

Sorcerer's Handbook

- Chapter 461: The Man in the Dark Red Trench Coat

"Igor, how's this pressure?"

"Need more water? Let me help! Want some fries? Open your mouth, ah~"

In the canteen on the first floor of the inn, the Con Artist watched Ashe, who was being unusually attentive early in the morning. He turned away from the offered fries and let out a long sigh. "Spill it, what do you want this time to humiliate me again? Do you want me to hypnotize someone to find you a girlfriend? Or help you rebuild the Four Pillars Cult?"

"No way!" Ashe replied firmly. "I just realized I haven't properly thanked you before, so I want to strengthen our relationship... purely academic, of course. How long does your hypnosis last, and how effective is it?"

"No ulterior motives?"

"None! But Igor, how old are you this year? What are your plans after the Weaving Festival? Have you thought about settling down..."

"Oh~~~," Igor said meaningfully. "But why are you only concerned about me? Harvey isn't any younger than me. You don't ask him?"

"What's there to ask? His answer is sure to be 'dig up all the ancestors in Gospel'."

Harvey swallowed the sandwich in his mouth and shook his head. "An outsider's prejudice—it's like flowers. Only at full bloom are they most strikingly beautiful; afterward, they're just withered remains. I'm not interested in ancestral graves. In necromancy, the 48 hours after death are called 'Ephemeral Time'. Livor mortis gradually forms, internal organs autolyze, and the corpse can produce super-reactions to external stimuli, making it the best period for appreciation. Over in Blood Moon, they never keep a corpse longer than 48 hours for similar reasons..."

Ashe suddenly felt something was off. Even though Harvey was talking about such disgusting stuff, it didn't affect his breakfast appetite at all, nor did it for anyone else. Even Lise was eating with relish.

After the Weaving Festival, Ashe must keep his distance from Harvey. He definitely didn't want his first reaction to seeing a corpse to be appreciation rather than fear!

"In conclusion," Ashe said warmly, kneading Igor's shoulders, "you want to settle down too, right? Aren't you tired of this wandering life?"

"Well..." Igor relaxed his shoulders, enjoying the Cult Leader's service. "Indeed, I'm not very interested in traveling. It's time to live a more stable life."

"Exactly, exactly," Ashe nodded repeatedly. "And the best choice for you to settle down is, without a doubt—"

Igor covered Ashe's mouth with his hand. "Yes, managing the Four Pillars Cult."

Ashe: "?!"

"Just kidding," Igor released his hand and laughed. "But Rust Crow's Four Pillars Cult does align perfectly with my career plans. Even without the Four Pillars' help, I intend to create a secret organization, gradually gaining fame, power, and money, to establish a business in Gospel—"

"But wouldn't marrying into Belldate's family also give you all of that? Plus, you'd have a super cute genius daughter, just as adorable as Lise!"

Lise, now slightly satisfied, turned her gaze away. Igor, annoyed, said, "That's all nonsense from Gospel. Anfel and I would never get to that point. And why do you keep pushing me to marry into Belldate? What's in it for you?"

"I'm really just thinking of you," Ashe's eyes wandered. "Of course, it would be great if you could remember an old cellmate after you hit the big time."

Glancing at Ashe and Lise, Igor instantly understood his true intentions. Grumpily, he turned to Annan. "Did you find a job in the ground city?"

"Yes," Annan replied. "One in city sanitation, one as a doll worker, and one as a canteen server. We'll head out after breakfast."

Ashe asked, "Hey? Young Lady, aren't you coming with us?"

"I'm definitely going."

"But there are only three jobs—"

"Only Igor, Harvey, and I are going. You and Banjeet will stay at the inn," Annan glared at Ashe. "Your task is to accompany Banjeet throughout the day. Do not separate for too long, understood?" *r*

Seeing the worry in Annan's eyes, Ashe immediately realized something. "Is it because of the Assassination Ranking?"

“That’s right,” Annan said. “Banjeet is number two on the Assassination Ranking and was rendered ineffective by ‘you’, the Echoer. The Yisuo Royal Family might send someone to impersonate you to assassinate Banjeet, fulfilling the future woven by the Assassination Ranking, just like Helephes and Roger on the Evil Arts Ranking. Leaving Banjeet alone is too dangerous; he must be accompanied by a sorcerer.”

“Sorry,” the blue-haired butler lowered his head in shame. “I’ve been a burden...”

“The Yisuo Royal Family wouldn’t dare kill me to maintain Gospel’s credibility, so as long as I stay by Banjeet’s side, their assassins won’t show up!” Ashe fully understood. “You all go make money; I’ll handle things at home!”

Though his reasoning was sound, it carried an odd tone coming from Ashe’s mouth...

After breakfast, the group split into two teams. Before parting, Igor pulled Ashe aside and asked, “Haven’t you thought about your plans for after the Weaving Festival?”

“It’s not that I haven’t—”

“That means you haven’t.” The Con Artist paused for a moment. “If you’re interested, you can come help me.”

“Help you?” Ashe blinked. “I’m not skilled at nor do I enjoy deceiving people—”

“I’m not eager for you to ruin my business.” Igor glanced at the little white-haired girl. “You just need a place to settle down with Lise, right? Stay home and study spellcasting; you don’t need to do anything else.”

“Is it really that simple?” Ashe asked, suddenly suspicious. “You don’t have any ulterior motives, do you?”

“...I actually like Lise quite a bit myself,” Igor admitted, his eyes drifting upward. “I can’t just watch her continue wandering with you. While starting a business won’t make us rich quickly, it’s more than enough to support you two freeloaders.”

“That’s true; who wouldn’t like Lise? She’s so adorable,” Ashe nodded in agreement. “I never thought one day I’d rely on my daughter’s cuteness to make a living... but I’ll gratefully accept your offer!”

After bidding farewell to the work team, Ashe and the group returned to their room at the inn. The blue-haired, black-haired, and white-haired trio exchanged glances until Ashe made a hand-rolling gesture.

Banjeet caught on and pulled an ancient gaming console and a box full of game cartridges from his suitcase. They could project the games onto the wall for some fun.

“Lise, you need to finish your Gospel basic education study tasks before you can play games!”

“If you guys are playing right next to me, how am I supposed to study?”

“Good point,” Ashe thought for a moment. “I’ll study with you this afternoon, so no slacking off.”

“Deal!”

The three spent the entire morning enjoying classic old-time games, and even the usually melancholy Banjeet started to smile.

After losing nine consecutive matches to Banjeet in Sorcerer Duel 14, Ashe let out a dramatic wail and dropped the controller. “I’ve cracked the case. I definitely didn’t assassinate you because of some ridiculous reason like killing the Empress. It’s because you kept beating me so badly, and I just needed an excuse for revenge!”

“To be honest, I also find it hard to believe that you, Mr. Ashe, would kill me.” Banjeet chuckled. “It’s like imagining Harvey hating corpses or Lady Qenna being affectionate.”

Ashe blinked. “You’re not implying anything with that, right?”

“Of course not,” Banjeet replied, sipping his tea. “But if you end up with our lady in the future, please steer clear of Lady Qenna.”

“Gospel makes up all sorts of nonsense, Banjeet, you’re overthinking it.” Ashe shook his head with a smile. “Besides, you know your lady has secret aspirations she doesn’t reveal. Emotions are just a side dish to her, while her ideals are the main course... Men would only slow her down.”

Ashe stood up and said, “It’s almost lunchtime; I’ll go downstairs to the canteen and bring some food back.”

“Thanks a lot.”

Lise patted her behind and stood up, saying, “I’m going back to my room to use the restroom!”

Listening to the sound of the door closing, Banjeet gazed out at the underground city through the window. Even though it was noon, the absence of a day-night cycle made it remain a city of eternal night.

Banjeet knew that in the near future, not just Nabistin but all of Gospel would undergo dramatic changes due to Funeral’s actions, turning countless fates around 180 degrees. However, he had neither the power nor the desire to intervene.

He was Dolan's butler, loyal to Funeral's will.

For now, he just wanted to enjoy a few more days of peace, and then, like ice, silently melt away into the water.

Knowing it was almost time to eat, the blue-haired butler went to the restroom to wash his hands. Suddenly, the water stopped flowing, and the restroom lights flickered. At the same moment, the sound of the door hinges turning reached his ears.

But he heard no footsteps.

Banjeet raised his head and saw in the mirror a figure at the door: a man dressed in a dark red trench coat, wearing a mask.

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

Chapter 462: Dolan

A dark red trench coat.

A pitch-black Mask.

An indistinct face.

There was no doubt that this was Ashe Heath. However, over sixty years of life experience constantly warned Banjeet, and even his spirits trembled in fear deep within his soul. Important spirits like "Iceheart," "Bonechill," and "Frostbite" were going berserk, attacking his other spirits frantically.

In that critical moment, Banjeet suddenly understood why Helephes and Roger had died so easily—they had no power to resist at all!

A spirit riot was happening!

The only spirits Banjeet could still control were the original spirits he had summoned himself. All the other spirits, those acquired from the Virtual Realm or purchased in reality, lost control. The ones merely shivering and refusing to work were troublesome but tolerable. The real problem was the newer spirits, those not bound to him for long, which had outright rebelled, attacking Banjeet's original spirits. Banjeet was over sixty years old; his spirit system had rarely been updated, and even the most recent rebellious spirits had been with him for at least three years.

For younger sorcerers like Helephes and Roger, who were still in their prime, their spirits underwent minor updates almost every year and major updates every three years. The ratio of original to external spirits might even be as high as 1:10 or more. Once a spirit riot occurred, their original spirits could be beaten to death by the external spirits!

If an original spirit was killed and all external spirits rioted, they would have no spirits to use. Unless they were physical sorcerers, they would be no different from non-sorcerers!

Using only original spirits could prevent a spirit riot, but that was impossible. During the foundational period of a silver sorcerer, the proportion of original spirits might be higher. However, by the time one reached the golden sorcerer stage, to build a functioning battle system or production system, the sorcerer inevitably needed to use one or two original spirits as the mainstay to construct their system. It's like comparing a family workshop to a factory: the latter has more management risks, but the increase in productivity vastly outweighs the risks.

Moreover, in fifty years of being a sorcerer, Banjeet had never encountered a spirit riot before, nor had he even heard of it. It made sense though—any sorcerer who encountered a spirit riot likely hadn't survived to tell the tale.

Was it the spirits, a Miracle, or...?

Am I going to die?

Banjeet found himself surprisingly calm, but when he lifted his head, he saw neither "Ashe" nor a mirror.

What he saw was a rainy night.

A large, outdated truck was parked outside a nostalgic café, the air filled with the acrid smell of tires and asphalt from the harsh braking. A woman in a purple trench coat lay on the ground, her lower body tangled in the truck's tires.

Banjeet's mind went blank in an instant. The screech of headlights, the screams of passersby, and the pitiful howls of raindrops shattering on the pavement—all of it was muted from his ears, the world silenced without an echo. He knelt by the woman's side, opening a blue umbrella, but the rain still fell on her face.

"The rain is too heavy; the umbrella is useless," the woman managed to smile. "Don't cry, Little Banjeet. Though I must say, you look pretty even when you cry... it's no wonder you're... cough... number one."

"Healers will be here soon," Banjeet's voice cracked, his vision blurred, and the anguish spread from his limbs to his heart. The mature and composed butler suddenly vanished, leaving only a frail boy behind. "And aren't you a sorcerer? A Miracle! Use a Miracle!"

You said, after the Weaving Festival, we would be family. You're lying! You promised by the Name of Dolan!"

"When I promised by the Name of Dolan, it meant I was committing to deceiving you," the woman chuckled. "Banjeet, you are already my family, so I want to ask you for a favor..."

"No! I won't do it! I don't want to!"

"Lex is only three, and I have no other relatives. I can only ask you to take care of him. That little rascal likes to cling to you, probably sees you as a future wife..."

"Why should I take care of your kid? You do it yourself! Once you're dead, I'll feed him to the dogs!"

"That doesn't matter. Dolan should have perished long ago; it's a wonder we made it this far," the woman's voice grew fainter. "I'm sorry, Banjeet. I really... wanted to give you a home..."

"At least... I don't want you... to be alone in the rain..."

The air died, the night rain died, and the young Banjeet died as well.

When the rain ceased, Banjeet lifted his head and realized he had arrived on the outskirts of Azura. At that time, Azura had not yet built the city on the second level, and the outskirts were still waiting for development. A young man, donned in a purple helmet, mounted his motorcycle and said, "This is as far as I can take you." r

"What exactly are you planning to do?" Banjeet asked. "Why can't you tell me?"

"Rebellion phase, old man. You wouldn't understand."

"You're already in your twenties; isn't it a bit late for a rebellion phase?" Banjeet sighed. "Now that you're spreading your wings, you call me an old man. You were so adorable as a child, always following me around. Every time I turned, there you were. Back then, you called me—"

"That was over a decade ago!" the young man interrupted, agitated. "Can't you look to the future like young people do, instead of clinging to the past!"

Thunder rumbled in the distance, and the sky was thick with clouds. Banjeet remarked, "It's going to rain. How about—"

"Then I better hit the road," the young man replied. "By the way, I want to ask you a favor."

“Hmm?”

“Don’t go taking care of Annan. She’ll do fine in Vamora. I’ve deposited money into your account and transferred some Gospel points to you. You’re not getting any younger, old man. Find a place to settle down, or maybe publish your novels. They might not have literary value, but they could surprisingly sell well...”

“Wait a minute.” Banjeet placed his hand on the young man’s shoulder and pointed his gun directly at his waist. “What are you really planning to do? Go back, or I’ll freeze you and take you back myself.”

“I bet there’s no bullet in your gun.”

Banjeet was stunned, instantly noticing the unusual weight of his gun. By now, the rain was pouring heavily, and through the sound of raindrops, the young man’s voice said, “You shouldn’t have let me play with your gun since childhood. Removing the bullets was all too easy.”

“Lex, even if you don’t care about yourself, think about Annan—”

“It’s for Annan that I’m doing this. If I don’t, she’d eventually walk this same path. By the Name of Dolan, I will end our family’s fate.”

“What about me? Lex, what about me?!” Banjeet gripped his shoulder tightly, his voice filled with desperation. “How many times do the Dolan family intend to hurt me?! I’ve already lost Wenna...”

“That’s why, while I could write letters to others, I had to tell you in person,” the young man said. “I’m sorry, Mom.”

“Don’t ever look back. I’m gone.”

Many days later, on a bright afternoon, Banjeet finally received the news of Lex’s death. The location was Nabistin, and the cause was a traffic accident.

The sunlight died, the tears died, and the middle-aged Banjeet died too.

Just as Banjeet was about to drown in the Family Dream of the Six Heraldry, a little girl nervously approached him. “Uncle Banjeet, I found a way to escape Vamora!”

“Miss, Senhaeser is a safe place, there’s no need for you to leave.”

“No, I am a descendant of the Dolan family. I must restore the glory of our ancestor, Danzell!”

“Miss, your last name is Senhaeser now.”

"That's precisely why I must leave. Vamora only breeds incompetence; I need to see the world outside!" The little girl spoke with determination. "And Qenna keeps bullying me. By the Name of Dolan, I will get my revenge in the future!"

Banjeet couldn't help but laugh, but as he looked at Annan, it was as though he was transported back to his own youth and middle age.

How could he possibly refuse an invitation from the Dolan family?

"Although I don't fully understand why, our family is cursed by the Gospel," Annan said. "Maybe because of this connection, I was able to log into our ancestors' accounts and read the future with Empress-level access. From logging in so many times, I've seen that I'll come to an end at 28... I don't even know what kind of future the Gospel has prepared for me."

"So that's it..." Banjeet muttered.

"That's why I must obtain the Divine Sovereign's Wish; it's the only way to break the chains of our bloodline. Just like Grandma helped you win first place at the Weaving Festival, I need to find others from exotic lands to deceive the Weaving Festival. The best time to find them is a few days before the festival, so their records are clean enough..." Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"Hmm? The client behind this is the Four Pillars Cult? They're looking for people from exotic lands too? Cleos asked me just a few days ago if I had any intelligence on the Four Pillars Cult... Four Pillars Cult, Red Hat, exotic land... I suddenly have a brilliant idea."

"Banjeet, are you ready to cause some chaos with me?" Annan asked with a mischievous grin.

"Of course," Banjeet replied, glancing out the window at the drizzling rain. "Until I melt into this rain."

Banjeet opened his eyes to find himself in a strange palace. Before him lay Annan, collapsed in a pool of blood. The Purple Moth was stained a vivid crimson.

He looked up and saw the Empress behind the veil. Memories of the air, night rain, sunlight, and tears all seemed to rush back to him.

He understood completely.

"I am a block of ice, frozen with my love for Dolan."

"For this last journey, how could I bear to let her walk it alone?"

“I indeed rank second on the Assassination Ranking,” Banjeet said, pulling out his dual ice-curse pistols. “This is my future.”

Just as he charged forward, a man in a dark red trench coat emerged from behind the veil. He parried all the bullets with his long sword and then thrust the sword, forming an ice spike that pierced straight through. Banjeet suddenly recalled his own death—

Those who assassinate the Empress will be pierced through by the coldest ice spike!

“Dad!”

When Lise’s sweet voice echoed from outside, ‘Ashe’ cast a deep, meaningful look at Banjeet, and all visions of the future faded like smoke.

Ashe walked in carrying takeout bags with Lise. “Dinner time, dinner time!”

The faucet was still running, and the mirror reflected no man in a dark red trench coat—only Ashe and Lise passing through the doorway. Lise followed Ashe like a little shadow, and it all seemed like nothing more than a hallucination to Banjeet moments ago.

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

Chapter 463: I Can Take Care of You All Too

Banjeet came out after washing his hands and saw that Ashe and Lise were already eating. He poured everyone a cup of tea, sat down, and said, “I was just attacked by Ashe.”

“What?!” Ashe, who was eating a sandwich, was stunned.

“Oops!” Lise sprayed orange juice onto Ashe’s face. “Dad, how could you—I’d rather you find a stepmom—wait, are you and Aunt Bukin—”

Ashe chopped Lise on the head, interrupting her endless imagination. He wiped his face with a napkin, turned and asked, “You were attacked by that, uh, ‘Gospel Ashe’?”

Banjeet nodded and briefly described what he had just encountered: “... Although it was an illusion, according to my state of mind, if Annan really died, I would definitely

assassinate the Empress to avenge her. Therefore, being second on the Assassination Ranking is not entirely made up; it could very well be my future.”

“Helephes and Roger probably died the same way. First, they were trapped by a spirit riot and couldn’t resist, and then they were pulled into an illusion based on the Future Ranking. Once they realized this truly was their future and something they would do, ‘Gospel Ashe’ appeared to kill them, making their ranking invalid.”

Ashe asked, “But when we came in, we didn’t find anything. How did ‘Gospel Ashe’ leave?”

“I suspect ‘Gospel Ashe’ isn’t a person but a Miracle or something similar. It’ll automatically find us Echoers and pull us into an illusion when no one is around.”

“How can you kill someone in an illusion?” Ashe still didn’t quite understand. “Besides, Roger jumped off a building in front of us, and Helephes was lying on the square fountain—they both walked there themselves!”

“That might be why ‘Gospel Ashe’ only appears after I acknowledge it’s my future,” Banjeet said. “In the ranking lists of the Evil Arts Ranking and Assassination Ranking, ‘Ashe’ and ‘future’ are highly intertwined. Once we accept the latter, we have to accept the former. Therefore, any harm ‘Gospel Ashe’ inflicts on us in the Illusion gets manifested on our own bodies—the ones truly killing the Echoers are ourselves!”

“Think about it carefully. Anyone killed by ‘Gospel Ashe’ within the ranking list, weren’t their injuries related to their own abilities?” Banjeet asked.

Ashe was taken aback. Reflecting on it, he realized it was true. After Roger’s suicide, he was melted by the Plague virus; Helephes, who was skilled in the Water Sect, was shriveled and drowned in the air; and Banjeet had been pierced by an ice sword!

“That’s right!” Lise said. “How could Dad master so many spellcasting sects? The fact that Dad is even a two-wings sorcerer is already surprising enough!”

“Can you have a little more faith in me?” Ashe angrily rubbed Lise’s head. “Once I successfully invent the Miracle of substitute cultivation, mastering all sects will just be a matter of time!”

“Dad, you just ate fries and now you’re touching my hair!”

Actually, Ashe might indeed master many spellcasting sects since the operators’ sect experience was all shared with him, though there was no need to mention that.

“This attack failed, but there might be a next time,” Ashe looked at Banjeet. “What are you planning to do?”

"It's simple. When you and Lise returned, it left immediately, which means as long as there's someone with me, there won't be an attack," Banjeet said. "Mr. Ashe, I'd like to spend as much time with you in the next few days."

"No problem."

"One more thing, I hope this stays a secret among the three of us. Please don't tell Miss Dolan."

Ashe was taken aback: "Why?"

"Knowing this would only add to her worries," Banjeet said. "She's already very tired. I just want to quietly accompany her in completing the final task of the Funeral. I am Dolan's butler; when needed, I am a life-taking gun, but I can also be a life-sacrificing shield."

"Mr. Ashe," the blue-haired butler looked hopefully at the Cult Leader, "would you grant an old man's last wish?"

Ashe pondered for a moment and then nodded, "I won't bring it up on my own."

Nighttime.

"...So that's the situation. As long as someone stays with Banjeet, the Yisuo Royal Family's Assassination Miracle won't work."

In Annan's room, Ashe finished speaking, took a sip of water, and spread his hands, saying, "You ordered me to say it. I'm bound by the Pact to be truthful; otherwise, I wouldn't have divulged it."

"You came into my room all hesitant and kept your clothes on. Of course, I knew you were hiding something." Annan, dressed in a purple nightgown, sat in the chair with her legs crossed and smiled, "Didn't expect you to be so good at exploiting loopholes. Guess I can't trust your promises anymore."

"I don't have some moral purism. If keeping a promise might lead to something bad, there's no need to keep it. Principles exist for inner peace, just like playing games is for creating joy. Once the order is reversed, it's just torture," Ashe said. "Besides, you're the person closest to Banjeet. If hiding this secret led to an irreversible accident, I'd just be the fool Igor always says I am."

"In any case, thank you all for saving Banjeet. And thank you for betraying that secret." Annan touched her earring and lowered her eyes. "Fortunately, you were here. Really, thank you."

Ashe asked, "So what do you plan to do?"

Annan stood up and leaned against the windowsill, looking out at the underground city's scenery. "Act like I don't know anything and let him stay, participate in the operation."

"I thought you'd send someone to get him out."

"I do wish to do that, but sometimes, it's not just about saying 'I'm doing this for you' to arrange someone else's fate." The Purple Moth said, "Even the Gospel doesn't have that right."

"And like he said, if I die, he wouldn't let me go to hell alone. If I succeed and stay alive, then his participation won't hurt. So why make him sad again?"

Annan sighed lightly, "Dolan has already wronged him enough."

Ashe walked to her side and said, "Don't worry. The Ranking of Schemes shows you and Banjeet performing the tenth scheme together, proving you'll be alright."

"We, who try to deceive fate, still rely on the future to save us?" Annan couldn't help but laugh. "Enough about that... By the way, Ashe, were you discussing plans for after the Weaving Festival with Igor this morning?"

"Yes," Ashe said. "No matter what I said, Igor doesn't want to depend on Belldate and insists on starting his own business. Lise and I plan to join him."

"Why?"

"Because he's willing to support both of us freeloaders, and it's hard to refuse."

"I can support you too."

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

Chapter 464: Weaving the Future

Far away, the neon lights of skyscrapers melted into the false firmament's starry sea. The incessant flow of traffic operated like the veins of the metropolis, while the never-sleeping street lighting knights below carved thick realms of light.

Brilliance and decadence collided; remnants of an unwilling-to-end old era disguised themselves as the future. Shadows wantonly sucked the desires emitted by the city.

Each corner seemed like a monster waiting to devour, burying countless fallen souls made from alcohol and sugary smoke.

Ashe and Annan leaned against the windowsill, gazing at each other. Half of their bodies were bathed in the room's lighting, while the other half was cloaked in the city's darkness. Their eyes flickered, reflecting the ambiguous image of one another.

"Good thing Igor reminded me. You're not thinking of extending our pact verbally, are you?" Ashe crossed his arms, signaling his refusal. "If I agreed, wouldn't the slave pact, with a 101-day term, automatically renew forever?"

