

# Sorcerer's Handbook

## Chapter 381: Reuniting with Valcas

"This commander's soul power is definitely limited."

Ashe analyzed, "He's only brought a small squad of Thousand-feathered Drakes, so his soul power arming limit should be just enough to equip this group of Drakes."

The next question is, who will fight the sorcerer and who will take on the commander.

Sonya analyzed seriously, "First of all, it doesn't matter if we win or lose the team fight with the sorcerer. The goal is just to delay until the commander is killed by the third person... I think I should face the commander."

"Then should I team up with the Observer to fight the sorcerer?" Deya asked, "But how do we get the Arena to recognize us as a team? By hugging each other?"

"No!"

"Holding hands then?"

"That won't work either!"

The Witch looked at the sword Princess in confusion. The sword Princess also realized her plan had a major flaw and quickly corrected it, "No, the Observer can summon spirits for his armed troop type, so it makes more sense for him to go after the commander."

"It was always going to be me," Ashe glanced at them, "I still need to map out the area. Speaking of armed troop types..."

Ashe raised his hand, and a form-fitting armor of deep blue materialized on both the Witch and the sword Princess. The Witch's fingers sparkled with sharp starlight, while the sword Princess's long sword emitted a dazzling arc of light.

"Fortunately, we killed that Raging Slashing Dragon earlier, otherwise, I wouldn't have enough soul power to arm you."

Ashe had exhausted most of his soul power in the Amnesia Cabin—if he hadn't armed himself with the Level 6 Starburst Warrior from the Star Shrine, he wouldn't have been able to suppress the Empress's phantom.

“Why didn’t you save it for the fight with the commander?” Sonya was taken aback, “I already said it doesn’t matter if we win or lose against the other sorcerers...”

“If we really lose, a few layers of armor won’t make a difference,” Ashe said, “Besides, I’m up against the commander. At worst, I can surrender directly. But if you run into some weird sorcerer and can’t even surrender, getting killed outright...”

“That possibility is very small, and I have the ‘sincerity’ spirit to boost my mental resistance—”

“As I’ve already used it, there’s no returning it,” Ashe said as two warm lights glowed from his hands, casting one each on the Witch and the sword Princess. “Also, here’s the Empowerment Sword...”

Because the names under Single-minded Devotion were too embarrassing, Ashe had to awkwardly rebrand them as ‘Healing Sword (Joy)’, ‘Empowerment Sword (Love)’, ‘Piercing Sword (Anger)’, ‘Slowing Sword (Sorrow)’, instantly lowering their grandeur to that of cheap knock-off Miracles.

Sonya felt a tingling sensation all over her body, as if her waist was electrified; while Deya felt light and cool, almost as if she were falling weightlessly.

With their pre-battle preparations complete, the sports car parked outside the Arena. The Arena was a typical colonnade-style building; stepping into the corridor would instantly teleport them inside.

First up was the duo of the sword Princess and the Witch. They exchanged a glance and opted for the hand-in-hand best friends’ formation. The moment they stepped into the corridor, they were teleported away.

As the scenery changed, they clung to each other’s arms, feeling an unknown force trying to separate them. However, the bond between Sonya and Deya was not something that could be easily broken without investment. After a few moments of testing, the unknown force gave up, and they found themselves together in the sandy center of the Arena.

“Am I dreaming? Are there really two sorcerers here to cause trouble? The Revelation spirit’s message ‘You will be harmed by those around you’ must have meant I shouldn’t act with you!”

“Alice thinks blaming others like this is very low.”

“Alice isn’t even here. What does he think?”

“In reality, Alice is right beside me.”

“But isn’t Alice lying in a coffin—never mind, I don’t want to know.”

The two sorcerers, whose plans had been thwarted, were now beyond shocked, nearly on the verge of infighting. The fact that they hadn’t exploded in rage already was surprising to Sonya. After all, if she thought about it, if an opportunity she had fought hard for was suddenly snatched away by strangers, an opportunity she might never get again in her lifetime, she would probably want to destroy everything too.

!

The village girl took a closer look, her expression turning serious. “No wonder they dare challenge the heroic soul commander. They actually control a Dire Jackal Dragon and Thousand-feathered Drakes... The zombified Dire Jackal Dragon might suggest a necromancer... Wait, that Thousand-feathered Drake in black armor, could it be the heroic soul commander’s follower that they’ve taken control of?”

“Witch, be careful. They have the ability to affect the mind. I have the Sincerity spirit, so I should be fine... Witch?”

Deya snapped out of her trance, her eyes narrowing in focus as she raised her fists nervously. “Are we starting the fight?”

“Their main strength should be the Dire Jackal Dragon and the Thousand-feathered Drakes. Our best strategy is to find a way to kill the sorcerers directly, avoiding a fight with their monster followers,” Sonya said. “Who do you want to take on?”

“...I want to fight the one with the fairer skin and prettier face.”

“Then I’ll take the one with darker skin and curly hair.”

After the sword Princess and the Witch entered, Ashe quickly drove the sports car in.

If the sports car could be considered a usable item by the Arena, that would be amazing. Ashe would definitely make it a point to visit the Arena every night during virtual realm exploration, using the sports car to clear a path to the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm.

Unfortunately, only he himself was teleported inside the Arena.

Ashe took a moment to observe his surroundings, but didn’t see the sword Princess or the Witch. Standing before him was a black-robed individual holding a long sword, silent and with cold eyes, showing neither panic nor fear. This was clearly the heroic soul commander.

Miracle: Heart Pen!

Ashe's first action upon landing was to use the Heart Pen to draw an ink mark trench around himself. The Heart Pen was excellent for setting traps, and Ashe could only use it for pre-battle preparations due to its complex procedure. He had just acquired it and couldn't use it effectively in combat yet.

The enemy didn't react while Ashe drew the ink mark trench. When he looked up, he saw the enemy had been watching him the whole time.

No.

She wasn't watching him.

She was watching the Heart Sword spirit created by the Heart Pen.

"Ashe Heath?"

Ashe was stunned.

This was the first time he'd heard someone call his name in the virtual realm—like being called by your real name online—it felt bizarrely surreal.

If another sorcerer or a virtual realm structure called his name, Ashe could understand.

But why would the heroic soul commander know his name!?

The black-robed individual lifted her hood, revealing pointed long ears, pale blue lips, a high nose bridge, and long, dark green hair. In life, she must have been a proud and fierce Elf, Ashe thought.

Standing before Ashe was indeed a female Elf commander. Though Ashe had encountered many female Elves, he had no recollection of her.

"Do you recognize me?" Ashe suddenly thought of a possibility. "Are you a commander from the Spider Tower? Do all of you know what I look like and hunt me as soon as I enter the Virtual Realm?"

"No, I'm not from the Spider Tower," the Elf woman shook her head. "And I didn't recognize you either."

She pointed to the Heart Sword beside Ashe and said, "I recognized that. It is a spirit born from a fragment of my soul, a gift I intended for my child."

Ashe was utterly stunned.

He looked at the Heart Sword, then back at the Elf woman.

“Valcas?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 382: Surrender

If one were to choose the person who helped Ashe the most in Shattered Lake Prison, the answer would be almost indisputable—not Harvey, not Langna, not 222, and certainly not Igor, but Valcas Uhl.

Without Valcas, Ashe would have long since become a firework in the Blood Moon Tribunal. It was precisely because of the rare occurrence of the “Judgment Elf” that drew out the deep-seated malice of the citizens of Kaimon City, that Ashe, the rapidly rising and notorious cult leader, barely escaped his fate.

Valcas, of course, did not intend to save Ashe. Even when he sent the Heart Sword, Earth Sword, Wind Wall, and other spirits to Ashe before his death, it was merely to spite Sylin.

Ashe did not think he needed to feel indebted to Valcas. In fact, after experiencing a series of ups and downs—escaping prison, fleeing the Blood Moon, joining the Funeral, escaping Azura, the white mist anomaly, being captured by Belldate, and more—Ashe had almost forgotten about the elf who had once shielded him.

Encountering Valcas in the Virtual Realm was unexpected, yet made perfect sense.

Upon a sorcerer’s death, their soul falls into the six layers of hell, stripping away all emotions and leaving only the purest memories and soul. These are then transformed into sorcerer projections in the Virtual Realm, becoming a legacy test for future sorcerers.

This forced tradition prevents sorcerers from monopolizing intellectual property. Even if kingdoms close their borders, knowledge still circulates within the Virtual Realm, leading to the flourishing of sorcerer civilization.

As a two-wings sorcerer, Valcas naturally became a sorcerer projection on the Time Continent upon his death. Since heroic soul commanders are transformed from sorcerer projections, it was only logical that he would become a heroic soul commander.

以下是翻译后的章节内容：

When Valcas had just died, Ashe had wondered if he might encounter her projection in the Virtual Realm. He just hadn't expected fate to be so uncanny.

But—

“Aren't you a man?” Ashe asked, dumbfounded.

He and Valcas had fought each other before, and no matter how blind Ashe was, he could still tell the difference between a man and a woman!

“I haven't always been a man,” the heroic soul Valcas said calmly. “After being a female elf for nearly a hundred years, it was only natural to want to experience the world as a male elf. This is a very common thought among the Elf, and humans also choose their preferred gender upon reaching adulthood. Almost every elf I remember has gone through a ‘gender-changing period.’ If they liked it, they stayed that way; if not, they changed back.”

“Apart from curiosity about the opposite sex, another reason was that I had my own child. According to my thinking, if I didn't undergo cosmetic surgery, living with my child in the future would arouse suspicion from the Beloved Church. But since I was already altering my appearance, I decided to change my gender as well. This way, at worst, people would suspect me of being a pedophile elf, rather than suspecting a blood relationship with my child.”

“However, biomechanical modifications in reality are not recognized by the Virtual Realm, which only reflects the true form of my soul. So, I've reverted to my original appearance... Any other questions?”

Questions? Too many!

Turning cosmetic surgery into gender change? Like opting to buy a house instead of just renting, because why not? This was a complete slippery slope!

Although Ashe had heard many times that the biomechanical modifications under the Blood Moon were the best in the world, he had thought such technological advancements mainly allowed the lower classes to adapt to advanced capitalist production through mechanical modifications. He never imagined the middle class would be so adept at this too—he couldn't even tell Valcas had ever been anything but male!

This did make things a bit tricky, though.

Seeing Ashe silently raise his long sword, Valcas gently brushed her fingers along the blade, assuming a standard swordsmanship stance: “Do you want to kill me too?”

“Yes,” Ashe said bluntly. “Killing a commander can yield a map, soul summoning spirit, and commander handbook, all of which are resources I desperately need. As I mentioned earlier, I am being hunted by the Spider Tower and can’t miss any opportunity to quickly increase my strength... I need to protect the people I care about.”

Indeed, Valcas had saved Ashe, and the spirits she sent had helped him immensely—without the Heart Sword, Ashe would never have been able to perform the Slash Me Miracle and break out of prison; the Miracle of the Earth Sword and Wind Wall combination, the “sword body barrier,” remains a crucial part of his tactical system.

But Valcas was already dead, crushed into a smear of blood by the Titan executioner in the Blood Moon Tribunal.

What remained before Ashe now was just a memory of the past, a soul enlightened by the Divine Sovereign.

Although Ashe couldn’t quite appreciate Harvey’s Necromancy Sect, the necromancers had a saying that was very true: the dead should serve the living, not the other way around.

Even if he felt a bit uneasy, Ashe wouldn’t hesitate. He carried more than just his own life; he bore the future of the sword Princess and the Witch.

“To protect others...” Valcas nodded. “I see, there’s no helping it then.”

“So, Valcas,” Ashe took a deep breath, “please instruct me—”

“Can you not take the commander handbook?”

Prepared for combat, Ashe was taken aback by this request. After a moment, he replied, “...I suppose so?”

The benefits of the commander handbook were mainly in command skills and sect experience, neither of which were particularly useful to a sorcerer like Ashe, who didn’t need the command skills and wasn’t desperate for a bit of sect experience.

