "Three Great Harbingers of Doomsday!"

It's like playing a New Game Plus where the NPCs remember everything you did in your first playthrough.

"Ashe Heath..." The bride Daphne remained calm, shielding her brother Carlos behind her, and said steadily, "Are you here to attend our wedding?"

"That's right," Ashe replied. "To be precise, I'm here to crash the wedding."

As he reached out, Daphne slapped his hand away forcefully. Her chest heaving with anger, she stared directly at him. "We were strangers before this. Why would you target us?"

"Just as you know me, I know you," Ashe said, unperturbed, spreading his hands. "Tenth on the Happiness Ranking: Daphne and Carlos. When I saw you two on the list, I decided to steal your future."

“Really?” Annan asked suddenly. “You’re planning to crash the wedding right now?”

Lise, equally shocked, stared at Ashe. “Dad, you actually like stealing other people’s brides?”

“Are you focusing on the wrong thing here?” Ashe’s mouth twitched. “Don’t you see? The ‘Ashe’ in there mentioned the tenth place on the Happiness Ranking—meaning he saw the Happiness Ranking and then crashed the events in the Happiness Ranking. And now the current Happiness Ranking has woven him into the list!”

Before the Happiness Ranking had even finished broadcasting, the people in it had already seen the Happiness Ranking and were acting according to the rankings...

A surreal sense of absurdity rose in everyone’s hearts. If the wedding before ‘Ashe’ appeared was a normal future, then the wedding after ‘Ashe’ appeared became a compound future layered over multiple playthroughs. While the latter may be closer to reality, it was also more chaotic.

“Why?” Daphne asked. “This wedding will soon be over; there’s nothing worth coveting—”

“I told you, it’s you two I truly want,” Ashe smiled. “You are the future chosen by the Gospel. Just defiling you is enough to excite me! Take them away—”

“No!” Daphne’s hands glowed blue as she resolutely declared, “I will never let you succeed!”

“Really? I know you don’t care about the guests, but don’t you care about your lover, your brother?” Ashe’s voice was like a devil’s whisper. “You don’t want to give up this hard-earned happiness, do you?”

“I’m not a complete villain; I don’t necessarily want to tear you apart. As long as you obediently submit to me, I’ll still give you time together.” He spoke slowly, “You will have a cozy little home, bear children, and grow old together... You’re just one step away. Are you really willing to give that up?”

Faced with such threats and intimidation, Daphne slowly collapsed to the ground, crying, “I haven’t done anything wrong, so why is this happening...”

Annan and Lise were no longer hiding their disdainful looks. Ashe felt the need to clarify, “This is absolute slander. I am a pure, pollution-free knight of love. At most, I might bully the weak, but I never abuse my power.”

“But why would the Gospel slander you out of nowhere?” Lise countered. “Dad, shouldn’t you reflect on whether you’ve done something that might have given the Gospel the wrong impression?”

“Impossible. The only women I interact with now are you and the Young Lady,” Ashe protested. “I consider myself lucky if you don’t sleep on my stomach, and as for the Young Lady, she’s the one being inappropriate with me!”

“Really?” Annan asked. “Do you truly have no impure thoughts about me?”

“Of course not...” Ashe suddenly remembered the synthesized video footage he’d bought from Yvaren. “...None at all (very softly).”

The footage continued.

“You’ve made a wise decision,” Ashe said cheerfully. “Take them away!”

Two crow feather guests approached. Daphne, feeling utterly defeated, let herself collapse to the ground, offering no resistance as they reached out to take her-

“Hey? Hey!”

Daphne watched in shock as they took her brother Carlos away. She quickly stood up and asked, “Why are you taking Carlos!?”

“We intended to take Carlos from the start,” Ashe explained. “In the future foretold by the Gospel, Carlos’s talents are what we need. What did you think was going to happen?”

“W-What about me?” Daphne asked, bewildered.

“Interested in joining the Four Pillars Cult?” Rust Crow said. “We could use someone with your social skills.”

This unexpected twist left everyone speechless. Ashe immediately grew smug. Annan avoided his gaze, and Lise, trying to return to her seat, was pulled back by him. She could only sheepishly say, “I’ve always believed in you, Dad...”

“Believed what? That I’m a villain? That I like other people’s wives? That I can’t find a girlfriend without threats, temptations, or hypnosis?” Ashe asked, baring his teeth in frustration.

“Ashe, I’ve always believed in you,” Igor suddenly raised his hand and said.

“Tsk tsk tsk, Lise, look even Aunt Bukin-“

“I believe you have self-awareness.”

“Harvey, could you throw that box of roaches onto Igor’s bed?”

“Ashe, I have to criticize you,” Harvey said earnestly. “Wasting food is wrong.”

While they were chatting, the footage finally ended, and the Gospel Book switched back to the ranking list:

“Happiness Ranking, 10th place: The Happiest Wedding”

“Synopsis: Daphne Barnabas and Carlos Barnabas have been lovers for ten years. Over the past decade, they have gone through countless joys and sorrows and many hardships of life. Finally, these paramours became husband and wife. On the day they got married in the Sky Garden, it marked the end of their trials and the beginning of their happiness. They will be together forever, never separated, facing countless difficulties with love... and they would go on to create... but due to the interference of Ashe Heath and others, this ranking is invalid.”

“Reward: Voided.”

“Culprit: Ashe Heath.”

“How is this my fault?” Ashe was bewildered. “So if the sun doesn’t rise tomorrow, are you going to blame that on me too?”

“Annan,” Igor asked, “Has there ever been a case where a ranking was invalid and the reward voided?”

“No.” Annan pondered. “Compared to the past, the future portrayed in this ranking is also quite different. This is the first time I’ve seen characters within the ranking mention the ranking itself.”

“Ashe’s actions were also bizarre,” Igor added. “Would he really target the tenth place just to ‘defile the Gospel’? And why didn’t Harvey and I object? We’re not that idle.”

“Invalid ranking, a culprit crashing the event, voided rewards, and early updates...” Annan bit her lip gently, “When these factors are pieced together...”

“It sounds like the author rushed to meet a deadline and churned out a pile of crap,” Ashe concluded.

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

Chapter 429: Igors Daughter

“Happiness Ranking, 9th place: The Happiest Child”

Upon seeing this ranking, the people at the Funeral heaved a sigh of relief—there’s no way they could possibly make another appearance this time, right?

Although there was the possibility of them appearing as the ‘parental generation,’ considering the futures of Ashe and his two friends, it seemed unlikely. One was destined to be a career con artist, another was a wanderer with no interest in the living, and the third had just clawed his way out of hell. Where would any of them find time to have children? Would Ashe have children with a Bewitcher in hell?

“Synopsis: Leia Bukin is the daughter of Anfel Belldate and Igor Bukin. From birth, she was destined to be the heir to the Belldate name, master of Mephila, and the sole inheritor of the Dominance Sect. Moreover, after Archibald brought peace to all the clanspeople of Belldate, Leia completely broke free from the bloodline curse. She grew up showered with affection from her parents, and whenever she went out, followers of the Four Pillars Cult protected her from the shadows. Her life was carefree and...”

Just like the last ranking list, the synopsis text suddenly started to distort, and soon the entire page was blackened, with blood-red ink forming a name everyone was sick of seeing: “Ashe Heath.”

At this point, no one cared about the mutation in the Gospel Ranking. Their eyes were fixed on the con artist with peculiar expressions.

Igor’s face didn’t show any surprise, only a thoughtful look.

At that moment, the left half of his body suddenly ignited with grey flames. Though they didn’t scorch his clothes or skin, the flames quickly spread, attempting to engulf his entire body!

“What’s happening?” This sudden attack put everyone on high alert. Banjeet and Annan immediately started to scout the surroundings, but the con artist, whose face was being burned on one side, remained calm: “No need to panic, Ashe, give me a hand.”

As Igor extended his hand, almost entirely turned into a torch of grey flames, Ashe didn’t hesitate and grabbed it. The grey flames whooshed along Ashe’s arm, eliciting gasps from the others, but Ashe only felt a slight chill. Then the flames returned to Igor, but this time they quickly extinguished, as if nothing had happened at all.

“Yvaren just activated a domination Miracle, trying to distort my perception while I was in shock, making me go back to be Belldate’s son-in-law,” Igor explained. “I have to admit, this miracle is quite creative. The abstract act of ‘distorting perception’ actually manifests as flames, speeding up the process through the phenomenon of burning... Great, I’ve learned it.”

“So, was having me help you a necessary step to resolve it?” Ashe asked. “Do I have some mind-control nullification effect?”

“No, I just wanted to scare you a bit,” Igor replied.

“Wait, if Yvaren is trying to send Aunt Bukin back now, and the ranking list mentioned Aunt Bukin’s daughter...” Lise said, “Does that mean Anfel already has little Leia!”

“Igor, you scoundrel! You played and ran!” Ashe gasped. “How could you have done it in just a few days... You must have used hypnosis! Teach me!”

“Who was the one who lured me into the car in the first place!” Igor’s lips twitched. “And I think I understand what’s going on with this ranking list... The young lady should have figured it out too. If you all still end up as clueless artiodactyla after we finish watching the ranking list, I’ll explain it to you.”

“Yeah,” Annan nodded in agreement, “This Gospel Ranking will be unexpected for everyone.”

Since the two smartest people in the group had spoken, everyone continued to watch the ranking.

The screen had switched to video footage, showing little Leia’s happy life from birth. She was lovingly cared for by her mother, allowed to grow freely in the Belldate manor. Occasionally, her father would take her out to witness magnificent landscapes and experience the hardships of the world, which nurtured her kind heart and compassion for the weak. Born into wealth, she naturally developed a disciplined character, possessed an insightful understanding of human nature, and excelled in empathy. Aside from a bit of stubbornness and mischief, Leia almost perfectly embodied the best qualities of both her parents.

It’s enough to make anyone envy-Igor, do you and your friends have any plans for more children? Can I make a reservation to be born into this family?

“Eight-year-old Leia was playing in the garden when the scene suddenly flickered, and Ashe appeared behind her out of nowhere.”

“‘Leia, nice to meet you,’ Ashe said, ‘I’m Ashe Heath...’”

“‘I know, Uncle Ashe!’ Leia looked up and said, ‘Aunt Yvaren and Mom talk about you all the time! Are you here to see Dad?’”

“‘No, Leia, I’m here to see you,’ Ashe squatted down in front of Leia, ‘I’m here to take you away.’”

“Leia tilted her head and extended her hands towards Ashe, ‘Okay, where are we going to play?’”

“‘You make it look so normal; you’re making me feel unimportant,’ Ashe laughed.”

“‘Because Uncle Harvey and Aunt Annan often take me out to play like this,’ Leia said, wrinkling her nose and pouting. ‘Aunt Annan takes me to fun places all around Gospel, and Uncle Harvey likes to show me his latest necromancy inventions...’”

“‘How do you like it?’ Ashe asked with a smile, ‘I’ve heard that Igor often takes you out too. Which one do you think is the most fun?’”

“‘They’re all really fun!’ Leia said cheerfully. ‘Dad also takes me out sometimes, but he does it more to teach me how to control situations with people—ordinary folks, the wealthy, humans, elves, men, women, the strong, the weak... He doesn’t want me to exploit others, but Bukin’s daughter needs to know the world’s operating rules. And even though my last name isn’t Belldate, I still have to grasp the principle of “Increase what they desire, gift what they need.”’”

“‘And Aunt Annan has friends everywhere. When I follow her, I get to meet many interesting people and see lots of beautiful places. Uncle Harvey, although he only takes me to different graveyards, always shows me new things each time. It seems like he’s constantly making progress in necromancy. Just recently, he managed to create his first Blood Corpse King... All my uncles and aunts are awesome.’”

“‘Really? But I think you’re more amazing than all of them,’ Ashe said. ‘Harvey’s Necromancy Sect is indeed impressive, but even we can’t appreciate the allure of death like he does. Igor’s mental domination has reached perfection, but we all find it hard to accept his cold and indifferent attitude. And as for Annan, don’t even get me started; I don’t like traveling and can’t understand the joy of wandering around.’”

“‘Only you possess eyes that can appreciate all the beauty,’ Ashe smiled. ‘It must be the blessings of the Belldate ancestors that brought forth such a perfect child like you. The truly fortunate ones should be Igor and Anfel.’”

“‘Then why don’t you and Aunt Annan have a baby too?’ Leia said playfully.”

“‘That’s why I can’t let Gospel spoil you,’ Ashe’s smile faded, ‘I’m here to take you away.’”

“‘Where to? To Uncle Ashe’s hometown?’”

“‘There’s no need to go anywhere. When I say take you away, I don’t mean physically,’ Ashe explained. ‘Leia, do you know you’re recognized as the Happiest Child in Gospel?’”

“‘I know,’ Leia nodded. ‘I also know that I genuinely am the happiest child...’”

“‘No, you’re not truly happy. Your current happiness is merely a shackle added by Gospel,’ Ashe said. ‘Have you ever wondered why you’re so perfect? You’re confident but not arrogant, intelligent yet humble, high-born yet compassionate towards the weak... As a child, almost no one has ever been disappointed in you.’”

“‘Isn’t that a good thing!’”

“‘Of course it is, but if we place you in a more competitive environment, like the homeland of Igor and me, what do you think would happen?’ Ashe spread his hands. ‘You would still not disappoint anyone; you’d quickly become an admirable and successful figure envied by many.’”

“‘Gospel claims that your happiness comes from your family, your environment, and luck. But in truth, your happiness comes from within. You learn whatever you’re taught—humility, compassion, appreciation, reflection... But what if they taught you different things?’”

“‘Leia stared blankly at Ashe, as if she couldn’t fully comprehend what he was saying.’”

“‘Why does Gospel want you to be the Happiest Child?’ Ashe said. ‘Because it doesn’t dare weave a future where you’re unhappy. By simply tapping into your talents, you can grow to a level that threatens Gospel.’”

“‘Sanctuary is just the beginning for you. Even a legend would only be a brief stop, and being an angel isn’t even your final destination.’”

“‘You are the only one in fifty years whose innate talent alone is enough to threaten the Divine Sovereign.’”

“‘Leia, you are naturally born a force of chaos. Any disaster would serve as nourishment for you. For you, rebelling against fate and overturning paradise is as instinctual as eating and dressing.’”

“‘You became the Happiest Child because Gospel is doing everything it can to suppress you. Igor and Anfel might have noticed your talent, but the alternative path is too long and arduous. So they, too, follow Gospel’s plan, ensuring you live a happy and secure life—they love you.’”

“‘“Increase what they desire, gift what they need” isn’t just the motto of the Dominance Sect but also the operating principle of Gospel. Even the descendants of Belldate, even the greatest Con Artist in history, cannot escape this trap.’”

“‘...Why are you telling me this?’ Leia asked.”

“‘Because I’m going to take you away,’ Ashe stood up and said. ‘And now, I’ve already succeeded.’”

“When Ashe left the garden, Leia sat there in a daze. The scene suddenly turned deep and dark, with a bright path laid out before her. But Leia turned her head to look at another blood-red path in the shadows.”

“She ultimately stepped onto the dark, bloody path. She grew up quickly, sprouting silver wings, then golden wings, and finally rainbow wings... As she became more and more beautiful, the innocence faded from her face, replaced by a profound and daunting presence and resolute eyes.”