"No way." Annan shook her head. "Although I have some authority within the Gospel, the pact's term can only be extended to December 31, 2100."

"That's still over five hundred years!" Ashe retreated instinctively. "By then, the Gospel Kingdom might not even exist. Your descendants could find my grave in the Doomsday wasteland, shout 'Ashe Heath, come forth as per the pact,' and I'd have to crawl out of hell to continue serving the Dolan Family for centuries!"

"Impossible. No pact, no matter how powerful, can summon the dead." Annan shook her head again. "Unless I get Harvey to perform necromancy on you, then Ashe, you could become an heirloom for the Dolan Family. Damn Igor, ruining my plans."

"Bless Igor for saving us from a wicked woman. He delivered us from evil."

Seeing Annan's frustrated look, Ashe internally breathed a sigh of relief.

When Annan abruptly confessed 'I'll take care of you,' although he couldn't help but feel a bit delighted—actually, more than just a bit, but he only allowed himself to admit a little—rationality quickly returned, leaving him feeling rather uneasy.

His relationship with Annan was abnormal.

If it weren't for Annan, he would have taken Lise and fled long ago. Even if Lise wanted him to rescue the princess in the Tower, he wouldn't have risked it. It was Annan's stubborn insistence on executing the plan to assassinate the princess that kept them in the underground city.

Or rather, from the very beginning, it was Annan who wanted to blaspheme the Gospel and deceive the Weaving Festival, which is why they were now like rats scurrying around the Gospel kingdom. Ashe only wanted to find a place where he could send a substitute to work, take care of Lise during the day, and venture into the Virtual Realm with the sword Princess and the Witch at night.

With “Aurora’s Sorcerer Handbook,” Ashe felt that becoming a legendary sorcerer was just a matter of time. There was no need to go on dangerous adventures; he could just bide his time.

However, he was still a slave under Annan’s domination. He couldn’t disobey any of her commands, so he had to follow her to the end. If Annan truly liked him, wouldn’t that be like falling in love with his kidnapper? That would be classic Stockholm Syndrome.

But in typical stories, it’s usually the kidnapped female protagonist who falls for the male lead. When it happens to him, it seems a bit reversed...

Thankfully, Annan is a bad woman. Thankfully, Annan is just a bad woman.

Ashe changed the subject. “By the way, I’ve already decided on my wish.”

“What is your wish?” Annan asked curiously. “To enhance your spirit substitute into an all-attributes-maxed super servant that can complete any task for you?”

“...That’s my secondary wish. If there’s any extra wish capacity, please help me with that, and also add the ability for me to freely set the appearance and gender of the substitute.” Although Ashe was tempted, he kept his promise to Lise. “My primary wish is to permanently cancel the ‘Ranking of the Unrelated.’”

“Huh?” Annan was stunned. “You want to cancel that Gospel ranking list?”

“That’s right.” Ashe nodded, already preparing a plausible reason in his mind.

However, Annan stayed silent for a moment and didn’t ask about the reason for his wish. She simply nodded. “As long as I obtain the Divine Sovereign’s Wish, I guarantee your wish will come true.”

Ashe breathed a sigh of relief; tonight’s mission was complete. He disclosed Banjeet’s situation to Annan, not only to prevent any tragedies due to such secrecy but also to use this favor to make Annan take his wish seriously—his little plan worked!

He relaxed and jokingly asked, “So, what do you plan to do after the Weaving Festival is over? You’re not going to wish to become an angel and leave reality altogether, are you?”

“My wish won’t change my abilities in any way,” Annan shook her head. “If I’m lucky enough to obtain the Divine Sovereign’s Wish and safely get through the Weaving Festival...”

She paused for a moment, then suddenly laughed. “How silly, the Weaving Festival isn’t even over yet, what’s the point of thinking about the future now... We might die in the Royal Palace in just a few days.”

“Precisely because we might die in the Royal Palace, we need to think about our future now,” Ashe said seriously. “If we do die, at least we can live out the rest of our lives in our imagination. If we don’t die, then this fantasy will serve as a source of courage, and we might even create a miracle.” ¶

“The ‘future’ is the greatest hope; once you have a future you want to go toward, nothing can stop you, not even mountains of blades or seas of fire.” He smiled. “In that sense, thinking about the rest of our lives is actually conducting our own Weaving Festival—crafting our future and then striving to achieve it.”

Annan was taken aback. “Weaving Festival...?”

She silently stroked her earring and suddenly asked, “Do you think the Weaving Festival is a good thing?”

“Hmm?” Ashe pondered for a moment. “Honestly, the Weaving Festival is something that can guide societal trends and even affect the development of spellcasting—judging it as good or bad might be oversimplifying it, like saying the sun is a good guy or a bad guy... But if I had to say, it should be a good thing.”

“Predicting a nation’s development, technological revolutions, key talents through the ranking list—all of this ensures that the Gospel will only develop faster and better, almost never regressing or stagnating. If it wasn’t for this Weaving Festival predicting a Doomsday disaster, I’d even believe I could see the future of the Gospel reaching for the stars and the sea.”

“But what about for the Echoers?” Annan asked. “Is it really good for them to know a predestined future in advance?”

“It depends on the situation. If the future aligns with what they hoped for, then it’s certainly a good thing; if it’s completely opposite to what they desire, then it can be quite distressing,” Ashe said, spreading his hands. “But life can never be perfect; even at a buffet, there are dishes that don’t taste good.”

“I don’t see it that way. Whether the future matches my expectations or not, I don’t think it’s a good thing,” Annan said. “For example, if the Weaving Festival told me that I would be with you forever, whether I like you or not, I would find it very uncomfortable.”

“If I didn’t like you, that’s one thing. But even if I did like you, I would think: does that mean I’m bound to be with you? I can’t leave, I can’t change, I can’t choose another path in life?”

“Being negated by the future is painful, but being affirmed by the future also brings pressure.” Annan looked at her hands. “In the end, why isn’t our future something that we can control?”

"You've been in the Gospel for quite a few days now. I'm actually curious about your thoughts on the Gospel," Annan turned to Ashe. "As someone from an exotic land, do you think the Gospel is good? Did the Omniscient Weaver bring the Gospel down because of a deep love for humanity?"

Ashe remained silent for a while before responding with a question, "Do you know about the societal system of the Blood Moon Kingdom?"

"I do. There's the Bloodline Prohibition Law, the Blood Moon Tribunal, the Blood Saints and Moonshadow, everyone grows up in orphanages, and biomechanical modifications run rampant," Annan sighed. "It's like a savage jungle disguised as civilization... I'm sorry if that sounds offensive."

"No, you summed it up well. The Blood Moon Kingdom is essentially a carefully tended farm by the Blood Moon Sovereign," Ashe said. "In my view, the essence of the Gospel and the Blood Moon Kingdom are the same."

"Huh?" Annan was taken aback. "Although I criticize the Omniscient Weaver, isn't that a bit extreme?"

"Although the social systems and cultural landscapes are vastly different, the foundation of both kingdoms stems from the Will of the Divine Sovereign," Ashe said. "The Divine Sovereign established the rules, and so all beings can only live according to these rules. This rule could be the Bloodline Prohibition Law, or it could be the Gospel system."

"The Divine Sovereign does not love or hate humanity. Even the Blood Moon Sovereign is the same. The Blood Saints and Moonshadow, although they are the ruling class, are not favored by the Blood Moon Sovereign but are established based on the Bloodline Prohibition Law. In a world where bloodlines are prohibited, only the selfish Long-lived Species can fully exploit their advantages, just like how flies thrive in a toilet. You can't say that the toilet favors flies, can you? In any other kingdom, these few Long-lived Species would quickly be oppressed by the numerous Short-Lived Species to the point where they'd remain incognito."

"So, you believe that the Divine Sovereign doesn't care about humanity?" Annan murmured.

"No." Ashe shook his head. "Although the Divine Sovereign neither loves nor hates humanity, they do care about people. Otherwise, there wouldn't be the Blood Moon Kingdom and the Gospel Kingdom. But they care about all humanity, not just one or two individuals, not just one era, but everyone from the birth of the kingdom to the present."

"If you ask me, hoping that the Divine Sovereign deeply loves humanity is a mistake. The current impartial and non-interfering attitude of the Divine Sovereign is the correct one."

“Why?”

“Because love is a gift,” Ashe glanced at her. “Are humans qualified to respond to the Divine Sovereign’s love? They would just drown in it. Take Vamora, for example; the patriarch of the Six Heraldry loved his clansmen unconditionally, and as a result, they lived indulgently.”

“Not necessarily,” Annan interjected. “In some ancient myths, there are races favored by the Divine Sovereign who are born mastering spellcasting sects of the silver and even golden realms—”

“Do you remember when you told me about the ‘Gospel Sorcerer’ and the ‘Silent Sorcerer’?” Ashe smiled.

Annan paused, then understood Ashe’s point. Gospel Sorcerers are those who consult the Gospel for answers whenever they encounter difficulties in their spellcasting sect, while Silent Sorcerers rely on themselves to overcome challenges in their traditional spellcasting sect without ever asking the Gospel for help.

In the Gospel Kingdom, ‘Gospel Sorcerers’ are predominant among One-Winged Sorcerers, but among Two-Winged Sorcerers, 70% are ‘Silent Sorcerers,’ and all Sanctuary Sorcerers are ‘Silent Sorcerers.’

“The Divine Sovereign’s love for a clan will only lead to the clan’s downfall in the evaluation system for sorcerers,” Ashe said. “Because spellcasting is not gold, resources, or production materials that can grow automatically. It is knowledge that requires a lifetime of study and pursuit. If the Divine Sovereign helps sorcerers within their spellcasting sects, it actually reduces their potential and corrodes their knowledge base.”

“In this regard, the Omniscient Weaver is actually overly ‘indulgent’ towards you all. Do you think the Omniscient Weaver’s approach is correct or wrong? Conversely, if you look at the Bloodline Prohibition Law, don’t you think the Blood Moon Sovereign is trying to create a high-intensity competitive environment where everyone is equal, allowing people to go further in their journey as sorcerers? Do you consider the Blood Moon Sovereign’s approach correct or wrong?”

Ashe paused. “Of course, this is only in the evaluation system for sorcerers. If we’re talking about resident happiness, the Blood Moon Sovereign isn’t even worthy of licking the Omniscient Weaver’s toes—”

Annan immediately covered Ashe’s mouth and hushed him. “Don’t speak ill of the Divine Sovereign.”

Ashe nodded and continued, “So, it’s not that the Divine Sovereign loves humanity deeply, but rather humanity loves the Divine Sovereign. People project their own

feelings onto the Divine Sovereign, which makes them believe that the Divine Sovereign loves them.”

“When you ask if the Omniscient Weaver loves humanity, what you’re really questioning is not His attitude but whether He is right or wrong.” He smiled. “You simply feel that He was wrong, so you no longer love Him, and thus you believe that He doesn’t love humanity.”

Annan stared blankly at Ashe and suddenly said, “You really are a Cult Leader. I thought Igor was just blackening your name on purpose.”

“You’re not wrong; he does it on purpose,” Ashe replied irritably. “In what way do I resemble a Cult Leader?”

“In every way.”

“Give me an example! Future Ranking examples don’t count!”

“There’s a perfect example right in front of you,” Annan joked. “I’ve been successfully brainwashed by you.”

She touched her earring. “I will weave the rest of my life well.”

“I should go back now.”

“I’ll see you out.”

Annan walked Ashe to the door and reached out to grip the door handle but did not push it open.

Ashe waited for a moment and then asked curiously, “What’s wrong? Can’t open it?”

“Ashe, do you hate me?”

Ashe was taken aback.

“You probably do hate me,” the Purple Moth said softly to the door without turning around. “If I hadn’t captured you before the virtual realm passage, if Cleos and I hadn’t forced you, you would’ve never been caught up in the Whirlpool of the Weaving Festival. You might even have settled down in Azura by now, living a peaceful and happy life.”

“Although I’ve always said I treated you all equally, that was just self-satisfying arrogance. You’re all bound by the Pact, so we can never truly be equal in status, let alone the fact that I’ve asked you to partake in this nearly suicidal mission. Harvey is probably already planning how to retaliate against me once this is over.”

"I may have my justifications, but what have they got to do with you? A Purple Moth destined to plunge into the fire yet dragging you all along in the flames."

"Your first reaction was 'Is Annan trying to trick me again?' and yes, I deserve that."

"But."

Annan turned to look at Ashe, the green of her eyes shimmering with Flow.

"In a few days, the first half of my life will be over," she said, her voice trembling slightly. "We might all die."

It was then that Ashe realized she was afraid.

Or to put it more accurately, who among the Funerals wasn't afraid except for Harvey? Igor never showed his fear and had gone through too many life-and-death adventures to be shaken; Lise completely trusted Ashe, using that trust to mask her fear; and Ashe himself...

He'd been thinking about his life after the Weaving Festival these past few days, using hope to fight fear, Lise to counter fear, and Igor to shield against fear.

Annan was different from them, the escaped convicts. Her previous adventures had always had Banjeet as a safety net, and in her work, she'd relied on the Gospel's godlike perspective. This Blasphemy Gospel plan was the riskiest action of her life; assassinating the Princess was an all-in gamble she had never experienced before.

But she couldn't show any fear in front of everyone else; it was her responsibility as a leader.

Only now did she shed all her disguises and reveal the vulnerability of a female boss.

"My question earlier is also my answer after weaving," the Purple Moth looked intently at the Cult Leader. "I'll ask you again."

"Are you willing to weave the future with me?"

This time, it wasn't a joke.

She was serious.

There was no way to dodge it now.

Ashe looked at her beautiful, expectant face, filled with a mix of daring and shyness, and for a moment, he was lost.

To be honest, he couldn't think of a reason to refuse. Although Annan wasn't as wealthy as someone like Yvaren, she was far better off than Ashe, who was prepared to sleep in a cardboard box under a bridge. Annan, living in a large apartment, was already rich enough to meet his daily needs.

Not to mention, Ashe also had Lise, who was a bit of a burden. Only Igor and Annan were willing to support them. Actually, Ashe had casually mentioned to Igor that once Lise's life stabilized, he would find a way to make some money. He couldn't possibly always rely on Igor.

But Annan's promise came with no strings attached and even with after-sales service! Since he was already putting himself out there, Ashe could comfortably call his wealthy benefactor "rich lady"!

So, did he like Annan? First, Annan was a ranked individual in the Azura Beauty Ranking; and her looks and figure are not something a zero-star loser like Ashe can compare to. Secondly, he felt relaxed around her, as if they were childhood friends; there was no barrier between them.

Yes, he did like her, and married life would surely be happy.

However, however.

Ashe closed his eyes, and images of many people flashed through his mind—parents, siblings, a Bewitcher, and a redhead...

He opened his eyes and looked at her seriously. The Purple Moth saw the Flowing tenderness in his eyes and immediately understood.

"I..."

"Wait, I want to paint a portrait of you."

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

Chapter 465: Poor Ashe

A man dressed in a dark red trench coat sat on a luxurious red leather armchair. He crossed one leg over the other, leaning his left hand against his cheek. With a mask on his face, his unkempt bangs fell lazily around him as he gazed out the window at the underground city, his eyes slightly squinted as if he were smiling.

Annan's brush moved swiftly, and before long, the painting was already taking shape. However, she frowned slightly. "Don't move."

"I can't hold the same pose for too long," Ashe complained. "I've never worked as a model before."

"But I can't draw if you keep moving," Annan said. "I have a good idea-Ashe, don't move!"

Ashe's body instantly froze. Annan, satisfied, continued painting and laughed, "It's a pity the world outside isn't burning; it would perfectly match the future first place on the Art Ranking."

"You're not as mature as you are in the Art Ranking," Ashe said. "But I'm pretty much the same across the different rankings."

"No way. You're more wickedly charming in the Art Ranking, more arrogant and boisterous in the Family Ranking, and more like yourself in the Ranking of Schemes. Overall, the 'you' in the first three rankings gets closer to the real you, but starting with the Happiness Ranking, things get weird. In the Evil Arts Ranking, you even seem righteous."

"Now that you mention it, it's weird. I appear in all these rankings, but I don't get any place."

"Aren't you ranked with me? Though as part of my work... Come to think of it, we weren't very familiar with each other back then. Why did the Gospel weave a future where I'd be painting you?"

"It means the Gospel knew you were already captivated by my good looks..."

"Are you sure you want to say that to someone on the Azura Beauty Ranking? I'm suddenly tempted to paint a nude portrait to confirm your looks."

"Sorry, I was being too cocky. Please forgive me."

After a moment's hesitation, Ashe couldn't resist asking, "I'm really curious, when did you start liking me? Never mind, don't answer that. If you can't recall, it'll be pretty embarrassing for me..."

Annan said nonchalantly, "From the beginning, back in the Underground Hall."

Ashe was shocked. " $\Sigma(\supset \circ \Delta^{\circ};) \supset$ What? Was it really love at first sight?"

"Of course not, I was just curious about you and started paying attention to you," Annan laughed. "When I saw Igor and Harvey waiting for your decision, when I saw you were

willing to accept Lise, when I heard you say in the locker room that you would wait until the 101 days were over before deciding whether to take revenge on me—”

“You actually installed a listening device in the locker room!”

“My home doesn’t count as eavesdropping,” Annan snorted. “And when I saw you taking the pain yourself rather than following my orders to target someone else, when I saw you comforting Lise even while on the run, when I saw you standing up for me in front of Qenna, when I saw you injure your own hand to save Lise, when I saw you hoping Igor would find happiness...”

“And when I saw you slow down near water puddles while riding a motorcycle, when I saw you think about Banjeet’s safety. All these things accumulated bit by bit, forming my good impression of you.”

“You have a great memory! I’ve forgotten half of that stuff,” Ashe said. “But I feel like you might have idealized me in your memory—”

“Of course I have,” Annan laughed. “Now, I think even your eyebrows are cute. How could I not idealize you? Alright, the painting is done.”

Annan turned the drawing board toward Ashe. Unlike the first place on the Art Ranking, it was a simple sketch. The background was left blank, and the painting technique was far less refined and grand than what the Art Ranking portrayed. The character didn’t appear as wickedly charming.

But the person in the drawing had vivid eyebrows and eyes, with soft features full of flowing love. It didn’t look like a mere painting; it looked like a confession of love.

Ashe sighed softly. “Annan, I—”

“You know, unless it’s work-related, I never ask about the Gospel,” Annan said, sitting on his lap and summoning her Gospel Book. “But tonight, I’ll make an exception.”

“Gospel, who is the most suitable lover for me?”

Annan showed Ashe the opened Gospel Book. The name “Ashe Heath” glowed faintly in lavender light on the white page. “See?”

Annan’s words felt like a necromantic miracle, draining all the vitality out of Ashe. The carefully chosen words in his mind now felt unbearably heavy. The more she acted this way, the more uncomfortable Ashe felt. He struggled to speak, “Annan, can you give me some time to think—”

“No.”

Suddenly, Annan wrapped her arms around his neck, pulled off his mask, and kissed him, pressing her lips against his. The warm sensation spread from his lips to his mind, and his vision was filled with her intensely possessive eyes.

Huh?

Huhhh??

Huhhhhh???

Ashe wanted to move, but the problem was he'd been instructed by Annan earlier not to move, and he couldn't defy the pact's restrictions! The only parts he could move were his teeth and tongue. Was he supposed to bite back—

Tch.

Ashe felt the delicate, fragrant little tongue awkwardly trying to pry open his teeth, like a piece of jelly trying to jump in on its own. Seeing the stubborn determination in Annan's eyes, something inside him softened. His solid barrier cracked just a bit, and the enemy forces poured in, leaving the defenders helpless. The two forces intertwined, sweat mingling, and then the enemy even managed to pull the defending forces out of their barrier and devour them entirely within their territory.

Earlier, Ashe had thought Annan was nothing like Qenna, but now he was utterly convinced they were absolutely mother and daughter!

Both were just as forceful and domineering!

After a long while, their lips parted, breaths low and warm, as if they were exchanging heartfelt secrets. Just as his pounding heart began to calm down, Ashe heard Annan whisper softly in his ear, "Meet my desires."

"Hold me."

"Play with me."

Suddenly, their Gospel Books popped out, and Ashe realized he had somehow rolled onto the bed. Annan glanced at the glowing Gospel Book and said, "The Gospel's weaving speed has increased... but the Gospel Ranking can be checked anytime. Right now, you should only look at me."

"Weave me."

A boss at work, a slave master in the pact, making such unreasonable demands—Ashe felt like he was reaching his limit!

Bam! Bam! Bam!

"Dad! Dad! I know you're in there, come out!"

Annan and Ashe exchanged glances. The Purple Moth pushed him off, sat up, and straightened her robe. Then she grabbed the baffled cult leader and led him to the door, pushing him out to Lise. She hooked her arm around his neck and whispered in his ear:

"We're done for tonight. We'll continue this after the Weaving Festival." Annan's warm breath caressed Ashe's earlobe. "This is the future I'm weaving."

"But—"

"No buts. Remember, your pact ends on August 15th. At the current pace, we need to act by the 20th at the latest. So, after the Weaving Festival, I'll still have at least 55 days to deal with you. By then, we might even have a child."

"I'm a relentless head of the firm. You don't think I was asking for your permission earlier, do you? Silly boy."

Annan placed a quick peck on Ashe's cheek and then waved him off. "Good night."

Once the door was shut, Annan dove onto the bed. After a moment of stillness, she began to roll around, her hands holding her face, which felt as if it were on fire. Her heart pounded, and her breaths came in uneven spurts.

"The future is the greatest hope..."

She turned to look at the newly painted portrait, tilting her head and studying it for a while. A small smile played on her lips, and the anxiety knitting her brows gradually eased. Her fear of death finally abated a little.

"The first half of my life might be ending," she whispered, "but now I look forward to the second half starting soon."

Outside, Ashe and Lise stood staring at each other, wide-eyed.

After a moment of contemplation, Lise turned and began walking away. Ashe called out, "Where are you going?"

"To find Aunt Bukin."

"Why?"

"To discuss Annan becoming my stepmom."

“Why would you discuss that with him?”

Ashe pulled Lise back, crouching down sheepishly. “How did you know I was here?”

“Because Aunt Annan sent me a message just now,” Lise replied with a blank expression.

Ashe was momentarily stunned before realizing Annan’s cunning plan!

Damn, she used a honey trap on him, leveraging the future after the Weaving Festival to spur him to work even harder on the mission! But it was an open conspiracy. Even though Ashe understood the setup, he couldn’t help but be a little swayed—actually more than a little, but he only allowed himself to admit to being a little swayed.

Poor Ashe, played like a pawn in the hands of a crafty woman.

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

Chapter 466: Bad Luck

Sonya was playing in a match.

However, it wasn’t the Meteor Trial but the Celestial Palace Trial, a five-person team battle representing their school. The roles were divided into Vanguard, vanguard, Center, Sub-chief, and chief. Each person could only compete once, and the lineup had to be submitted before the league started, without any changes allowed mid-tournament.

To avoid scenarios where a top-tier competitor faces a lower-tier one, which would harm the spirit and viewership of the competition, the Celestial Palace Trial didn’t purely focus on win-loss records. Each match earned 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 points respectively. Thus, even if a team lost the first three matches, the $4+5=9$ points from the Sub-chief and chief could still reverse the situation. This meant that schools had to arrange their competitors from weakest to strongest; otherwise, they would be vulnerable to a comeback.

Being a single combat event, the restraint among different Spellcasting Sects was particularly evident. Bad luck could indeed lead to a fire sorcerer getting severely beaten by a water sorcerer. Therefore, although Sonya was the chief in Friendly Matches, she could only serve as the third Center in official competitions.

The Sub-chief was her familiar senior sister, Leoni, while the chief was a fourth-year student, Negus Barver, once heralded as the “Swordgrass.”

Like Sonya and Leoni, Negus was a student of the Sanctuary sorcerer “Rainstorm Singer” Valenteen. He had remained low-profile over the past year at Swordflower College because he spent most of his time adventuring in the Abyss’s third and fourth layers. If it weren’t for the College League, he likely wouldn’t have returned to the surface. He was a pure battle sorcerer.

Negus becoming the chief in the Celestial Palace Trial was a natural choice. He had already stepped into the Time Continent in his third year and completely formed his Golden Wings within a year and a half. He also had multiple Abyss Adventure experiences, making his qualifications and combat prowess unmatched by Sonya. There were rumors that Negus had already been reserved by the Royal Family’s Starburst Guard and would become a Sword Noble immediately after graduation—the lowest noble title in the House of Nobles, the starting point for the ruling class of Stars, and truly a person with a bright future.