But why ask this?

“I can give you the soul summoning spirit and the map,” Valcas said calmly. “Can you spare my life?”

Ashe was stunned for a moment. “...Why?”

“I no longer have any soul power left. Continuing to fight you would likely result in my death. If I can trade some resources for my life, it’s a deal worth making,” Valcas

explained. “Unless it’s a war between Kingdoms, a commander doesn’t need to fight to the death—dying here won’t earn any merit.”

“But the last commander I fought battled me to the very end...”

“Perhaps he believed he had a chance to defeat you until the very last moment,” Valcas shook her head. “But I have no soul power, no followers; my chances of winning are too slim.”

“But you’re not the type to surrender without a fight!”

Valcas was slightly taken aback and asked, “In your impression, what kind of person am I?”

“Proud, impulsive, emotional, and you like to provoke others with sharp words,” Ashe said. “Even if you knew you would lose, you would definitely try to fight me to the end until there was no hope... More accurately, you’re someone who would rather die than compromise.”

“If you were willing to compromise, you wouldn’t have died in the first place.”

The main reason Sylin forced Valcas to her death was that Valcas refused to give up raising her child. Despite being an Elf, Valcas ended up in prison, and Sylin played a significant role in that. Yet, Valcas refused to compromise until the end, insisting on violating the Bloodline Prohibition Law. It was only after being completely disappointed that Sylin decisively abandoned the child he had watched grow up... or rather, the daughter.

In a sense, Sylin was the ultimate double standard—he took care of Valcas himself but wouldn’t allow Valcas to care for her own child. S

However, it was precisely because of this contradictory understanding that Sylin so vehemently prohibited Valcas from repeating his mistakes—in the Blood Moon, “selfishness” was the only political correctness. Everything Sylin did was in the hope that Valcas would become more selfish and more adaptable to survival in Blood Moon society; this was his way of showing kindness to Valcas.

“If Valcas couldn’t become ‘normal,’ then perhaps letting her die was the best outcome”... Ashe didn’t know Sylin’s true thoughts, but he felt this might be what Sylin believed.

After all, even someone as powerful as mayor Fenanshe couldn’t be in contact with his own son. In the vast Blood Moon, was there really a place that could accommodate a parent and child?

“Is that so?” Valcas said. “So that’s the kind of person Valcas is?”



Ashe realized something. “Valcas, you...”

The female Elf sheathed her sword, looked around, and walked over to sit on a larger rock. Seeing this, Ashe couldn't maintain his combat stance and went over to sit cross-legged.

“What do you want to know?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 383: The Little Bat and the Bewitcher

Ashe thought Valcas had something to tell him, but instead, he was asked a question. However, Ashe indeed had many things he wanted to know: “Start from after you died?”

Valcas seemed to have no intention of keeping secrets and said calmly, “After being killed by the Titan Executioner, my soul left my body, drawn downward by gravity.”

“It was like sinking into the deep sea, drifting unconsciously. But there were layers of filters in the deep sea. When a soul flows into the filters, many impurities are sifted out, and only then can my soul continue to sink. After passing through six layers of filters, I arrived at the Time Continent, constantly tumbling and floating, without even a self-consciousness.”

“But 72 hours after death, a drop of blood in my soul began to erupt and spread, binding me while also awakening my consciousness.”

Valcas pulled open her black robe, revealing a blood lotus on her collarbone.

For some reason, this blood lotus didn't feel like a tattoo to Ashe but seemed to bloom from inside her body, much like the livor mortis Harvey had introduced to him many times before.

“And then I became the commander of the Tomb Keepers of the Blood Tomb.”

Ashe blinked: “Wait, where did that drop of blood in your soul come from? Why would there be blood in a soul?”

“I don't know, I only know that this drop of blood was likely implanted in Shattered Lake Prison. Or rather, all Redeemed who die in the Blood Moon Tribunal must have a Blood Seed in their souls.”

Valcas said, "After becoming a commander, I understood the mystery behind this. For us Blood Moon Death Row Inmates, the Blood Seed in our souls erupts after more than seventy-two hours of death. If we are found to have the commander talent, the Blood Seed directly activates our consciousness, making us Tomb Keeper commanders."

She paused: "All Tomb Keepers are born this way."

The selection mechanism for commanders!

Ashe immediately grasped the intention of the Blood Moon Sovereign—the Blood Moon Tribunal was not just a spectacle for public venting and a guillotine for deterring criminals; it was also the Blood Moon Sovereign's interview site!

Actually, Ashe had previously discussed with the Sword Princess and others about how the Divine Sovereign selects the commanders they need. After all, two-wing sorcerers die every day, and it's impossible for the Divine Sovereign to personally test each one. According to Ashe and their conjecture, the birth of a commander likely consumes certain resources and can't be mass-produced. Otherwise, the Time Continent would already be as crowded as a subway transfer station with heroic soul commanders.

Therefore, the Divine Sovereign must establish an efficient selection mechanism to obtain a commander who can grow with as little time and investment as possible. At that time, Ashe and the others believed the most likely method for the Divine Sovereign was to use the Miracle of the Prophecy Sect to directly select sorcerer projections with commander potential.

It's normal for sorcerers not to know the Prophecy Sect, but the Divine Sovereign surely would, right?

But whether it was because the Prophecy Sect was unavailable or because this method was found to be more effective, the Blood Moon Sovereign used an ingenious selection method—the Blood Moon Tribunal!

The threshold to enter the Blood Moon Tribunal was actually very high. Being sentenced to death by public vote as a Redeemed required more than just killing a few people; one had to stand against the vast majority, like Ashe, an infamous Cult Leader, or Fenanshe, a high-ranking conspirator. Such people were the most likely to possess commander potential.

By planting a Blood Seed in them during the Blood Moon Tribunal, they would automatically awaken as commanders in the Virtual Realm after they died.

The entire process didn't require the Blood Moon Sovereign to exert much effort. The reserve commanders would continuously become part of the talent pool for the Blood Tomb. Ashe wasn't sure if the Blood Moon Tribunal was established to select commanders or if it was discovered after its establishment that it was the best talent

market. Regardless, in the Blood Moon Kingdom's industrialized system, death became a part of production.

The dead must serve the living, not the other way around... No wonder Harvey both loved and hated the Blood Moon, the necromancer's sanctuary!

"So, after becoming a Tomb Keeper, do you still have your memories?"

"Yes," Valcas nodded. "But I am left with only memories; Hell has washed away all my emotions."

"What does that feel like?" Ashe was very curious. After all, no living person isn't curious about death.

"My memories are like books," Valcas said. "They are written in the first person, telling various stories. Although I can read these stories anytime, they are just stories to me. I've never stepped inside them."

"Anger, joy, sorrow, emotion... these words can't touch my soul. My soul is empty," she pointed to her chest. "I have no heartbeat, and I can't comprehend anything from my memories. But ironically, our consciousness is born from these memories. Therefore, our only desire as commanders is to accumulate merit and ask the Divine Sovereign to retrieve our soul fragments from Hell so that we can regain our heartbeat."

"With each soul fragment, I understand a little more of my memories. When I gather all the soul fragments..."

Ashe interjected, "You will be resurrected?"

"I don't know," Valcas shook her head. "And I don't care. Besides wanting to understand my memories, we have no other desires."

Ashe exhaled deeply. Even he found it hard to resist the temptation of 'resurrection.' Though the path was fraught with difficulties, at least there was a glimmer of hope.

He even wondered if he should try to achieve something significant in reality. Perhaps, even if he died, he might be reborn as a commander and make waves again on the Time Continent.

However, from reality to the Virtual Realm, from survival to death, Ashe realized they had never left the Divine Sovereign's control. Even though he had never heard any teachings about the Divine Sovereign, he vaguely understood the different ideologies of various Divine Sovereigns. Blood Moon's 'selfishness' and Gospel's 'listening' subtly influenced society from all aspects, spawning different social waves.

The Divine Sovereign's strength was not reflected in the deterrence of power but in the implementation of will. Whether sorcerers were foolish or wise, rebellious or loyal, they would ultimately unconsciously enforce the Divine Sovereign's will, becoming forces that drive societal change.

"Here."

Ashe looked up and hurriedly caught the spirit and the map.

"Valcas's hand-drawn map"

"Soul Summoning Spirit"

Ashe opened the virtual realm map, and the system immediately popped up a notification: "Map information has been updated."

However, compared to Demilo's detailed Star Shrine map, which covered one-sixth of the area, Valcas's map was much more modest, only documenting one-twelfth of the Time Continent. This might be because she had just started her position and hadn't yet familiarized herself with the terrain of the Blood Tomb.

The most noticeable feature of the new map was the three main cities of the Blood Tomb. Ashe noticed that the Blood Tomb had one fewer main city than the Star Shrine and asked why. Valcas explained, "The Star Shrine was the victor in the last Great Appointment of the Six Nations, so it has the most main cities. Unless something unexpected happens, the Star Shrine will likely become the primary target of the five major forces this time."

"What is the Great Appointment of the Six Nations?"

"It's a massive war that occurs every fifty years. I don't know the reason for the war; I only know that it inevitably happens. A large amount of soul power, followers, and even commanders will perish in this war until the final victor is determined."

Fifty years... hearing this familiar time interval, Ashe's heart skipped a beat. "How long until the next Great Appointment of the Six Nations?"

"Very soon," Valcas said. "If calculated in real-world time, there are about seventy days left."

First Layer of the Virtual Realm, Sea of Knowledge.

A small bat flitted through the white mist, suddenly sensing something and flying straight towards an area ahead. Soon, an island appeared before her, with an orc gun sorcerer on it.

As the bat transformed into a human and landed, the orc sorcerer immediately armed his heavy sniper, attempting to blast the intruder with heavy firepower. However, the newcomer merely raised her hand lightly, and the orc sorcerer became completely paralyzed. Blooms of blood flowers appeared on his body, but they did not break through the skin, looking both bright and grotesque.

Pop.

The sound was like a pustule bursting, and the orc sorcerer exploded into a firework, dissipating and leaving behind a spirit and a .

“Does the necromantic Miracle have to be so disgusting...?”

Even though it wasn't her first time, Sivirin still found it hard to accept this scene. Although she was also a member of the Blood Saint clan, her primary focus on the Blood Spell Sect made it difficult for her to understand necromancers' fascination with *livor mortis*.

Just now, Sivirin had used a single spirit to instantly kill the orc sorcerer projection. This spirit, known as the “Flower of Death,” was a benefit that every member of the Blood Saint clan received.

The “Flower of Death” has a single effect: it activates the soul blood seed within a ten-meter radius. Once activated, the seed kills the host, allowing the Blood Moon sorcerer to achieve victory effortlessly.

The creators of the soul blood seed are none other than the Blood Saints themselves. In fact, the so-called soul blood seed is a byproduct of the Blood Embrace Ritual performed by the Blood Saints.

During the Blood Embrace Ritual, Blood Saints disguise themselves as Healers and infiltrate prisons, embedding their soul blood into chosen Death Row Inmates. When the inmate dies during the Blood Moon Tribunal, their spellforce is completely absorbed by the soul blood. The Blood Saints then retrieve the soul blood, converting it into nourishment for their source blood.

Because the Blood Saints' souls and blood are intertwined, the soul blood also invades the inmate's soul. While alive, the inmate's robust soul can resist the infiltration of the soul blood. However, during the Blood Moon Tribunal, the soul blood is immensely strengthened, and the inmate's soul stagnates at the moment of death. This allows the soul blood to burrow into the inmate's soul like a centipede, rapidly growing until it becomes a “blood seed.”

Even in the Virtual Realm, Blood Saint sorcerers can detect the scent of the blood seed within a hundred-meter radius. By using the Flower of Death spirit, they can easily eliminate sorcerer projections harboring blood seeds.

Although these sorcerer projections are merely a drop in the ocean within the Virtual Realm, the Blood Saint sorcerers' rapid flight, combined with the accumulation of blood seeds over years of Blood Moon Tribunals, means that Sivirin has encountered three or four such cases so far. This is considered a unique benefit for the Blood Saints.

