

SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

Chapter 661: Oneiric Schism

It's hard to imagine any sorcerer not being thrilled by the term "Divine Sovereign Candidate." A Divine Sovereign is not only a magnificent being above all others but also embodies omnipotence. They are eternal, and they can welcome mortals into the Celestium, granting them everlasting happiness and endless pleasures.

They can pierce through hell to resurrect life, and they can graffiti the Kingdom as they please. The entire world is their amusement park, and the rise and fall of all things hinge on their whims.

The Witch excitedly clung to Ash's arm, the sword Princess's breath became shallow and her cheeks flushed, and even Vesser silently clenched her fist. Only Ash remained relatively calm, as becoming a Divine Sovereign might not solve his problems-like returning to Earth, or having the sword Princess agree to be his wife alongside the Witch...

Wait, Ash suddenly recalled that his time travel seemed closely linked to the Four Pillars Cult. The Four Pillars are likely at the Divine Sovereign level, so perhaps becoming a Divine Sovereign would reveal the secrets of time travel. Even if it doesn't, he could at least confront the Four Pillars for intelligence.

In any case, there's at least a glimmer of hope.

However, sorcerers aren't fools. This enticing promise is sweet, but it only counts if they can actually achieve it. Vesser took a deep breath and asked, "What do we need to do?"

The nightmare raised its hand, and a massive three-dimensional diagram appeared in the air of the hall: "This is the divine diagram of the Nightmare deity. Your task is to construct the Virtual Divinity according to the procedure."

Ash and the others stared at it for a moment, feeling dizzy. Deya exclaimed, "This procedure looks like the challenge from Level 15!"

"That's because the challenge of Level 15 in the Specter's Inheritance is about selecting Truth sorcerers."

The nightmare explained, "While any sorcerer can construct a divinity procedure, there is a failure rate. Any mistake can lead to the collapse of the procedure. Below Demigod level, only Truth sorcerers have a chance of successfully constructing a divinity procedure; above Demigod level, if a sorcerer isn't proficient in the Truth Sect, constructing divinity is prone to failure."

Ash and the others realized why the nightmare chose them as successors-because Vesser is a Truth sorcerer!

Who would have thought that the Truth Sect is the key spellcasting for creating deities? If this news were to spread, well... it probably wouldn't change much, as the Truth Sect is one of the mysterious three spellcastings, and ordinary people can't even find the threshold to enter.

Vesser studied the procedure diagram and said, "This divinity procedure requires many spirits for construction. Do you have spirits?"

“Because the originals once attempted to construct the Nightmare divinity and failed, many materials have been preserved.” The nightmare gestured, and the walls on both sides of the hall revealed glowing crystal walls containing spirits. “But due to the long passage of time and lack of nourishment, many spirits have starved to death.”

“Four Wings Heart Sword!” Sonya tugged on Ash’s arm, and Ash looked over to see a Four Wings Heart Sword spirit-his current Heart Sword is still at two wings!

“Fortune, Timing, Time-consuming, Speed-up...” Deya first focused on the time spirits within the crystal walls, murmuring, “There’s even a Four Wings Reverse Year!”

Reverse Year series: One-Winged lasts one year, Two-Wings for eight years, Three-Wings for twenty-seven years, and Four-Wings for sixty-four years!

Even the treasury of the Yisuo Royal Family doesn’t have a Four-Wings Reverse Year spirit!

It’s worth mentioning that although Reverse Year spirits are the best products for extending life, their usage comes with many caveats. For instance, they cannot be used simultaneously.

In other words, if you’re 99 years old, even if you have 64 One-Winged Reverse Year spirits, you can only revert to 98 years old. But if you have a Four-Wings Reverse Year, you can return to the prime age of 35!

So, wouldn't a 63-year-old be unable to use a Four-Wings Reverse Year? Normally, they can't, but Deya knows of a Time Miracle called 'Eternal Youth,' which can precisely adjust how many years you revert, locking your age for the remaining years.

In the most extreme case, a 25-year-old with a Four-Wings Reverse Year can use Eternal Youth to lock their 25-year-old state for 64 years!

It's easy to imagine that anyone who gets their hands on a Four-Wings Reverse Year would keep it hidden for personal use, never trading it away.

As for other time spirits, they're mostly Four-Wings level, and the occasional Three-Wings time spirit is a rare gem even Deya would covet!

Even a royal family's treasury can't compare to the legacy left by a Demigod Angel!

Everyone walked around the crystal walls, almost dazzled by the sight. Even if they didn't gain anything else, just being able to choose a few spirits here would be a huge win!

"Can we pick a spirit here as a deposit?" Ash asked tentatively. "Of course, we won't choose any that are needed for the divinity procedure--"

“No,” the nightmare shook its head. “All spirit materials are solely for constructing the procedure.”

“But surely there are extras?” Sonya suggested. “Can’t we choose from the surplus?”

“No.”

The nightmare repeated, “All spirit materials are solely for constructing the procedure. You are not allowed to use them personally.”

The group exchanged glances, their eyes flickering with realization that something was off about the nightmare.

As sanctuary sorcerers, they had interacted with other sanctuaries and understood the average intelligence of upper-tier sorcerers. Foolishness and incompetence can’t overcome the challenges of the Virtual Realm; calculation and thought are almost ingrained in a sorcerer’s soul, speaking with reservation is instinctive.

Yet the nightmare not only detailed the Soul Divinity School unrelated to the Virtual Divinity School but also mentioned the death of its originals without any concealment or avoidance. When faced with Ash’s group’s request, it refused outright, without any leeway or courtesy.

This was completely unlike the social skills expected of a demigod sorcerer. Coupled with its claim of being a devil derived from the Sorcerer’s Handbook, everyone suspected it

lacked normal thinking abilities, resembling more an intelligent program executing commands, straightforward and literal.

Vesser's eyes gleamed with curiosity as she asked, "If deities are born from concepts, how did the first deity come into existence?"

The nightmare explained, "Concept Aggregation Phenomenon. It's generally believed that as spellcasting continues to develop, concepts will autonomously aggregate various materials, evolving into deities, but this process often takes thousands of years. However, if a sorcerer knows the specific materials required for a concept's aggregation and understands its Ritual Track, they can use the Soul Divinity School to accelerate the birth of a deity."

Sonya caught on and asked, "Deities are unique. If a deity corresponding to a concept already exists, does that mean it can't be created again?"

"Exactly," the nightmare confirmed. "If a deity already exists, no matter how many times you try, you can't create the same deity. However, the same concept can lead to multiple different deities, and it's also possible to create entirely new ones. A Nightmare is a deity that has never appeared before, so there's no need to worry about that."

Ash inquired, "What's beyond Ruby Mountain? How do we proceed on the Path of Origin?"

"I can't tell you," the nightmare replied, "or you'll be infected with a secret toxin. If you wish to walk the Path of Origin, you must find the Angel at Ruby Mountain."

Deya watched as they bombarded the nightmare with questions, realizing they were exploiting its mechanical nature to extract as much intelligence about the demigod sorcerer as possible. For sanctuary sorcerers, the intelligence the nightmare held was likely more valuable than the spirits on the wall. This was divine knowledge even legendary sorcerers craved, and they couldn't afford to miss this opportunity.

"Faded dream!" Deya suddenly remembered. "The faded dream requires the Into Dreams spirit and the Wind, Flower, Snow, and Moon materials. Is there any Into Dreams spirit here?"

The nightmare shook its head. "The Into Dreams spirit was a natural spirit produced when the concept of entering dreams was closely tied to the Dreaming Celestium before it shattered. After the Dreaming Celestium broke, all Into Dreams spirits were annihilated, leaving none behind."

Everyone sighed. Without the Into Dreams spirit, they couldn't traverse the Path of Origin to reach Ruby Mountain and would have to diligently hone their Spellcasting Sect...

"Wait," Ash suddenly realized. "After we create a deity, does its Gate of Truth open to us? Could we skip Ruby Mountain and directly reach the fifth layer of the Virtual Realm?"

But the nightmare shook its head. "That won't happen."

"Why not?"

“To reach the fifth layer, you must find the Angel at Ruby Mountain. If you don’t, even if you create a deity, you can only reach Ruby Mountain.”

The four exchanged glances-advancing through spellcasting realms, the traditional path of progression, was only effective below the legendary level. To break through the boundary from legendary to demigod, they must walk the Path of Origin and find the Angel!

Thud.

Suddenly, a slight tremor passed through the golden hall.

“Another layer of the seal has been broken,” the nightmare announced. “Sanctuary sorcerers can’t use their spirits or spellforce in the Inheritance because the specter seal harnesses the power of the Dreaming Celestium. Once too many seals are broken, sanctuary sorcerers will regain their full strength and tear open the Specter’s Inheritance from within.”

“The Specter’s Inheritance won’t hold for long. You must act immediately.”

As it spoke, the nightmare pointed a finger, and a black shackle connected Ash and the others, locking tightly around their necks!

“This is the divine intervention known as ‘Oneiric Schism,’” the nightmare explained. “You are currently in the ‘Oneiric’ state. I will leave one of you as a hostage. If I unleash

the ‘Schism’ on the hostage, even if you escape to reality, you will be trapped in a nightmare curse until your entire souls are worn away by the nightmare.”

Ash and the others looked grim, but they weren’t too surprised. From the moment they were transported here, they had mentally prepared for the worst.

A nightmare angel, being an evil sorcerer, would certainly leave behind an inheritance fraught with mortal danger.

“The other three must gather the spirit materials missing from the divinity procedure,” the nightmare continued, gesturing with a finger to produce a list before the four of them. “A total of 26 spirits and two materials.”

Sonya spoke up nervously, “Wound of the Wind and Crystal of the Moon? But those materials have already vanished.”

“Materials in the Virtual Realm never truly disappear; they merely transform,” the nightmare replied. “These two materials are spatial and mental in nature. Due to the development of the Spatial Sect and the Mental Sect, they have likely evolved into spirits.”

Vesser seized the opportunity to ask, “What were the original uses of Wound of the Wind, Language of Flowers, Scattering of Snow, and Crystal of the Moon? Were they only for nurturing the Into Dreams spirit?”

“No, these materials were primarily for sorcerers’ own use,” the nightmare explained. “By interacting with these materials, sorcerers could experience the processes of spatial formation, completion, collapse, and void, thus mastering the Spatial Sect to form a Sanctuary. However, the production of these materials was limited, so not all three-winged sorcerers could enter the Spatial Sect.”

The realization dawned on Ash and the others.

It seemed that as the Spatial Sect developed to a certain point, these four materials gradually merged into the Distant Sky Domain, eventually forming the Ritual of Prohibited Synchronization of Wind, Flower, Snow, and Moon.

In this regard, modern times had indeed progressed significantly compared to the past. What was once a luxury for three-winged sorcerers had become standard-without a Sanctuary, one would be crushed by the Ritual of Prohibited Synchronization of Wind, Flower, Snow, and Moon.

“Although the original materials can’t be found, they can be substituted with spirits.”

With a swipe of the nightmare’s finger, ‘Wound of the Wind’ and ‘Crystal of the Moon’ on the list were replaced with ‘Four-winged Wind Formation Spirit’ and ‘Four-winged Moon Void Spirit.’

However, Ash and the others didn’t look any more relieved.

They eyed the long list of four-winged spirits with confusion. “This is the Distant Sky Domain, where only three-winged sorcerers exist. Where are we supposed to find so many four-winged spirits?”

“It’s precisely because this is the Distant Sky Domain that you have a chance to find these spirits,” the nightmare said. “The originals possess a divine intervention that allows them to create any spirit they need, regardless of type or wing count.”

Ash and the others were stunned-could it really be that whatever they wanted, they could have?

The nightmare concluded, “It is called, longing for.”

Chapter 662: Source Crystal

“The originals initially attempted to create a deity not of nightmares, but of Oneiros,” the nightmare explained. “If they could create an Oneiros Deity, they could perform the divine intervention of ‘dream come true,’ meddling with fate, twisting time, and achieving omnipotence. With control over both the Dreaming Celestium and the Oneiros Deity, even a newly ascended Divine Sovereign would fear no challenge from ancient deities.”

“Unfortunately, the Dream Sect was a secondary spellcasting art created by the originals based on the Mental and Soul Sects. In their era, the conditions for the birth of an Oneiros Deity were not ripe, and despite their efforts, they could not design a divinity for such a being.”

“However, because the originals excelled in using the Nightmare Miracle to curse and kill, the concept of nightmares influenced the Virtual Realm from reality. Thus, the conditions for the birth of a Nightmare Deity matured, leading the originals to create one instead.”

As a Devil, the nightmare wouldn't lie, and Ash and the others felt a subtle shift in their perceptions. Until now, they had viewed the Nightmare Angel as a 'thug hogging public resources,' a 'failure from eons past,' and an 'Evil Sorcerer who died with regrets.' Now, they began to see the Nightmare Angel as a pioneer among sorcerers.

Creating the Dream Sect from the Mental and Soul Sects alone was a feat that etched the Nightmare Angel's achievements into the annals of sorcerer history. He opened up an unprecedented new field of spellcasting, even forcing changes in the Virtual Realm and contributing to the total knowledge of the virtual.

The name Nightmare Angel was enough to prove that he not only pioneered but also expanded the Dream Sect, making enemies tremble at the mention of his name. Unfortunately, the Nightmare Angel kept his secrets close, and after his untimely death, the Dream Sect's Inheritance was lost, stalling further development. His achievements likely merged into the Mental and Soul Sects, with the Specter Seer's 'Soul's Obsession' possibly having deep ties to the Nightmare Angel.

Ash and his companions felt as if they were witnessing a figure from history come to life. Although the Nightmare Angel wasn't a good person and even threatened their lives, he was undeniably a spellcasting pioneer they could only aspire to emulate.

However, the nightmare's intention wasn't to earn their admiration. “Although the originals couldn't create an Oneiros Deity, the concept of the 'dream come true' divine intervention was feasible. By leveraging the unique environment of the Distant Sky Domain and through continuous modification, they created the divine intervention known as 'longing for.'”

“The foundation of this divine intervention is that every sorcerer entering the Distant Sky Domain generates their own dream phantom.”

Ash and the others were taken aback.

“The dream phantoms you experience are the Dreams of other sorcerers,” the nightmare continued. “Why do some dream phantoms suddenly shatter? Because that sorcerer has left the Virtual Realm. Why do dream phantom affixes vary? Because affixes reflect different sorcerers’ perspectives on the world.”

“Affixes reflect sorcerers’ perspectives on the world?” Sonya couldn’t help but ask, “What does that mean?”

“If there’s an affix where flyers suffer no harm, what perspective does that represent?” Vesser furthered the inquiry with an example.

“The affix represents the sorcerer’s affirmation of flight in their dreams,” the nightmare explained. “It’s likely that this sorcerer is skilled in aerial combat and believes it to be overwhelmingly superior to ground combat, hence the creation of such an affix.”

