

# SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

## Chapter 591: The Truth of Cicada Transformation

Nightfall, Twinborn Palace.

As the sacred ground of the Twinborn Cult, the place was now cluttered with blackboards and clipboards. Harvey watched Igor maneuver between the blackboards, chalk in hand, scribbling and drawing, while the floor was littered with pages of laboratory data. Yet, the con artist moved with the grace of a high-society gentleman at a ball, stepping on vibrant petals meant to enhance the atmosphere.

The necromancer naturally felt at ease watching from the sidelines, after all, he didn't possess the mind for gathering intelligence, and getting too close would only earn him a scolding.

But after watching Igor busy himself for several days, Harvey couldn't help but speak up, "Hey."

Igor ignored him.

"Your hair's gotten long. How many days has it been since you last showered? Even Alice is tidier than you."

Igor paused but still didn't respond.

"I bet once Ashe is rescued, it'll be your turn to pass out."

Seeing that persuasion was futile, Harvey gave up. Caring for the living three times was already his limit. But then, Igor suddenly spoke, "Go call the Dark Serpent Twins over."

Harvey didn't move, but Alice leaped out of the coffin, transforming into a mist and leaving the palace. Over time, Harvey had become increasingly skilled at converting corpses into other types of necromantic troops, and he was close to unlocking the ultimate necromantic troops: the Dragon Lich and the Blood Corpse King.

Soon, the Dark Serpent Twins followed Alice into the palace and asked, "Do you need more materials brought over?"

"No," Igor shook his head, "I have some questions for you... Where did I put it...?"

He glanced around, suddenly realizing his hair had grown long enough to obstruct his vision. He casually pushed it aside, grabbed an elastic band from the table, and tied up the messy golden locks behind him. Then, he crouched to search for the needed pages. The Dark Serpent Twins instinctively glanced at his exposed, pale nape, quickly realizing it was inappropriate and looked away, only to find themselves stealing another glance.

"Found it." Igor picked up a sheet of paper from the floor and asked, "Although the Twinborn Cult doesn't follow the Circle Cicada Demi-God, your sect's philosophy is derived from the experimental results here, right?"

“Correct,” the Dark Serpent Twins nodded. “In the experiments of the Circle Cicada Demi-God, the concept of ‘Perfect Twinborn, Fate Spiral’ was proposed, meaning only the Fate Twins can combine to form a perfect fate, freeing themselves from suffering and transcending all things in the world.”

“That’s essentially correct,” Igor said, “but after carefully comparing the data from the Nature Cult and the experiments here, I’ve found some discrepancies.”

“The data mentions a crucial clue-the concept of Perfect Twinborn didn’t originate from the Circle Cicada Demi-God or its followers, but from-“

Igor turned to Harvey, “the Gospel.”

The necromancer looked puzzled, “Why are you looking at me? Did we ever encounter Perfect Twinborn in the Gospel before?”

“We didn’t witness it firsthand,” the Con Artist said, “but we’ve heard of it.”

“Many experimental records indicate that the Perfect Twinborn sought by the Circle Cicada Demi-God isn’t about both Fate Twins transcending together. Instead, it’s about transferring one person’s life, fate, will, and everything else to the other, allowing that person to achieve flawlessness-“

Harvey caught on, “The Ranking of the Unrelated!?”

In the depths of Nabistin’s Mermaid Palace, they had learned the secrets of the Ranking of the Unrelated from the First Sea Witch. Later, in Senlo, Ashe mentioned during a casual conversation that the reason the Yisuo royal family could ensure the First Gospel was always born into their lineage was due to the effect of the Ranking of the Unrelated, which stacked the fate of one princess onto another.

“But aren’t the followers of the Circle Cicada Demi-God trying to transform themselves into the Demi-God with intelligence?” Raven suddenly interjected, “What does that have to do with the Fate Twins?”

“The reason the Demi-God lacks intelligence is the same as why mortals cannot wield deities,” Igor explained. “The instinctive consciousness of the Demi-God and deities is enough to overwhelm the will of mortal mages.”

“But in the Gospel, someone used the method of Fate Stacking to allow a mortal, with the combined fate of two people, to barely control a deity. The Circle Cicada Cult likely took notice of this. However, the Fate Stacking in the Gospel Kingdom originated from the Divine Sovereign’s Miracle. To replicate it, they had to use mortal miracles as a substitute.”

“The Fate Stacking in the Gospel has no requirements for the recipient, but the higher the compatibility, the better the stacking effect. The example we know is that when a pair of sisters underwent Fate Stacking, one of them gained the stable ability to house a deity.”

“Since the Circle Cicada Cult couldn’t replicate divine intervention, their requirements for the recipient had to be even stricter. So, with the technology of the Gray Fox Divine Era, how did they find the two individuals with the highest compatibility?”

Everyone’s gaze turned to the Dark Serpent Twins in the palace.

“The Gray Fox mages found the optimal solution,” Igor said. “By creating a perfect custom Copy, they could attempt Fate Stacking.”

Cicada Transformation Hall.

Ashe sheathed Honey Sword.

Two Cicada Transformation Chambers, four people.

Someone had to remain in the hall as the sacrificial offering for the Trial Takers in the Cicada Transformation Chambers.

According to normal logic, one group should defeat the other, and the losing Trial Takers would remain in the hall as expendable resources, completely consumed by the victors.

Though cruel, Ashe had already passed the earlier trials and knew this Divine Fire Trial wasn't a legitimate inheritance. He had mentally prepared himself for it.

However, the two Cicada Transformation Chambers were placed so far apart, and once one was activated, the other only had 30 seconds left to enter.

If both groups of Trial Takers were determined to enter the final trial together with their other halves, they would naturally have to fight to the death. The victorious Fate Twins could return fully rewarded, having survived the trial together.

But if even one person didn't share this mindset and only cared about surviving the trial alone, the current situation would arise.

Silver Lantern had already entered the Cicada Transformation Chamber, leaving Ashe and the others with just over 20 seconds to enter the other chamber. And no matter what they did, only one spot remained for survival.

Only one person could survive alongside Silver Lantern.

At that very moment, Ashe sensed the attack from beside him. Even though he reacted swiftly, the Observer's speed far exceeded his expectations-

Thud!

A mere impact to his side was enough to make Ashe gag, instantly sapping his strength and paralyzing his entire body. His vision even blurred, leaving him completely unable to control his movements. What was going on? He didn't recall mastering such a combat technique...

In his daze, he felt himself being lifted and then thrown onto the cold ground.

When his vision cleared, Ashe turned his head with great effort and saw the Observer looking down at him from above.

"I told you from the very beginning," he said, "take care of yourself."

The Observer stepped out of the Cicada Transformation Chamber, took out the candy Ashe had given him, and flicked it toward the chamber's activation button. The door closed.

"I won't look after you anymore."

Vesser watched this scene from a distance, not particularly surprised but feeling a bit of joy, perhaps even a hint of satisfaction.

By the time Ashe recovered, the countdown had just ended. He only managed to rush to the door, pressing his face against the glass as he stared intently at the Observer.

What did he want to say?

For once, the Observer was willing to listen, but in the next second, Ashe descended into the abyss with the Cicada Transformation Chamber, facing his fate alongside Vesser.

In life, many farewells happen without the chance to say goodbye.

“I thought you would seize this opportunity.”

In the vast underground hall, the voice of one of the two remaining figures echoed.

Yolan removed her fox mask, revealing a face etched with worry and cold detachment. “This is the best opportunity. Ashe has laid the groundwork for you, and you can play his role. With just one switch earlier, you could have achieved a perfect rebirth.”

“Though Death Maniac might throw a fit, you, who are adept at weighing gains, naturally understand what’s more important,” she said softly. “After all, compared to Ashe, you’re more rational, more powerful, more-“



“You don’t need to remind or tempt me like this,” the apocalypse observer said coldly. “I’m well aware that, just like you, I’m a demon covered in filth.”

“I won’t deny it either. At the very beginning, I did have such thoughts,” he admitted. “The Divine Fire Trial was my midterm exam for Ashe.”

“It didn’t surprise me. He’s still as disappointing as ever.”

“Too weak to need comfort.”

“Too kind to dare kill.”

“He even dares to trust people he’s just met.”

“He values friendship, family, and love. I used to think he just wanted to use love to dominate them, but now it seems it might be the other way around...”

“He even found a home here,” the observer said calmly. “A stray dog content with a doghouse.”

“Even though you say that,” Yolan replied, “aren’t you still quite pleased? Your staying is the best recognition of him.”

“Staying was always part of the original plan. I just didn’t want complications. Death Maniac is still a tough problem to solve,” the observer said, glancing down at his hands and shaking his head slightly. “And...”

“As an older brother, of course, I have to protect my younger brother as much as possible.”

“For the midterm exam, he passed.”

Yolan was seeing him say such words for the first time and couldn’t help but narrow her eyes, her lips curving into a smile.

But soon, her expression slowly changed. “How... is this... possible...?”

White mist began to rise from their bodies, not dispersing but instead condensing into snow-white ribbons, like... a floating bridal veil.

The observer stared intently at the anomaly in his body. He knew exactly what this was. It was the fusion Miracle of the Fate Twins, stacking one’s fate onto another. Among the divine Kingdoms, only the Gospel Kingdom and Senlo Kingdom had inherited this Miracle, but he had never witnessed the Miracle in action... almost never.

The Mirror Master instinctively reached out, as if to comfort the apocalypse observer. However, her hand turned into mist upon touching him. The observer didn't look at her but closed his eyes until both of them completely dissipated into white mist.

## Chapter 592: The Final Trial: Golden Flow

There was no sense of weightlessness, no feeling of deceleration-Gray Fox's technical prowess was evident in these details, as if the Cicada Transformation Chamber hadn't even been activated.

Yet when the chamber door opened, what appeared before Ashe was merely an unfamiliar underground palace. The damp air carried a faint musty scent, and the pure white stone pathway seemed to be seamlessly formed without a single crack. The golden dome above was dazzling yet not ostentatious.

The Trial was still a Trial; nothing had changed.

But the person who could share a toast with him-one to their homeland, one to their past-was no longer there. From now on, he was left with only the distant horizon and tomorrow.

Ashe drew his blade and stepped out of the Cicada Transformation Chamber. His footsteps on the water-soaked white stone sent ripples across the surface as he charged toward Silver Lantern, who had just emerged from her own chamber!

Clang!

There were no spirits, no miracles, yet within seconds, the two had exchanged dozens of attacks and defenses. The Honey Sword passed between their hands, water splashed in all directions, and their movements became almost impossible to track.

They seemed like mortal enemies, each strike aimed to kill; yet they were also the closest of friends, their understanding of each other so profound that no matter how fierce or devastating the attacks, neither could inflict even the slightest harm.

Though there was no clear physical sensation, both deeply realized in that moment that their Twin was truly gone.

Because the power of the Twin had already flowed along the path of miracles and merged into their souls. The near-perfectly synchronized “dance of combat” they now performed was the clearest proof.

Before this, their senses could only foresee the “first layer of the future.” For example, Ashe could predict what Vesser would do next, and Vesser could predict Ashe’s next move. They would then adjust their actions accordingly, only to continue predicting again.

Because they constantly had to adapt their decisions, they would end up in mutual destruction, as they could still outmaneuver each other by complicating the other’s choices, catching them off guard.

But now, both Ashe and Vesser felt they could fully “see the future.”

The future they saw had already factored in the fact that “the other could also see the future.” After countless overlapping decisions, their foresight converged into a perfect spiral. No matter how intense or ferocious their battle became, they could not harm each other.

In a daze, they realized they were no longer just seeing the future-they were approaching something closer to...

Weaving fate.

They both saw that neither would die in this struggle, and so, they would not be injured.

Almost simultaneously, Ashe and Vesser stopped their movements. Ashe then took three steps back, putting distance between them.

When both of them could see the future clearly, there was no longer a need to maintain a safe distance. Even if they stood shoulder to shoulder, neither could assassinate the other. No amount of physical distance could provide the same sense of security as the certainty of knowing what lay ahead.

Ashe’s actions were merely a gesture to express his stance.

So Vesser walked up to him with ease, her voice even carrying a rare hint of amusement. “For a moment, did you wish it was all just a delusion?”

“We’re creatures like that. When we’re sad and hurt, we wish it was all just a nightmare, that we’d wake up and nothing would be lost. When we’re happy, we fear it’s all just a beautiful dream, that we’d wake up and nothing would remain.”

“Only eternity is unafraid of loss. Only eternity can possess everything. Even if you kill me, what then? What’s lost won’t come back.”

“That’s the sorrow of living in a delusion.”

Ashe stared at the person hidden behind the fox mask. “Are you that afraid of death, Silver Lantern?”

Vesser let out a mocking laugh, as if she’d heard a joke. “Afraid of death?”

“It’s precisely because you’re afraid that you’re so stubbornly fixated on the journey after death, even going so far as to romanticize it, to pray for it,” Ashe said. “But who isn’t afraid? After all, death can take away everything tangible. Someone like you, who has nothing, would naturally try everything to escape it.”

“But we’re different,” he continued. “Love, respect, friendship, longing... the treasures we possess can’t be diminished by death. Our bonds will pierce through the veil of death and keep us connected.”

The effects of the Cicada Transformation were almost imperceptible.

If Ashe hadn’t known about the Cicada Transformation, he might have mistaken the enhancement of his senses as the result of his own hard work. Fortunately, he was aware of all the silent sacrifices, so he could remember that the thoughts of the Twin flowed through his blood and bones.

“What’s the point of your high-and-mighty nonsense, something only those who survive are qualified to say?” Vesser sneered. “If you had the chance to keep your other half alive, would you give it up? You tried to kill me just now because I took one of the spots, didn’t you? You were furious, thinking I robbed him of the chance to live-but am I just supposed to die up there for you? I didn’t force you into this Trial!”

Ashe looked at her in silence and finally nodded. “You’re right. You didn’t do anything wrong just now. I was just taking my anger out on you. What I said earlier was just something I heard from a necromancer-words the living use to comfort themselves in mourning...”

“But you rushed into the Cicada Transformation Chamber, while I was placed inside,” Ashe said softly, wiping his eyes. “That’s the difference between you and me.”

