

# DOROTHY'S FORBIDDEN GRIMOIRE

## Chapter 1: Knowledge

The night was moonless, with a cold drizzle pattering down. Raindrops fell on the riverbank's soil and rocks, washing away bloodstains and spreading a faint metallic scent through the air.

This was the bottom of a deep gorge. A turbulent stream cut through the valley, its rushing waters echoing against the cliffs. On one side of the gorge stood a sheer cliff; on the other, a steep slope dotted with resilient shrubs and trees clawing their way out of the rocky soil. At the base of the slope, the incline eased, forming a slanted floodplain along the riverbank—a stage for a grim scene.

Several overturned wagons lay scattered across the riverbank. Corpses of people and horses were strewn about, blood oozing from ghastly wounds, only to be swept into the river by the rain. The faces of the deceased were frozen in terror, forever preserving their final moments.

The silence of death pervaded the rain-drenched battlefield. All seemed devoid of life—or so it appeared.

Near the riverbank, within an overturned carriage barely suspended by its reins from slipping into the rushing waters, a young girl leaned against an upturned seat, silent and still.

The girl looked to be about thirteen years old, dressed in a modest white-and-brown dress, with plain shoes and short socks—hardly the attire of someone wealthy. Her body was stained with blood in several places. Long, silver-white hair cascaded neatly down past her shoulders, glinting faintly even in the dim light. Her serene, closed face was marred by blood on one side, which had trickled down from a wound hidden beneath her right bangs.

Like the surrounding carnage, the girl seemed to be another part of the tragedy—until her brows twitched ever so slightly.

No one could tell how much time passed before faint breaths emerged from beneath her nose. Her chest began to rise and fall again, and the weak rhythm of life returned.

“Ugh...”

The girl’s brows furrowed tightly, her expression revealing discomfort. She raised a hand to her throbbing temple.

'It hurts... and it's so cold... Was I having a nightmare? Did I fall off the bed?'

Her thoughts swirled chaotically as she tried to make sense of her situation. As the pain in her head gradually subsided, her mind cleared, and questions began to multiply.

'Is it raining outside? Why do I hear running water? There's no river near my house. Did someone turn on a faucet early in the morning?'

Amid her confusion, she slowly opened her eyes, revealing crimson irises. At first, the dark, cramped space disoriented her. As her vision adjusted, she could finally discern her surroundings—and froze.

Opposite her, in the overturned carriage, a woman's lifeless body slumped against an upright seat. Fragments of broken glass from the carriage window jutted from the woman's throat, her blood-soaked dress a macabre canvas. Her eyes were wide open, terror etched in her final expression, sending a chill through the girl.

"Gah..."

The gruesome sight made the girl gasp, fear gripping her mind and washing away all other thoughts. Instinctively, she stood, only to slam her head against the carriage roof with a loud thud. Crouching and clutching her head, she frantically surveyed her surroundings, now fully aware of the cramped space she was trapped in.

Sharing such an enclosed space with a horrifying corpse made her shiver uncontrollably. Hastily, she groped around, searching for an escape route. Her fingers soon found the carriage door above her. She pushed it open with all her strength and clambered out into the rain-soaked riverbank.

'What the hell is this? Where am I? Why are there corpses?! Did someone dump me in a haunted house as a prank? Who would go this far for a joke?!

These frantic thoughts raced through her mind as she crawled out of the carriage. But when she finally emerged and took in the scene before her, she was struck dumb.

More bodies littered the area—not just humans but horses as well. The air reeked of blood, a stench the rain couldn't wash away. Several wagons lay overturned, their flickering gas lanterns casting faint, eerie light over the carnage. Wagon wheels spun slowly, hinting that the chaos had unfolded not long ago.

'This... This can't just be some prank... The scale is insane... Who would go to such lengths?'

Standing in the rain, the girl muttered to herself, her voice tinged with fear and confusion. Terror clawed at her heart, but she forced herself to take a deep breath and calm down.

"Don't panic... Stay calm... I need to assess the situation..."

Just as she steadied herself, a sudden sharp pain surged through her head. Groaning, she clutched her temple.

Her thoughts became a chaotic torrent as countless memories—foreign and unfamiliar—surged into her mind. The influx overwhelmed her, threatening to tear her consciousness apart.

"Ah... what... is this..."