Are the phantoms we experience actually the dreams of other sorcerers?

Does that mean other sorcerers are experiencing our dreams too?

“I think I’ve heard something similar... No, I’ve even seen it in a TV drama!” Sonya murmured. “Yes, it was in that hit show from a few years ago, ‘Wandering Wonderland!’”

“The protagonist encounters her own dream in a world similar to the Distant Sky Domain! Could it be that a sorcerer once-“

“Impossible,” the nightmare interrupted. “The originals have already conducted experiments. When a sorcerer approaches their own phantom, it automatically shatters. You’ll never encounter your own phantom.”

“It’s normal for ordinary sorcerers to speculate about the connection between dream phantoms and themselves, but from the perspective of a sanctuary sorcerer, there’s no way to confirm such guesses. Moreover, even if a sorcerer knows this secret, it holds no practical significance.”

Indeed.

While Ash and the others were initially surprised by the relationship between sorcerers and phantoms, upon reflection, what difference does it make? Does it mean a discount on fruit purchases?

Between Truth and practice lies a barrier called reality.

But just because they can’t utilize it doesn’t mean a Demigod can’t.

“The more phantoms you explore, the higher the chance of generating ‘affix bubbles,’ which materialize phantom affixes into spirits,” the nightmare continued. “Essentially, this is you summoning new spirits by leveraging the insights of other sorcerers.”

Deya pointed out a flaw: “Hold on, the spirits generated by affix bubbles are mostly ones that sorcerers can’t summon themselves, existing in a strange space between fantasy and reality. For example, my witness spirit can attack targets through sight, and such fantasy spirits are beyond a sorcerer’s understanding to summon.”

The nightmare calmly replied, “A three-wing sorcerer can’t understand, a four-wing sorcerer can’t understand, but can a Five-Winged Demigod or a Six-Wings Divine Sovereign not understand the witness spirit you mentioned?”

It wasn’t asking, but directly answering: “The spirits that can be summoned are always far more numerous than those you know. Because any small advancement in spellcasting can intertwine with other spells to create countless new spirits. However, some spirits can only be understood and summoned by sorcerers who have stepped into the Divine Dominion.”

“And the special aspect of dream phantoms is that sorcerers use their insights to retrieve corresponding spirits from the Virtual Realm’s complete spirit library. Any spirit that ‘can exist’ can become a reward from a dream phantom.”

At this point, Ash and the others finally understood the mechanism of the Distant Sky Domain.

First, when a sorcerer enters the Distant Sky Domain, a corresponding dream phantom is generated. Their accumulated spellcasting knowledge and worldview become the affixes within the phantom.

When a sorcerer explores enough phantoms to form affix bubbles, they can use these affixes as a medium to retrieve spirits from the Virtual Realm's complete spirit library, ultimately receiving rewards.

Simplifying the entire process, it's essentially sorcerers taking spirits from the Virtual Realm's complete spirit library!

Dream phantoms and affixes merely serve as intermediaries for testing and retrieval!

"The originals created the divine intervention 'Longing for' based on the mechanism of the Distant Sky Domain," the nightmare explained. "By using other sorcerers as spellcasting materials, twisting their dream phantoms, and altering the affixes to the desired ones, you can summon the spirits you want from the Virtual Realm's complete spirit library."

"In fact, most of the inventory here was created by the originals through 'Longing for.'"

Ash and the others finally understood why this divine intervention had to be performed in the Distant Sky Domain.

Sorcerer → Dream Phantom → Fantasy Spirit, the tight correlation among these three allowed the Nightmare Angel to find a loophole in the rules: directly targeting the sorcerers in the Distant Sky Domain to steal spirits from the Virtual Realm's complete spirit library!

"But in that case..." Ash was about to say something but stopped abruptly.

"Currently, there are nearly a thousand sanctuary sorcerers within the Specter's Inheritance, and they are all under the suppression of the specter seal, unable to resist," the nightmare stated. "This is your opportunity."

The divine intervention 'Longing for' clearly has two challenges: finding sanctuary sorcerers and suppressing them.

But these challenges don't exist within the Specter's Inheritance!

To compete for the inheritance, sanctuary sorcerers from the entire Virtual Realm have flocked here, providing ample targets for spellcasting!

Moreover, the Specter's Inheritance seals spellforce and spirits, weakening their combat power to the extreme!

The Nightmare Inheritance perfectly exploits the Specter's Inheritance to achieve its goals.

Ash and the others exchanged glances, seeing the alertness in their teammates' eyes.

Rather than calling it a coincidence, it was more like the Nightmare Angel anticipated this scene when setting up the inheritance. As the original master of the Dreaming Celestium, he naturally foresaw how later comers would use it.

He was a Mental Demigod, the Angel who founded the Dream Sect!

As long as someone uses the Dreaming Celestium to set up an inheritance, the hidden inheritance he placed would also take effect!

For such an existence, setting up an inheritance would be flawless, and the four sanctuary sorcerers could only comply.

"Alright, we understand," Vesser said. "So how do we perform 'Longing for'?"

The nightmare pointed a finger, and six spirits floated before them, along with a miracle procedure.

"'Longing for' was initially a complex divine intervention driven by hundreds of spirits simultaneously, but after simplification by the originals, you can perform it in six steps

using six spirits. These spirits can be temporarily lent to you, and for the three responsible for gathering, using two spirits each should suffice.”

Deya pointed at the spirits, eyes wide, and said, “But their wings are more than ours—we’re only three-wing sorcerers, how can we drive four-winged spirits?”

“The originals anticipated this,” the nightmare replied. “Not only for gathering spirits, but when creating the Virtual Divinity, you’ll need to drive hundreds of spirits simultaneously, which even legendary sorcerers can’t support with enough spellforce. So…”

A large treasure chest rose behind the nightmare, its position indicating it held something of utmost importance.

It opened the chest, revealing the dark illusion eight-sided crystal inside. The crystal seemed to be in constant energy reaction, changing and vanishing.

“This is the Source Crystal left by the originals.”

Nightmare summoned three Source Crystals, letting them float before the sorcerers. “Each Source Crystal can convert a massive amount of colorless spellforce. If used by a demigod sorcerer, it can even transform into Five Wings spellforce, serving as a common equivalent among demigods. With these three Source Crystals, you can perform ‘longing for’ hundreds of times.”

Ash's pupils trembled, yet he managed to ask calmly, "Are Source Crystals very precious?"

"Extremely," Nightmare replied. "At its peak, the originals accumulated around 1,500 Source Crystals, and now only 88 remain."

Ash reached out to take a Source Crystal, examining it closely, and then shot a glance at his companions. Sonya and the others might not understand why Ash was so astonished, but they knew at least that Ash not only knew about Source Crystals but also possessed them himself.

This intelligence naturally reinforced their belief that Ash was reborn from a powerful origin. Previously, they thought Ash was at most a reborn legend, but they had underestimated him. What other surprises does this guy have up his sleeve?

However, at this moment, no one in the group cared whether Ash was reborn from a powerful origin. Regardless of what secrets he might still be hiding, to Deya he was still a knight, to Sonya he remained an observer, and to Vesser he was simply Ash.

"Wait!" Deya suddenly exclaimed. "According to this Miracle procedure, to create a Four-winged Spirit, the sorcerer must undergo extreme Dream stimulation until their soul is obliterated to succeed!"

"Yes," Nightmare nodded. "That's the downside of 'longing for.' To create a Four-winged Spirit, it almost requires the obliteration of a three wings sorcerer's soul. Therefore, the originals couldn't nurture three wings sorcerers for regular harvesting and could only treat them as disposable."

Sonya held back the witch who wanted to speak and asked, “So, do we need to kill 28 sorcerers to collect spirits?”

“In reality, since you’ll be unfamiliar at first, the first ten attempts might not yield the spirits listed,” Nightmare explained. “Therefore, I’ll give you a margin to harvest from 50 sorcerers, but due to time constraints, you should keep the number under 100.”

“If there are no issues, please begin as soon as possible.”

Chapter 663: Ash as the Hostage

“Who’s staying behind?”

Ash casually pulled his teammates aside, asking the question as if he were merely deciding who would stay to watch the luggage while the others went to the restroom.

Deya had tried to speak up several times, only to be hushed by Sonya and Vesser.

Everyone knew what she wanted to say because they all shared the same thought-run away!

The vision the nightmare offered was indeed enticing, a double harvest of divine status and a celestial realm, seemingly allowing them, a group of sanctuary sorcerers, to ascend in one leap. But with a moment of calm reflection, they all realized a pressing issue-could they truly hold onto this adventure?

The Nightmare Angel once sought to create a Nightmare Deity, to rule over the Dreaming Celestium and become a new Divine Sovereign, only to have everything fall apart spectacularly.

Not only was the Dreaming Celestium, which it cherished and protected, ruined, but it also changed hands through thirteen owners. It even had to hide its Inheritance in the rat holes of the Dreaming Celestium, fearing discovery by new masters.

If they did manage to obtain the complete Dreaming Celestium, could the four of them, mere sanctuary sorcerers, really withstand the covetous eyes of Divine Sovereigns, the envy of Demigods, and the onslaught of countless peers?

And that's assuming everything goes smoothly. The more likely scenario is a complete failure.

After all, the Specter's Inheritance could be breached at any time. The Virtual Divinity might be destroyed halfway through its creation, exposing them to the eyes of other sorcerers, and in the next moment, they'd be drowned in a sea of spellcasting.

In fact, failure might be the better outcome. If they actually succeeded, they'd likely be hunted down by Divine Sovereigns both online and offline.

The risks were too high, the rewards too intangible. No matter how they looked at it, staying out of this was the wise choice.

But did they even have the right to refuse?

Setting aside the “Oneiric Schism” curse hanging over their heads, just from the nightmare’s behavioral logic, if Ash and his team said, “I don’t want to do this,” would the nightmare politely see them off, perhaps with a parting gift as an apology?

Impossible!

Ash and the others even suspected that if they showed any hint of ‘resistance,’ ‘disgust,’ or ‘giving up,’ they would instantly fall from the status of ‘inheritors’ to ‘disposable assets.’

Whether as the Nightmare Angel in life or the Devil nightmare in death, it never cared about the lives of others.

Among the four of them, only Vesser was irreplaceable. Or rather, the other three were brought here as hostages to bind Vesser to the Inheritance.

Forget about backing out; they were even careful with their words during discussions, fearing the nightmare might detect their reluctance.

So when Ash posed his question, the three of them exchanged peculiar looks.

Ash had used “you,” clearly excluding himself-he didn’t want to stay as a hostage.

Yet no one thought he was being cowardly.

“Witch, you stay,” Sonya suggested.

“No way! If you two are going, then I must go too!” Deya shook her head. “Vesser, you stay!”

“That makes sense,” Ash added. “Given the circumstances, Vesser, you should stay behind. It’s not that we’re excluding you, but you know our relationship is unique. We might need to engage in some close interactions to relieve stress, and having you around might make things awkward for you, even turning into a source of stress.”

“Besides, you’re the newest member of the team. You’ve been with us for two months and haven’t caused any trouble, always stepping back and quietly doing your part. I’ve always appreciated that. Now that we have the chance, let us three veterans handle the troublesome matters, and you can enjoy the benefits of being the newbie.”

“What do you mean ‘haven’t caused any trouble’?” Sonya’s eyes widened. “Did I cause you trouble before?”

“Yeah!” Deya chimed in. “Did I cause you trouble?”

Ash and Sonya exchanged a glance with Deya, words hanging in the air, unspoken yet understood.

This was the first time Ash openly acknowledged in front of Vesser the not-so-innocent relationship between him and the sword Princess Witch. Yet neither Sonya, Deya, nor Vesser seemed shocked or bothered by it.

“I disagree with your decision,” Vesser stated calmly. “I think the Observer should stay.”

Sonya was slightly taken aback, but quickly changed her stance. “I agree, the Observer should stay!”

Though Deya was inclined to act alongside Ash, she found herself torn between Ash and the sword Princess and Vesser. She promptly switched sides. “I... I also think the Observer should stay.”

Ash’s mouth twitched. “You guys...”

“Have you decided?” The nightmare appeared silently beside them. “Then let’s begin.”

Six spirits and three Source Crystals floated towards the female sorcerers, and the nightmare spoke. “I will transport you into the Specter’s Inheritance, lifting the restrictions on your spellforce and spirits, and adjust the routes of other sorcerers so they will encounter you. Of course, others will still have their spellforce and spirits sealed.”

“I have one more question,” Ash seized the opportunity to ask. “Even if we can’t reach the fifth layer of the Virtual Realm, if we create a deity, shouldn’t we be able to reach Ruby Mountain through the deity’s Gate of Truth?”

Unexpectedly, the nightmare fell silent at this question.

“I don’t know,” it replied. “The originals have never heard of sanctuary sorcerers creating deities, so there’s no precedent for what might happen. Moreover, whether deities possess a Gate of Truth is also unclear to the originals.”

“The difference between spirits and deities is vast. While a spirit’s knowledge can entirely originate from a sorcerer, a deity’s concept must come from external sources. Thus, while sorcerers can create deities, whether the deity ‘fully belongs’ to the sorcerer, and whether the Gate of Truth opens for the sorcerer, I do not know.”

Sonya was somewhat surprised. “The Nightmare Angel never created other deities?”

“The originals never nurtured any deities during their lifetime,” the nightmare provided an unexpected answer. “In fact, due to the uniqueness of deities, they are not only rare but no Divine Sovereign would mind having an additional deity join the Celestium.

Therefore, Demigods seeking to claim natural deities must not only compete with other Demigods but also snatch them from the mouths of Divine Sovereigns.”

“Many Demigods spend their entire lives without ever possessing a deity. Once you step into the Divine Dominion, you’ll often find that all deities are already claimed.”

Ash nodded thoughtfully.

He recalled the ancestor of the Belldate family in the Gospel Kingdom, the Necromancy Angel. At that time, he merely seemed like an ancient tomb remnant beaten by Harvey. But looking back now, Ash realized he was a remarkable figure, capable of arranging resurrection rituals and possessing a deity at such a young age!

This also showed how bold the Nightmare Angel was.

He dared to reach for the Dreaming Celestium without even a single deity, aiming directly for the Divine Sovereign’s rank. No wonder he got his head blown off.

But this means that even if they succeed in Godsmithing, they likely won’t be able to sneak into Ruby Mountain...

“Since you don’t have a deity, how do you perform divine interventions?” Ash pressed on, “Even if all are Four-winged Spirits, they can only be called miracles, right? Like longing for used six Four-winged Spirits, why is it also called a divine intervention?”

At this moment, the nightmare gently waved its arm, and the sword Princess, Witch, and Vesser vanished from the golden hall.