As for who would be the Sub-chief between Sonya and Leoni, Professor Trozan mentioned that there had been debates at the school level. Both had become two-wings sorcerers around the same time, and Sonya had even defeated Leoni head-on. However, they ultimately chose the safer option, Leoni.

After all, in the Celestial Palace Trial, the lineup can’t be adjusted once submitted. If a participant encounters an opponent who restrains their abilities, they’ll have no leverage to fight back. While Sonya is indeed stronger, Leoni, with her three years of sorcerer experience, has much richer combat experience and a far more developed spirit system compared to Sonya. Hence, she has a lower chance of being restrained by opposing competitors.

Put it this way, Sonya still doesn’t have a good solution to deal with gun sorcerers, whereas Leoni is an anomaly—known as “The Orange Dancer,” she can dodge a gun sorcerer’s lock-on with her speed. In fact, her speed alone allows her to contend with most sorcerers.

Sonya hasn’t been a sorcerer for long, and she’s been too comfortable in the Virtual Realm. She only needs to focus on burst damage, with Observer and the Witch handling everything else, which inevitably leads to shortcomings.

In the chaotic battles of the Meteor Trial, she could rely on her combat instincts to find opportunities, but in one-on-one spellcasting matches, her weaknesses get infinitely magnified. It makes sense that Swordflower College didn’t select her as the Sub-chief.

In this year’s Celestial Palace Trial, except for the Vanguard who is a silver sorcerer, all other members of Swordflower College are golden sorcerers, marking the best lineup the school has had in nearly five years. By now, it’s clear that while Swordflower College has decent faculty and ranks high, its cultivation rate is far below other schools

of the same level. They couldn't even field five two-wings sorcerers for the Celestial Palace Trial. This is mainly because Swordflower College is the top choice for children of wealthy merchants and nobility who couldn't get into Truth College.

Simply put, the student quality is too poor.

It's not that these students lack talent, but their college life is filled with balls, socializing, and entertainment, leaving them no time to study spellcasting. In Sonya's dormitory, students like Engulite, who focused solely on practicing swordsmanship, were the exceptions.

Sonya chose Swordflower College initially because of its advantage in meeting noble children.

Over the past five years, Swordflower College couldn't even break into the Top Sixteen of the Celestial Palace Trial. This year, reaching the Top Eight is all thanks to the sudden rise of Sonya and Leoni. Apart from Sonya's uniqueness, Leoni quickly elevated her spirit system to the two-wings level as soon as she stepped onto the Time Continent. Coupled with her "rhythm swordsmanship" at its peak during the golden phase, she easily surpassed other schools' fourth-year students in combat strength.

With this lineup, Swordflower College could hold its own against other schools. Losing the Vanguard and vanguard matches wouldn't matter much because the team would almost certainly come back to win the last three matches, aiming for a solid fourth place or even second place.

However, when the match draw was announced, the whole team from Swordflower College fell silent.

Boom!

When the blood-red sword light, curved like a crescent moon, descended, the thick Concrete Wall shattered instantly. The green-haired young man hiding behind it immediately raised his hand, "I surrender."

"Sigh, such bad luck," he said with a sigh, "If it had been The Orange Dancer or a water sorcerer, I definitely would have won. But to face the Red-Haired Sword Princess... I'm the only one who lost, and now I'll be laughed at for a long time when I get back..."

Though blunt, Sonya knew he was telling the truth. As a sorcerer specializing in both earth and wood spells, his powerful earth spell, the Defensive Miracle "Concrete," could withstand gun attacks. Additionally, he possessed an extremely strong spell called the Senlo Miracle "Spirit-Siphoning Vines"!

Currently, the whole arena was covered with Spirit-Siphoning Vines, which had a simple yet devastating effect: they drained spellforce from other sorcerers to bolster his own!

In his previous battles, he had used the combination of Spirit-Siphoning Vines and Concrete to wear down his opponents until they had no strength left. What was remarkable was that the Spirit-Siphoning Vines were not weak against fire, but rather against toxic or dark spells with corrosive properties, making it difficult for him to meet his match.

If it had been Leoni or Negus, they might have been worn down by him because his Concrete Wall's defense was terrifyingly robust. However, his opponent happened to be Sonya, whose burst attack capability was unparalleled. When Sonya broke through his defenses with three consecutive "Blood Moon Shattered Lake" attacks, he had no choice but to gracefully admit defeat and surrender.

The audience erupted in cheers, though not overwhelmingly so. When Sonya returned to the players' area, there wasn't much elation; only Professor Trozan and Leoni gave her a nod of acknowledgment.

She went over and patted Leoni on the shoulder. "Let's go for a drink later?"

"No, thanks. You used to always turn down my invitations to rush off to the Virtual Realm, so tonight I'll use the same reason to refuse you," Leoni stood up and smiled, "After this match, I'm sure I'll be motivated to dive into the Virtual Realm. Thank you, you at least made our defeat not quite so embarrassing."

Sonya watched as Leoni walked onto the field,

The host's voice rang out: "Next is the Sub-chief Battle, featuring Leoni Vickt from Swordflower College, against—"

"Aisha Maltz from Truth College!"

Swordflower College's opponent in the Celestial Palace Trial Top Eight was Truth College!

The pinnacle of all universities, the nightmare that has dominated the College League for decades!

No matter how much Swordflower College hated the draw results, there was nothing they could do. Some school had to face obliteration at the hands of Truth College. Why shouldn't it be them?

The Vanguard Battle and Forward Battle were practically instant defeats. Although Sonya won one match, no one believed Swordflower College had any hope.

Truth College's Sub-chief and Chief were overwhelmingly powerful and insurmountable.

On the arena, Aisha said from a distance to Leoni, "Nice to meet you. I've long wanted to see the renowned move 'Rhythm Melody' of the rhythm sword saint. They say Rhythm Melody needs three strikes to fully unleash its power?"

"That's correct."

"Then I'll let you attack three times. I hope you don't disappoint me."

Facing Aisha's dismissive words, Leoni solemnly nodded, "I won't disappoint you."

"Very well," Aisha smiled, raising a shield with her left hand and pulling out a handgun with her right.

At the host's signal, "Begin!" Leoni instantly vanished, leaving only a fleeting orange streak. Aisha, however, stood leisurely in place, not using any Defensive Miracle and even distractedly gazing at the starry night sky.

Clang!

Suddenly, Aisha swung her shield backward, perfectly blocking Leoni's attack. Though the first strike didn't succeed, Leoni quickly adjusted her angle and launched a side attack—

Slash!

Although there wasn't time to maneuver the shield, Aisha effortlessly leaned to one side, narrowly avoiding Leoni's slash. The longsword merely cut off some of Aisha's hair!

Leoni disappeared again, and after a brief adjustment, the third strike of Rhythm Melody descended from above, its golden sword light falling like a meteor!

Clang!

Aisha's block was so sharp it was almost piercing to the ears. Not only was Aisha unharmed, but Leoni was sent flying, rolling several times on the ground. The Orange Dancer tried to stand but found her legs too weak, falling to her knees and coughing up a mouthful of blood.

When Leoni looked up, she saw Aisha pointing a handgun at her head.

She smiled bitterly, "I lost."

There were no cheers or boos from the audience, just an expected silence.

Aisha was proficient in both the Prophecy Sect and the Shielding Sect.

Shields are actually quite common among sorcerers; in the early stages of the Virtual Realm, everyone conjures a shield to block attacks like those from a Blade Fish Dragon. However, the Shielding Sect is very niche because it specializes in defense, and other sects can achieve similar defensive effects through their own Defensive Miracles, reducing the need for shields.

The biggest advantage of the Shielding Sect lies in its miracles of 'Perfect Block' and 'Perfect Counterattack.' By mastering the timing, a block can entirely neutralize an enemy's attack—sometimes even reflecting it back at the attacker.

However, mastering this timing is extremely challenging, with only a fleeting window of opportunity. The enemy's attacks are unpredictable and varied, making it very hard to consistently achieve. Most Shielding Sect sorcerers can, at best, only manage a 'Normal Block' or 'Normal Counterattack,' which is less effective than other Defensive Miracles, thus leading to the Shielding Sect's unpopularity.

However, 'Unbeaten Star' Aisha showed everyone that when combined with the Prophecy Sect, the Shielding Sect's powers can become terrifyingly potent.

Fire, Water, Wind, Earth, Swords, Gunmanship, Nunchaku, Fist-Claw... she can perfectly block any attack. Since her debut, she has never been defeated, nor even injured! And whenever an enemy launches a strong attack, she uses a Perfect Counterattack to reflect the attack back in full, sometimes even stunning the opponent!

Leoni was defeated because the third strike of Rhythm Melody was perfectly countered, causing her to bear the full power of her own miracle. Even if Aisha wasn't pointing the handgun at her, Leoni was too weakened to continue fighting!

Of course, Aisha wasn't invincible. Take Sonya's earlier opponent, for example; a defensive and multi-target combination like 'Concrete' and 'Spirit-Siphoning Vines' could slowly wear Aisha out. But that's when her handgun comes into play—it's not an ordinary standard-issue handgun, but the Spellforce-powered Stargazer Model 85, an Artifact Spirit gun whose power increases with the input spellforce.

Because it holds no pre-sealed miracles and requires the sorcerer to expend spellforce, such tools are allowed in the College League.

This handgun, of course, lacks the destructive power of a dedicated gun sorcerer, but if Aisha infuses all her golden spellforce into a single bullet, it can still punch a hole through a wall of Concrete. Although the hole would close quickly and dodging the shot would be an option, who can guarantee they can evade a surprise attack from a prophecy sorcerer?

If you don't attack her, she'll shoot you; if you do attack, she'll counter and kill you.

Fortunately, Aisha struggles in multi-person battles; otherwise, she would have dominated the Meteor Trial!

Watching Leoni being carried off for medical treatment, Sonya refocused on the arena. Compared to facing the prophecy sorcerer Aisha, the next match was the one Sonya was most concerned about.

Because the two sorcerers about to face off were both Top Eight contenders from the Meteor Trial! If Sonya wanted to capture a meteor, she would inevitably have to face them eventually!

“And now, for the highly anticipated Chief Battle, representing Swordflower College, Negus Barver, versus—”

“Truth College, Dimy Vlozrada!”

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

Chapter 467: I Am No Longer Two-Wings

Not only did the crowd from both schools erupt in thunderous cheers, but other spectators also applauded as well. Amid the excited crowd, the calm Felix stood out. She gripped her gloved left hand tightly with her right hand.

A handsome young man with blond hair stepped onto the field, clad in platinum combat attire that made him look like a prince on a parade—no different from a prince, considering he was the eldest son of the Stargazer Duke. He waved to the audience, instantly receiving a wave of frenzied cheers and applause.

Dimy, a fourth-year student at Truth College, the vice-president of the Student Council at Truth College, and heir to the Vlozrada Family, had individually won the Meteor Trial, led his team to win the Stars Trial, and represented his school to win the Celestial Palace Trial in last year’s College League. He was the only person in the past ten years to win all three Trials!

He was the nightmare of every college student in Galaxia over the past four years—a wall too high to climb, a figure too distant to chase.

Compared to Dimy, Negus looked as if he had just been fished out of water—his hair wet and resembling noodles. He wasn’t even wearing combat attire, just some old

abyss armor. But no one underestimated him because he had narrowly lost to Dimy in the semi-finals of the last Meteor Trial. Even if he came wearing flip-flops, he would still be considered unique.

“Long time no see, Negus,” Dimy said. “I heard your team recently conquered the fifth layer of the abyss, ‘Molten Steel Abyss.’ Outstanding.”

What!?

The audience buzzed with astonishment, including Lois and Engulite. Adelle was a bit confused. “Is Molten Steel Abyss really that formidable?”

“It’s not just about being formidable... You definitely didn’t pay attention in Abyss Common Sense class, did you?” Lois replied. “Molten Steel Abyss is the most treacherous area in the fifth layer of the abyss. It’s filled with boiling molten steel, with temperatures exceeding 1500 degrees. To conquer this abyss, you must kill the Guardian in the center of Molten Steel Lake...”

Adelle was stunned. “So that means you have to fly over for an aerial battle?”

“The Guardian in the abyss isn’t foolish. If a sorcerer is in the air, it will directly create a steel tsunami to drown the invader,” Engulite added. “Typically, one would enter Molten Steel Lake and engage the Guardian in combat.”

“But at such high temperatures, won’t one be burned to ashes upon entering?”

“More than just being incinerated, it would cause a liquid phase explosion,” Lois explained. “The density of molten steel is seven times that of the human body. Your shattered remains would float on the surface of Molten Steel Lake... However, because of the extremely high temperature of the molten steel, water sorcerers could potentially traverse Molten Steel Lake.”

“Why?”

“I won’t go into detailed principles, but simply put, when water encounters a high-temperature substance far exceeding its boiling point, some of the liquid will violently boil and evaporate, forming a gaseous protective layer that separates it from the outside. If used correctly, a sorcerer can rely on this gaseous protective layer to cross Molten Steel Lake safely! That’s why a water sorcerer can conquer Molten Steel Abyss!”

“The Guardian is not weak. A water sorcerer alone can’t handle it; they must rely on their teammates,” Engulite said admiringly. “Not only does Negus trust himself, but his teammates also entrust their lives to him. That’s the only way to conquer Molten Steel Abyss!”

The clamor of the audience didn't affect the tense atmosphere on the field. Negus looked at Dimy expressionlessly. "You sure know a lot."

"With you as my opponent, I have to gather all the Intelligence I can. How could I afford any negligence?"

"Why didn't you participate in the Stars Trial?"

"My team members have their own aspirations, and we couldn't gather together," Dimy shrugged. "In my opinion, you have at least a top-four spot in this Stars Trial, and you might even win. But you should watch out for my junior brothers' team. They are not only adorable but also strong."

"Hmph, those small fries don't concern me. My only target is you, Dimy," Negus sneered coldly. "I originally planned to get my revenge in the Meteor Trial, but since the opportunity has come, I'll make sure you lose twice in a row."

"I'm looking forward to it," Dimy smiled. "You won't disappoint me."

At the word "start" from the announcer, Dimy placed his hand on his sword hilt but made no move. Negus's face contorted with anger as he yelled, "Still so confident, huh? Relaxed and waiting for me to make the first move, then breaking all my spells before defeating me? Hmm? Such a detestable display of showmanship!"

"But this time, I won't give you any chance." Negus crossed his arms and slashed viciously. The sharp ring on his index finger cut through the arteries in his wrist, and blood gushed out like water from a faucet.

The Blood Spell Sect... Negus's mentor, the "Rainstorm Singer" Valenteen, frowned slightly. The Star Miracles Directory doesn't offer any training in Blood Spells. That's almost exclusively the domain of the Blood Moon Kingdom... Could it be a legacy from vampires in the Virtual Realm?

In no time, the entire arena filled with Negus's blood. With a loud shout, all of the blood floated in the air and formed countless blood swords, all aimed at Dimy, leaving scarcely any space!

"Swords formed from blood..." Dimy curiously asked, "It doesn't look like they're meant for a simple slash, are they?"

"Of course not," Negus replied. "This is a Composite Miracle using blood water. Although the blood is propelled by my spirit, it is still my blood, meaning I have far greater control over it than over water."

Dimy nodded. "Blood Spells and Water Spells do make for a highly compatible Sect."

“Stop stalling!” Negus shouted, baring his teeth. “Because of that, I can also cast high-damage miracles that require close contact using these blood swords. Care to guess which miracle I’ve integrated into them?”

“Let me guess, it’s your favorite ‘Exploding Red Lotus,’ isn’t it?” Dimy surveyed the area. “So if even one of these swords touches me, the water in my body will boil, my skin will redden and burst, just like a red lotus bloom? Hmm, but with a Death-Prevention miracle in place, my head and heart should remain intact.”

“Hasn’t anyone told you your smugness is annoying?” Negus replied coldly. “And by the way, I’ve added ‘High-frequency Water Blades’ to a few of these swords. Even Defensive Miracles won’t stand a chance.”

“Dimy, this is the grand finale I’ve prepared for you—my 25-meter radius ‘Red Lotus Sword Formation.’ Prepare to pay for your arrogance!”

While Negus explained his miracle, he not only terrified the majority of the audience but even moved the Sanctuary sorcerers.

“So powerful,” Sonya couldn’t help but sigh. “Unless I defeat Senior Brother Negus first, I’ll have no choice but to surrender if he successfully casts this move.”

“If this miracle gets added to the Star Miracles Directory, it will at least be ranked in the True Rainbow Upper-tier,” Trozan commented from nearby. “Even entering the Radiant Rainbow Lower-tier isn’t out of the question.”

Radiant Rainbow!

Sonya couldn’t help but click her tongue in awe. Although she had recently created the “Blood Moon Shattered Lake,” it was only a Radiant Golden Lower-tier miracle. But what does Radiant Rainbow mean? It’s an upper-tier miracle even Sanctuary sorcerers yearn for!

The critical point is, Negus is just a two-wing sorcerer!

Creating a Radiant Rainbow Miracle as a two-wing sorcerer!

This stunning talent made Sonya, who had been feeling a bit complacent lately, realize there are always people more skilled out there. That tiny bit of burgeoning arrogance was instantly stuffed back down to her ankles.

Thinking of this, Sonya turned her attention to Negus’s opponent. Honestly, she was more interested in Dimy. Besides being Felix’s older brother, Galaxia’s most famous noble scion, he was also a swordsmanship practitioner specializing in the Vibration Sword.

As a village girl curious about the full prowess of the Vlozrada family's Vibration Sword system, she, being somewhat of a wild offshoot of that lineage, naturally wanted to know if the main family's techniques harbored any hidden secrets.

But given the current situation, Dimy seemed likely to be taken down in one swift stroke.

"Wait," Sonya suddenly realized something. "If we win both the Center Battle and the Chief Battle, Truth College will lose, won't they?"

If they won the Chief Battle, Swordflower College's score would be $3+5=8$, eliminating Truth College with its $1+2+4=7$!

For nearly ten years, Truth College had been the unchallenged champion of the Celestial Palace Trial, only to potentially be knocked out of the Top Eight by Swordflower College this time!?

Other participants from Swordflower College couldn't contain their excitement either. "No way, are we actually going to win?" "Serves them right for underestimating Senior Brother Negus!" "Truth College, your luck just ran out this time!"

However, Professor Trozan remained solemn, still watching the match intently.

"Perhaps it's not that simple."

"You certainly haven't disappointed me, Negus," Dimy said with a smile. "In that case, I will also give my all and not let you down."

"Enough with the pretty words!" Negus roared. "Scream, wail, and then die for me! 144 Red Lotus Swords, annihilate my enemies!"

As the blood swords swarmed toward Dimy, the blonde swordsman finally drew his sword.

Then, with one swing.

Shing—

It was like a bell tolling from a distant shore, sending a visceral shockwave through the hearts of every spectator. Then, they saw a sphere.

A spatial crystal ball enveloping the entire arena.

It was as if a spherical segment of space had been excised, with no connection between the inside and the outside. Within the sphere, all the blood swords were annihilated, and the entire area was cleared out an inch deep, the ground covered with dense Sword Marks.

Snap!

As the space returned to normal, blood burst from Negus's entire body, but his head and heart were shielded by a glowing light, indicating that he had activated a Death-Prevention Miracle.

The spectator stands fell silent, and the entire arena was hushed.

Until a cautious voice broke the silence: "Annihilation Vibration?"

Sonya was completely bewildered. She turned to Trozan beside her and asked, "Professor, was that...?"

"Annihilation Vibration," Trozan replied with a grim expression. "A Radiant Rainbow Upper-tier Miracle from the Vlozrada legacy. It appears to be a single slash, but in reality, it compresses the entire space into a single line, slashing every location within the space with one strike."

She paused. "This miracle requires spatial slicing, with a minimum Spatial Sect requirement of Silver-tier. This is why only Sanctuary sorcerers can learn it."

Just as the Time Sect's sole training ground is the Time Continent, the Spatial Sect's official learning site within the Virtual Realm is the third layer, the Distant Sky Domain. No matter how talented one is in spatial abilities, entering the Spatial Sect can only happen at the Distant Sky Domain.

But this means...

Negus, now a bloodied figure, gritted his teeth against the immense pain and lifted his head to look at Dimy, who had approached him. "You... you're no longer... a two-wing sorcerer..."

Dimy picked him up and carried him toward the medical station at the edge of the arena, smiling as he said:

"Two-wings? I haven't been that in a long time."

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

Chapter 468: The Witch and the Observers Oddity

Even after two hours, Sonya, who had descended into the Virtual Realm, still couldn't recover from her shock.

Now, the entire Galaxia... no, all the Stars were chanting Dimy's name!

All the citizens watching the live broadcast of the League witnessed the birth of yet another Star Sword Saint!

What is the concept of a Sanctuary sorcerer?

Her teacher, Professor Trozan, is only a Sanctuary sorcerer!

You have to know that Swordflower College has only four Sanctuary professors, yet it has the most Sanctuary sorcerers aside from Truth College. Other colleges generally have two Sanctuary sorcerers, some even just one – but in this respect, Swordflower College is often criticized by other colleges because it offers Sanctuary sorcerers “high pay with little work.” For example, Professor Trozan has been researching spellcasting on her own and just casually took on two students this year. What's the difference between this and freeloading off Sanctuary sorcerers!?

Price war! Unfair competition! Market imbalance!

However, Swordflower College has deep pockets; they don't care about the complaints of others while they continue to support their sorcerers. But this also shows how precious Sanctuary sorcerers are – if Sonya becomes a Sanctuary sorcerer, Swordflower College would definitely be willing to spend a large sum of money annually to indulge her!

In a mundane world where legends are absent, Sanctuary sorcerers are the strongest power that ordinary people can witness, the embodiment of miracles, the epitome of spellcasting!

It might seem like they only need to find the Rainbow Tail to become a Sanctuary sorcerer, but Sonya knows very well that even if they are lucky enough to sneak into the Distant Sky Domain, she would only be a fake Sanctuary sorcerer, a flimsy façade of gilded garbage.

If silver represents talent and gold represents genius, then a Sanctuary sorcerer represents the theoretical limit of extreme talent, diligence, and resources. As for legends, as their name suggests, they are irreplicable legends.

Although the village girl's current swordsmanship sect has Golden level and seems almost at the threshold of Sanctuary, it's this 'one last step' that leaves countless swordsmanship geniuses forever stranded on the Time Continent, with little hope of glimpsing the vista of Spatial Swordsmanship.

Let's take a simple example: the faculty hierarchy at Swordflower College is ranked as Assistant, Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor. The basic requirement to become an assistant is to fully condense the Golden Wings, officially making them two-wings. Except for anomalies like Sonya, the average sorcerer takes two to three years to condense the Golden Wings. During this time, they usually can push their main sect to the limits of the golden realm.

An assistant is already very close to the Sanctuary level, yet there are still three more ranks above them, each representing a step closer to the Sanctuary. Even this 'little gap' is broken down into four levels among the two-wings sorcerers, showing how meticulous and competitive they are.

Even though Sonya diligently practices Swordsmanship during the day and has the Observer feeding her Experience Orbs and a commander handbook at night, she doesn't dare guarantee that she can advance to the Sanctuary within three years.

For Sanctuary seeds like Sonya, Leoni, and Negus, who completed the silver routes and golden paths in less than four years, the expectation is for them to advance to the Sanctuary within twenty years. According to statistics, the 'germination rate' of Sanctuary seeds is less than 30%, meaning if one out of the three like Sonya steps into the Distant Sky Domain, it would be considered a significant success for Swordflower College's education efforts.

It's hard to describe the gap between the Sanctuary and the golden realm directly, so let's use the color of the virtual wings as a metaphor: golden virtual wings are just gold, while Sanctuary virtual wings are a gradient rainbow. Not mentioning the countless derivations between different colors, just the seven colors of the rainbow alone signify that the knowledge quantity at the Sanctuary level is seven times that of the golden realm, and this knowledge must be fully integrated and mastered to the point of seamless change like a rainbow to be considered competent.

Most geniuses take three years to elevate their Sect Realm to the peak of the golden level, so multiplying that by seven gives twenty-one years, making the twenty-year development period for Sanctuary seeds seem very rigorous.