“Happiness Ranking, 9th place

: The Happiest Child”

“Synopsis: Leia Bukin, daughter of Anfel Belldate and Igor Bukin, her ranking is invalid due to the influence of Ashe Heath.”

“Reward: Voided.”

“Culprit: Ashe Heath.”

The sheer volume of information left everyone momentarily silent.

“Dad,” Lise looked at Ashe with a touch of annoyance, “you’ve never praised me like that...”

“But I need a reason to praise you,” Ashe replied. “Should I commend you for eating quickly and a lot?”

“But how could you shower a little girl you met just once with so many flattering comments? Are other people’s children really that amazing?!” Lise stomped her foot in frustration.

“Well, then...” Ashe cleared his throat. “Lise, you are naturally born a force of chaos. Any food will turn into nourishment for you. For you, eating and sleeping are as instinctive as breathing...”

“That’s so perfunctory!”

While fending off Lise’s disgruntled attacks, Ashe turned to the Con Artist and said seriously, “Igor, I promise, I would never do that to your daughter—”

“You don’t need to explain,” Igor interrupted. “Just like I won’t explain why the ranking list shows me marrying Anfel and having children. Let’s continue reading.”

“Leia, your daughter Leia, has the talent to become a Divine Sovereign!”

In the Belldate manor, a blue-haired girl was jumping for joy, hugging her sister tightly. “Did you see that? Your child will completely break free from the curse of our bloodline! Don’t worry, Anfel. I’ll make sure Igor comes back to you. Then you can have Leia, and we’ll raise her to become a legend, no, an angel!”

Anfel knew her sister’s happiness was genuine, but there was no doubt she also wanted to use Leia for her own ends.

Although Anfel had shared the ‘Kingdom Coin,’ which could protect one’s will, with her sister, trying to restore her to normalcy, Yvaren’s will was actually not the issue. She had just completely separated her emotions from her reason, so no amount of passion would sway her cold-blooded decisions.

“Yvaren,” Anfel said once her sister had calmed down, “I think you shouldn’t get your hopes up too high—”

“Don’t worry, once I bring Igor back, I have plenty of ways to make him breed: manual stimulation, electric stimulation, all sorts of miracles one after another!” Evaline proudly raised her head, “Even if it doesn’t work, it has to work!”

“I have no doubt about Mr. Igor’s abilities, but the biggest problem now is the future rankings.”

“Hmm?” Yvaren was taken aback, “What’s wrong with the rankings?”

At this moment, the Gospel Book updated. Anfel looked down, and her expression immediately turned very strange, “Take a look and you’ll see.”

Yvaren looked down.

“Happiness Ranking, 8th place: The Happiest Wife”

“Synopsis: Nalber Harvey, wife of Archibald Harvey, is the happiest wife...”

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

Chapter 430: Ashes Harem

The footage of the 8th place on the “Happiness Ranking,” titled “The Happiest Wife,” had just finished airing.

In short, Harvey made a significant breakthrough in the Necromancy Sect, creating a perfect undead wife. This wife completely understood Harvey's preferences, kept up with his pace of thinking, and loved him wholeheartedly. Her happiest moments were spending time researching with Harvey, and his progress was her source of joy. In this regard, she indeed deserved the description of being the "happiest," as typical couples would have arguments and secrets, whereas they fit together like a perfectly matched puzzle.

At first glance, it seemed quite logical.

Then, as usual, Ashe made an appearance, and with just a few words, he enlightened the wife about her potential as an undead. To better assist Harvey, she decided to become a necromancer as an undead, no longer content with being merely Harvey's dependent!

At first glance, it seemed quite inspiring.

Because she chose the second path, she naturally was no longer the happiest wife, her ranking is invalid, and the reward is voided..

To most people, this future scenario seemed reasonable: a necromancer creating an undead bride that satisfies his every sexual fetish wasn't unusual, right? And distributing the position of the happiest wife to an undead creature as a nod to minority inclusion on the Gospel Ranking seemed quite politically correct, didn't it?

But for those who knew Harvey, this was absurdity to the max—if Harvey really needed an undead for sexual function, he wouldn't have only one undead, and that being Alice (♂)!

Yes, Harvey did have someone he liked before, but those feelings arose before he delved deeply into the Necromancy Sect, much like cicadas in summer—once missed, never to return.

Even if someone else liked him now, Harvey, engulfed in the cold winter of necromancy, could never embrace summer again.

Therefore, Harvey now only looked at people's functionality, not their sexual function.

This was something Ashe and Igor had much to say about. Over the past few days, sharing bunk beds with no private space had given Harvey plenty of time to observe them. He had meticulously planned various undead enhancements for them—ghoul enhancements for their hands, bone demon enhancements for their legs, lich enhancements for their hearts... When Harvey looked at people, it was really no different from how one would evaluate cuts of pork.

And after all, a partner is ultimately for emotional comfort. However, as a madman so powerful that he didn't even need friends, Harvey didn't need any emotional comfort. In the dead of night, he wouldn't be wallowing in nostalgia; he'd be incessantly planning his own death scenes.

"Harvey," Ashe asked, "what are your thoughts on this?"

"I don't rule out the possibility of having a mental breakdown in the future," Harvey replied calmly. "Who knows, I might come up with new ideas when I see Igor getting married? After all, human emotions are regulated by hormones, and reproduction is one of the major concerns of those hormones. It's not surprising if I succumb to biological instincts."

"But undead can't reproduce..."

"Hmm?" Harvey looked at Ashe with a peculiar expression. "Isn't reproduction essentially creating a new, intelligent life?"

"So, you still haven't..." Ashe trailed off, suddenly catching up with Harvey's line of thought—in a certain sense, necromancers did indeed reproduce.

"So, isn't she both your daughter and your wife?" Igor said casually.

"Igor, have you lost your mind? I didn't even say that out loud!" Ashe hastily covered Lise's ears. "There are kids here, mind your influence!"

Lise broke free from Ashe's hands. "Aunt Bukin, tell me more, I want to hear."

Ashe: " $\Sigma(^{\circ}\triangle|||)\} \text{ ?}$ "

Next up, in 7th place, was The Happiest Red Hat, and the lucky winner was none other than someone everyone knew—Cleos. Before they could finish introducing her glorious achievements, Ashe swooped in. Just like before, he easily lured Cleos away, and Cleos seemed to become Ashe's simp. Resulting in another ranking invalid and the rewards voided.

The 6th place was The Happiest Merchant, featuring the honorable appearance of Yvaren. Character introduction, Ashe's swoop-in, and recruiting her as a lackey...

The 5th place...

The ranking continued to grow more outrageous, featuring people who were almost all somehow related to Ashe and his group. In each piece of footage, Ashe made an inevitable appearance, using various methods to divert the ranked individuals from their original paths, leading them to follow Ashe instead.

And the most absurd part was that nearly all the unmarried females in the ranking, including Cleos, Yvaren, and others, displayed strong affection for Ashe. Ashe seriously doubted whether the Gospel Ranking had misidentified his race—he was human, not a Bewitcher!

A well-meaning “Happiness Ranking” had morphed into Ashe’s personal collection tour, turning the Gospel Ranking into a matrimonial Firm.

Lise clung to Ashe like a koala, earnestly picking out potential stepmoms, critiquing them for being too short or not gentle enough, as if Ashe had any real say in the matter.

“Happiness Ranking, 2nd place: The Happiest Patriarch”

Seeing this title, even though Ashe had already gotten used to the absurdity of the ranking list, he still couldn’t shake the sense of foreboding.

“Synopsis: With the help of her sister Nona Senhaeser, Qenna Senhaeser has successfully expanded their Family...”

Lise keenly noticed Ashe’s body suddenly becoming tense and asked, “Dad, why do you get nervous when you see Annan’s mom?”

Annan turned to look at him.

“No way!” Ashe quickly shook his head. “I’m nervous because I’m scared! Qenna almost captured our Sanctuary spellcaster. Isn’t it perfectly normal for someone to be afraid of her?”

Lise and Annan gave Ashe a suspicious look before looking back at the footage.

The initial scenes were quite normal, depicting Qenna building up the Senhaeser Family with Nona’s support. Until a familiar scene flashed by and ‘Ashe’ suddenly appeared in the frame.

“You!” Qenna immediately stood up, tense. “Why are you here!?”

“Isn’t it perfectly normal for me to be here?” Ashe walked up to Qenna. “Haven’t you always wanted me to become a Senhaeser clansman? Now that I’m home, you’re not happy?”

As he spoke, he reached a hand towards Qenna, only for her to slap it away. “Ashe, the Senhaeser Family does not welcome you. Hurry up and—”

“Ashe pressed Qenna back into the chair, their faces so close that their noses nearly touched.”

“‘Manners,’ Ashe said, staring at her. ‘Your heart is racing. Are you nervous?’”

“‘It’s fear. I’m scared of you!’ Qenna gritted her teeth. ‘Ashe, how dare you—’”

“‘You got it wrong again.’ Ashe gently touched Qenna’s face. ‘What are you supposed to call me, hmm?’”

“Qenna’s face turned bright red. The mighty Sanctuary Red Hat didn’t dare to resist but instead leaned stiffly against the chair, her chest heaving as she averted her gaze and bit her lower lip. ‘Master...’”

“The next scene shifted to a large bed.”

“Banjeet, help me out here.”

“Sure.”

Ashe and Banjeet quickly shielded Lise’s eyes and ears, instantly cutting her off from the global channel. Lise was, of course, defiant, squirming and protesting, “Why can’t I watch Dad and Aunt Qenna!? Let me watch, I wanna see! Did they kiss?”

They didn’t.

Given that the footage was meant for the entire Gospel audience, the depiction was quite mild. The screen only showed Ashe lying alone in bed, covered with a blanket, which was enough to make him breathe a sigh of relief.

Inside the Senhaeser building, a maid who saw this scene gasped.

“It’s true after all!”

“What they told me was spot on! I thought it was just a lie... but that man really is intimate with the heads of the family...”

“The Patriarch, even she would act coquettishly! She even begged him, begged him to stop... I couldn’t have imagined this scene even in my wildest dreams!”

“Happiness Ranking, 2nd place: The Happiest Patriarch”

“Synopsis: Qenna Senhaeser could have become the happiest Patriarch with the help of Nona Senhaeser, but unfortunately, she encountered Ashe Heath, becoming his captive. This ranking is invalid.”

“Reward: Voided”

“Culprit: Ashe Heath”

When the 2nd place on the 'Happiness Ranking' ended, the room suddenly fell into silence.

The atmosphere was so heavy that even the mental spellcaster, Heath, couldn't think of anything to lighten the mood.

Lise gave Ashe a resentful glance, then turned to Annan and said, "Sister Annan..."

Although the greeting was still as mundane as ever, at this moment, the title "Sister Annan" seemed to carry a new meaning.

Annan glanced at them expressionlessly and then looked down, saying, "The first place has been updated."

"Happiness Ranking, 1st place: The Happiest Empress"

"Synopsis: ..."

There wasn't even a synopsis for the first place. It transitioned directly to the footage, and this time, the Gospel Book didn't even bother with a pretense, featuring Ashe right from the start.

"In a grand palace, Ashe lounged lazily on the throne at the top, with a young empress sitting on his lap, her back to the camera, obscuring her face. She held Ashe's neck intimately, looking like the favored consort of the Calamity Demon Lord."

The footage ended.

"Happiness Ranking, 1st place: The Happiest Empress"

"Synopsis: With Ashe Heath involved, ranking invalid."

"Reward: Voided"

"Culprit: Ashe Heath"

Ashe closed the Gospel Book with a sense of immense relief.

This was the most uncomfortable ranking list he had ever seen because he appeared as the villain from start to finish.

Unlike the Family Ranking, where he was at most a lackey, with the chief culprit being the necromancer Harvey, in the Happiness Ranking, he practically monopolized the mischief. From the lowest place to the first, he had indulged in everything, leaving no grass unplucked.

If evil had a color, it certainly wouldn't be enough to describe Ashe's shade.

Ashe noticed Lise rewinding to view the empress scene and said, "Stop looking, she's definitely not your stepmom. I don't even know her... Huh?"

Lise suddenly tensed up, quickly closing the Gospel Book. "Dad, why were you surprised?"

"Nothing, it's just that the empress's pose was similar to yours," Ashe replied.

At that moment, Lise was also sitting on his lap, one arm around his neck. The resemblance to the empress scene was indeed striking.

Lise froze but then quickly returned to her usual self, hands on her hips as she laughed loudly, "That's right, I am the empress! So, Dad, you have to listen to me. Tomorrow, you need to buy ice cream!"

Ashe ignored her, turning to Annan and Igor. "Now that the ranking list is over, can you explain what's going on with the Weaving Festival?"

Annan closed the Gospel Book and carefully considered her words.

"Do you know 'Divine Illusion'? In ancient theater, when the plot required a major twist, and roles like angels needed to appear, illusion spellcasters would create scene effects to make the angel appear abruptly on stage."

"Later, in theater and novel works, 'Divine Illusion' came to refer to those contrived, forced, and completely unprepared plot twists. For example, when writers didn't know how to continue, they would either have an angel save everything or a meteorite destroy everything."

Ashe pondered, "Are we the angels?"

"No," Annan said. "You are the meteorite."

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

Chapter 431: The Gospel Is Framing Me

Senhaeser Building, top-floor office.

Hearing the sound of the oak door being pushed open, Qenna, who was in a conversation with the Listening Minister, turned her head and saw her sister, with a gloomy expression, walking in wearing high-heeled boots.

“Captain Nona.” The Listening Minister nodded slightly in greeting, and Nona nodded back, calmly standing behind Qenna.

“That’s it, for now, postpone the Listening Plan for over three years. Change the decision-making preference from ‘future risk-oriented’ to ‘current stability-oriented’. I need you to prepare a report on the number, realms, and Spellcasting Sect of the spellcasters within the tribe, prioritizing their training importance.”

“Understood.”

After the Listening Minister left the room, Qenna stood up and gazed at the white mist city below. The eyes of the Elf patriarch seemed to be envisioning the future of Vamora, and her meditative lips appeared to be weighing the family’s safety.

“Nona, come here.”

Nona walked over, not quite understanding, only to have Qenna smack her bottom hard. The usually composed and quiet vice-captain shivered all over, letting out a surprised “Eek.”

“I just found out you like to spank, like a mother cat...” Qenna chuckled softly.

Nona abruptly pushed Qenna into a chair, staring at her sister sternly and coldly. Unfortunately, the blush that wouldn’t fade from her porcelain-like face reduced her intimidation to that of a little kitten puffing up its fur.

“What’s the deal with the ranking list?”

“We discussed this before, didn’t we? The gospel made an erroneous judgment,” Qenna replied calmly. “Annan and her people from the exotic land are variables that the gospel can’t accurately predict. Annan’s deliberate interference caused the gospel to vastly overestimate their potential and future...”

“I’m asking why you and I are both serving Ashe Heath on the ranking list!”

“For the same reason as on the Family Ranking, Ashe’s peculiar tastes...”

“It’s different,” Nona retorted. “On the Family Ranking, we were transformed into undead, and our minds were twisted, so that’s not surprising. But on the Happiness Ranking, you and I are fully conscious!”

“The Happiness Ranking also mentioned it. As the Happiest Patriarch, I was forced by Ashe,” Qenna paused, then suddenly gritted her teeth and said, “Damn Ashe! He must have threatened me with the Family, forcing me to submit to him. I wish I could lock him up in a dark room and torment him day and night... But in the future, he is the Source of Calamity and an Undying Fiend. His power will surely surpass the Sanctuary. For the sake of protecting the Family, the Gospel thinks that I would endure humiliation and bend to his will. It’s understandable.”