Alive, you are society's fuel and our material; dead, you are the Virtual Realm's fertilizer and our nourishment.

Despite living under the Blood Moon for many years, Sivirin still finds it hard to accept this worldview: everything has a price, all items should be recycled, and the additional values of emotions, memories, and meanings are not recognized. Extracting the last bit of value from life is seen as the highest respect for it... This extreme pursuit of maximum profit leaves Sivirin, who enjoys travel, photography, and cardistry, feeling exhausted.

"Ashe is living in another Kingdom now... I wonder what kind of Kingdom it is. What races live there? What are its unique features? Do they still have archaic practices like bloodline heritage? Does their Divine Sovereign care for the people?" As Sivirin pondered these questions while collecting her spoils, she transformed back into a small bat and continued her exploration of the Virtual Realm.

Glug.

The small bat hovered in mid-air, detecting the strange sound of a whirlpool in the nearby waters through her echolocation.

A whirlpool?

Sivirin's silver wings had long been ready, awaiting the Blood Spell Sect's promotion to the Golden level for her two-wings advancement. She had been in the Sea of Knowledge for several months but had never encountered a whirlpool, so she decided to investigate.

Just as the small bat was about to fly into the whirlpool, a small boat emerged from it, leaving her no time to dodge. She collided directly with someone on the boat!

"Oh? I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Did I hurt you?"

The small bat fluttered her wings, realizing she had been caught in the embrace of a Bewitcher sorcerer.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 384: Blood Tomb Troop Type, Two-tone Anchor

Aside from the map update, Ashe's soul summoning spirit also underwent new changes.

The soul summoning spirit, previously a triangular bipyramid with six faces, had only one face glowing blue. After absorbing Valcas's Blood Tomb soul summoning spirit, another face began to glow red.

"This spirit has successfully absorbed a spirit of the same name, unlocking new troop types: 'Blood Minion,' 'Adventurer,' 'Blood Hunter,' and 'Two-tone Anchor.'"

"Blood Tomb: Blood Minion"

"Ranged soul damage +10%. 3 layers of armor, free-form shape, can consume life to shoot Blood Arrows. Each unit consumes 1 point of soul power."

"Blood Tomb: Adventurer"

"Melee soul damage +15%, movement speed increased by 30%, can plunder 1 point of soul power for the commander with each kill of a war unit. 2 layers of armor, humanoid creature. Each unit consumes 2 points of soul power."

"Blood Tomb: Blood Hunter"

"Gunmanship and Swordsmanship soul damage +20%. 4 layers of armor, humanoid creature, comes equipped with a long sword and the Miracle 'Blood Frenzy.' Each unit consumes 4 points of soul power."

"Blood Frenzy: Applied to oneself, enters a state of lost sanity with greatly increased attack speed and movement speed, lasting until death in battle."

While "Adventurer" might be a common name coincidence, "Blood Hunter" clearly pointed to the lifelong enemy of the Cult Leader, the ace profession of the Blood Moon Kingdom, the Blood Hunter.

Actually, after hearing the Sword Princess mention that someone similar to the Star Prayer had appeared in her kingdom, Ashe had some premonitions. These Blood Tomb professions completely confirmed his suspicions: the Virtual Realm's troop types are closely related to real-world professions, or rather, each Virtual Realm troop type has a real-world counterpart.

Speaking of which, when Ashe was being chased by the Empress's heroic soul, he saw troops wearing Red Hats from the Spider Tower. He didn't think much of it at the time, but now that he recalls, weren't they just the Red Hat security forces from the Gospel Kingdom?

However, is it that the Virtual Realm troop types mimic real-world prototypes, or has reality infiltrated the Virtual Realm, creating these troop types...?

Compared to the familiar Blood Tomb troop types, the new troop type left Ashe baffled.

"Two-tone Anchor"

"2 layers of armor, 20% anchoring, each unit consumes 2 points of soul power."

"Anchoring"

"When you encounter any external influence (physical attack, mental shock, curse debilitation, etc.) or self-change (consuming spellforce, enhancing yourself, etc.), there is a chance to trigger the anchoring effect. Once anchoring is triggered, for the next 5 seconds, you cannot be influenced by external factors, nor can you influence the external world."

Unlike other troop types, "Two-tone Anchor" doesn't have a prefix like "Star Shrine" or "Blood Tomb," indicating that it is not an exclusive troop type of any faction. Moreover, it doesn't have any attack bonuses; its only feature is the "anchoring" special effect.

At first glance, this effect seems very powerful: once triggered, you become invincible to external influences. But the problem is that when "anchoring" is triggered, Ashe also cannot influence the external world, becoming a mere bystander—wait a minute, could this be an exclusive troop type derived from my title of "apocalypse observer"?

However, this troop type is exactly what Ashe needed. If they were really chased by the Spider Tower legion, this 20% anchoring could potentially help them avoid multiple fatal attacks. Even if anchoring limits their ability to attack, it wouldn't matter—in the face of the heroic soul legion, their combat power was negligible anyway. Their main strategy was to rely on the Sports car to gas the pursuers to death.

After organizing his gains, Ashe looked up at Valcas. "You're just giving this to me, aren't you afraid I'll go back on my word? And if you were willing to surrender, why didn't you surrender to those two sorcerers earlier?" search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

"I may lack emotions, but I'm not brainless." Valcas pointed to her temple. "The Ashe Heath in my memory is a fool with an excess of conscience. Besides, I have no means to restrain you. When I give it to you makes no difference; I have to trust you. As for those two... my memory tells me they are not trustworthy."



Ashe didn't think much of it, simply assuming that Valcas had encountered unfamiliar sorcerers whom she didn't dare to trust easily.

"Can't you surrender and leave?" Ashe asked, puzzled.

The Death Arena allows for surrender. It's normal for knowledge creatures and sorcerer projections not to surrender; after all, the former can't speak, and the latter have no self-awareness. But a heroic soul commander, who is at least a form of artificial intelligence, why wouldn't they surrender?

"You sorcerers can surrender because when the Arena drains your spellforce, you leave the virtual realm and return to reality," Valcas said, naturally using the term "sorcerers." "But we cannot surrender because after the Arena drains our spellforce, we remain here. The Arena continues to absorb our souls until we completely merge with it."

"Sorcerers and virtual realm creatures are different. While you outsiders can't survive long-term in the virtual realm, you have certain advantages that we cannot match."

It was at this moment that Ashe truly realized he was conversing with a virtual realm creature. The virtual realm, for Ashe, was a place of adventure, a dating venue, and an escape from reality. If Ashe ever decided to settle down and leave the virtual realm, he could sever ties with it completely.

But for Valcas and her kind, the virtual realm was their reality.

The Reverse Golden Rain, the Arena, resource points, the Golden Flow... these were rare wonders for Ashe and his companions but regular surroundings for Valcas and her people, elements they needed to map and record.

Life and death imposed an insurmountable veil between them.

If sorcerers were tourists in the virtual realm, Ashe might be one of the few who deeply understood the local culture. While other sorcerers might at best communicate with a Raging Slashing Dragon through roars, Ashe had engaged in meaningful dialogue with two heroic soul commanders, learning truths that even Sanctuary Legends might not know.

The Empress commander had even admired Ashe after their conversation, so much so that she wanted to keep him in the virtual realm-forever.

Ashe mused, "If I died in the Gospel Kingdom, would I likely become a colleague of the Empress's heroic soul? But my body is from the Blood Moon Kingdom, and I've participated in the Blood Moon Tribunal. Would the Blood Moon Sovereign fight the Omniscient Weaver to claim me as a talent?"

"So, only I can surrender and leave?"

“That’s correct,” Valcas nodded. “But if you insist on killing me, there’s nothing I can do. I’ve given you all my spirits before my death, including the soul summoning spirit. I no longer have any combat capabilities.”

Ashe suddenly summoned the Heart Sword spirit. Valcas stared at the Heart Sword, lifting her head slightly to expose her smooth neck, as if waiting for an end.

“Do you want me to return it to you?” Ashe asked.

Valcas was slightly taken aback and shook her head. “The Virtual Realm doesn’t allow the exchange of spirits. The moment you release the Heart Sword, it will vanish and escape.”

“Oh, right,” Ashe remembered the rule.

The elf woman asked, “And you’ve upgraded this spirit to two-wings. Are you still willing to give it back to me?”

Ashe countered, “But wasn’t this a gift you prepared for your child?”

“You can keep it,” Valcas thought for a moment. “However... speaking of which, I have a favor to ask.”

“As long as it’s not making me your colleague, I’m open to it.”

“During my final moments, when I was about to be executed by the Titan Executioner, ‘Valcas’ had a message for her child. If you get the chance, please find that child and deliver this message.”

I’m no longer in the Blood Moon Kingdom... Ashe was silent for a moment and then nodded. “Alright.”

The elf woman gazed into the distance, as if reading the final page of a non-existent book, and with a cold tone, recited the story’s closing lines: “I’m sorry... You should live well. I’ve disappointed you. Never follow my path and violate the Bloodline Prohibition Law.”

Ashe was silent for a moment and then asked, “You said you have no desires other than ‘understanding memory.’ So why do you want me to deliver your message?”

Valcas glanced at him, her lips curling into the only smile she showed during their entire conversation.

“Yes, why indeed?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 385: Déjà Vu

In Mephila, in the wardrobe of a suite on the left side of the second floor of Belldate Manor, there was a row of White Ghost Mask and black robe outfits. The White Ghost Mask had three holes resembling a skull, and the black robe was wide and deep, looking extremely eerie even when no one wore it.

Suddenly, one of the black robes sprouted limbs and walked out, like a resurrected evil spirit.

However, he couldn't maintain his posture and fell directly onto the carpet after taking two steps. He removed the White Ghost Mask, revealing a pale and haggard face, beads of sweat on his nose, and cheeks flushed from lack of oxygen. He breathed shallow and rapidly, with a "huff huff" sound, his body aching so much that he didn't even want to move a fingertip.

Lung function impaired, poor contact in all parts of the body... That damned girl! If you're sick, go see a vet! Don't let me run into you again!

For the first time in many years, the Con Artist couldn't help but curse out loud in anger.

The more Igor thought about it, the angrier he got. The first time he encountered another sorcerer on the Time Continent, he ran into Harvey, an old acquaintance. Naturally, they teamed up to explore together and unexpectedly discovered both the heroic soul legion and the Death Arena at the same time.

All these lucky opportunities piled up together, it was like the goddess of fortune was spoon-feeding him. Igor even wondered if he had exhausted all his future luck and would slip and crack his head on the bathtub the next morning.

Although neither of them had received formal sorcerer education, no sorcerer would be foolish enough to not investigate Virtual Realm intelligence. In the Virtual Realm, where one could only travel alone, the only one a sorcerer could rely on was themselves. Moreover, the Death Arena and the heroic soul legion were not secretive entities, so they naturally had some knowledge about them.

As the Con Artist pondered, he connected the dots and thought of using the Death Arena to trap and kill the heroic soul legion. After hearing this whimsical yet coherent scheme, Harvey's only comment was, "When are you going to start a new venture with Ashe, reorganize the Four Pillars Cult, kill the Empress, and seize the throne? I'll be content managing the morgue for you."

The necromancer who had long since removed the term “cherish life” from his dictionary naturally had no objections to taking risks, but things went more smoothly than expected. Igor hid inside a coffin that Harvey had hastily constructed, and the Arena recognized them as a team, teleporting in a heroic soul commander and a Thousand-feathered Drake.

Though separated from her legion, the female commander showed no signs of panic. She glanced at Igor and Harvey, assuming a Swordsmanship Stance, while the Thousand-feathered Drake, covered in black armor, appeared to be enhanced.

But this was all within Igor’s plan.

Since he and Harvey were teamed up, the Arena would naturally send a two-person team to fight them. Igor had long anticipated an unstable factor. The combination of “heroic soul commander + knowledge creature” was, in Igor’s view, the best possible scenario.