Vesser had originally planned to use this opportunity to torment Ashe.

Guilt, anger, despair, melancholy, sorrow, fear-anything would do. Even if he wanted to fight her for three days and nights, she didn't care. She wanted to see Ashe break down, preferably with his face twisted in rage or tears streaming from his eyes. If he cursed her, even better.

Wasn't I your best outlet? Pour out all your negative emotions in front of your enemy. Let me see how pitiful, how ugly, how despairing, how... endearing you are when fate tortures you.

What she hated the most was this attitude of seeing the truth of fate, accepting it calmly, and continuing to love life.

"You really are a despicable person," she said.

"Likewise," Ashe replied.

Continuing to fight was meaningless now. They decided to begin the final Trial. Once the Trial determined the victor, life and death would naturally follow.

The pure white pathway led deep into the palace. Strangely, there was water flowing along the path, reaching up to their ankles. It wasn't due to the palace being old and allowing an underground river to seep through-the anti-slip treatment on the floor made it clear that the water was an integral part of the palace's design.



They looked back. The Cicada Transformation Chamber was at the very beginning of the white pathway, with a dead end blocked by a wall behind it. On the wall was a massive carved cicada pattern. Having come this far, even without seeing any documents or records, they could vaguely guess from the hall's name that this Trial might have some connection to the Circle Cicada Demi-God of the Fire Cat Divine Era.

Ashe and Vesser walked side by side along the stone pathway. It was amusing-these two, who would always fight to the death whenever they met, could now walk forward calmly together. Not because they were about to reconcile, but because they knew the end was near.

The palace's terrain sloped downward the deeper they went, with the starting point being the highest elevation. The water flowed downward from the beginning. At regular intervals, four white support pillars appeared.

Vesser didn't pay much attention to it, but Ashe felt a sense of familiarity: the white pathway, the white pillars, the golden dome-this combination felt like something he had seen before...

Soon, they noticed something unusual-statue pedestals began to appear along the sides of the corridor!

One statue sat on a stone throne, its appearance unremarkable, but its clothing immediately caught Ashe and Vesser's attention: it was wearing the exact same combat attire they were wearing now!

These were statues of past Trial Takers!

Their first thought was that the previous Trial Takers had been turned to stone. Was this Divine Fire Trial just a scheme to harvest lives?

But beneath the pedestal was a badge for the Trial Taker: “Blanchard Misty White, legendary sorcerer, specializing in the Physical Sect.”

Seeing this, both of them felt a hint of confusion. It wasn't unusual for Trial Takers to be deceived, but a legendary sorcerer? Could even they fall victim to such a trap?

At this moment, Vesser's strengths finally had a chance to shine-when faced with something that might be a living being, she didn't hesitate to slap it, completely unconcerned with what might be inside.

However, the statue remained unharmed by her attack. Instead, ripples spread across the stone floor. They quickly realized this was a kinetic transfer miracle-any attack on the statue would be transferred and distributed across the ground.

Even though their current combat prowess could easily surpass that of a two-wings sorcerer, shattering the earth with bare hands was beyond their capability. Even someone like Raven Annihilation might not be able to do it... or perhaps even he couldn't.

They continued forward and found that both sides of the corridor were densely lined with statues, and every single one of them belonged to a legendary sorcerer-not a single Sanctuary-level figure among them! At this point, even Vesser couldn't believe the statues contained real people. Dozens of legendary sorcerers all deceived and turned into stone statues? As if legendary sorcerers didn't have access to miracles like prophecy, Truth, and fate! If they couldn't resist danger, couldn't they at least foresee it?

But this Divine Fire Trial was supposed to be for 16 people at a time, with at least 15 being consumed each time. Could it be that during the Gray Fox Divine Era, Sanctuary-level figures were as common as dogs, and legendary sorcerers were treated as expendable resources?

However, Vesser soon realized the flaw in her reasoning: the fact that the victors were legendary sorcerers didn't mean the other Trial Takers were too. It was more likely that 15 ordinary people and 1 legendary sorcerer participated, with the ordinary people being sacrificed to help the legendary sorcerer complete the Trial Ritual.

In other words, these statues were probably just decorative, like a hall of honor... right?

Ashe thought of another possibility: "What if they suddenly come back to life and turn us into statues too?"

"Impossible," Vesser said calmly. "Time is the most potent poison. People can forget things even after a night's sleep. These statues have been here for at least two hundred years. If someone truly slept for two centuries before waking up, they'd probably forget who they were entirely. They might even have to relearn how to crawl from scratch..."

Both of them fell silent. Ashe wondered why he had even spoken, while Vesser questioned why she had bothered to respond.

After walking for ten minutes, they finally reached the end of the palace corridor.

There stood a pedestal holding a torch, its flame burning with a rainbow divine fire that shifted between blazing white, deep blue, and pale purple. The moment they saw the torch, their senses began to wildly predict the future. In the overlapping visions of countless possible decisions, they saw the same scene: they touched the divine fire, and their bodies burst into flames of different colors, resonating with the Virtual Realm, transforming them completely into divine fire seeds!

But it wasn't just a vision. The moment they foresaw the future, the divine fire had already begun to burn them.

Ashe and Vesser's expressions changed drastically. They immediately understood the bizarre design of this Trial-how outrageous! The divine fire didn't require physical contact. As long as they 'touched' it in their sensory predictions, the fire would travel along their perception and ignite them directly!

The medium of the divine fire wasn't matter, sight, or sound-it was perception!

No wonder the Trial required two people to reach the final stage. If there was only one person, they might use something like a sleeve to test and predict cautiously. But with two

people, especially rivals, the first prediction would inevitably involve rushing forward to fully touch the divine fire, triggering this mechanism!

There was no way to escape the divine fire now. They could only watch as their skin turned transparent, burning with an otherworldly glow. In an instant, they both became human-shaped flames of colored glass, and then-

As the last trace of divine fire receded into their bodies, Ashe turned to look at Silver Lantern. Her Mask was untouched, and even her clothes were intact. It seemed the divine fire didn't burn tangible objects.

He focused on sensing his own state and found that his soul hadn't changed much either. His spirits were still asleep as usual, though his soul felt more solid, and the spirits seemed to be sleeping even more soundly.

Was this the final Trial? No lost limbs, no fried brains, not even a combat phase?

Unbelievable. If it wasn't meant to harm anyone, why did it have to suddenly burn them like that?

But now that it was over...

Ashe turned to Vesser, his right hand tightening on the hilt of his sword, his gaze growing colder. Since he couldn't find an opportunity to deal with Silver Lantern during the Trial, he'd have to fight her to the death.

Just then, a deafening rumble echoed from behind them. Ashe turned his head and saw the statues in the passageway beginning to crumble, shedding layers of dust as if something inside was stirring, ready to emerge into the light.

Strangely, he wasn't particularly surprised. In fact, he felt a sense of relief-in a Trial filled with such eerie and sinister energy, the sudden appearance of a group of statues would have been more alarming if they didn't pose a threat. If he didn't have to fight them, that would have been the real shock.

"Hmph."

Ashe turned to see Silver Lantern clutching herself tightly, her shoulders trembling uncontrollably. Though her fox mask hid her expression, it was clear she had fallen into a negative state, unable to maintain even a facade of composure.

Should he take advantage of her vulnerability?

The thought had barely crossed Ashe's mind when his body, acting on its own, drew his sword and charged toward her. But in that instant, an unimaginable anomaly occurred.

He was swept back by a surge of golden water.

A golden sphere of water suddenly formed around Silver Lantern's body and then exploded, unleashing an endless torrent of golden liquid that blasted Ashe away, his malicious intent thwarted.

But it wasn't just Silver Lantern. All the statues around them also burst open, releasing a surging flood of golden water that quickly filled the palace passageway, forming a raging river.

However, instead of flowing toward the torch pedestal at the bottom of the palace, the golden river reversed course, rushing upward toward the starting point where the Cicada Transformation Chamber was located!

Caught in the torrent, Ashe and Vesser collided, their eyes meeting in mutual shock and fear.

These golden waters, seemingly endless and without a source-how could high-tier sorcerers like them not recognize them?

This was the water of the Golden Flow, a wonder of the Virtual Realm from the Time Continent!

At that moment, Ashe noticed something strange-why was it that Silver Lantern and the statues were all releasing the waters of the Golden Flow, while he remained unaffected?

But he quickly deduced the answer: the only connection between reality and the Virtual Realm was the Gate of Truth. Silver Lantern and the statues must have their Gates of Truth linked to the Golden Flow, turning them into nodes that channeled its waters.

As for him? He didn't have a Gate of Truth at all.

## Chapter 593: Cicada Song Sharing Ritual

In the Twinborn Palace, the Dark Serpent Twins, for some unknown reason, had not left. They sat to the side, watching the Con Artist.

Igor thought they were waiting for the latest research results, so he didn't say anything and continued to review the documents in front of him.

After days of study, he had managed to understand some of the terminology by cross-referencing the context, allowing him to interpret more of the experimental data. However, there was still some information that, while he could comprehend, seemed too fantastical to be real.

He paced back and forth in front of the blackboard, then suddenly asked, "Have you ever encountered 'the gifts of the virtual realm'?"



The Dark Serpent Twins immediately responded, “The gifts of the virtual realm? What exactly do you mean?”

“Simply put, it’s when virtual realm creatures suddenly assist you, whether you’re in the virtual realm or the real world,” Igor said, glancing at the documents in his hand. “For example, the Bronze Dragon, the Resentful Dragon, and so on...”

The Dark Serpent Twins shook their heads. “Why would virtual realm creatures help sorcerers? Isn’t it always a fight when you encounter them?”

“These experimental records mention that some sorcerers are naturally able to resonate with the virtual realm,” Igor explained. “Not only do they exhibit astonishing talent in specific Spellcasting Sects, but some virtual realm creatures even regard them as kin, pets, or companions, often bestowing gifts upon them. Moreover, these virtual realm creatures are of extremely high status, with intelligence comparable to that of sorcerers. They’re nothing like the Blade Fish Dragon, which is essentially a chew toy for infants...”

Harvey turned to look at Alice, and she turned to look at him. Then he reached out his hand, and Alice promptly opened her mouth and bit down on all four of his fingers. The necromancer then turned his gaze to the Con Artist, his eyes revealing a subtle skepticism.

Seeing this, Igor naturally understood the message Harvey was silently conveying. Honestly, the necromancer could have just said that a dim-witted virtual realm creature had slipped into his corpse suit, and it wouldn’t have mattered. The Dark Serpent Twins had four eyes, and Raven didn’t even need eyes-it wasn’t like anyone would miss it.

But Igor wasn’t interested in Harvey’s talents. As long as the necromancer could confirm that this experimental data wasn’t just some made-up game setting, that was enough.

“Many of the sorcerer test subjects in the laboratory were geniuses with this kind of talent,” Igor casually recounted the brutal hunts from centuries ago. “They were also the first twin test subjects. Through repeated overlaps of fate, Nightfall pushed their talents to the limit.”

Hearing this, the Dark Serpent Twins couldn’t help but feel puzzled. “Why would they do that?”

“When a sorcerer’s talent reaches its limit, they can resonate with the wonders of the Virtual Realm,” Igor explained. “The text doesn’t specify where this conclusion comes from—perhaps the knowledge originates from an upper-tier existence... In any case, the core idea of the Twins Experiment is to create life capable of producing intense resonance with the wonders of the Virtual Realm.”

“But what does it mean to resonate with the wonders of the Virtual Realm?” the Dark Serpent Twins still couldn’t grasp it. “Does it make it easier to find wonders in the Virtual Realm?”

“More than that.”

Igor’s tone gradually grew more impassioned, his entire being radiating an unusual energy. His pupils reflected the words on the document, and his sickly pale face flushed with a vivid hue, so much so that the Dark Serpent Twins almost missed what he was saying. “Although I can’t fully understand the principle, the trials deep within the Abyss allow the Trial Takers to continuously accumulate time talent!”

“If what’s written here is true, then all we need to do is activate the Twins system by initiating the Divine Fire Trial, throw in a group of people to consume each other, and then we can obtain-“

Crack.

Like the sound of ancient fossil layers breaking, Raven slightly raised his head, his cervical vertebrae emitting a faint but distinct noise. It was akin to the grating of a sharpening knife or the dull click of a trigger being pulled.

Igor turned his head slightly, glancing at Raven from the corner of his eye, and continued, “The Trial Takers who complete all the trials will, in a short time, attain the pinnacle of time talent and resonate with the corresponding wonders of the Virtual Realm. As a result, their Gate of Truth will directly connect to the originals of those wonders!”

The wonders of the Virtual Realm corresponding to time talent...

Except for Raven, the sorcerers immediately realized how earth-shattering this plan was. No wonder Igor was so excited. Even if this was just a centuries-old relic, as a Con Artist, how could he not be moved by the grand ambitions of his predecessors?

“They want to deceive the Virtual Realm and channel the Golden Flow into reality!” Igor turned to look at the sealed Abyss, recalling a casual line from the document:

“Reality and the Virtual Realm embrace each other, and myth will be born from within.”

“Is it time already?”

“This isn’t what we agreed on!”

“I’m going to kill them once I get out!”

“It seems fate is playing another joke on me...”

Vesser, after all, was a sorcerer who had journeyed alone through the Sea of Knowledge for thousands of miles. Although the appearance of the Golden Flow was enough to consume all her mental resources, her body’s instincts alone were sufficient to maintain her balance in the turbulent river.

Ashe, having collided with her, instinctively grabbed Vesser’s waist before being swept away. Though Vesser immediately kicked him off, it gave him a brief moment to catch his breath and barely withstand the onslaught of the Golden Flow.

At the same time, the long-sealed legends of the past began to resurrect one by one from the Golden Flow!

A young female sorcerer, her eyes transformed into clock faces, strolled leisurely through the Golden Flow as if untouched by its currents. “Where are the people from the Circle Cicada?”

“Stop bickering, Skadi,” growled a male orc sorcerer. “Clearly, something went wrong in another part of the plan. Nightfall didn’t wake us up as scheduled... Mess, do you have any way to contact the outside?”

