

SORCERER'S HANDBOOK

Chapter 731: Raven

Raven had tried being relentlessly hunted by evil cults for three days and nights, never closing his eyes for a moment; he could prop himself up to fight despite being paralyzed from the waist down, and continued to battle blindly after losing his sight. He had once clashed head-on with physical sorcerers with skin as tough as steel, and he also had experience in entangling with water sorcerers who combined flexibility and strength.

Anyone who knew Raven, whether enemy or friend, whether they liked or disliked him, would not deny that Raven was a ruthless person who was indestructible, unyielding, and unbreakable.

While chatting, Ashe and Igor once remarked, “It’s as if his heart is made of iron, his intestines are cold, and even his veins flow with black blood.”

It seemed as though the Virtual Realm had cursed him while also stripping away his weakness. The term “fearless” was practically tailor-made for him, but unlike Harvey, who would embrace death with reckless abandon, Raven was more like someone who would charge forward with a grey fox blade, actively welcoming life’s final challenge—after the Raven Annihilation Cult was destroyed, he feared nothing.

Yet this stainless steel saint walking through the decaying world now found his arm trembling slightly, almost unable to hold the grey fox blade steady, causing him to slide down another meter, while Mercury Trojan Horse slid down 1.1 meters—she couldn’t hold onto his arm, her delicate hands would break with even a little force, and if Raven didn’t hold her, she would slide down herself.

Raven had been holding her forearm, but now, with a slight loss of strength, he was holding her wrist.

“Ah.”

Mercury Trojan Horse was startled by the sudden slip, breathing shallowly and quickly, she said, “If you don’t hold me tightly, I’ll disappear.”

“Is that such a good thing?” Raven tried to calm his emotions, looking up at the crack above without looking at her.

“You will save me, won’t you?” Mercury Trojan Horse’s voice seemed somewhat light-hearted, “You won’t abandon me, nor let me die here.”

“Is that so? But you know, I just said goodbye to Igor and the others, preparing to track your trail and continue hunting you.” Raven said, “If I hadn’t fallen into the crack just now, if I hadn’t instinctively grabbed you when I fell... perhaps I would have completed my goal.”

“Why?”

Mercury Trojan Horse asked in a puzzled tone, “Why do you still want to hunt me?”

Raven was taken aback, opening his mouth as if a thousand words were eager to rush out, the complex emotions of anger, sorrow, and regret almost causing his heart to seize. He wanted to start from the fall of the Raven Annihilation Cult two years ago, wanted to talk about everyone he knew, wanted... but he took a deep breath, and those thousand words converged into one weary sentence:

“Because I am Tamashi, and you are Tanomoo.”

Mercury Trojan Horse understood his meaning, and after a moment of silence, she said, “You didn’t even know I came to the Silent Spiral, and I’ve only been here for a few days. So your destination was also the Silent Spiral, and with your familiarity with the Void Gate Spirit as a virtual realm insulator...”

“You were originally coming to the Silent Spiral to leave Senlo through the Void Gate, right?” she said, “And you were traveling with them, so are you...”

“Yes.” Raven replied very straightforwardly, “I once thought about leaving.”

“If that’s the case, then why didn’t you leave, but stayed in Senlo to hunt me?” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “I’m actually happy for you, not because you gave up chasing me, but because you finally know to pursue your own happiness.”

“I thought you were finally going to end your long, wandering youth and find your own place.”

“Leaving Senlo might bring happiness, having a place might bring happiness.” Raven said, “But if I can’t punish you, I certainly won’t be happy.”

“The mark of maturity is accepting the pain of one’s own powerlessness.” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “Do you remember the question I asked you when we first ate fish?”

Raven thought for a moment, “With so many bones in the fish’s body, does it hurt?”

“I always thought it must hurt, after all, they’re bones. But if you get used to it, accept it, then they’re the bones that support you, not the thorns that scar you.”

Raven said, “I don’t care if I’m scarred, as long as I can hurt the ones I hate.”

Mercury Trojan Horse smiled wryly, “It seems your youth isn’t over yet.”

“I will save you.” Raven thought it through, and said seriously, “You are still in the Silent Spiral area, if you die now, you’ll reincarnate into Igor. So I must save you, and imprison you in the Silent Spiral, wait for Ashe and the others to leave, wait for others to exit the Silent Spiral, ensure you have no reincarnation target, then I will execute you.”

“Save me just to kill me? That’s so you.” Mercury Trojan Horse chuckled lightly, “But what if I told you, the owner of this body isn’t dead yet?”