Miracle: Domination of the Mind!

This Miracle was the most rigid impression and quintessential hallmark of the Mental Sect—directly dominating other creatures and seizing control of their minds! The higher one’s Sect Realm in the Mental Sect, the higher the success rate!

However, this Miracle actually had poor effects on intelligent creatures. Even if a sorcerer hadn’t specifically studied the Mental Sect, just by navigating social interactions, managing relationships, and experiencing the warmth and coldness of human nature, it was equivalent to Mental Sect training, albeit not to the threshold of a silver-level qualitative change.

But for knowledge creatures, who lacked social experience and civilization, this Miracle was extremely effective. The reason Igor could thrive on the Time Continent was that he would dominate a large knowledge creature as a mount every night.

Even when encountering communities of social creatures, Igor was unafraid. He could temporarily dominate one or two social creatures to incite internal conflict, using his command skills to annihilate the community with fewer numbers. Search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Just like now!

After seizing control of the Thousand-feathered Drake, even though the commander had also armored herself, she was powerless against the combined assault of Igor and his companions.

Don’t forget, Harvey had also brought in a zombie Dire Jackal Dragon he made that night. With a total of four command units, Igor hadn’t fought such a well-resourced battle

since entering the Virtual Realm. He toyed with the commander, gradually wearing down her armor Miracles bit by bit.

As time passed, the commander grew weaker and weaker, and the dawn of victory began to embrace them. However, Igor did not relax in the slightest; instead, he became even more cautious and careful!

He understood very well that this might be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, a chance to kill a heroic soul commander that might never come again. According to the Virtual Realm's principle of "the greater the risk, the higher the reward," killing the commander would undoubtedly yield immense benefits, massively boosting his strength.

And strength was precisely what Igor lacked the most.

Annan, the Weaving Festival, Yvaren Belldate... although their personal safety was temporarily assured, this assurance was tenuous, a gift from others, and only because they still had value to be exploited.

Igor did not fantasize about gaining the power to solve all problems just because of his current predicament. He still loved the game rules and respected the game order. But the issue was that they were still pawns, and pawns used by Annan to cheat. Their safety was not protected by the game; even if they died, it would simply mean one less game exploit.

Igor just wanted a bit more say, a few more chips, a bit more room to maneuver with Annan and Yvaren.

Among them, only Harvey had a promising future but was currently underperforming. Relying on Ashe was less dependable than expecting the Four Pillars to have a change of heart, and Lise was only good at causing trouble. Igor could only rely on himself.

He had to rely on himself.

Killing the heroic soul commander might be the turning point he could seize!

The Con Artist gritted his teeth, pounded the carpet, and struggled to stand up with the help of a table.

Those two damned meddling women!

Why did they have to team up and enter the Arena at that exact moment?

Igor watched helplessly as the heroic soul commander, who was about to be slaughtered by them, patted her butt and left the Arena, replaced by two fully armed female sorcerers!

At that moment, Igor almost wanted to lie down in Harvey's coffin and give up!

He had planned countless social engineering projects under the Blood Moon, encountering numerous unexpected double-crosses, but none was as outrageous as this—this was the first time he had been thwarted by an event with less than a 1% probability!

What made it even more infuriating was that they couldn't defeat them!

Although neither mental sorcerers nor necromancers excel in skirmishes, at that time, they had both the Thousand-feathered Drakes and the Dire Jackal Dragon as combat units. With the two of them providing support, their chances of winning seemed high no matter how you looked at it.

However, when Igor tried to extract some interest from the two female sorcerers to recoup his losses, he was utterly shocked by their power.

The red-haired female swordsman had terrifying explosive power, and combined with their strange armor Miracles, the zombie Dire Jackal Dragon was torn to pieces. Harvey could at most reassemble the bones and barely hold his ground. Igor fared even worse; the black-and-white female sorcerer he faced had mastery over a Time Sect spirit. Whenever the Con Artist moved, he would overshoot his position, landing himself directly within her attack range, where she would bind his joints with threads and beat him senseless.

Even though he surrendered and exited in time, Igor's joints, chest, and lungs were still affected. The injuries to his soul were reflected in his physical body, and with his spellforce nearly depleted, Igor felt like a broken toy in a trash heap.

"Heart of Stone!"

"Iron Will!"

Draining the last bit of his spellforce to add mental enhancements, Igor felt he could barely operate this machine with loose screws.

"No, it's almost seven..." Igor walked to the bathroom. "I need to take a quick shower and get to work... Can't let Yvaren dock my pay..."

After filling the bathtub with warm water, he laboriously took off his clothes, turned on the showerhead to rinse his body, and then closed his eyes to wash his hair—

His heel touched the bathroom stool, an ordinary action that seemed to loosen a bolt in his body. Igor felt his knees give out suddenly, his body losing balance, and he crashed hard onto the bathroom tiles.

Splash!

The water splashed loudly, as if shouting the pain.

The Con Artist lay on the tiled floor, water streaming over him, shampoo bubbles still in his hair. He hadn't felt this humiliated even when captured by the Blood Hunter.

After a long while, he slowly sat up, looking down at the water splashing on the floor. The stream of water hit his hair, trickling down his face and hair strands.

"Why did this happen..."

"Why did we lose..."

"Why did I miss this opportunity... How could I miss this opportunity..." Igor bit his lower lip, watching the ripples created by the water droplets, his shoulders trembling slightly. "There might have been a spirit that could release us from the Pact with Annan..."

"Why did it have to be this time..."

Creak.

Igor suddenly heard the sound of the door opening and closing from outside, followed by familiar footsteps tapping on the floor. He quickly rubbed his eyes and tried to make himself look less disheveled—

Knock, knock.

No one barged in.

"Are you okay? Need any help?"

Igor was surprised to see a silhouette knocking on the bathroom door. "Why are you here?"

"When someone falls in the bathroom, others are notified. Wealthy families always show their humanistic care in these ways. Ah, it's good to be rich."

Igor glanced at the green indicator light by the bathtub. When he fell earlier, it immediately detected it and broadcasted to everyone that a hapless Con Artist had taken a spill, inviting them to come and mock him.

"I'm fine!"

"Doesn't sound like you're fine. Why do you sound like you're about to cry? Come on, how old are you? Falling and crying?"

The Con Artist instinctively rubbed his eyes and quickly adjusted his tone. “No, I just... had a bit of an accident in the Virtual Realm last night, so my voice is a bit off.” Since his physical anomalies would be exposed during work anyway, there was no point in hiding it.

“What kind of accident?”

“Can you leave me alone? I need to take a bath!”

“I’m not coming in. You bathe, I talk.”

Looking at the silhouette outside the frosted glass door, Igor suddenly understood something. His expression grew complicated as he carefully sat down in the bathtub, the water level gradually rising until it covered his chest and collarbone.

The warm water seemed to temporarily tighten the screws on his machine, and his rapid breathing gradually calmed down.

“...I just missed a very important opportunity, one I might never encounter again.”

“That’s tough, but I had a pretty smooth exploration last night.”

“Are you here to pick a fight?”

“No, but even if you missed an opportunity, isn’t wailing a bit much?”

“Your rumors keep escalating. What’s next, am I supposed to be sobbing uncontrollably?” Igor retorted irritably. “I just... can’t see any hope.”

“What hope?”

“The hope of turning the tide.” Igor’s voice grew somber. “Annan, Belldate, Senhaeser, the Yisuo royal family, the Red Hats, and many, many more... Gospel now only has two kinds of people: those who want to kill us and those who want to use us. Aside from that elusive Divine Sovereign’s Wish, I can’t see any opportunity.”

“Can we really survive the Weaving Festival? Is there anyone in Gospel who can help us?” Igor looked down at his blurry reflection in the water, a drop of water falling from his hair and causing ripples. “Harvey only cares about his Alice, and you’re so unreliable. Every day, I keep thinking, what to do, what to do... I’m really at my wits’ end...”

Since arriving in the Kingdom of Gospel, the pressure on Igor had been mounting day by day.



The Art Ranking and Family Ranking instantly made them the most talked-about doomsday stars in Gospel. Every day, Igor contemplated how to deal with their rapidly deteriorating reputation, all while being watched by Annan and Banjeet. This dire situation, offering almost no way out, had left the Con Artist mentally exhausted. Recently, falling into Belldate's hands only added insult to injury for their already troubled family.

The defeat in the Virtual Realm Arena was nearly the final straw that broke his mental defenses. Igor felt as if Lady Luck had lifted her skirt only to pull a handgun from her thigh garter and shoot him.

He knew that complaining wouldn't solve anything, but he couldn't help feeling aggrieved. In the past, he would never have shown such weakness. The most crucial aspect of being a Con Artist was to always maintain the persona of having everything under control. Once that facade crumbled, no one would believe in his deceptions anymore.

Perhaps it was the soul wound inflicted by the Black and White Sorceress, or maybe it was the recent head injury from his fall. It could even be the frosted glass separating him from Ashe, but for some reason, Igor began pouring out his troubles.

"Why not listen to the Gospel?" Ashe suddenly suggested.

"Huh?"

"Look, we appeared in the Future Ranking, which means Gospel believes we'll definitely survive into the future. This is a time to trust in the Omniscient Weaver's power. Don't overthink it; Gospel will help us."

Igor laughed bitterly, "I won't even mention that we appeared on the ranking list because of deception... But the problem is, I'm not on the list!"

"So you have to believe in Gospel and believe in us," Ashe said. "Based on our friendship, if we're all suffering in the future, how could we let you stay in the past and enjoy yourself?"

"...Your way of comforting people is really unique."

"I wouldn't dare try to comfort a mental sorcerer, but if you really need us to do something, Harvey and I probably wouldn't refuse. We might not be able to keep up with your thinking, but we can certainly share your worries. If we all stress together, you won't be as stressed by yourself."

"Hmph, you really have the self-awareness of an artiodactyla."

"A Con Artist who cried after slipping in the bathroom shouldn't be so arrogant... Lise?"

The bathroom door was suddenly pushed open, and Lise, dressed in a white maid outfit, rushed in. However, she slipped on the wet floor and fell loudly onto the tiles, sliding to the edge of the bathtub and lightly bumping her head against it with a dull thud.

Ashe: "..."

Igor: "..."

But Lise quickly got up, patting her butt, and hurried to the bathtub, nervously asking, "Aunt Bukin, are you okay? Did you hurt yourself anywhere? We should get a Healer right away."

Igor was slightly taken aback. When he looked up, he saw Ashe's amused expression, as if saying, "Even a child is better than you." His face reddened slightly, and he reached out to straighten Lise's hair. "I'm fine."

Seeing the unreserved concern on Lise's face, Igor felt his heart melt like ice cream. Although he still felt frustrated, the Con Artist's anxiety seemed to dissipate in the warm bath.

He sighed, "Ashe, I won't be able to go to the canteen later. Can you bring me some breakfast?"

"No problem." Ashe opened the Gospel Book and sent a voice message: "Harvey, bring some breakfast to Igor's room."

Come to think of it, can Harvey even move? I remember he was bisected by that red-haired sorceress...

At that moment, Igor suddenly noticed something. He held Lise's face in his hands, his eyebrows knitting together.

"Why does Lise feel so familiar to me...?"

A slightly guilty Little Witch and her nervous sisters: "Σ(つ°Д°;)つ !"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 386: The Servant Ashe

"I know you might not want to accept my gift... but what if I wore garter stockings?"

Yvaren lifted her long skirt up to her thighs, revealing an alluring glimpse of her fair skin. Dressed in his butler's uniform, Ashe felt no vibration in his heart and continued to vigorously scrub the glass.

"I mean, even if you want to use your charms, don't stand outside the glass. What's the difference between this and looking at a risqué picture?"

"What if there were no glass and you actually tried to touch me?" Yvaren pouted, taking out a notebook and jotting down observations, "When facing garter stockings, Ashe Heath's eyes become fixed, heart rate increases by 13%, resistance slightly weaker than with black stockings, probably a T0-level fetish... I've collected enough information. I'll have an illusion sorcerer create a film starring you and Annan, incorporating all the elements that make your heart race. You'll definitely buy it."