“No, and there’s no need,” Mess replied. “This experiment was designed to mimic the womb in absolute isolation, using the slaughter of memories as a form of prenatal education to cultivate time talent. There’s no way I could contact the outside... But I assure you, if something has gone wrong, the outside world is far more anxious than we are. The ones who want us to succeed the most are the people of the Circle Cicada.”

At this, the legendary sorcerers’ expressions shifted as they realized a possibility. They turned their gaze toward the two strangers struggling against the reverse current in the distance and asked, “Are you newcomers? What’s happening outside?”

Vesser instinctively glanced at Ashe, only to find him looking back at her. Though Silver Lantern wasn’t exactly trustworthy, these unfamiliar legends were unlikely to be benevolent either. Just as Ashe always left negotiations to Igor to handle, he decided to let Silver Lantern take the lead in speaking to these unknown entities, fearing that saying too much might cause trouble.

Vesser’s mind raced as she slowly replied, “It’s the year 1668.”

“So much time has passed!?”

“Impossible! The longest estimate back then was only 10 years!”

“Over two hundred years... That means so many wonderful cultural works must have been created by now!”

“Has the Gray Fox Divine Era already ended?” Skadi asked. “What’s the current divine era? What’s the prevailing Demi-God philosophy? And why are you here?”

Vesser, wearing her Mask, naturally didn’t reveal any expression, but Ashe’s face showed a subtle hint of displeasure.

The legendary sorcerers were all sharp-witted. Mess, the handsome middle-aged man, immediately spoke up. “Skadi, they’re not your disciples or students. They have no obligation to share information with you. Even if they’re only at the Sanctuary level, who here can actually use their spirit?”

Ashe and Vesser were startled. How did Mess know they weren’t legendary sorcerers? Shouldn’t everyone here, being legendary sorcerers themselves, have instinctively assumed they were equals?

However, no one else reacted to Mess's words, clearly indicating that they too had recognized Ashe and Vesser as the weakest among the Trial Takers. This situation only proved one thing: legendary sorcerers could effortlessly discern the highest Sect Realm of others without even using any special means!

No wonder Skadi, the female sorcerer, was so domineering. Legends had no need to be polite to those in the Sanctuary Realm, just as Ashe would never greet a Blade Fish Dragon. Mess had deliberately pointed this out as a subtle warning-anyone here could easily crush them once they left.

Vesser remained silent for a moment before saying, "I'll ask a question, and then you can ask one."

Skadi replied, "Then you go first."

The question itself was enough to reveal their limitations. For legendary sorcerers, manipulating social dynamics was almost second nature. Vesser had no choice but to ask, "What was your original plan?"

The legends in the Golden Flow exchanged glances, and many of their expressions changed dramatically. It was clear they had already guessed that the situation outside was vastly different from what they had known. After all, "a gap of over two hundred years" and "ignorant Sanctuary Trial Takers" both suggested that those in charge of the experiment were no longer the people they had once known.

Skadi closed her clock-like eyes, and her aggressive demeanor softened unexpectedly. She said, "To answer this question, we first need to clarify who we are and why we're here. So, you're actually asking three questions, and you'll have to answer three in return."

So, it's impossible to play word games with legendary sorcerers... Vesser exchanged a glance with Ashe and nodded. "Fine."

"We are legendary sorcerers on the verge of death," Skadi began. "Some of us have half a year left, others as little as ten days. We can accurately estimate the day our souls will extinguish."

"In the final days of waiting for death, we received an invitation from the secret cult 'Circle Cicada' to participate in their Immortality experiment," she continued softly. "Before me, almost all the Gray Fox legends had joined this experiment. And after me, there will be no exceptions."

"Even the greatest of lives cannot resist the fear of death. The instinct for survival is both ugly and impossible to defy."

"The Circle Cicada cult privately created the divine fire system and, combined with centuries of experimental results, successfully helped us condense our time talent to its limit, allowing our Gates of Truth to directly connect to the Golden Flow. But there weren't enough sorcerers-we needed at least 42 legendary sorcerers to initiate the Cicada Song Sharing Ritual. So, we've been sealed within these statues, waiting for the ritual to begin."

Ashe frowned. "The Cicada Song Sharing Ritual?"



However, Skadi very precisely cut to the chase and asked, “Now it’s our turn to ask-which Demi-God’s divine era is the outside world in?”

Vesser shook her head. “The outside world isn’t in any divine era.”

“Just the interval between divine eras?”

“Could the Fifth Divine Era already be over? But two hundred years-it’s certainly possible...”

The legends began to chatter, but Skadi shook her head and pointed at Ashe. “I want you to answer.”

“Do I look easier to bully?” Ashe naturally wasn’t about to undermine Silver Lantern now. “My answer is the same as hers.”

“Then I’ll ask another question. If you answer, it’ll count as two; if she says even a single word, it’ll only count as one.” Skadi continued, “I’m old and don’t want to play word games-what exactly happened outside?”

Even without looking back, Ashe knew Silver Lantern was subtly implying he should take the lead. The best strategy here was to conceal as much real information as possible, then use intelligence to negotiate with these former legends. Besides uncovering the truth about this Trial, they might even deceive them for personal gain.

However, Ashe wasn't on the same level as Igor when it came to such talents. And looking at these remnants of the Gray Fox who had been abandoned by the world for over two hundred years, he didn't think he could spin a flawless lie.

I really must be easier to bully... Ashe sighed and said, "Over two hundred years ago, a 'cataclysm' occurred. Nearly all sorcerers were killed or injured, and most fantasy creations lost their effects. To this day, Senlo remains in a chaotic era of sectarian warfare."

Surprisingly, the legends didn't panic. Knowing that over two hundred years had passed, they had already prepared for the worst.

"So that's what happened..." Skadi murmured. After a pause, she calmly added, "The Cicada Song Sharing Ritual was the final step toward our Immortality."

"The essence of the Cicada Sound Project was to fuse sorcerers with Demi-Gods, thereby achieving Immortality in the form of a Demi-God's existence."

Ashe couldn't help but interject, "But Demi-Gods themselves aren't eternal. In fact, they're fragile beings that can't exist without faith."

“Almost all Demi-Gods are as you described,” Skadi nodded. “But there’s one exception.”

Vesser had already guessed it. “The Circle Cicada?”

“In the Fire Cat Divine Era, only one Demi-God successfully ascended, and that was the Fire Cat ‘Knowing Guard Fire,’” Skadi explained. “After the Fire Cat’s ascension, both the Circle Cicada and the Chasing Light lost their disciples, and the Chasing Light Demi-God subsequently fell. Then the Bluebird Divine Era began, and new Demi-Gods became the mainstream of the era.”

“The Circle Cicada Demi-God should have vanished into history, but perhaps because it’s a rare Time Sect Demi-God, or because its obsession with ‘Immortality’ was too strong, it managed to cling to existence by drinking the Golden Flow Water. Time could no longer erode its essence, and so the Circle Cicada became a ‘Secret Cult’ that persisted through every divine era.”

“The so-called Golden Flow Water is essentially the flow of time for all things in the world-omnipresent, the source of all life. In other words, it is Immortality itself, flowing alongside time, coexisting with heaven and earth.”

“So, we’re not just aiming to fuse with a Demi-God, but specifically with the Circle Cicada Demi-God.”

Skadi explained, “The Cicada Song Sharing Ritual involves gathering 42 sorcerers to open the Gate of Truth together, converging 42 different tributaries of the Golden Flow Water to fully awaken the Circle Cicada. This is what we call the ‘Cicada Song.’”

“At the same time, we transform into time-based beings capable of containing a Demi-God. But for a single sorcerer, recklessly containing a complete Demi-God is far too dangerous. Since all we truly need is the ability of Immortality, we-“

At that moment, a resonant cry, like the trembling of space-time, echoed above the Golden Flow Water. The river itself seemed to freeze, and time within the entire palace slowed to a crawl.

Then, the legendary sorcerers suddenly ceased their struggles, allowing themselves to be swept away by the river’s reverse current, even actively swimming toward the source of the cry!

“-only need to consume a portion of the Circle Cicada.”

As soon as Skadi finished speaking, she turned and plunged into the reverse current.

Ashe was still standing there in shock when he saw Silver Lantern rush forward to join the feast. With no other choice, he followed the crowd, letting the current carry him along.

Save a bite for me too!

## Chapter 594: The Cicadas Cry, the Mans Demise

It was only at this moment that Ashe fully realized he was no longer an ordinary being.

An ordinary being would never be able to swim in the Golden Flow Water, let alone take a sip of that golden liquid-it had no particular taste, somewhat like cool well water. He wondered what the Golden Flow Water would taste like when steamed into a creamy milk tea for Lala Fatty.

His previous ‘sensory premonition’ was actually his body sensing the flow of the Golden Flow Water. The Golden Flow Water originates from the movement of all things in the world, and reality itself is its source. The reason all things age and decay is because they are gradually corroded by the invisible Golden Flow Water-at least, that’s how aging is defined in the world of sorcerers.

Ordinary people, even sorcerers, cannot sense the flow of the Golden Flow Water. But Ashe and other Trial Takers, whose time talent has been amplified to an absurd degree, can faintly perceive this flow and even alter its direction to some extent, giving rise to a premonition-like instinct.

In a sense, Ashe can no longer die of old age. He can now swim in the Golden Flow Water, so naturally, he is no longer affected by time. It’s like if you can drink lava, would you still be afraid of eating a spicy hotpot?

However, judging from Skadi's and others' reactions, this 'ultimate time talent' likely has its limitations. It might only last for a certain number of days, or perhaps it will disappear once he leaves this underground palace.

If he wants to maintain this state, or even go further and turn the Golden Flow Water into the source of life, he must assimilate a true time creature-the Circle Cicada!

Immortality!

To say Ashe doesn't desire it would be a lie. Although there is the theory of 'eternal suffering,' look at how the Divine Sovereigns have ruled the world for so many years. None of them have been heard to hang themselves. Instead, they've been busy creating various forms of social Kingdoms in reality and orchestrating the Great Appointment of the Six Nations in the Virtual Realm. Clearly, the joys of immortality are beyond the imagination of ordinary people.

Moreover, just one bite can grant immortality-missing out on such a good deal would be a shame. Ashe even felt that it might be too generous. Perhaps it should come with some curse like 'being chased by a snail,' otherwise, this immortality wouldn't feel very secure.

Soon, they saw a giant golden cicada appear at the end of the passage. It clung to the wall, its body about three meters long, its two pairs of membranous wings slightly trembling. Its large compound eyes were located on either side of its head, and when Ashe looked over, he noticed one of the pupils in the compound eyes was staring directly at him.

Its head and tail segments were almost perfectly round, while its body and wings were angular and rectangular, giving it the appearance of something a child might draw-no wonder it's called the Circle Cicada.

Its location was precisely on the cicada-shaped mural that Ashe and Vesser had seen earlier. Now that the mural had disappeared and the Circle Cicada had emerged, it was clear that the creature had been lying dormant on the wall, barely clinging to life, until enough Golden Flow Water had revived it from the mural.

At that moment, the orc legendary sorcerer at the front had already reached the end. He leapt up and grabbed the Circle Cicada, though he hesitated slightly-how exactly was he supposed to eat something this big?

But he didn't stop. He seized one of its membranous wings and took a bite.

Crack!

The orc's teeth were strong enough to shatter marble, yet when he bit into the delicate cicada wing, it was his own teeth that broke. A front tooth chipped off!

At this point, the excited legendary sorcerers finally began to calm down. Ashe and Vesser also quickly halted their momentum.

They realized a very serious problem.

"Your original plan wasn't to try and devour the Circle Cicada yourselves, was it?" Ashe asked. "I remember that even an ordinary Demi-God can't be killed through normal

means. You either have to eliminate all its disciples first or exhaust the energy of its divine hosts...”

“In the original plan, we were supposed to wake up already at the dining table, ready to share a pre-prepared Circle Cicada,” Skadi at the front murmured. “If the experiment succeeded, a small portion of the Circle Cicada would be left behind, fed with Golden Flow Water to regenerate, and then shared again, granting us all Immortality, eternal and unending...”

“But now the Circle Cicada cult is gone,” Ashe said. “Don’t you Trial Takers have any backup plan?”

At this point, Vesser suddenly asked, “You said the Circle Cicada’s food is the Golden Flow Water?”

“If it loves drinking Golden Flow Water, then what do you think we, Trial Takers whose Gates of Truth are connected to the Golden Flow Water and who can swim freely in it-essentially beings of time-are to it?”

It was then that everyone noticed something. As the Circle Cicada continued its incessant chirping, the orc legendary sorcerer who had been holding it was slowly dissolving.

It was as if a straw had been inserted into his body, sucking him dry like yogurt. Not only was his insides being drained, but even his outer skin was dissolving entirely, leaving not a single drop behind. In no time, the orc legendary sorcerer had vanished, and the Circle Cicada seemed to have grown just a tiny bit larger.



As if savoring the aftertaste, the Circle Cicada gently landed back into the Golden Flow Water, its compound eyes fixated on the little treats in the river.

In that moment, Ashe suddenly understood how Lala Fatty must have felt.

There was no need for words; everyone quickly turned around and swam back against the current of the Golden Flow River. Originally, Ashe and Vesser were at the back of the group. Now, turning around should have placed them at the front, but these legendary sorcerers not only surpassed them in realm but also in swimming skills, swiftly overtaking the two.

Vesser was somewhat better off, being second to last, because Ashe was dead last.

Though Ashe knew that “the classes you skip will eventually catch up with you,” he hadn’t expected that the swimming lessons he skipped in the Sea of Knowledge would become his weakness at such a critical moment!

He looked back, relieved that the Circle Cicada was slow. Even with his swimming speed, he should easily escape-

What!?

Ashe's body stalled, nearly swept into the mouth of the Circle Cicada by the Golden Flow River.

He forcefully stabilized himself, struggling against the current, but felt an increasing resistance. Indescribable loneliness, despair, and bleakness gradually gnawed at his mental state.

Insignificant.

Every drop of the Golden Flow River represented a mortal's lifetime. The swathes he swam through were the past lives of millions; each stroke forward spanned the rise and fall of cities. Everything he valued or despised was less than a drop in this vast river.