Then it answered Ash, “The difference between divine intervention and miracle lies in whether world laws are invoked. Deities are manifestations of laws; any spellcasting involving deities is naturally a divine intervention. But even without deities, if you can leverage world laws through other means, miracles can transform into divine interventions.”

“In other places, those six spirits would at most form a miracle. Only in the Dreaming Celestium, only in the Distant Sky Domain, can their miracle tap into the residual laws of the Celestium and take effect through the Distant Sky Domain’s operational mechanism.”

“At this moment, the power of the miracle includes not only the spirits but also the Distant Sky Domain and the support of related laws. In other words, if the target wishes to resist, they must possess the power to counter the Distant Sky Domain, or they will be crushed by its laws.”

“A miracle is using one’s will to sketch the reality of the world.”

“A divine intervention is transforming one’s will into the world’s will.”

“This is the difference in their manifestations.”

Ash watched the spot where the sword Princess and others disappeared, his eyes flickering with emotion.

He wasn't sure if the nightmare had seen through his intention to delay with questions, but the nightmare's actions had already proven it could distinguish between priorities. Those tricks to deceive artificial intelligence likely wouldn't stop the Nightmare deity's plan.

Now, he could only trust the sword Princess and the others.

Ash asked, "If I say to switch places with them, is it possible?"

"Transporting you and controlling the Specter's Inheritance both consume Source Crystals," the nightmare refused. "Source Crystal reserves are tight, and creating a deity later will require many Source Crystals, so we can't waste them here."

"Besides, you give me a very unsettling feeling. No matter how you arrange it, I'll keep you as a hostage."

Ash was taken aback, "How do I make you uneasy?"

“I don’t know,” the nightmare replied, “but I don’t need to know. Keeping an unstable factor close is enough.”

Damn!

It was Ash’s first time encountering such blatant, baseless appearance discrimination!

He didn’t continue discussing with the nightmare but instead sat down to rest, preparing by bonding with the spirits. The nightmare watched his back, pondering the source of its unease.

Having a feeling but not recalling it meant it wasn’t something recorded in the Sorcerer’s Handbook but rather a faint memory of the Devil nightmare.

After a while, the nightmare finally remembered.

It was the Specter Seer.

It had once glimpsed the Specter Seer in the Dreaming Celestium.

At that time, the Specter Seer had slain the twelfth owner and seized the Dreaming Celestium.

The Specter Seer possessed a million Human Souls, a realm even the Nightmare Angel hadn't reached in life. But while the Nightmare Angel's ten thousand Human Souls were gained through pure, clean cultivation, the Specter Seer's million Human Souls were murky and foul, evidently cultivated through murder and aggregation. During the Specter Seer's residence in the Dreaming Celestium, the wails of vengeful spirits permeated every corner, leaving a deep impression on the nightmare.

The man in front of it, wearing a black silver-chained trench coat, gave the nightmare the feeling of being the Specter Seer's successor.

Chapter 664: The Sword Princess, the Witch, and Vesser

Four-winged Dream-chasing Spirit. Four-winged Soul-hooking Spirit. Four-winged Heart-engraving Spirit.

In the Underground Hall, Sonya, Deya, and Vesser unleashed their spellforce, bringing these six Four-winged Spirits under their control.

Undoubtedly, these Four-winged Spirits were rare treasures. The Soul-hooking Spirit, for instance, could extract a legendary sorcerer's soul when they were off guard, and then, by merely destroying their body, the soul would dissipate on its own.

The Dream-chasing Spirit was a masterpiece of the Dream Sect, capable of being paired with any Dream Spirit. For example, one could use a Sleep Spirit on a Lala Fatty, and then use Dream-chasing on any target, causing them to pursue the sleeping Lala Fatty.

If used on a Miracle, the Dream-chasing Spirit could even forcibly redirect the Miracle's target to the sleeping Lala Fatty!

These six spirits were so powerful that obtaining them would be worth a legendary sorcerer altering their entire Spellcasting Sect.

Though Sonya and her companions could wield these six spirits, they were acutely aware that they did not truly own them. The nightmare could reclaim these spirits from their souls at any moment.

Among the three, only Sonya had experience with renting spirits.

In the harsh environment of the Senlo wasteland, not only was spirit rental unheard of, but even the trade of spirits was in its infancy. Vesser's spirits were half self-summoned and half spoils of war from cult battles; she had never even purchased one. In the Gospel Kingdom, there were spirit rental platforms, but Deya was either imprisoned, unable to access spirit transactions, or in a position of power as the Empress, needing no rentals.

Only in the Stars Kingdom was the rental service both mature and central to Sonya's experience.

During the Meteor Trial, she borrowed several key spirits from Professor Trozan, without which she couldn't have executed the 'invisible blade.' After returning the spirits to the professor, she still hadn't gathered the full set of spirits needed for the 'invisible blade,' only managing to perform the basic version of this Miracle.

In the Stars Kingdom, renting and buying spirits were two sides of the same coin.

If a spirit proved useful, a rental could turn into a purchase intention; if it was just for an emergency, renting was preferable to buying.

This was especially true for sanctuary sorcerers, who frequently rented spirits. As they began developing new Miracles, they often needed to reference the effects of other spirits. Direct purchases were not only costly but also rare-spirits became scarce as their wing count increased, and if they weren't available for purchase, they simply weren't available.

Thus, short-term rental services emerged, becoming a crucial part of the social currency among sanctuary sorcerers. Professor Trozan, for instance, could afford to be blunt and sharp-tongued, not only due to her prowess but also because she possessed many rare spirits and was willing to lend them out. Many sanctuaries sought her help, so people were willing to indulge her, allowing her to disregard social niceties.

Moreover, impressions could be transformed. Many initially found Professor Trozan unremarkable in appearance and somewhat unkempt, but her generosity and largesse revealed her to be a successful woman with a warm heart beneath a cool exterior.

Even Sonya couldn't escape the norm; her close relationship with Trozan was simply because Trozan was genuinely kind to her!

Besides that, leasing remained a crucial sales channel. Most sanctuary sorcerers would lease spirits for a period to see their effectiveness before purchasing. Sonya currently had

several three-winged spirits listed on the rental platform, expecting it would take one to three months to sell them.

However, leasing spirits came with significant risks.

If the lessee perished in the Virtual Realm, the spirit could be lost. Even if the lessee was willing to compensate, once the spirit was gone, it was truly gone.

Moreover, even though the lessee only had usage rights, they could still choose to kill the spirit directly if they wished.

In other words, Sonya and her companions could crush the four-winged spirit in their hands, preventing “longing for” from activating and destroying the Inheritance of nightmares.

Yet, they all quietly put away the spirits, except for Deya, who couldn’t help but ask, “Are we really going to kill for the spirits?”

It wasn’t just Deya; the other witch sisters were also uneasy about it. Even the Black Butler, with the darkest heart, clung nervously to the White Queen.

The witches’ moral compass was indeed weak, as qualities like kindness, responsibility, and hope were all left to the Sleeping Beauty. The witch sisters, derived from the Secret Princess Deya, were all driven by a self-preserving personality.

Deya herself had faced many opportunities to turn dark, such as being captured by Annan, the sacrifice of the Scarlet Dead Apostles, and the separation at the Royal Palace. Although the Secret Princess Deya had a decent psychological endurance, the White Queen's mindset was fragile, and if she crumbled, the Black Butler would follow, eventually dragging Deya down with them-this was the price she paid to escape loneliness.

Sleeping Beauty was made of love, candy, and all things nice, like the Yisuo Princess, but witches were different. They were made of survival, evasion, and unscrupulousness, a fleeing Gospel.

Yet, in the Omniscient Celestium, facing perhaps the only chance to make a wish in her life, Deya chose to sacrifice her desires for the stability of the Gospel Kingdom, willingly becoming a bound Empress.

Yes, although witches were not born with qualities like kindness, responsibility, and hope, Ash had taught them these superfluous things by example.

So, facing what was about to happen, the witches were filled with anxious unease.

"Give me the spirits," Vesser extended her hand. "I can complete the miracle procedure of 'longing for' on my own."

"On your own?" Sonya looked at her.

“This kind of thing shouldn’t be executed by three people,” Vesser said calmly. “Now we’re all under the curse of the nightmare, with the Observer held hostage by it. We have no choice but to harm others to survive.”

“In fact, most sorcerers, when encountering a miracle procedure like ‘longing for,’ would be overjoyed rather than hesitant like you. Yes, ‘longing for’ does require killing, but on the path of a sorcerer, those who don’t kill are the minority. Those who reach the sanctuary level, even if their hands aren’t stained with blood, have long crossed the moral interrogation of life and death. Fate, environment, position, good and evil... whether willingly or forced, we are already hunters and prey wandering in the forest.”

“Besides, it’s not like we’re killing sorcerers we know. They might not even be from the same Kingdom, so most people wouldn’t feel any guilt.”

“The Observer has sheltered you all too well, but it works both ways,” Vesser murmured softly. “That’s why none of you are suited for this task.”

Deya asked blankly, “Then, Vesser, are you suited for it?”

“More suited than you all,” Vesser replied. “And I’m quite adept at handling such matters.”

“Don’t be fooled by my demeanor; I’m actually older than you. My adventures might not be as extensive, but I’ve witnessed far more scenes of bloodshed, slaughter, and death than you have. To put it bluntly-“

Vesser looked at her own hand and said calmly, “I’ve grown accustomed to destroying life.”

“Of course, your unfamiliarity isn’t wrong, and my familiarity isn’t superior. It’s just that our life experiences differ, leading to slight differences in our perspectives.”

“I suggested leaving the Observer behind because I saw he wanted to take on this responsibility, to protect you from the violence. But you don’t need to force yourselves because of this unexpected situation, just like when we explored the Specter’s Inheritance, everyone had their own duties.”

“Now, it’s time for me to fulfill my role in the team,” Vesser stated. “Hand me the spirits.”

Deya blinked, hesitated for a moment, but eventually handed over the spirits.

But as Vesser reached out to take them, her wrist was firmly grasped.

“Are you done talking?”

Sonya stared at Vesser, her ruby eyes showing blatant dissatisfaction. “Making decisions on your own, flaunting your experience from a high perch, sacrificing yourself with self-righteousness... Yolan Vesser, do you still consider yourself a member of this team?”

“Of course,” Vesser replied, somewhat taken aback. “I didn’t mean-“

“Then, who was the earliest member of the team? Who does the leader trust the most? Who understands the leader’s thoughts best?”

“When the Observer isn’t around,” the Red-Haired Sword Princess said seriously, word by word, “I will lead the team.”

Chapter 665: Hold Off on the Killing

“Sword Princess, you know me.”

Vesser tried to explain as calmly as possible, “I have no intention of competing with you for leadership-“

“But that’s exactly what you’re doing,” Sonya interrupted. “You think you’re protecting us, helping the team, but in reality, you’re imposing your personal views over the team’s will, causing trouble for us and for the Observer.”

Vesser, slightly irritated, shook off Sonya’s hand and replied coldly, “How am I causing trouble for you?”

Deya stood by, anxious and at a loss, only daring to plead with her eyes, not daring to intervene.

“You might mistakenly believe that the Observer favors me and the Witch, so you think your protective actions will earn his approval. After all, you’re the only one getting your hands dirty, while everyone else can remain guilt-free...”

The Sword Princess pulled Vesser closer. Though only slightly taller, she seemed to look down on her, “You really underestimate both us and him.”

“He has never taken our contributions for granted, never. You’ve integrated into our group, contributed greatly, and willingly stepped back from benefits. We’ve all noticed.”

“In the Specter’s Inheritance, you’re being focused on to enhance the Soul Sect not just because you’re suitable, but because the team is favoring you. He works hard to maintain a balance of resources among us, even if it means he gets less, so we all gain according to our efforts.”

“So you realize you’re causing trouble, right?” Sonya continued, “You’re making us owe you a huge favor. How are we supposed to repay that? How is he supposed to repay that?”

“You don’t need to repay anything!” Vesser exclaimed. “I never expected any of you to-“

Smack.

Deya widened her eyes, covering her mouth, terrified that even a single word might drag her into this conflict.

Vesser stared at Sonya in shock, unable to believe she'd been slapped.

Sonya withdrew her hand and shifted the topic, "In 'Blade of Shifting Time,' there's a case where someone did a good deed without asking for a reward, which ended in tragedy. I used to think it was just a plot device, but I've come to realize it's a common occurrence."

"In any organization, the principle of equivalent exchange is crucial; contributions must yield returns, or it's a test and insult to human nature. By saying you don't want repayment, you're trampling on this team's principles—we're here exploring the Virtual Realm because we each have our own goals."

"If we could really use you like a dirty rag and discard you, would I be saying all this?" Sonya asked. "Your words suggest you don't understand us at all. Are you insulting us or yourself?"

"Moreover, saying you don't want repayment implies either there's nothing in the team that can repay you, or you've already received some other form of compensation." The Sword Princess's ruby eyes reflected Vesser's appearance. "Are you satisfying some strange self-sacrificial urge?"

Vesser pressed her lips together and said, "I just want to do my best to help the team."

“I will also do my best to contribute, and if necessary, I’ll sacrifice my own interests. But unlike you, I’ll report my efforts to the Observer. If he doesn’t compensate me tenfold, I won’t accept it,” Sonya said. “Since I’m contributing to the team, I won’t bear the cost alone.”

“So I really dislike your tone just now, filled with a self-destructive desire to bear sins alone, lost in some vague self-pity. You haven’t considered that this is a fate we all face together, and there’s no need for you to act out of place... You’re just like those nauseating protagonists in melodramatic plays.”

Vesser’s face turned sour. “I was just-“

“And you’ve misunderstood the Observer’s intentions,” Sonya continued. “He might want to cast spells alone like you, but he would never say, ‘I’ll take all the responsibility.’ Instead, he shares his mental burdens with us-remember his hint earlier?”

“It was more of a direct statement,” Vesser replied. “He said he’d engage in intimate actions with you.”

“Ahem,” Sonya quickly moved past the topic. “Anyway, gains and losses are the team’s, and so are the responsibilities. Whatever you contribute, speak up about it, don’t hide it, and certainly don’t bear it alone... That’s how I’ve always done it, and the Observer has started doing it too. You should learn from us.”

Deya nodded vigorously like a pecking chick.

Vesser softly said, “I just thought doing this wouldn’t cost me anything.”

“Really?” Sonya asked. “But deep down, you don’t want to do it, so why force yourself not to care?”

Vesser was taken aback.

“In the past, when I talked to you about stories from the Sea of Knowledge, you’d listen intently to the interesting ones. But when it was boring, you’d increase your engagement, forcing yourself to express opinions to cover your disinterest,” Sonya explained. “Just like your actions now.”

“You usually speak very little, Vesser.”

Vesser was silent for a moment, then suddenly relaxed, whispering, “Your insight and rhetoric are so much like the Observer’s.”

“What does he have to do with this!”