Ashe felt as if struck by lightning: "Are you threatening me?"

"This is clearly a temptation!"

"What if the young lady finds out? Besides, she's not even my type!"

"Really? But in yesterday's list of beauties, your heart rate spiked the most when you saw Annan. Maybe Annan isn't your type, but given your current status, she's the one who excites you the most. After all, you men have a desire to conquer... Oh, does that mean you have an interest in me too?" Yvaren clapped her hands lightly, her eyes filled with amusement. "If you're willing to accept my patronage, I wouldn't mind giving you a chance to pursue me."

"Oh, please don't make such disgusting jokes, I still have to clean the glass."

"Damn it." Suddenly, Yvaren's expression changed. The eye mark on her right eyelid glared coldly at Ashe, sending shivers down the cult leader's spine.

She opened the Gospel Book, twisted her right hand, and pulled a tomato out of thin air, smashing it against the glass window. The expensive juice, worth hundreds of Gospel points, splattered all over Ashe's view.

"You're welcome. Since you love cleaning glass so much, I'll let you clean it slowly."

Yvaren left triumphantly, like a mischievous child who had just pulled off a prank. Ashe looked at the mess in front of him and had no choice but to continue cleaning up this unwarranted malice. He wiped the glass, mopped the floor, cleaned the lampshades... After two or three hours of hard work, the cult leader finally managed to thoroughly clean the corridor.

At 11 o'clock, it was time for lunch break. Ashe put away his cleaning tools and went to the canteen on the basement level. By this time, dozens of servants were already dining there, and these were just the ones responsible for the main building.

It was said that Belldate Manor had as many as 80,000 servants. The manor had canteens in various locations, including the forest, snow mountain, wilderness, and even hell, each with different flavors. The canteen in the main building was considered to be of medium quality, while the one built above the hell's magma received unanimous praise, making the servants particularly eager to be assigned to the hell area.

But none of this mattered to Ashe. He approached the serving window and saw an array of dishes: giant mantis shrimp, basil red clam meat, charcoal-grilled razor clams, Eden Zero Lala Fatty, teriyaki grabroot... These dishes were not only enticing but also shockingly expensive, with none priced below three digits in bell points.

Ashe took out his Gospel Book, which contained a "Belldate Manor Card." His hard work this morning had earned him 30 bell points, which could be used for purchases throughout Belldate Manor. This was the only currency accepted in the manor; Gospel points, silver coins, and other forms of currency were useless here.

Servants could eat and drink without worrying about the price, but Ashe had to budget carefully. Of course, he could also order without any concern because his "Manor Card" had already activated the "Bell-Pay" service. If he overspent, his loan limit would automatically cover the excess.

Ashe's maximum loan limit from "Bell-Pay" was... 100 million bell points.

There was no interest, and the repayment period could be extended up to 10 years. This meant Ashe could spend freely, as it would be a problem for him to be in the Gospel Kingdom or even in Mephila 10 years later. No matter how powerful Yvaren was, she couldn't time travel to collect debts.

But Ashe only ordered the 10 bell points curry mush and the 5 bell points bread. Carrying his tray, he soon spotted his companions. They were the only ones among the delicious delicacies of the canteen, eating mush, making them look like the lowest of the low among the servants.

"Where are Annan and Banjeet?" Ashe asked as he sat down.

"Annan has been assigned to the prairie area, and Banjeet to the snow mountain area. Apparently, those are high-income positions that can earn a lot of bell points," Igor replied. "It seems Yvaren plans to take us down one by one."

"Uncle Harvey," Lise asked, "Are you sure that's enough for you?"

Harvey's meal was even more meager than Ashe's. He had only a bag of bread crusts and a cup of water, chewing the crusts slowly like a pigeon.

Igor instantly understood: "Harvey, what did you buy from Yvaren?"

"...A skull."

"A skull?" Ashe was taken aback. "You could easily get one from any grave after we leave here. Why buy it from Yvaren?"

"You don't understand!" Harvey said seriously. "It's the most perfect human skull I've ever seen. The alveolar ridge, brow ridge, supraorbital margin, infraorbital foramen, anterior nasal spine, nasal cavity, and alveolar process... Not a single defect, no injuries, no cosmetic alterations, just pure, unblemished beauty in death. I've never seen such a beautiful skull in my entire life. If I had encountered such a skull earlier, it would have saved me at least a month of study!"

"In the past, I would have been willing to pay 10 gold coins for it. Now, it only cost me 50 bell points, and I couldn't resist!"

"And now you're stuck eating bread crusts." Igor's face was grim. "Luckily, you can still work. Otherwise, we'd have to support you."

Although Harvey had been nearly bisected by a red-haired female sorcerer, rendering his waist almost powerless, he could manipulate himself using corpse control techniques. It didn't seem to affect his daily life and work.

"Harvey is no longer dependable. Yvaren has figured out his weakness. He can't even use 'Bell-Pay' anymore. We can't count on him to save money for emergencies," Igor said, looking at the remaining two. "You guys haven't splurged recently, right? You should have saved some bell points?"

Ashe and Lise exchanged glances and fell into silence.

Igor felt a sense of foreboding. "Did Yvaren tempt you too?"

Lise hesitated and then opened her palm. Inside her half-finger glove was a flexible mirror that she could squeeze and reshape without damaging it. "Sister Yvaren said this is a special flexible mirror glove from her company. It's not available outside, and she sold it to me for just 50 bell points. It's such a steal..."

Igor knew how important mirrors were to Lise and her sister. He sighed heavily and turned to Ashe. "What did you buy?"

Ashe nonchalantly ate his mush. "... I haven't actually bought anything yet."

Though it was just mush, it was quite substantial with mashed potatoes, carrots, and beef. Paired with bread, it was enough to fill his stomach.

“But you’re planning to buy something?” Igor accurately read between Ashe’s lines. “Yvaren has already figured out your preferences and is preparing an irresistible temptation just for you?”

Ashe responded righteously, “Don’t worry, Igor. No matter how Yvaren tries to tempt me, I won’t fall for it. I’m not like Harvey, that flamboyant fool.”

“You’re right, you’re not a flamboyant fool. You’re just a fool.” Igor looked exasperated. “So, you’re telling me all three of you have spent all your bell points?”

“I haven’t bought anything yet!”

“I believe in you, Ashe. You never fail to disappoint when it comes to being disappointing.” The con artist rubbed his forehead in frustration. “You had the nerve to tell me I could trust you and discuss things with you... Idiots!”

The three of them flinched. Hearing Igor’s straightforward anger without his usual sarcastic tone made them realize he was truly upset this time.

“Aunt Bukin, I only spent my savings. I didn’t use Bell-Pay!”

“Yeah, I still have some bell points left for bread crusts. If worse comes to worst, I can eat grass.” search the [NôveFire\(.\)net](http://NôveFire(.)net) website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

“Igor, could you at least use ‘you all’ when you scold us? Otherwise, it feels like you’re only yelling at me.”

Igor sighed again. “Do you even understand our situation? Do you think just avoiding Yvaren’s gifts and not using Bell-Pay will protect you from the ‘Dominance Sect’ influence?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 387: Dominance Sect

Let’s rewind to the early morning of May 20th.

When Yvaren Belldate captured the Funeral Firm group, she didn't hand them over to the Red Hat, nor did she preemptively eliminate Ashe and Harvey. Instead, she made a strange deal with Annan: Yvaren would protect their whereabouts and even provide them with comfortable accommodations, but they were only allowed to operate within her manor and were forbidden from leaving without permission.

Additionally, as soon as the six of them collectively earned 6000 bell points, the deal would be over, and the Funeral Firm group would regain their freedom.

There were six of them, meaning each person needed to earn 1000 bell points. Yvaren offered them various positions, where working eight hours a day could earn them 60 bell points, and overtime could yield up to 100 bell points.

In theory, without eating or drinking, they could all escape within ten days at most.

The fairness of this deal was undeniable. With Annan, the head of the Funeral Firm, personally supervising and detailing all the specifics, it was impossible for Yvaren to exploit any loopholes to trap them.

However, the deal itself was quite peculiar.

Ashe initially thought Yvaren wanted to use this to coerce them into practicing Criminal Law, but the jobs Yvaren provided were all quite normal: cleaning corridors, trimming gardens, hanging clothes to dry... there was even a position for a healer. The only challenge was the sheer volume of work due to the size of the Belldate manor.

The only overt pitfall was that food and drink required spending bell points, which would significantly slow down their accumulation of points. Thus, Ashe and the others' initial plan was to work without spending, relying on Banjeet's suitcase for sustenance.

They hadn't forgotten that Banjeet carried a lot of emergency rations.

However, Banjeet explained that his emergency rations were plentiful but insufficient to support six people for over ten days, especially given that they needed to perform high-intensity work daily. Fresh, nutritious food was necessary to sustain their bodies.

Moreover, Annan also mentioned, "If you only save money without spending it, you'll easily fall into Yvaren's trap. Belldate loves people like you who delay gratification and force yourselves to endure hardship. You use future expectations to overcome present difficulties, continuously putting pressure on yourselves. When an irresistible temptation appears, you'll use the word 'reward' to hypnotize yourselves, squandering your wealth for a moment of happiness."

"The so-called currency only has value when it circulates. If you don't use it at all, it's just numbers on a ledger, and it's easier to spend it thoughtlessly. Even if it's just to

understand the value of bell points and to cherish your earnings, you should use bell points to buy food.”

“I can only remind you of one thing: at most, you can only use the bell points you earn yourselves. You must never use ‘Bell-Pay’ or accept any gifts from Yvaren, unless she explicitly says, ‘This is an unconditional gift for you.’”

“Bell-Pay and gifts are the most sinister Miracles of Belldate, the crowning achievements of the Dominance Sect.”

When Annan unveiled the mysteries of the Dominance Sect, Ashe and the others finally understood Yvaren’s cunning intentions.

The Dominance Sect is an ancient faction with a long history, a derivative of the Mental Sect, also known as the ‘Enslavement Sect.’

Its name says it all—dominating others, enslaving all things.

It is said that during the chaotic times a millennium ago, the Dominance Sect was at its peak. Any powerful faction inevitably had high-ranking domination sorcerers. Only domination sorcerers could represent the comprehensive combat power of a faction; factions without domination sorcerers were nothing more than insignificant riffraff.

The reason lies in the domination sorcerers’ ability to possess the combat power to fight against thousands. This is not a metaphor; it’s the literal ‘one against ten thousand’: domination sorcerers could enslave legions numbering over ten thousand, commanding them to destroy classical armies that relied on shouted commands and foot messengers.

Even sorcerers of the same rank could not compete with a domination sorcerer commanding a structured legion. Titles like ‘Strategic Sorcerer’ and ‘Legion Sorcerer’ allowed the Dominance Sect to look down on other spellcasting factions. There was even a period when the saying ‘the end of spellcasting is domination’ became popular.

However, the greatest enemy of the Spellcasting Sect is the development of the times, the progress of spellcasting, and the ever-changing human heart.

When the Yisuo Royal Family unified the Gospel, the demand for war was suppressed to the extreme, and the disadvantages of the Dominance Sect were magnified instantly: domination sorcerers often controlled specific combat beasts, such as wolves, cats, rats, pigs, and so on. In times of war, these beasts could be sustained or bred for battle, but without war, there was no reason to maintain these private assets of the domination sorcerers.

A domination sorcerer without a legion was merely a downgraded version of a mental sorcerer. Domination sorcerers also tried to reverse the trend by having their legions



engage in production and mining, but even the most agile beast couldn't compete with the clumsiest orc.

As for using the Dominance Sect to run livestock farming—it wasn't impossible, but ordinary people without the Dominance Sect could also shepherd sheep and raise pigs quite well.

Not all military facilities can be converted to civilian businesses.