Of course, society is different from school; 'effort' and 'achievement' are not necessarily linked. In comparison, the choice of Spellcasting Sect significantly influences one's fate. Battle sorcerers can only chase monsters' filth in the Abyss, while creation sorcerers can earn a fortune within the comfort of a bright, cozy workshop. Even a supreme sect like prophecy, with just silver wings, can hold a status far surpassing those with Twin Wings of silver and gold.

Sanctuary sorcerers, however, have no such worries because they all master a top-tier spellcasting branch: the Spatial Sect!

The Distant Sky Domain is different from the Time Continent. A sorcerer may have a chance to enter the Time Sect on the Time Continent, but most never truly understand time. If Sonya hadn't had her Adventure in the Amnesia Cabin, she wouldn't grasp the Time Sect teachings even if she soaked in the Golden Flow—"using the Golden Flow to understand time" is a traditional practice for two-wings sorcerers. If you haven't nearly drowned in the Golden Flow ten times, you can't claim you have seriously studied the Time Sect.

But in the Distant Sky Domain, every sorcerer must get initiated into the Spatial Sect; otherwise, they can't even open their Sanctuary to explore the Virtual Realm! Essentially, a Sanctuary is the manifestation of a sorcerer's knowledge in the Spatial Sect!

The advantages of the Spatial Sect in combat are well known, but in creating artifacts, any Sanctuary sorcerer, after some basic training, can start producing spatial artifacts. And spatial artifacts are always in high demand—they're like tactical weapons controlling advanced production resources.

Before meeting the Observer, Sonya's dream was to become a charming two-wings water sorcerer; after meeting the Observer, she dared to dream bigger, longing to become a revered Star Sword Saint.

As for becoming a legend... she doesn't doubt the Observer's ability to guide her into the fourth layer of the Virtual Realm, but just entering it and having legendary spellforce doesn't automatically make one a legendary sorcerer.

She knows her limit is the Sanctuary level.

Or rather, once she reaches the Sanctuary, she won't push herself further.

Her life isn't solely about Swordsmanship. Reaching the Sanctuary would ensure financial freedom, elevate her social status, and allow her to live carefree. Then, she could pursue the things she loves, like becoming a performer or Songstress, finding love, starting a family, or even researching how to travel to other kingdoms.

Or perhaps researching how to perform the Miracle of bringing others into the Stars Kingdom.

Ah! I really want to become a Sanctuary sorcerer! Why do those nobles born with silver spoons living the high life get to become Sanctuary sorcerers? Shouldn't they be wasting away their family fortunes in debauchery and end up destitute instead!?

How am I supposed to face them in the Meteor Trial? There should be a law banning Sanctuary sorcerers from participating in the College League!

The village girl couldn't hide her envy, jealousy, and bitterness anymore.

She glanced at the situation inside the sports car. Hmm, tonight the Observer and the Witch were not piled on top of each other, so Sonya felt a bit better and couldn't help but spill her emotions: "You guys have no idea what I went through tonight..."

"...So, I finally managed to defeat an Earth sorcerer, but our school still lost miserably in the Celestial Palace Trial. And now I have to face someone in the Meteor Trial who, like me, specializes in the Vibration Sword, but has higher spellforce, a higher realm, and can perform miracles that completely overshadow mine! It's so unfair!"

As she spoke, Sonya grabbed the Witch's hand and shook it, sighing, "Looks like I won't be able to win the Meteor Trial this time..."

A moment later, Sonya suddenly felt a strange sensation.

So quiet.

It was so quiet inside the sports car.

Previously, the Witch would engage in awkward but earnest attempts at conversation, using phrases like 'mm-hmm,' 'is that so,' and 'how impressive' to keep the discussion going. Plus, the Witch truly was interested in campus life and the College League, which made Sonya happy to chat, given she had such an attentive listener.

Due to their roles, the Observer usually wouldn't join in, but if he noticed that the atmosphere was becoming stagnant, he would step in to break the ice, giving Sonya a chance to tease him a bit and maintain the group's balance.

But now, despite Sonya initiating the conversation, neither of them reacted at all?

It felt like saying a whole paragraph in a group chat only to get no responses, making the village girl squirm with awkwardness.

She looked at the Witch and found that she was resting her chin on her left hand, looking somberly out at the Reverse Golden Rain, her expression pained as she bit her lip. The Observer was also staring blankly ahead, as if his soul was still stuck in reality.

"Witch? Witch!"

Sonya gave her a nudge, pulling the Witch out of her thoughts. "Huh? What is it?"

"Do you know what I just said?"

Deya: "I... I'm sorry, I zoned out and didn't catch it."

"Are you okay?"

“Can you tell?”

“Of course, your eyebrows practically spell out ‘I’m not happy.’ How could I not notice?”

“Really!?”

“Of course not. Are you okay?” Sonya asked, “You seem really out of sorts.”

“I’m just a bit anxious...”

“Is it something in the real world?” Sonya probed gently, “Maybe we can give some advice, and talking about it might make you feel better.”

Deya’s face showed a complicated mix of emotions as she pressed her lips together tightly. In the end, she slowly shook her head. “No, I can’t... I just can’t say it.”

“But you don’t seem in the right state to explore. How about letting another sister take over for tonight?”

Sonya initially used a bit of reverse psychology, knowing that the Secret Princess personality was always strong-willed and hated being underestimated. However, after a moment of hesitation, Deya meekly nodded. “You’re right. I think I need to calm down. Let White Queen take my place tonight.”

With that, the Witch’s attire shifted from black to white, transforming into the elegant and composed White Queen. Among the Witch’s four personalities, White Queen was the one with the highest emotional and general intelligence, always polite and well-mannered. Though she wasn’t as gullible as the Secret Princess, interacting with her was very pleasant.

After exchanging greetings, the village girl called out to the driver, “Observer, what are you up to tonight?”

Ashe snapped to attention suddenly, “Nothing! I’m not up to anything tonight!”

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

Chapter 469: He Has Someone Else

“Hmm?” The Stretch Paw Club President was puzzled. “What are you talking about, Little Trumpet... I asked you about tonight’s Virtual Realm plan.”

“The Virtual Realm plan...” Ashe breathed a sigh of relief. “I’ll keep an eye on things as I go.”

The sports car roared to life, chasing after the distant white bull’s hooves. Golden rain flowed swiftly into the Alchemy Throne, transforming into spellforce for the sorcerers.

Sensing the nearing fullness of her spellforce, Sonya estimated that within the next couple of days, she’d be able to fully condense her golden virtual wings and officially become a two-wings sorcerer. Although she didn’t have shortcuts like ‘Whirlpool’ for rapid spellforce absorption, the combination of the sports car and Alchemy Throne’s cultivation bonuses allowed them to absorb spellforce at least ten times faster than others. Their month-long stay in the Time Continent covered a year’s worth of progress for others.

If the Sea of Knowledge requires a journey of thousands of miles, then the demand of Time Continent is a trek of thousands of miles. In the Sea of Knowledge, sorcerers had no choice but to swim as there were few spirits and miracles, but in Time Continent, walking for a few days would feel ridiculously slow. Securing Movement Miracles for transportation tools became essential.

Sonya still didn’t have a good Movement Miracle, which had a lot to do with being driven by the Observer daily. In a way, Sonya was somewhat spoiled for this, as without the Observer, her progress in Time Continent would likely be quite arduous.

With this thought, the village girl decided on tonight’s discussion topic with the Witch: “What if we are abandoned by the Observer?” This topic could continue to lower the Witch’s favor for the Observer while also sparking her sense of crisis to actively intensify her real-world training!

However, the wording required careful consideration. If the Witch misunderstood and thought it was “What if you get abandoned by the Observer,” it would backfire, making it seem like she and the Observer were oppressing the Witch.

Therefore, Sonya had to muster genuine emotions, expressing herself as if she was really worried about being abandoned by the Observer to make the Witch empathize.

If I were to be abandoned by the Observer, what would be the cause...

Not strong enough as an operator? Impossible, he’s clearly just saying that to scare me into more training—I saw through that long ago...

Appearing less attractive than another operator? No way, I’m the most beautiful one...

If these reasons can’t even convince me, how can they persuade the Witch? But I just can’t think of anything...

While Sonya was brewing a stomach full of mischief, she suddenly heard strange muttering next to her—

“Poison her? The success rate is too low.”

“Anyway, just hold onto it, don’t give her a chance…”

“Call her mom over? Little Red, did you forget, her mom wants it too.”

“Although it’s unlikely, what if they reconcile and decide to develop and use it together? How could we compete then? And her aunt is also an enemy—that makes three people, almost as many as we have!”

“Damn it, damn it, every single one of them is a bad person, all eyeing my treasure!”

Sonya listened to the White Queen’s lowered murmuring, watching her smooth white hair gradually tainted with bright red and black, her gentle face turning dark and gloomy. She thought about what could have happened to the Witch in reality that caused her mood swings to be so intense, even leading to a personality breakdown in the Virtual Realm.

Moreover, it sounded like something important was about to be taken away. The Scarlet Dead Apostles believed calling the other side’s mother would stop it, but the White Queen thought the mother and aunt both desired it too… Was it some kind of toy? R

Sonya quickly hugged the White Queen, softly comforting her. Realizing her own abnormality, the White Queen gently leaned on Sonya’s shoulder to rest.

“Is everything okay? Or—”

“No problem, it’s just that we lost our composure this time. Since we’ve come to the Virtual Realm, we shouldn’t dwell on real-world matters, and even more so shouldn’t bring emotions into our work.”

Sonya felt a bit disappointed—since the Witch was in such a bad mood today, she couldn’t discuss the topic of ‘being abandoned by the Observer’ to avoid adding to her troubles.

Just then, the sports car stopped outside a resource point. The White Queen looked towards the depths of the mine cave. “I hope the fight can help me relax a bit.”

“It definitely will. Nothing like slaying a few Blade Fish Dragons to relieve some stress,” Sonya laughed. “I’ve even set challenge goals for myself. My current record is one sword slash killing five Blade Fish Dragons. Maybe you should set a challenge for yourself too—like how many pieces you can divide a Blade Fish Dragon into with a single attack?”

Skilled in eradicating enemies and looting, Sonya seized the opportunity while the White Queen was scavenging for essential materials to pull Ashe aside and asked, “What’s going on with you today?”

“W-What do you mean?” Ashe was visibly tense.

“Why did you use the Healing Sword and Empowerment Sword on me so many times?” Sonya crossed her arms over her chest. “The minor injuries I had could be healed with soul energy alone; I didn’t need the Healing Sword. And the Empowerment Sword lasts for over twenty seconds—you kept reapplying it every ten seconds. Do you know how annoying that is?”

Sonya always felt that the Observer’s Empowerment Sword was incredibly peculiar. It gave a strong sensory stimulus for some reason, and every time she was empowered, it felt like he was hugging her. Not that she disliked it, but it did interrupt her fighting rhythm quite a bit when done frequently.

“I’m sorry!” Ashe immediately clasped his hands together in apology. “I’ll let you have all my essential materials tonight!”

“I’m not asking for compensation...” Sonya frowned slightly. “You’ve just been acting weird tonight.”

“No, I haven’t. I’ve always been like this—”

“Look at me and don’t move.”

Under Sonya’s intense gaze, Ashe managed to maintain eye contact for two or three seconds before turning his eyes away. He opened the virtual realm map and said, “Sword Princess, I think we should go to—”

“Forget about these trivial virtual realm matters.” Sonya pushed Ashe against the wall and grabbed his hand. A faint red glow emerged from her fingertips as they came into contact with his. “Look into my eyes.”

“Sword Princess, the Witch is about to come back—”

“Look. At. Me!”

Miracle – Treat with Sincerity!

This Miracle, based on the spirit of ‘sincerity’, had previously been used by Sonya only once—in the Amnesia Cabin to share her emotions with the Witch and the Observer, thereby gaining their trust. However, this Miracle could also be used the other way around. As long as the other party didn’t resist, she could reverse the process to sense their emotions.

At that moment, Ashe, noticing the Witch emerging from the mine cave, immediately used the Rush ability to teleport outside. "I'll be waiting in the car while you two finish scavenging!"

The White Queen emerged, seeing the Sword Princess standing alone at the entrance of the mine cave, feeding stones to a spirit as she approached. "Sword Princess, the Observer..."

The moment the Sword Princess turned to look at her, the White Queen's words abruptly stopped. Her mind went blank under the impact of the icy killing intent. After a difficult moment of regaining her composure, she adjusted her glasses. Instantly, her makeup, clothing, and hair color transformed to black, becoming the Black Butler.

The Black Butler looked at the Sword Princess, twitching slightly at the corner of her mouth. She took a deep breath. "Sword Princess, you... I can't help it, I'm still really scared!"

Adjusting her glasses once more, she morphed into the cold and arrogant battle-crazy Scarlet Dead Apostles. The Scarlet Dead Apostles gave the Sword Princess a glance and shook her head. "I'm not stupid."

In the end, it was the Secret Princess Deya who stepped up to handle the situation. Yet even Deya didn't dare to look directly into the Sword Princess's eyes, which seemed to be a sea of blood and killing intent. She hugged the Sword Princess, burying her head in the latter's chest, her voice trembling. "S-Sword Princess, what happened? You seem to be in a very bad mood..."

"Nothing happened."

The Sword Princess's voice was still as soft and captivating as ever, like feathers brushing the ear, stirring the heart. She gently stroked the Witch's little head, smiling. "I just suddenly had a strange thought and got lost in it for a moment."

"W-What thought?"

"A very trivial thought... just, what if the Observer abandons me."

The anxiousness of avoiding eye contact.

The lingering excitement of a secret joy.

And a strong sense of guilt.

Even though it was her first time feeling this way, Sonya's intuition—or what the Observer called "Dark Insight"—had already grasped the truth.

He's seeing someone else.

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

Chapter 470: I Cant Even Feel Your Body Temperature

"No matter if the main city of the Garden Area is taken down by the Spider Tower and the Oasis, the Garden legion, which is already on high alert, is definitely concentrating its forces and wouldn't dispatch a commander to retrieve resources. This is our opportunity..."

Ashe's analysis was spot on. He followed the Garden map to scavenge resource points, which were filled with social creatures that hadn't retreated and abundant resources.

Moreover, he noticed that the resource volume in the Garden Area was nearly two to three times that of other areas. There are two possibilities for this: either the resource harvesting cycle in the Garden is two to three times longer than other factions, causing a massive pile-up of resources, or the social creatures in the Garden Area are two to three times more efficient in gathering resources, allowing them to collect multiple times the resources within the same cycle.

After looting several resource points, the Truth balance gradually tilted towards the second possibility.

Compared to social creatures in other areas, those in the Garden Area may not have a significant increase in combat power, but their tactical insight and teamwork capability were far superior. When Ashe's group tried to lure the social creatures into a narrow passageway to block and kill them, the creatures hid inside the mine cave and didn't come out. They even gave Ashe a disdainful look, as if to say, "How naive are your deceptive tactics?"

Furthermore, Ashe discovered that the mine caves in the Garden Area were much more complex than those in other areas. The interiors had numerous interconnected tunnels, and a moment of carelessness could lead to ambushes from all directions.

Although they eventually emerged victorious, the danger level of these fights was several times higher than that of ordinary resource points. And keep in mind that they were three sorcerers, capable of defending all directions by standing back-to-back. For a lone sorcerer attempting to challenge such resource points, it would be an overwhelming task, likely resulting in being surrounded and killed, or worse, torn apart

and consumed by the social creatures, with no hope of recovering their soul for at least half a year.

In the most dangerous encounter, after Ashe's group scattered the monsters at the entrance and ventured into the mine cave's passages, the other social creatures actually tried to collapse the mine cave to bury them alive. If it weren't for the sword Princess unleashing a deadly "Blood Moon Shattered Lake" attack to blast through the rubble, they might indeed have met their demise inside.

These complex passageways were definitely not naturally formed. Upon closer inspection, Ashe and his team could see clear claw marks dug into the walls.

All signs indicated that the social creatures in the Garden Area had intelligence levels very close to that of sorcerers. This intelligence not only aided them in combat but also in production, naturally resulting in the Garden Area's resource growth rate being several times that of other regions.

"...No wonder the books 'Golden Rain Observer,' 'The Second Secret Record,' and 'Under the White Bull' all mention the hypothesis of 'Virtual Realm Civilization.' They likely suffered significant losses to Garden Creatures, which strongly convinced them that virtual realm creatures possess the intelligence to establish civilizations..."

Sonya, while validating the correlation between virtual realm observations and real-world data, fed 'Heartless Silver' to the Sword of Killing Intent spirit. The Sword of Killing Intent is a spirit that belongs to both the Swordsmanship and Mental sects, roughly in a 6:4 ratio. Thus, feeding it advanced Mental material like 'Heartless Silver' was also effective.

The red-clad sorcerer spirit, who wields two swords, suddenly burped. A second blood-colored wing sprouted from its back, its red clothing acquired an additional black-gold mantle, and its twin swords transformed into more ferocious curved blades. The spirit's appearance shifted from a gloomy male to an androgynous female.

"The Sword of Killing Intent has advanced to two-wings," Sonya noted as she inspected the spirit in front of her, shaking her head. "Doesn't quite resemble me. My eyes aren't this cold."

Generally speaking, any spirit humanoid summoned by a sorcerer would mirror the sorcerer's gender (except in cases of gender identity discrepancies) and would also bear features of the summoner. External spirits, when advancing in the hands of a sorcerer, would also gradually align their appearance and gender with that of the sorcerer. If a spirit advanced consecutively under sorcerers of different genders, its gender might indeed change multiple times.

"Congratulations, Sword Princess!"

“Congrats.”

“Thank you,” Sonya replied, retracting the Sword of Killing Intent and giving them a bright smile. “I’ve collected all the necessary essences. I’ll head back to the vehicle and wait for you.”

Watching the Sword Princess leave, Ashe and Deya felt like adventurers who had just seen a terrifying evil dragon fall asleep; the tension they had been holding finally eased, and they couldn’t help but breathe a long sigh of relief.

They even felt a bit weak in the knees and had to lean against the wall, hiding in the shadows where they couldn’t be seen from the outside.

Deya couldn’t help but ask, “Observer, do you have any idea why the Sword Princess suddenly changed like that?”

“I’ve only met the sword Princess in the virtual realm, just like you. If you have any clues, then I have them too,” Ashe said, his eyes flickering.

Deya didn’t suspect anything. Although the sword Princess suddenly seemed very intimidating, it wasn’t specifically targeting the Observer. Moreover, as the Observer said, their interactions were limited to their time in the virtual realm. If the Observer had upset the sword Princess, wouldn’t there be some telltale signs? It’s unlikely that the Observer angered the sword Princess in the real world.

“So, do you have any solutions, Observer?”

“Not at the moment.”

“Well, I have a solution that requires your cooperation.”

“For real?” Ashe was excited and almost grabbed the Witch’s shoulders but stopped himself. “No problem, I’ll definitely cooperate!”

“Then there’s no problem,” Deya said. “Here’s my plan: First, I’ll sit in the front seat of the sports car.”

“Uh-huh, uh-huh!”

“Then, you’ll sit in the back seat with the sword Princess.”

“Uh-huh... huh?”

“Finally, we endure until tonight’s virtual realm exploration is over. If the sword Princess is still in a bad mood tomorrow night, we’ll repeat this process.” *ra*

“Uh... uh-huh??”

Ashe was dumbfounded. “How is this a solution? It still doesn’t resolve the sword Princess’s issue!”

“Well, my problem’s solved. If yours isn’t, that’s your issue.” Deya waved her fist threateningly. “You already agreed to cooperate, and breaking your word means swallowing a thousand needles... Besides, the sword Princess is your operator, so you need to take responsibility! Just don’t come to the front seat, or I’ll hit you!”

With that, the Witch darted away, not giving Ashe any chance to back out.

Although he felt tricked by the Witch, she had a point. If the sword Princess had a problem, Ashe was the one primarily responsible. The sword Princess was his operator, not the Witch’s. More importantly, Ashe knew deep down that he was the Source of Calamity causing the sword Princess’s sudden personality shift.

Although the ‘Treat with Sincerity’ Miracle couldn’t read thoughts, by observing the sword Princess’s expressions, Ashe knew she had already guessed most of what he was feeling based on his emotional fluctuations.

In this matter, Ashe didn’t dare underestimate a woman’s intuition. Back in middle school, his mom had instantly spotted his slight crush on his desk mate and squashed it promptly (since his grades had started slipping). Moreover, the sword Princess’s intuition was endorsed as a Personal Skill in Aurora’s Sorcerer Handbook: the Dark Insight.

Ashe knew he couldn’t hide his feelings. Just as he would flash back to the moment of color in the sword Princess’s eyes frozen in the black and white static domain when confessing to Annan, now his tongue still lingered on the blissful memory from a few hours ago.

He could effortlessly navigate between departments, masterfully deflect blame in reports, and even sincerely deceive project managers, but he couldn’t apply those same maneuvers to his emotional life. If his relationship skills were even ten percent of his work skills, his only nightlife wouldn’t be overtime, and he wouldn’t always watch movies alone.

What to do, what to do... Honestly, Ashe was panicking. He had never seen the sword Princess this angry before. Even when arranging a Summoning Ritual with sincerity, she hadn’t been this scary.

Usually, the sword Princess wouldn’t miss a chance to prevent him from being alone with the Witch. Yet earlier, she left without a backward glance, her resentful attitude making Ashe worry she’d explode at any moment.

Most unnerving of all was how the sword Princess behaved as though nothing had happened, continuing their adventures and battles, explaining the virtual realm, and even...

...even seeming more polite and responsible than before.

Once they had harvested the mercury from the resource point, Ashe glanced at the Witch and the sword Princess seated in the front and back seats, respectively. He took a deep breath to calm his nerves and carefully slid into the back seat.

The sword Princess shot him a glance, and Ashe felt a massive weight on his chest. If she showed any anger, he'd risk a beating from the Witch to sit in the front again. However, the sword Princess said nothing, merely looking ahead calmly. Ashe exhaled in relief and opened the virtual realm map to continue exploring the Garden Area.

"Captain."

Both Ashe and the Witch were startled. Ashe quickly responded, "What is it?"

"We still owe ourselves two maps, one of which is the Oasis. Now that the Oasis and Spider Tower have allied, if we attack the Garden's main city, the Oasis-Spider Tower legion will surely show up together. This will be our chance," Sonya pondered aloud. "Compared to resources, isn't the Oasis map and the commander's handbook more important?"

Switching to the main topic, Ashe also became serious and explained, "We're collecting maps to find the Rainbow Tail, but relying solely on the Rainbow Tail is really too risky. Moreover, gathering resources is crucial for upgrading the various peripherals of our sports car, ensuring that in future main city battles, we can navigate the battlefield more safely and confidently."

"I see," Sonya said, suddenly understanding. "If we can't find the Rainbow Tail in the end, we can still take advantage of the sports car and soul summoning spirit to benefit from main city wars. So the sports car is indeed more important. Speaking of which, although the Starburst Warrior suits me very well, it doesn't fit you all... Witch, if you were to design a troop, what would you want?"

Deya perked up at that topic. "First, I'd want enhanced melee damage. The armor doesn't need to be thick, but I need two specific Troop Skills. One that recovers armor by killing other units, and another that boosts movement speed. My battle strategies differ greatly between duels and chaotic fights. During chaotic battles, I usually use the Water-born Thread to pull enemies together and create chaos, so speed becomes critical..."

Ashe, equally enthused, joined in the discussion. Ever since he learned about the troop system, he had fantasized about the ideal troop for himself, much like when you play a

card game and can't help but design your own cards. Surely, the balance might be terrible, but the reality doesn't demand meticulous balance.

Cheerfully, they arrived at the next resource point. Deya, who was still brimming with ideas for her fourth troop, reluctantly got out of the car. At this moment, Ashe hesitated before saying, "Witch, you go in and try to lure the monsters out first."

"No problem!"

After Deya disappeared into the mine cave, Ashe adjusted his mood and mustered the courage to speak to the sword Princess, "Sword Princess, I'm sorry."

The atmosphere had been cheerful and lively on the way here, with the sword Princess chatting and laughing, not avoiding interaction with him. Ashe felt she might not be as angry anymore, so he seized the chance to clarify things with her.

He had prepared several plans, ready to respond whether the sword Princess was angry, displeased, or ready to lash out.

However, her response was still beyond Ashe's expectations.

"Why are you apologizing to me?" Sonya asked with a smile.