Despite her words, Sonya’s cheeks flushed, her gaze drifting as if recalling something pleasant.

“Anyway, don’t say things like that anymore.” Sonya placed her hands on Vesser’s shoulders. “I don’t know what you’ve been through to develop this inexplicable self-sacrificing tendency, but...”

Sonya leaned closer, their foreheads touching, as if feeling each other's warmth.

"We're forehead-touching companions now," she said. "So, you don't need to sacrifice for us. Risks are shared, responsibilities are shared, benefits are shared-that's what being companions means."

Vesser blinked, and in a daze, she remembered how Vionelle used to touch foreheads with her as a child. Hesitating for a moment, she wanted to hug the sword Princess to show her apology, and the latter happily embraced her.

Yet, this embrace, devoid of any warmth, made Vesser feel a familiar comfort.

Deya watched in awe from the side-didn't the sword Princess just slap Vesser a minute ago? How did they reconcile so quickly?

Is this the power of the vice-captain?

"What about the longing for?" Vesser eventually pushed the sword Princess away and asked, "Shouldn't it be performed by just one person? Let me..."

"If we're going to get our hands dirty, let's do it together," Sonya said. "There's no need to avoid it."

Vesser asked, "Are you all mentally prepared?"

"Even if we're not, we can always go back and share the psychological burden with the Observer later," Sonya said, stroking her sword hilt. "But I actually anticipated this. The higher the level, the more likely we are to encounter situations like this, where we're forced or compelled to kill innocent people. It's actually easy to weigh-on one side, there's the lives of the four of us, and on the other, 28, 50, 100 people-of course, we're more important."

"After all, we're doing this out of necessity. It's all the Nightmare Angel's fault. Once you understand that, the psychological burden lifts."

Deya timidly asked, "Can it really be that simple?"

"We're not Divine Sovereigns, and even they aren't Omniscient and Omnipotent. The only thing we can do is try our best for the world and give our all for ourselves," Sonya said. "Then, continue living with a sense of guilt."

She paused. "That's what I learned from the Observer."

Deya took a deep breath. "Alright!"

Vesser looked at her palm and lowered it. "Then let's accomplish the longing for together."

“Wait!” Sonya pondered. “Do you think we could improve the procedure so it can create a spirit without causing death?”

Deya was powerless in this regard. If she could return to reality, she might ask the Gospel Book how to improve it, but in the Virtual Realm, she couldn't command the Gospel Deity.

However, Vesser, who had studied the Miracle procedure earlier, said, “It's not impossible to avoid deaths. The longing for procedure obliterates the sorcerer's soul to ensure a 100% success rate. If we make some adjustments, we could trade off some success rate for the sorcerer's survival.”

Sonya and Deya were stunned-what had they been agonizing over earlier?

“But such improvements are beyond our capability,” Vesser said helplessly. “Even with my Golden level in the Mental Sect and Soul Sect, I can only grasp a rough direction. It would take at least months to make improvements. To quickly refine the procedure, we'd need sanctuary level expertise in both the Mental and Soul Sects.”

Sonya sighed softly. “So there's no way?”

“No way,” Vesser shook her head.

“We’ll just have to kill!” Deya resolved firmly.

At that moment, a mass of black mist suddenly appeared in the Underground Hall, and the nightmare finally transported the first victim.

The sorcerer hunt begins!

“This Specter’s Canon... what an ingenious idea, and it’s just perfect for me!”

Igor was still savoring the Specter’s Canon he had just acquired, his heart racing with excitement. Thanks to a soul enhancement Ash had given him after dinner, he had managed to break through to the 80th level tonight and seize a Specter’s Canon!

The Specter’s Appendix, Canon, and Codex-if the Appendix was merely a collection of minor Miracles occasionally used by the Specter Seer, then the Canon was undoubtedly a set of Powerful Miracles heavily relied upon by the Seer!

The Specter’s Canon Igor obtained was a Miracle procedure that pointed straight to legend! Although the Canon only contained three wings of spirits, as long as he advanced and completed the spirits, it would remain a top-tier Miracle even at the legendary stage!

Moreover, the spellcasting philosophy embodied in this procedure was greatly beneficial to Igor, giving him new insights into his spirit system.

'What incredible luck tonight...'

As he pondered, Igor noticed that the Underground Hall was suddenly engulfed in black mist. He squinted, wondering if this was a change after the 80th level.

The black mist gradually dissipated, and the Con Artist, using the Soul Spirit obtained from the Inheritance, prepared various Miracles to face the next challenge.

As the mist cleared, what appeared before Igor were three... female sorcerers?

The moment the red-haired sorcerer charged at him, Igor immediately unleashed a "Riptide of Souls"! This was a potent soul miracle he had assembled from the Inheritance, capable of nearly obliterating any enemy unit-

Sizzle!

The Riptide of Souls was blocked by a transparent barrier, diverted and cut off!

Sanctuary!

Igor was stunned, instinctively wanting to raise his own Sanctuary, but his spellforce didn't respond at all.

How could this be!

Smack!

The Con Artist was slammed against the wall, and before he could utter a word, his throat was tightly grasped. He quickly took out the specter key, attempting to escape the Inheritance.

As expected, the specter key wouldn't activate; he couldn't escape.

He took a sharp breath, but only the cold breath of death filled his lungs.

Igor had a vague idea of what was happening. The appearance of sorcerers not suppressed by the Inheritance, combined with the specter key's failure to activate, was enough to indicate that he had become a lamb to the slaughter.

He was doomed.

"Sorry," he heard the red-haired sorcerer say, "we have no choice."

At that moment, what flashed through Igor's mind wasn't a scheme for survival, nor a curse of resentment, but a painting.

A painting he had drawn countless times in "Rejuvenating Return."

Even now, he couldn't understand why that painting featured a black crow...

Just as the red-haired sorcerer was about to use an unknown spirit on him, Igor heard the other two female sorcerers shout:

"Wait!"

"Don't kill him yet!"

Chapter 666: Fates Guidance

Watching Igor being choked by the sword Princess, Deya was bewildered.

Having spent the past decade as a princess in the Tower, she knew few people, and even fewer had managed to forge a connection with her.

Igor was one of those rare few.

Of course, everything changed once Deya became the Empress. She could freely travel to any part of the Gospel Kingdom, and everywhere she went, countless people vied to be her friend.

After all, she was the first Gospel Empress in nearly seven hundred years with emotional inclinations. Her likes and dislikes could alter the fate of the Kingdom, her wishes could change countless lives.

She could dream something one night and make it come true by morning.

Some approached Deya for self-preservation, like the Mercury Family, who once hunted her. Others sought to advance further, like the Senhaeser and Belldate Families, who had once welcomed her.

Qenna had suggested more than once to send clansmen from Senhaeser to serve the Empress in the palace; Yvaren was even more daring, offering herself as the Empress's maid, ready to give her heart to the Empress!

Even though Deya hadn't expressed any opinions, everyone eagerly speculated on her divine will, trying to uncover the New Empress's preferences.

Such is the power of authority.

Deya could be a capricious Empress, and everyone was prepared to welcome a willful and indulgent New Empress.

But how much of the Yisuo Dynasty's seven hundred years of heritage could Deya squander? The Yisuo Royal Family had diligently contributed to the Gospel for seven centuries, so what harm could a little whimsy from Deya do?

More importantly, no one could defy Deya, who possessed the Gospel Deity.

Yet, instead of indulging in whims to compensate for her childhood, Deya consciously confined herself to the Royal Palace, rejecting all external flattery and goodwill.

As for governance and policy matters, she entrusted them to the most rational White Queen, never revealing her personal desires in front of outsiders.

Deya once read a fairy tale picture book where the protagonist was an emperor. She had forgotten the story, but remembered a line: "I am a lonely ruler."

A sovereign must be solitary and emotionless, for without solitude, there is favoritism; with emotions, there is bias. Though she hadn't received formal education, only fairy tale books, she naturally adapted to her new role and understood her responsibilities.

Perhaps it was ancestral bloodline, perhaps Ash's influence, or perhaps... she simply wanted to be a good Empress.

In any case, without being brainwashed by the Gospel Deity, Deya, like the Empresses of Yisuo before her, lived a secluded life, embodying a reserved beauty. To wield power without indulging whims is challenging enough, especially after being confined for over a decade. Even Deya wasn't sure she could maintain it.

But the price was her social circle becoming fixed. Before leaving the Tower, she was an untouchable princess; after ascending to the Gospel, she was a solitary Empress. Only during her time at the Funeral Firm did she experience normal social interactions.

Annan Dolan, Banjeet Dolan, Ash Heath, Igor Bukin, Archibald Harvey... she valued them.

Thus, she chose Annan to be her representative, establishing a governance team to push forward reforms.

As for Ash, there was no doubt; she had already reserved a position for him that could potentially bring chaos to the nation.

However, when it came to Igor, Deya's feelings were quite complicated.

She was well aware that Igor didn't like Lise. From the beginning to the end, the Con Artist never hid his disdain. Yet, he would braid Lise's hair, buy clothes for her, and even protect her.

The thought of Ash likely returning to Gospel with Igor made Deya feel troubled.

Even though she was the Empress, if she truly wanted to lock Ash in a dark room to prevent him from going to the Stars, her first obstacle wouldn't be the sword Princess, but rather the Con Artist and the necromancer.

Despite this, Deya sincerely hoped Igor would return safely.

Because Lise wanted to see Aunt Bukin.

Because Ash couldn't lose the Con Artist.

"Wait!"

"Don't kill him yet!"

Deya looked at Vesser in surprise.

She had shouted without thinking, only realizing afterward that she had no valid reason to save Igor. To maintain her secrecy power, she couldn't reveal that she was Lise Deya, nor could she let the sword Princess know the Con Artist's importance to Ash.

Moreover, Igor was too perceptive. If she suddenly showed concern for him, he might actually figure it out! If the secrecy power were to break, Deya would be left in tears.

But since Vesser had also called for a halt, she must have a solid reason. All Deya needed to do was agree with her and save Igor!

However, Vesser, though appearing calm, was already deep in thought.

She had to save the mental sorcerer, not out of friendship-they had no such bond-but purely because Ash's real-world team couldn't do without a mental sorcerer!

If it were the necromancer, Vesser might have hesitated, given that his value was not as high.

But the mental sorcerer was different. Without him, Ash's real-world team would collapse instantly. Furthermore, with the Four Pillars Cult and the Qinyi Alliance soon intensifying the war, without the mental sorcerer to lead, Ash and his team would likely get caught in the war's Whirlpool!

Yet, Vesser also had no reason to save him!

The only reason she could offer was, "He knows the Observer."

But who is he? And how do you know they know each other?

A little probing would make the sword Princess and the Witch realize she knew Ash in reality, and the Silver Lantern identity wouldn't stay hidden for long.

So, I can't save him directly; instead, I need to...

"The longing for is just to erase his soul, so why not have him surrender all his spirits first?" Vesser suggested. "Otherwise, his spirits would be erased too, which would be a terrible waste."

Sonya was taken aback, "Strip the pig before slaughtering it? ... Oh, 'strip the pig' is a saying from my hometown, meaning to extract every last bit."

"But he wouldn't willingly give up his spirits, would he? With a single thought, he could destroy his own spirits. Sanctuary sorcerers are smart; unless a Pact is made to guarantee his safety, he wouldn't easily give up his life's work."

The Sword Princess paused and said, "Moreover, taking a life for a spirit is one thing, but murder and robbery are another. The former is for survival, the latter for personal greed."

"Even if we don't take his spirit, it will go to waste, but for something like this, I..."

Sonya looked conflicted. "...At least I need to take a few lives to steel myself mentally for such a transformation."

Vesser's mouth twitched.

She suddenly realized that the Sword Princess might be the type to easily fall into selfishness, with a moral baseline as flexible as a rubber band, the kind that doesn't need a push to slide into the Abyss. Whatever Ash did, it not only preserved the Sword Princess's innocence but also...

Turned her into someone who could warm others.

"But aren't we trying to improve 'longing for' so it doesn't have to be lethal?" Vesser said. "Maybe he got some unique spirits from the Specter's Inheritance that could effectively refine this Miracle."

Sonya hesitated for a moment but then shook her head. "You were right earlier; we have no choice but to kill, so let's not hold onto false hope."

But I didn't expect the first person we'd have to kill would be a mental sorcerer or Aunt Bukin!

Vesser and Deya deeply felt the invisible malice of fate.

As they racked their brains for reasons, Igor finally caught his breath and asked, “You want to refine a Miracle... from which Spellcasting Sect?”

“Dream Sect! It’s a secondary spell developed from the Mental Sect and Soul Sect!” Deya quickly replied, but then switched to a fierce tone, “The effect is to steal spirits by controlling Dreams! If you can’t help, then you’re as good as dead!”

“I can help,” Igor said. “I just got a Canon from the specter, a Miracle procedure from the 34th level ‘Soul’s Obsession,’ which includes some Dream Spirits. I can bring them out.”

“Plus, I’ve reached the Sanctuary level in both the Mental Sect and Soul Sect, so I should have the capability to refine the Miracle.”

The three exchanged glances. Sonya released him, frowning, “How can it be such a coincidence? Are you a Con Artist?”

“It’s not that coincidental,” Igor said softly, leaning against the wall. “Maybe there’s a bit of fate’s guidance.”

This morning, as usual, Igor used a Revelation spirit after his bath.

In truth, the Revelation spirit was of little use to him now. After all, the Revelation spirit was only One-Winged, while he was a three-wing sorcerer. The fate he carried had already surpassed the observation limits of the Revelation spirit.

The hints from the Revelation spirit had become increasingly trivial, offering minor benefits if followed but no harm if ignored.

However, today's hint was peculiar, directing him to comfort Ash. Initially, Igor had no intention of paying attention, but when he saw Ash looking downcast at dinner, he decided to talk to him later, only to find them in the middle of a pillow fight.

Normally, Igor wouldn't indulge in such trivialities, but Raven promised not to use any martial skills, and no one could resist such a temptation. So everyone ended up ganging up on Raven, yet still, Raven fought them off, leaving them in disarray.

Afterwards, Igor asked Ash if he was alright. Ash replied that he had a headache from Raven's beating and needed a bit of mental massage miracle. Normally, the Con Artist wouldn't bother with him, but considering the Revelation, he gave Ash a quick head rub.

Ash was so moved that he tapped Igor's head and bestowed upon him an enhancement miracle, something called 'Ignite Soul.'

Once Igor entered the Virtual Realm, he discovered a remarkable change within himself- he had recently cultivated his soul to fifty Human Souls, but tonight it had suddenly skyrocketed to five hundred Human Souls!

A tenfold increase!

Because of this, he managed to reach the 80th level and obtained the specter Canon 'Soul's Obsession'!

He thought that was the end of the Revelation's guidance.

Turns out, the guidance wasn't over yet.