This wasn't even a slow decline; after all, a decline is a gradual process. The Dominance Sect instantaneously collapsed on the day the Gospel was unified, celebrating peace with its demise.

According to the historical process, perhaps if the Gospel fell into chaos again or if there was a large-scale war between Kingdoms, the Dominance Sect would be dug up from the annals of history and updated, blooming with even more brilliant and cruel colors.

Royal power is not eternal; only interests are everlasting.

But the Belldate family successfully halted the wheels of history, becoming the only reverse-trend powerhouse in the entire Gospel—they invented Miracles that could dominate intelligent creatures.

The reason the Dominance Sect only enslaved beasts and not intelligent creatures—even those regarded as the 'scum' of intelligent beings like orcs, ogres, and goblins—was that intelligent creatures possess civilization and can communicate, which means they can accumulate knowledge and enhance their wisdom.

Wisdom is not a fixed attribute. For example, an orc who graduated from university undoubtedly has greater wisdom than a human who grew up in the jungle with beasts. As long as one keeps acquiring new knowledge, forming their own worldview, and learning to think, their wisdom will gradually increase.

And the natural enemy of the Dominance Sect is wisdom.

The essence of domination is to "impose one's will upon others," making one's commands the fate of enslaved creatures and one's will their sole directive.

Why are beasts easier to dominate? Because they lack sufficient wisdom. Even if they resist, they don't know why they resist, how to resist, or what to do after resisting. The process of domination is akin to telling them, "Listen to me, and you'll be well-fed, well-watered, and warm." The beasts think this is acceptable, so they submit to enslavement.

Intelligent creatures, however, can think, desire more, and question, "Can I just eat without working?" "I don't want to go," "Is it possible you could be my slave?" One or two

such creatures are manageable, but when their numbers reach thousands or tens of thousands, the difficulty of domination increases exponentially, rendering control impossible.

A domination sorcerer who can enslave a legion of ten thousand beasts can at most dominate ten intelligent creatures. Moreover, beasts almost never rebel, but intelligent creatures have a high likelihood of betraying the sorcerer out of dissatisfaction.

So, how many intelligent creatures has Belldate dominated?

According to statistics, Mephila had a permanent population of 7.958 million in 1687. And that's just a fraction because, unlike Vamora, Belldate's influence extends throughout the Gospel. The total number of people she dominates likely exceeds ten million.

Belldate achieved this astonishing feat by combining the Dominance Sect with the Ritual Sect, leveraging the power of the Virtual Realm.

Belldate doesn't strive for 100% domination over other beings, and Yvaren doesn't possess the vastness needed to control the souls of millions. Instead, they utilize mutually beneficial Pacts to a certain extent—offering sufficient benefits in exchange for a portion of the subjects' cognitive abilities.

It's said to be a peculiar sensation; the dominated individuals don't feel as if another person has taken residence in their minds—Belldate doesn't have the time to delve into the tumultuous thoughts of every mortal. In fact, surveys show that the people of Mephila consider this a “profitable deal,” “a bargain,” “Belldate got the short end of the stick.”

But is Belldate really losing out?

According to statistics, Mephila ranks first in the Gospel for average working hours per capita, last in aging population, first in consumption levels, and has a populace that is universally in debt.

The seemingly incompatible terms “advance consumption for entertainment,” “high-intensity work,” and “marriage and childbirth” are common characteristics of every Mephilan. Despite getting married and having children, each Mephilan also works intensely every day, spends all their income, often overdrawing their credit limits during holidays, and then returns to high-intensity work.

When they reach the age of fifty and their physical functions begin to decline, Mephilans suddenly develop desires to “relive their adventure dreams,” “embrace life's challenges,” or “explore the vast Gospel.” They voluntarily vacate their jobs, spend all their money, and venture into the Abyss, towering mountains, or other life-threatening places, effectively ending their lives. As a result, Mephila maintains a healthy population

structure, with bustling streets filled with young and robust individuals, and hardly a single elderly person in sight, always vibrant and dynamic.

Incidentally, the city with the highest aging population is Vamora.

Every Mephilan feels normal and believes their life is joyful and fulfilling, and this is precisely what makes Belldate so terrifying.

Belldate uses Rituals to convert the cognitive abilities of millions of people into her own mental processing power, subtly influencing every dominated individual through mental threads. Simply put, Belldate uses the cognitive resources provided by the Mephilans to dominate them. Thus, even though Yvaren is only a two-wings sorcerer, she can easily wield mental control over millions of people.

Belldate doesn't attempt to forcibly dominate the populace with commands like "work until you die," "give me all your money," or "commit suicide if your efficiency drops to make way for the young." Such orders would be met with resistance. Instead, she subtly modifies Mephilans on a cognitive level with sweetened concepts like "pursue your dreams," "reward yourself," and "take risks before you grow old," transforming them into the producers and consumers she needs.

The Belldate Corporation has maintained its stronghold in Mephila for many years, even claiming the era's dividends in the city on the second level for itself. This success demonstrates that they have successfully transformed the Dominance Sect into a new version that adapts to a civilized society.

The medium through which Belldate dominates the masses is money, or more specifically, loans.

They provide the entire society with interest-free loans that can be borrowed at any time and repaid over years, but the collateral is the borrower's shared cognitive abilities. The more one borrows, the greater the share of their cognitive abilities.

How the people of Mephila dealt with this in the past is unknown, but today, nearly all Mephilans treat "Bell-Pay loans" as their personal wallets, spending recklessly in their youth.

If they collectively defaulted, Belldate might face a financial crisis. Interestingly, once Mephilans reach adulthood, they work hard to repay their loans and then continue borrowing and spending. The term "defaulter" is almost non-existent in Mephila.

"Rather than calling it the Dominance Sect, it should be called the Money Sect," Annan summarized. "Now you understand why Yvaren asked us to save 6000 bell points? She's simply providing you with a channel to spend, luring you into using Bell-Pay, which then allows her to infiltrate your mind and transform you into the slaves she needs."

“Do not accept any gifts from her unless she explicitly states that they are unconditional. As long as she hasn’t declared it, it remains her property. Every second you use it, you are encroaching on her assets, and she can demand repayment with your cognitive abilities.”

Igor had a question: “Why don’t Azura, Vamora, and other places adopt this effective Money Sect method? Why is it only Belldate using it?”

Annan replied, “Because not every Family has an Angel ancestor.”

The fundamental reason Belldate can dominate millions is that each of their loans is bound by a “money for cognitive abilities” Pact. The true enforcer of these Pacts is not Yvaren, nor her ancestors, but the Virtual Realm.

Only the Virtual Realm can support such high-frequency contracts, occurring millions of times daily. In a sense, Belldate’s real backing is the Virtual Realm.

Even if other Families wanted to emulate Belldate, without the Virtual Realm, they wouldn’t be able to dominate even a few dozen people, let alone run a small to medium-sized enterprise.

In the past, Annan and the others did not understand how Belldate managed to secure the support of the Virtual Realm. It wasn’t until the Family Ranking was released that they understood—the Necromancy Angel, although not leaving a legacy for the family, left behind a golden key for her descendants to enslave all beings.

“The Necromancy Sect and the Dominance Sect have similarities,” Harvey explained. “The Dominance Sect enslaves the living, while the Necromancy Sect creates and enslaves the dead. The Necromancy Angel was able to extrapolate from this and invent new dominance Miracles. It might seem off-track, but it’s quite reasonable.”

By now, everyone understood their next goals.

Earn 6000 bell points.

And avoid owing Yvaren anything.

“And yet you still dare to buy things from Yvaren!” Igor slammed the table in anger. “Today, you think it’s okay to use the bell points you’ve earned. Tomorrow, you’ll think it’s okay to use a little Bell-Pay. The day after, you’ll be mortgaging your brain for cheap! This is how she gradually breaks down your psychological defenses until you let down your guard and become slaves to that vile glue woman!”

Harvey raised his hand. “Igor...”

“Harvey, can’t you be a bit more mindful?” Igor sighed. “Everyone knows you love the Necromancy Sect. Everyone sees that you will inherit the Angel’s mantle one day. And the Angel whose grave you’re digging up is Yvaren’s ancestor. Do you think she has any goodwill towards you? She just wants to use you to reclaim her ancestor’s legacy. How can you still dare to buy her things? If I were you, I’d consider myself a corpse already and avoid listening to, seeing, or speaking to that venomous woman!”

Lise also raised her hand. “Aunt Bukin...”

“You don’t get to speak either!” Igor glared at Lise. “Can’t you use a hand mirror? Do you really need to seek that little convenience? Didn’t Ashe teach you not to talk to strangers? Yvaren is like a female Ogre who preys on children. Why would you still interact with her?”

Ashe raised his hand with a complicated expression. “Male Bewitcher, that...”

Igor, growing more and more furious, interrupted, “Ashe, you’re the most ridiculous. This morning, you swore you could resist temptation, and now you’re already feeling weak. Let me guess, is she seducing you? Can’t you hold out for a few days or take care of it yourself? Please don’t tell me you’re attracted to Yvaren, that Dwarf.”

“Igor Bukin.”

Igor was slightly stunned and turned his head slowly to see the blue-haired girl standing behind him.

“Sorry, the Dwarf wants to see you. Please come with me.”

“...No problem.” The Con Artist quickly composed himself, following Yvaren out as if nothing had happened. But before leaving, he turned and glared at Ashe and the others, as if questioning why they hadn’t warned him.

However, Ashe and the others felt wronged. They had tried several times to interrupt Igor, but the Con Artist’s Miracle of speech was released so quickly and urgently that they could only watch as Igor repeatedly insulted Yvaren.

“Do you think a coffin can fit two people?” Harvey suddenly asked.

Ashe thought for a moment. “I think it’s possible. Igor is quite slim.”

Lise blinked, confused. “Huh (◉△◉)?”

Ashe patted Lise’s head. “Lise, today it’s just the three of us having dinner. No one else, got it?”

Lise's eyes widened in shock. "Σ(°△ °|||) You mean you guys have already decided Aunt Bukin is doomed!?"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 388: Wanting to Be Belldates Dog

Mental damage compensation.

This concept, which Ashe had previously dismissed as an irrelevant fantasy akin to "team-building on a workday," suddenly became a reality for him—for the first time, he found himself on the hook for mental damage compensation.

The accusation was that "when Igor insulted Miss Yvaren, you remained silent and did not intervene, thus being complicit in the group bullying of Miss Yvaren."

Ashe almost wanted to applaud Gospel's robust legal system for allowing lower-class workers to bully capitalists. The most alarming part was that, after spending 1 Gospel point to verify, he found that Gospel indeed ruled in such a manner.

However, this was a civil matter. If the people do not bring it up, Gospel will not pursue it. Even if pursued, it would not matter much. Although the victim could make reasonable demands of the perpetrator, if the perpetrator refused to comply, Gospel would at most lower their ranking list evaluation, and only by a tiny bit—compared to the Blood Moon, which places a high value on human rights and freedom of speech, Gospel is surprisingly lenient on public opinion. Unless it causes significant social impact, Gospel is extremely tolerant of casual remarks.

The Blood Moon prohibits racial, gender, and educational discrimination because these forms of discrimination genuinely exist there. Conversely, Gospel's indifference to public opinion is because the populace harbors little resentment, or they hide it well. Casual remarks and heated words are not lauded but are instead criticized and educated by rational individuals, exemplifying the idea of good currency driving out bad.

Although Ashe and his companions had only traveled through a small part of Gospel, just from the cities of Azura, Vamora, and Mephila, they no longer expected Gospel to have any PVP zones.

Other kingdoms might have areas where "the sun does not reach every shadow," but in Gospel, the "radiance of Gospel is truly omnipresent."

Casual remarks wouldn't incur significant punishment, but this leniency only applied to ordinary people.

Now that Ashe and his companions had fallen into Belldate's hands, this small mental damage compensation was just a scout probing their psychological defenses. If Ashe dared to refuse the compensation, he could expect to dream of himself turning into Miss Belldate's husky tonight.