Ashe was taken aback. "Be... because you seemed very upset. Actually, in reality, I'm—"

"What happens in your real life has nothing to do with me," Sonya said, looking at the mine cave calmly. "I can neither see it nor hear it, and I certainly can't interfere with it."

"Besides, I should be the one apologizing. It wasn't right for me to test you with a Miracle out of the blue." She looked genuinely remorseful. "If I put myself in your shoes, if someone suddenly tested me like that, I would be very upset and angry. I'm really sorry."

Ashe quickly responded, "I'm not mad at you."

"But I still feel sad, just as sad as you felt when I tested you." Sonya met Ashe's gaze. "An apology only counts if the other person feels just as sad."

"You don't need to take such a solemn and formal attitude with me. After all, we're just teammates in the Virtual Realm, partners in adventure. We don't interfere in each other's real lives; we only need to fulfill our responsibilities within the Virtual Realm."

"Beyond that, we don't have, and can't have, any other relationship." Sonya touched Ashe's hand lightly. "See, I can't even feel your body temperature."

“The Witch is coming out. Looks like the knowledge creatures here are too clever to be lured out. Let’s end the chat here.”

“Let’s move on, Captain.”

Watching the sword Princess’s back, Ashe stood in silence for quite a while before catching up.

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

Chapter 471: Heartfelt Again

Sonya is a loyal fan of Delarose, having watched various TV dramas starring Delarose since she was a child. When Sonya was twelve or thirteen and filled with naive longings for love, Delarose was in her late teens, starring in many romantic TV dramas. It was through these series that the little village girl’s perspective on love gradually took shape and matured.

Now that Delarose is a nationally acclaimed star in the country of Stars, even her staunch fan Sonya has to admit that the romantic dramas Delarose starred in during her early years were not particularly popular.

During that time and even now, the favorite type of romantic dramas among the citizens of Stars were those filled with tragic or tangled love stories, where all characters were embroiled in complicated, inseparable relationships, living and dying for love as if it were above all else. Sonya could understand the appeal, as such dramatic conflict made these stories compelling and entertaining.

However, Delarose rarely appeared in these kinds of dramas. Most of her roles were in career dramas, detective shows, or other TV dramas where romance was not the central theme. Although there were romantic elements, they were mostly moments of light-hearted relief amidst the intense plot, causing viewers to smile wryly while also inspiring a sense of yearning.

In the few multi-love interest TV dramas she did appear in, Delarose was almost never the lead actress, typically playing supporting roles. Her characters, whether good or evil, liked the male lead but never abandoned their aspirations for him. Inevitably, they would end up opposing the male lead, distinguishing themselves from other tragically romantic female characters, often being the first to exit the story.

By the time Sonya reached fifteen or sixteen, Delarose had reached the peak of her career, starring in many Empress dramas — those centered around a female lead where all male characters were supporting roles. Delarose's portrayal of a cool, proud, and relentless character left a deep impression on Sonya, who was then still a diligent student.

Influenced by Delarose since childhood, it was natural for Sonya to grow up dismissive of love and passionate about her career. Although meeting the Observer reawakened Sonya's suppressed feelings of love, it did not make her naive or change her views on romance. At most, it brought her back to the age of twelve or thirteen, when she longed for love.

When Sonya realized that the Observer had other women in real life, her first reactions were, of course, anger, resentment, sorrow, and grievance, even a killing intent. She wished she could cast Blood Moon Blossoms and shred the Observer into thirty-six pieces right then and there.

But once she calmed down, she found that there was nothing she could do.

Absolutely nothing.

Even though they met every night in the Virtual Realm, even though they had witnessed the Golden Fish, fought fiercely against the heroic soul legion, supported each other in the Amnesia Cabin, and shared their futures in Fate Questioning... They could share all their secrets and emotions, but they couldn't touch each other's reality.

Even if Sonya got angry and killed the Observer, she would only be destroying his soul projection. At most, it would make him recuperate for a few months, having little significance. She couldn't interfere with his life, let alone threaten it.

Distance reduced their fluttering hearts to mere Echoes, and space turned their feelings into ethereal water moon floating on reality.

So what if the Observer had someone he liked in the real world? What could she do about it?

Act cute like a kitten to win his affection?

Lose her temper and lash out, stepping closer and closer?

Flirt and seduce him until he was enchanted?

Leaving aside whether Sonya was willing to do these things, just because she did them, did that mean it would prevent the Observer from acting in real life? Could she guarantee he wouldn't have a wandering heart?

She couldn't.

And more importantly, she didn't want to.

After meeting the Observer, she no longer fawned over anyone or wore those elaborate Masks again. She had found her true self and became a better version of herself. She wouldn't regress.

Most importantly, she was already a two-wings sorcerer and a Sword Saint Seed. Advancing to the Sanctuary was almost a given; she would inevitably become part of the Stars' nobility! With such power and prospects, wherever she went, she was her own master. Why should she be tormented by longing and fear for just one person!?

Even though this power was gifted to her by the Observer, Sonya was willing to help him manage the team and strive to complete their adventures and battles. But she would never completely give herself over to him!

Even though the Observer had actively apologized and explained, Sonya's thoughts didn't change. Analyzing the Observer's emotional makeup, she had a vague feeling that the Observer might not have been acting on his own volition—his sense of guilt without genuine regret was evidence enough.

But if this time wasn't intentional, what about the next time? Or the time after that?

She couldn't solve the problem, nor could she bring it up to the person who caused it. No matter how many Blade Fish Dragons she killed, it couldn't give her a shred of security. ♦

Put another way, the Observer had never done anything to provide a sense of security: more and more operators, the reality that was never connected... The Observer had never proactively expressed his stance. Although he might have lost his memories and started anew, he was strong in his previous life. Was there really room in his heart for others?

Perhaps everything was just her wishful thinking, and now she was merely accepting the outcome of a gamble.

Sonya couldn't recall which TV drama it was from, but she remembered Delarose's line: "Any relationship that makes you suspicious, anxious, uneasy, or even doubt if you're good enough is a burden you need to shed."

The usually decisive and proactive village girl had not taken further steps in their relationship, keeping it in a hazy state because she was aware of this concern. When the concern eventually materialized, she could leave decisively, without dragging it out and without feeling heartache.

It ought to have been that way.

But as Sonya watched the Observer chatting and laughing with the Witch during the fight, as if nothing had happened, she couldn't help but feel a mix of jealousy and killing intent surging in her heart—he never cared about me. His earlier apology was just for show. Without my interference, he couldn't wait to get close to the Witch.

Deya suddenly sensed a chilling intent from the side. Turning to look, she only saw the Sword Princess casually slaying a Savage Jackal Dragon. The Sword Princess approached with a cheerful smile and asked, "What are you guys talking about?"

"The Observer asked if I was tired tonight. If so, he suggested we drive to a farther special building instead of continuing to scavenge resource points," Deya quickly explained.

"Got it," Sonya responded with a smile, joining in the conversation, but her hands didn't slow down at all. Even though the Savage Jackal Dragons were sly and cunning, she still managed to eliminate them with ease.

Back in the car, Deya, sitting in the front seat, glanced at the two chatting and laughing in the back. She couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief, thinking that the Observer was truly remarkable for resolving the Sword Princess's issue so quickly and even appearing to have reconciled-

White Queen: "They haven't reconciled. Look at the Sword Princess's sword."

Deya looked back and noticed that the Sword Princess's sword wasn't secured at her waist but was placed on the seat between her and the Observer.

Black Butler: "Now check the Observer's posture."

Deya scrutinized them and saw that the Observer was slightly turned towards the Sword Princess, his left hand never raised, always guarding his body as if to fend off a side attack.

Scarlet Dead Apostles: "Try sticking out your tongue and making a 'ha-hoo' sound."

Deya did as instructed, immediately drawing strange looks from both the Observer and the Sword Princess. "Huh? Why are they looking at me?"

"They're looking at you because you just acted like a dog," Scarlet Dead Apostles remarked. "I never thought you'd actually do it."

"You're the dog!"

Deya glanced at the Sword Princess and the Observer, sighing inwardly.

Sigh, the relationships between adults are so complicated.

Luckily, she and Ashe only shared pure mutual affection.

After a thirty-minute drive, they arrived outside a black, hemispherical space. It looked like a black bowl overturned on the ground, and even the Reverse Golden Rain couldn't penetrate the dense darkness.

"Dark Phantasound Miracle Park?" Sonya recognized it immediately.

There were many types of Miracle Parks in the Time Continent. For example, the Misty Miracle Wonderland they had visited before, where sorcerers had to capture spirits within the mist, and once the mist dissipated, all the spirits would disappear as well.

Similarly, the Dark Phantasound Miracle Park was another challenging Miracle Park. Inside, absolute darkness prevented any form of detection, rendering even miracles ineffective. Moreover, the sounds of the spirits were amplified thousands of times. Although sorcerers couldn't understand them, their ears would be filled with noise.

The sorcerer has to capture spirits while all their vision and hearing are restricted. Similarly, there is also a time limit—once the darkness lifts, the spirits vanish.

"If the three of us act separately, we might end up bumping into each other inside," Ashe suggested. "Why don't we hold hands? This way, we can form a net to capture more spirits and avoid accidental collisions."

It was a very reasonable proposal, and both the Witch and the Sword Princess readily agreed. Deya glanced at them and said, "How about I walk in the middle?"

Ashe shook his head, "Witch, you are adept in the Fist-Claw Sect, and Sword Princess excels in Swordsmanship. You two are much more agile than I am; you should walk on the sides."

The three of them held hands and approached the darkness. Ashe suddenly remembered something and handed each of them a Love Sword: "Although it may not be of much use, it should at least enhance your hearing and reaction abilities."

That familiar feeling arose again.

Every time she received the Observer's enhancement, Sonya felt as if she was being embraced by him. But unlike the shy and joyful feelings she experienced before, this time she felt a mix of fondness and resentment well up and recede in waves, so much that her eyes grew red.

Fortunately, they had already walked into the Dark Phantasound Miracle Park, where no one could see the change in her expression or hear the turmoil in her heart.

In her eyes was darkness so thick it felt palpable, and her ears were filled with the jubilant or chaotic noise of the spirits. The only tangible connection she had was the hand holding hers. Just as she felt an irrepressible rise in dependence, the village girl within her swiftly extinguished such a weak thought.

Always wanting to rely on others in the face of danger, getting flustered at his touch—how could she ever detach herself if she stayed like this? Could anything be more entangling and muddy than this?

I need closure, thought the member of the Stretch Paw Club.

Thinking it over, they had never actually done anything—no hugs, no kisses, much less anything else. The most intimate moments they shared were when she used his lap as a pillow and held hands. With this thought, Sonya looked into the darkness ahead, listening to the noise around her, and couldn't help but have a bold idea—

Just for closure, or maybe as a reward, she could secretly kiss him here. No one would notice. If the Observer asked, she would just say a spirit bumped into his face.

This idea rapidly took root and grew like a towering tree. Sonya felt her heartbeat quicken—thankfully, souls didn't have body temperatures, otherwise, she would feel her hand heating up.

There was no better opportunity, whether for progression or for the end.

Taking a deep breath to steel herself, Sonya silently turned her head and moved closer—

Smooch.

Sonya froze.

She knew the person in front of her was also frozen.

At this moment, as if gazing through what was called “Dark Insight,” she could see the Observer purse his lips, see the determination, anxiety... and surprise on his face.

Even though there was no sense of temperature, it felt like heat was radiating from her lips to her ears. Thankfully, the gentle darkness concealed her blushing face.

“I caught one!” the Witch's voice sounded nearby. “No wonder it was so loud—it's a ‘heartbeat’ spirit!”

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

Chapter 472: Necromancy and the Gospel

Working in Nabistin is indeed a wonderful experience.

At 9 AM, Harvey, Igor, and Annan arrived at Ark Square, in front of the city's elevator. As the name suggests, the city's elevator is a series of elevators connecting the lower level, middle level, and surface. Although elevators are available in other places, the ones in Ark Square are undoubtedly the most numerous, capable of transporting thousands of people within half an hour.

Ark Square is the largest "talent market" in the underground city, but interestingly, there are no staff present-only an array of 'doors.'

Each door has listed requirements and wages. For example, one door set up by Belldate's Wonderland World displays the following information:

"Requirements: Work for 7 hours, height 170 cm, appearance rating above 67, physical fitness rating above 70..."

"Wages: 30 brass per hour, total 210 brass. An additional 1 Gospel point can be earned after accumulating 70 work hours."

When workers who meet the requirements pass through the door, they automatically become Gospel employees and work at Belldate's Wonderland World. Seven hours later, they return to Ark Square with 210 brass added to their account.

So, when Harvey and his group arrived at Ark Square, they saw countless people lining up to pass through the doors. There was no sign of work-related anxiety on their faces; they stepped through the doors with ease and then appeared calm. Everyone marched in sync to the elevators to work elsewhere, as if part of a grand symphony.

Simultaneously, countless others finished their day's work and returned from the elevators. They would instinctively avoid the crowd, sit on the benches around the square, then stand up as if waking from a dream. They checked their balances in their Gospel Books and left content.

People came and went, never ceasing. With no day or night in the underground city, people were always coming to and going from work at any hour. Ark Square ebbed and flowed with this endless stream of people, carrying the three interconnected cities toward a future woven by the Gospel.

They were both free humans and efficient tools; they embraced the Gospel's mercy and were stained by its cruelty. To Harvey, Ark Square was akin to the Blood Moon Tribunal, with an artistic sense that seemed to seep from the very seams of the bricks. Each individual acted like a precise cog, ingeniously driving the machinery of society, and the entire system exuded a chilling, bone-deep aesthetic of cold efficiency.

However, while the Blood Moon's bone-crushing impact was physical, here it was a total replacement of free will. Although the Gospel Kingdom was more civilized and developed, Harvey believed neither was superior; both were artistic masterpieces crafted by their respective Divine Sovereigns, tailored to their environments.

Every visit to Ark Square sparked a burst of advanced inspiration in Harvey's mind. Just as he could glean the tenets of the Blood Moon Sovereign from the Blood Moon Tribunal, watching Ark Square now gave him a faint grasp of the Omniscient Weaver's supreme realm.

"Yesterday I wanted to ask, Harvey, why do you seem... unfazed?"

At 3 PM, on a bench in Ark Square, a dizzy and nauseous Igor couldn't help but ask, seeing Harvey observing the crowd with keen interest: "Don't you feel a bit suffocated in your soul after your memories return?"

Work had only been a matter of moments. Apart from feeling physically tired, Igor and the others hardly sensed anything, not even the loss of memory.

The quicker their memories returned, the better. Moreover, Annan didn't want Banjeet to see her discomfort upon regaining her memories. So, Igor used a spirit to awaken their work memories, which had been sealed by the Pact.

Even though it was their second time regaining work memory, Igor was still overwhelmed by the suffocating sensation from the memories.

Narrow.

Claustrophobic.

Oppressive.

There was a reason their work memories were blocked. When they returned, Igor felt his soul confined within the prison of his body. This prison was so tight that his soul had no extra space to move, not even to breathe deeply. He could only stay trapped in this narrow shell, bombarded by the near-noise high-frequency commands of the Gospel, watching helplessly as this flesh machine worked under the Gospel's relentless drive—efficiently, tirelessly, endlessly.

Even though the work environment was out in the bright surface of Nabistin, Igor still felt suffocated, and being able to alleviate the pressure by vomiting was a testament to his high mastery in the Mental Sect. In contrast, Annan, sitting beside him, was so distressed that she bit her own index finger until it bled, using pain to forcibly divert her focus.

Compared to them, Harvey seemed at ease, merely lighting a catnip cigarette. Igor even felt he didn't need it to relieve any sense of suffocation; perhaps he just wanted something to occupy his mouth.

"Hmm?" Harvey blew out a smoke ring, "What suffocation?"

"Didn't you restore your working memory?" Igor asked. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"I did."

"And you didn't feel anything special? Like suffocation, oppression, despair?"

"No," Harvey glanced at the two of them thoughtfully, "I was wondering why you both looked so miserable... I thought you were admiring the artistic presentation of Ark Square like I was."

Igor no longer had the strength to mock him, "How are you immune to the negative effects of memory restoration? Don't you feel very... inhuman in your working memory?"

"Oh," Harvey finally understood what he meant, "You mean that sensation of being like a puppet, almost as if your whole body is crawling with maggots?"

"Ugh, ugh!"

The necromancer's vivid description made the Con Artist retch once more. Weakly, he looked at Harvey, "Exactly... how do you cope with that feeling?"

"I don't deal with it; I'm just used to it."

"Used to it?"

"Yeah," Harvey nodded, "Do you remember when I merged with Alice in the battle at Belldate's manor? When my soul integrated with Alice, the sensation she gave me was identical to what's in my working memory."

"Put it this way: Undead Corpses always exist in that state. I just occasionally experience it. And compared to the sensation inside an Undead, the negative effect of working memory is like a few flies buzzing around a rotting body—not nearly the level of crawling maggots."

“And what about the Noise of the Gospel?” Igor asked, “Does it not make you feel nauseous and overwhelmed?”

“That’s a living person’s mindset talking,” Harvey shrugged, “Living people try to discern useful intelligence from noise, which is why you feel overwhelmed and nauseous. Undead don’t possess such advanced intelligence-gathering capabilities. To the Undead, noise and silence are indistinguishable. If you treat yourself as an Undead, then neither working memory nor the Gospel will bother you.”

How could I, a living person, possibly see myself as an Undead!?

Do you think everyone shares your quirk of enjoying sleeping in coffins with corpses!?

Igor and Annan turned their heads away in disappointment, left to cope with the negative effects of their working memory. After a good while, once they had rested enough, they stood up, ready to leave, only to find Harvey staring at Ark Square, dazed and deep in thought.

“Time to go, Harvey,” Igor called out, “Or do you want to stay here a bit longer?”

“Undead... Gospel... hmm, so that’s it.” Harvey murmured softly. He then stood up, smiling, “No, I’ve understood everything completely. Let’s go back.”

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

- Chapter 473: Culprits Ranking

Chapter 473: Culprits Ranking

Back in the hotel room, as soon as Annan saw Banjeet, she went over and hugged him, gently rubbing against the blue-haired butler. “Banjeet, I’m back.”

“Even though it’s been seven hours since you left, Miss, for you it must feel like it hasn’t been long since you finished breakfast,” Banjeet said with a smile, patting Annan’s hair. Actually, Annan was a bit taller than him. “Anyway, you’ve worked hard.”

“Yeah.” Annan turned to look at Ashe, who blinked and seemed like he wanted to run, but the next second, Annan flew over and hugged the Cult Leader, giggling. “Ashe, I’m so tired today. You need to comfort me!”

Watching them play and tussle on the bed, Lise turned around expressionless and walked away. Passing by Igor, she whispered, “Aunt Bukin, emergency meeting.”

“Alright.” The Con Artist held back the necromancer who was about to leave. A confused Harvey was dragged into Igor’s room by the two of them.

“Why did you call me here?”

“Because today we need to discuss a very important issue,” Lise said seriously, sitting in a duck position on the bed with her arms crossed. “Annan is going to take Dad away!”

“...Even though I don’t pay much attention to their love life, Alice told me a long time ago that Annan and Ashe getting together was just a matter of time,” Harvey said, spreading his hands. “After all, Blasphemy Gospel of the Funeral is filled with danger, anxiety, and risk. In such a mission state, it’s easy for us to develop the misattribution of arousal and feel a strong affection for our companions.”

“Among us, let’s not talk about Banjeet and Lise, Igor, you were reserved by Anfel a long time ago. Plus, you and Annan are both the type who won’t hesitate to use any means necessary — you can cooperate out of necessity as comrades, but any closer relationship is impossible. You can’t be each other’s confidant, not even friends — as for me and Annan, we are the kind who grow distant from each other.”

“So it’s only natural that Annan likes Ashe.”

Being psychoanalyzed by a necromancer made Igor’s mouth twitch. He said irritably, “You’re talking like you might like someone.”

“I like Ashe,” Harvey said calmly. “And you all.”

Although it was rare for Harvey to express his feelings, neither Igor nor Lise felt happy about it. They were unsure how much of this affection was influenced by necromantic elements, so they tacitly decided not to probe further.

“So Annan liking Ashe is just a choice without a choice? Forced and insincere?” Lise’s eyes lit up.

“Of course not,” Harvey shook his head. “Let’s ignore the fact that what we call ‘liking’ is merely a biochemical outcome of oxytocin, endorphins, and other hormones, making the concept of true or false irrelevant... Even Alice can see that Annan genuinely likes Ashe.”

“Although Ashe doesn’t seem remarkable at first, and still doesn’t feel so after getting to know him better, it’s hard to dislike him. He has a mysterious aura that doesn’t fit in with his surroundings. Sometimes I even doubt if he’s really from the Blood Moon... If you truly try to understand him, it’s hard not to fall for him.”

“This,” the necromancer glanced at them, “you should understand better than I do.”

"Let's get back on track," Igor said calmly. "The issue now is how to address the situation between Annan and Ashe."

Harvey took a catnip cigarette from the pack and lit it. "Why address it? They're a perfect match. Who are we to oppose them?"

"Weren't you the one who said you wanted to take revenge on Annan once you regained your freedom?" Igor asked. "If Ashe and Annan are together, don't you find that troublesome?"

"Oh, that. I almost forgot." Harvey pondered for a moment. "I can let it go."

"And your necromancer dignity?!"

"A necromancer's dignity lies in obtaining more perfect corpses. Clinging to revenge would go against my principles," Harvey shrugged. "After they live their happy lives, I'll collect their bones, pass through the veil of death, and turn their happiness into my strength—"

"Stop, just stop!" Lise covered her ears. "Lise doesn't want to hear that!"

"And besides," Harvey continued, "have you considered Ashe's feelings in trying to split Annan and Ashe apart? I have Alice, Igor has himself, but Ashe, still an ordinary person with simple pleasures, surely craves the warmth of an intimate relationship. He might be secretly happy about this situation."

"Are you planning to take away his lover and not offer him another one in return?"

As he spoke, the necromancer glanced at the two of them, his face clearly saying, "How do you plan to repay Ashe for what you'll owe him?"

Igor lowered his eyes in silent contemplation, but Lise's eyes lit up. "It's just a matter of finding Dad another lover? No problem! I can find not just one but even four!" ř

Harvey asked, "Did you make friends with some new people near the hotel or something? But I meant a mutual, comforting lover, not a daughter who needs taking care of."

Igor sighed, for once tenderly patting Lise's head. "Lise, if you push Ashe into this, he'll end up violating Criminal Law... Wait, if he gets taken away by the Red Hats for breaking the law, that would physically separate him from Annan..."

"Oh, I didn't mean myself... Well, maybe I did... Anyway, I can definitely introduce Dad to a kind, mature, sly yet silly, beautiful older sister!"

Igor considered it for a moment. He was aware Lise had a hidden personality, so he could somewhat guess her thoughts. However...

"If we have to wait ten years, by then Annan and Ashe's child will probably be about your age, and you might already be used to calling Annan 'Mom.'"

"Hmph!" Lise raised her head defiantly. "Just you wait and see!"

Despite her words, they didn't form a unified front against Annan. Harvey was on Annan's side, Igor wavered in the middle, and only Lise was firmly against the idea of a stepmother.

However, by the time dinner rolled around, everyone's mindset had changed.

"Ah~ um!"

In the hotel canteen, Lise and her siblings watched as Annan accepted bites of food from Ashe, feeding him in turn. When a grain of rice stuck to Ashe's lips, Annan boldly wiped it off with her finger and popped it into her mouth, then shot a provocative glance at Lise and the others.

Not even hiding it anymore, huh?

Blatantly claiming him, huh?

Lise and her sisters were infuriated and shouted, "Dad, I want you to feed me that!"

Due to the Pact, Lise actually had some territorial claims over Ashe as well. Just as Ashe was about to turn around, Annan intervened, "Kids need to learn to eat by themselves and not rely on adults. Ashe, don't feed her."

"But Aunt Annan, you're so grown up, why do you need someone to serve you? Feed me!"

"What we have is called 'romantic interest,' Lise, you'll understand when you grow up. Don't feed her."

"Feed me!"

"Don't feed her!"

Igor watched Ashe tremble, sensing that he was about to go into logical breakdown from the conflicting commands of the two Pacts. But then the Con Artist noticed something. As Ashe's gaze drifted to the false starry sky outside the window, camouflaged by glowing grass, his eyes were soft and filled with affection, reflecting the glow as if they were shining.