“Is it?” Nona said coldly. “But I got the feeling that you didn’t seem too unwilling in the images.”

“Ashe is a companion of Rust Crow, and Rust Crow is a powerful mental spellcaster. To protect the Family, I would have to conceal my killing intent and even pretend to enjoy it. Otherwise, how could I deceive this calamity-breeding Demon Lord!” Qenna sighed deeply. “I’ve sacrificed so much for the Family’s well-being, but since I am the patriarch, I must shoulder this responsibility.”

“What about me?” Nona demanded. “Why am I in it too?”

“That proves Ashe is full of vile deeds. It’s not enough for him to use underhanded tactics to get me; he even wants a piece of you...”

“But the problem is, why do I also look so willing in the images!?”

Qenna quietly looked at her blushing sister and said, “Then Nona, maybe you should reflect on why you would want to steal your niece’s man...”

Nona was so angry she laughed. “Qenna, you’re still trying to blame me? Ever since you returned to be the patriarch, I’ve always been your avatar spirit! What I’m saying is, when we were at the Belldate manor, how could I have developed feelings for Ashe? It must be your emotions spilling over into me!”

Every Six Heraldry patriarch has several avatar spirits among their clansmen to ensure the Family’s power inheritance if the patriarch suddenly dies. During the white mist anomaly, Qenna was trapped in a Dream, and the avatar spirit of Qenna within Nona’s soul activated, allowing her sister to temporarily move using her body.

This insurance mechanism is stringent, given that avatar spirits could potentially usurp the host’s will. Therefore, both parties must trust each other completely. But in the Six Heraldry Family, trust has never been an issue.

“Even so, the avatar spirit can still have side effects on the host, such as emotional leakage. To give an analogy, the relationship between the main body and the avatar is like a champagne tower. Normally, there’s no impact, but if the emotions of the main body overflow, they drip down into the avatars below.”

“Can’t it just be that you’re moved yourself?” Qenna argued stubbornly. “Don’t blame everything on me!”

“I’ve always been detached my whole life, so why would I care so much about Annan?” Nona said. “If it’s not your fault, whose is it?”

“Putting that aside,” Qenna changed the subject, “the important issue now is that the Gospel has a big problem.”

Hearing her sister talk about business, Nona could only suppress her irritation and nod, “Updating early is an unprecedented event in a thousand years. And after reviewing Ashe and his people’s profiles, it’s clear that they vastly differ from the ranking list descriptions. If I’m not mistaken...”

“The Gospel can no longer make things up,” Qenna motioned for her sister to sit across from her. “We need to change our strategy for utilizing the Gospel. Nona, for the next few days, assist the Listening Department and try to use up our Gospel points as much as possible.”

“No problem... wait, what?”

“The Gospel can no longer make things up.”

Annan said, “So, it uses people like you, these meteorites, to smash through everything.”

“Can no longer make things up?” Ashe and Lise were both puzzled. “What does that mean?”

“It can’t weave a genuine future,” Igor explained. “So it uses us, these fake futures, as replacements.”

“Since we’re talking about drama, let’s use it as a metaphor,” Annan said. “If the Gospel is an author, then the Weaving Festival is their meticulously written work. Before writing, it usually spends fifty years collecting materials and then completes the work in one go within 100 days.”

“Its update speed is one chapter every ten days. Though it may occasionally be delayed, it has consistently delivered quality updates for hundreds of years. But one day, it suddenly updates six days early—what could be the reason?”

“Maybe it has some chapters in reserve?” Ashe guessed.

“An author who has procrastinated for hundreds of years suddenly having a backlog of chapters? Highly unlikely,” Annan chuckled. “Although I don’t know the exact reason, it’s

definitely not a normal update. This ‘Happiness Ranking’ is undoubtedly a rushed product.”

“If you were this author and had only written 40% of your manuscript, but the editor suddenly demanded that you hand it over immediately, how would you resolve it?”

“I would deal with the editor,” Ashe replied. “But the Gospel isn’t just anyone; does it even have an editor?”

“Dad, you’re silly! There are Angels and a Divine Sovereign above the Gospel!” Lise quickly grasped the situation. “So, to submit the manuscript, did the Gospel just scribble and haphazardly fill in the remaining 60%?”

“Something like that, but the Gospel didn’t just scribble aimlessly.”

Annan spread her hands, her expression complicated. “The Gospel used you all.”

“You are people from an exotic land. The Gospel isn’t aware of your pasts, so you hold infinite possibilities. This also serves as your leverage to deceive the Gospel. But precisely because of these ‘infinite possibilities,’ you become the Gospel’s best... how should I put it, filler side-story material?”

“Normally, for the Gospel to weave a ‘true future,’ it needs to leverage all past intelligence to piece together the future bit by bit. This is why the Gospel delays updates until the very last second—another second of speculation makes its predictions more accurate.”

“Therefore, even if the Gospel wanted to update early, it wouldn’t work. It lacks the time to predict the future of us Gospel people, meaning it can’t predict it at all. As a miracle that foretells the future, it can afford to be inaccurate but can never actively make mistakes.”

“But with you people from an exotic land, it’s different—precisely because of your ‘infinite possibilities,’ the Gospel can allow itself to make fuzzy predictions about you! Even if its predictions are off, it’s not a mistake, just less accurate!”

Hearing this, Ashe finally understood.

“So,” Ashe said calmly, patting Lise on the head, “the Gospel, as an author, needs to update early. However, it can’t write nonsense about you Gospel people because you are the main characters, and tampering with that would ruin your character arcs. The Gospel knows better than to let that happen.”

“However, we’re different. We are new characters who crash in mid-story. No matter what plotline we follow, it’s deemed reasonable. So, the Gospel just makes up our storylines to fill the updates!” S

“Wait a minute,” Harvey said through a mouthful of food, “making stuff up isn’t the same as random writing. Our characters are quite different from those in the Happiness Ranking!”

“That’s because the Gospel doesn’t derive our future based on our real personalities,” Igor said calmly, tracing the rim of his wine glass. “Compared to the Gospel people, our future might be even harder to predict. It shoots arrows after drawing the target, first setting a template for the Happiness Ranking and then fitting us into it. That’s why you get bizarre plotlines like me having a daughter, or Harvey creating a wife.”

“Actually, I think Leia is pretty nice...” Ashe muttered, but seeing Lise’s murderous glare, he quickly straightened up. “The Gospel is being completely irresponsible, wrecking my character! How am I supposed to show my face now?”

Harvey took a long sip of stew and reminded, “Even without the Happiness Ranking, going out now would still make you the Source of Calamity, Calamity Demon Lord, and a fugitive...”

“The Gospel is a good chronicler but a poor fantasy writer. Everything in the Happiness Ranking can be seen as third-rate fiction written under the influence,” Igor said. “It’s all fake.”

“Everything is fake?” Ashe sounded a bit disappointed.

Lise, recalling the number one scene on the Happiness Ranking, glanced at her hand mirror and murmured softly, “Not everything is fake...”

“Although it’s fabricated, the Gospel must have seen some signs to inspire its secondary creations,” Annan said, staring intently at Ashe. “For example, Igor and Anfel indeed almost became a couple, and Harvey does have the power to create Necromantic Brides. So...”

“Ashe, why does the Gospel think you have relationships with Qenna and Nona?”

“Yeah, why!” Lise immediately lifted her head to join the attack.

A speck of the Gospel’s dust on Ashe’s head felt like a mountain.

Ashe declared firmly, “The gospel is framing me.”

Annan said, “Why did you lick Qenna’s face? That’s definitely not something you normally do. I haven’t seen you lick Lise, so on what basis did the Gospel derive this plot?”

Ashe gritted his teeth and said, “The gospel is framing me!”

Annan pressed on, “And why were you in bed with both Qenna and Nona? Moreover, you even-let Nona do that to you...”

Ashe completely capitulated, “This is truly the gospel framing me!”

Heaven and earth could attest, Ashe never had such thoughts about Nona. This was simply the Gospel reworking the synthetic image data that Yvaren had sold him!

Just as Ashe was being thoroughly overwhelmed, Banjeet suddenly spoke up, “Since everything in the Happiness Ranking has some basis, then...”

“Why did Igor’s daughter Leia push Ashe to hurry up and have a child with Aunt Annan?”

Everyone turned to look at the Purple Moth.

Now the pressure shifted to Annan.

After a moment of silence, Annan reluctantly nodded, “The gospel is framing him.”

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

Chapter 432: The Gospel in Chaos

“Blame Ashe!”

In Belldate’s main residence, Yvaren stomped in anger after reading the ranking: “If it weren’t for Ashe’s interference, we would have received two sets of ranking rewards this time!”

Leia is nowhere to be found now, and the rewards would definitely go to her parents, Anfel and Igor; plus, Yvaren herself also made it onto the Happiness Ranking as the ‘The Happiest Merchant.’ Hence, Belldate really had a big harvest, making it onto the list twice in a row.

However, Ashe’s appearance rendered the rankings invalid, nullifying the rewards!

To Yvaren, this was even more infuriating than being taken as Ashe’s concubine on the list — two rewards lost! When she is not making decisions, Yvaren is actually quite meticulous; other family patriarchs would definitely value the ranking information more than the rewards, but Yvaren couldn’t stop thinking about the rewards.

After all, to her, everything came from Belldate, and she didn't own a single thing. The reason she left home in her youth, longing for real love, was this. Now, the Gospel acknowledged her personal value, and she was so close to getting a reward that was 'exclusively hers,' only to lose it because of Ashe—it was infuriating!

"No, I need to manipulate Igor to lure Ashe over too!" Yvaren sulked at the table, "Then you take care of Igor, and I'll handle Ashe. We must squeeze the rewards back!"

Anfel glanced curiously at Yvaren—her sister's focus on Ashe seemed a bit intense, and Ashe was not a debtor. Technically, he shouldn't factor into her sister's decision-making process. Speaking of which, although her sister wanted to pursue ordinary love, deep down, she liked the bossy CEO drama. However, the most bossy CEO in the Gospel was herself...

"Yvaren, the reason our ranking rewards were nullified actually has nothing to do with Ashe."

"Huh?" Yvaren tilted her head, "How is it unrelated to him? If he hadn't enchanted me, how could I have lost the title of The Happiest Merchant?"

Anfel said, "Think about it, Ashe is just an influencing factor, or rather, he's just an excuse. Just like I can only give you suggestions, but the one making the actual decisions is you, Yvaren."

Yvaren blinked, "You mean..."

"Ashe Heath is just the Gospel's scapegoat."

"But why does the Gospel keep causing my character to break into other people's stories as the Source of Calamity, even if it's just fan fiction?"

Ashe puzzledly asked, "And it's been ten times in a row—in its storyline, I ended up as an anti-Gospel anarchist. Every ranked individual on the Happiness Ranking had their lives changed by me, leading to the rankings becoming invalid... If I had that much free time, why wouldn't I just go back to sleep with my wife?"

"Ashe, aren't you an anarchist?" Harvey asked curiously, cutting a small piece of lamb and putting it in his mouth. "I've never seen you do any good orderly deed."

Ashe wanted to vehemently refute the necromancer with examples, but as he recalled his good deeds: prison break, smuggling, deceiving the Gospel, fleeing from a bounty... Not to mention, he had just instigated a legion war in the Virtual Realm.

Source of Calamity—when you think about it, the title wasn't entirely wrong!

"I adopted Lise! Isn't that an orderly good deed?" Ashe lifted Lise up, and Lise nodded repeatedly.

Harvey was momentarily confused—hadn't Lise initially latched onto Ashe because she found him easy to bully, using him as a scapegoat? Was his memory wrong, or had Ashe and Lise started rewriting history?

"Ashe, you're mistaken," Igor said after sipping some hot milk. "The Gospel needs you to be the Source of Calamity, so it writes stories about the people around you."

"What do you mean?" Ashe asked, looking baffled as he stroked Lise's little white furry head to soothe his nerves. "Did I insult the Gospel? Why is it retaliating against me in this way?"

"Speaking of which, I haven't explained why you guys are like meteorites."

Annan flicked her earring and said, "The significance of a meteorite is its ability to destroy all characters, thus ending the story immediately—for the Gospel, rushing updates, 'completion' is exactly what it needs."

"In fact, if you look at the ranking list, the Gospel does have a lot of 'original content'—besides Leia and Harvey's wife, Daphne, Cleos, Yvaren, and Qenna are all characters that have already been born within the Gospel. Therefore, it can't just make up their futures."

"But," Annan paused, "the Gospel has only projected a tiny bit of their futures. When there's not enough time to continue the projections, what does it do? At this point, it needs a meteorite to destroy them, ending their storylines directly."

"Ashe, Igor, Harvey—you are that meteorite."

"As long as you all intervene in their lives and reckless destroy their fates, the Gospel doesn't need to weave their futures anymore, and the ranking becomes invalid. As for why you would do this in the future..."

"Because we possess 'infinite possibilities,'" Ashe said bitterly. "The Gospel is using us as its cleanup crew!"

If the Gospel were a real writer, Ashe would want to charge in and yell at it: "Stopping updates would be better than producing this kind of garbage! Trying to rush through updates with such lousy plots—do you even care about your readers? Give me a refund!"

The current situation is that the Gospel, in its rush to update, inserted a scene midway through the storyline where "a sudden meteorite crashes down and wipes out all the characters," abruptly ending the story, and then submitted it for publication.

As for why the meteorite crashes down, it's actually a long-laid plan: this meteorite is from an exotic land. Although it currently appears to be an ordinary migrant worker meteorite, there's a chance it could grow into a demon king meteorite, even if that chance is only 1%.

The Gospel might find this method convenient, but has it considered how the meteorite feels!?

"I can understand the meteorite part," Harvey said while eating his mashed potatoes, "but why does the Gospel have to invalidate the rankings?"

"Because the rankings are actually invalid," Igor explained. "Not only is Ashe's intervention storyline made up, but even the ranked individuals themselves are fabricated—they are only ranked because they are connected to Ashe. The Gospel filled in their futures on the list, making Ashe's interference appear more reasonable." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"So the Gospel has to disqualify their rankings. If it were a true Happiness Ranking, they wouldn't even make the list!"

Annan shook her head. "Not necessarily. I think only the 10th spot might be valid, but that's about it. After all, you don't know Daphne or her brother... But to align with Ashe's 'destructive nature,' even The Happiest Wedding had to be sacrificed."

"As for the ranks after that, they were probably set up to make Ashe's involvement seem more reasonable. Most of the people in those ranks are familiar to Ashe. It's too much of a coincidence otherwise."

Ashe felt his blood vessels harden with frustration!

The Gospel's tricks run deep. I need a Blood Moon!

With Ashe as the perfect scapegoat, the Gospel managed to update a trashy chapter but can put all the blame on Ashe. Moreover, it can later invalidate these plots as if nothing ever happened!

This doesn't even affect the accuracy of the Weaving Festival!

So, the Gospel managed to churn out an update, the readers had to endure a filler chapter, and the only world left damaged was the one belonging to the innocent Ashe.

The living room fell silent as everyone contemplated the changes brought by the Gospel until Banjeet finally spoke: "Let's eat—the soup is getting cold."

Everyone then remembered they were in the middle of a meal, which had been abruptly interrupted by the Happiness Ranking.