Watching Igor pull out several Dream Spirits, Sonya pulled Deya and Vesser aside for a quick discussion, then turned to him seriously and said, "Are you willing to help us improve the miracle procedure? Time is extremely urgent, and if we catch you doing anything suspicious, for safety's sake, we'll have to execute you immediately."

"But if you succeed in improving it, we'll let you go."

For a sorcerer they 'didn't know,' this was the best deal Vesser and Deya could negotiate. Now the question was, would the petty Con Artist accept these terms?

Igor slowly lifted his head and glanced at the red-haired female sorcerer before him.

This wasn't their first encounter.

Back in the Arena on the Time Continent, he and Harvey had been killed by them once.

It had been a while, and with so much happening in between, Igor had forgotten about it.

So much so that when Ash was influenced by the Kaleidoscope, transforming into this red-haired female sorcerer who bore no resemblance to his originals, the Con Artist didn't make the connection.

Moreover...

He looked at the two female sorcerers behind the sword Princess, wondering who the other participant in the love triangle was.

Or perhaps Ash had hidden the fact that it wasn't just a love triangle, but a love quadrangle?

This must be one of Ash's hidden secrets, yet he himself wasn't here, and their words subtly hinted that their killings were for 'survival'...

Igor's mind raced with thoughts, yet his face remained impassive. He looked at the red-haired female sorcerer he had been seeing every night recently and nodded, saying:

“I accept your terms.”

Chapter 667: The Godsmithing Begins

“The next level is the 85th, and there’s a high chance the second Specter’s Canon will appear!”

Mercury checked the state of his soul, feeling increasingly anxious. The emergence of the Specter’s Inheritance was an enormous opportunity for him. The Mercury Family had integrated the Shadow Evil Drake’s blood into their lineage to preserve the Shadow Sect, a process that took centuries of selection to stabilize. Even so, they still needed to consult the Gospel Book to determine the best times for procreation, as the deformity rate was as high as 80% without it.

In return, Mercury’s clansmen were not only naturally attuned to shadow spells, but their soul growth rate far surpassed that of ordinary people. A typical Mercury had a soul strength of three Human Souls, silver had ten, gold had twenty-five, and Sanctuary level had fifty!

With such a solid soul foundation, Mercury's shadow spells were unstoppable, much like how the Physical Sect required a strong physique as a base; shadow spells needed the soul as a medium for casting.

The Mercury Family also had a Soul Sect Inheritance, but it was incomplete. It was adequate for soul cultivation but lacked the power for offense and defense, which is why it remained obscure. Moreover, while Mercury's clansmen had high soul growth rates, they were not Elves.

Without being Elves, entering the Soul Sect was exceedingly difficult. However, Mercury's research showed that while Elves found it easier to enter the Soul Sect, their souls were more sensitive and fragile, requiring careful cultivation. Perhaps due to these soul deficiencies, Elves could keenly sense souls.

In the Specter's Inheritance, Mercury's powerful soul was almost like cheating. Not only did it amplify the use of Soul Spirits, but it also allowed him to brute-force through many levels! The rewards from the Specter's Inheritance compensated for Mercury's shortcomings in the Soul Sect, allowing him to progress rapidly.

Thus, when the Specter's Inheritance came under attack, Mercury was among the most anxious. He was confident he was in the first echelon of the Specter's Inheritance, possibly even the seed player most likely to seize the Codex!

If the Specter's Inheritance were dismantled in the chaos involving the Divine Sovereign, he would almost certainly lose his chance at the Inheritance meant for him!

"The current pace is a bit strained... but there are probably only two or three days left!" Mercury resolved, "Today, I must push to level 90, so tomorrow I can be the first to seize the Specter's Codex!"

"The Specter's Canon I've obtained is good, but it lacks the crucial 'concept'! The concept might be in the Codex, and if I can get it... becoming a Demigod is within reach!"

"Then, the trivial Gospel Kingdom and that wet-behind-the-ears Empress..."

As Mercury pondered, black mist engulfed the hall. Though surprised by this unprecedented change, he quickly used a soul miracle to protect himself, a flowing garment appearing on his body.

This was the Specter's Appendix miracle he had acquired, the 'Soulgarment of the Sea'! With this miracle's protection, he could weaken almost any external influence!

However, as the black mist dissipated, Mercury's expression changed dramatically!

Before him lay over twenty 'corpses' sprawled across the ground!

And four mysterious figures clad in black robes!

Hiss!

Before Mercury could make a move, the chaotic threads had already bound him tightly!

In the next moment, a sword was held against his throat.

“You might want to try using the specter key first,” the figure in black suggested. “Have you realized your situation yet?”

Realizing he couldn’t escape the Specter’s Inheritance, Mercury quickly regained his composure. “What do you want?”

“Show us all the Specter’s Appendix and Canon rewards you’ve obtained from the Specter’s Inheritance,” the figure in black demanded. “We’ll take one spirit.”

“And then you’ll let me go?”

“Not only that, but we’ll also take most of your soul to repair the Specter’s Inheritance.”

The figure in black kicked one of the ‘corpses’ on the ground and added, “Then you’ll end up like them, needing hours to reconnect with your physical body-but at least you’ll survive.”

Repair the Inheritance!?

Mercury's expression shifted between uncertainty and determination. "Who are you? Why do you want to repair the Specter's Inheritance?"

"Isn't it obvious? They think they can't win, so they want to flip the table and destroy the Specter's Inheritance, hoping to snatch the core reward. But if there are those who can't win, naturally there are those who can," the figure in black explained. "The Codex trial has already begun, and to ensure it proceeds smoothly, the Specter's Inheritance can't collapse."

Mercury murmured, "The Specter's Inheritance... is it over?"

"Almost, but we've already gained partial control over the Specter's Inheritance," the figure in black shrugged. "So, will you cooperate? If not, we'll take your entire soul."

Mercury chuckled bitterly, "How can I trust you? Just because of these dozens of residual souls you can crush at any moment?"

“Because we don’t know which Kingdom you’re from,” the figure in black replied.

Mercury was taken aback, then understood the underlying message, and sighed, “Which Divine Sovereign are you serving?”

“You first tell us which Kingdom you’re from,” the figure in black retorted, a mocking tone in their voice. “Maybe we’ll spare you.”

Of course, Mercury dared not reveal his origin.

Indeed, he had seen the Divine Sovereign’s forces attacking the Specter’s Inheritance, so he should have known it was predetermined. How could an ordinary Sanctuary like him possibly touch the Codex? He was pleased with reaching the 85th level, unaware that the Divine Sovereign’s chosen ones were already inheriting the Codex.

To ensure their candidate could smoothly inherit the Specter Seer’s heritage, the Divine Sovereign even sent people to take over the Specter’s Inheritance, extracting souls from the Trial Takers to repair it. On reflection, only a Divine Sovereign could control the inheritance left by a Demigod.

Therefore, it was credible that these people wouldn't kill, because every Kingdom had numerous Sanctuaries, and they might inadvertently kill their own. If Mercury confessed he was from the Gospel Kingdom, but these people weren't serving the Omniscient Weaver, he'd be doomed.

So Mercury sighed and displayed the rewards he had obtained from the Specter's Inheritance.

The figure in black glanced at them, frowned, and asked, "What about the Canon? We know how many Canons you've acquired; you must have at least one Canon now."

Mercury replied, "The Canon I obtained isn't a spirit or a miracle, just a piece of intelligence."

"What intelligence is worth a Canon?"

"About the Godsmithing Ritual Track of the 'Static Deity.'"

With a crisp snap, Mercury fell backward, his body almost turning transparent. A bewildered Four-winged Spirit emerged from within him, looking around in confusion, only to be quickly captured by Sonya.

“This Miracle is already quite stable,” Igor remarked, lifting the hood of his black cloak thoughtfully. “There hasn’t been any spell failure or incorrect spirit extraction, so there’s no need for any immediate adjustments.”

These cloaked figures were, of course, Sonya, Deya, Vesser, and Igor.

Since Igor was tasked with improving the procedure, it was impossible to conceal the effects they were longing for. Once he understood what they intended to do, Igor not only worked on refining the procedure but also offered three suggestions.

First, everyone should don black cloaks for disguise. After all, if they encountered a familiar Sanctuary by chance, should they kill or not?

Second, they needed to pose as subordinates of the Divine Sovereign, claiming their actions were to repair the Specter's Inheritance, with their allies already inheriting the Codex.

Lastly, they should seize part of the Specter's Inheritance rewards from their victims.

"The rewards from the Specter's Inheritance are a pleasant surprise for them and won't harm their original spirit system. Therefore, losing the specter rewards falls into their 'comfort damage zone.'"

"Comfort damage zone?" Deya asked, puzzled.

Igor explained, "People don't truly hate losses; sometimes they need losses to feel secure. For example, a lover might accommodate their partner's quirks, tolerate unreasonable behavior, or waste time on meaningless demands, all to gain 'security' in the relationship by sacrificing their own interests."

"Similarly, if someone is robbed but only loses a small amount of money, they might actually feel grateful. This is because the loss is less than expected,

and within an acceptable range, making them feel 'lucky' despite the loss, even giving up on pursuing the matter."

"As long as you hit the 'comfort damage zone,' people will give you whatever you want."

Sonya and Vesser listened intently, while Deya seemed a bit confused. In truth, Sonya and Vesser had already grasped similar concepts through life experiences, but hearing Igor articulate this advanced Con Artist's wisdom was enlightening and beneficial.

As for deceiving Trial Takers out of their spirits, not only Igor but Sonya and the others were all in agreement.

They might hesitate when it came to killing, but tricking someone out of a spirit carried no such moral burden. In the Virtual Realm, sorcerers were naturally competitors; if you got tricked, you should reflect on your own shortcomings!

Moreover, they had racked their brains to spare these people's lives, so taking a spirit as a life-saving fee seemed fair enough.

However, they hadn't expected things to go so smoothly.

Igor's mastery of the specter Canon "Soul's Obsession" happened to complement the first half of the "longing for" procedure, increasing soul extraction efficiency while reducing soul damage. With little extra effort, they created a safe version of longing for.

The first five attempts either resulted in spell failure or failed to acquire the designated spirit, but soon they found their stride. Through several iterations and improvements, the new longing for had become a sustainable Miracle for harvesting spirits.

Even Sonya and the others were getting restless-should they seize the opportunity to steal a Four-winged Spirit for themselves? Opportunities like this to raid the Virtual Realm's resources might only come once, especially since the Nightmare had given them fifty slots!

"Come over here."

Vesser suddenly called them over, saying, “This Godsmithing Ritual Track for the Static Deity is surprisingly simple.”

Faced with the robbery, Mercury handed over the Godsmithing Ritual Track without hesitation. Although the Ritual Track was far more important than a spirit, knowing he couldn’t obtain the Codex or any other means to acquire concepts, its value plummeted.

Igor stood aside, not joining them. Deya glanced at him and recited, “Incorporate the ‘Silence’ concept into your being, then carry the Four Wings Lock, Four Wings Break, and Four Wings Erosion spirits within your soul. Endure in the static domain for one white bull cycle to create a Static Deity.”

“Simple, yes,” Sonya remarked, “but putting aside the Silence concept, who can endure a white bull cycle in the static domain? Or was there once a Miracle that allowed movement in the static domain?”

“The final step of the Soul Divinity School is to endure the curse of the Virtual Realm,” Vesser shook her head. “Even if there was a Miracle, it probably can’t be used. The curse of the static domain is a necessary condition for the birth of a Static Deity.”

“No wonder the Soul Divinity School fell into decline,” Sonya shrugged. “If the final step involves a curse from the Virtual Realm that sorcerers can’t withstand, it’s no surprise it hasn’t survived to this day.”

However, Vesser was looking at Sonya thoughtfully, causing the latter to blink. “What’s up?”

“Do you have any spirits you want?”

Vesser suddenly said, “It’s rare to have such an opportunity. It would be a waste not to make good use of it. Let’s steal a few spirits we need.”

Igor slowly opened his eyes.

Outside Black Robe Town, it was still dark. He was still under the influence of the Mirage Prism. In his soul, not only were his spirits intact, but he also had a few more Soul Spirits.

The spirits stolen using the longing for naturally ended up with the three of them. But since the plan to deceive the sanctuary sorcerers into giving up their spirits was Igor's, and he helped improve the Miracle procedure, they let him choose a few spirits from the spoils as a reward.

Igor left his room, tried Ash's door, found it locked, and used a spare key to enter.

He saw the red-haired girl lying quietly on the bed, her expression serene, lips slightly pursed, as if she were in a Oneiros.

Igor stood by the bed, watching for a while, and softly said, "It's truly identical..."

"Is it nice to look at?"

Raven's distorted voice came from the doorway. He seemed to appear there suddenly, always so silent that he could make wrongdoers break out in a cold sweat.

But Igor was not among those.

“Why does that sound a bit like you’re showing off?” Igor said. “Or have you seen it many times?”

“He’s worth showing off.”

Igor, feeling a headache from this oddball, shook his head and left the room. As he passed Raven, he said, “Since you want to watch, keep a close eye on him these next two days. Don’t let him out of your sight.”

Raven was silent for a moment, then asked solemnly, “Where does the danger come from?”

Igor glanced at him. “The danger comes from himself, from the Virtual Realm you can’t touch.”

After Igor left, Raven sat by Ash's bed, quietly staring at the floor.

Like a dejected raven.

In the Golden Hall, Ash, who had been resting with his eyes closed, stood up, his gaze meeting the returning teammates.

"The spirits on the list are all gathered," Sonya announced loudly to the Nightmare. "The spirits we got from 'casting errors' should be ours, right?"

"As long as you don't take spirits from the Nightmare Inheritance, I don't care," the Nightmare replied.

With a wave of its hand, the spirits flew towards the crystalline walls on either side of the Golden Hall. Light flickered within the walls, seemingly performing some kind of Miracle detection.

Seconds later, the Nightmare said, "All materials are ready."

“Godsmithing, commence.”

Chapter 668: Revert

Chapter 668: Revert

Thud!

In the golden hall, as a burst of light exploded before him, Ash felt as if his body had been struck by a massive hammer, causing him to tremble all over.

Even though his soul body wouldn’t bleed, he experienced a wave of dizziness, as if five hundred Lala Fatty were screaming in his ears, and his vision was filled with overlapping images.

Six Four-winged Spirits fell to the ground, visibly exhausted and too drained to even muster the strength to fly. The failed Spirit Convergence had not only dealt a severe blow to Ash but also left the spirits overwhelmed.

In the hall, aside from Vesser, who seemed in slightly better condition, everyone else appeared as if they hadn’t fully awakened, their expressions drowsy and puppet-like. Though they still looked beautiful, there was a withering aura about them.

They had been working continuously for twelve hours.

As they embarked on Godsmithing, they quickly understood why only Truth sorcerers could possibly complete a Virtual Divinity.