Raven was stunned.

“Very cute, very beautiful, very lovable, right? I didn’t choose randomly, as my portable reincarnation vessel, she’s practically a work of art, and she’s not a sorcerer.” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “I originally planned to reincarnate and start anew from the Sea of Knowledge. Over the past two years, I’ve collected many secrets of the Virtual Realm, but unfortunately, I’m already a sanctuary sorcerer and can’t go back, but if I could start over, I have confidence I could climb Ruby Mountain.”

“But also because she is not a sorcerer, I have no spellforce and cannot directly affect the soul. Our state is more akin to a dual personality, only she is asleep.”

Mercury Trojan Horse said, “She is just an ordinary, simple girl, always nurtured by me, mostly sleeping to strengthen her soul, never having done anything bad in her life. Would you kill her for me?”

Though she said this, Mercury Trojan Horse didn’t expect to threaten Raven; she merely wanted to add a bit of psychological burden to Raven, to gain leverage for the upcoming conversation.

However, Raven thought for a moment and said, “I will find a way to confine you in the Silent Spiral, and I will be your jailer. If you attempt to become a sorcerer, I will kill you immediately; or if my life is about to end, I will execute you. Apart from these two situations, I will keep you imprisoned.”

Mercury Trojan Horse tightly grasped Raven’s wrist.

“This doesn’t align with the Raven Annihilation doctrine,” she said. “Eliminating evil is always more important than saving lives. Saving one person only saves one life, but killing one evil person might indirectly save hundreds.”

“It indeed doesn’t align,” Raven nodded. “But I believe I am right, as long as I can bear all the consequences of my choices. Just now, I spared you to save Igor, and I am willing to spend the rest of my life hunting you down for that; I can also spare you now for the girl you reincarnate into, as long as I am willing to imprison you for life.”

Mercury Trojan Horse said in a low voice, “If you kill me now, you can go out and kill more evil people, save more lives, rather than wasting your life on me... That is the way of Raven Annihilation.”

“Yes,” Raven said, “If life can truly be weighed, then the benefit of killing you is obviously greater than sparing you. But is it true that without me, no one can stop you?”

“In the past two years of chasing you, I’ve been to many places. Initially, I thought that with the Raven Annihilation Cult’s demise, Evil Sorcerers would have no restraint, and ordinary people would surely suffer, with evil rampant across the land. What I first saw was indeed such a situation, with Evil Sorcerers running rampant, and common folk suffering.”

“But this situation didn’t last; sometimes other cults sent people to suppress it, sometimes new sorcerers emerged among ordinary people, and some Evil Sorcerers were even stabbed to death by common folk with pitchforks.”

“Evil will not be eradicated, the evil raven will always howl, but where there is oppression, there will be resistance. Raven Annihilation is not only our ideal but also the common aspiration of ordinary people.”

“Tanomoo, do you know what the happiest thing I’ve encountered in the past two years is?”

Mercury Trojan Horse: “Catching me?”

“It’s when I passed by a small town on the edge of the Bronze Law Cult, where everyone feared and avoided me, but a few children came up and asked me if there was a Raven Annihilation Cult in the south that specialized in killing bad people, asking if I was from Raven Annihilation. You know, the Bronze Law is strict, civilians are not allowed to possess weapons, so when they encounter Evil Sorcerers, they can only wait for Bronze Law sorcerers to enforce the law.”

Mercury Trojan Horse: “They wanted Raven Annihilation to go after Evil Sorcerers, right? They must have been disappointed to hear of Raven Annihilation’s demise, right?”

“Yes,” Raven said, “But they told me they secretly train at home, hoping to have the power to resist the next time they encounter bad people. They also asked me to quickly rebuild Raven Annihilation to scare those bad people to death.”

“So, Tanomoo, do you understand? Even if Raven Annihilation was really just a group of murderers satisfying twisted desires, our cause still has meaning. Senlo people will remember that there was once a group of people who took pleasure in hunting bad people, and those seemingly invincible, vicious bad people were merely prey for that group.”

“Evil is actually very weak.”

“Though Raven Annihilation has perished, the spirit of resistance will not extinguish. As long as ordinary people have the heart to resist evil, even if the name Raven Annihilation disappears, more people will emerge to fight against the evil raven.”

Raven said, “Life can indeed be weighed, but not by me or any single person, but by everyone together, saving together, killing ravens together.”

“I don’t aspire to save the lives of many future people; the lives of others will be saved by others. I only need to save the lives that ‘only I can save,’ such as Igor, such as your vessel.”