Igor recognized that look.

People with that look can find joy in mundane tasks, smile at dogs on the street as if they're being greeted, feel the wind as especially gentle, the sunlight embracing them softly, and everyone around them becomes more endearing. Even the blandest buffet turns delicious, their favorite drinks taste sweeter, as if the whole world knows someone's in love.

Igor closed his eyes, and soon a calm smile spread across his face. He was about to end this farce when Harvey beat him to it.

"Banjeet, bring out the coffin."

Banjeet, who was happily watching his young lady being charmed, found it odd that Harvey would want a coffin during dinner. But there were so many strange things about Harvey, so Banjeet simply took the coffin out of the suitcase.

As Harvey activated the spirit, Alice opened the coffin lid herself and climbed out, pulling up a chair next to Harvey.

Harvey shoved a spoon into Alice's hand and said, "Feed me."

"...I'm sorry, Harvey, I was wrong."

"...I apologize, Uncle Harvey. I was being too arrogant."

Seeing Annan and Lise sincerely apologize, Harvey waved his hand, signaling for Alice to return to her coffin. Ashe heaved a sigh of relief, finally able to eat in peace—

Suddenly, everyone's Gospel Book in the canteen sprung open by itself, with the bookmarks inside gleaming brightly.

"Updated again after just one day? It's evolved into a daily update now?"

"The Gospel is so diligent, I feel like I should tip it!"

"The speed at which it Weaves is terrifying..."

Voices of discussion filled the canteen, but the Funeral group remained calm. Since the ranking lists were all nullified by Ashe, unless the Echoers listed were people they personally knew, they could largely dismiss it.

However, when Annan opened her Gospel Book, her eyebrows shot up. "This time the ranking list... might be different."

“How different can it be? Isn’t it always the same outcome of Ashe wiping them out?” Harvey beckoned Alice to sit beside him and look at the Gospel Book together. “Unless Ashe somehow can’t bring himself to do it anymore-”

Harvey’s skeptical tone cut off abruptly when he saw the title of the list.

“The Culprits Ranking.”

“Ashe,” Igor furrowed his brows slightly, a hint of concern in his eyes. “You might finally officially make it onto the list.”

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

Chapter 474: The Culprits Ranking

So far, the updates have included the Art Ranking, Family Ranking, Ranking of Schemes, Happiness Ranking, Evil Arts Ranking, Assassination Ranking, last night’s update of The Tough Ranking, and now, the latest update of the Culprits Ranking.

Although Ashe appeared in the first seven ranking lists (sometimes even more than the main character), he never actually made it onto any list. His only ranking was as part of Annan’s work, making it seem like his sole positive contribution in the Gospel evaluation system was his association with Annan.

Last night, Annan and Ashe were preoccupied with serious matters, so they missed the update of The Tough Ranking, which turned out to be the right choice-there was no new intelligence.

The individuals ranked on The Tough Ranking had nothing to do with strength, ideals, or even personal will. The sole criterion was ‘luck,’ though whether it was good or bad luck was debatable. These individuals, without exception, survived numerous trials but always endured great suffering. Disabilities were a basic requirement, amnesia was common, and many had experienced multiple Art Ranking incidents. Perhaps people had forgotten, but one key reason the works on the Art Ranking made it onto the list was because the crime scenes were left with nothing but the art pieces.

In retrospect, although the Family Ranking members were all necromancers, they were at least half-alive; the deaths in the Ranking of Schemes, while numerous, couldn’t amount to the population of a city. And the later rankings were even less significant. No

matter how formidable the Echoers on the Evil Arts Ranking were, how many could they kill in a lifetime? Ten thousand? A hundred thousand?

In comparison, the Art Ranking's works had a background of one devastated city after another, with each city's population counted in the millions. Only through such massive sacrifices could these art pieces gain their historical significance. The number of casualties from all the "evil rankings" combined couldn't match the death toll of a single ranked piece on the "good ranking" Art Ranking. Rather than calling this the Gospel's dark humor, it might be more accurate to say individual concepts of good and evil are insignificant echoes in the grand historical tide.

The Tough Ranking and the Art Ranking are of the same type of benevolent rankings.

Although all the ranked individuals ultimately survived, they would personally witness the disasters claiming the lives of millions. The term "tough" referred not only to their resilience but also to the cruelty of fate towards them.

Incidentally, although Ashe from the Gospel rendered The Tough Ranking ineffective, he didn't kill the ranked individuals. Instead, he slightly altered their future to let them perish along with their loved ones in the tsunami of calamity.

It's hard to judge Ashe's actions regarding The Tough Ranking. Some might prefer to cling to a bitter existence, while others might find it better to die happily rather than struggle through doomsday. The only certainty is that, as the ranking list unfolds, Ashe gradually becomes neither benevolent nor malevolent, merely an aloof deity overlooking the world.

Thus, everyone is curious about what Ashe will ultimately become. So far, Ashe has always appeared in others' narratives; the Gospel has never updated a main storyline featuring him as the protagonist.

But perhaps now, the Gospel is finally advancing the main plot and revealing the mystery.

"Wait, if Dad made it onto the ranking, would that fake Dad come to kill him?" Lise suddenly thought of a terrifying possibility.

"The Yisuo Royal Family sent someone to impersonate Ashe for assassination to realize the future. So, unless the Gospel writes that future, the Yisuo Royal Family won't act rashly," Annan said, touching her earring and smiling. "And no matter how wild the Gospel gets, it won't come up with a flawed logic like 'I kill myself.'"

With a twinkle in her eye, she cuddled up to Ashe and said, "But better safe than sorry, right? Ashe, why don't you stay in my room tonight? I'll protect you."

Lise was furious. "Why not let me share a room with Dad!?"

“Can you protect him?” Annan retorted.

“Then Uncle Banjeet—”

“Banjeet himself is a ‘Punished One’; living with Ashe would just make things easier for the fake Ashe.”

“Then Aunt Bukin and Uncle Harvey—”

“Igor needs to protect Banjeet, and Harvey... Lise, would you honestly let Ashe sleep with Harvey?”

Lise’s large eyes darted back and forth between Harvey and Annan, her small face scrunching up as if making a painful decision. “Well, it’s not... impossible...”

“Hey, hey, hey, hold on a second,” Ashe couldn’t help but interject. “Why are you all so sure that I’ll make it onto the ranking list? The criteria for being on this list clearly include being a ‘world-changing culprit,’ ‘mastermind behind a terror organization,’ or ‘having countless followers,’ and I have nothing to do with any of those things—” r

“It’s a perfect match,” everyone, including Alice, chimed in unanimously.

While Ashe muttered under his breath about “workplace bullying” and “office politics,” things nobody else understood, Igor raised an eyebrow, “It’s someone we know right off the bat.”

“What?”

Everyone looked down, and their expressions immediately turned peculiar—

“Culprits Ranking 10th Place: Red Hat of Havoc”

“Charge: Collusion between Azura’s Red Hat Captain, Cleos Baimu, and Annan Dolan, leading to the private release of Ashe Heath, Igor Bukin, and Archibald Harvey.”

“Evaluation: Gravely sinful”

“Culprit: Cleos Baimu”

“Cleos has received the reward ‘Lawbreaker Silver Handcuffs.’”

Azura Red Hat Division.

“Captain, Captain, don’t cry.”

“Everyone knows it’s not your fault; the higher-ups won’t blame you.”

Cleos lay collapsed on her desk, shoulders shaking as her tears soaked deep into her sleeves, and she emitted whimpering sounds like a wailing kitten. This time, it wasn't the activation of her 'crying curse' causing her tears but true sorrow.

How could she have known that these few people from an exotic land would cause such a huge rift in the Kingdom of the Gospel!

In principle, even if they didn't execute foreigners from an exotic land on the spot, the Red Hats should at least capture and detain them for a year-long observation before granting them citizenship and releasing them back into society. But that's just a guideline, and generally, everyone just kills them to save trouble—the Red Hats are lazy too. Back then, in order to capture members of the Four Pillars Cult, she had an agreement with Annan, deeming those foreigners as spoils of war. Handing them over to Annan followed all the rules. So, what grounds does the Gospel have to find her guilty?!

"If I had known, I would've let the Four Pillars Cult finish their sacrifice before arresting those guys!"

"Culprits Ranking Ninth Place: Incompetent Dame"

"Charge: Ina Aldo of the Happy Family Firm launched a nighttime raid on the Funeral Firm but failed. All members of the Funeral Firm escaped safely."

"Evaluation: Deserving of death"

"Culprit: Ina Aldo"

"Ina Aldo has received the reward 'Mech-spirit Ring +3.'"

Red Cicada Dame at the firm was utterly shocked.

To be honest, when she sent her people to raid the Funeral Firm, it wasn't out of any sense of justice. At that time, the wanted notice hadn't even been issued. While her team had some justification for invading private property, the procedure was entirely wrong. It was only because Cleos also wanted to capture Annan at that time that she didn't press the issue. Regardless, the raid was an evil, illegal, and tyrannical act.

Yet now, the Gospel has listed her in the infamously eternal "Culprits Ranking" because she 'failed to carry out her evil act to the end'!?

For decades, the Dame manipulated loopholes in the Gospel, leaving many victims helpless and resentful. These victims knew that the Happy Family Firm was responsible for their suffering but couldn't seek justice or even voice their grievances through proper channels.

Now, the Dame finally understood how deeply wronged those people felt.

“Culprits Ranking Eighth Place: Lustful Patriarch”

“Charge: Guided by lust, Senhaeser Patriarch cooperated with the other Six Heraldry Patriarchs, disrupting the Red Hats’ plan to capture Ashe Heath and enabling his escape.”

“Evaluation: Heinously criminal”

“Culprit: Qenna Senhaeser”

“Qenna Senhaeser has received the reward ‘Shared Spirit.’”

“...Qenna, did you really let Ashe Heath go for such a reason?”

In the Patriarch’s office inside the Senhaeser Building, Nona spoke calmly, but everyone could hear the anger in her voice.

“Of course not. You know the Gospel has been fabricating stories, so why believe it now?”

Qenna, calm and collected, looked at the newly obtained Spirit in her hand. “It’s quite rare for the Future Ranking to reward a Shared Spirit, even in history... Hmm? This seems to be a custom-designed Shared Spirit by the Gospel just for me. It has two effects. The first one allows blood relatives to share sect realms. Nona, you might have a chance to break through to the Sanctuary!”

“Don’t change the subject!” Nona turned Qenna’s chair so she faced her. “You say the Gospel fabricates stories. What exactly do they fabricate? That you didn’t lust after Ashe or that your judgment was never clouded?”

“The second effect of this Spirit allows sharing of sensory experiences with blood relatives. Let’s give it a try...”

“Qenna!” Nona took a deep breath, grabbing her sister’s shoulders and speaking earnestly, “I had a communication with Annan last night.”

“Mm-hmm?”

“She told me that after the Weaving Festival, she plans to be with Ashe,” Nona stared at her sister. “You understand what that means, right? Don’t do anything unnecessary.”

Qenna blinked. “You must’ve forgotten that I also have a Pact with Annan.”

“Huh?”

“As part of the deal for letting them go, Annan has to return and become a Senhaeser clansman after the Weaving Festival.” She spread her hands. “I wouldn’t do anything unnecessary. She can be with Ashe if she wants, as long as they both come back to live at Senhaeser.”

“You know that’s not what I mean by unnecessary things!”

“Then what do you mean? If you don’t tell me, how would I know?” Qenna swayed her chair with a clueless look.

“Are you pretending to be innocent with me?” Nona gritted her teeth, but the blush creeping to her ears betrayed her outwardly furious demeanor.

“Sis, you’re speaking so oddly. I’m your older sister. Just tell me what you need, and I’ll definitely fulfill it for you.” Qenna smiled. “Since childhood, when have I ever refused any of your wishes?”

Nona’s lips twitched. She took a deep breath and said, “What I mean is, if Annan and Ashe really do come back to Senhaeser...”

“Mm-hmm.”

“Don’t try to find Ashe in private when Annan’s not around... and don’t make a scene publicly, either!”

“Mm-hmm, but why would I look for Ashe?”

“To, to, do, um...”

“To do what? Bake a cake?”

“Ugh...” The normally cool-headed Red Hat deputy captain turned beet red, glaring silently at her sister.

Qenna sighed. “Alright, alright. Maybe this is why the Gospel rewarded me with the Shared Spirit. It’s not just for sharing sect realms; you need to learn from my shamelessness too. With your thin skin, you’re more easily affected by emotions.”

“I don’t want to share anything with you!”

“Fine.” Qenna spoke calmly, “Right now, the Family needs Sanctuary-level power more than ever. Within a year, do you have confidence in breaking through to the Sanctuary with the help of my shared sect realm?”

Hearing her sister speak seriously, Nona had no choice but to suppress her embarrassment. She responded earnestly, “I will do my best... Ah!”

However, Qenna also straightened up instantly, letting out an adorable nasal sound, “Mm-hmm~”

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

Chapter 475: The Source of All Evil

“Like mother, like daughter, both are equally lustful...”

Hearing Lise’s mumble, Annan raised her eyebrows. “It’s fine if you talk about me, but don’t lump me together with Qenna. I hate it when people say we’re mother and daughter... Humph, considering Ashe, I’ll forgive you this time. If you do it again, I’ll spank your butt.”

What do you mean ‘considering Ashe,’ as if you’re that close!

Lise stubbornly lifted her head but, seeing the fierce look in Annan’s eyes, instinctively covered her butt and hid behind Ashe, mumbling softly, “Well, you’re the pervert!”

“Yes, I’m the pervert, and I’m craving Ashe.” Annan hugged Ashe’s arm affectionately but then immediately sat up straight when she noticed Harvey looking over. “So what?”

Lise was fuming, shaking Ashe’s body as she said, “Dad, look at her! Look at her!”

“Ahem,” Ashe cleared his throat, a sly smile forming on his lips. “Please don’t fight because of me—”

“Don’t be so quick to celebrate.” Annan fixed her gaze on Ashe. “Before, you could say that the Gospel was slandering you by randomly weaving your future. But the ranking list clearly states that Qenna took an interest in you when we passed through Vamora... In the limited interactions we’ve had, I didn’t see anything special between you and Qenna. And Qenna isn’t the type to hide her feelings; when she likes something, she can’t wait to show it off...”

Everyone recalled Annan earlier making Ashe feed her and thought, if not for Harvey supervising, the Purple Moth would probably already be sitting on the Cult Leader’s lap—Annan is definitely Qenna’s biological daughter.

“... If she was interested in you, there must have been some close interactions.” Annan stared intently at Ashe. “So, what happened between you and her?”

“You know me; I was busy playing video games all the time back then,” Ashe said earnestly. “At that time, I didn’t even have time to beat the Extreme Cutting Carp Overlord Lord, how could I have time to flirt with Qenna? She is a Sanctuary sorcerer; she could kill me with a slap!”

“I can testify,” Harvey suddenly said. “Ashe was indeed playing games a lot during that time. Besides, Senhaeser had many admirers back then. If he wanted to be perverted, he didn’t need to go after someone as powerful as Qenna.”

“Senhaeser had many admirers...?” Annan stared at Ashe.

“None of the people involved with Senhaeser are good folks!” Lise concluded from behind Ashe.

Though it wasn’t a convincing defense, at least it diverted everyone’s attention. Ashe looked gratefully at Harvey. “You’re truly my good friend. I’ll leave my future remains to you! Igor, you should learn from him. Friends should help one another—”

“So,” Harvey said leisurely, “the key moment when Ashe and Qenna got involved actually happened at the Belldate Manor.”

“Huh?”

“Alice saw it with her own eyes. When Ashe put Qenna into the water, he pretended to trip and fall in, cuddling with Qenna in the water for quite a while. Afterward, when Qenna floated up, she even licked Ashe’s face. At that time, Qenna was under Igor’s domination and had lost all her powers, making it the perfect opportunity for Ashe to take advantage of her—”

“I’ve decided to be cremated and scattered into the ocean, leaving not a trace for you,” Ashe said through gritted teeth. He turned to Lise and Annan to explain, “Harvey’s spouting nonsense that not even ghosts would believe. Don’t take it seriously!”

Harvey replied, “But it was a ghost that tipped me off about this...”

Annan asked flatly, “Did you fall into the water?”

“ (’Д

Lise questioned, “Did you cuddle with Aunt Qenna in the water?”

“ (’Д

Annan continued, “Did Qenna lick your face?”

“ (’Д

Lise asked, “Did you ever think about sleeping with Aunt Qenna—”

“Wow, the Culprits Ranking just updated with a new name!” Ashe exclaimed excitedly, flipping open the Gospel Book.

Annan and Lise both huffed but didn’t pursue the matter further. Honestly, they didn’t think Ashe was trying to make advances on Qenna. Setting aside whether Ashe even had the capability to seduce Qenna, her personality was more like a fierce wildcat: the more you approached her proactively, the more she’d dislike you. Conversely, she would chase after things she wasn’t allowed to have with great enthusiasm.

Although the Future Ranking weaved a scenario where Qenna was at Ashe’s beck and call, firstly, that was pure fabrication, and secondly, a wildcat turning into a house cat could indeed undergo such a transformation. They even suspected that the future woven by the Gospel was one where Qenna tried to subdue Ashe but somehow got reverse-manipulated by Ashe, which led to the future shown in the ranking.

Clearly, Qenna was the bad one, and Ashe was innocent!

On this point, Lise and Annan reached a unanimous agreement.

“Huh?” Ashe looked at the ranked individual and couldn’t help but laugh. “Igor, you really are sinful, causing others to make the list.”

“Culprits Ranking 7th Place: Canary”

“Charge: Anfel Belldate failed to win Igor Bukin over, missing out on the ‘Golden Feather of the Rust Crow and Canary’s Twin Flight’ ending, which allowed Igor to successfully control Belldate’s central nexus of domination. This strong domination led to the successful defense of the manor against the united pursuit team, enabling Ashe and others, who were nearly captured, to escape unscathed.”

“Evaluation: Evidently Guilty”

“Culprit: Anfel Belldate”

“Anfel Belldate receives the reward ‘Rust Crow’s Golden Feather.’”

“Culprits Ranking 6th Place: Queen of the Caged Birds”

“Charge: Yvaren Belldate once considered confining Annan and Ashe in the basement to be her playmates, but ultimately failed, watching them escape Mephila.”

“Evaluation: Unpardonable Crime”

“Culprit: Yvaren Belldate”

“Yvaren Belldate receives the reward ‘Ghost Ignorance Veil.’”

When they saw the previous ranked individuals, Ashe and the others had guessed that the Belldate sisters would definitely be on the list. However, they didn’t expect the reasons to be so outlandish—Anfel made the list because she didn’t marry Igor, while Yvaren was ranked because she failed to turn Ashe and Annan into her slaves!

Even if Anfel is forgiven, there’s no doubt that Yvaren’s domination is a blatant violation of human rights! Yvaren dominated millions of Mephila’s populace, and the Gospel didn’t condemn her; yet, because she failed to dominate Ashe and Annan, the Gospel deemed her unforgivably guilty!

“The Rust Crow’s Golden Feather...” Ashe was a bit perplexed. “But I didn’t see any wings on Igor while he was bathing. Could it refer to virtual wings?”

“It’s a legendary miracle from the Mental Sect,” Igor explained calmly. “It merges the sect realm with the virtual wing feathers. As long as someone successfully absorbs this feather, they can directly attain the corresponding sect realm—a miracle nearly divine in nature, though it severely damages the sorcerer. A normal mental sorcerer wouldn’t produce such a feather.”

“But since it’s called the Rust Crow’s Golden Feather, it suggests that in the worldline where you and Anfel fly together, the Gospel thinks you would create such a feather, right?”

The Con Artist was silent for a moment. “Anfel is a ‘container’ for the mental energy of millions in Mephila. Plagued by chaotic mental energies, she lacks the focus needed to delve into any spellcasting sect, ensuring she could never become a sorcerer.”

“So the Rust Crow splits off a golden feather to help Anfel become a sorcerer?” Ashe chuckled. “The Rust Crow carrying a golden feather to the Canary... Sometimes the Gospel isn’t all bad news, huh?”

“It’s bad news for me,” the Con Artist muttered, lowering his eyes. “I don’t want to become someone who does good for others.”

“That’s because you haven’t met someone better yet.” Ashe winked. “Someone will make you put down all your grievances and reconcile with your past, believe me. You’re bound to meet such a person, or maybe you already have—once the Weaving Festival ends, if you’re shy about going to Belldate, we can all go with you.”

Meeting the intense gaze of the Cult Leader, the Con Artist suddenly chuckled and said casually, “I’ll consider it.”

“Then it’s a deal!” Ashe turned back to the Gospel Book. “Now, what is this Ghost Ignorance Veil?”

“A legendary miracle from the Necromancy Sect, Haagen-Dazs’s most mysterious legacy,” Harvey explained. “It’s said that Ghost Ignorance can make all undead ignore the wearer. In certain deep realms of the Abyss, a necromancer could roam unchallenged with this miracle.”

“This reward might allow Yvaren to escape her death curse,” Annan suddenly said. “We all know now that the Belldate patriarchs rarely live past 40, which is likely related to their attempt to resurrect their Necromancy ancestor. With the Ghost Ignorance Veil, Necromancy angels won’t be able to affect them through their bloodline.”

“Huh?”

At that moment, Igor suddenly made a strange sound and then said, “Yvaren just sent me more knowledge about the Dominance Sect.”

“The Queen of the Caged Birds isn’t usually so generous,” Annan commented nonchalantly. “You owe the Canary a big thanks in the future.”

Just then, the ‘Culprits Ranking’ was updated, with the 5th and 4th places being the Sanctuary Sorcerers of Mercury and Kaesrei, respectively. Naturally, their charge was failing to capture Ashe and the others. As to why their rankings were higher than Yvaren’s, perhaps it was because their greater abilities made them more responsible for the failure.

When it came to the 3rd place, although everyone had some guesses, they couldn’t help but hold their breath.

“Culprits Ranking 3rd Place: Ghost King”

“Charge: Archibald Harvey, a necrophile from an exotic land, participated in the Blasphemy Gospel plan with Ashe and others, one of the roots of the chaos.”

“Evaluation: Heinous Crime”

“Culprit: Archibald Harvey”

“Archibald Harvey receives the reward ‘Cursed Ghost King’s Rainbow Tail Feather.’”

“Culprits Ranking 2nd Place: Rust Crow”

“Charge: Igor Bukin, a Con Artist from an exotic land, participated in the Blasphemy Gospel plan with Ashe and others, one of the roots of the chaos.”

“Evaluation: Death Deserving”

“Culprit: Igor Bukin”

“Igor Bukin receives the reward ‘Cursed Rust Crow’s Rainbow Tail Feather.’”

They made the list again!

Igor and Harvey were once more on the ranking!

Ashe couldn’t help but sneak a glance at Annan—truth be told, at this point, neither Igor nor Harvey cared about adding more filth to their names; being described as eternally infamous might even be a compliment. But the issue was their new rankings would place them higher than Annan in the sequence weights for the Divine Sovereign’s Wish!

Currently, Igor is 1st in the Ranking of Schemes and 2nd in the Culprits Ranking,

Harvey is 1st in the Family Ranking and 3rd in the Culprits Ranking,

while Annan has only 1st in the Art Ranking and 10th in the Ranking of Schemes.

The priority of the Purple Moth for obtaining the Divine Sovereign’s Wish had already fallen below that of Igor and Harvey!

Yet, the Young Lady remained calm as she looked at the Gospel Book. Noticing Ashe’s gaze, she smiled and held his hand. “It’s almost your turn; don’t be nervous.”

With Annan’s reassurance, Ashe couldn’t help but feel a mix of anxiety and anticipation, excitedly awaiting his first appearance on the ranking list.

From the moment everyone saw the title of the ranking, nobody doubted who the 1st Place would be. Now that Igor and Harvey had made the list, could Ashe still dodge it?

As it turned out, he could.

“Culprits Ranking 1st Place: Purple Moth”

“Charge: Annan Dolan, head of the Funeral Firm, controlled Ashe and others through a Pact to execute the Blasphemy Gospel plan. She is the root of all evil in the Gospel Kingdom.”

“Evaluation: Utterly Villainous”

“Culprit: Annan Dolan”

“Annan Dolan receives the reward...”

Suddenly, the text on the pages began to distort, and flickers of red light danced across the lines.