Of course, Yvaren couldn't make excessive demands. Gospel is fair and just, so the detestable blue-haired dwarf made a small request: aside from Lise, both Ashe and Harvey had to wear weights all afternoon as a sign of their sincere apology.

She didn't let Lise off out of respect for the elderly or the young. Gospel has protection laws for minors, and Lise was still just a child. A simple apology would suffice. Adults shouldn't hold grudges against children.

However, as Lise's nominal guardian, Ashe had to bear Lise's share of the burden too—double the weights.

As for Igor, Ashe couldn't even imagine the torment he was enduring. However, Igor's most valuable asset was his appearance, so he might have to sacrifice his looks a bit... Damn, he suddenly couldn't take pleasure in Igor's misfortune.

"Hu... ha..."

Wearing double his body weight while cleaning, Ashe was exhausted to the point of nausea. He could barely lift the cloth in his hand. He wanted to just lie down and rest, but he forced himself to wet the cloth and continue wiping the dust off the statues.

Even though no one was supervising Ashe's work, he didn't dare slack off. By accepting the cleaning task, he had essentially made a Pact with Yvaren: Ashe would complete the work, and Yvaren would pay him in bell points.

In theory, Ashe could totally touch fish and earn Yvaren's money, thereby reverse-exploiting the big capitalist Belldate.

But the problem was, no one supervising Ashe didn't mean Gospel wasn't supervising, or that the Virtual Realm wasn't.

Belldate herself wasn't terrifying; it was the iron fist behind her that was.

The phrase "you can't take advantage of Belldate" applied to all employees working for her. If Ashe took the salary without doing the work, it would be considered a breach of the labor Pact. He would then have to open his mental window and thought palace to Yvaren, and soon, he would unknowingly overdraw his Bell-Pay to buy the Ultimate Divine Weapon, Lala Fatty, and then think that being a dog wasn't so bad after all.

The number of statues in this main house is just too much... Ashe was wiping down a statue of a female sorcerer holding a staff. He wasn't sure which medieval fairy tale she was from, but there were many similar statues, covering various races and factions. Ashe even saw a Bewitcher dressed like a holy knight. It seemed the Belldate Family had a penchant for collecting.

As Ashe was diligently cleaning the crevices of the female sorcerer statue, his heavy body caused him to accidentally knock over a nearby bucket, spilling water all over the floor. This made the already burdensome job even more challenging.

Sighing, the Cult Leader knelt down to wipe the marble floor.

While he was cleaning, someone suddenly appeared in front of him. Ashe looked up and saw a girl with short wine-red hair, dressed in a butler uniform, also kneeling down to wipe the floor.

Noticing Ashe's gaze, she smiled and said, "It'll be quicker if we clean together, right?"

"What about your own work?" Ashe was a bit surprised. This was his assigned work area, and generally, servants didn't wander into other areas except to use the restroom. Not only because they were busy, but also because thoughts like "slacking off" or "visiting others" to reduce work efficiency didn't cross their minds.

"My job is to patrol the main house and help everyone complete their tasks," the red-haired girl said. "You're new here, right?"

"Hmm?" Ashe wasn't wearing his "Fiend trench coat" now, but the Twisting Mask was mandatory. Whether he wore it or not, others would see him with the mask on, so he was quite easy to recognize. However, Yvaren had said that no one in the manor would pay attention to them. Ashe could only trust in the Dominance Sect's power. "Why do you think so?"

"I remember the faces of all the servants in the manor," the red-haired girl said with a slight smile. "Nice to meet you, my name is Anfel."

"That's impossible. This brutal manor has eighty thousand servants. How could you remember them all? You must mean the servants in the main house, right?" Ashe scoffed. "But yes, I am new here. My name is Akamashi Sparashi..."

"Ashe Heath."

Seeing Ashe suddenly hit by the true name, Anfel blinked. "Don't worry, no one here will report you."

Is this the power of the Dominance Sect, where even if they know I'm Ashe Heath, they won't report me? Ashe suddenly grew curious. "Why won't you report me? Don't you



know I'm the top-ranked piece on the Art Ranking, and the Empire is hunting me down?"

"I know, but this is the Belldate manor. If you're working here, it means the patriarch of the Belldate Family has approved of you," Anfel said. "We all trust the judgment of the Belldate patriarch."

"The patriarch of the Belldate Family? You mean Yvaren?"

"Yes, we usually address her as Ms. Belldate," Anfel reminded him. "Only those very familiar with her can call her by her first name. In daily interactions, we use 'Miss,' 'Master,' or 'Your Excellency.'"

Ashe hesitated, wanting to speak but holding back, then finally couldn't help himself. "Do you realize you've been brainwashed?"

"Brainwashed?" Anfel tilted her head. "By the way, you used the prefix 'brutal' to describe the manor earlier."

"Although you might not feel it, you've all been enslaved by Belldate," Ashe briefly explained Belldate's concept of dominance over the populace. "It's due to her evil Miracle of Domination that you're wasting your youth, working and consuming endlessly as adults, and then going on dangerous adventures in old age, all to build her brutal dictatorship!"

"The reason you won't report me is because Yvaren has hypnotically suggested you let go of any malice towards me!"

Since learning about Belldate's secrets from Annan, Ashe had been holding this in. Fortunately, no one had approached him to poke at his sensitive points over the past few days, so the Cult Leader managed to keep it in. But now, chatting with Anfel, he couldn't hold back anymore. He couldn't resist showing off the Dominance secrets he knew, trying to awaken a lost lamb.

But he seemed to forget that if he truly awakened the lost lamb and Anfel refused to follow Yvaren's orders, it would mean Anfel was free from all restraints and could report him as the Fish that Escaped the Net and source of disaster.

"Oh..." Anfel nodded heavily, a thoughtful expression on her face.

Just when Ashe thought she understood, Anfel sighed. "Mr. Heath, you..."

"Just call me Ashe."

"Mr. Ashe, it seems you have many misunderstandings and prejudices about us."

“What? Are you saying what I said was false? Was I deceived?”

“No, everything you said is true, but...” Anfel thought for a moment, then leaned closer to Ashe and said, “Don’t move, look sideways at that floor-to-ceiling window.”

Because there was a lush sycamore tree outside, the green-tinted window could barely serve as a mirror. Ashe looked at the window and saw a reflection of him and Anfel, their faces seemingly close together-though it was just a visual misalignment.

Ashe understood. “You mean everything I said is true, but it’s just one perspective?”

Anfel nodded. “Let me ask you three questions first. When you were young, did you have many things you wanted to buy, many places you wanted to go, and many experiences you wanted to have?”

“Yes.”

“When you were working, did you wish for a beautiful and virtuous wife, a few mischievous but lively children, and weekends off to create more memories with them?”

Ashe, who had always hoped to find a beautiful wife and then let a Substitute raise the family, had to answer honestly, “Yes.”

“When you’re in your fifties or sixties, with your children grown and tired of work, wouldn’t you want to see how the world has changed over the decades, visit the grand landscapes you didn’t dare to when you were young, and take on the final challenges of your life?” After asking, Anfel shook her head. “But we’re still young, so we can’t answer that question.”

But Ashe already understood her point completely.

“You think the people of Mephila are not under Belldate’s domination, but are acting of their own free will?”

“I’ve actually been to other cities and learned about life in different parts of the Gospel.” Anfel continued wiping the floor as she spoke. “When young people are most eager to experience various lifestyles, they have plenty of time but no money; when middle-aged people are busiest and most stable, they have lots of money but lack time; when elderly people have experienced all the world has to offer and are weary of life, needing to rekindle their passion, they are often tied down by their descendants.”

“If we could give the money from middle age to the young, then many problems would be solved. The young could grow up happily and carefree, establish their careers and families satisfactorily, and in old age, they wouldn’t have to worry about their descendants because their children could also advance their middle-aged money.”

“In the ranking list of cities by resident satisfaction, Mephila has always been in the top five. But I believe, apart from Vamora, which cheats with stimulating gases, Mephila is undoubtedly the happiest city,” Anfel said earnestly. “We make the most of our youth while playing, honor our dreams while working, stay true to our partners and children when marrying, respect the passage of time in old age, and stay true to ourselves in death.”

“Yes, Belldate does subtly influence us, using our work value to build this manor, just as you said. But is there any city without domination or rule? Vamora? Modora? Nabistin? Or the wilderness, the Abyss?”

“The people of Mephila aren’t unaware; they know everything, understand everything, and still choose the life they love. You can ask any Mephila resident, and they will tell you: ‘I can live my life to the fullest; Belldate has not wronged me.’”

“Everything in the world is subject to cycles of domination. Time, space, the past, environment, bloodline, race... even the gods might not dare to claim they are free,” Anfel chuckled. “Recognizing reality and bravely facing challenges, that’s what we Mephila people do.”

“What do you think, Mr. Ashe?”

Damn it, I almost believe you!

It sounds pretty good to be Yvaren’s lackey!

I’ll max out my credit with a billion bell points, live an amazing life, and then let my Substitute work off the debt!

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## **Chapter 389: Igors Worth**

Just as Ashe was about to be persuaded, he suddenly became alert. “Wait, Anfel, are you Yvaren’s envoy?”

“Wow, that was close. I almost fell for it. You’ve got quite the silver tongue. What Spellcasting Sect are you from? Mental Sect? Dominance Sect? So, have you secretly used a Miracle to cloud my judgment? No wonder you approached me; it was all part of a plan!” S

“This is outrageous! You, a henchman of Belldate’s, please spare my life!”

“Mr. Ashe, you really are an amusing person,” Anfel chuckled. “But I still don’t recommend you stay in Mephila.”

“Why not?”

“Because the previous ranking lists show that you, Mr. Ashe, have great ambitions. You are destined to become a legendary sorcerer, leaving a significant mark on history and the Virtual Realm. Belldate cannot anticipate your future. Mephila is just a wonderland for mortals; you are meant for a greater stage.”

“I will continue to follow your progress in the Gospel Book,” Anfel said, clenching her fists in encouragement. “You are the first person I know to appear at the Weaving Festival. Although I don’t know how long you’ll stay here, if you encounter any trouble, come to me. I’ll do my best to help you. Please take care of me in the future!”

Looking at the radiant face of the red-haired girl, Ashe suddenly felt a bit dazed.

He recalled his past first encounters—

Igor, who wanted to fleece him the moment they met;

Harvey, who spent an afternoon discussing his peculiar fetish;

Annan, who captured him right from the start;

Qenna, who almost pierced his ear...

But Anfel, not only engaged in friendly conversation with him and offered sincere advice, but also cheered him on, her smile as pure as vanilla.

Thinking about it, Ashe couldn’t help but turn his head. Anfel blinked. “Mr. Ashe? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, I just feel strangely moved,” Ashe sniffled. “I think if I keep looking at you, I might start having unrealistic fantasies about reality—”

“Anfel, what are you doing here?” A voice suddenly echoed down the hallway.

Yvaren quickly approached the two of them. She noticed Ashe staring at her intently, his unreserved gaze making her instinctively cover her important parts with her hands. “If you keep undressing me with your eyes, I’m going to have to charge you. Starting price: 10,000,000 bell points.”

“Ah,” Ashe sighed in relief. “Thank you, Yvaren. Seeing your wretched face has finally helped solidify my shaky worldview.”

“Hey! Do you believe I won’t pay the fine just to beat you up?” Yvaren raised her fist threateningly. Since Ashe had been so rude to her multiple times, she wasn’t going to be kind: “Anfel, come with me.”

“Yes, sister.”

Ashe was stunned. “You two... are sisters?”

“Yes.” Anfel nodded, quickly explaining, “But Mr. Ashe, I spoke sincerely earlier. I wasn’t deceiving you... Mr. Ashe, why are you crying?”

Ashe covered his mouth, his eyes welling up as he looked at the two of them.

“I just thought of how you’ve been oppressed and humiliated by your half-sister all these years. I couldn’t help but—”

“We are full sisters! Same father, same mother!”

