

DOROTHY'S FORBIDDEN GRIMOIRE

Chapter 12: Manuscript's Fragment

Staring at the three ghastly pale fingers preserved in the glass vial, Dorothy remained silent. She neither opened the vial nor looked away. Instead, she sat still on her chair, gazing at it like a statue.

According to the note, these three fingers contained the equivalent of the "Chalice" spirituality of nine adults. By consuming them, she could instantly amass sufficient spirituality, needing only one ritual to step into the realm of beyond. Once she entered the realm of beyond, she would possess greater power.

It was impossible for Dorothy not to be tempted.

Having accidentally transmigrated into this unfamiliar world and being targeted by a dangerous cannibalistic organization, Dorothy deeply lacked a sense of security.

The fear she experienced during her death was vividly etched into her memories—the panic of being hunted and the despair of falling into the valley still haunted her. Coupled with the bizarre nature of this world, an unshakable unease lingered in her heart.

This kind of unease... could only be eradicated by power.

Humans inherently desire the power to control their own destinies. This desire becomes even more intense after experiencing death.

Dorothy, who remembered dying once, now found herself in this uncanny world and under the watchful eyes of a perilous organization. Desperate for power that could grant her security, she couldn't ignore the allure of the three fingers in the vial.

After all, wasn't her entire effort to acquire Edrick's so-called "reward" motivated by the mystic power mentioned in that letter?

And now... that power lay before her, within reach. All she had to do was open the vial and consume its contents. It was as simple as eating takeout.

As Dorothy stared at the vial, her breathing quickened slightly. Her hand slowly lifted, inching toward the glass vial within the box.

Then, with a sudden “snap,” she shut the box’s lid.

“Ugh... it’s still revolting. Eating something like this would only make me experience nightmares. I’d better find another way to step into the realm of beyond...”

Letting out a long sigh, Dorothy made up her mind. She resisted the temptation before her and decided against consuming the so-called “Chalice” spirituality.

After all, humans need to hold onto some bottom line...

Sure, the power within reach was tempting, but the method of obtaining it was utterly abhorrent. As someone from a modern, civilized society, Dorothy could never bring herself to eat human body parts.

It was just fingers from a corpse now, but what about later? If she wanted to climb higher in this pathway, would she have to eat living humans? That was absolutely unacceptable.

While she sought power, the means to acquire it mattered as well. The so-called “Chalice” pathway violated Dorothy’s moral principles far too much, leaving her no choice but to abandon it.

“What a shame. I guess I’ll have to find another way later...”

Sighing in resignation, Dorothy shook her head with some regret and flipped over the note in her hand. To her surprise, there was more written on the back.

Oh, one last reminder, Mr. Edrick. Many mystic artifacts come with side effects or require a price. The Corpse Marionette Ring you obtained is no exception. Once activated, the ring must be offered sacrifices every six lunar cycles to satiate its hunger for ‘Chalice’ spirituality.

Based on your description of the ring’s current state, we’ve calculated that its next sacrifice is due this month—specifically very soon. We estimate it to be at 3:00 AM on the 11th. You must place the ring on the chosen sacrifice’s hand by this time. Otherwise, you yourself will become the sacrifice.

Lastly, we sincerely welcome you to join the Crimson Eucharist. We await you in Igwynt.

Reading the note's contents, Dorothy was startled. She immediately turned to the calendar and clock on the wall. The calendar showed April 11th, and the clock read 2:50 AM.

Wasn't it almost time?

Dorothy was startled. She hastily removed the Corpse Marionette Ring from her finger, encountering some difficulty in the process. Once it was off, she noticed that the inside of the ring had grown a circle of fine, sharp "teeth."

Just as the note had described—the ring's time to demand a sacrifice was fast approaching.

A sacrifice! It needed a sacrifice... but where could she find a suitable one at this moment?

In that instant, inspiration struck Dorothy, and her gaze shifted to the box she had just closed.

According to the note, the ring essentially craved "Chalice" spirituality, didn't it?

Quickly, Dorothy reopened the box, retrieved the glass vial inside, unscrewed its cap, and used the tongs provided within the box to pick out one of the fingers.

Holding the severed finger with the tongs, Dorothy slid the Corpse Marionette Ring onto the wet, severed digit. Then she silently waited for the clock's hands on the wall to align with 3:00 AM.

Finally, as the hands overlapped, the "teeth" inside the ring suddenly elongated into sharp spikes, piercing deeply into the flesh. The ring's exterior became tinged with a crimson hue, and the engraved figures of holding hands began to move. They formed a circle and started a macabre dance around the ring.

As the eerie movements of the engraved figures continued, the impaled severed finger visibly shriveled. It withered slightly before finally stopping, at which point the figures ceased their dance.

Seeing this, Dorothy removed the ring. The severed finger now bore a neatly pierced bloodied hole where the ring had been.

She tossed the finger back into the glass vial and exhaled in relief as she looked at the Corpse Marionette Ring. Based on the note's explanation, the ring's usual sacrifices required at least one person—or the "Chalice" spirituality of one person. Since each finger contained the equivalent of three people's "Chalice" spirituality, one finger could sustain the ring for three uses.

"These fingers might not be something I'd eat, but at least they work as a power bank..."

Dorothy muttered, feeling a mix of resignation and relief. With these fingers in her possession, she wouldn't need to worry about sacrifices for the ring for quite some time. If she ever came across other items that required "Chalice" spirituality, these fingers could serve as a convenient battery.

At least they had some utility.

This incident also helped Dorothy understand that the source of power for mystic artifacts was spirituality. Spirituality was the essence of the beyond in this world.

However, what unsettled Dorothy even more than the Corpse Marionette Ring was the organization called the Crimson Eucharist.

'Damn it... They didn't disclose the ring's need for sacrifices beforehand and only revealed it as part of the reward after everything was done. It's obvious they were setting Edrick up to fail if he didn't cooperate.'

The Crimson Eucharist had known about the ring's side effects but deliberately withheld the information during their earlier interactions with Edrick.

This meant that if Edrick had refused to cooperate or failed the test, the ring in his possession would have consumed him. In such a case, the Crimson Eucharist could effortlessly reclaim the Corpse Marionette Ring without lifting a finger.

'What a sinister group of people... I almost got caught in their trap too.'

Staring at the Corpse Marionette Ring on the table, Dorothy felt a wave of relief wash over her. She then returned the glass vial to the box and glanced through the grotesque contents of the booklet a few more times. Just as she was about to pack everything away and go to sleep, a familiar voice echoed in her mind.

"High-Spirituality Knowledge Confirmed: Fragment of The Art of Sacred Anatomy. Recommended for Study..."

The voice was devoid of emotion, resembling countless whispers speaking in unison. Dorothy recognized it immediately. It was the "system" that had mysteriously appeared after her transmigration.

She had almost forgotten about the "system" since it had been silent for so long. Now, it had suddenly spoken again, seemingly triggered by her reading the morbid booklet.

According to the "system," the booklet's contents were fragments of *The Art of Sacred Anatomy*, a source of high-spirituality knowledge?

So not only flesh but knowledge could also contain spirituality?