“Ashe told me that every moment, someone is committing a crime in this world, but he can’t see it, so he can’t do anything; sometimes crimes occur that he can see, but he lacks the ability, so he can’t do anything; only when crimes occur before his eyes and he has the ability, will he try to crush evil to gain moral satisfaction.”

“We weaklings only need to do what’s in front of us.”

These words had been brewing in Raven’s heart for a long time but had never taken shape. Until he experienced a series of events in the Silent Spiral, it was as if he had cleared the fog before his eyes, finally clarifying his path and redefining his own Raven Annihilation.

By the end, he was no longer speaking to Tanomoo but to himself, and after speaking, he felt refreshed, his mind clear, as if reborn, shedding a heavy burden.

At this moment, the Raven Annihilation Cult truly perished. But a new Raven Annihilation was being born in the cracks.

“Could you stop misusing the word ‘weakling’?” Mercury Trojan Horse said coldly, “It’s truly disgusting to hear.”

“You always live so purely, which is why I’ve disliked you since childhood.”

Chapter 732: Mercury Trojan Horse

Raven glanced at her but ignored her. He looked up, braced his foot against the wall, and attempted to climb up.

However, once the floodgates opened, Mercury Trojan Horse seemed unable to stop her desire to speak: “We started learning to read at four. I learned two hundred words in half a month, while you didn’t learn a single one, not even recognizing numbers. Everyone realized you might be cursed by the Virtual Realm. I often comforted you and hugged you back then, but soon after, I saw you seeking a mentor to train your body, without a trace of unhappiness on your face. From that moment, I hated you.”

“Later, I summoned my first spirit and became a sorcerer. I was happy to share the news with you, only to see you smash a big rock with one punch, and then I immediately became unhappy.”

“I unexpectedly received the Inheritance from the Prophecy Sect and was officially appointed as the White Crow. I hadn’t been happy for a few days when I heard about your victory over the judgment warriors. Fortunately, the cult still didn’t agree to let you become a warrior. You have no idea how delighted I was to hear that news, like drinking honey. But soon you disappeared, and when you returned, you dragged back the corpse of an evil raven.”

“There are so many things. Do you know how much I wished you’d die on a mission, die at someone else’s hands? But you’re like a cockroach, never dying no matter what, surviving every time, growing stronger each time. Do you know how disgusting and hateful you are?”

“Why won’t you just die, just admit you’re a failure, always living so resiliently?” Mercury Trojan Horse’s voice gradually filled with venom, her hands trembling with anger: “You’re just an ordinary person who can’t even recognize words!”

“Now you must feel satisfied, having captured the Mercury Trojan Horse of the Four Pillars Cult. My life and death are at your mercy. You’ve accomplished what countless others couldn’t. Achieving this great feat as a ‘weakling,’ doesn’t it give you a sense of accomplishment?”

Raven, climbing with effort, replied, “Because I want to protect you, I can’t hesitate, can’t be lazy. Only by taking the toughest and hardest path can I stand by your side.”

“Did I ever say I wanted you to protect me?” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “Wouldn’t it be better for you to stay in the cult and cook?”

“You did.”

“When did I say that?”

“When we were very young, probably just learning to read.” Raven said, “We were playing outside and fell, scraping our knees. You cried immediately. I... I probably wanted to cry from the pain too, but seeing you cry, I held back, because I realized this was where I was stronger than you. Then I comforted you, promising you wouldn’t get hurt again.”

The blood from the hole in Mercury Trojan Horse’s right palm continued to seep, sliding down her arm into her sleeve.

“Yes.” She said, “I’m afraid of pain, afraid of fatigue, afraid of death, afraid of the dark, afraid of ghosts, afraid of thieves, afraid to sleep alone at night, haven’t mastered any combat Spellcasting, and cry easily. I’m just a weakling.”

“So I hate you, hate you to death. Even though we’re identical twins, why are you so strong despite facing so many misfortunes, able to uphold pure beliefs, while I’m so weak?”

“If you feared death like me, perhaps you’d join my side...”

“Impossible.” Raven said, “Even if I feared death, I wouldn’t betray the cult.”

“You would.” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “If you knew Raven Annihilation was about to be destroyed.”

“What do you mean?”

“Raven Annihilation has offended too many cults. I’ve advised them several times, but no one listened to me. Tribulation Fire Chapel, Light Spiral Sect, and several other cults have long united to prepare to besiege Raven Annihilation.” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “Raven Annihilation won’t compromise. You’re not afraid of death, but I am. I don’t want to die!”