It was then that Ashe recalled his venture into the Golden Flow River with the Sword Princess and the Witch. Given the lifespan of mortals, it was nearly impossible to withstand the relentless wash of the river. It was manageable to drift along or remain still, but swimming against the current was like a single drop trying to move against millions.

While swimming upstream, he, the Sword Princess, and the Witch supported each other, their lifespans pieced together just enough to maintain their selves in the vast expanse of the river.

But alone, how could one withstand the long erosion of time?

He looked up and saw Silver Lantern still ahead of him. Although her pace had slowed, she was making gradual progress and hadn't been stripped of her resolve or confidence by the river.

Ahead of Silver Lantern, the legendary sorcerers also struggled forward. Though their lifespans far exceeded those of Ashe and his companions, they likely lacked experience in swimming against the Golden Flow River. Encountering such an intense mental barrage unprepared, they would need much time to adapt.

Suddenly, Silver Lantern stopped. Despite her efforts to push forward, she couldn't advance an inch further. Each time she moved slightly ahead, her body would naturally weaken and be swept backward.

But Ashe encountered his limit even sooner; he bobbed up and down in the Golden Flow River, not swept away by the waves but also unable to break through them. This was no longer about determination; it was simply that his lifespan was too short, and even the sharpest blade must rely on a sturdy enough blade body to cut through.

Both realized what needed to be done, but each waited for the other to make the first move.

After a brief hesitation, suddenly, the Circle Cicada let out a chirp. Ashe quickly reached forward while Vesser reached back. Their movements, nearly perfectly synchronized, propelled them swiftly upstream, quickly catching up to the legendary brigade that had struggled to advance!

Just then, they saw splashing water ahead, clearly a fight was happening.

Someone yelled, “Mess, have you lost your mind? Two hundred years have passed outside, is now really the time to settle scores?”

“I’m not crazy,” Mess replied. “Our only way out is to swim through the Golden Flow Water. The flow rate of the river is related to the number of tributaries... Although we are all Divine Fire Seeds, and the Gate of Truth opened by resonance can’t be closed, if a person dies, the Gate of Truth will have to close no matter what!”

“Besides, it takes time for the Circle Cicada to consume a person!”

With a loud shout, a middle-aged sorcerer was suddenly kicked into the air. Ashe and Vesser quickly dodged, watching as he was swept toward the Circle Cicada. Sure enough, the Circle Cicada stopped, even as the sorcerer tried desperately to swim back, but its three pairs of massive legs had already firmly bound him.

There were no screams, no wails, just the cheerful chirping of the cicada expressing its delight.

It seemed as if the flow rate of the Golden Flow Water actually slowed down a bit. The Trial Takers made significant progress forward again before facing another bottleneck.

This time, as the legends confronted each other, two of them turned back to look at the weakest duo here.

Even Vesser, under her fox Mask, silently released Ashe's hand, her pupils filled with vigilance.

Splash!

As the water splashed, a Murloc legend approached Ashe. The battle that unfolded between the sanctuary sorcerer and the legendary sorcerer in the Golden Flow Water was devoid of any miracles.

Just after the clash began, Ashe felt an immense pressure – all his senses were fighting against the temporal erosion of the Golden Flow Water, nearly nullifying his time precognition, just like everyone else.

But the Murloc legend not only had superior aquatic combat skills, his physical constitution also surpassed Ashe's natural body. Icons like Silver Lantern had used silver dragon blood to enhance their bodies, and how could these legitimate legends from the Gray Fox Divine Era not have used fantasy creations to enhance their physiques?

Faced with the dual pressure of skill and attributes, Ashe quickly found himself at a disadvantage, forced to keep moving just to buy time.

That's when he saw Vesser also struggling and impulsively he dashed into her fight, coordinating with her to attack the Bearman legend!

Caught off guard, the Bearman was quickly pushed back, but then the Murloc caught up with Ashe. As he attempted a Draw Sword Slash, the slow swing in the water left his defenseless left side completely exposed, allowing the Murloc to strike fiercely!

However, Vesser timely covered his vulnerability, her chains skillfully grabbing the Murloc's arm. Ashe's sword came down, nearly slicing the Murloc's throat!

The Murloc and Bearman regrouped on either side, eyeing the situation, as Ashe and Vesser stood side by side in battle, yet both turned their heads away, not looking at each other.

With their sensory precognition disabled, they realized the only reliable allies were each other, having fought side by side for four days. Not only because they were the first ones the legends targeted for being the weakest, but more importantly, because after so many days of fighting together, they fully understood each other's tactical thinking, knowing each other's moves as well as they knew their own.

"Observer's been dead an hour and you're already this close to me, he won't be jealous, will he?" Vesser didn't miss any opportunity to provoke Ashe.

"Once we're out, I'm chopping you up to feed to Lala Fatty," Ashe said.

## Chapter 595: The Power of the Circle Cicada

Ashe never expected that fate could be so bizarre.

Legends standing at the pinnacle of sorcerers were desperately swimming for their lives in the Golden Flow Water.

The remnants of the Gray Fox from the previous era, upon waking, immediately turned on each other.

And enemies who, just half an hour ago, couldn't stand breathing the same air or sharing the same sky, now had no choice but to cooperate to survive.

Only now, as an interloper, Ashe finally managed to piece together what had actually happened.

Without a doubt, Silver Lantern had no knowledge of the Cicada Lurk Plan. She only knew that Nightfall had left behind a divine fire system that could be activated. However, the divine fire system required citizen authentication, which is why she broke into the Transcendent Cult to seize the Resonance String Demi-God.

As for how she knew that the Resonance String Demi-God could grant her citizen status and that the divine fire system existed in Nightfall... the sources of information were too numerous to count. The Sorcerer's Handbook in the virtual realm, the secrets of the sects she had destroyed, or perhaps she herself was a sorcerer from a sect related to the prophecy of fate.

In this world, even the dead cannot keep secrets.

Moreover, although Ashe didn't like Silver Lantern, he had to admit that she possessed an extraordinary level of determination and drive. For someone like her, once she set her mind on a goal, the entire world would make way for her.

Just as she had said in the Transcendence Building, fate is the Echo of a person's cry into the virtual realm.

But Silver Lantern only wanted to become a divine fire seed. She didn't anticipate that the divine fire was merely a sub-component of the Trial here. Because she became a divine fire seed with the ultimate time talent, she instinctively triggered a resonance with the virtual realm, forcing the Gate of Truth to open and allow the Golden Flow Water to pour in.

The other legendary sorcerers were in the same predicament. They had been sealed within statues, not only to halt their aging but also to forcibly close the Gate of Truth using the external environment... Ashe thought of a very direct analogy, but he restrained himself from pursuing it further.

This was also the reason why the legends had slept for over two hundred years without suffering from "Undirected Manic Intermittent Systemic Dysfunction Syndrome" or other side effects. Because, fundamentally, these side effects were the result of being corroded by the Golden Flow Water. But they had always maintained their ultimate time talent, allowing them to swim freely in the Golden Flow Water. How could they possibly be corroded by it?

Though both situations were accidents, Silver Lantern's was a case of "what shouldn't have happened, happened," while for the legends, it was "what should have happened, didn't."



For these once-great legends clinging to life, the Circle Cicada's Immortality Plan was their last hope. They had resigned themselves to failure if the plan didn't work, but they never expected that the plan wouldn't even reach its final step.

According to Ashe's speculation, the Circle Cicada cult probably didn't dare to deceive these legends. After all, legends weren't lone wolves; they had friends, mentors, and disciples. If the Circle Cicada had tried anything shady, the sorcerers outside, who hadn't had their spirits sealed, would have intervened.

But life is unpredictable. When the 'cataclysm' erupted in Senlo, all sorcerers-and even most adults-vanished. As a result, the Cicada Sound Project was indefinitely shelved, only to be reignited when Ashe and Silver Lantern stumbled into it, reviving this centuries-old Immortality plan that had been buried for over two hundred years.

Thinking about it, Ashe couldn't help but feel a pang of regret-if he hadn't entered, Silver Lantern would have been left to her own devices and likely perished here. They could have waited a few days aboveground, noticed the disappearance of the Blood Seed, and then happily sought a way home, leaving the Senlo wasteland behind to head to the Gospel, the Stars, or even the Blood Moon.

Back then, when faced with the Blood Hunter Gerard, I sat there like a nobody and got captured. But now, I'm a sanctuary sorcerer. If I ever meet him again, I'll make sure he... can't catch me.

Ashe wasn't foolish enough to pick a fight with the Blood Saints. After all, Gerard wasn't targeting him personally but rather the Cult Leader Heath. At most, Gerard was just doing

his job. If Ashe ever returned to the Blood Moon, his priorities would be avenging Harvey, visiting friends like Freya, and continuing his quest to travel across Kingdoms.

But no, he just had to barge into this Trial. Sure, he had the good fortune of meeting the Observer, but now there was no escaping this mess!

The Golden Flow erupted, the Circle Cicada was resurrected, and instead of feasting on the Immortal Circle Cicada, the Trial Takers were about to become its snacks!

And before the Circle Cicada could even catch up, they had already started turning on each other. The speed of the Golden Flow was tied to the number of tributaries-the slower the flow, the further they could swim. And the number of tributaries was linked to the life and death of the sorcerers, so the more people who died, the further the survivors could escape!

These legendary sanctuary figures, who could bend laws and invert causality in the outside world, now engaged in an unprecedented Battle Royale in the Golden Flow.

“Yibaqian, Karsnas, I’ll meet you at Ruby Mountain!”

With a piercing curse, a nearly three-meter-tall legend was swept downstream by the Golden Flow. Perhaps he had some unique bloodline or had enhanced his body through Physical Miracles. In the outside world, his massive frame would have been a shield against both physical and magical attacks. But in the Golden Flow, his size made him the perfect target.

His arms and legs were broken, his joints twisted into horrifying angles, and his wrists were bleeding profusely-his tendons had been severed. Without such measures, it would have been impossible to completely incapacitate this legendary sorcerer.

Just as the Circle Cicada finished its last snack, nature generously provided it with a larger, more chewy feast, and its chirping grew even more lively in response.

As the legends had predicted, the creature didn't move while eating, so it remained at the end of the Golden Flow.

Feeling the current slow, everyone stopped their fighting and hurried to swim upstream. However, after the underwater brawl, they instinctively kept their distance from one another. Ashe and Vesser stayed at the very back of the group, too wary to get close to the main crowd.

When Mess, at the front, once again hit the limit of his resistance, he turned back to look at the others.

"How pitiful," he said. "I, Mess Misty White, am a triple-system legend, the director of the Institute of the Blood of the Eternal. I've traveled to four Kingdoms, explored Angelic ruins, and been hailed as the 'Gears of Time.' Before me, no time legend could compare. After me, Skadi, Yuni, you are merely followers in my footsteps."

The people Mess pointed at didn't argue, a testament to his towering status in the Gray Fox Divine Era, second only to the Demi-Gods of that age.

"Now, the era we knew is gone, and we, the remnants, will pay the price for clinging to life, becoming food for the Circle Cicada," Mess continued. "We tear at each other like fish, shrimp, and crabs, fighting for a sliver of survival... But if we can't take a bite of the Circle Cicada, how long will we last even if we escape the Golden Flow? A month? An hour?"

The legends' expressions shifted. Unlike Ashe and Vesser, they had joined the Cicada Sound Project precisely because their time was running out. Once they left here or their time talent failed, they would rust and decay like ancient relics unearthed from tombs, fragile as bubbles ready to burst.

"Only death is an unavoidable fate," Ashe heard Silver Lantern murmur beside him. "Only eternity is salvation."

Ashe had almost forgotten he was still holding Silver Lantern's hand. The two of them didn't have the legendary lifespan, so they had to rely on each other to survive the temporal currents. Ashe was already frustrated and ashamed that he had to cooperate with Silver Lantern to stay alive, and now she dared to preach (though she was really just talking to herself). Unable to suppress his urge for petty revenge, he-

Squeezed her hand.

Vesser turned to look at him in surprise, and Ashe, realizing what he'd done, flushed with embarrassment-either let go and fight her outright, or hold her hand and fight side by

side. What kind of childish revenge was this? This was the Golden Flow, not a kindergarten class.

Just as Ashe was about to reluctantly let go, he felt a sharp pain in his hand-Silver Lantern was gripping his hand tightly. The two of them engaged in a childish game, even more immature than kindergarten antics, squeezing each other's hands in the water as a form of petty revenge.

"Mess," Skadi opened one eye, revealing a clockwork eyeball. "If you have something to say, just say it."

"Running away is useless," Mess said. "The plan continues. We must devour the Circle Cicada."

"How?" another person asked. "I didn't replace my teeth with the sharp fangs of the Raging Slashing Dragon."

"Didn't you bring knives and forks?" Mess pulled out a dagger, its gray blade glinting in a way that felt oddly familiar to Ashe. "No matter how powerful it is, it can only resist the Golden Flow. It won't withstand the corrosion of the Circle Cicada. But even if we can just scratch a wound and sip a drop of its essence, it would count as our victory."

It was then that Ashe suddenly realized their clothes, weapons, and even Silver Lantern's mask hadn't been corroded or worn down by the Golden Flow. Otherwise, the massacre would have turned into a chaotic bath. However, the Golden Flow couldn't only affect living beings. This meant that their clothing and weapons had been designed with the Golden Flow's effects in mind from the very beginning.

Ashe glanced at his Honey Sword, which was naturally unscathed. It seemed the craftsmanship of Aurora's Sorcerer Handbook was quite reliable.

"So, you're saying we should all go back and wound the Circle Cicada, eating as much as we can?" Karsnas asked, deeply concerned. "But-"

"Do you think we have any other way out?" Mess shot back. "Step out of the Golden Flow, take a look at the Senlo of two hundred years later, and then let our souls fade into nothingness-does that sound appealing to you?"

"We've already lost our past," Mess said, gripping the dagger between his teeth. "We can't lose our future too!"

"While it's still eating!" With a powerful leap, he surged forward with the current toward the Circle Cicada. "Gears of Time, Mess!"

Ashe and Vesser heard several sighs among the legends, followed by one resounding declaration after another:

"Named Blade Moonshadow, Disco."

“Night and Flame, Bofang.”

“Phantom Bird Soaring, Cecil.”