Ashe turned his head and saw that Harvey had already eaten nearly half of the food—he had spent the whole day working like a beast at the construction site without using his spellcaster abilities and was famished.

“Uncle Harvey, could you please stop eating? There’s hardly anything left for me!”

“Butler Banjeet, could you get me a bowl of soup, please?”

“The lamb is tender and delicious. Ashe, your Substitute’s cooking skills are impressive.”

“Mmhmm!” Lise, in her hurry to compete with Harvey for food, ended up choking. Ashe couldn’t help but laugh, patting her back and offering her some soup.

After everyone had eaten and felt satisfied, Ashe suddenly realized that while the Happiness Ranking might be outlandish, it didn’t really affect him much. As Harvey mentioned, even if his reputation wasn’t already infamously bad, any further tarnish was insignificant. He didn’t need the extra punishment.

“As long as I’m useless enough, no one can exploit me!”

What Happiness Ranking? Being full is more important to him.

Until Igor suddenly broke the warmth of the moment: “Young Lady, you seem quite happy.”

Everyone turned to look at Annan and noticed that the corner of her mouth, smudged with a bit of black pepper sauce, was indeed slightly upturned. Annan paused and then smiled, “Well, I worked all day, and the dinner is so delicious. I couldn’t help but feel a bit happy.”

“Is that so?” The Con Artist lowered his eyelids. “I thought you were happy because the ranking list is invalid.”

Huh?

Ashe, Harvey, Lise, and the others looked confused. Why would Annan be happy about the ranking list being invalid?

However, Annan sighed and spread her hands, saying, “Actually, I’m not certain yet, and it’s not like I was deliberately hiding it. Igor, you’re just too suspicious.”

“If you want me to trust you completely, you’d have to be as foolish as Ashe,” Igor replied coolly.

“Alright, can we stop picking on me for a moment?” Ashe said. “What are you all talking about?”

“If the Gospel is rushing to conclude the Weaving Festival, it means this kind of ‘ranking list invalidation’ could happen again. It’s possible that even the next six ranking lists might all be invalid,” Igor explained. “This way, only the first three ranking lists would genuinely count.”

“Then the winner of the Divine Sovereign’s Wish would be chosen only from the top three ranking lists.”

Ashe and Lise were momentarily stunned and then stared intently at Annan!

Their minds raced back to recall the top achievements of the Funeral Firm in the first three rankings:

1st place in the Art Ranking, Annan Dolan.

1st place in the Family Ranking, Archibald Harvey.

1st place in the Ranking of Schemes, Igor Bukin, and... 10th place, Annan Dolan!

In the Funeral Firm, Annan alone held two rankings!

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

Chapter 433: The Final Ranking List

In Annan’s plan, competing for a ranking list position was merely a means to an end; their ultimate goal had always been the Divine Sovereign’s Wish.

The great Omniscient Weaver would personally fulfill the wishes of the wisher.

Even outsiders like Ashe, Harvey, and Igor, who showed little respect for the Omniscient Weaver, did not dare to underestimate the significance of this wish.

Although the Divine Sovereign likely had limitations, to mere mortals like them, these rulers of the Kingdoms seemed almost Universal in their capabilities. Just like ants, who, with their limited imagination, would only wish for a larger and stronger body or

tastier food, Ashe and the others couldn't possibly wish for anything beyond the Divine Sovereign's capabilities.

Sure, they knew the Divine Sovereigns were just higher forms of ascended spellcasters. Since there were multiple Divine Sovereigns, each one probably had different focal areas and couldn't be truly omnipotent, similar to how spellcasters specialize in specific Spellcasting Sects.

However, even a spellcaster proficient in just one sect could reflect many spells through that single discipline. For example, Ashe's Swordsmanship could kill negative statuses (Slash Me), teleport (Rush), and defend (sword body barrier). He wouldn't be surprised if someday his Swordsmanship could even cut chemical bonds to harness nuclear energy.

Moreover, over the long years, even if the Divine Sovereigns only honed their skills gradually, they would still master a vast majority of the Spellcasting Sects. The miracles and Divine Interventions they commanded were beyond mortal imagination. Rust Crow spent so many years and so much effort to resurrect a single person, yet in the Time Continent, resurrection services were openly available, provided at a clear price to the heroic soul commanders by the Divine Sovereigns.

The most outrageous request mortals could make would probably be something like "Make me a Divine Sovereign as well." However, the Omniscient Weaver isn't an artificial intelligence like Gospel that's constrained by computational logic. The Weaver might turn you into a "Divine Sovereign Lala Fatty" (a new species created by the Weaver), thus achieving your wish while also diversifying the Gospel Kingdom's menu.

But slightly lesser wishes, such as becoming an Angel, resurrecting someone, ruling Gospel, or having unlimited Gospel points, should be fairly manageable. Hence, obtaining the Divine Sovereign's Wish, even if it couldn't satisfy all desires, would at least solve all problems.

Annan's original plan to obtain the Divine Sovereign's Wish was as follows: people from exotic lands would strive to secure the ranking list positions on the Future Ranking. The Echoer with the highest ranking and greatest weight should be the first to receive the Divine Sovereign's Wish.

This was why Annan was adamant about making them sign slave Pacts—without absolute control over them, if they obtained the Divine Sovereign's Wish, she wouldn't be able to take it back from them!

Now, the Echoer with the highest ranking and greatest weight turned out to be Annan herself!

No middleman cutting into the deal!

Ashe exhaled heavily and glanced at Lise, “Well, this works too.”

Lise’s eyes flickered, but she lowered her head to eat the roasted lamb chops without saying anything. Ashe knew it wasn’t that simple—he hadn’t forgotten that Lise had tried to conspire with him to seize the Divine Sovereign’s Wish on the first night.

By now, Ashe didn’t think Lise was just some lost little girl picked up by the Four Pillars Cult. Though he didn’t believe she could really take the Divine Sovereign’s Wish from them, avoiding trouble was always better.

Moreover, his relationship with Annan had rapidly improved recently, making Ashe fully aware that Annan would never let go of this opportunity. As representatives of greed and madness, Igor and Harvey had long been itching to make a move.

Even Ashe himself found it hard to resist the temptation. Wandering in a foreign place, tossed by the turbulent waves of fate, having nothing left, didn’t he want to dream of happiness for once?

Never test human nature, and especially not your own, lest you become the Abyss, lest you become the evil dragon.

For now, they could still work together harmoniously, enjoying dinner merrily. But as the conclusion drew near, the more brilliant the current cooperation, the more brutal the inevitable betrayal would be.

This sacrilege that began with deception would surely end with deception.

Therefore, upon hearing that Annan had secured the spot for the wish, Ashe felt some disappointment, but more was relief.

If the spot were in Ashe and the others’ hands, they might still have a chance to resist. But with the spot in Annan’s hands, they had no hope of taking it away. They remained 100% Annan’s obedient slaves.

Harvey ate the creamy sauce on his plate by sopping it up with bread, seemingly unconcerned that Annan had secured victory ahead of schedule. Igor glanced between Ashe and Lise, lowering his eyelids in deep thought.

“If I do obtain the Divine Sovereign’s Wish, I will honor our initial promises and help fulfill your wishes,” Annan said seriously. “Harvey, I will help you acquire the legacy of the Necromancy Angel and provide you with ample resources.”

“Igor, if you want money, I’ll give it to you. If you want freedom, you’ll have that too. When our Pact ends, you can choose your own path.”

“Ashe, Lise,” Annan looked at them, “trust me, I will ensure you both find happiness.” search the novelFire.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Ashe blinked-how come the lines directed at him and Lise seemed so different? Is Annan simplifying things for Lise?

“I don’t know if these thirty-plus days have been enough for you to see through me, but I can only offer this earnest promise: I will not disappoint you,” Purple Moth paused, “as long as I succeed in obtaining the Divine Sovereign’s Wish.”

Igor caught the underlying meaning in the Young Lady’s words, “Do you have competitors?”

“Assuming all Future Ranking lists are nullified, I am indeed the highest-ranked Echoer,” Annan said. “But the problem is, the final ranking list will definitely not be null and void.”

“Not only will it remain valid, but the top rank on this list was determined even before the Weaving Festival began.”

After finishing her meal, Lise came over to Ashe and acted playfully. As Ashe wiped her mouth with a handkerchief, he asked skeptically, “But that’s just one top spot, and you have one plus ten, don’t you?”

“What if I told you that in the past ten Weaving Festivals, the Divine Sovereign’s Wish has always been granted to this top spot?” Annan said.

The outlanders were slightly taken aback, and Igor quickly realized, “This ranking list carries the highest influence weight?”

Annan nodded. “In the past ten Weaving Festivals, there have been the Legend Ranking, the Battle Power Ranking, and even the Great Men’s Ranking. But no matter who held the top position on these lists, they never obtained the Divine Sovereign’s Wish. Meanwhile, throughout all these festivals, the first nine ranking lists have always changed, but the final ranking list has never altered. The Divine Sovereign’s Wish is only granted to the first place on this final list.”

Ashe asked, “So what ranking list is it? The Omniscient Weaver’s Illegitimate Children Ranking? Do we stand a chance to get on it? ...Hey, what are you doing?”

Lise gently bit Ashe’s finger, and when he looked over, she turned her head away. Ashe thought she was just being playful and didn’t give it much thought.

“It’s not the Illegitimate Children Ranking, and no, we cannot get on it,” Annan said. “It’s called the Gospel Ranking, and the criteria for getting on it are-“

“Only the purest, most innocent, kindest, and most beautiful young girls can be included on this list.”

Everyone was stunned. Igor asked incredulously, “So men can’t get on it?”

“There hasn’t been such a precedent,” Annan replied. “So, do you understand why you can’t make it on the list?”

“Because we’re not women?”

“No, if it were only about gender, it wouldn’t be an insurmountable obstacle,” Annan said, spreading her hands. “The main issue is that the Gospel has never seen an innocent Con Artist, a pure-hearted necromancer, or a kind Calamity Demon Lord.”

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

Chapter 434: Assassinate the Princess

The highest-ranked “Gospel Ranking” astonishingly requires pure and innocent maidens to make the list!

Although Ashe knew that everyone loves beautiful girls, even the Divine Sovereign being this shallow was simply outrageous!

“Young Lady, let me look at the ranked individuals of past ‘Gospel Rankings.’ I need to thoroughly study the Omniscient Weaver’s preferences!”

“Can’t you use your own points to look?” Annan touched her amethyst earring and said, “But even if you look back, you wouldn’t find much——because the top Echoers of past Gospel Rankings have always been veiled maidens, their appearances concealed.”

“Huh? The Omniscient Weaver monopolizes?” Ashe looked down at Lise and took out a Twisting Mask from his pocket, placing it on her face: “Like this?”

“Where did this big demon king and little witch come from,” Annan said irritably. “Don’t even think about it. I’ve never considered using Lise to deceive the Gospel Ranking. Not to mention, Lise doesn’t meet the requirements at all. Plus, as I just mentioned, the top spot of this ranking list is already determined even before the Weaving Festival begins.”

Although Ashe thought Lise was the cutest little girl, she indeed didn't embody 'innocence' and was a bit far from being 'kind.' If she grows up, she might be someone skilled in playing with emotions, someone people would both love and hate——Ashe had always thought Lise had recognized the wrong parents; she should have taken Aunt Bukin as her mother instead, that would be a perfect match.

Igor asked, "Then who is the pre-appointed top of the Gospel Ranking?"

"The next Empress of Yisuo."

Annan scanned the crowd and slowly said, "Every top-ranked individual of the Gospel Ranking becomes the Empress of Yisuo for the next fifty years. The Empress currently residing in the Imperial Capital Nabistin was the top of the previous Gospel Ranking."

"Since the founding of the Yisuo Dynasty, this tradition has never seen an exception and has never changed."

Igor frowned, "Every time?"

"Every time."

"No anomalies? Is there any chance someone else made the ranking but the Yisuo Royal Family incorporated them before the ranking list was published——"

Annan shook her head: "Believe me, when I first thought about seizing the Divine Sovereign's Wish, my initial option was to become first on the 'Gospel Ranking.' And it wasn't just me; who doesn't want the Divine Sovereign's Wish? Just think about it——Belldate, Mercury, Kaesrei, which family hasn't contemplated seizing the Divine Sovereign's Wish?"

"However, the fact is that the Yisuo Royal Family has held tightly onto the first place of the 'Gospel Ranking' for hundreds of years, never letting it slip." She shrugged. "That's precisely why I dared to blaspheme the gospel with you guys——because the Yisuo Royal Family has been blaspheming the gospel for hundreds of years!"

"How could it be that every generation of the royal family has the purest maiden in all of gospel? The only explanation is that the Yisuo Royal Family has mastered the technique to deceive the gospel and has stolen the grand prize of the Weaving Festival!"

"Even if gospel invalidates all other ranking lists, it would never invalidate the 'Gospel Ranking'——because it doesn't need to be woven at all; the Yisuo Royal Family already has the answer prepared!"

Ashe noticed Lise restlessly squirming in his arms. He patted her white-haired head and asked, "But why does the Weaving Festival have such a peculiar ranking list as the

‘Gospel Ranking’? How does having the purest maiden boost productivity or enrich everyone’s spiritual needs?”

If it was just once or twice, that would be one thing, but having this ranking list at every Weaving Festival seems too odd, especially compared to other ranking lists—like the ‘Art Ranking,’ which satisfies spiritual and cultural needs; the ‘Family Ranking,’ which guides families to align with new influential figures; the ‘Ranking of Schemes,’ predicting major events for the next fifty years...

The purest maiden, who neither has accomplishments (good or evil), nor guides social life, might be appreciated occasionally, but how could it be the one consistent ranking list at the Weaving Festival?

Could it really be that the Omniscient Weaver is selecting a consort?

“Gospel has never provided a response.” Annan said, “Currently, there are three mainstream theories—the Omniscient Weaver desires everyone to become innocent, pure, and kind, so this ranking list is created to attract us to emulate; the ‘Gospel Ranking’ is the foundation for the other nine ranking lists, and altering it would cause the collapse of the Weaving Festival, so the Omniscient Weaver keeps it unchanged; the Omniscient Weaver is female and likes women.”

The first reason is easy to understand. People tend to follow what those in power favor, but societal trends clearly cannot be guided by a ranking list alone, especially when it only has ten spots.

If the list could expand to a billion spots, then Ashe might see a kingdom filled with beautiful girls.

The second reason is also quite normal. It’s like spaghetti code—you might not know why it works, but as long as it works, you don’t touch it.

“But why suspect that the Omniscient Weaver is a woman?” Ashe found it confusing. “Shouldn’t the guess be a man?”

Annan asked, “If you designed a ranking list to select women, would you place ‘kindness and innocence’ as the highest criteria?”

“Um...” Ashe pondered, “It’s hard to say. For me, many qualities in women are highly valued.”

Annan pressed, “What’s the most important?”

“It’s kind of embarrassing to say, but it would probably be physique.”

"If it's embarrassing, at least don't answer so quickly!" Annan glanced at herself, huffed, and said, "Shallow!"

"If it were me, I would value her strength," Harvey interjected.

"Mm, I get it," Ashe nodded, "After all, she'd also be your combat tool, so strength is indeed crucial."

"I wasn't talking about corpses." Harvey gave him a look. "I think the best woman is one who can efficiently and cleanly eliminate my targets and bring their bodies back to me."