“Even if I’m captured, as the White Crow, I might be killed. Even if I’m not killed, I’d be ostracized, unable to gain trust, and might even be secretly murdered!”

“That’s when I received the favor of the Four Pillars God, becoming the Tactile Sense of the Four Pillars God. Since destruction was inevitable, I might as well make use of my failure. So I started developing from a small town within the cult. Fortunately, Raven Annihilation had a good reputation, and my initial preaching went smoothly, then I infiltrated the cult... You know the rest.”

Raven’s hand tightened slightly, leaving a red mark on Mercury Trojan Horse’s wrist:
“You didn’t have to go against the cult.”

“But the cult would go against me.” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “Raven Annihilation and the Four Pillars Cult are natural enemies. Rather than wait for you to become my enemy, I might as well strike first. I’m afraid of you.”

“If you don’t want to be buried with them, why not just run away?” Raven asked, “Others may not want to leave, but I’d definitely be willing to go with you!”

“Without Demi-God powers, how can we survive in the wasteland? Moreover, we’re the Black and White Crow. After the enemy cults destroy Raven Annihilation, how could they not send people to hunt us down?”

“Then we can start anew, reorganize the cult after Raven Annihilation is destroyed, and then-“

“See, see, this is what I hate most about you.” Mercury Trojan Horse showed a bitter smile, “How can you so easily speak of things I can’t do?”

“I’m the indulgent Tanomoo, not the idealistic Tamashi.”

Her body suddenly began to tremble violently, and she said, “I lied to you. The reincarnation vessel is not that simple. It requires many preparations in advance. In two years, I’ve only prepared this one vessel. No matter where I die, I will die, not reincarnate into someone else.”

“And,” her teeth chattered, tears streaming down as she sobbed, “this time, the cataclysm, I’m afraid everyone will die...”

She looked up at Raven, sniffed, crying and laughing: “But Tamashi, you seem unaffected... It’s hilarious, who would have thought you, a virtual realm insulator, would happen to survive this cataclysm?”

“Everyone has their misfortunes, and everyone has their luck. Who can say misfortune won’t be luck?”

“Come, do it.” She trembled, “You hate me too, right? Rather than let the cataclysm kill me, you’d prefer to kill me yourself, wouldn’t you?”

“I don’t hate you.” Raven said, “I just resent you.”

“Just like you can’t truly hate me, you just resent me. You don’t truly resent me; the line between love and hate is always blurry. You just occasionally resent me, but often love me.”

“I can still hold on, without giving up.”

“But at this moment, I truly hate you!” Mercury Trojan Horse’s eyes filled with tears, “Don’t you understand!? I’m scared, I’m going to die, but I don’t know what will happen, whether it will hurt, whether it will be painful, I’m so scared! I’m scared to death!”

“If you kill me, at least I can die quickly, without enduring unknown torment!”

“And after death, there’s hell... I’m so afraid...” She trembled all over, “Will there be many waiting to take revenge on me, will there be endless torment waiting for me, and, and...”

She hiccuped, snot bubbles forming, tearful eyes looking at Raven.

“Tamashi, save me...”

Raven looked at the person whose hand he held, once they often held hands like this, but she was no longer the pure White Crow, not even her original self, just a sinner full of evil.

However, Raven sighed and said, “Look at me, don’t move.”

He shook his head, and the raven mask automatically fell off, spinning once in the air, just right to cover Mercury Trojan Horse’s face.

“I don’t know if it will help.” Tamashi said, “But dying with this mask on might scare away some revenge in hell, gain some help.”

“You go down first and wait for me. I’ll probably come down soon to help you atone.”

Yet Mercury Trojan Horse just stared at Tamashi, saying, “Two years without seeing... You’re still so beautiful, much more beautiful than me...”

“Maybe that’s why I hate you. I’ve always felt that during our gestation, I took your knowledge, but you took beauty and perseverance. My share is less than yours.”

“You owe me so much, so I’ll take this mask.” Mercury Trojan Horse said, “Since you’re no longer a judgment warrior, don’t wear a mask anymore.”

Her body trembled more and more violently, speaking rapidly as if afraid of running out of time: “I’ll wait for you, no need to help me atone, just being with me is enough. I can’t stand being alone... Are you really willing to stay by my side?”

At this moment, Mercury Trojan Horse’s face showed no cunning, no venom, and in her unfamiliar eyes, Tamashi saw the familiar shadow of the sibling who always acted spoiled with him.

“Of course.”

Tamashi watched his sister turn into water, slipping away through his fingers.

“Even before birth, I was already by your side.”