Gritting her teeth, she leaned against the carriage, fighting to stay conscious. Gradually, the storm in her mind settled, the pain fading into the background. And with it came clarity—a realization as shocking as the scene around her.

“Haah... So... it’s not a prank... but... reincarnation?”

Panting heavily, she grasped the truth of her predicament.

The soul now inhabiting the girl’s body was that of a traveler from another world, while the original owner of this body was named Dorothy.

According to Dorothy’s memories, she was an ordinary girl living in a remote village. Her father, a hunter, had died in an accident during a hunt, and her mother disappeared shortly afterward. From a young age, Dorothy and her only remaining family member, her older brother, were taken in by Aunt Hannah, a kind relative of their father.

Dorothy stood out because of her striking silver-white hair and crimson eyes, but in every other way, she was an ordinary, albeit beautiful, girl. Under Aunt Hannah’s care, she grew up alongside her brother, a well-behaved and diligent child who often helped the adults with chores.

Due to her natural intelligence, Dorothy was sent to a church school in the nearby town to learn to read and write. By her early teens, she became one of the few literate people in the village, often helping others with letters and documents.

Dorothy's brother, six years older than her, left the village at sixteen to work in the city after local lands were fenced off for sheep pastures. After three years, he wrote back, saying he had found a decent job and could afford a proper place to live. He wanted Dorothy to join him in the city.

Overjoyed by the letter, Dorothy bade farewell to the villagers, packed her belongings, and boarded a carriage heading for the city. However, not long after setting out, their convoy was attacked by bandits.

Now sitting by the riverside at the gorge's base, rubbing her temples, Dorothy sifted through the memories while glancing at the steep slope nearby. The slope was littered with items that had spilled from overturned carriages. Her memories revealed that their convoy had been chased by bandits, causing the carriages to topple and tumble down the slope. Judging by the scene, it seemed no one had survived.

In her final moments, Dorothy remembered hearing the bandits' shouts and the growls of beasts. Amid the terrified neighing of horses, her world flipped upside down, and the last thing she felt was a sharp pain in her forehead before everything went dark.

"Poor girl," Dorothy sighed softly, feeling a pang of sympathy. "She finally had the chance to leave for a better life, only to face this..."

As she lamented, her expression suddenly froze.

"Wait... girl?!"

Realizing something crucial, Dorothy quickly extended a hand to examine her body. After a few probing attempts that yielded no results, her face twisted in disbelief.

"It's gone... it's really gone... I'm Dorothy... Dorothy's a girl... I've turned into a girl?!"

For a moment, Dorothy stood in stunned silence, her face blank, letting the drizzle soak her.

But just then, a distant sound snapped her back to her senses.

“Hey! Found it! The carriages rolled down here!”

“Boss, we found them!”

Hearing the unfamiliar voices in a language she somehow understood, Dorothy’s heart skipped a beat. She turned toward the direction of the sound and saw faint flickering lights in the distance, gradually moving closer along the riverbank.

The bandits. They had come down to search and were heading straight in her direction.

Realizing the peril, Dorothy frowned deeply. She crouched down and hid behind one of the overturned carriages, her mind racing.

‘This is bad... They must be here to loot the place. Those guys are ruthless criminals—I have to escape...’

Scanning her surroundings, Dorothy looked for a way out. Unfortunately, the rising river due to the rain had submerged potential escape routes, and the steep slope was too slick and dangerous to climb.

The only path out was the direction of the approaching firelight, but that was precisely where the bandits were coming from. If she fled that way, she'd surely run straight into them.

'Damn it... Is there no way out?'

Feeling the weight of the situation, Dorothy grew increasingly anxious. Just as she contemplated playing dead in hopes of fooling the bandits, a strange voice echoed in her mind.

It was emotionless, impossible to discern whether male or female, as though countless voices spoke in unison in a low chant.

**“Soul integration complete... Link established...”**

**“Sacrifice knowledge... Bestow knowledge...”**

“Huh?”

Startled, Dorothy’s eyes widened. She shook her head, trying to refocus her thoughts.

‘What the hell? Where’s that voice coming from? It’s directly in my head? Could this be... one of those systems people always talk about when they get isekai’d?!’

Though confused by the sudden voice, Dorothy quickly pushed aside her shock. With danger imminent, she forced herself to think clearly, determined to figure out how to use this mysterious phenomenon to her advantage.