“Silver Triumph, Kathleen.”

In an instant, nearly ten legendary sorcerers charged toward the Circle Cicada alongside Mess. The Circle Cicada was still devouring the giant legend, seemingly oblivious to their actions.

Clang!

When the legendary Disco swung his blade, a cascade of sword shadows appeared, as if he had instantly slashed into the Circle Cicada. Even from a distance, Ashe felt his hair stand on end, a chilling sensation running down his spine as if he himself had been struck!

The swordsmanship of the legendary realm!

Without the aid of spirits or miracles, merely by wielding his blade and harnessing his ultimate time talent, he managed to unleash a slash that distorted time, even causing a mental shockwave from a distance!

If he were to recklessly display his swordsmanship miracles outside, just the sight of his slashes could potentially kill a large number of onlookers!

“Coward.”

Silver Lantern’s taunts were always so timely. Ashe coldly glanced at her, suddenly grabbing her wrist-admiration, how do you manage to keep your palm from getting goosebumps?

You bastard, weren’t you also terrified by the legendary swordsmanship!

Although the other legends didn’t possess legendary swordsmanship, they more or less had sanctuary-level close combat abilities. One after another, they inflicted wounds on the Circle Cicada, causing it to bleed!

Could it really be effective!?

Just as Vesser was also itching to join in, Ashe suddenly grabbed her hand and desperately swam forward!

“Zhi-“



Before the legends could extend their tongues to lick, the Circle Cicada let out an unprecedented cry, and in an instant, all its injuries vanished!

“Le-“

With the second cry, the legends surrounding the Circle Cicada turned into a pile of clothed skeletons!

Even those who hadn’t yet jumped onto the Circle Cicada but were merely close to it also turned into skeletons!

Notably, the Golden Flow Water around the Circle Cicada suddenly thinned slightly but was quickly replenished.

The Trial Taker was almost speechless with shock at this scene. Suddenly, a middle-aged sorcerer appeared near Ashe and Silver Lantern-it was Mess.

Mess stared intently at the Circle Cicada, his eyes filled with both fear and fervor.

“The Circle Cicada... can actually cast spells?”

## Chapter 596: Shared Crossing

### Chapter 596: Shared Crossing

Nightfall, Twinborn Palace.

“So, is Circle Cicada a codename shared by several Demi-Gods?” Igor asked.

The Dark Serpent Twins shook their heads. “The titles of Demi-Gods are exclusive. Even those within the same faction or sharing the same ideals will only share specific characters, such as ‘Transcendence,’ ‘Twinborn,’ or ‘Tribulation Fire.’ They are never entirely the same.”

“Aren’t you two high-ranking members of the Twinborn Cult?” Harvey leaned against the coffin and asked. “Why are you idling here?”

“The Twinborn Abyss is the most important matter for our cult,” the Dark Serpent Twins replied without a flaw. “And only we have the capability to monitor outsiders like you.”

“Strange,” Igor frowned. “It’s written here as if Circle Cicada still exists, and experiments can even be conducted on it...”

“Circle Cicada does indeed still exist.”

Everyone turned to look at Raven, who had been silently meditating.

“I once hunted down an evil raven who possessed a gray fox heritage. It could instantly kill anyone below the Sanctuary level. After his cult was destroyed, the right half of his body turned green. He was insane yet cunning, slaughtering several towns and taking pleasure in shaving the right side of living people’s bodies. I, Kalan, and Tanomoo set a trap and killed him.” Raven’s voice showed no trace of anger, suggesting that the word ‘killed’ likely encompassed many brutal punishments that had already quelled his rage. “Tanomoo discovered that the gray fox heritage, which allowed him to kill instantly, was actually a box containing the limb of a Demi-God.”

“That limb belonged to Circle Cicada. Anything touched by Circle Cicada’s aura would rapidly age and corrode. That’s the secret of the gray fox heritage.”

The Dark Serpent Twins asked, “How did you confirm it was Circle Cicada?”

“Tanomoo said so. She’s a prophecy sorcerer,” Raven replied. “She’s always right.”

“Demi-Gods can have their limbs disassembled?” Harvey was clearly more interested in this.

“Probably not now. If anyone could do it, word would have spread,” the Dark Serpent Twins said. “But if it was during the Gray Fox Divine Era... Wait, Circle Cicada’s disciples would never treat Circle Cicada like this. So, the experimenters here don’t worship Circle Cicada? How did Circle Cicada survive without disciples?”

“Faith isn’t limited to devotion,” Igor said. “It seems they wanted Circle Cicada to evolve.”

The Dark Serpent Twins asked, “How else can a Demi-God evolve?”

“Didn’t they say it? Their path to Immortality is to become a wise Demi-God. But conversely, it doesn’t seem entirely implausible.”

Everyone froze. The Dark Serpent Twins frowned in unison. “Are they trying to awaken Circle Cicada’s intelligence?”

“Exactly,” Igor nodded. “But it seems the plan was eventually scrapped. For one, they discovered that the only material capable of enhancing a Demi-God’s intelligence was sorcerers themselves, but even after consuming a few Sanctuaries, there was no noticeable effect. Secondly, the changes in Circle Cicada seemed to deviate significantly from what they had envisioned.”

What changes?

However, the Con Artist didn’t elaborate further. He sat back in his chair, set down the documents in his hand, and said, “You can take these files back now.”

The Dark Serpent Twins immediately asked, “Are they no longer needed?”

“There’s nothing more to analyze,” Igor slumped over the table, his voice low. “In the end, what does it matter if we uncover the secrets of the Trial? We have no means of influencing the Abyss. Knowing too much only serves to satisfy our curiosity...”

He glanced sideways at Tamashi. “Might as well be like that Raven over there, sitting in meditation and waiting for the results.”

“After days of work, we’ve still come up empty-handed,” Igor tapped the table lightly, his tone soft and weary. “I’m tired. Harvey, let Alice out. I’m going to take a nap in the coffin.” RANÖBES

Harvey frowned at him-that was incredibly rude. Did he think he could just waltz into someone’s coffin whenever he pleased?

But at that moment, the Dark Serpent Twins looked conflicted and couldn’t help but speak up.

“Actually, it’s not entirely...”

“If only...”

Got them.

Igor's lips slowly curled into a smirk.

Ashe and Vesser stared at the legendary Gray Fox, Mess of the Gears of Time.

Weren't you supposed to have charged ahead and sacrificed yourself? Why are you still here!?

Yet Mess showed no shame for having pushed others to their deaths. He was fixated on Circle Cicada, muttering to himself, "Could this be the Circle Cicada cult's plan after all? Or is it the result of it consuming us? But how? A Demi-God wouldn't..."

Ashe found it strange and couldn't help but ask Silver Lantern, "What's the big deal about Circle Cicada casting spells?"

Vesser replied, "Casting spells is the exclusive domain of spirits."

"And not just any ordinary spirits."

Skadi's voice came from behind. The legend seemed to still hold some goodwill toward them. "Circle Cicada instantly heals its injuries by reversing time, returning itself to a state before it was harmed. Those who turned into skeletons had their time accelerated by decades, so they instantly decayed into bones."

"It's not about aging or recovery-those are continuous temporal processes, meaningless to time-immune beings like those resistant to Golden Flow Water. Circle Cicada grasps each individual's 'fate' through the river of time and replaces it, which is why it takes effect instantly," she said, unable to hide her awe and longing. "Capturing decades of fate through time... that's already the domain of deities..."

"Not necessarily," Mess suddenly interjected. "When it cast the spell, it consumed a lot of Golden Flow Water. Under normal circumstances, even with the support of a legendary sorcerer's spellforce, it could probably only adjust fate for ten seconds-unless someone could carry an entire river of Golden Flow Water around."

"It's roughly at the level of a Four-winged Spirit, yet it possesses the power of a Five Wings deity," he said. "Even if Circle Cicada might be an exception, it's still an unprecedented discovery. If we can make it out alive..."

Just thinking about it, Ashe realized this could be a groundbreaking technological revolution.

Even if it only transforms a Demi-God into a Four-winged Spirit, the ability to consistently obtain Four-winged Spirits would be extraordinary. Moreover, these Four-winged Spirits could be custom-made!

Whatever obsession one has, they could cultivate a corresponding Demi-God, which would naturally evolve into a specific spirit!

Take Circle Cicada, for example-a dual-element spirit of time and fate. A sorcerer couldn't summon it themselves; they could only stumble upon it by chance in the Virtual Realm. In the Distant Sky Domain, it would involve encountering the relevant affix, then the reward of an affix bubble, and finally drawing it... Every sorcerer who possesses an ultra-rare spirit has likely sunk thousands, if not tens of thousands, of attempts. It might take decades just to encounter one ultra-rare spirit.

Compared to relying on luck, this technology that allows for the customization of rare spirits would drive every legendary figure to madness!

The problem is that this process consumes sorcerers with strong obsessions. But that's fine-as long as a special environment is created where these sorcerers willingly become Demi-Gods, then...

Ashe paused, suddenly realizing this wasn't exactly a novel idea.

At that moment, Silver Lantern impatiently tugged at him, and Ashe noticed that the group had moved forward quite a bit. With many people dead, several tributaries of the Golden Flow Water had closed, slowing the current significantly and extending their progress.

"Mess, you despicable scoundrel! You tricked so many into dying earlier, and now you dare to act again!" A legendary figure ahead roared in battle. "We can't let you stay any longer! Let's all send him to feed the cicada!"



“You didn’t rush forward earlier because you wanted to see if others would succeed first, didn’t you? I’m just doing the same as you,” Mess said. “There’s no cooperation now. Everyone wants to kill others to slow the flow and make Circle Cicada stop to feed. Whether you or I die, they’d accept it. Why would they help you?”

Ashe glanced back and saw that Circle Cicada was indeed chasing them. Although the golden cicada wasn’t fast, they themselves were moving slowly, and there was a limit to how long they could keep swimming. Without intervention, they would inevitably become the cicada’s buffet.

Soon, Mess won. The legend whose limbs had been broken drifted downstream, his blood a deep blue, likely the result of enhancements from a fantasy creation similar to the Dragon Blood Cultivation System. Circle Cicada, now with a new snack, paused to enjoy its meal.

Ashe and Vesser cautiously stopped further back. When they saw Mess turn to look at them, their hearts tightened, but Mess soon turned away and continued swimming forward with determination.

The river churned, waves splashing everywhere.

Suddenly, Yibaqian, a legend in the front ranks, came to a halt.

Not just a pause-as Mess, Skadi, and others passed him, he didn't move forward but was instead swept back by the Golden Flow.

Everyone glanced at him and immediately understood what had happened.

It wasn't the flow or his physical limits. It was his will.

If will is a blade, the sharper it is, the better it can cut through the Golden Flow. But blades dull and rust over time, and once they rust, they're useless.

Under the endless erosion of the Golden Flow, only the sharpest will can reach the other shore; only the most resilient will can endure to the end.

Perhaps he was tired, or perhaps this was simply his limit. In any case, Yibaqian's will had rusted. He couldn't even maintain his sense of self, and the Golden Flow swept away his fighting spirit.

He was doomed.

He seemed to realize this too, turning to look back at the others with a gray, lifeless gaze in his eyes.

“Let’s die together!” Yibaqian growled, letting the Golden Flow wash over him as he completely abandoned his defenses and attacked the Trial Takers behind him with wild ferocity.

But no one engaged with him. Whether they blocked or dodged, as long as they passed him, Yibaqian would be swept away by the current.

“Moryu, you’re dead!”

However, Yibaqian seemed to have a personal vendetta against someone named Moryu. He latched onto him, biting and locking his legs around him, refusing to let go even when one of his eyes was stabbed.

The two of them tumbled down, locked in a fierce struggle. Ashe and Vesser naturally swam far to the other side to avoid the chaos. However, when Yibaqian spotted them, he opened his bloodshot eyes and roared, “How could I be weaker than a Sanctuary?!”

Even though Ashe and Vesser immediately tried to block them, the force of the current combined with Yibaqian and Moryu’s momentum was too much to withstand.

Boom!

Ashe and Vesser were sent flying. But that wasn't the end of it-Yibaqian wanted more people to join him in death, while Moryu hoped to grab onto something to stop himself. Both of them reached out, trying to latch onto the weaker Sanctuaries nearby!

Ashe and Vesser were both caught. Ashe quickly drew his sword, intending to chop off Yibaqian's hand. However, Yibaqian had grabbed him from behind, clutching his right shoulder with a grip that felt like it could crush his shoulder blade. The angle made it nearly impossible to swing his sword effectively, and a simple stab likely wouldn't make this deranged legend let go.

In desperation, Ashe glanced over at Silver Lantern, who had been caught by Moryu's grip on her leg. With a swift motion, Ashe brought down his Honey Sword, cleanly severing Moryu's tendons and forcing him to release his hold.

Silver Lantern was spared. She looked at Ashe, who had just saved her life, and Ashe met her gaze through her fox Mask. But Ashe was still being dragged by Yibaqian, hurtling dangerously close to Circle Cicada's gaping maw.

Ashe extended his left hand. Vesser, quick to act, grabbed hold and swiftly closed the distance. With a deft motion, she crushed Yibaqian's wrist and ulna as easily as cracking an egg.

Yibaqian finally let go, and both he and Moryu tumbled toward Circle Cicada.

The cicada, having just finished its last "snack," paused for a moment before letting out a cheerful chirp, as if thanking the Golden Flow for its generous offering.

Ashe and Vesser managed to stop their momentum. Without a word, without rest, and without even exchanging a glance, they struggled forward in the Golden Flow, swimming with a slightly quicker pace than before.

## Chapter 597: She Doesn't Like Reading

Yibaqian was by no means the only one who had fallen.

The Golden Flow Water was the manifestation of vast time. It was not an attack, nor was it corrosion, but rather erosion. Even if your ideal was as solid as a rock, it would eventually be worn away by the relentless drip of water. Even if your Kingdom was prosperous and powerful, it would eventually become a relic of history.

No one could catch up to time, nor could they resist it.