The creation of a Virtual Divinity was deceptively simple yet incredibly complex, as it involved only one step-Spirit Convergence.

It had been mentioned before that while there were single-sect spirits like the “slash sword,” more often, there were composite-sect spirits like the “Vibration Sword,” which belonged to Swordsmanship but also contained elements of light spells, wind spells, and other sects, albeit in varying proportions.

Spirit Convergence involved extracting the same sect elements from different spirits and then piecing them together into fragments of a Virtual Divinity!

The nightmare had cast “Oneiric Schism” on them not merely to coerce them, but because “Oneiric Schism” was filled with Nightmare contamination, enhancing their sensitivity to Nightmare forces, allowing them to clearly discern the Nightmare power within different spirits.

To illustrate, it was like they were graduates entering a Nightmare company, and when they saw keywords like “young and energetic team,” “afternoon tea, snacks, and gym provided,” “fast-paced work environment,” and “salary negotiable,” they knew just how nightmarish the company was.

Ash and the others needed to simultaneously manipulate multiple spirits, separating the “Nightmare” elements within them one by one, then blending them into fragments to be inserted into the Virtual Divinity maintained by the nightmare. It sounded like a slow and

meticulous task, but the problem was that a single fragment was often composed of several, dozens, or even scores of smaller fragments!

Separation was inherently mentally taxing, and if the separation wasn't pure and contained impure elements, it would trigger a Spirit Convergence explosion! However, if too few elements were separated, preventing the formation of sufficiently large fragments, they would have to start over!

Essentially, Spirit Convergence was akin to a Miracle composed of multiple spirits, and failure in Spirit Convergence equated to a Miracle backlash, making severe injury unsurprising. The core capability required for Spirit Convergence was computational processing ability. Truth sorcerers excelled in this area, and their sensitivity to spirit elements was far superior to other sorcerers. Ash and his group had triggered dozens of Spirit Convergence explosions due to impure separation, whereas Vesser had only triggered two!

It's worth noting that Ash and his group could only handle fewer than ten fragments, while Vesser consistently managed over ten large fragments, with a work efficiency more than four times theirs, highlighting the innate advantage of Truth sorcerers in this aspect.

Although it was extremely arduous, this valuable experience allowed them to grasp the wonders of the Virtual Divinity School—simply put, it's like stacking blocks.

Spirits are the building blocks, factors are the colors of the blocks, and by assembling them together to form a divinity, then infusing a concept, one can breathe life into the creation, crafting a deity that resembles the blocks perfectly. The principle isn't complex, but designing the blueprint and determining which spirits are needed is something only sorcerers who have entered the Divine Dominion might comprehend.

Compared to the Soul Divinity School, the Virtual Divinity School indeed has its advantages-firstly, it can be completed by an individual; secondly, it doesn't have strict requirements for materials, as all spirits can be substituted; thirdly, it avoids the curse of the Virtual Realm!

From the final step of the Static Deity Ritual Track, which requires spending a cycle in the static domain, it's evident that the curse of the Virtual Realm faced by the Soul Divinity School is a natural disaster that ordinary sorcerers cannot overcome-even having the chance to overcome it is unlikely, as the static domain is exclusive to the Time Continent.

Not to mention the difficulty for a Demigod to return to the lower Virtual Realm, as seen from the nightmare angel's experience, the greatest obstacle to Godsmithing in the Virtual Realm is other sorcerers!

It's worth noting that Ash unknowingly found himself entering the Truth Sect, clearly because the Spirit Convergence work accumulates Truth experience, which others share with him, coupled with Vesser constantly sharing her experience with him, reaching the silver level was a natural progression.

But it was also the limit.

Ash exchanged glances with the operators and said, "Nightmare, we need to rest. Even if we restore our soul energy, we can't keep going."

Sonya, Deya, and Vesser all paused, quietly watching the nightmare.

The nightmare had been continuously helping them restore soul energy; otherwise, they would have been exhausted and expelled from the Virtual Realm long ago. But restoring soul energy isn't universal; twelve hours of intense, monotonous work without any breaks was enough to cause severe psychological discomfort.

Their souls remained strong, but the light in their eyes gradually dimmed.

However, faced with such a reasonable request, the nightmare firmly shook its head, "No, I need Source Crystals to maintain the Virtual Divinity, and stopping midway would cause significant waste. Of course, the originals have prepared a Miracle to restore your spirits-"

"But I need to return to reality for a moment," Deya said, "I'll be back after I explain-"

"No, you may not."

Suddenly, as if their bodies were pierced with needles and then rolled on the ground, intense pain shot through their souls, causing them to bend over and gasp, nearly losing consciousness!

"No one is allowed to leave here, no one may return to reality," the nightmare said firmly, "Until Godsmithing is complete, no one is allowed to leave."

Ash glanced at the operators, then stared at the nightmare and said, “But we have the Oneiric Schism curse. I can stay as a hostage, and even if they don’t return, you can-“

“But you might leak information to the outside, causing the Godsmithing to fail,” the nightmare replied, “The mistakes made by the originals cannot be repeated.”

“As for your lack of focus and other issues, I will resolve them immediately.”

The nightmare pointed at Deya, and then a boiling wave surged over her, streams of energy flowing along the Oneiric Schism connection into the other three. Ash felt a burst of thoughts exploding in his mind, his spirit invigorated, as if the entire world had become crystal clear.

But the price was that the Witch nearly collapsed to the ground, her shoulders trembling with pain!

“Stop!” Ash stood up, positioning himself between the nightmare and the Witch, shouting, “What are you doing!?”

“The Oneiric Schism transformation procedure,” the nightmare replied. “This technique can link enemies, allies, or even both. When linking allies, it consumes one person’s soul to provide a powerful enhancement to the entire group.”

“Essentially, it depletes the target’s soul capacity to increase others’. So, the target’s soul can’t return to normal immediately. But sacrificing one to benefit all is a fair trade.”

Sonya went over to hold the Witch, lowering her head to hide her angry gaze, and said coldly, “So, can we get back to work now?”

“No,” the nightmare said. “Even if you don’t say it, when the Truth sorcerers reach their fatigue phase, I will use this Miracle to enhance her soul. Your role is to ensure the Truth sorcerers can last till the end.”

“Stop it,” Ash said. “Let me take her place.”

Deya, trembling, bit her lip and said, “Observer, I, I didn’t-“

“Are you sure?” the nightmare asked. “I confirmed she has the highest soul capacity among you, which is why I chose her first.”

It wasn’t surprising that the Witch had the highest soul capacity. With multiple personalities honing her day and night, she had reached twenty-five Human Souls upon entering the Sanctuary, and now she was at forty.

“I’m sure.”

Ash quickly spent 30 points to purchase a set of Source Crystals, then equipped the Soul Theft Handbook, activating the ‘Soul Ignite Chart’!

With a roaring gust, his soul capacity surged from thirty to three hundred Human Souls, making his soul body more solid and defined, even his hair became more distinct.

The nightmare showed no surprise, merely nodding before pointing at Ash.

Boom!

A massive pressure bent Ash’s back, and the pain, like countless small knives slicing him, filled his soul. If a soul body could sweat, he would be drenched!

He covered his mouth to endure, trying to straighten his back to resist, but it only made the pain more acute.

Soon, his consciousness began to fade, his mind blanking out, replaced by a cold, bone-chilling calm and countless clashing thoughts.

The correct use of Oneiric Schism was likely to link an enemy and oneself, then unleash the schism on oneself, causing the enemy to be cursed by the Nightmare as well. But clearly, the Nightmare Angel could resist nightmares...

The Nightmare Angel failed because it was betrayed, which is why the program left by it for the nightmare emphasized not leaving the Virtual Realm...

The nightmare had never attacked before, probably because 'leaving' triggered its built-in program, so there must be other dangerous or even deadly keywords...

Vesser watched as Ash's pained expression gradually turned serene, his shoulders no longer trembling, a slight smile forming at the corners of his mouth, and the light in his eyes becoming deep and inscrutable. She immediately recognized this as the Observer Ash she had longed for.

A being colder, calmer, and more perfect than herself!

Vesser never imagined that the hope she had almost entirely abandoned would reappear before her eyes. Almost instinctively, she couldn't help but wonder-what if Ash really changed?

In the Virtual Realm, having a perfect Observer Ash leading the team would yield double or even ten times the benefits! No one understood the power of a perfect Ash better than Vesser; he had never fully tapped into his potential when he was normal!

In reality, if Ash changed, she wouldn't need to consider his psychological endurance; she could simply be honest with him, and he would become her ally. Moreover, although he might not like her, he wouldn't favor the sword Princess or the Witch either. As long as she could keep him by her side... as long as...

Vesser's breathing quickened, but she soon steadied her gaze and pressed her lips firmly together, standing up to walk towards Ash.

Even though Ash was now more fearless and stronger than before, Vesser felt a pang of heartache, unable to suppress the irrational thought-

Don't change!

Turn back!

So she rushed forward, wanting to reach out-

"Observer!"

Sonya held Ash in her arms, whispering softly in his ear, affectionately brushing against his cheek. Deya, having recovered from her earlier pain, could only hold Ash's hand, anxious and unsure of how to help.

Vesser, a step too late, stopped outside, watching Ash's expression gradually regain vitality, even a hint of pain mixed with joy, finally realizing-

Of course.

Ash's experiences in Blood Moon and Gospel were no safer than those in Senlo, even more brutal and bloody-Ash was a sanctuary sorcerer in Senlo, but a death row inmate in Blood Moon, and a slave in Gospel.

He had plenty of reasons to change in the past; if he were to change, he would have done so long ago.

But just as he pulled back the fallen sword Princess and protected the crazed Witch, the sword Princess and Witch likewise pulled him back from the brink of the Abyss.

They were a mutually redemptive relationship, leaving no room for anyone else to intervene.

She actually thought she could take Ash away from them...

Suddenly, Vesser saw the sword Princess beckoning her over. When she approached, the sword Princess held her hand tightly, as if to demonstrate their unity.

That hand had just touched Ash's face...

While Vesser was momentarily distracted, she noticed the sword Princess writing on her palm.

It was the word "danger."

Vesser looked at Ash, who was enduring pain, resting his head on the sword Princess's chest, and he gave her a meaningful glance.

The Nightmare Inheritance posed significant danger.

Although Ash had left his long-lost Observer state, the thoughts from that state hadn't dissipated. He suddenly realized a crucial point-the Nightmare Angel was an Evil Sorcerer!

Look at the other two Evil Sorcerers, the King of Time and the Specter Seer. The former, despite opening the Eternal City, didn't prohibit spirits or spellforce, but added a new rule: sorcerers within the Eternal City cannot destroy spirits and cannot leave the Virtual Realm.

In simple terms, even if a sorcerer obtained the Inheritance of Time, they must leave the Eternal City the same way they entered to return to reality. If they died in the process, their spirit would be guaranteed to drop, and they couldn't destroy their own spirit to prevent benefiting their enemies!

The Eternal City was a place of relentless conflict, and its inherent challenges were no small feat. Over the past month alone, it's estimated that nearly ten thousand two-wings sorcerers have perished there. This was precisely what the King of Time desired-after all, he wasn't a being of the real world but an Ancient Sprite with a deep-seated hatred for sorcerers. Though his reasons for leaving an Inheritance remain unknown, it's clear he hoped for significant casualties among the sorcerers.

The Specter Seer was even more blatant in his intentions. He deceitfully offered the 'specter key,' an artifact for escape, but once sorcerers dared to venture deeper, they would encounter deadly traps like 'Soul's Obsession' and 'Rejuvenating Return,' from which there was no escape.

The Specter Seer knew that sanctuary sorcerers were shrewd. To lure them into danger, he dangled tempting rewards, ensuring that those who followed would meet a grim fate. This was typical of Evil Sorcerers, who were inherently self-serving. They would only leave behind an Inheritance when they had no other choice, and even then, they would ensure it wasn't easy for their successors. The reasoning was simple: why should they die while someone else reaps the benefits of their life's work? They left their Inheritance begrudgingly, and they wanted their successors to suffer to vent their resentment.

In stark contrast, the Nightmare's Inheritance seemed surprisingly lenient. There were no trials; simply arriving was a reward in itself, with gifts of deities and Celestium. It was almost too generous, though the longing for power was brutal, it was directed at outsiders, not the Nightmare Angel. But just as Ash began to wonder if the Nightmare Angel had a change of heart before death, the recent actions of the Nightmare shattered that hope.

The Nightmare Angel had set up torturous keywords, consuming their souls to sustain the Truth sorcerer. These actions proved that even in death, the Nightmare Angel remained malevolent, unable to bear the thought of sorcerers prospering, and quick to inflict pain and suffering.

If the Nightmare Angel had been benevolent, even if Deya misspoke, a warning would have sufficed. Why resort to torture? If the Nightmare Angel retained the Evil Sorcerer's twisted kindness, they could have taken someone from the Specter's Inheritance as a soul fueler. Instead, they treated them as mere expendables.

Throughout, the Nightmare never regarded them as true successors, only as 'Truth sorcerers and expendable artifacts,' with promises that were never meant to be fulfilled. The Nightmare Angel's generosity and cruelty could only mean one thing-this Inheritance was a trap.

At the very least, they were not the true beneficiaries of the Nightmare's Inheritance. This explained the Nightmare Angel's seemingly generous yet brutal behavior-tools were given freely to those who were to be used and driven mercilessly.

If they naively pursued Godsmithing, at best, they would toil in vain; at worst, they would be eradicated by the Nightmare. But Ash couldn't voice this aloud; the Nightmare Angel likely set up keywords that, if triggered, would doom them.

Vesser pondered for a moment, glancing at Ash's hand resting on the sword Princess's thigh, but ultimately wrote a few words in the sword Princess's palm.

Sonya, slightly puzzled, relayed the message to Ash. He frowned slightly, then relaxed and extended his hand to Vesser. They clasped hands, with Sonya sitting between them, placing her hand on top. Deya, finding it amusing, joined in.

Moments later, the Nightmare suddenly spoke, “Five minutes are up, back to work.”

Sonya looked at Ash in her arms, her ruby eyes questioning-what’s going on? You stopped hurting five minutes ago?

Ash shamelessly hugged her, taking a deep breath against her neck. It was the first time he had shown such affection in front of everyone. The stretching paw sword saint blushed with embarrassment but returned the embrace. However, when Ash also hugged the Witch, the smile on the village girl’s face quickly faded.

Just then, the golden hall shook slightly. Everyone looked up at the ceiling, their expressions changing drastically. The Nightmare, expressionless, urged again, “Get back to work.”

Outside, Igor, having rested, returned to the Distant Sky Domain. He observed the dense cluster of black dots surrounding the golden Phantom, his expression grave: “Is this all the time we have left?”

Chapter 669: Assault on the Specters Inheritance

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“Captain Gerard, finally we meet.”