"Sorry, we're discussing character sexual traits here, not functionality." Ashe looked towards Igor. "What about you?"

Igor coldly glanced at him. "I value the same factors as the 'Gospel Ranking.'"

"Because it's easier to deceive innocent and pure women?"

"Because such women don't exist," Igor stated. "Children learn to manipulate life from a young age, teenagers' desires surge and become uncontrollable, and young adults experience the mingling of good and evil in society... Unless they've been isolated from the world since birth, how could there possibly be innocent and pure maidens? I'd love to see what kind of impossible creatures the Future Ranking will conjure up."

"According to the 'Con Artist's Guide,' the more a con artist verbally despises someone, the more they actually like them deep down." Ashe chuckled, "I never thought you liked that pure and innocent type, Igor... Ah, I get it now!"

Igor raised an eyebrow, "You idiot, what do you understand now?"

"Anfel really matches that description!" Ashe exclaimed in realization. "No wonder Gospel predicts that you and Anfel will get married in the future! It all makes sense; she totally fits your preference!"

"Dad, what's the 'Con Artist's Guide'?" Lise asked. "Can I become a con artist by learning it?"

"No, but learning it will teach you how to deal with con artists." Ashe turned to the young butler, "What about you, Banjeet? What do you value the most?"

Banjeet was slightly taken aback, then smiled, "Isn't this conversation getting off track?"

"Indeed," Annan said. "Regardless of whatever ultimate purpose the Omniscient Weaver had in setting up the 'Gospel Ranking,' what we need to know is that it has become the biggest hurdle for us."

“My initial plan was to secure high rankings in several of the other lists, allowing one of you to accumulate enough weight to completely overshadow the first place on the ‘Gospel Ranking’ and claim the Divine Sovereign’s Wish with the top priority.”

“Therefore, I’m not particularly happy, even though I am currently the highest-ranking contender.” Annan spread her hands, “With just two rankings, I can’t replace the status of the ‘First Gospel.’”

“Right now, I honestly hope that the other rankings haven’t been invalidated, but the chances are slim. Since the Omniscient Weaver intends to speed up the Weaving Festival, it’s unlikely to accelerate only one ranking.”

Ashe hesitated for a moment and then asked, “Have you considered that even if the Weaving Festival hasn’t been sped up...”

“Even if we capture first place in all nine rankings, there’s still a high chance that the Divine Sovereign’s Wish will be predetermined for the First Gospel? Of course, I’ve considered that possibility, and I think it’s quite probable,” Annan said calmly. “But so what?”

But so what?

If she stopped taking action whenever hope seemed slim, Annan would never have led them in the Blasphemy Gospel plan in the first place. This has always been a scheme against the divine sovereign, and from the beginning, she had prepared herself for the possibility of a total loss.

Ashe couldn’t detect even a hint of regret in Annan’s eyes. She was like a moth drawn to darkness, destined to rush into the flame. The only thing Ashe still couldn’t figure out was what exactly she yearned to set ablaze.

“Since every Yisuo Emperor has received the Divine Sovereign’s Wish,” Igor inquired, “what wishes did they make?”

“I don’t know,” Annan shook her head. “That’s the second of the three great mysteries of Gospel: why each Empress can make it to the ranking list and what wishes they’ve made.”

Ashe asked, “What’s the third mystery?”

Annan glanced at him, “The identity of each Empress’s lover... But we’re fortunate because one of the answers is sitting right in front of us.”

Ashe felt deeply wronged-if the other rankings on the Happiness Ranking were playful speculations about Ashe, then the wedding at the 10th position and the Empress at the first were outright fabrications!

He had never even met the Empress, so how could Gospel determine that he would end up with her in the future?

What's more infuriating is that the Happiness Ranking didn't even reveal the Empress's face. He couldn't even satisfy his curiosity about what new "wife" Gospel had paired him with!

"Lise," Ashe, bored, struck up a conversation with Lise, "do you think the Empress will be beautiful?"

Lise blinked, "I think...maybe she'll look a lot like grown-up Lise?"

At that moment, Harvey belched and leisurely said, "So, Annan, does that mean you no longer have a chance to seize the Divine Sovereign's Wish?"

"It's we," Annan emphasized, correcting the pronoun, and then continued, "Theoretically, we have no chance. But while invalidating the other ranking lists, Gospel has also handed me the blade to solve all problems."

Igor was taken aback for a moment, then quickly stood up, fixing his gaze on Annan. "Such unverifiable conjecture can't be the main basis for decision-making!"

"But this is our only chance left," Annan said, locking eyes with him. "We've come this far, and even if it's just a faint flame, I have to let it burn."

Ashe looked at them, suddenly quarreling, a little perplexed.

Optimist, pessimist, yet me?

Ashe: "Can you guys switch to normal language before you start arguing? Your meowing back and forth is really confusing us!"

The Con Artist glared at the Purple Moth for a long moment before slowly sitting back down. His face was as calm as a lake, but internally, he was roiling with turmoil. Even though he had acquired knowledge from the Dominance Sect, and even though he had experienced the mental seas of thousands of people in Belldate, he still couldn't reverse Annan's slave Pact using the Mental Sect's abilities!

Gospel's acceleration of the Weaving Festival not only disrupted Annan's plans but also threw Igor's arrangements into chaos!

His original intention was to forcefully break the Pact using the power of the Mental Sect before the final ranking list was released. Yvaren's debt Pact with him was both his homework and his final exam—if he could nullify Yvaren's debt, Igor would be confident in breaking free from Annan's control!

But everything came too quickly.

Their quiet days were too short-lived.

The Purple Moth looked at the Cult Leader, “Ashe, Gospel may have invalidated the ranking lists through you, but it has also granted you an unprecedented special authority.”

“You are recognized by Gospel as the ‘Disrupter of Fate.’ Any impact you have will be considered a ‘small reasonable deviation within the fate range.’ Applied to the ranking lists, this means that no matter who you influence, their spot can still be on the list, but their ranking will be invalid.”

“This isn’t Gospel’s original intent; it’s a new rule set up temporarily to accelerate the weaving. But since it’s a new rule, it must adhere to it; otherwise, it would cause contradictions between past and future rankings.”

Ashe finally understood: since Gospel used Ashe to nullify the Happiness Ranking, it must recognize Ashe as a tool capable of wiping out futures.

The “Disrupter of Fate” that Annan was talking about means that—without realizing it—Ashe has acquired a region-specific license to kill (invalidate) any Gospel follower’s future!

Ashe caught a fleeting insight. “Do you mean you want me to...”

Annan explained, “If you kill the Echoer before they make it onto the ranking list, Gospel won’t bother to revise the list. Because ‘you can destroy the future’ is a newly announced rule, it will simply operate under that logic and render the Echoer’s ranking invalid.”

“Ashe, you are the blade Gospel has given us.”

“If you can kill the person who is slated to be ranked first on the Gospel Ranking ahead of time, the Weaving Festival will invalidate her ranking, and I will rightfully ascend to the highest position.”

After a brief silence, Harvey suddenly chuckled. “So, we’re finally getting into the business of killing? Who’s the target?”

Banjeet looked worried, Igor furrowed his brows, and Lise buried her head deeply into Ashe’s chest.

“The future Yisuo Empress,” Annan said, “a princess residing in the Imperial Capital, Nabistin.”

“It has to be Ashe who kills her to complete the final blasphemy against Gospel.”

“So, here are two pieces of news: the good news is that you only have one last job left. The bad news is that this task may very well be your last,” Annan said, pulling out a handkerchief to wipe her mouth. “Destination: the Imperial Capital, Nabistin. Task content-“

“Assassinate the Princess.”

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

Chapter 435: The Witches Anomaly

Virtual Realm, Time Continent.

“Witch!”

Along with Ashe’s voice came the warm yellow “sword body barrier.” Only then did the stunned Deya snap back to reality, managing to escape the damage zone just in time before the Raging Slashing Dragon’s tail could break through the sword body barrier.

As if sensing that Deya was their greatest vulnerability, the smaller Blade Fish Dragons swarmed towards her in an attempt to encircle and slay her. However, Ashe had already used the “Heart Pen” to draw a network of ink marks in the surrounding area. As soon as the Blade Fish Dragons entered, they got stuck in those seemingly ink-like ‘aerial strokes,’ their bodies quickly being shredded into pieces by the ink. The horrific sight deterred the other Blade Fish Dragons from entering the dense region of ink marks.

The “Heart Pen” Miracle that Sonya had gifted Ashe was indeed very useful. Normally, the combination of ‘Heart Sword’ with ‘Sword Mark’ to create a trap zone at a distance had a significant issue-the spellcaster had to continuously expend spellforce to maintain the Sword Marks. If Ashe ceased supplying spellforce, those Sword Marks would instantly dissipate.

This not only consumed a lot of spellforce but also required Ashe to constantly divert attention to the Sword Mark area while performing other attacks.

In the early stages of use, it was quite entertaining, but the hassle made it grow tiresome quickly. If one were to say spirits were the spellcaster’s harem, then the Sword

Mark spirit was like a capricious and demanding courtesan, and Ashe hardly felt like pampering her.

However, the “Heart Pen” Miracle ingeniously altered the damage mechanism of the ‘Sword Mark’ spirit: Normally, Sword Marks are fixed in mid-air to continuously harm moving targets. The “Heart Pen,” on the other hand, bypasses continuous damage and uses the Sword Marks as consumable ink marks. These can be carried away by moving targets, but within seconds, the ink marks deplete themselves, causing cutting damage to the target.

Because they are consumable ink marks, the spellforce consumption of the “Heart Pen” is significantly lower, allowing Ashe to easily draw a multitude of ink mark traps. Although the overall damage wasn’t decreased, it made his job much less taxing. Moreover, Ashe could also draw ‘ineffectual ink marks’ with minimal spellforce consumption to confuse and intimidate knowledge creatures!

As a high-quality Miracle that Sonya bought for 15 gold coins, it even included instructions on how to disable friendly fire. After all, in Sonya’s world, team combat is the norm for spellcasters. Ashe only needed to apply an ink mark to his teammates beforehand, allowing them to freely move through the ink mark area without disrupting its arrangement!

Their newly developed tactic involved Ashe setting up the ink mark area first. Then the sword Princess and the Witch would lure the knowledge creatures over. Once in the ink mark zone, they could safely hunt the knowledge creatures. After one or two charges, the knowledge creatures wouldn’t dare to step into the ink mark area again.

Thanks to this new trick from the “Heart Pen” Miracle, the Sword Mark spirit’s status in the spirit harem was instantly elevated from a demanding courtesan to a favored concubine, rivaling the Heart Sword and Substitute in affection.

When the Raging Slashing Dragon was finally defeated by the ‘Blood Moon Shattered Lake’ severing its head, Sonya sheathed her blade amid the blood rain, her killing aura all but dissipating. Her sharp eyes curved into crescents as she turned to see Ashe walking past her without a word, heading into the gemstone mine pit to loot resources.

Sonya glanced at his back, muttering something under her breath before pulling Deya to the side. “Witch, zoning out during a battle is dangerous.”

“Sorry,” Deya immediately replied. “It won’t happen again.”

“I’m not blaming you. It’s normal to make mistakes. Look at the Observer; he’s always making mistakes from the back. You don’t need to take it to heart.”

“What mistake did the Observer make?”

“Breathing,” Sonya snorted, her face showing clear contempt for their captain. “Have you ever seen a time when the Observer was charming and gentle? Let me clarify, I haven’t either.”

“And don’t you think the Observer has been getting more annoying lately? I’m telling you, he’s always been this annoying. Do you know he did something extremely inappropriate to me in the Sea of Knowledge? Just thinking about it makes me so angry I shake...”

There’s nothing like talking behind someone’s back to strengthen bonds, especially when that person is everyone’s boss. Deya listened with great interest as Sonya ranted about the Observer, her antenna-like cowlick bobbing and bending in agreement.

Ashe finished looting the resources and brought a pile of gemstone materials for their spirits to consume. He signaled them not to get into the sports car just yet and proceeded to upgrade the Alchemy Throne once more. With the radiance of rose-gold light, the golden droplets at the top of the seat increased to 11, and the surrounding Reverse Golden Rain poured into the seat like a flood!

“Alchemy Throne – Level 11: Increases the absorption rate of golden spellforce by 130%.

Level 6 Special Effect: For every 60 minutes spent in the Virtual Realm, accumulate an additional layer of [Flowing Gold Age]; each layer increases the golden spellforce absorption rate by 10%.

Level 11 Special Effect: As the speed of the sports car increases, further enhance the golden spellforce absorption rate, up to a maximum of 100% (peak at 400 km/h). Each layer of [Flowing Gold Age] reduces the maximum required speed for this effect by 50%.

Requirements for next level: 1175 Gem Essence, Crystal Essence, Mercury Essence, Wood Essence, Ore Essence, Golden Essence.”

After throwing all the resources they had gathered over these days into the upgrade, they finally raised the Alchemy Throne to Level 11, unlocking the second special effect. The first special effect is straightforward: the longer they stay in the Virtual Realm, the faster the absorption rate. The second effect, while providing an additional 100% absorption rate, requires driving at top speed.

But under normal conditions, that’s nearly impossible given the road conditions on the Time Continent, which are comparable to a primitive forest. Even without hitting some mountain or stone wall, a sudden small bump could send the sports car airborne, likely crashing into some tree and causing a spinning cyclone.

However, with the reduction in requirements from [Flowing Gold Age], after 2 hours, Ashe would only need to drive at 100 km/h to get the additional 100% absorption rate, a

speed that's barely manageable on the Time Continent. After 4 hours, even driving at just 25 km/h would suffice. Ashe and the others could even move at a leisurely pace inside the car and still achieve a 270% spellforce absorption rate boost (130% + 40% + 100%).

Ashe explained the upgraded status of the Alchemy Throne to them and said, "Tonight, we won't be looting any resource points. Let's just drive around and explore some special locations."

Today, they had already spent over an hour in the Virtual Realm. In a bit, they would gain 2 layers of [Flowing Gold Age]. Even if they didn't have any other gains tonight, just driving around in the Time Continent would yield spellforce twice that of an average spellcaster. Ashe's suggestion made complete sense, and the sword Princess and the Witch naturally agreed immediately.

However, as the sports car crossed the Rain Curtain, Deya, prompted by her sisters' reminders, suddenly realized, "Are we not fighting tonight because of my issue?"

"Heh!" Sonya suddenly let out a loud sneer, pulling Deya close and glancing at Ashe through the rearview mirror. "Do you think he would be that considerate?"

Ashe's mouth twitched, and he had to follow Sonya's lead, speaking in a deliberately indifferent tone, "We've already come up empty at several resource points today. Continuing to scavenge would be inefficient. It's better to look for those special buildings. We might find something unexpected."

Ashe wasn't wrong. In the past hour, they had scoured five resource points, and two of them were empty. Not only were there no resources, but even the knowledge creatures had fled. But it's currently the Blood Tomb's turn, and according to the Blood Tomb Map Ashe held, there should have been knowledge creatures guarding those major resource points.

This could only mean one thing: The Blood Tomb had dispatched its heroic soul legion to reclaim resources!

The evidence lay in the fact that, for over an hour, no heroic soul legion had chased them, indicating that the Blood Tomb forces had shifted to a defensive strategy, perhaps even executing a scorched-earth policy to reclaim all resources and protect the main city.