Yibaqian was merely a precursor. After him, legends one after another became stagnant in the Golden Flow Water. No matter how hard they struggled, they were ultimately washed away. They might have had many great ideals, such as continuing to follow the Demi-God of the Gray Fox Divine Era, expanding the boundaries of Spellcasting, exploring the forbidden

zones of Angels, and so on. But in the Golden Flow Water, their ideals were eroded into nothingness, and their persistence faded. If they didn't move forward, they would fall behind.

This was the norm of the world. Most people could only go with the flow. Only the strong could see the direction of the current, and only the saints could swim against it.

People like Yibaqian were once part of the saintly ranks two hundred years ago. Unfortunately, time had taken everything from them. They no longer had a home.

"Cough, cough!"

After choking again, Ashe felt he was nearing his limit.

The sheer will to survive was utterly powerless against the Golden Flow Water. Every drop of this river was the most desperate cry of life. Back in the Golden Flow Water of the Time Continent, he had barely managed to resist the torrent because he was with the Witch and the Sword Princess. But now...

He glanced out of the corner of his eye at Silver Lantern beside him. Though her pace was slow, her movements showed no hesitation. Clearly, the Golden

Flow Water couldn't shake her resolve. In fact, she was essentially pulling Ashe forward.

What was wrong with this world? Why were the wills of the wicked always so much stronger than those of the good? Ashe mocked himself inwardly, gritting his teeth and slapping the water with all his might. His mind wandered to thoughts of where he belonged.

Igor and the others were surely still up there, thinking of ways to save him. If he didn't make it back, they would eventually disband. Igor would go to the Four Pillars Cult and play along with Mercury Trojan Horse. Tamashi would hunt down the Four Pillars Cult and inevitably clash with Igor. Harvey would keep digging until he found his remains...

Lise, even without him, would surely grow up happily in the Royal Palace of Yisuo. But if possible, he still wanted to see Lise grow up. She would undoubtedly be cute and beautiful, though her love for food might turn her into an adorable chubby girl... And Annan...

Anfel was also waiting for Igor. If he wasn't around, Igor might just turn into a scoundrel...

And then there was the one in the Virtual Realm, the one he cherished the most, the one he could never let go of...

Ashe nearly gritted his teeth to dust, pushing through the waves of the current, keeping pace with Vesser!

My life has only just begun!

“My life cannot end like this!”

Suddenly, a piercing wail erupted from a legendary figure ahead. This wasn't the first fallen one whose will had rusted, but the legends around grew tense. “Kina, don't act rashly!” “Kina, calm down! You're the mental sorcerer known as the 'Dreaming Songstress'!”

Ashe didn't understand why everyone was so on edge, but Silver Lantern's voice beside him was grave. “Be careful.”

“Why?”



“Shouldn’t you know this better than anyone?” Vesser stared at Kina, who was being swept back. “Even without a spirit, a mental sorcerer is dangerous, let alone a legendary one.”

Ashe thought of Igor and nodded in agreement. Then he turned his gaze to Kina, preparing with Vesser to dodge at any moment.

But as Kina struggled, he began to sing a mournful melody with a clear, resonant voice.

Almost everyone froze, as an overwhelming sense of homesickness seeped into their minds through their ears.

This song of Kina’s wasn’t his strongest, but it was certainly the most effective-after all, most here had just learned they had lost over two hundred years of their past. Even Kina himself had rusted in will because he knew he no longer had a home to return to.

With the enhancement of legendary-level technique, combined with the raw emotion of despair, even without a spirit, it was enough to be called a Miracle.

But legends were still legends. Many shook off the melancholy instantly, while others slowed down. Yet, some sentimental sorcerers were dragged down by Kina's invisible hand.

Thud.

Vesser realized she was being pulled back. She turned her head and saw a pitiful soul sinking into despair.

Ashe paddled forward with all his might, his face twisted as if he wanted to kill someone, but his body felt light and powerless, like a deflated balloon being swept away by the water. Rationally, he knew this couldn't go on, but emotionally, he was unleashing months of pent-up grief.

He was human, after all. His heart wasn't made of iron. How could he truly let go of the past? When he saw the Observer, he had been genuinely happy, even if it was just a false solace. At least he could talk to the Observer until his eyes grew moist.

These legends had only heard that their homes were gone. They hadn't yet seen the Senlo Wasteland, and they still had a chance to return to their homeland.

But he...

Thud!

Just as Ashe was about to completely let go, Vesser grabbed his hand. She was still swimming, but dragging this deadweight, she too was swept away by the Golden Flow.

"It's only because the Golden Flow has drained my strength," Ashe said. "Otherwise, I'd definitely drag you down with me."

What he meant was for Silver Lantern to let him go. But instead, she nodded. "As you wish."

She pulled Ashe closer, wrapping her arms tightly around his waist, still struggling against the Golden Flow.

"Do you want to die?" Ashe asked. "But if I'm gone, you'll definitely be caught by the Circle Cicada."

Kina's mournful song still echoed through the passage. Vesser said, "I really didn't expect you to be brought down by this song. To me, it's just some unpleasant music."

"It's a good thing you can't understand it," Ashe's voice actually softened. "Because you haven't lost enough."

"No, it's because what I have far outweighs what I've lost," Vesser stared at him. "Don't you still have someone you love?"

"Don't you want to kiss her lips? Don't you want to feel her warmth? Don't you want to be tangled up with her from morning till night?"

"I-"

"Don't listen to that awful song, listen to me!" Vesser interrupted him, pressing close to his ear. Her voice was softer, more enchanting, and more captivating than the mournful song. "After you leave the Virtual Realm, the moment you open your eyes, you'll see her. She'll be half-asleep, clinging to you and whining. After you both freshen up, you'll make breakfast together. In the morning, she'll be reading in the study, and even though you're not interested,

you'll sit beside her doing other things. You'll occasionally glance at each other, share a kiss, or play around."

"After lunch, you'll go to the library to read. The library is supposed to be quiet, but you can never settle down. You'll always try to make her laugh, earning warnings from others before finally calming down for a while. Occasionally, you'll quietly read the same book together."

"After dinner is your intimate time. This is when she's most obedient to you all day. You can do whatever you want, but she always guesses your intentions before you act. Only when you're both satisfied do you reluctantly lie down on the bed, gazing at each other as you enter the Virtual Realm..."

By the time Silver Lantern was halfway through her words, Ashe had already managed to resist the interference of the mournful song, regaining some strength.

And by the time she finished, he had completely stopped being swept back, his will to fight against the current fully restored.

Now, they were less than ten meters away from the Circle Cicada.

The lingering song grew closer. They turned their heads and saw Kina passing by them. They glanced at this despairing legendary sorcerer and continued their struggle upstream.

A moment later, the heart-wrenching mournful song finally stopped, signaling that the Circle Cicada had received a new snack.

“She doesn’t like reading,” Ashe suddenly said.

“I do,” Vesser replied.

At this moment, the Circle Cicada, having eaten a bit too much, let out a belch. Although it hadn’t stopped feeding, its body grew larger, and the chirping from its tymbal muscles became increasingly piercing.

With the Circle Cicada’s call, the flow of the Golden Flow Water slowed even further, but the intensity of its impact on the sorcerers’ wills didn’t decrease-it intensified.

If the earlier pressure from the Golden Flow was like a barrage of bullets raining down from all directions, now it felt like a massive iron ball rolling through, blocking the entire space. The former could be dodged with effort, but the latter had to be endured head-on.

“It can actually control the Golden Flow?” Ashe was stunned.

“The Circle Cicada’s earlier spellcasting used the Golden Flow Water as fuel, so naturally, it has limited control over it,” Vesser explained. “In essence, when a spirit casts a spell, it channels virtual realm power into reality through the Gate of Truth. Simply put, spellcasting requires spellforce and spellcasting materials. We sorcerers provide the spellforce, while the spirit transfers the materials from the virtual realm.”

“For example, spirits of the Time Sect consume Golden Flow Water, while fire, water, and Earth spells consume virtual realm materials. True creation from nothingness doesn’t exist in this world. All spirits can be said to be Spatial Miracles.”

Ashe recalled the resources he had found on the Time Continent and asked, “What about the Physical Sect, like Swordsmanship and Fist-Claw?”

“That involves the evolution of virtual realm materials,” Vesser replied. “But explaining it would be pointless-you wouldn’t understand.”

As they chatted, they didn’t stop moving, swimming desperately toward the main group.

With the resistance of the Golden Flow increasing, everyone’s speed had significantly dropped. Every inch forward felt like an immense struggle.

While the two were swimming back, three more individuals with rusted wills were swept downstream, lining up to await the Circle Cicada’s “blessing.”

As they approached the main group, Ashe and Vesser overheard the conversations ahead:

“Karsnas, after you survive, join me in rebuilding the Misty White cult!”

“No, I want to travel to other kingdoms. I want to visit the Blood Moon Kingdom, where Parase comes from, and see if the Blood Saints are truly as powerful as they say compared to our Dragon Blood Cultivation System.”



“Senlo is still our homeland. If it truly becomes a chaotic wasteland, I plan to rebuild it.”

“I want to go to the Gospel to seek an answer...”

Ashe was slightly puzzled by their sudden exchange of ideals, but Vesser understood their struggle. “Kina reminded them. They’re using words to strengthen their wills.”

“Without spirits, words can still be a powerful force if one masters the Mental Sect. In fact, if they weren’t proficient in the Mental Sect, they probably would’ve been swept away long ago.”

“The Mental Sect isn’t just about understanding others; it’s an essential path to knowing oneself. Any sorcerer who seeks inward is bound to achieve something in the Mental Sect, as it’s the only way to persist,” Vesser explained. “I’ve reached the silver level in the Mental Sect.”

“I’m at the Golden level,” Ashe said.

“Then why did you need my help?” Vesser teased.

As they spoke, they caught up with the main group and finally understood why even legendary sorcerers were using conversation to strengthen their resolve.

The Circle Cicada was growing smarter. Under its active control, the further upstream one went, the slower the current became, but the resistance was also more terrifying. It was gradually learning how to use the Golden Flow to its advantage, turning it into a tool for hunting.

Just staying afloat was an immense challenge for the sorcerers, let alone swimming forward.

Killing each other had become meaningless. Not only did the sorcerers lack the energy for it, but more importantly, the Circle Cicada was the one controlling the flow.

Moreover, everyone vaguely realized that the more people the Circle Cicada consumed, the higher its intelligence would grow.

“Ah!”

Karsnas was finally overwhelmed, swept toward the Circle Cicada’s mandibles by the slow current. This legendary sorcerer, who had wanted to witness the Blood Saints on the Blood Moon, couldn’t escape the fate of being swallowed by history.

Now it was Vesser’s turn to falter. She was repeatedly pushed back by the vast Riptide.

After all, none of the legendary sorcerers here were weaker than Vesser, and none had a smaller vision than her. But this was a temporal torrent that even they couldn’t withstand. The fact that Vesser had lasted this long was a testament to her legendary caliber.

Ashe didn’t say a word, simply falling back to her level. When Vesser glanced at him, Ashe looked slightly uncomfortable, glaring at her before turning his gaze forward.

For some reason, that look from Ashe acted like the finest whetstone, scraping away the rust from Silver Lantern’s resolve and sharpening her will.

Vesser's nearly shattered determination solidified once more, and together with Ashe, she continued to fight against the current.

## Chapter 598: Ashe, How Do You Plan to Kill Me?

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“So this palace is mimicking the Time Continent.”

Upon hearing Ashe's words, Vesser glanced at the golden dome above and immediately grasped its secret. Yet, she feigned ignorance and asked, “Really? Why is the ground of the Time Continent white?”

“Well, that's because...” Ashe paused, “You wouldn't understand even if I told you.”

“How could I possibly understand if you don't tell me?” Vesser said softly, “Do you believe that with just a hint of information, I could deduce the truth?”

“No, I don't.”

“What shall we bet on?”

“Let's bet on one thing,” Ashe stared at her, “Whoever loses has to do whatever the winner asks.”

Vesser didn't add any rules and simply nodded, "Alright."

Ashe confidently said, "The reason the ground of the Time Continent is white is related to the white bull."

Vesser pondered for a moment, then pretended to have an epiphany, "I see, the white bull is actually underneath, and the Time Continent is its belly, hence the white ground."

Seeing Ashe's stunned expression, Vesser couldn't help but laugh.

From the very first day she joined the team, Ashe had told her about the secret toxins of the Golden Fish and the Rainbow Tail. Naturally, she knew the truth about the Time Continent.

However, she had always been careful to separate the Virtual Realm from reality, never exposing real information in the Virtual Realm nor revealing Virtual Realm intelligence in reality.

This was the first time she used the intelligence she had gained in the Virtual Realm, just to win a verbal argument with Ashe.

"Remember, you owe me one thing."

Vesser said cheerfully, “Although there’s no guarantee, a good person like you wouldn’t renege, would you?”

Ashe retorted, “Do you think someone who travels with a Con Artist and a necromancer can be that good?”

“Good enough to be willing to deceive me is sufficient.”

Ashe didn’t immediately grasp the meaning behind Silver Lantern’s words, but she had already changed the subject, “Is the palace mimicking the Time Continent just to construct this Golden Flow river?”

At the end of the passage, the torch on the pedestal was still burning, not submerged by the Golden Flow. As mentioned earlier, the palace passage itself had a water flow system, which remained effective even after the Golden Flow erupted. Otherwise, the entire passage would have been filled with the Golden Flow.

In front of the pedestal was a slope, and in front of the slope was a drainage system. The Golden Flow stopped at the slope, naturally unable to invade the pedestal.

As long as they walked up the slope and stepped onto the pedestal, they could escape the Golden Flow. Although they still faced the threat of the Circle Cicada, at least they could take a moment to catch their breath and strategize.

And let's not forget, the Circle Cicada's power is built upon the Golden Flow Water. For it, the Golden Flow is its 'comfort zone,' just as time spirits reside within the Golden Flow. Once Ashe and the others escape the Golden Flow, the Circle Cicada might not even chase them out!

Seeing the end point, everyone's spirits lifted. From then on, there were no more casualties. Even though the Golden Flow slowed and the resistance grew stronger the further upstream they went, everyone gritted their teeth and pressed on.

Suddenly, Mess, who was at the front, began to rise out of the river. The further he walked, the more of his body emerged from the water-he had stepped onto solid ground.