The White-haired Hunter turned to see a nun dressed in black, her attire split high up her thigh, with a tightly fitted top that somehow still revealed a glimpse of her fair chest. Her face was pure and saintly, yet her eyes were a striking blood-red.

Gerard, however, knew better than to underestimate this woman. He nodded politely and said, “Good day, Deputy Director Selene.”

“It’s Selene, Deputy Director of Bloodcry,” she corrected, pinching Gerard’s nose playfully. “It’s important to emphasize Bloodcry; it’s the only thing I can be proud of!”

In Blood Moon, titles were treated differently than in other realms. Sorcerers in other lands, upon reaching the status of Sanctuary Legend, often had unique titles, either from folklore or official recognition, reflecting their personal traits. However, in Blood Moon, the Blood Moon Sovereign insisted that the Blood Saint and Moonshadow Clans remain inconspicuous, and grandiose titles were contrary to this principle. Moreover, members of these clans often held various positions, such as hunter captain, hospital director, Institute director, or High Priest. Thus, using titles instead of names became customary.

From her position alone, one could gauge the influence of this woman masquerading as a nun. Bloodcry was one of the Four Great Institutes of Blood Moon, specializing in mechanical and biological prostheses. Eighty percent of human modifications in the nation relied on their patents, and the production value of Bloodcry Institute even surpassed that of Kaimon City.

Though both were Blood Saints with three wings, Gerard, a hunter captain involved in combat, clearly held a lower status compared to Selene.

“My junior sister is under your care,” Selene said, placing her hands over her chest. “I only asked an old classmate to help, but I didn’t expect you to visit her in the hospital so often.”

Gerard felt a bit awkward. “Well...”

“You must be there to care for my junior sister, right? Not to see that disabled girl named Selina?” Selene teased, tapping her lips. “Otherwise, it would be strange, considering you’re a Blood Hunter captain, and that disabled girl is from a foreign land we need to eliminate. I’ve been pondering whether to help my junior sister with this problem...”

Gerard’s expression turned serious as he looked at her silently.

Selene suddenly burst into laughter, playfully slapping Gerard’s chest. “Don’t be so fierce, old classmate, you scared me! Since you and my junior sister are so fond of that disabled girl, why would I ruin your toy? I’m a devout priest of the Blood Moon Sovereign, certified by the Beloved Church!”

“So, please continue to take care of my junior sister~”

“You really do care about her.”

“Of course, she’s my dearest junior sister~” Selene twirled around, cupping her face, her cheeks flushed with a crimson glow of ecstasy. “Those crimson lips, egg-white complexion, eyes like jelly, and that soft, slippery tongue...”

Suddenly, both felt a surge of blood boiling within them. Though soul bodies naturally lack blood, they possessed spell-infused blood from the Blood Embrace Ritual. When they entered the Virtual Realm, it permeated their souls, simulating the effect of blood.

Following the trail of blood, they saw a cluster of shimmering crimson light above. As they flew closer, they found dozens of Sanctuaries gathered there, including the shadowy and enigmatic Blood Saints and the charming and lively Moonshadow Wolves, with more joining by the minute.

The Moonshadow clan was naturally adept at creating an atmosphere, and with many Blood Saints being quite talkative, the air was filled with chatter-a rare spectacle in the Distant Sky Domain.

Half an hour later, a voice softly resonated within their souls, causing their blood to boil and their tails to twitch!

“Silence.”

The Blood Moon Sanctuaries turned to see a slouched figure, dressed in a white shirt and jeans, resembling a disheveled youth just emerging from his bedroom. Upon closer inspection, one could see that he had one crimson eye, while the other was dark!

He spoke with a listless tone, "I am the Deputy Director of the Sanguil Research Institute, Abyssalith Guldengrave. The Blood Moon Sovereign has tasked me with overseeing this operation. We must breach the Dreaming Celestium within three days."

"Is it really him?"

"So that's what Abyssalith looks like..."

"Wow, can I go ask for his autograph?"

The crowd was abuzz with amazement at the introduction by the despondent youth. Among the Four Great Institutes, the Sanguil Research Institute was the most mysterious, as they delved into the realms of slaughter, plague, curses, and death! Their recruitment was extremely selective, and people only knew the names of the Director and Deputy Director, with no other intelligence available!

Abyssalith glanced into the distance, scratching his head, "It seems the Sovereign isn't the only one eager for a swift resolution. This complicates things."

Gerard followed his gaze but could only see a speck on the horizon.

“It’s the sorcerers of Wonderland’s Cursed Elves,” Selene remarked, using some miracle to observe the distance. “The Lord of Wonderland is quite greedy, isn’t he? Even though the Cursed Elves are descendants of Ancient Sprites, the Inheritance of Time is practically handed to them, yet they’re here to snatch the Specter’s Inheritance...”

“Your intelligence isn’t very accurate,” Gerard replied calmly. “It’s said that the ones most likely to seize the Inheritance of Time are three female sorcerers, but their combination is peculiar—one Blood Saint, one Bewitcher, and one human...”

“So the Inheritance of Time will fall into the hands of our Blood Moon? Fantastic.” Selene clapped her hands lightly, causing her white rabbit to tremble. “But a Bewitcher, a Blood Saint... I recall my junior sister took in a Bewitcher student.”

Gerard pondered, “But that Bewitcher college student only became a sorcerer four months ago. How could she possibly be on the Time Continent now?”

Selene nodded in agreement, “True, Sivirin only became a two-wings sorcerer two months ago. She hasn’t even formed her Golden Wing yet.”

Abyssalith added, “The Cursed Elves of Wonderland and the Parasitic Sorcerers of the Abyssal Depths are gathering. At least three factions are vying for the Specter’s

Inheritance, not to mention the scattered forces outside... We'll rely on your bravery soon."

The Moonshadow Priests chanted in unison, "The Blood Moon has arrived; we shall reunite in the promised land."

"Well then..." Abyssalith placed his thumbs in his mouth and bit down, drawing purplish-red blood. With a swift motion, he traced a complex compass pattern in the air within three seconds. Then, with a sweeping gesture, the pattern expanded to encompass all the Blood Moon Sanctuaries.

"Don't resist, just check 'I agree to the terms above,'" Abyssalith's weary voice now carried an air of sanctity. "The time of death is upon us, the Twins restore all things; the time of bloodletting is upon us, the maid activates all phenomena; the time of decay is upon us, the priest awakens all souls..."

"Miracle: Blood Moon Alliance!"

An invisible connection linked the Blood Moon Sanctuaries together. Abyssalith, leading the Sanctuaries, flew towards the crimson lightning bolt embedded in the massive golden Phantom, reaching out his hand as the crimson lightning shrank and fell into his grasp.

Many sorcerers believed the crimson lightning was the handiwork of the Divine Sovereign, but it wasn't entirely so. Even a Divine Sovereign found it challenging to exert power over the Distant Sky Domain; mortals could never fathom the sheer solidity of the Virtual Realm's chasm.

However, a divine intervention of this magnitude could be achieved with a small artifact bestowed by the Divine Sovereign, combined with the efforts of dozens of sanctuary sorcerers-provided their powers could be perfectly unified!

“Ha!”

Abyssalith straightened his back, his form suddenly towering as he let out a mighty shout, channeling the Rainbow spellforce of all the Blood Moon Sanctuaries into the crimson lightning!

Blood Spells, when reaching a high level, possess a hidden trait unknown to many: the bloodstain curse. Anything subjected to continuous damage by Blood Spells, with bloodstains accumulating and thickening, gradually loses its resistance to Blood Spells. The Blood Moon sorcerers had allowed the lightning to remain embedded in the golden Phantom for so long to leave enough bloodstains!

The bloodstains hadn’t yet reached their limit, but with internal issues arising within the Specter’s Inheritance, the Sovereign had personally ordered an early activation!

A flash of blood light illuminated the entire Distant Sky Domain, causing all observing sorcerers to feel as if their eyes were burning, followed by a thunderous roar of heaven and earth colliding!

Crack!

The crimson lightning struck the golden Phantom again, seemingly unchanged from before. But when Abyssalith retrieved the crimson lightning, the golden Phantom, which should have instantly recovered, now bore a crooked, finger-sized opening.

Yet this small opening was enough to become the root of the Dreaming Celestium's downfall!

"Restore spellforce," Abyssalith commanded. "Prepare for a full assault."

"Is this all the time we've managed to buy..."

Igor watched as the golden Phantom echoed with various earth-shattering sounds, his expression grim.

In the Specter's Inheritance, advising Ash's friends to deceive the sanctuary sorcerers wasn't just about tricking the spirits; the more crucial goal was to buy time.

Sanctuary sorcerers were important figures in any Kingdom, and their deaths would inevitably be thoroughly investigated, especially during the Inheritance period. The death of a sanctuary sorcerer often hinted at involvement with the Specter's Inheritance, making an investigation unavoidable.

Other Kingdoms might not know, but Igor was aware that the Blood Moon Kingdom possessed the ‘divine intervention of death reappearance,’ and other Kingdoms likely had similar capabilities. This meant that if they used their longing for to eliminate the sanctuary sorcerers, they would soon be exposed as controlling the Specter’s Inheritance.

Not killing the sanctuary sorcerers, but merely draining their souls to the point where they are bedridden for half a month, would allow the secrets of the Specter’s Inheritance to remain hidden as long as they kept silent. Even if they did speak, it would likely be assumed that some Divine Sovereign had seized the Inheritance. But which Kingdom’s Divine Sovereign would it be? This back-and-forth investigation would take considerable time.

With any luck, by the time Ash returned, the Divine Sovereigns might not have discovered the theft of the Specter’s Inheritance. However, Igor underestimated the importance the Divine Sovereigns placed on the Specter’s Inheritance. It turned out that those sanctuary sorcerers would only be ejected back to reality after a few hours, meaning it would take roughly six hours for the Divine Sovereigns across the Kingdoms to realize that the Specter’s Inheritance had been preemptively taken and to mobilize sanctuary forces to compete for it!

So, what should I...

As Igor pondered, he suddenly heard a distant call.

“Mr. Bukin, over here, over here!”

Igor turned his head and saw a flaming orc flying over.

Chikara!?

“We were just thinking about how to find you, and then we spotted you right away. This must mean we’re meant to pull off this heist together!”

Igor raised an eyebrow. “We?”

“Me and Mr. Harvey,” Chikara replied, “and a group of like-minded new friends I just met!”

“What kind of friends?”

“The kind who are looking for a chance to storm the Dreaming Celestium and make a grab!” Chikara’s innocent face was full of cunning. “They go in to feast, and we can follow behind to pick up the scraps, right? Of course, if we’re lucky, we might end up feasting ourselves. What do you say, Mr. Bukin? I heard you used to be in the same line of work, robbing and looting. Interested?”

“Don’t compare my noble profession of helping people fulfill their wishes with your unskilled robbery,” Igor mused. “However, with you and Harvey involved...”

After a moment's thought, the Con Artist's face slowly broke into a sweet smile. "I'm very interested."

"Let's be clear, this time whatever I grab from the Specter's Inheritance, you can't order me to hand it over!"

"How could I possibly be interested in your little trinkets? I'm just worried you might get carried away, so I took a few of your spirits to keep safe for you. I'll return them later."

The orc's eyes widened. "Will you really return them?"

"Absolutely, once I feel you've matured, I'll give them all back."

Chapter 670: Hidden Motives

Half an hour later, a once-in-a-millennium spectacle unfolded in the Distant Sky Domain.

Sanctuary sorcerers, who were supposed to be exploring within countless Phantoms, had all gathered in one place.

Two thousand sorcerers unfurled their Sanctuaries, drifting in the air, and as time passed, more arrived, their three wings fluttering swiftly.

A single stone stirred a thousand ripples.

The news of the Blood Moon sorcerer breaching the Dreaming Celestium spread like a Plague, rapidly reaching the Six Nations.

Whether you were a mayoral official in the Kingdom of Gospel, a cult leader in the Kingdom of Senlo, a noble professor in the Stars Kingdom, or a reclusive hermit, unless you were severely injured or out of the loop, you were inevitably drawn to this unprecedented gathering of chaos.

Every sorcerer who arrived, gazing at the thousands of Sanctuaries surrounding the golden Phantoms, found it nearly impossible to contain their excitement.

Even though they hadn't seized anything yet, the sheer spectacle was enough to etch itself into their memories forever-this was likely the only time in their lives they would witness so many Sanctuaries together.

In that moment, they finally understood the weight of the phrase, "The Virtual Realm is the homecoming for all sorcerers."

Blood Moon, Stars, Senlo, Wonderland, Abyssal Depths, Gospel!

The tremendous commotion caused by the Blood Moon Sanctuary in the Virtual Realm drew sorcerers from around the world within half an hour!

Sorcerers from the Six Nations converged!

Even for sanctuary sorcerers, leaving their own nation was a rare feat. To them, sorcerers from other nations were like distant fairy tales, stories from novels, virtual characters behind screens-known but unreachable.

In the Sea of Knowledge, shrouded in white mist, a One-Winged Sorcerer could travel thousands of miles without encountering another sorcerer, which was entirely normal.

On the Time Continent, under the cover of golden rain and fraught with danger, even if two-wings sorcerers did meet, unless they were acquainted, they would typically keep their distance for safety.

In the Distant Sky Domain, the chances of meeting were even slimmer, as sorcerers were isolated in individual Phantoms, numbering in the thousands.

However, starting from the Sanctuary level, if sorcerers did meet, they were more inclined towards communication rather than conflict-because fighting wouldn't result in death.

Sanctuary represents security, and security is the foundation for equal exchange.

If multiple two-wings sorcerers met on the Time Continent, they would immediately prepare Defensive Miracles, or hide if they had none. Avoiding conflict was the best outcome; communication was unlikely.

Some might wonder, why are sorcerers so wary of each other? Can't both parties be decent people? Indeed, most sorcerers are law-abiding individuals in reality, but once they enter the Virtual Realm, it's a different story.

The Virtual Realm has two key features: you can log in and out at will, and it's difficult to trace actions in the Virtual Realm back to reality.

Simply put, if you attack someone in the Virtual Realm, even if you don't kill them, there's little they can do about it, as you might only encounter each other once in a lifetime.

An anonymous, rule-less space with no real-world repercussions is, without a doubt, a breeding ground for trolls.

And throughout history, the Virtual Realm has always been like this.

Even if in reality you've never even slaughtered a Lala Fatty and mourn the death of strangers, when you encounter other sorcerers in the Virtual Realm, it's not unusual to suddenly feel the urge to try and kill them-after all, no one will hold you accountable.

Moreover, even if you don't harbor such thoughts, how can you be sure the other party doesn't?

Not to mention the various influencing factors, such as being a Gospel Elf sorcerer and the other party being a Blood Moon Goblin sorcerer persecuted by society. You've never discriminated against Goblins, yet due to the Blood Moon's societal structure, you find yourself hunted by them.