It's not hard to understand why. Whether or not the Spider Tower had captured the main city of Oasis, the fact that it had triggered the Great Appointment of the Six Nations was now a certainty. Consequently, all factions would cancel their developmental plans and enter a state of high alert.

Ashe even suspected that the Blood Tomb knew he was the fuse of the Oasis War. If he dared approach the Blood Tomb's main city, he might be met with thousands of armed legions ready to obliterate him.

Therefore, Ashe no longer planned to continue upgrading the Alchemy Throne. Further upgrades would require too many resources, and future resources would only become scarcer. Under the current circumstances, seeking out other special buildings would be more beneficial than looting resource points.

But Deya wasn't so easily fooled. "Even if we're not looting resource points, we can hunt down large knowledge creatures. Experience Orbs and spirits are also steady sources of income. And even if we are seeking special buildings, we can loot resource points along the way. There's no need to give up fighting!"

"So you're really taking care of me because I've been distracted and made mistakes tonight, right?" Deya said, looking down at her knees. "I'm sorry, it's all my fault tonight..."

Ashe couldn't help but say, "Actually—"

"Actually, Observer, you think the Witch is a burden! That's why you're so quick to abandon fighting, so she won't drag you down or even get you killed!" Sonya interjected, hugging the Witch tightly and glaring at Ashe. "This is exactly the kind of person the Observer is—so profit-driven and heartless! He doesn't trust his companions at all!"

This! Sword! Princess!—

Ashe took a deep breath, speaking in a cold voice, "That's your theory, not mine."

"I'm sorry!" Deya said loudly, rubbing her eyes forcefully. "I've been affected by things in the real world, so I wasn't focused on the battle just now... But I've adjusted my mood. If I make any more mistakes, I'll let the White Queen or the Scarlet Dead Apostles replace me, so I won't affect our exploration. Observer, please follow the original route and loot the resource points."

"You don't need to apologize," Sonya said gently. "Everyone has rough times. Taking a break for one night won't stop us from becoming Sanctuary spellcasters. Is there anything we can do to help?"

Deya slapped her face hard, making it turn red.

"If I expect others to accommodate me just because I'm upset, unhappy, or confused, that's childlike behavior," the Witch said seriously. "I'm not a child anymore; I don't have a favorite color."

She paused, clenching her fists, and said earnestly, “Besides, I do have someone I can lean on. You don’t need to worry about me. In my case, I just need to go back and get a hug and a kiss from him, and I’ll be fine!”

Sonya’s expression froze suddenly, and she forced a smile. “Ah, oh, um... that’s good then.”

“So, Observer, let’s proceed according to the resource point looting route!” Deya said. “I’m okay now!”

“When you first made the request, I already thought about switching back to the original route,” Ashe said flatly. “But halfway through, we found the Golden Flow blocking our path. Now, I’m driving along the edge of the Golden Flow, and the original route is no longer viable.”

This situation is not uncommon; the distribution of the Golden Flow changes randomly every day and can block critical paths. For typical spellcasters, this is a good thing because most two-wings spellcasters encounter the Golden Flow daily. As long as they have the stamina to dive in and collect spirits, they won’t go home empty-handed today. However, for Ashe and his group, who have maps, the Golden Flow significantly lowers their efficiency.

“Then let’s pick a resource point along the way-“

“We’ve already reached a special building,” Ashe interrupted, looking at a golden area marked “Come Here” on the virtual realm map. “But the Blood Tomb Map doesn’t indicate what kind of building this is.”

In fact, most special buildings are not marked, which is one reason why Ashe previously avoided exploring them. The rewards are too unpredictable. On reflection, it makes sense; the heroic soul commanders never enter virtual realm buildings, so they have no need to mark them. Moreover, even the heroic soul commanders may not recognize all the virtual realm buildings.

“Let me go in and check it out first. I’ll figure out the rules inside and come back to update you!” Deya immediately said. “If it’s something like the Amnesia Cabin, you won’t need to take the risk of going in!”

Given that the virtual realm map labeled it “Come Here,” it likely means there’s no inherent danger inside. However, Ashe understood that this was Deya’s way of making up for her earlier mistakes. And, to be honest, he wouldn’t mind some alone time with the sword Princess as well. So with a nod, he agreed, “Leave it to you, Witch.”

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

Chapter 436: The Sword Princess Breaks Down

Deya energetically reached out to high-five Ashe, gave the Sword Princess a hug, and then jumped into the sports car, driving into the rain curtain.

“Finally, it’s just the two of us.”

Ashe turned to look back, quite dissatisfied, and said, “Sword Princess, why did you have to sow discord in front of the Witch, making me the bad guy? If the Witch ends up hating me because of this, it will be a real problem... what’s wrong with you?”

Ashe spoke for a while before realizing that the Sword Princess was staring gloomily at the reverse golden rain outside. She was pouting angrily, completely different from the gentle and considerate demeanor she had in front of the Witch. She didn’t even spare him a glance, practically warning him with an “Inside: Dangerous Cat, Very Sensitive” sign.

“The Witch was finally cured, and now you have problems?” Ashe sighed, rubbing his forehead. “I’m not a psychologist... If only we had one on our team, it would save us a lot of trouble...”

Seeing that the Sword Princess still ignored him, Ashe used the Heart Pen to write a few lines in front of her:

“Do you prefer the deep sea or the starry sky?”

“What do you want for dinner, braised Lala Fatty or stir-fried Lala Fatty with bamboo shoots?”

“Do you like thigh-high socks or stockings?”

“Do you prefer gold coins or silver coins?”

“Of course, I prefer gold coins!” Sonya grumbled, “I’m not an idiot!”

Ashe blinked and continued his previous question, “Why did you badmouth me in front of the Witch? I haven’t offended you recently, have I?”

“Although we usually communicate normally, to make the Witch drop her guard against us, it’s best if we appear to be in a hostile state,” Sonya explained. “Since I’m responsible for helping the Witch, you have to be the one opposing her, so she can quickly get closer to me.”

“Moreover, who said you haven’t offended me recently?”

Ashe looked innocent, “How did I offend you? I barely said a few words just now!”

Sonya looked at him wistfully.

Ashe hadn’t actually offended her with his words. The one who had offended her was the Witch.

The moment she heard that the Witch could go home and find someone to be affectionate with after this, the Stretch Paw Club President broke down instantly!

She broke down! She panicked! Her mental state collapsed! She realized she was the real clown!

Originally, Sonya’s plan was going quite well. She would play the good person and make the Observer the bad guy. This way, the Witch would become close to her and distance herself from the Observer. Not only would she become the core of the team, but more importantly, she would prevent any chance of the Observer and the Witch forming a deeper relationship.

Not just now, but in the future, if there were new teammates, Sonya would still follow this method. Overall, her goal was to encourage everyone to isolate the Observer so she could enjoy the benefits alone.

But the Witch’s words were like piercing armor with wind fury and adding poison, making Sonya extremely anxious. And Ashe still had an innocent and confused expression, making Sonya feel like his very breathing was offending her now.

The Sword Princess took a deep breath, forcing herself to clear the annoyance from her mind. Pointing to the lines of ink beside her, she asked, “What will we do with this stuff when the Witch comes back?”

Ashe blinked. He recalled the Heart Pen and found there was indeed no way to undo it. The one-time ink didn’t require him to use his spellforce because it had already become independent, but naturally, he also lost control over it.

“Use your sword to slash them away.”

Sonya stared at Ashe as he drew his long sword, making Ashe feel as though he was about to be cut down.

However, it wasn’t convenient to swing the sword while sitting in the car, and the ink was right outside the car door. If she pushed the door open and went out, she would get stained by the ink. After a brief moment of thought, the village girl jumped out of the car into the air and used ‘Evil Light Slash’ to eliminate all the ink, then elegantly landed in the rain curtain outside—

“Are you stupid!?”

Ashe instantly rushed out and carried the Sword Princess back into the car, noticing that her legs had begun to show signs of aging. He was furious, “Didn’t I just say that I was driving along the Golden Flow? Jumping out like that would land you directly in the Golden Flow’s area! You don’t belong to the Time Sect; can’t you smell that strong tea-like time scent of the Golden Flow?”

“Uh-huh.” The Sword Princess made a soft, cute nasal sound, as if acknowledging her mistake.

Hearing the obedient tone of the Sword Princess in his arms, Ashe also softened his tone, “But it’s partly my fault too. I was just trying to quickly bypass this section of the Golden Flow and didn’t realize we got too close.”

“Uh-huh.” search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

“Have your legs recovered? Can you walk on your own?”

“It still feels a bit off.” The Stretch Paw Club President tilted her head. “I think my waist might have been corroded a bit by the Golden Flow. It feels weak, and if you don’t hold me tighter, I might just collapse...”

“Why has your soul become so weak?” Ashe found it strange. “Could it be the curse from the Chaotic Shopping Book?”

“Maybe. I bought a downgrade in constitution, and since the body and soul are closely related, it’s not surprising there’s an impact.” The Sword Princess wriggled restlessly. “What about you? Has your bad luck purchase affected your life?”

Ashe paused slightly, suddenly remembering that the curse he purchased was the “no toilet paper” one. Then he had returned to reality only to have the Gospel used to wipe... He felt like the ‘Dramatic Poet’ was mocking him.

“I think the word ‘impact’ is a bit too gentle for this...”

“I’m back!”

Deya emerged from the Rain Curtain, seeing the Observer silently watching the Sword Princess, who was sitting properly in the back seat. She curiously asked, “Did something happen while I was gone?”

“No.” Sonya replied, “Witch, did you investigate the special building inside?”

“Yes, I did.” Deya nodded, “It appears to be the Fate Questioning you both mentioned, but the format seems slightly different.”

Fate Questioning!?

Ashe and Sonya immediately became alert. When they followed Deya inside, they found it was indeed different from the Fate Questioning in the Sea of Knowledge—

They saw a round table with three chairs, three pieces of paper, and three pairs of headphones.

The three exchanged glances, then sat down face-to-face and put on the headphones. The first thing they heard were the rules: “The Fate Questioning listening test will now begin. Answer questions based on the content of the dialogue. Failure to answer correctly will result in immediate termination. Correct answers allow you to continue. If the number of correct answers is greater than or equal to 1, the respondent has the right to ask questions.”

Sonya exchanged a quick look with the others and then heard the following conversation through her headphones—

“Witch, what do you think is the meaning of our lives?”

“Revenge.”

“No, I mean, since we were born into this world, we must have certain missions only we can complete. What do you think our true mission is?”

“Even if it burns down the whole world, we must have revenge.”

“Question: Who do we need to avenge?”

“①The world ②The Observer ③The Divine Sovereign ④ All of the above”

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

Chapter 437: Hold Me Again

Fate Questioning – The Listening Test!

Actually, it wasn’t much different from the Fate Questioning of the Sea of Knowledge. The only change was that the questions were replaced with dialogue content.

Compared to straightforward questions, this added a lot more information: Sonya could discern that the speakers were herself and the Witch, and the conversation took place at least ten years later, because her voice had become richer yet not thin, husky yet not dark... It was like the tone Delarose would use when playing a mature beauty. Just by listening, Sonya could picture herself as a rose with thorns.

The Witch was the same. Her voice no longer had the youthful innocence it currently possessed—even when she uttered the word ‘revenge,’ it lacked the purity one would expect.

‘Revenge’ is a word tinged with a fairytale quality, much like ‘love.’ How could someone harbor love or hate for four or five years like in a TV drama?

Life dilutes everything; all intense emotions eventually fade to plainness.

However, when the Witch spoke the word ‘revenge,’ it was as calm as discussing dinner plans. This indicated that revenge wasn’t a fleeting impulse for her but a mission she must complete, an obstacle she had to overcome to continue living, and a life goal intertwined with her interests.

The key point was that when the Witch said the word, it seemed to include her—did they have some common target for revenge?

Sonya looked at Deya, only to find Deya equally puzzled. After the three of them removed their headphones and exchanged looks, Ashe coughed deliberately and asked solemnly, “Do you want to discuss this together, or handle it yourselves?”

If it had been just Ashe and the sword Princess, Ashe would have unceremoniously asked her directly what juicy gossip she had just heard. But since the dynamic in the team was currently framed as “Observer vs. sword Princess and Witch,” Ashe had to stick to the script.

As long as it reduced internal conflict, Ashe didn’t mind playing the antagonist. Although Ashe always felt that the sword Princess had ulterior motives, this hierarchical model was indeed more beneficial for team management.

Ashe had seen teams at his company where ‘superiors and subordinates blend seamlessly,’ but that led to a lack of authority for the superiors, resulting in subordinates touching fish, slacking off, working from the restroom, and even rebelling.

To be fair, Ashe’s previous attitude of discussing everything with the team was actually a mistake and the Source of Calamity that caused internal conflicts—because once something is open for discussion, it can be contested, leading to favoritism and partiality.

Wasn't it precisely because the sword Princess discussed and communicated with him too much that the Witch felt insecure and suspected the possibility of being abandoned?

It's not that discussions are unacceptable, but Ashe needs to have decisive authority, deterrence, and credibility to ensure that his will can be effectively implemented at all times. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Ideally, the operators would trust and support him. If achieving this perfect team dynamic was impossible, then at the very least, Ashe needed to ensure that even if the operators didn't trust him, they wouldn't dare defy him!

Apparently, regardless of the state, Ashe had a long way to go. Sometimes Ashe wondered if it would have been better not to draw new operators initially. After all, upon leaving the Sea of Knowledge, he and the sword Princess already made a perfect team, and their duo had significant advantages.

Other spellcasters couldn't even dream of having a 'mutual growth and trust partner,' while Ashe not only had one, but he also had a ship and a vehicle. What more could he want?

Was it really necessary for him to draw the Witch as a new operator?

But quickly, Ashe had his answer: it was necessary.

The heroic soul legion, Golden Flow, resource point scavenging... The Witch brought a substantial increase to the team's capabilities. As a support-based DPS, her importance to the team was invaluable. There were many resource points that even if Ashe and the sword Princess could conquer, it would take a long time and they would likely get injured. The presence of the Witch enhanced the team's efficiency by at least two or three times.

Most importantly, the team's loot harvest was now abundant, making it foolish to let the sword Princess use it to trade for money. For every spellcaster, resources yield diminishing marginal returns. Initially, the sword Princess did use these spoils to gain resources she could use. For example, her Miracle 'Sharpen Sword for Ten Years' no longer needed to be used sparingly. However, this enhancement effect would rapidly diminish because the number of spirits the sword Princess could use was limited, and she only needed to master some specific Miracles.

It's like playing a game. Sonya already had the best equipment with the top-notch lighting, bought the most expensive skins, and ordered the best food delivery. If she wanted to continue improving her strength, she had to focus on advancing in the Sect Realm.

At this point, having one more operator to train became incredibly significant. In fact, the more operators there were, the more efficient the conversion of resources to team strength would be.

As for why strength was necessary...

Many images flashed through Ashe's mind: Lise, Igor, Annan, Qenna, Harvey, lavish manors, the everyday life of waking up naturally, and meeting with the sword Princess and the Witch, but not in the Virtual Realm...

It wasn't just about him; the sword Princess and the Witch needed strength even more. Therefore, he had no reason to become complacent. Once he saved enough points, he would continue making In-game Purchases for card draws. The team had to keep growing, even if it meant increasing his management costs.

'When will I become a captain exuding authority...' Ashe was filled with a longing for power—after all, he was almost promoted to an operational director!