Whether it was due to the countercurrent or the Circle Cicada's control, the water became shallower as they approached the end, almost as if they could run through it.

Yet, Mess's pace slowed significantly, almost to the point of taking one small step per second, inching forward bit by bit.

Even so, his progress was still the fastest among all the sorcerers. It was clear that Mess was on the verge of collapse, the resistance of the Golden Flow pushing him to his limits. But with the end so close, it was enough to keep any legendary sorcerer going.

When Ashe and Vesser also stepped onto the ground, the astonishing resistance of the water momentarily halted their movements. Mess, too, finally overcame all his hardships!

The water beneath his feet was now so shallow it couldn't even cover his heels. All he had to do was lift his leg to step onto the dry slope, completely escaping the threat of the Circle Cicada!

The sorcerers behind him held their breath, watching Mess's back with bated tension, ready to celebrate the first escapee. But some wondered if Mess, the "Gears of Time," with his cunning and deceitful nature, might turn against them once he was safe...

Yet, time doesn't pause for anyone's will. Mess took a deep breath, lifted his right foot out of the water, and stepped toward the dry surface of the slope!

The Circle Cicada did not chirp.

The sorcerers did not interfere.

This legendary figure from over two hundred years ago, a sorcerer who sought Immortality, was finally about to reclaim his fleeting freedom. He had already thought of many ways to leave this place and even began to covet the Circle Cicada behind him...

But all his perseverance, all his ambitions, were shattered in a single step.

Splash.



The crisp sound of water echoed like thunder in everyone's ears.

Mess stared at his right foot, still resting in the shallow Golden Flow Water in front of the slope, momentarily unable to comprehend what had just happened.

He tried again, watching as his right leg hovered above the water. But just as his foot was about to touch the slope, he saw golden water trickling down his leg. Then, as he stepped onto the water, his right foot slid back on the slope, which seemed to have zero friction after being soaked with the Golden Flow Water.

Many of the sorcerers stopped. Except for Ashe, everyone else's Physical bodies had been enhanced by the creations of Physical Weakness. Compared to them, an eagle would be considered nearsighted, so they could clearly see what had happened to Mess.

"The Golden Flow Water originates from the movement of all things in the world," Skadi suddenly said. "Everyone generates Golden Flow Water."

"It's not just that he generates Golden Flow Water," another legend chimed in. "It's that the Golden Flow won't let him leave! The slope is just an illusion. If there were no slope to push him back, the Golden Flow would follow him wherever he goes!"

"Is it the influence of the Circle Cicada?"

While the legends were debating, Mess finally spoke. “Chapter 2, third sentence of The Wheel of Time.”

Skadi replied, “Time has no beginning and no end.”

Mess said calmly, “The Golden Flow is the manifestation of time, and time is the concept of the Golden Flow. Any law that holds true in time is a natural law of the Golden Flow.”

The legends’ expressions turned grim. “Mess, are you saying...”

Mess continued, “The Golden Flow has no beginning or end, so those within it cannot escape from either end.”

Ashe couldn’t help but interject, “But I can traverse the Golden Flow! I can even fly out of it!”

“You can traverse it from the sides or spread your virtual wings to fly out of the Golden Flow,” Mess answered Ashe’s question kindly. “As long as there’s no rule against it, it’s not forbidden.”

He looked up at the golden dome and the four white pillars beside it. “This place goes to great lengths to mimic the Time Continent, creating the perfect environment for the rules of the Golden Flow to take effect, all to ensure that those in the river cannot leave.”

“It seems the Circle Cicada cult has another backup plan...”

Thud! Mess fell backward onto the slope, but as expected, Golden Flow Water seeped from his back, sliding him back into the river.

He allowed himself to be carried by the Golden Flow, drifting back under the watchful eyes of the sorcerers.

“If yesterday placed in tomorrow becomes two days ago, then should the day after tomorrow be today or yesterday?” he asked.

“First page, first question of Advanced Golden Time Problem Set,” Skadi replied. “Today.”

Though the Circle Cicada hadn’t finished its meal, when it saw Mess, it eagerly put down its yogurt and greeted him with the highest level of etiquette.

It seems that in the eyes of the Circle Cicada, there’s a hierarchy among its ingredients, and Mess undoubtedly ranks at the very top.

Another legend slowly made his way to the slope. He tried jumping toward it with both feet together, only to be slid back by the Golden Flow Water. He then attempted to leap onto the slope by stepping off the wall, but again, the Golden Flow Water seeping from his body sent him sliding back.

If they were on the Time Continent, they would have many ways to escape the Golden Flow: flying up, traversing the sides, or even breaking through the riverbed... But here, they were just ordinary Trial Takers with their spirits sealed.

Soon, the remaining legends began to give up one after another, collapsing like ancient relics left behind from two hundred years ago, their faces pale as they allowed the Golden Flow to wash over them.

In the blink of an eye, only four were still holding on.

“Does the wall not count as the sides?” Ashe muttered.

“It does.”

Skadi, walking slowly ahead, pointed to the ceiling. “If you could leave through the edges of the ceiling, you wouldn’t trigger the Golden Flow mechanism.”

“We’re essentially in the riverbed of the Golden Flow, and the sides are just the river walls,” the legend even chuckled. “You see, by creating such an environment, we can deceive the Virtual Realm and its rules. Sorcerers are truly creative beings, and this world is endlessly fascinating.”

Ashe asked, “Is there really no way to survive?”

“There is,” Skadi replied firmly. “The rules of the Golden Flow exist because of the Golden Flow itself.”

“If the Golden Flow were gone, we wouldn’t be bound by its rules.”

“Is there any point in stating the obvious, Skadi?” another legend couldn’t help but interject. “The Golden Flow originates from our Gates of Truth, and we can’t close those gates...”

“To completely stop the flow, we’d all have to die, closing all the Gates of Truth!”

“If we’re all dead, what’s the point of the Golden Flow?”

Hearing this, Ashe’s pupils constricted, but he forcefully resisted the urge to glance at Vesser.

However, at that moment, he felt a gentle scratch in his palm.

Not long after, that legend reached the slope, tried a few more times, and finally gave up. Surprisingly, he stripped off all his clothes and lay freely in the Golden Flow, as if taking a bath.

Skadi walked up to the slope. She lifted her foot and stepped onto it, watching as the Golden Flow Water seeped out and slid her foot back. Slowly, she opened her clock-like eyes, revealing a satisfied smile.

“Time... what a delicate plaything.”

As Skadi, too, was swept by the Golden Flow to the side of the Circle Cicada, the vast river was left with only two people still trudging forward.

The surroundings suddenly grew quiet, yet Ashe could hear his own heart pounding wildly. Their upper bodies had already emerged from the water, and he could feel his palms drenched in sweat. His breathing became shallow and rapid, almost uncontrollable.

Splash.

Splash.

Splash.

He looked down at the surface of the Golden Flow, faintly catching his own reflection. Then, a fox Mask suddenly appeared beside him.

“Ashe, how are you planning to kill me?”

## Chapter 599: The Same Reason

Chapter 599: The Same Reason

Beneath our feet was the gentle flow of the Golden Flow River, and behind us, the Circle Cicada was sipping its milk cap.

Sometimes, you can't continue living without hurting others.

“Your Gate of Truth hasn't opened at all,” Vesser said. “You're the only sorcerer who hasn't released the Golden Flow.”

“Once we die, the Golden Flow will completely dry up, and you'll be able to escape.”

“Even those legendary sorcerers couldn’t seal their own Gates of Truth,” Ashe’s voice was hoarse. “How could I possibly be the exception?”

“But you haven’t opened the Gate of Truth. I saw it.”

“Don’t you doubt that you might be mistaken? Every sorcerer has a Gate of Truth, and once you become a divine fire seed, it triggers virtual realm resonance, making the Gate of Truth impossible to close-“

“I couldn’t have been wrong,” Vesser said. “I’ve been watching you all along.”

Vesser knew Ashe didn’t have a Gate of Truth, a fact that came up during a casual conversation in the virtual realm. Ashe had once mocked himself for being a sanctuary sorcerer without even a single autonomous spirit capable of opening the Gate of Truth.

But she wasn’t lying.

Ashe turned to look at her, and she calmly met his gaze. Behind her fox mask, her eyes shimmered with an unusual light.

“Are you trying to deny this fact first to lower my guard, and then seize the opportunity to act? There’s no need for that,” she said. “I’m not like you. If I knew I was heading toward eternity, I wouldn’t drag others along. The final journey must be taken alone.”



“The outcome now is either you survive or none of us do. Since you still want to indulge in your delusions, why shouldn’t I indulge you?”

Ashe lowered his eyelids and sneered, “I don’t recall Silver Lantern being a good person. Is it because you’re about to die that you’ve finally had a change of heart?”

“Not at all,” Vesser replied without anger. “If it were anyone else, I would have killed them first to prevent them from killing me, and then held on until the very end, waiting for an unknown miracle.”

“But for you, I can fulfill all your requests.” She splashed through the Golden Flow River, step by step, heading toward a nonexistent end.

“Why? Haven’t I always been the avenger hunting you down?”

“Yes, the avenger,” Vesser replied, as if recalling something. “Then choose the death you’d like for me. Do you want to kill me swiftly with a single strike, sparing me the pain? Or do you want to make me suffer, bit by bit, until I die in agony? Strangled, disemboweled, beheaded, or dismembered? While this environment isn’t ideal for an execution, if you want someone to suffer, you can always find a way. When it comes to cruelty, every sorcerer is a genius.”

She grabbed Ashe’s hand and pressed it onto the hilt of his sword. “Go on, take your revenge for what you’ve endured, for your sense of justice. Do you want me to give up completely, or would you prefer I struggle a little to satisfy your desires-“

“Stop messing around! I’m not you!”

Ashe forcefully pushed her hand away, causing Vesser to stumble and nearly fall. But he quickly caught her and steadied her.

“I don’t torture people,” Ashe said, his voice firm. “When I kill, I make sure they think it’s just a fleeting illusion before they wake up.”

“...How many people have you killed?”

“If we’re talking about direct kills, not many. But if we’re counting the eradication of other cults, the destruction of Nightfall’s surface cities, the schemes that plunged rival sects into endless Deathmatches, and the Dragon Blood Cultivation System...” Vesser spoke calmly, “then it’s in the tens of thousands.”

Feeling the sudden increase in Ashe’s grip, Vesser glanced at him, the corner of her mouth curling slightly beneath her Mask. She knew lying or playing the victim would have been the smarter move, but for some reason, she wanted to expose herself so recklessly, completely unlike her usual self.

Even before she had summoned the delusion spirit, she had already mastered the art of hiding herself, only showing her intelligence, kindness, warmth, and other flawless traits, as if she had no flaws. After obtaining the delusion spirit, she had even hidden her name.

Before she betrayed the Tribulation Fire cult, everyone who met her was captivated by her perfect first impression, as if she were an untainted lotus. řãNõbEş

But with Ashe, she couldn't wait to dig up the tangled roots she had buried deep underground and lay them bare in the light. She didn't know what she was expecting, but she wanted Ashe to see them.

Ashe fell silent, and they stopped talking, conserving their last bit of strength to trudge through the Golden Flow. Though there was no communication, Vesser could almost sense Ashe's thoughts through their shared warmth-he would make his decision before they reached the slope.

The closer they got to the end, the greater the resistance of the Golden Flow River became, and the smaller their movements were. Every drop of Golden Flow Water felt like the strike of a giant bell, reverberating through their souls and shattering their thoughts.

To make matters worse, they already knew that reaching the slope wouldn't bring an end. The loss of a destination intensified the temptation, testing their willpower more severely. Every cell in their bodies urged them to give up, to submit to the tide of history, and to accept their fate.

Yet, Vesser grew steadier with each step. Though she had nearly been overwhelmed earlier, she was no longer affected by the Golden Flow.

Her will was like an uncut gem-the more time and hardship polished it, the brighter and sharper her gaze became.

Ashe, on the other hand, was struggling. Yet, Vesser kept dragging him forward. As he looked at her back, he felt as though he were witnessing a madwoman who could defy the wheels of history.

In the Gray Fox Divine Era, she would have stood alongside those legends, becoming a saint who explored the limits of humanity. In the Senlo Wasteland, she would have risen above millions of disciples, transforming into the Silver Lantern Master who overturned the world.

She felt no remorse for the countless people she had hurt. Her unyielding will meant that if she survived, she would continue to pursue her ideals, step by step, toward the apocalyptic end she envisioned.

If she died, the Golden Flow would dry up.

If she died, the story would end.

Splash.

Golden droplets scattered, falling onto the slope before sliding away.

Time had no end, but their journey did. Vesser, still holding Ashe's hand, finally reached the slope.

This was their end.

She stopped, suddenly turned, and grasped Ashe's Honey Sword, swiftly pulling it out. Throughout the process, she kept her eyes locked on Ashe, as if anticipating something.

Yet, Ashe remained calm, watching her. For two people who knew each other so intimately, a sword blade could no longer influence their battle.

Finding it uninteresting, Vesser flipped the blade and handed it back to him. Whether intentional or not, the tip of the sword now pointed directly at her throat. If Ashe were to thrust it with force, she wouldn't have time to react.

Ashe gripped the hilt but didn't move. Suddenly, he asked, "Didn't I lose a bet and owe you a favor earlier? Why not use it here?"

"Using it here would be such a waste," Vesser replied with a laugh.

Then when do you plan to use it?

Ashe suddenly recalled Igor. When they had left the Blood Moon through the virtual realm passage, Igor had stubbornly refused to use his wish to make Ashe save him. To this day, Ashe still owed Igor a wish.

You people...

He sighed inwardly and sheathed the sword.

“Even if the Golden Flow dries up, the Circle Cicada won’t disappear,” Ashe said. “It’s already awakened its hunting instincts. If I’m the only one left in the passage, do you think it’ll just let me go after it’s full?”

In the end, their real threat wasn’t the Golden Flow, but the Circle Cicada. It was like how your homework wouldn’t jump up and punch you if you didn’t do it—it’s your parents and teachers who’d scold you.

Dealing with the Golden Flow without addressing the Circle Cicada would only change its dining spot, but it would still eat what it wanted.