Additionally, there are benefits to killing sorcerers-normally, even if a sorcerer is killed, they merely lose their spirit, not their life entirely. The spirit they lose is likely to contain a spell spirit, which becomes the spoils of victory.

The first and second layers of the Virtual Realm are akin to a dark forest where everyone can hunt each other without any repercussions.

But upon reaching the third layer, the emergence of Sanctuaries changes everything. The impenetrable barrier fosters trust and dissipates malice.

Scattered warriors gather courageously to discuss forming teams, even subtly opposing the sorcerer troops representing the Divine Sovereign, all thanks to the courage provided by the Sanctuary.

No matter what happens, they believe the Sanctuary can withstand the first couple of blows, giving them a chance to escape and counterattack!

A retreat is the most substantial asset in an adventure!

Thus, a grand scene of two thousand sanctuary sorcerers eyeing each other emerges.

Currently, the Distant Sky Domain can be divided into four clusters: Blood Moon Sanctuary, wonderland Sanctuary, Abyssal Depths Sanctuary, and all other Sanctuaries.

The first three consist of around a hundred members each, while the ‘others’ number two thousand!

However, these ‘other two thousand Sanctuaries’ lack unified leadership, not even forming teams of more than ten. Many are in groups of three to five, and more are lone wolves. Forget about fighting; if they encounter valuable treasures, they might start fighting among themselves, merely appearing formidable when gathered.

They’re like a flock of vultures waiting for the lions to leave scraps, but if the lions get injured, they wouldn’t mind embarrassing the Divine Sovereign.

Therefore, Abyssalith paid no heed to The Crowd; he focused on the Cursed Elf and Parasitic Sorcerer in the distance, scratching his bird’s nest-like hair, gripping a red lightning bolt in his right hand: “The Sovereign never mentioned a confrontation phase...”

At this moment, a female sorcerer stepped out from the Cursed Elf group. Like regular Elves, Cursed Elves have long, pointed ears, but besides having paler skin, their most distinctive feature is their serpent-haired appearance.

This elegantly dressed female Cursed Elf had nine bronze serpent hairs that seemed to possess independent will, slightly flicking their tongues as they, along with her originals, gazed at Abyssalith.

“Mirehex,” she spoke softly, yet everyone within a kilometer radius could clearly hear her gentle, slow voice.

From the Parasitic Sorcerer’s side, a masked young man emerged, shrouded entirely in clothing: “Malgraith.”

“Sanguil,” Abyssalith casually assigned himself a codename: “The Sovereign’s orders are to seize the Specter’s Inheritance and Dreaming Celestium. I wonder if you two could make some concessions? If possible, I’d like to work less overtime...”

Mirehex slowly replied, “We, the same.”

“Isn’t it a bit premature to start fighting when we haven’t even seen the prize yet? We should at least unwrap the Dreaming Celestium into something adorable first,” Malgraith remarked, casting a glance at The Crowd lurking in the distance. “And with so many waiting in line, if we start a fight, they might seize the opportunity to attack us, the representatives of the Divine Sovereign—trust me, no one can resist the temptation of desecrating the sacred and trampling on the noble.”

Abyssalith was equally reluctant to stir up trouble. “Let’s enter the Celestium first, and then rely on our own skills.”

“Clear the field?” Mirehex inquired.

“Wow, such a fierce Elf, I like it,” Malgraith teased, indicating the Parasitic Sorcerers’ agreement.

However, Abyssalith firmly refused. “Blood Moon does not engage in indiscriminate slaughter.”

This wasn’t a situation where the minority obeyed the majority. To clear the field, all three factions had to act simultaneously; otherwise, if two factions fought the sorcerers on the periphery while Blood Moon Sanctuary suddenly attacked them from behind, they could be completely out of the specter competition.

Since Blood Moon had vetoed the idea, Malgraith and Mirehex didn’t insist further.

Abyssalith put away the Crimson Lightning, quietly observing them-if they wanted to partake in this grand feast, they first had to prove their qualifications; a mere hundred sanctuary sorcerers wouldn’t meet the threshold.

Moreover, if Malgraith and Mirehex didn’t have divine interventions at their disposal, Abyssalith saw no reason to share with them. After all, the Crimson Lightning he wielded could still be used once more, posing an unbearable threat to any party.

Mirehex raised her hand, and a blazing orange giant bow materialized in her grasp-in an era dominated by Gunmanship, bows and arrows were quite unfamiliar to most sorcerers.

Simultaneously, the serpent-haired Cursed Elves hissed, their serpentine eyes glowing with a bright orange light, fixating on Mirehex at the forefront. Similar to the Blood Moon Alliance, the Cursed Elves unified their sanctuary power through blood resonance!

Within seconds, the orange giant bow expanded to a hundred meters in length, and the giant arrow in Mirehex's hand grew to rival Abyssalith's Crimson Lightning. The intense, dazzling light was so blinding that merely gazing at it could scorch the retina, forcing the sanctuary sorcerers to avert their eyes!

Divine Intervention: Glory Arrow!

The sound of the giant arrow tearing through the air reverberated, creating ripples across the sanctuaries of the sorcerers!

Boom!

The giant arrow hit the tiny finger-sized hole in the golden Phantom precisely, enlarging it to the size of a torso!

"Now it's my turn to perform an expansion surgery on the adorable Dreaming Celestium," Malgraith casually gestured, and the hole in the golden Phantom was suddenly filled with

emerald jade. The verdant hue spread until it burst open, creating an entrance large enough for two people!

Divine Intervention: Infinity Green!

Abyssalith and Mirehex narrowed their eyes slightly-there were no incantation steps, no flight distance, and it was unclear whether other sanctuaries' powers were unified; Malgraith had practically instantaneously cast this divine intervention.

The only drawback was likely the limited damage range, unlike the Crimson Lightning and orange giant arrow, which could transform into a group attack mode, but a group attack variation couldn't be ruled out.

At this point, Abyssalith sent a Moonshadow Sanctuary to probe the entrance. The Moonshadow Sanctuary tested the area near the entrance and gestured a V sign towards Abyssalith, happily reporting, "One-Winged Spirit has no restrictions, Two-Winged Spirit increases spellforce consumption by 50%, Three-Winged Spirit increases spellforce consumption by 100%, and at most, three spirits can be commanded simultaneously!"

"The Dreaming Celestium has ultimately shattered. Even if the Specter Seer patched it up with numerous seals, once broken, it can no longer suppress the spirits..." Abyssalith mused over the information given by the Sovereign while leading the Blood Moon Sanctuary into the Specter's Inheritance.

The Cursed Elves and Parasitic Sorcerers followed closely behind.

As soon as they entered, the restless onlookers outside began to chatter:

“The Dreaming Celestium is so vast, there’s no way they can scour it clean. The leftovers should be enough for us, right?”

“If the Specter Seer has set other traps, they’ll surely clear the way for us.”

“They are sorcerers favored by the Divine Sovereign. Even without the Specter’s Inheritance, they know how to reach Ruby Mountain and beyond. But if we miss the Specter’s Inheritance, we’ll never hope to ascend above Ruby Mountain!”

“The Divine Sovereigns have already reached the pinnacle of realms. Why are they competing with us for the Specter’s Inheritance? The Demigod Inheritance should be shared by all; how can they hoard it?”

“Break the monopoly on the Inheritance!”

As the first person rushed into the opening, the sanctuary sorcerers erupted into a frenzy, pouring into the Dreaming Celestium!

“Mr. Bukin is truly impressive!” Chikara exclaimed as Igor returned, marveling, “You actually managed to stir up the sanctuary sorcerers! Haha, with them as cannon fodder, we can just sit back and watch who picks up the good stuff and then rob them!”

“Impossible,” Igor replied calmly. “Though Mental Miracles using sound as a medium can penetrate Sanctuaries more easily than other miracles, they can’t affect over a thousand Sanctuaries... If I’m not mistaken, there were at least dozens of Mental Sanctuaries casting miracles just now, which is why it was so easy to incite greed and anger among the others.”

“There are quite a few who share our thoughts...”

Reflecting on the synchronized casting with other Mental Sanctuaries, Igor couldn’t help but feel a thrill-born to crave grand stages and spectacles, this gathering of Six Nations Sanctuaries in the Distant Sky Domain was as enticing to him as an ancient battlefield was to Harvey!

But Igor quickly steadied his mind, for the real challenge was just beginning.

Harvey glanced around, pondering aloud, “It’s been over ten hours since Ash logged into the Virtual Realm...”

“Let’s go,” Igor said, not addressing Harvey’s comment directly.

The necromancer gave the con artist a nod.

Igor, Harvey, and Chikara entered the Dreaming Celestium through the opening, where the light shifted from bright to dim.

Inside the Dreaming Celestium was a vast, completely dark world. Yet, intriguingly, the sorcerers' vision remained clear, with the edges of all objects outlined in white, making the world resemble a black-and-white sketch.

In the darkness, countless massive Black Orbs moved at high speed in chaotic patterns!

Boom!

Igor saw a sanctuary sorcerer collide with a Black Orb, sending him flying a hundred meters away!

Now, the sanctuary sorcerers were trying to stick close to the edges to avoid the Black Orbs' high-speed charges!

However, the Blood Moon Sanctuary, Cursed Elf, and Parasitic Sorcerer were all focused on attacking the same Black Orb. Whatever Miracle they used managed to slow down the fast-moving Black Orb, and after continuous Miracle bombardments, they finally shattered it!

As the Black Orb disintegrated, dozens of spirits and experience light orbs eagerly escaped from within. Upon closer inspection, they realized that inside the Black Orb was the very familiar Trial Underground Hall!

Although the Divine Sovereign sorcerers quickly secured these rewards, some of the spirit light orbs still managed to slip out and were snatched by the onlookers.

“The Black Orb hides the Specter’s Inheritance!”

“Break the Black Orb, and all the rewards inside will burst out!”

The sanctuary sorcerers were all thrilled. Normally, they had to pass a Trial to earn a reward, which might only be a Temporary Spirit. But now, by smashing the Black Orb, they could directly seize the rewards, and there were hundreds of Black Orbs here, each containing hundreds of rewards!

Moreover, inside, there might be the Specter’s Appendix, Canon, or even the Codex!

In contrast to the excited onlookers, Abyssalith, Mirehex, and Malgraith’s expressions were extremely grim. Observing the other Black Orbs, they finally discovered the trap left by the Specter Seer.

“As expected of the Specter Seer...” Abyssalith chuckled weakly, “We’re in big trouble now.”

The Specter Seer had undoubtedly anticipated that someone would forcibly attack the Dreaming Celestium to seize the Inheritance, so Abyssalith and his companions had been very cautious. But they hadn't expected the Specter Seer to be so inventive-

When a Black Orb is destroyed, its energy merges into other Black Orbs, increasing their size and speed!

Once enough Black Orbs are broken, the remaining ones will speed up to an exaggerated velocity, and even with their Sanctuary, they would be knocked senseless, unable to withstand the impact!

The Black Orbs are likely fragments of the Dreaming Celestium, allowing them to automatically operate and reorganize. This means they are not only contending with the Specter Seer but also with the power of the Virtual Realm!

And this is just the first layer of traps; the Specter Seer has a second and third layer waiting for them!

But they have no way to solve it, nor can they avoid it!

Because the Specter's Inheritance is inside the Black Orbs, unless they can directly locate the Codex, they have to tackle each Black Orb one by one!

Even if they have prophecy Miracles to slowly search, there are still two thousand greedy sanctuaries nearby!

These people are now only thinking of grabbing what they can and running; if they can't get the Codex, so be it. How could they possibly stop and let Abyssalith and his team smoothly seize the Codex without competing?

This perfectly crafted Black Orb trap, exploiting greed and shortsightedness, demonstrates the Specter Seer's deep understanding of human nature.

But there is good news; Abyssalith and his team found that the additional spellforce consumption for two-wings and three-wings spirits has decreased. The Black Orbs are fragments of the Dreaming Celestium, and breaking them further damages the Dreaming Celestium, reducing the suppression they face as they progress.

Abyssalith, Mirehex, and Malgraith exchanged glances and nodded: "Let's do it."

The three factions of Sanctuary sorcerers once again slowed down a Black Orb for a fierce assault!

Chikara and Harvey glanced at Igor, who was observing the outer Sanctuaries forming groups of four hundred to intercept and forcefully attack three or four Black Orbs. Though there were still many Black Orbs left, the Sanctuaries were exerting considerable power, not to mention the Divine Sovereigns wielding potent divine interventions. The fall of the Dreaming Celestium seemed inevitable.

The Con Artist knew that Ash and the others were inside the Black Orbs, so his task was to prevent the Sanctuaries from attacking them.

But this was a foolish act against the tide; everyone was busy scrambling for the Specter's Inheritance, who would willingly stop?

Thus, he needed to create another wave of momentum...

With that thought, Igor signaled Harvey and Chikara to follow him, and they positioned themselves not far from the Divine Sovereigns. As soon as the Divine Sovereigns shattered a Black Orb, they rushed in to grab whatever they could, then quickly retreated to avoid being pursued.

If it were The Crowd, someone would surely chase after Igor and his companions, but the Divine Sovereigns were led by Abyssalith, Mirehex, and Malgraith, who naturally wouldn't want to complicate matters over a few opportunistic pests.

Soon enough, they realized the consequence of not swiftly swatting away these pests was attracting a swarm of them.

Noticing Igor's actions, more Sanctuaries outside began to gather, waiting to swoop in for leftovers.

They watched the Divine Sovereigns attack the Black Orbs like diners waiting for the chef to serve, or students waiting for the teacher to hand out assignments. As soon as a Black Orb shattered, they rushed in to grab whatever they could for free, then quickly retreated to wait for the next opportunity.

This was too brazen for Abyssalith and his team to tolerate, so they decided to spread out and encircle the Black Orbs, aiming to claim all the rewards for themselves, leaving nothing for the outer sorcerers.

But spreading out meant reducing the density of sorcerers, making them more susceptible to interference from the Black Orbs!

As a Cursed Elf prepared to dodge a Black Orb, a sudden piercing explosion rang in his ears, causing intense mental pain that left him stunned, only to be sent flying a hundred meters away by the Black Orb!

“Who!” he shrieked, the serpent-haired tendrils on his head hissing as he glared at the outer sorcerers. “Who just attacked me with a mental miracle!?”

Naturally, none of the outer sorcerers responded, while Abyssalith, Mirehex, and Malgraith exchanged glances and silently regrouped their team.

However, this meant that when they shattered a Black Orb, the rewards inevitably spilled out.

Though it seemed like nothing had changed, with the Divine Sovereigns attacking the Black Orbs and the outer sorcerers waiting to scavenge, a tense atmosphere of impending storm gradually spread throughout the Dreaming Celestium.

Chikara and Harvey looked at Igor, who slowly shook his head.

The mental miracle that attacked the Cursed Elf had nothing to do with him.