Faced with Ashe's suggestion, Sonya immediately complained: "Although I'm not at all happy about sharing my future with you, to improve the accuracy of our answers, I can compromise. Also, the conversation I heard was between me and the Witch. I think it needs to be disclosed."

"I have no objections," Deya said curiously. "Was it a conversation between the future me and you?"

Sonya nodded, then relayed the conversation and the questions. She asked: "Witch, do you have someone you seek revenge against? Is it related to your unease tonight?"

Deya immediately shook her head: "No! I don't have any particular target for revenge, not even my grandmother, who put me through the Armoring Ritual. I don't harbor any thoughts of revenge!"

Despite being trapped in a high tower since she was young, Deya didn't hold any resentment towards her grandmother. While she lost her freedom, she gained a carefree childhood. Especially after leaving the tower and experiencing the outside world with Ashe and the others, she understood that her grandmother didn't owe her anything and had no intention of harming her.

Ultimately, all she had encountered was simply the predetermined fate of the Yisuo clan; her grandmother was merely part of a long chain of tragedies.

So, what she sought wasn't revenge, but rebellion.

Since they couldn't extract useful information from the conversation, they could only analyze the answers.

“The world seems too broad, and the Divine Sovereign...” Sonya had a strange expression on her face, “Are we really powerful enough to take revenge on the Divine Sovereign?”

For most spellcasters, the Divine Sovereign is less of a tangible ‘god’ and more of a symbol, a set of rules, or even the world itself. No one has ever seen the Divine Sovereign, and no one can escape its influence. How do you take revenge? On the sun? On a storm? On the ocean?

Thus, ‘the Divine Sovereign’ and ‘the world’ were almost equivalent options. So...

As the Witch and the sword Princess looked at him, Ashe remained very calm: “Although I also think that I might be the most reasonable answer, the problem is, I’m the only one among these options that you know.”

Sonya paused slightly, then quickly realized: “That’s right, the Fate Questioning isn’t supposed to be a knowledge-based trial for us to ‘figure out’ but a gamble based on luck. If the answer is that obvious, it must be a decoy!”

Deya nodded in agreement as she listened. Although she hadn’t experienced the Fate Questioning in the Sea of Knowledge, she thought it made a lot of sense: “And I can’t imagine why I would seek revenge on the Observer... If it was the sword Princess seeking revenge, that I could understand.”

Sonya’s face turned slightly red as she gave a little humph: “I can’t wait to part ways with him as soon as possible.”

Deya blinked—Hey, I didn’t say anything.

After hesitating for a moment, Deya said, “Actually, the conversation I overheard was also very strange. I’m not sure if it’s related to the sword Princess’s question.”

Then Deya’s hair began to change color; first, she transformed into a sweet girl with white hair: “Next, let the White Queen and—”

Then she changed into a cool beauty with black hair: “And the Black Butler reenact the conversation.”

The Black Butler laughed maniacally: “Hahaha, you’re killing me! Didn’t you want to catch me? Come on, catch me, and then we’ll both be captured by the Tribulation Fire Temple! They will absolutely burn us both to ashes! Hahaha!”

The White Queen said calmly, “We won’t be caught. Our master will definitely come to save us. Witch, let’s cooperate for now.”

The Black Butler sneered, “Oh, really? If that’s the case, where is that demon now? You were supposed to act together, weren’t you? But why are you the only one trapped here with me? Could it be that, like me, you’ve finally been abandoned as well? Abandoned~~huh!?”

The White Queen said resolutely, “The master will not abandon me.”

The Black Butler retorted sarcastically, “Ah, such a loyal love. Can you open your mouth and let me spit in it? Everyone is just a tool for that demon, including you! Why? Why are you still willing to be used by him? Don’t you realize you’ve never been loved?”

The White Queen replied passionately, “Why wouldn’t the master use others but choose to use me? He must still love me, and he is always so gentle with me.”

The Black Butler screamed hysterically, “Yes, he is gentle, but there isn’t a trace of love in his eyes—I’m going insane! What did I do wrong to be so unfortunate as to encounter you two demons! One madman! One fool!”

The White Queen said, “So, are we going to cooperate? They’re almost here. We won’t escape if we don’t work together.”

The Black Butler suddenly calmed down. “I can cooperate, but you have to agree to one condition.”

“What condition?”

“Just like before, hold me once more.”

“Question: What was the relationship between the two speaking?”

“①Friends

②Colleagues

③Relatives without blood ties

④All of the above”

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

Chapter 438: Silly Woman

After presenting her topic, Deya reverted to her previous state and hastily said before anyone could ask a question, “I have no recollection of the other speaker.”

“None at all?” Sonya asked curiously. “From the conversation, it sounds like you were very close. But for some reason, you separated. She and her master were trying to capture you, but something went wrong, putting you both in a dire situation... you even wanted to hug her.”

“That’s precisely what confuses me,” Deya tilted her head, a puzzled look on her face. “I don’t have any female friends that close.”

If it were a male voice, there was no need to ask; it could only be her favorite, Ashe.

But the voice was a clear, wind-chime-like, and constantly captivating female voice, someone Deya didn’t know in real life!

The closest match to that voice was Aunt Bukin, but he was a man!

The most likely candidate was Annan, but Annan’s voice wasn’t that sweet, and Lise wasn’t that close with Annan either. In terms of intimacy, Aunt Bukin was even closer than Annan. Neither Lise nor Deya would crave Annan’s hugs!

Among all the people she knew in real life, except for Annan, there was no other woman! S

The only person who fit all the conditions was Ashe, but Ashe was a man. Based on her extensive reading of hundreds of fairy tales, Deya could only come up with this story: Ashe was dominated by Igor and transformed into a woman. This would explain everything. ‘Master’ and ‘demon’ referred to Igor, and the ‘she’ in the conversation was Ashe. Naturally, Deya would be enraged by Ashe’s predicament.

But this hypothesis was too far-fetched, only feasible in fairy tales. Thus, Deya couldn’t help but look at Sonya—if it wasn’t someone she knew in real life, then it could only be a friend she met in the Virtual Realm.

Sonya immediately shook her head. “I wouldn’t call anyone master, and that kind of love-crazy behavior isn’t in my character.”

Deya also felt it wasn’t the sword Princess. After all, in the Amnesia Cabin, the sword Princess had made it clear that the only person she valued was herself. Neither family nor lovers could override her personal will.

Moreover, the 'she' in the conversation sounded silly and sweet, like an adorable and innocent young lady, completely different from the elegant yet fierce sword Princess.

"And I also feel that the 'Witch' mentioned in the conversation is vastly different from you sisters," Sonya said. "Do any of you have such a... circus-like personality?"

Deya shook her head repeatedly. She also felt that the 'Witch' in the conversation didn't resemble her at all: chaotic, dark, and gloomy. If she and her sisters were defined by their distinct and vibrant personalities, then the Witch in the conversation was like murky and filthy black and gray.

But the voice was unmistakable, and coupled with the mention of the 'Witch' codename, it seemed important. More crucially—if neither party in the conversation was Deya, then what did this question have to do with her?

Ashe suggested, "Is there a possibility that these two questions are connected? For instance, the target of the sword Princess's revenge could be the 'demon' or 'master' mentioned in the Witch's question?"

Sonya thought that made sense and asked, "Observer, do you have someone who loves you so devotedly that they would call you 'master'?"

"No!" Ashe immediately shook his head. "In real life, I don't get involved with women; I'm always surrounded by men. There's no one who loves me that devotedly!"

Sonya: "Then who would call you 'master'?"

"Actually, I have a hypothesis." Ashe ignored Sonya's question entirely. "Do you think 'world' could be a person's name? Or perhaps a nickname?"

Sonya hesitated. "If that's the answer, then the difficulty of getting it right seems too high..."

"Maybe as the Virtual Realm's levels increase, the difficulty of the questions also increases. The Fate Questioning at the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm might even ask us about our children," Ashe said casually. "But that would explain things—there's a demon named 'world' who has a female follower. The Witch is destined to encounter 'world' and his follower, leading to a grudge."

Though it sounded far-fetched, there was no better hypothesis. Mainly because the Witch was adamant that she didn't know any woman in real life who fit the conversation, the only possibility left was that she didn't yet know the other speaker.

Deya suddenly realized that Ashe and the others had already developed a notorious reputation in Gospel. After the Weaving Festival, they definitely wouldn't be able to stay there and would likely leave for another Kingdom. Considering they weren't new to

traveling abroad, her sisters had no attachment to Gospel either. Once their bodies returned to normal, they would surely follow Ashe, leaving together.

So, it's possible that the 'she' and 'master' mentioned in the conversation were new characters Lise Deya would meet in another Kingdom?

"What should I choose for my question?" Deya asked.

"Actually, the first three answers to your question are pretty similar. I suggest picking all of them," Ashe said. "Based on our previous Fate Questioning experience, it's best to select all that you can for the first question. However, the sword Princess's first three options are vastly different; she definitely can't simultaneously seek revenge on the world, me, and the Divine Sovereign, right?"

Both Sonya and Deya nodded, put on their headphones, and wrote their answers on paper. Soon, they received responses from the Virtual Realm—

"Congratulations, you got one question right. Would you like to continue?"

"You got it wrong. The Fate Questioning ends here."

Deya happily exclaimed, "I got it right!"

Sonya angrily retorted, "I knew it couldn't be 'the world'; that option was ridiculous. The correct answer was clearly the Divine Sovereign!"

Ashe protested, "When did you say that—"

"I definitely did!" Sonya glared at Ashe, her cheeks puffing up in irritation. "It's all your fault for suggesting such nonsense... hmph!"

Ashe felt a kick from under the table from the sword Princess. Instantly tempering his frustration, he knew he had to maintain his stance as the team leader and not let an operator act so recklessly. But—what? The sword Princess had taken off her shoe?

Moreover, her kicks were gentle, no stronger than a cat kneading. Looking down, Ashe saw a small foot clad in black stockings, its toes curling and sliding against his calf. So, Ashe had to suppress his anger, signaling with his gaze for the sword Princess to tone it down. But the Stretch Paw Club President instead lifted her chin defiantly, escalating her antics.

While the two were engaged in their silent battle, Deya started listening to the second question.

"Silly woman, lustful lapdog, all your nutrition went to your chest and hips, only thinking about crawling into that person's bed..."

“I... am not... silly...”

“Out of everything I’ve insulted you with, that’s the only thing you want to refute? And you just proved how silly you are—why did you save me?! I must have been infected by you, actually carrying you while escaping!”

“Because... master... needs you... needs your personality gift...”

“If I hear you say ‘master’ one more time, I’ll throw you out.”

“When I saw you in danger... as soon as I realized it... I was already in front of you, shielding you. Witch, come back with me to see the master... I will protect you... The master told me he wouldn’t harm you, which is why I came... I’m sorry... I’ve wanted to apologize since that day... I’m sorry...”

“You’re not allowed to apologize, no! The one at fault is him, you were just used by him, it has nothing to do with you!”

“No, I knew all the consequences, but for the master’s benefit alone, I... if I could do it all over again, I would still do the same...”

“What’s so great about him? You’ve spent countless nights on him, but he’s never seen the moon!”

“We still have plenty of time... eventually we’ll be together...”

“I give up on you, you fool... Alright, they shouldn’t be able to find us here for now. Let me treat your wounds.”

“Witch...”

“Hmm?”

“Your hair is loose, let me tie it up for you.”

“Question: What is the ‘silly woman’ actually here to do?”

“① Violent abduction of a witch; ② Persuading a witch; ③ Setting a trap to confine a witch; ④ Visiting a witch.”

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

Chapter 439: The Future Me Cheated

“How pitiful...”

After Deya performed the dialogue, she couldn't help but feel sorry for the 'silly woman'. “Such a devoted woman, why did she have to meet a man who doesn't love her and only wants to use her?”

“It's really sad.” Sonya also had sympathy but felt more anger at the woman's fate and her inability to stand up for herself. “She could fight alongside you, Witch, which means she's not weak. Why does she have to tie herself to someone? Can't she live without depending on something? Without liking something, does she have no hope? Why degrade herself to the dust like this?!”

“Sword Princess,” Ashe signaled for Sonya to control her emotions, “not everyone is as strong as you. You are too powerful.”

“I'm not strong. I'm just a fragile girl dominated by you,” Sonya said, still rubbing his shin with her stockinged foot. “And what are two-wing spellcasters if not strong—”

“When I say strong, I don't mean in terms of power,” Ashe explained. “Not just you, Sword Princess, but also you, Witch. You both are 'strong' in the sense of your life's purpose—you can savor every dish that fate serves you.”

“Maybe you don't think it's worth being proud of, but life is like a buffet. Not everyone can keep eating.”

“I know two people: one of them ate something so terrible that ever since, he adds sugar and spice to everything, giving up on tasting the food, numbing his taste buds with the intensity and waiting for the day it kills him; the other person never ate crap, but he found the canteen environment to be a toilet, so he stopped enjoying the food and instead focused on adding crap to everyone else's dishes, as only then could he find joy in life.”

“Then, there are many who give up on themselves, living aimlessly, or even ending their lives early—because they consecutively ate several dishes as bad as crap at the buffet and don't want to eat anymore. If you tell them to live seriously, their response would be, ‘What, you want me to keep eating crap?’”

“This ‘she’ in the conversation might be in such a situation. ‘She’ may have already decided to leave the buffet, maybe because the food is terrible, or maybe because the environment is unpleasant... Just when ‘she’ was about to leave, someone pulled ‘her’ back, and ‘she’ found that as long as ‘she’ stayed with this person, any food would taste delicious, and any environment would seem comfortable.”

“‘She’ may not be as brave as you, but this situation that frustrates you might already be the best circumstance ‘she’ can achieve.”

“Of course,” Ashe paused, “the person who is using ‘her’ is indeed irredeemable scum.”

“Absolutely!”

“Agreed!”

Although they had different views about the ‘silly woman’, there was unanimous consensus among the three of them regarding the ‘master’: a scumbag who exploits a girl’s infatuation deserves to be chopped up and fed to Lala Fatty!

Deya had already made up her mind that if she ever met the ‘silly woman’ from the conversation, she would do everything in her power to help her break free from the scumbag’s domination.

Though both Witch sisters weren’t very good at advising people, if mental control was involved, they could ask Aunt Bukin for help. If it was purely because of deep infatuation, then it would be time for Ashe to step in-Deya didn’t know how Ashe would handle it, but she believed he would be just as indignant and would figure out a way to save the ‘silly woman.’

“So if it’s not the ‘world’, then her master is a Divine Sovereign?” Sonya speculated. “Or is it that my and the Witch’s issues are unrelated? The one we’re seeking revenge on isn’t the ‘silly woman’s’ master?”

“There’s too little to go on, we can only speculate,” Ashe said. “But it wouldn’t be surprising if it were a Divine Sovereign. Perhaps the Divine Sovereign sent an avatar down to deceive people, or maybe the Divine Sovereign fell for some reason and is slowly regaining power, using their charm along the way to turn various people into loyal followers...”

As Ashe spoke, he noticed that the Sword Princess and the Witch were looking at him with a subtle gaze. He cleared his throat. “Let’s not discuss whether I am a Divine Sovereign, but the real question is, are you loyal?”

Deya looked at Sonya, who stuck out her pink tongue playfully. “I’m not unreasonable. I admit there’s a reason for everything. So I’ll return just as much as I receive. If you want my full-hearted loyalty, you have to give me everything first.”