Ashe's pupils constricted; he had seen this kind of phenomenon too many times in recent days. When the Gospel Book showed such signs, it meant that—

Squelch.

Along with the sound of a sword blade exiting flesh, an image of Annan lying in a pool of blood appeared, her empty eyes staring at the ceiling. The person who killed her wore a dark red trench coat familiar to everyone. When he turned to look at the camera, the unfamiliar coldness in his eyes sent a deep chill to the viewers' bones.

"Culprits Ranking 1st Place: Purple Moth"

"Charge: Annan Dolan, head of the Funeral Firm, controlled Ashe and others through a Pact to execute the Blasphemy Gospel plan. She is the root of all evil in the Gospel Kingdom, but the ranking is invalid due to interference by Ashe Heath."

"Evaluation: Utterly Villainous"

"Culprit: Annan Dolan"

"Reward: Nullified."

"Culprit: Ashe Heath."

After a brief silence, the surrounding cheers nearly lifted the canteen's ceiling.

"Yes! The root of all evil as recognized by the Gospel is about to die! Her ranking is invalid!"

"If the root of all evil is dead, does that mean the future is nullified too?"

"Yeah, but what about the Ghost King and Rust Crow? Why hasn't Ashe Heath killed them yet?"

"Go, Ashe! You can do it!"

Amid the jubilant celebrations and raised glasses, Annan looked at Ashe and smiled softly. "It seems tonight I really have to sleep next to you. You must protect me well, okay?"

Her hand was trembling slightly.

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

Chapter 476: Cursed Rainbow Tail Feather

"In the event of the following circumstances, I am willing to transfer the Divine Sovereign's Wish to Annan Dolan."

In the hotel room, Igor spent nearly half an hour reading through the new Pact, which spanned over a thousand clauses. He looked deeply at Annan, then pressed his fingerprint on the contract and said, "In the event of the following circumstances, I am willing to transfer the Divine Sovereign's Wish to Annan Dolan."

Annan looked at Harvey. "Say, in the event of the following circumstances, I am willing to transfer the Divine Sovereign's Wish to Annan Dolan."

Harvey seemed completely indifferent. Without even glancing at the contents on the paper, he pressed his fingerprint and repeated the same vow.

The Purple Moth breathed a sigh of relief and turned to look at the Cult Leader nearby.

Ashe seemed a bit surprised. "Do I have to as well?"

"Since everyone else has done it, if you don't sign, I fear they might exclude you."

"Now you care about my relationships with colleagues? Just now, when feeding..."

"It's just a formality, can you give me some peace of mind?" Annan tugged at his sleeve as if she were acting coquettishly. "I don't have any more contract paper left, so just follow along with me: Regardless of the circumstances..."

Ashe: "Regardless of the circumstances..."

Annan: "I am willing to dedicate the Divine Sovereign's Wish to Annan Dolan..."

Ashe: "I am willing to dedicate the Divine Sovereign's Wish to Annan Dolan..."

Annan: "And forever adore, respect, and cherish her."

Ashe: "And forever adore—"

"There's a problem here, a problem!" Lise immediately interrupted the spell, angrily saying, "Aunt Annan, you're inserting your own terms!"

Igor's face darkened as well. "Interfering with free will and extending the contract period, both of these severely violate our original Pact, don't they?"

“Ugh.” Annan touched her earring. “I was just joking. Even if Ashe agrees, it won’t be effective.”

After returning from reading the Culprits Ranking, the first thing Annan did was to further strengthen her Pact with her employees.

Now, Annan is no longer the highest-ranking Echoer in the Weaving Festival—in theory, she should still be the highest-ranking, but her top spot on the Culprits Ranking was nullified by ‘Gospel Ashe.’ If the mission to Assassinate the Princess is successful, both Igor and Harvey would be more qualified than her to obtain the Divine Sovereign’s Wish.

In order to ensure that Igor and Harvey would transfer the Wish to her after obtaining it, she needed to deepen the pact terms. Although under normal circumstances, as long as Annan gave the command, the two would obediently hand over the Wish, the Divine Sovereign’s Wish was clearly not a normal circumstance.

No one knows exactly how the ‘granting of a wish’ process works—whether the Omniscient Weaver directly extracts the deepest desires from your heart, drags the wisher into a special space for consultation, or presents a paper for the wisher to write down their wish... there are just too many possibilities.

Not to mention, Igor and Harvey could wish to nullify their pacts. Annan’s greater concern was that the Omniscient Weaver might shield them from the pact’s influence, giving them full autonomy in their wishing process—this would hardly be an effort for a Divine Sovereign, possibly just a thought could bring about this Miracle, but for Annan, it would be a disaster, negating all of her efforts.

Annan had no intention of relying on Igor and Harvey to wish on her behalf; it never even crossed her mind. This was no longer a ‘test of human nature,’ but a ‘test of intelligence’—her intelligence.

Honestly, not even during her most intimate moment with Ashe last night did Annan contemplate trusting him with this matter for even a second.

The final step of the Blasphemy Gospel had to be handled by her personally; no one else could be entrusted with it.

For this, she needed Igor and Harvey to sign an additional agreement.

However, ‘multiple contracts’ were a serious taboo. As a Con Artist, Igor had naturally anticipated this. Even when signing the original Pact, he noticed many pitfalls Annan had set. If Annan was in a good mood, she might play the role of a benevolent boss; if she was in a bad mood, she could at any moment force Ashe to lick her toes.

Despite Igor's efforts to argue and remove many clauses, Annan still retained considerable power, such as the current 'deepening of the pact terms.'

Simply put, within the framework allowed by the original pact, Annan can sign additional agreements with them to provide more detailed explanations for certain behaviors, such as "under certain conditions, I must do a specific thing."

There are also limitations to the "deepening the pact terms." For instance, the validity period of this new version of the contract cannot exceed the original pact; otherwise, Annan could perpetually renew the slave contract every three months, which would be no better than them all changing their last names to Dolan.

Moreover, it cannot affect personal will; otherwise, if Annan ordered them to "wholeheartedly be Dolan's dogs," even after the contract ended, they might still be willing to work for Annan for free.

Of course, a contract is not universal. Even someone like Igor, a mental sorcerer, or Ashe can somewhat resist Annan's enslavement. Annan cannot force them to do things they adamantly refuse to do.

But now that Igor and Harvey have signed a more detailed secondary contract, no matter how unwilling they might be at heart, once they trigger any of the nearly thousand "prerequisite conditions" in the secondary contract, they will immediately speak their vow.

If this still doesn't help Annan seize the Divine Sovereign's Wish from their hands, then Annan would have to accept defeat.

"What would happen if my vow from earlier really took effect?" Ashe curiously asked, "Would it directly influence my will?"

"A contract is not a mental Miracle; it doesn't have such an immediate effect," Annan replied. "It would probably constantly imply to your mind to focus more on me, to only look at me, care about me; even if you don't see me, your mind would keep circling back to thoughts of me..."

"It sounds somewhat similar to seeking a partner through the Gospel," Ashe remarked, "Giving you no other choices, so you can only love one person for life."

Annan was taken aback and, after a moment of silence, said, "I'm sorry, that joke was a bit much."

"It's okay," Ashe turned to Harvey and Igor, "Speaking of which, what is the effect of your ranking rewards this time? The Cursed Rainbow Tail Feather, is it..."

“Yes, it’s the feather from the Celestial Bull,” Igor’s expression grew complicated as he spoke. “But rather than a reward, it feels more like a trap. It’s like...”

“It’s like the Gospel is paying us protection money, but hiding counterfeit bills in it,” the necromancer’s voice was full of irony.

“Cursed Ghost King/Rust Crow’s Rainbow Tail Feather: Can only be used on the Time Continent, and only by the user themselves. After usage, it fully forms the Golden Wings and directly advances the user to the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm. Simultaneously, it permanently closes the spellforce channel between the sorcerer and the Fourth Layer of the Virtual Realm.”

How powerful!

Ashe thought that the “Rust Crow’s Golden Feather” was already quite ridiculous—it could enable ordinary people to directly possess a Golden level Sect Realm, allowing them to ascend through the Virtual Realm step-by-step thereafter. However, the Rainbow Tail Feather was even more absurd—it directly feeds the golden spellforce into your mouth and takes you to the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm! Not even kindergarten services are this considerate!

If the Golden Feather lets you win at the starting line, the Rainbow Tail Feather puts the finish line right at the start; with just one step (using this item), you become a Sanctuary sorcerer!

“But what does it mean by ‘permanently closing the spellforce channel between the sorcerer and the Fourth Layer of the Virtual Realm’?” Ashe was puzzled.

“Exactly what it says,” Banjeet explained. “In our daily lives, when we consume spellforce, it naturally replenishes over time. But where does that spellforce come from? There’s no spellforce in the air, and us sorcerers can only use knowledge as raw materials for spellforce, we can’t directly generate it.”

“Though we don’t directly log into the Virtual Realm, we are constantly connected to it. Normally, when we consume spellforce, the virtual wings automatically draw spellforce from the Virtual Realm to replenish it—this is the spellforce channel.”

“Then what’s the use of closing the spellforce channel to the Fourth Layer of the Virtual Realm?” Ashe was still confused. “Even if they used the Rainbow Tail Feather, they’d only be Sanctuary sorcerers in the Third Layer; they wouldn’t be able to absorb the spellforce from the Fourth Layer.”

“If you want to break through the Sect Realm and summon a higher-level spirit by entering the upper layers of the Virtual Realm, you must connect to the spellforce of a higher layer,” Igor calmly explained. “Simply put, when I want to ascend to the Fourth Layer of the Virtual Realm in the future, I must connect to the spellforce of the Fourth

Layer to summon a Four-winged Spirit—because the fourth wing of a Four-winged Spirit is composed of the colorless spellforce of the Fourth Layer.”

Ashe immediately understood. “So, if you use this reward, it would completely cut off any hope of becoming a legendary sorcerer?”

“That’s why it’s called the Cursed Rainbow Tail Feather,” Igor sneered. “It shows just how highly the Gospel thinks of us, willing to use such a precious bait as the ‘Sanctuary’ just to sever our potential to become legendary in the future. Now even I’m curious about how much trouble I will cause the Gospel in the future that it feels such a strong need to be wary of me.”

Ashe spoke earnestly, “Which means you shouldn’t use it even more. If the Gospel is this certain and fearful of your potential, achieving Sanctuary is just a matter of time for you—there’s no need to rush—”

“I’ve already used it.”

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

Chapter 477: Do You Really Want Me to Explain?

Everyone looked at the necromancer in astonishment, even the con artist was no exception.

Standing by the windowsill with a catnip cigarette in his mouth, Harvey said, “When I went to the bathroom earlier, I took the opportunity to use this item in the Virtual Realm. The process was quite interesting; I was enveloped and carried away by a river of rainbow-colored light. Before I knew it, I was in the Distant Sky Domain, then I took a look and immediately came back.”

Logging into the Virtual Realm in the bathroom, really impressive.

“Why the rush?” Ashe voiced the question on everyone’s mind. “Clearly, Harvey, becoming a legendary sorcerer is just a matter of time for you!”

If Igor’s becoming a legend is still uncertain, then Harvey is undoubtedly a Legendary Seed— not to mention that the Gospel has already Weaved the future where Harvey becomes legendary and rules a deity in the Family Ranking. Everyone who interacts with Harvey daily has no doubt about his future achievements, just as no one questions his abnormal tendencies.

Harvey has soaked the Necromancy Sect into every cell, every inch of his soul, every bone. Behind his twisted sense of aesthetics lies his fervent dedication to the Necromancy Sect. At the same time, he possesses enough talent and an almost self-destructive desire. Ashe really can't imagine anything other than death that could stop his progress— and even death might fail.

Ashe even suspects that this move by the Gospel was specifically aimed at Harvey, with Igor being a mere afterthought.

After all, if Igor becomes a legendary sorcerer, he would inevitably be the lawful chaos type; he wouldn't destroy and might even proactively maintain the order of the Kingdom of Gospel. But with Harvey being the neutral chaos type, it's hard to say. Suppressing his power to the Sanctuary level is indeed beneficial for both the country and its people.

So, the last person who should have used the Rainbow Tail Feather is Harvey; he's sabotaging his own future and cutting off his prospects!

"What future or prospects do someone like me have?" The necromancer laughed and said, "I might just die in a few days."

"But if—"

"If I don't die? If I can achieve Sanctuary on my own? If the people of Gospel are willing to send their corpses to me for processing?" Harvey shook his head, "Ideal, future, love, career... you all are filled with longing for the future because you believe things will get better. But I am different from you. My life has always been on a downward slope, the future only getting worse than the present, though it's been an easier walk downhill."

Lise wanted to say something, but Ashe held her and covered her mouth.

"I actually hate how the Gospel Weaves my future. Ghost King, founder of the necromancer Family... utterly boring," Harvey shrugged. "It's like when you're researching a subject and you develop some minor hobby on the side, then someone tells you how great your hobby is, how much honor it could bring you, and that you should fully commit to developing it... it's disgusting."

The necromancer's voice was calm, but twisted negative emotions roiled within it, dark desires seeping from every pore, drowning himself and about to engulf the surrounding world.

"There are two kinds of necromancers: one clings to life, like that necromancer Angel who always wanted to use his bloodline descendants for resurrection. He's ugly, pathetic, twisted, hoping for a beautiful future after resurrection but living in his coffin worse than a maggot, tormented by the endless stretch of time every single day."

“And then there’s the other kind, like me.” Harvey smiled. “Tomorrow will only be worse than today, so there’s no need to consider the future. You just need to live each day well because each day is the best day of the rest of your life.”

“Your attitude towards life— both pessimistic and optimistic— really confuses me,” Igor said.

“You hope for the future because you haven’t seen death,” Harvey laughed. “There’s still time to sign up, join me in crossing the veil of death.”

“Alright,” Annan clapped her hands. “Thank you, Harvey, for that incredibly inspiring speech. Igor, it’s up to you whether to use the Rainbow Tail Feather or not. If you use it, you won’t see any significant improvement in the next few days. If you don’t, it would be a shame if you die without seeing the Distant Sky Domain.”

Ashe suddenly realized that the Gospel wasn’t just calculating Igor and Harvey; it had included Annan in its machinations as well. Logically speaking, to improve their chances of success, Annan would definitely urge them to use the Rainbow Tail Feather to advance to the Sanctuary quickly. Even if they were unwilling, under the Pact’s domination, they would be forced to step into the Gospel’s Weave.

Annan’s entire argument actually had a weak foundation. The Rainbow Tail Feather not only allowed Igor to ascend to the Distant Sky Domain but also helped him immediately consolidate his Golden Wings. Right now, Igor’s Golden Wings were only partially formed. Once fully consolidated, his mana bar would lengthen exponentially, dramatically enhancing his combat capabilities.

Why is Annan being so generous today...? Ashe glanced at the Purple Moth, only to see her wink at him.

“Alright, time to rest,” Annan said. “Since Banjeet and I are both targets of ‘Gospel Ashe’s’ assassination, we’ll split into two rooms to sleep.”

“Banjeet, Igor, Harvey, Lise, you four take one room. Let’s go.”

“Objection!” The white-haired little girl latched onto Ashe. “Why should you sleep with Dad?”

“Because he’s the only one I can choose,” Annan said, matter-of-factly.

“No way...” Lise looked at the others, momentarily stumped.

Banjeet was already one of the targets, bundling him with Annan was like delivering an easy win to their enemies.

Harvey was unacceptable on a physical level.

Aunt Bukin was an option, but even Lise had to admit that Ashe smelled better.

"Wait, I can sleep with you!" Lise offered, willing to sacrifice herself.

"You could, but can you protect me?" Annan asked.

Lise rolled her eyes, thinking quickly: "Hold on, why do we need to split rooms? Can't we all just sleep together?"

"I'm still a woman, and I need a bit of privacy," Annan replied. She added, looking at Harvey, "and..."

Lise looked at Harvey with frustration. Uncle Harvey, you're such a nuisance, no one wants to room with you!

Harvey calmly returned their stares. He lit a catnip cigarette and walked out. "I'll sleep alone. Igor can keep an eye on Banjeet."

"Then Dad and I will accompany you!" Lise felt she was making a huge concession.

"Banjeet, Igor, take her away!" Annan said decisively, leaving no room for negotiation.

Banjeet restrained the fussing Lise with a smile and looked appreciatively at Annan. "Miss, I wish you a good night."

Lise cried out, "Dad, Dad, hurry and escape!"

Ashe said, "Banjeet, Lise tends to kick off her blanket at night. Keep an eye on that."

"No problem."

As the door closed, the room fell into silence.

Annan suddenly leaned closer to Ashe, a teasing smile playing on her lips, "You're not expecting anything, are you?"

"Don't overthink it. You're sleeping on the sofa tonight; I won't let you touch me," Annan said, poking Ashe's forehead. "The prize is only given out after the mission is over."

"I wasn't expecting anything," Ashe retorted, feeling somewhat annoyed as he stood up to leave. "Now that they're gone, I might as well step out too."

"Step out for what?"

"To give you some alone time," Ashe glanced at her. "The only reason you let me stay is that you don't want others to see you're scared, right?"

Annan stiffened slightly, then snorted and pulled on Ashe's cheek. "Don't act like you understand me so well. I was ready for this from the moment I found you guys. I'm the initiator of the Blasphemy Gospel. How could I be afraid at the crucial moment?"

"Yes, yes, you are the bravest, most daring, and proudest Purple Moth," Ashe said, spreading his hands. "I'll go outside and ask Harvey about the Distant Sky Domain. If you need anything, just call out and I'll hear you."

"Tell him I'm sorry for me. I don't actually dislike him; it's just hard to breathe the same air in the same room as him."

"Is that really an apology...?"

Ashe's lips twitched as he prepared to turn and leave, but then he heard a soft thud and felt something press against his back.

"Don't turn around."

"I hate it when people think they understand me or pity me."

"It's only you; if it were anyone else, I'd kill them to keep them silent. As for you, you'll be spared the death penalty but must live the rest of your life paying for it."

Ashe chuckled helplessly and shifted the topic. "I thought you'd force Igor to use the Rainbow Tail Feather."

"Yes, I did think about it."

"Then why didn't you?"

Ashe felt a poke in his side and heard Annan's soft voice from behind. "Do you really need me to spell it out?"

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

Chapter 478: Ashe, Endure!

Drip, drip, drip...

Ashe sat on the sofa, listening to the sound of water flowing from the bathroom. He closed the Gospel Book, walked over to the fridge, and took out a can of Azure Lala Fatty wine. Azure Lala Fatty is one of the few inedible Lala Fatty products, but the wine

it produces is exceptionally refreshing and tasty. Even Ashe, who usually has no taste for alcoholic drinks, enjoyed it a lot.

Drip, drip... plop, plop... whoosh...

No matter how much Ashe tried to focus his attention elsewhere, the sound of water continued to vividly paint a picture of the bathroom's scene in his mind. Although he had not specifically trained under the Physical Sect to hone his original body, the Universal spellforce he possessed naturally strengthened sorcerers like him over time.

The sword Princess once proposed a hypothesis: a sorcerer is a type of spirit, and a Four-winged sorcerer is essentially the same as a Four-winged Spirit. However, compared to other specialized spirits, sorcerers have far more functions: moving, eating, studying, reproducing... These functions are something sorcerers can perform on their own without the need for spellforce, which is why they seldom use spellforce to enhance themselves.

Some sorcerers have wondered if it is possible to enhance themselves directly with spellforce, reaching the point where they could shatter a rock with a single punch. However, a sorcerer can only do what he can 'imagine.' He must vividly envision how the spellforce strengthens his fist; for example, skin as tough as copper, bones as sturdy as iron, specific techniques of force such as bright force, hidden force, and explosive force. By the time he perfectly imagines how to enhance his fist with spellforce, he is mostly capable of summoning a 'Iron Fist' or 'Explosive Fist,' kinds of Fist-Claw spirits.

Spellforce, spirits, and sorcerers seem to form a perfect loop. Yet, there are exceptions, such as elderly sorcerers-though their physical abilities are not what they once were, they have experienced their peak and belong to the realm of the 'imaginable.' Therefore, these older sorcerers can consume spellforce to restore their body to peak condition and even maintain it indefinitely. This phenomenon serves as crucial evidence for the 'sorcerer-spirit hypothesis.'

Although becoming a sorcerer does not directly extend one's lifespan, and even dying in the Virtual Realm can lead to sudden death that shortens their life more than ordinary people, the quality of life for sorcerers remains exceptionally stable. This stability is due to factors like not needing sleep and their bodies consistently being at peak condition.

All this is to say one thing: Ashe's hearing isn't naturally that good; he had simply heightened it to its limit using spellforce because of his desires.

"Ah!"

Ashe immediately stood up. "What happened? Is it an assassination attempt?"

"No, no, nothing at all. Don't you dare barge in here; I will scream, you know!"

Originally, Ashe was just worried that 'Gospel Ashe' might have come to attack, but Annan's teasing and playful manner made an unnamed fire rise in his belly. He sat back down, taking a large gulp of the chilled wine, trying to find some inner peace through the icy alcohol.

For some reason, when Annan actively flirted with him, he could staunchly defend his principles with a firm stance of, "Even if you unlock all my poses, you'll never win my heart." Yet, now that Annan declared nothing was allowed to happen tonight and he had to sleep on the sofa, Ashe couldn't help but let his mind wander.

He patted his cheeks and told himself: Ashe, Ashe, Annan just doesn't want anyone to see her scared, and she needs someone to stay over for protection tonight. If you can't control yourself, she'll just look down on you!

Besides, she doesn't have that intention. Not to mention she could control you directly if she wanted to, and she carries Second Miss Donna, who can shoot 9mm bullets. Could you really handle both sisters at once?

Maybe I should ask Igor to hypnotize me, make me temporarily lose all my desires... No, that won't work. The male Bewitcher would definitely mock me for that.

Forget it. It's not like I haven't seen beautiful girls before. When it comes to looks, Annan is 'merely' on the same level as the sword Princess and the Witch. But her gaze... it's hard to resist, as if her eyes could draw you in... Well then, I'll just avoid looking at her face. Tonight should be easy to handle!

Just as Ashe resolved to calm himself down, the bathroom door creaked open. A pair of shapely, slender legs stepped barefoot onto the carpet. "Ashe, are you going to take a shower?"

"I..." Ashe turned his head to glance at her and instantly covered his eyes with his hand, though the gap between his fingers was wider than his fingers themselves. "Where are your clothes?!"

Annan was wrapped in nothing but a bath towel. Her long purple hair steamed softly from the evaporating heat, and droplets of water trailed from her shoulders down her arms and collarbone. The towel barely covered her hips and chest, leaving her long legs completely exposed, as alluring as a Bewitcher after a seductive spell.

The worst part was that she hadn't completely dried herself off. Several water droplets still clung to her skin, shimmering and moving. Ashe could not stand people who were not fresh and tidy, and his stern gaze was nearly impossible to move away from her! R

But now, it wasn't just looking at her face that would cause a heart-stopping blow. Ashe felt like staring at any part of her would deal real damage!

"I usually come out and change into my nightclothes; sometimes I don't even bother to change at all. So tonight, I forgot to bring my clothes into the bathroom. But it felt weird to ask you to get them," Annan said as she sat at the dressing table to brush her hair. "I don't want you rummaging through my underwear."

"Couldn't you have just put on your old clothes?"

"Wearing old clothes makes it feel like I didn't bathe at all," Annan glared at him. "You staying there means I can't change, so hurry up and take your shower."

Ashe quickly grabbed his change of clothes and headed into the bathroom. For safety, he locked the bathroom door behind him and hurriedly undressed for a cold shower, calming himself down quickly.

His first thought was: Is Annan using some kind of Mental Miracle to attack me?

But on second thought, it didn't seem right. Annan's tone was normal, her reason impeccable, her actions polite, and her attitude was neither too familiar nor too distant. The sense of distance was just right. The fact that Ashe couldn't control himself was purely his own issue. He couldn't exactly blame Annan for being too beautiful and sexy, could he?

Moreover, the reason Annan came out wearing only a bath towel was because she genuinely accepted him. Just as she didn't mind showing vulnerability in front of Ashe, she also didn't mind revealing her lifestyle habits. However, Ashe only focused on her appearance without considering her emotional world, and he felt deeply ashamed of his shallowness.