However, this reasoning only explained why it was possible not to kill Silver Lantern.

Silver Lantern didn’t respond, quietly watching him. Ashe turned his head away, refusing to meet her gaze, and gritted his teeth as he asked, “Am I wrong?”

“You’re absolutely right,” Silver Lantern replied with a soft laugh. “By the way, didn’t you ask me earlier why I’m willing to fulfill your requests?”

“I think it’s the same reason you chose not to stab me just now,” she said, leaning closer to Ashe as if trying to see him more clearly. “We’re both acting on the same impulse.”

Ashe ignored her and turned to look at the Circle Cicada behind them.

They had been moving slowly, so the Circle Cicada was almost done with its current meal.

The dozens of legends from the Gray Fox era, whose names alone could define that entire period, were now nothing more than a snack to satisfy the Circle Cicada for a few minutes.

Though the Golden Flow Water continued to erode their thoughts, at least they weren’t fighting against the current anymore. Ashe finally had the mental capacity to think about how to escape this hopeless situation.

Fighting was out of the question. In the Golden Flow, the Circle Cicada was practically a deity controlling time.

Escaping wasn't an option either. Even if the Cicada Transformation Chamber could take them back, reaching it would require passing the Circle Cicada, which seemed to have the ability to turn nearby people into yogurt. Earlier, some of the legends who had flowed downstream had tried to bypass the Circle Cicada to reach the chamber, but they had simply stopped at its mouth as they passed.

No matter how he looked at it, this was a dead end. Ashe racked his brain, trying to recall any artifacts from Aurora's Sorcerer Handbook that could help-but with his spirits sealed, he couldn't use any sorcerer abilities...

"Speaking of which," Ashe suddenly said, "is the Circle Cicada a spirit or a Demi-God right now?"

"It doesn't have to be one or the other," Vesser replied. "As the most peculiar existence, it retains the traits of a Demi-God while also possessing the spellcasting nature of a spirit."

"What I mean is, if it's a spirit, and we're sorcerers..." Ashe mused, "is there any way we could dominate it?"

But as soon as he said it, he shook his head, dismissing the idea. "To dominate a spirit, you'd at least need to touch it. But if we get close, we'll just become its prey."

Yet Vesser stared thoughtfully at the feeding Circle Cicada. She lightly scratched Ashe's palm, as if spreading her hesitation.



Ashe didn't ask. After a moment, Vesser slowly said, "I might have a way."

"You remember, don't you, that my blood isn't red?"

## Chapter 600: Bleeding

### Chapter 600: Bleeding

In their numerous confrontations with Silver Lantern, Ashe and his companions were not always at a disadvantage.

On the contrary, guided by Mercury Trojan Horse's prophecy, they had managed to catch Silver Lantern off guard and dealt her severe blows several times.

During the battle in Food Factory Town, Tamashi had pierced Silver Lantern's heart with the Grey Fox Blade-not just nearly, as Raven would never make such a mistake-had it not been for a life-saving Miracle, Ashe and his team would have already succeeded and prepared to return to the Gospel.

Although Silver Lantern had always used Miracles to disguise herself, there was one characteristic she couldn't hide: when injured, she bled silver blood.

It was only after Mercury Trojan Horse's explanation that they learned Silver Lantern had used the Grey Fox Heritage's 'Dragon Blood Cultivation System,' which condenses extraordinary blood by absorbing the life energy of nearby beings. Theoretically, this system shouldn't work on humans, but as 'unofficial citizens,' they didn't qualify for human status within the Dragon Blood Cultivation System.

The Blood Seeds within Ashe, Igor, and Harvey were extracting their life energy, condensing silver dragon blood cells, which were slowly flowing toward Silver Lantern. If they couldn't replenish their life energy in time, they would eventually be drained into mummies.

"A few drops of your silver dragon blood came from me," Ashe said.

"Since you know, I won't need to explain too much," Vesser replied. "Although silver dragon blood is called blood, it actually belongs to the category of fantasy creations. Because silver dragon blood is so powerful, even with all precautions, it would inevitably cause rejection. Therefore, the Grey Fox Sorcerers utilized the principle of 'mutual influence between body and soul,' enhancing the compatibility of silver dragon blood through the soul."

Ashe nodded repeatedly, but Vesser could tell he didn't fully understand. She rolled her eyes at him and said, "Simply put, my soul is contained within the silver dragon blood, which not only completely resolves the rejection issue but also allows me to improve my control over my body and enhance my talent in the Blood Spell Sect."

"Of course, this only uses the byproducts of normal soul metabolism and doesn't harm the integrity of the soul. For a Sorcerer, an intact soul is more important than anything." At this point, Silver Lantern also showed a hint of curiosity: "From the Sorcerer's Handbooks of others, I've read that the Blood Saints of the Blood Moon completely disperse their souls into their blood, claiming that 'blood is the currency of the soul,' thereby achieving immortality. I wonder how they managed to do that..."

Ashe pondered, "Your blood contains your soul... and then what?"

“Dominating a spirit isn’t just about physical contact-it’s a medium for the soul,” Vesser explained. “The real way to dominate a spirit is to lure it into your soul palace.”

Ashe thought back to his experiences in the Virtual Realm, realizing she was right. Though the word “lure” felt oddly fitting. It made sorcerers seem like hunters rounding up stray cats and dogs, summoning spirits akin to adopting newborn pets, and sorcerer battles nothing more than super-powered pet fights...

“You’re planning to use blood as a medium to dominate the Circle Cicada?” Ashe frowned. “But that would require us to get dangerously close to it.”

“Not necessarily,” Vesser said, pointing at the Circle Cicada. “Look, it’s not just eating them-it’s constantly drinking the Golden Flow Water.”

Ashe focused and noticed that while the Circle Cicada was using its proboscis to suck the “yogurt,” its entire body was absorbing the Golden Flow Water. Every drop that splashed onto its body seeped in almost instantly.

Though it resembled a cicada, it was, after all, a legendary spirit. Using its proboscis to eat was more of a ritual-it could absorb energy through its entire body.

Just like that orc legend from earlier, who was drained dry just by lying on its back. Clearly, the proboscis wasn’t its only means of feeding. Its entire body could become a mouth.

Golden Flow Water... silver dragon blood...

Ashe's eyes widened as he stared at the fox mask.

"We might not need to get close to dominate the Circle Cicada," Vesser said, her tone light. "I can control the silver dragon blood to flow downstream, mingling with the Golden Flow Water for it to absorb."

"But you said your blood only contains the metabolites of your soul," Ashe argued. "And the Circle Cicada might not even be a spirit that can be dominated. Even if it is, it's a Four-winged Spirit! How much blood would it take to dominate it?"

"Do we have a choice?"

Vesser released Ashe's hand, removed her chain glove, and held her wrist out to him. "Go ahead."

Ashe stared at her pale wrist, hesitating. After a moment, Vesser seemed to have an epiphany. "Oh, right. If it's just about the blood, we don't have to stick to the wrist artery. Chest, abdomen, thigh... You can leave as many marks on me as you want. You don't even need the sword-last time, you used your teeth to bite a hole in my neck."

"Or," Vesser said, tugging at the zipper of her combat suit, "do you want me to take off my clothes first before—"

Ashe grabbed her hand and made a shallow cut with his sword.

The silver blood formed a thin stream, merging with the golden waters of the Golden Flow, creating a shimmering blend as it flowed downstream. Silver Lantern hadn't lied—she could indeed manipulate the flow of blood slightly, directing the silver dragon blood precisely into the Circle Cicada's body.

“Feel anything?” Ashe asked.

“A little pain.”

“I meant the Circle Cicada!” Ashe was annoyed. Silver Lantern couldn't have misunderstood his question.

“Nothing,” Vesser replied, glancing at her now-healed wrist. “It's closed.”

Not just the Circle Cicada, but they, as quasi-temporal beings within the Golden Flow, also possessed certain peculiar traits. For instance, over the vast scale of time, their injuries healed rapidly.

Ashe made another cut on her wrist. The blood flowed for about twenty seconds before the wound closed again. When he raised his long sword for the third time, Vesser suddenly pressed down on the blade, forcing it deeper!

The sword nearly severed half her wrist. She let her hand hang, and silver blood cascaded from her fingers into the Golden Flow. If the river had previously been a mix of gold and silver, now it was as if a bucket of silver paint had been overturned. A river of silver poured into the Circle Cicada's mouth.

The Circle Cicada paused briefly, as if noticing a change in the water's taste. But Vesser's blood seemed palatable-or perhaps it was just curious-so it didn't mind and continued to drink.

"The cut you made earlier would've taken until the Circle Cicada reached us for my blood to run dry," Vesser mocked. "It's not your blood. Why are you so stingy?"

Ashe wanted to say something but held back. Yet Vesser seemed to hear his unspoken question. "It hurts. Of course it hurts. But... it's a wound you caused."

What does it matter if it's a wound I caused?

Ashe remained silent for a moment, then said, "The people you've dragged into this also feel pain."

“I don’t care,” Vesser replied, her gaze fixed on him. “Ashe, if you think facing death will make me ‘repent’ or ‘turn over a new leaf,’ you might as well sit back and watch me bleed out. In my eyes, you’re the ones who are wrong. I’m the only one who’s right.”

“Even if the whole world opposes me, it doesn’t matter. I can swim against the current in the Golden Flow, and I won’t care about going against the tide in reality either. Those who stand in my way, those who pass by, the innocent...” Her voice beneath the fox mask grew colder. “I’ve never cared about their feelings.”

“Ashe, I’m not a mental sorcerer or a necromancer,” she said. “I won’t change myself because of someone or something.”

Ashe asked, “Then what do you care about?”

“Before, I only cared about myself,” she said. “Now...”

Thud!

Silver Lantern suddenly collapsed. Fortunately, the current of the Golden Flow ahead wasn’t too strong, and Ashe immediately caught her, preventing her from being swept away.

“I’m fine,” she said, quickly standing up.

However, Ashe noticed her hand was ice-cold-a symptom of acute blood loss. The amount of silver dragon blood she had lost had reached a point where she could no longer maintain her bodily functions.

This was different from the Golden Flow's test of willpower. With willpower, you could deceive yourself, but the body was the body. If you didn't have enough blood, you'd suffer from oxygen deprivation, leading to brain fog or even a heart attack. They had no Miracles now; everything had to follow the laws of nature.

"Circle Cicada-"

"Not yet, not enough," Vesser said hurriedly. "I'm fine."

Yet, most of Vesser's body weight was leaning on him, unrelated to the Golden Flow's current. She was beginning to lose strength throughout her body. If this continued, she would lose consciousness before her silver blood ran out.

Ashe watched the silver blood dripping from Silver Lantern's wrist and suddenly felt a stirring within himself. He looked down at his hand. Though almost imperceptible, tiny specks of silver were indeed drifting from him toward Silver Lantern.

This was to be expected.



Because he was so close to Silver Lantern, the Blood Seed inside him had intensified its work, extracting his life energy and transporting it to her.

“Right,” Ashe murmured.

Vesser turned to look at him. “I’m your cursed Blood Seed,” he said.

With that, he reached out toward Vesser’s fox mask-

Slap!

Vesser forcefully pushed his hand away and shoved him back.

“You’d have to remove the mask to drink my blood,” Ashe said.

“I’m not a Vampire,” Vesser replied, lowering her eyelids. “I have no interest in your blood. And don’t touch my mask. I hate it when people touch me.”

Where was the Silver Lantern who was even willing to take off her clothes earlier... Ashe suppressed the urge to comment and said, "I'm your Blood Seed. Drinking my blood will help you regenerate quickly. If you lose consciousness from blood loss now, you'll completely ruin any chance of dominating the Circle Cicada!"

"You were willing to bleed to survive, and now you won't even drink blood?!"

Without waiting for Silver Lantern's response, Ashe drew his sword and sliced open his wrist.

Crimson blood flowed down his arm and into the Golden Flow.

"If we don't deal with the Circle Cicada, I won't escape either," he said, extending his hand. "Your turn."

Vesser stared at him coldly, then looked down. "You're quite decisive now," she said.

Perhaps resigned to the situation, Silver Lantern took Ashe's wrist. Yet she still refused to remove her Mask, stubbornly turning her back to him. As a result, she pressed her back against him, effectively blocking his view of her actions. This position, however, made it seem as though she was being held in his embrace.

Ashe shuddered.

He felt Silver Lantern's tongue repeatedly lick the wound on his wrist, drawing his blood into her mouth. The strange, sticky sensation combined with the pain from his wrist created an oddly unsettling feeling.

After a moment, Vesser spoke. "You're stingy even with yourself-such a shallow cut."

"Then I'll make it deeper this time," Ashe said, trying to pull his hand back, but Silver Lantern held on tightly.

"You just passed up the chance to hurt me, but I won't miss mine," Vesser said, her voice dripping with malicious glee as she bit down on his finger. "I've been wanting to hurt you as much as I please!"

"Ah!"

The pain shot straight to his core. Ashe felt his finger being brutally bitten by Silver Lantern.

This hurt far more than the wrist wound, especially as she used her teeth to widen the injury. Though Ashe was a seasoned sorcerer, no stranger to pain, he couldn't endure such senseless malice-especially since he hadn't intentionally hurt her earlier!

Ashe tried to pull his hand back, but Silver Lantern, surprisingly strong, gripped him like a vice. Yet, since she still needed to bleed, he couldn't risk harming her. Her position, with her back to him, presented an ideal target for retaliation-

Slap!

Silver Lantern jolted, then seemed to calm down, no longer using her teeth to deliberately hurt him. Just as Ashe breathed a sigh of relief, he realized she wasn't done yet.

Silver Lantern's tongue gently glided over his finger.

Fingers were far more sensitive than wrists, and easier for the tongue to caress. Combined with the faint pain from the wound... Amid the slow loss of blood, the alternating sensations of tearing pain and gentle soothing, an indescribable feeling lurked within the mix of numbness and ache-violent yet tender, seeping into Ashe's heart.

After the Circle Cicada let out a second burp-like chirp, Mess, who was at the front, suddenly burst into cheers. Ashe and Vesser looked up and saw a distant torch glowing in the distance-

That was the end of the Trial's passage and the starting point of the Golden Flow!