“See,” Ashe shrugged, “my charisma is so poor that I can’t even attract that loyal of a follower. Also, in reality, I’m just... well, let’s get back to the topic.”

Ashe was about to share something about his real life, but Annan's information restriction Pact immediately silenced him. He couldn't even complain about his status as a worker.

Deya nodded and asked, "So, which of these four answers should I choose?"

"It definitely can't be '①Violent abduction of a witch,'" Sonya analyzed. "It's clear that 'she' had a good relationship with the Witch and that the 'master' had promised not to harm the Witch. So, 'she' couldn't have resorted to violence."

"'②Persuading a witch' is also unlikely," Ashe added. "From the tone, you can tell the Witch holds deep grudges against them and wouldn't be swayed by mere sweet-talk. '③Setting a trap to confine a witch' doesn't fit either. If there had been a trap, the Witch would've been caught by now."

"So, it must be '④Visiting a witch,'" Sonya concluded confidently. "'She' didn't really want to capture the Witch; she just used it as an excuse to meet the Witch and apologize. Completing the mission would be a bonus, but even if she failed, her primary goal would have been achieved."

Their analysis matched exactly with the sisters', so Deya put on her headphones and chose the answer. The Virtual Realm immediately checked her test:

"You got it wrong. The Fate Questioning ends here.. You may start asking questions."

"What?!" Everyone was shocked. How could that be wrong?

"Let me go over this," Sonya said, furrowing her brows. She retracted her foot from Ashe and began to unconsciously curl her toes. "② is absolutely impossible. 'Persuading' implies offering something of benefit, right? But 'she' merely emphasized not harming the Witch and forming an alliance. That hardly makes her a convincing interlocutor."

"Could it be ① then? It's possible. 'She' did mention the original plan was for 'her' and the 'master' to capture the Witch together, so violence could have been part of the plan."

"I think it should be ③," Ashe suddenly said.

"A trap?" Deya was taken aback. "But if it's a trap—"

"Do you remember the last part of the conversation?" Ashe said. "'She' wanted to braid the Witch's hair."

"If 'she' is very familiar with me, that's a normal behavior," Deya said. "I'm not good at fixing my hair, so I often have others braid it for me."

“But when ‘she’ is braiding your hair, you’re completely off guard,” Sonya murmured. “Your nape is exposed to ‘her’ touch. The cervical spine at the nape affects the central nervous system. If ‘she’ has a way to restrain you, then you’ve completely fallen into the trap.”

“But, but...” Deya stuttered, desperately trying to find an excuse. “Isn’t that too much of a coincidence? If ‘she’ and I are originally enemies, and ‘she’ gets close enough to touch my nape, trap or not, I would already be captured!”

Ashe replied, “‘She’ probably can’t capture you by force, so ‘she’ has to earn your trust, making you drop your guard and even willingly expose your nape.”

“But I wouldn’t drop my guard that easily!” Deya protested. “From the conversation, we know that I became close to her because she saved me once while I was being pursued. But how could she possibly calculate that pursuit into her plan—”

“Really impossible?” Sonya asked suddenly. “Escaping a chase unharmed, and even finding a safe hiding place—do you think maybe your luck was a bit too good?”

Deya froze, unable to refute anymore.

But she was still unwilling to believe this possibility. The Sword Princess and the Observer had only heard her recounting, but Deya had listened to ‘her’ voice directly, ‘her’ tone of care and affection. She was well aware of ‘her’ genuine love and knew that the future Witch was truly fond of and reliant on ‘her.’

If all of this was fake and calculated, it would be unbearably sad.

“Maybe ‘she’ really doesn’t know,” Ashe suddenly said. “Although ‘she’ hasn’t appeared yet, let’s not forget the existence of the ‘master.’ In the original plan, the ‘master’ was supposed to show up and capture the Witch long ago. However, despite being severely injured during the chase, they still haven’t appeared.”

Sonya snorted, “Because the pursuit team was too strong, and that cowardly ‘master,’ who only knows how to manipulate women, didn’t dare to come out.”

“But what if it was all schemed by the ‘master’?” Ashe suggested. “The Witch isn’t weak; killing her and capturing her are two entirely different concepts. To ensure her capture, the ‘master’ might have lured the pursuers and secretly adjusted the intensity of the chase, creating a high-pressure environment where the bonds between them rapidly intensified.”

“Braiding her hair might have been a scenario meticulously planned by the ‘master.’ Once they were safe, the ‘silly woman’ would definitely help braid the Witch’s hair. Maybe it was a ribbon imbued with a Miracle or some form of mental domination. In any case, the ‘silly woman’ would unknowingly capture the Witch.”

“This is the only way to explain why the Witch let her guard down. Even if she herself lowered her defenses, her sisters would definitely remain cautious. Only in a scenario where the ‘silly woman’ was completely unaware could the Witch’s sisters fall into the trap.”

Deya and Sonya nodded in agreement. This explanation accounted for many coincidences and the Witch’s trust. Moreover, the idea that ‘it’s all that scummy master’s fault’ resonated well with their emotional needs.

However...

“Observer, how did you come up with such a method so quickly?” Sonya asked curiously. “It sounds like a mental spellcaster’s scheme.”

“Could it be that you’ve seen a similar plot in fairy tales?” Deya speculated.

“Is it really that hard to figure out? Isn’t it just a common scheme?” Ashe responded, bewildered. “Maybe I have a vivid imagination. Besides, in the two conversations, the Witch seemed completely unafraid of being captured. So thinking from the opposite perspective, the ‘master’ couldn’t use conventional methods to capture her, and the ‘silly woman,’ who has a good relationship with the Witch, was clearly the best trap.”

Although it sounds logical, the fact that the Observer could reconstruct the thought process of such a villainous character felt a bit unsettling. However, Sonya quickly brushed it off and looked at Ashe with sparkling eyes. “So, what’s your question?”

Ashe’s expression turned odd at the mention of his question. After a moment’s hesitation, he said, “Let me tell you the question first.”

“Question: Among these three people, who is the Observer’s closest acquaintance?”

“①The first person; ②The second person; ③The third person; ④None”

Sonya’s eyes lit up, and Deya also showed a curious expression.

“What about the conversation?”

Ashe continued, “The answer is ③, the third person.”

“The conversation is the key! Information from the future is more valuable than any Fate Questioning rewards!” Sonya urged. “Come on, don’t be shy like a Little Trumpet.”

“I’m not shy,” Ashe said, spreading his hands in exasperation. “But the problem is—”

“There was no dialog, only the answer itself. My future self cheated.”

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

Chapter 440: Ashes Hidden Secrets of the Future

Ashe's listening experience was completely different from the other two operators. If Sonya and Deya's experience could be described as "What? What? What are you talking about?" his was extraordinarily clear.

"o(≧▽≦)ツ I'm here~~~ Let's take it slow, tonight will definitely be a night to remember..."

"Hey, wait, wait! Stop talking!"

"Someone's listening, a Prophecy Sect Angel? Or the Divine Sovereign? No, this feels more pure, like the power of that one from Ruby Mountain... I got it, it's Fate Questioning!"

"But that can't be right, how could Fate Questioning see me now?"

"Don't move, don't move, we're being listened to, be serious... ow!"

"Mm? Don't talk, write in my palm... Oh right, I used to have the Secret Incarnation for a while. These conceptual Incarnations are the best anchors. No wonder Ruby Mountain can connect me to the past, and the Secret Incarnation comes with a 'stealth' effect. Ruby Mountain hasn't realized I've noticed the spying!"

"The answer is ③. I can't say more, or Fate Questioning will delete this recording."

Perhaps out of intuition, or maybe to protect his image, Ashe concealed the first and fifth lines. But just the other self-narrations were enough to astonish the sword Princess and the Witch.

"'Stop talking'?" Sonya's eyes widened. "From analyzing the options, you're with at least three others, right?"

Deya suddenly asked, "Observer, have you ever revealed the Secret Incarnation in reality?"

"No, at least not now."

"But in that content, someone reminded you about the Secret Incarnation by writing in your palm. So, that person is either me or the sword Princess?"

Ashe hurriedly explained, "It could also be a new operator in the future!"

"That's still the same, isn't it? They're part of the team." Sonya blinked. "So options ①②③ refer to us? Is this question asking who among the team is closest to you?"

"...That possibility cannot be ruled out." Ashe shrugged and said, "But it's also possible that I might disclose the Secret Incarnation in the future—"

"Are you nuts? The Secret Incarnation is a conceptual Incarnation that affects the survival of related Spellcasting Sects. Revealing it would do more harm than good!" Sonya immediately responded. "This secret must stay between us. Even future operators can't know!"

"Alright, alright." Ashe just wanted to end the topic quickly. "What we should be focusing on is the fact that my future self can detect Fate Questioning—"

"Observer, what would you be doing with three other team members?" Deya asked curiously.

"Playing games or chatting." Ashe replied without missing a beat. "What else could it be?"

The village girl suspiciously eyed the Cult Leader. "Are you hiding something?"

"It's clearly my future self hiding something!" Ashe forcibly brought the conversation back on track. "He knows he's become listening material for Fate Questioning, yet he doesn't take the opportunity to send me any Intelligence!"

He's definitely hiding something!

But Sonya glanced at the Witch, knowing now was not the time to press further, and said, "Didn't he already say that if he discloses any more information, Fate Questioning would definitely delete that recording."

"But your future self seemed very surprised to be listened to." Sonya mused. "Does that mean you've grown so powerful that you can block all prophecy surveillance? But if your power grows, shouldn't the Witch and I also grow in sync? Why wouldn't we have that strength as well in the future?"

"Could it be due to different timelines?" Ashe suggested. "The future you heard might only be a few years from now, while the future I heard could be ten years later."

"And when you realized you were being listened to, your first reaction was to think it was being eavesdropped on by an Angel or the Divine Sovereign." Sonya murmured. "Does that mean in ten years, you'll reach the level of an Angel or Divine Sovereign? And you mentioned Ruby Mountain... At the very least, you're already a legendary spellcaster!"

“What is Ruby Mountain?” Ashe asked curiously.

“Layer four of the Virtual Realm is called Ruby Mountain, also known as the Mountain of Legends, Half-step Heaven, or the Near-God Forbidden Zone,” Sonya explained. “Your future self is very familiar with the power of Ruby Mountain, even deducing that you were being recorded by Fate Questioning... You’ve become so strong.”

“We’ve become strong,” Ashe emphasized. “We will climb the Virtual Realm together, and enjoy the breathtaking view from the summit.”

The village girl quickly brushed off her slight sense of inferiority and nodded, saying, “It must be that my future self is too strong, so Fate Questioning couldn’t listen to me and had to choose a weaker version of me!”

“Wait a minute,” Deya suddenly noticed something. “Future Observer said that the Secret Incarnation comes with a stealth effect, so it can counter-surveil the Virtual Realm’s probing. That means...”

“Exactly!” Ashe nodded excitedly. “If Fate Questioning is always picking up from the distant future, then my future self is definitely helping me cheat!”

“Congratulations, you got one question right. Would you like to continue?”

“The listening material for question two is starting—”

“...Hmm? Has it started?”

“After the last session, I remembered there was indeed such a Fate Questioning, but it happened too long ago, and my situation was a bit chaotic back then... so I didn’t recall it in time.”

“The Virtual Realm won’t let you take advantage forever. Fate Questioning should have already noticed something off... The answer to this question is ①.”

“Our different selves at different times are not the same self. So, I won’t disclose anything about the future to avoid jeopardizing your present.”

“The Secret Incarnation is very useful.”

“Question: Observer... (static)?”

“①Thigh-high stockings ②Glasses ③Combat attire ④??? (static)”

Ashe briefly described the situation of the second question. Sonya looked at him skeptically, “You only heard static for the question and the fourth option? If you don’t want to say it, we won’t mind; we respect your privacy.”

Deya nodded repeatedly and asked in confusion, “But why would thigh-high stockings, glasses, and combat attire appear together? What kind of question would ask about that?”

Ashe shook his head and moved on to the third question. But he quickly took off his headphones and said to the operators, “The third question was all static. The only word I could clearly hear was ‘question.’ Even the question and options were chaotic. I picked one at random and got it wrong.”

Seeing his genuine expression, the Sword Princess and the Witch believed him. If Ashe could really keep answering correctly by exploiting a loophole, it would actually make them more anxious. [search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

Many spellcasters are not afraid to offend the Divine Sovereign, but they hold a deep reverence for the Virtual Realm. To draw an analogy, the Divine Sovereign is like a company boss who controls your paycheck. Even if you embezzle company funds, the Divine Sovereign might not care too much. However, the Virtual Realm is like a bank; would you dare exploit a loophole in a bank?

With the Fate Questioning session over, it was time for the Q&A segment.

Ashe and his team had already prepared their question — just like in the first Fate Questioning, they intended to inquire about the Intelligence on Rainbow Tail.

Although they had yet to fully extend their Golden Wings, with the absorption rate of the Alchemy Throne and the training boost from the sports car, they could probably achieve what would normally take other spellcasters a year in less than a month.

However, extending the Golden Wings is only the basic requirement for promotion to three wings. Countless spellcasters get stuck in the Sect Realm for years or even decades, unable to break through to the Sanctuary level. Although the Sword Princess and the Witch are both geniuses, elevating their main sect to the Sanctuary level in a few months or a year seemed unrealistic unless they could consume Experience Orbs like snacks every night.

Ashe estimated that only by exterminating the Blade Fish Dragon clan on the Time Continent could the Sword Princess possibly be force-fed into the Sanctuary level.

Thus, seeking Rainbow Tail was definitely worthwhile. With their past success with the Golden Fish, they naturally wanted to experience the joy of another seamless crossing.

However, in the second listening material from Ashe’s Fate Questioning, his ‘future self’ had clearly hinted at how to utilize this Fate Questioning session.

“Your future self’ emphasized that the Secret Incarnation is very important,” Sonya said. “Yet our current utilization of the Secret Incarnation is almost non-existent. The conceptual Incarnation itself is a Secret Toxin; I didn’t dare inquire about it, and I couldn’t find anything useful in the documents... If we want to understand how to use the Secret Incarnation, we have to seize this opportunity.”

Ashe nodded. “Now we have two opportunities to ask questions. We can ask once about the usage of the Secret Incarnation and once about Intelligence on Rainbow Tail.”

After a brief discussion, they decided that Deya, who had answered correctly once, would ask about Rainbow Tail, and Ashe, who had answered correctly twice, would ask about the Secret Incarnation. Since Rainbow Tail undoubtedly falls under the category of Secret Toxin-level knowledge, no matter who asked, the Virtual Realm would likely give a vague response. However, the usage of the Secret Incarnation is not a Secret Toxin, so Ashe, who had answered more questions correctly, was bound to obtain more effective Intelligence.

Of course, they still needed to be careful about how they phrased their questions. Otherwise, if the Virtual Realm responded with something like “the best use of the Secret Incarnation is for heroic soul commanders,” they would be left scratching their heads.

Ashe asked, “With the resources we currently have, how can we effectively utilize the Secret Incarnation?”

The Virtual Realm provided a detailed response: “① Use the ‘Water-born Thread’ to bind the spirit summoned by the soul summoning spell. Then aim the ‘Rage Sword’ and ‘Evil Light Slash’ at the spirit. When the Secret Incarnation feels threatened, it will share its first power; ② Kill a commander of the Spider Tower, thereby unlocking the Spider Tower troop type. The Secret Incarnation will share its second power.”

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