He soaked in the tub, focusing on calming his mind, deciding he would immerse himself in the Gospel Book to pass the time and wouldn't look at Annan at all, thus avoiding any evil thoughts—

Wait, why was there a scent of violet? Ashe looked down and saw purple petals floating in the bathwater. After a moment's hesitation, he remembered this was Annan's bathwater.

Just a few minutes ago, the Young Lady was soaking in here... Wait, it's not like I haven't used someone else's bathwater before. When Igor finished bathing, I would just hop in after him, and his bathwater's scent was even stronger!

Nothing to make a fuss about, stop overthinking!

Ashe, endure!

Even though he told himself this, Ashe still felt his body temperature rising rapidly. He ended the most relaxing part of his day prematurely, dried himself off, and changed into his pajamas before going out.

“Finished already?”

Annan was sitting on the bed, leaning against the wall. Her purple hair was loosely tied up and draped over her right shoulder. She had her legs covered with a plush blanket and was wearing an obviously oversized white shirt, clearly not her size, while wearing glasses and reading the Gospel Book.

“If you want to sit on the bed, you can, but you’ll need to return to the sofa when logging into the Virtual Realm.”

Ashe stared dumbfounded at her shirt. “That shirt...?”

“It’s yours.” Annan raised her hands, shaking the sleeves, her palms completely hidden inside them. “I left all my nightclothes in the previous room, and it’s not convenient to rest in formal clothes. I saw a shirt in your suitcase, so I borrowed it. Hope you don’t mind?”

“No, I don’t mind. But those glasses...”

“Blue light blocking glasses. The Gospel Book is great, but its light simulates sunlight, which can affect the retina. Although macular degeneration can be treated, I prefer to prevent it by wearing glasses. Plus, they help reduce fatigue.”

Ashe nodded in sudden understanding and then sat at the dressing table to blow dry his hair. Annan glanced at him but said nothing, immersed in the TV drama being played by the Gospel Book.

The Cult Leader calmly blow-dried his hair, but inside, waves of turmoil surged, crashing endlessly against his mind!

He didn’t even dare to glance at Annan from the corner of his eye, fearing that in the next second he would transform into an Extreme Cutting Carp Overlord Lord-level monster of lust.

Why, why did Annan, who didn’t appear charming in the least, excite him to the point where his mind was filled with unspeakable thoughts?

How could she wear my white shirt, and even glasses? This should be illegal! This kind of behavior is practically a crime! It’s borderline attempted murder!

After drying his hair, Ashe let out a long sigh of relief and carefully crawled onto the bed. Annan seemed so engrossed in the TV drama that she didn’t notice him, so he slowly

scooted over until he was beside her and asked, pretending to be casual, "What are you watching?"

"From the Old World'," Annan said, moving the Gospel Book closer to him so he could see the TV drama too. "It's a comedic fantasy story about a future world where Gospel is freely and infinitely supplied. In this world, several 'Old People' from other Kingdoms enter the Gospel Kingdom. Their resistance to embracing Gospel and adherence to outdated lifestyle habits lead to a series of hilarious incidents."

"Gospel freely and infinitely supplied'... In my previous life, that would be a sci-fi concept of unlimited energy. So, this is a sci-fi story set in the Gospel universe?"

Ashe had no interest in sci-fi stories, but when he glanced at the Holographic Screen of the Gospel Book, he found himself momentarily captivated.

"Who is that girl fighting?"

"She's the second female lead," Annan explained. "One of the 'Old People' from a very poor village. She's impulsive and reckless. After arriving in the Gospel Kingdom, she feels both inferior and arrogant. A lot of the conflicts arise because of the trouble she causes... Why, do you like this actress?"

"No, she just reminded me of someone."

"Someone similar to this character?"

"Not at all. Their personalities aren't alike, their appearances aren't alike, there's no resemblance at all."

"Then why did you think of them?"

"I don't know," Ashe scratched his head. "My mind just made the connection somehow."

Annan glanced at him, and then the two of them watched the TV drama in silence. As the beautiful ending showed the 'Old People' integrating into the Gospel Kingdom, Ashe suddenly asked, "How much time do we have left before we need to act?"

"We're just two ranking lists away from completing the Weaving Festival. At the current pace, the earliest we'll need to act is the day after tomorrow, and the latest would be within five days."

"Five days..." Ashe murmured, "That means we don't have much time left."

"Indeed," Annan said softly. "If there's anything you want to do, make sure to finish it in the remaining time."

“Okay,” Ashe nodded. “It’s about time for me to enter the virtual realm. Good night.”

“Good night,” Annan replied. “I’ll stay up a bit longer to browse some information.”

Ashe sat cross-legged on the sofa, opened Aurora’s Sorcerer Handbook, clicked on “virtual realm exploration,” and chose to enter the virtual realm with the Sword Princess Witch.

After Ashe closed his eyes and his consciousness left his body to arrive at the Time Continent, Annan closed the Gospel Book. She quietly lifted the plush blanket and got out of bed, walking over to Ashe. If Ashe could open his eyes now, he would see Annan wearing nothing but a white shirt—just a white shirt.

The Purple Moth bent down, staring at Ashe with a puzzled expression. “Strange, according to the video Yvaren sent me, this should be exactly his preference. Plus, he was nearly at his limit just now. Why the sudden change...”

She pondered for a moment but couldn’t come to a conclusion. This result, however, seemed to satisfy the Purple Moth even more. Losing control would indicate her charm, but holding on would demonstrate Ashe’s willpower.

Annan gently kissed him and smiled, “Good night, my knight.”

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

Chapter 479: Sonyas Odd Behavior

Adelle noticed three things today that made her think Sonya was acting very strange.

The first thing was that she sat in the chair all morning watching the Holographic Screen with a faint smile on her face, as if she were immersed in the romantic fantasy of the TV drama. But, remarkably, she didn’t skip the opening or ending theme songs, which meant she wasn’t actually watching the drama.

The second thing was that she actively sought out Lois to ask about fashion advice.

Although their relationship had softened, it wasn’t as if they had become inseparable best friends. To be honest, Lois’s personality left a bit to be desired. Furthermore, they were both vying for attention and beauty, so for Sonya to ask for fashion advice was akin to admitting inferiority in taste. Even Lois was stunned.

Surprisingly, though, Lois didn't take this opportunity to be condescending or sarcastic. On the contrary, she seemed somewhat at a loss. In the afternoon, she took Sonya and Adelle to scour the commercial district in Galaxia, buying Sonya a few outfits and even treating Adelle to a few new dresses.

Honestly, this time Sonya had indeed asked the right person. While Sonya had spent a lot on makeup and grooming, she knew very little about clothing. She practically wore the Swordflower uniform all year round—partly because it saved her money, but more so because the Swordflower uniform was stylish enough on its own, adding youth and the allure of being a 'student.' Don't forget, just over two months ago, she was still a genuinely poor and beautiful college student.

During the first half of the semester, Sonya had tried wearing her own clothes, only to be mocked by Lois and relegated to the bottom tier of the fashion ladder. Her outfits were not only of poor quality but also reflected her fashion sense, which was about as sensitive as marble. This made her look like a village girl who had just arrived in the big city. She was better off sticking to her uniform.

For the entire latter half of the semester, Sonya's only personal attire was a black spaghetti strap dress, which the well-versed Adelle immediately recognized as an imitation of Delarose's latest costume from her new show.

Everyone's fashion style is different. Even someone as indifferent to dressing up as Adelle has tried out dozens of outfits to find her own style. Lois's family ran a combat attire business, and her fashion sense was among the best in Swordflower. By seeking Lois's advice, Sonya skipped the tedious trial-and-error process and achieved instant success.

Charming, sweet, pure, elegant, sophisticated... Adelle had secretly taken quite a few photos; it was a big win for the Stretch Paw Club.

Then there was the third thing.

After returning to school from the city center, Adelle casually opened the school forum to see if there was any news. She happened to see yet another debate stirring up, titled, "Therave the village girl is so amazing, she can definitely defeat Dimy to win the Meteor Trial, right?"

Just as Adelle clicked on the post ready to engage in the battle, she saw a startling reply—

"Stretch Paw Club President: She can't beat Dimy."

"And so, in light of the above anomalies."

In the canteen, Adelle looked at her two roommates and said, "It can be concluded that our little Sonya has been compromised."

"I don't quite understand," Engulite said, biting her spoon, "The first two things, okay, but why is the last one also considered abnormal? Isn't her reply quite normal?"

"It is precisely because it's normal that it is unreasonable," Adelle explained. "This post is full of jabs like 'village girl' and 'defeat Dimy,' clearly intended to provoke. The replies are filled with Sonya's haters celebrating. This post was never about having a reasonable discussion."

"When faced with such unreasonable posts, Sonya typically replies with something like 'There's no way Therave is as good as you, you must have raised yourself' or 'Who taught you to talk like that,' baiting the other person into cursing so we can report them and get them banned."

"In the Stretch Paw Club, online or offline, Sonya is the fiercest combatant. She's like a hedgehog; anyone who dares to hurt her gets pricked."

"But look at her now, facing such mockery without striking back, even replying rationally!" Adelle's voice was filled with anguish, "Someone must have found her soft spot, so she's retracted all her spikes!"

"Indeed," Lois agreed, "Sonya is like a completely different person today compared to yesterday."

"So, who has taken our Swordflower?" Adelle asked, scanning the room. "Do you have any clues?"

"Her social interactions haven't changed recently," Engulite noted. "I haven't noticed any close relationships with the opposite sex."

"She came back to the dorm right after last night's competition," Lois added. "Then she went to the Meditation Building to log into the Virtual Realm around 10 PM. There's no way she could have been kidnapped during that time, right?" R

Adelle slowly nodded, but still fixed her sharp gaze on the two. Lois quickly caught on, exclaiming, "You suspect us!?"

"Just one of you," Adelle corrected. "If there's no one else around Sonya, then the culprit has to be one of you two. Now, confess and get a 20% discount for coming clean early."

"What exactly are you discounting..." Lois's face twitched. "You know me; I'm into handsome and considerate guys."

"It couldn't be me either," Engulite shook her head. "I prefer men who are stronger than me."

"Alright then," Adelle said calmly. "Anyone who does not harbor any admiration for Sonya, please stand up."

Silence.

"Anyone who doesn't like Sonya's appearance, please stand up."

Silence.

"Anyone who doesn't fancy Sonya's strength, please stand up."

Silence.

Adelle took a slight step back. "You two wouldn't be double-teaming me, would you... Is it too late to switch dorms? I don't want to wake up being the cheese in a double sandwich."

"No way!"

"You're misunderstanding!"

"What are you all talking about?"

The noisy conversation came to an abrupt halt as Sonya, carrying a tray, sat down with a smile. "Why didn't you invite me to eat? I had to search for a while to find you."

The three exchanged glances, and Adelle offered an excuse, "You weren't around when we left, and we thought you had already gone to eat."

"Oh." Sonya responded, "So, what were you all talking about?"

"We were talking about that sarcastic post on the forum," Adelle tentatively inquired, "Sonya, why didn't you fight back on that thread?"

"There's nothing to fight about—I really can't beat Dimy," Sonya shrugged. "Losing to him isn't shameful. Besides, my goal for the Meteor Trial is to secure a spot between fourth and second place, and I'm already content with that."

"Why did you ask me about buying clothes today?" Lois questioned.

"A lot of film offers have started to come my way, and I'll be leaving school more frequently," Sonya explained, putting her hands together in appreciation. "I can't keep

meeting people in my school uniform, can I? I'll pay you back for the clothes later; I've made quite a bit of money in the Virtual Realm recently."

"No need," Lois replied, "I have a discount card, so the clothes didn't cost much."

"Geez, why are you all so awkward?"

Engulite suddenly bent her stainless steel spoon and looked at Sonya. "Sonya, do you have a crush on someone?"

What a direct hit!

Adelle and Lois held their breath, waiting for Sonya's reaction. They knew Sonya typically had three kinds of responses. One would be a straightforward admission with a disdainful expression, as if they'd just asked a childish question; the second would be an ambiguous, dreamy response, leaving them guessing; and the third would be a cold denial, giving no clue to her true feelings.

But no matter which it was, they knew Sonya well enough to spot any inconsistencies!

"No, no I don't," Sonya stammered, her eyes instinctively shifting away. Crimson spread from her neck to her ears, making her face glow so red it was irresistible, "I don't have a crush on anyone..."

The rest of the meal proceeded quietly. There was a College League match tonight, but Sonya had to go with Professor Trozan, so she parted ways with her roommates.

Once in Lois's car, Adelle, who had been holding back all the way, couldn't contain herself any longer. She pounded on the leather seat with her fists; Engulite leaned on her sword bag, taking deep breaths in large gulps, but still couldn't wipe the silly grin off her face; Lois, paralyzed in the driver's seat, sat stiffly, twisting and turning nonstop.

Though they had uncovered the truth, was it all worth it?

Why, oh why, is Sonya so adorable when she's in love!?

"Are you worried?"

From the audience, while watching the Stars Trial, Sonya glanced unexpectedly at Professor Trozan beside her and shook her head. "Not worried. For all we know, I could lose in tomorrow's semi-finals, so it won't even matter."

"Though you are my student, I haven't really taken much care of you," Professor Trozan sighed. "I'm a typical academic—climbing my way up to the Distant Sky Domain and only then researching practical Miracles. Back in the Time Continent, I wasn't as strong as you are now. All my signature techniques are Sanctuary-level Miracles; if I reduce

them to Golden level, their power wouldn't even match your self-created Moonlit Water series. Honestly, I'm the one who has benefited greatly from you."

"Just the fact that you were willing to take me as a student shows you've been looking after me," Sonya said sweetly, hugging Trozan's arm. "And you've always supported me in Friendly Matches, collaborative training, and school matters. I am always grateful."

"You're quite the smooth talker," Trozan huffed, "but a swordswoman should never flatter."

Despite her words, the faint upward curve of her lips showed that Trozan was clearly pleased.

"Professor, you're not much older than me. Can I call you Sister Trozan?" Sonya pressed on, seizing the moment.

Trozan wanted to refuse, but facing Sonya's bright, expectant eyes, she inexplicably agreed. "In public, you should still call me Professor."

"Got it, Professor Sister!" Sonya giggled.

"So, even if you lose to Dimy, don't be disheartened," Trozan advised. "Once you reach the Sanctuary level, I have plenty of Sanctuary Miracles to help you reclaim your pride."

"Thank you, Professor Sister!"

Trozan shifted her gaze back to the arena, frowning slightly. "How much longer will this drag on?"

"Well, that's how the Stars Trial works. If the three teams are evenly matched, it can easily become a stalemate. No one wants to launch an all-out attack for fear of letting the third team take advantage," Sonya explained. "They're all waiting for a fleeting opportunity."

"A waste of time," Trozan remarked. "It's almost 11 o'clock. Don't you need to head to the virtual realm exploration, Sonya?"

"Oh, right!"

"I'll fly you back right away."

Without waiting for Sonya's reply, Trozan picked her up and flew out of the Sports Arena. Within minutes, they were back at Swordflower College. Trozan set Sonya down in front of the Meditation Building, said goodbye, and then left.

Since the Stars Trial wasn't over yet, most of the students were watching the live stream, making the Meditation Building quite deserted.

Staring at the familiar building, Sonya felt her heart race uncontrollably. She was so nervous that she almost wanted to turn and run, as if the building concealed some kind of man-eating Abyss.

In the end, she mustered her courage and entered the Meditation Room, sitting cross-legged to summon the Vibration Sword spirit. As she gazed at the two-winged Vibration Sword, a village girl's consciousness moved through the spirit and easily found the Gate of Truth.

Was she really going to enter the Virtual Realm?

No, I should take a leave! Just for today! I don't want to go!

But wait, would the Observer think I have some issue with him? Would it cause some kind of misunderstanding?

So should I go in after all?

But I'm scared to see him!

Ugh...

The Stretch Paw Club President's mind was a tangled mess when her wristband alarm went off, reminding her that it was time for their meeting. Almost reflexively, Sonya stepped through the Gate of Truth.

When she came to her senses, she had already arrived at the Time Continent.

Her first reaction was to look down at her outfit, and she was immediately delighted—it was the elegant attire Lois had helped her buy today. It looked nice without being overly flattering, perfect for the atmosphere between them!

Just as Sonya started to relax, she heard the Observer say, "Witch, I have something to discuss with the Sword Princess alone. Stay in the car, don't move."

"Okay..." the Witch responded weakly.

However, Sonya had no time to worry about the Witch's situation. Dizzy with anticipation, she was led by the Observer behind the Rain Curtain, to a place out of the Witch's sight. The Observer turned and looked at her seriously.

Huh?

Uh, what?

What's going on?

It's happening? But I'm not ready! I should have worn my combat attire, and—

As the Observer placed his hands on her shoulders, Sonya felt her body go limp, as if she would collapse into his arms the moment he let go. She couldn't bring herself to meet his gaze. Lips pressed together, mind blank, the usually assertive Sonya now seemed like a shy girl needing guidance, quietly waiting for the Observer to make the first move—

“Sword Princess, I may have no more than five days left.”

The Sword Princess opened her eyes, looking at Ashe with a sorrowful expression.

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

Chapter 480: Is the Observer Really Just a Bully?

“So, you can't tell me what you're going to do, nor can you give me a clear promise.”

Sonya kicked a stone at her feet, her gaze following its path until it disappeared into the Rain Curtain. “So you want me to pray to the Divine Sovereign for you? But I don't even believe in gods...”

“I'm not hoping you can help me with anything...”

“Then what do you mean? Do you want to see me worry myself sick over you? Fine.”

Suddenly, Sonya's eyes brimmed with tears. She rushed over to embrace Ashe, burying her head in his shoulder, her voice quivering, “Don't go! Don't leave me. I can't live without you. We have to be together forever—Is this what you like?”

Sonya pushed him away and calmly said, “You suddenly tell me that you're going to undertake a very dangerous mission within five days, that you might die, all without giving me any choice. You're so domineering, Captain. You never give me any options. I just have to obediently listen to

"In many TV dramas I've watched," Sonya suddenly said, "many male leads, even when saying goodbye to the female lead before a dangerous mission, wouldn't disclose the life-threatening risk. Instead, they would paint a bright future to reassure their partner, adding a lot of tragic color to the plot."

"I used to wonder why scriptwriters liked using such clichéd plot devices. But now, it seems that clichés have their merits." Sonya glanced at Ashe's hand. "If they didn't follow these clichés, the male leads would just seem too powerless."

"But didn't I inform you when I was planning my move in prison?" Ashe said in confusion. "What's different now?"

"Different in strength, different in process," the village girl paused. "And different in mood."

"And did you bring me out alone just to talk about this?" She suddenly remembered something, her expression puzzled. "There's no need to hide this from the Witch, right? Or..."

She looked at Ashe intently, her eyes sparkling with a glimmer of expectation. "Do you have something more important to tell me?" S

However, Ashe shook his head. "This has to be kept from the Witch, and I can only tell you in advance."

Sonya was slightly taken aback but then realized something.

"I'm not even sure if I have any inheritance to speak of, and I wouldn't know how to transfer it to you," Ashe said. "But you and I have the highest Bond Level right now. If I really have any Virtual Realm inheritance, it should all go to you. Like that sports car, and maybe those miscellaneous features..."

Sonya studied him quietly for a moment, then suddenly said, "You didn't arrange your affairs like this during the Prison Break."

"Prison Break was dangerous, but I was well-prepared. More importantly, the Blood Moon Kingdom is not quick to kill. Even if the escape failed, my most likely outcome would be becoming a permanent guest of the Blood Moon Tribunal. I might even manage to survive for a few more days," Ashe explained. "But this time, there may be no such leniency, and..."

He paused. "The mood is indeed different."

"Is it really that dangerous?"

Ashe blinked and then suddenly shook his head with a laugh. "No, even though I made it sound like a sure-death situation earlier, it's really not dangerous as long as

everything goes smoothly. It's like driving a car—it's dangerous, but if you operate it properly, you won't crash... I was just trying to see if you would worry about me. I didn't expect you to beat me so thoroughly; you're not one bit gentle or considerate."

"Then go find a gentle and considerate woman. I'm sure you have one in real life," Sonya glared coldly at him. "She's probably lying in bed right now, waiting for you to come and favor her."

"Alright, alright, time to get back to exploring. The Witch must be getting impatient, and the white bull seems to have gone far."

Ashe was just about to head back when suddenly the sword Princess threw herself into his arms, and he felt a punch to his abdomen. 'Am I finally achieving the honor of being stabbed to death by the sword Princess?' he thought.

But nothing happened; she merely hit him with her small fist.

"Before I met you, I always wore a Mask," Sonya whispered in his ear. "Even if you're wearing a mask when you speak, I can tell with my ears covered."

She pushed him away, her eyes full of disdain. "Don't pretend in front of me. You're acting so indifferent, but aren't you just hiding your fear? Your poor acting is so obvious; don't you want me to know? What, do you think I'll hold you and comfort you, ease your mind?"

Already filled with pressure and prepared to confess to the sword Princess, Ashe couldn't help but feel angry at such questioning. Adding to this was a bit of shame at having his mind seen through, making his tone sarcastically sharp. "When I calmly explain things, you don't like it. When I laugh off my crisis, you're not satisfied either. What do you want me to do? Should I hug you and act spoiled? Should I pull you into my arms to seek warmth?"

Sonya sneered, "And what do you want me to do? Let you rest your head on my lap pillow while I sing to you?"

Ashe gritted his teeth, "And what do you want me to do? Hold hands and stick together all these days?"

"Do you want me to look at you with nothing but love in my eyes, like some love-struck fool?"

"Do you want me to escape from reality every day just to depend on you to survive?"

"Do you want me to change into something cuter and sexier to comfort you?"

"Do you want me to look for chances every day to—"

Before she could finish saying the unspeakable word, Sonya, red-faced with anger, stomped on Ashe's boot, "Die!"

Then she stormed off in a huff, only to come back and stomp on his other foot. "Hurry up and die! I'm waiting to inherit your stuff, hmph!"

Boom!

Deya looked at the furious sword Princess and momentarily set aside her "Ashe and Annan bed fantasies." Earlier, in her mind, the Black Butler and the White Queen had been playing out different scenarios where Ashe and Annan were alone, all ending in intimate harmony. It made everyone unhappy, except for the Black Butler, who, though not happy himself, had a face full of delighted expectation, tirelessly imagining explicit dialogues between Ashe and Annan.

"What are you two fighting about?"

"Don't ask me, ask him!" Sonya pouted, sitting in the back seat. When Ashe returned, she turned her head, looking out at the Reverse Golden Rain.

Ashe silently took the front seat, opened the virtual realm map, and began exploring.

In such a tense and stifling atmosphere, even Deya didn't dare speak out of turn. She sat in the car more quietly and properly than ever.

After a while, Sonya suddenly turned to her and said, "Did I tell you last night that one of my upcoming opponents in the Meteor Trial is from the Sanctuary?"

"Yes, yes," Deya nodded. "He's also a swordsmanship Sanctuary, just like you."

"If I can keep winning, I will face him in the Final," Sonya said. "But he's not just a Sanctuary; he's a very strong sword saint. I have no chance at all."

"Yes." Deya thought it was time to comfort the sword Princess and said, "There's nothing you can do. The gap in skill is too great. Even if you lose, you'll still have gone down with honor. You're already impressive enough—"

"But I want to win the Meteor Trial," Sonya said. "I don't want to lose."

Deya was taken aback. "But the opponent is a Sanctuary sorcerer... your swordsmanship realm can't breakthrough to Sanctuary level in such a short time, sword Princess."

"Exactly."

Suddenly, Sonya grabbed Ashe by the collar and said intently, in the midst of his bewildered glance, “There are only a few days left until the Final. I need to become a Sanctuary as soon as possible!”

“Do you understand, Observer?” She glared fiercely at Ashe. “Hurry up and find the Rainbow Tail. I need to become a Sanctuary now!”

The Witch sisters looked on in stunned silence as the sword Princess suddenly erupted, filled with awe.

The sword Princess is so brave!

She actually dared to boss the Observer around so arrogantly!

Is this an uprising? It must be an uprising, right!?

What to do—if the Observer and the sword Princess start fighting, and I don’t have any snacks to eat while I watch?

Just as the Witch sisters were considering whether to find a Blade Fish Dragon for a snack, the Observer calmly replied:

“Alright.”

Deya blinked, and in her shock, she seemed to have discovered some sort of secret—does the Observer really just bully the weak and fear the strong?

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