“Impossible, your hair colors are different!” Ashe had a flash of insight. “Wait, unless—”

Yvaren interrupted his epiphany: “That’s the result of a sorcerer’s Miracle! Our parents specifically selected the best genetic information for us!”

“But that still doesn’t make sense. Your inner worlds are so different. Anfel is taller, more beautiful, and has a better personality than you... Oh, I get it. The first attempt is always a trial run, and with experience, the second attempt produces the perfect product!”

“Damn it! Anfel, don’t stop me. I’m going to kill him for calling me a dwarf again!”

“Sister, Mr. Ashe didn’t call you short... Oh right, didn’t you need to discuss something with me? Let’s go quickly!”

As Anfel hurriedly dragged Yvaren away, Ashe was about to return to his work when he faintly heard Igor’s name in the distance.

He had merely mentioned that Anfel was taller than Yvaren, which was enough to ignite the dwarf’s fuse. Igor had openly criticized Yvaren at noon, and Ashe wondered how Yvaren planned to deal with the Con Artist.

Feeling a bit concerned, Ashe summoned his Substitute to carry him and followed them. After all, he was still burdened with the weights Yvaren had punished him with, and running would be exhausting.

By the way, the reason Ashe didn’t let his Substitute do his work was because Yvaren had already closed that loophole—her work requirements specified “real manual labor,”

with the reasoning that “only intelligent creatures can provide the most appropriate service.”

Ashe and his colleagues could use a spirit Miracle to enhance their bodies, but they couldn't let the spirit Miracle do the work for them. Otherwise, it would be deemed “low-quality work completion” → “exploitation of Belldate,” which was prohibited.

Although having his Substitute carry him drew a hundred percent of the attention, the servants along the way merely glanced at Ashe before continuing their work. Their dedication was as if they were polishing ancient artifacts of the Angel Alliance's Dragon King, even though they were just doing routine cleaning. They seemed to genuinely love their work.

“Work diligently, play heartily, take comfortable vacations, and live freely...” Many thoughts crossed Ashe's mind.

Yvaren and Anfel didn't go to any secretive place but arrived at the second-floor courtyard garden. Ashe trailed behind, thankful that the garden's dense landscaping was like a maze, ensuring he wouldn't be discovered.

Hiding behind a hedge, Ashe heard the sound of someone sitting down, followed by Yvaren's voice: “This is my sister, Anfel; this is Igor Bukin, a companion of the necromancer.”

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Bukin.”

“Just call me Igor. Nice to meet you, Miss Anfel.”

Yvaren said, “Bukin, didn't you just say that the reason you refused my offer was because you didn't want to sign any Pact with me?”

“Yes,” Igor replied. “Your family's Angel ancestor left you a precious legacy regarding Pacts. I don't think my shallow knowledge can compare to an Angel's arrangements—I'm not Harvey, and the Angelic traps from 900 years ago still hold significant deterrence for me.”

“So, I now offer you a better choice,” Yvaren said. “This is my sister, Anfel Belldate.”

Ashe blinked in confusion—hadn't she already introduced her? Did this dwarf have Alzheimer's?

“Her child will be the next patriarch of the Belldate family, Mephila's master.”

“As long as you can make her fall for you, Belldate will invest in you with all its might. Not only will we help you break Annan's Pact, but we will also ensure you stand on the stage of the Weaving Festival and seize the wish of the Omniscient Weaver!”

“We can even find a way to control Annan, using the Dolan Family’s legacy for our own purposes! You fear the Dominance Sect, but what if the Dominance Sect served you? What if you could wield the Dominance Miracle of Belldate as well?”

“Igor Bukin, this is the deal I propose to you, and the value I place on you,” Yvaren’s voice now was more alluring than any salesperson’s. “Does this arouse your desire for an impulsive purchase?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 390: Why Not Me?

“So that’s the situation.”

Not long after dinner, everyone except the Con Artist was gathered in Ashe’s room. Annan seemed to have just finished her bath, wearing purple pajamas and eating pudding; Banjeet was still in his ever-present butler attire, as if he were working overtime; Lise had also finished her bath and was having Ashe blow-dry her hair.

“So you disturbed my skincare routine with Alice for this trivial matter?” Harvey complained.

Everyone stared blankly at the necromancer.

Banjeet pursed his lips.

Annan touched her earring.

Ashe frowned.

Only Lise couldn’t help but open her mouth, but as soon as she uttered a vowel, Ashe covered her mouth.

“First, I cleanse Alice’s body with a protein coagulating preservative solution, then I apply diluted Galligen solution to maintain her skin elasticity, and then—”

“No one asked you about that! Interrupt! Heavy blow! Prevent rebound!” Ashe was so exasperated he felt like throwing the hairdryer at Harvey, and said crossly, “The topic now is Igor, not Alice!”

“What’s there to discuss about Igor?” Harvey scratched his ear nonchalantly. “Are you wondering what wedding gift to give? On that note, I’m quite confident. Two custom-made necromancer-exclusive couple coffins will outshine any of your mundane gifts.”

“As for Lise, she hopes Aunt Bukin will wear a wedding dress at the ceremony,” Lise said. “Just seeing that will make Lise happy, no other gifts needed.”

Banjeet reminded her, “Lise, the wedding gift is something we give them, not something they give us.”

Lise shook her head. “I don’t care, Lise just wants to see Aunt Bukin in a wedding dress! Just want to see it, just want to see it!”

“Lise!”

Ashe pressed down on the white-haired girl’s head and said sternly, “The adults are discussing serious matters. Don’t cause a ruckus! Do you think you can have everything you want?”

Annan nodded secretly, thinking that Ashe still knew how to prioritize.

Then she saw Ashe summon the Gospel Book and open it, revealing a catalog of items inside: “In my opinion, we should pool our funds and custom-order a wedding dress for Igor as the wedding gift—”

“So that’s the situation.”

Not long after dinner, everyone except the Con Artist was gathered in Ashe’s room. Annan seemed to have just finished her bath, wearing purple pajamas and eating pudding; Banjeet was still in his ever-present butler attire, as if he were working overtime; Lise had also finished her bath and was having Ashe blow-dry her hair.

“So you disturbed my skincare routine with Alice for this trivial matter?” Harvey complained.

Everyone stared blankly at the necromancer.

Banjeet pursed his lips.

Annan touched her earring.

Ashe frowned.

Only Lise couldn’t help but open her mouth, but as soon as she uttered a vowel, Ashe covered her mouth.



“First, I cleanse Alice’s body with a protein coagulating preservative solution, then I apply diluted Galligen solution to maintain her skin elasticity, and then—”

“No one asked you about that! Interrupt! Heavy blow! Prevent rebound!” Ashe was so exasperated he felt like throwing the hairdryer at Harvey, and said crossly, “The topic now is Igor, not Alice!”

“What’s there to discuss about Igor?” Harvey scratched his ear nonchalantly. “Are you wondering what wedding gift to give? On that note, I’m quite confident. Two custom-made necromancer-exclusive couple coffins will outshine any of your mundane gifts.”

“As for Lise, she hopes Aunt Bukin will wear a wedding dress at the ceremony,” Lise said. “Just seeing that will make Lise happy, no other gifts needed.”

Banjeet reminded her, “Lise, the wedding gift is something we give them, not something they give us.”

Lise shook her head. “I don’t care, Lise just wants to see Aunt Bukin in a wedding dress! Just want to see it, just want to see it!”

“Lise!”

Ashe pressed down on the white-haired girl’s head and said sternly, “The adults are discussing serious matters. Don’t cause a ruckus! Do you think you can have everything you want?”

Annan nodded secretly, thinking that Ashe still knew how to prioritize.

Then she saw Ashe summon the Gospel Book and open it, revealing a catalog of items inside: “In my opinion, we should pool our funds and custom-order a wedding dress for Igor as the wedding gift—”

The Second Miss pulled off her earring, which transformed into an assault gun and aimed it at Ashe. “Are you out of your mind? Want to run away from home? Don’t be shy, the Funeral Firm’s main business is transportation.”

“Second Miss, let’s talk this out. You’re scaring Lise,” Ashe and Lise raised their hands in surrender.

“Let’s get back to the main topic.” Annan turned the assault gun back into an earring. “Do you think Igor will agree to this?”

“You should ask, what reason does he have to refuse this investment?” Harvey was playing with a skull he had pulled out from who knows where.

Ashe glanced at it, feeling an odd sense of natural harmony and unique beauty from the skull, much like the feeling of finding a perfectly straight stick that could be used as a long sword during his childhood walks.

He shuddered and quickly hugged the warm Lise, trying to resist the allure of the dead. “Maybe Igor is just extremely averse to intimacy...”

“But didn’t you mention that Mr. Bukin has the Bewitcher Lineage?” Banjeet asked. “Though there are no Bewitchers in the Gospel Kingdom, according to records, the Bewitcher Lineage shouldn’t be compatible with aversion to intimacy, right? However, Mr. Bukin might already have someone he’s interested in, perhaps...”

“So what if he has someone? Can’t people change their minds? Does a Con Artist have some kind of ‘loyalty’ mechanism that locks their affections forever? And if you’re making assumptions, why not assume Igor, like me, doesn’t like living people and prefers the cold touch of the dead?” Harvey retorted irritably. “Or maybe assume Igor doesn’t like money and just enjoys our adventurous, nomadic life. That would make more sense!”

“In other words,” Lise concluded, “As long as Aunt Bukin is a normal person, he will definitely agree to this deal.”

Everyone nodded, even Annan couldn’t argue.

Mainly because the conditions offered by Yvaren were too advantageous, the price bubble was almost inflated to an irrationally impulsive level—that was the entire Belldate consortium!

An Angel Family!

The sole ruler of Mephila!

And they controlled the profound legacy of the Dominance Sect!

Let’s think about it from Igor’s perspective. If he agrees to this deal, he can leap from being an outsider to becoming the son-in-law of the Belldate family, marry a rich and beautiful woman, become a CEO, and wield wealth that rivals nations, reaching the pinnacle of life.

For an ordinary person, they might consider whether they have the ability for all this, but Igor is a Con Artist. He might not have the skills to run the massive Belldate consortium, but he definitely knows how to turn Belldate’s resources into his own wealth. Embezzlement, bribery, and using power for personal gain are all within a Con Artist’s repertoire!

Thinking more maliciously, even though a Con Artist can never truly control Belldate, since only his and Anfel's offspring would be the rightful heirs, what if something happened to Anfel after she had a child?

Furthermore, the current patriarch, Yvaren, is merely a two-wings sorcerer. The Belldate fortress might protect her, but if Igor becomes her "family," a Con Artist would have countless ways to harm his sister-in-law.

As for whether Igor would do such a thing... don't forget, the first time Ashe met Igor, he was nearly drained dry by this handsome blond Bewitcher!

And the most irresistible point: Yvaren would find a way to break Igor's Pact with Annan!

As the inheritors of the Dominance Sect, Belldate has industrialized and specialized the use of Pacts. Yvaren's promise can be trusted—after all, what if Annan controlled Igor through the Pact to steal Belldate's wealth?

For her own interests, Yvaren wouldn't let Igor remain under Dolan's control. Igor had explicitly said he wouldn't sign any Pacts with Belldate, so Yvaren's offer is not only enticing but also comes with the convenience of having her sister feed it to Igor directly, making it seem like Igor is the one paying for such attentive service!

The more Ashe thought about how Belldate was going to such lengths to poach their companion, the angrier he got. He slapped his thigh in frustration and exclaimed, "Why not me?"

"Ah!" Lise also punched Ashe in the jaw in anger. "Dad, if you're going to hit someone, hit yourself! Why hit my thigh?"

"But Ashe does have a point," the young butler pondered.

Ashe nodded vigorously. "Right, right! Why do I have to mop the floors and clean up while Igor gets to sit in the garden and go on a date with a pretty, sweet, and innocent young lady? It's not fair! Why does that shorty offer Igor such a great deal while all I get is Annan's—"

He stopped abruptly, like he'd hit the brakes.

But it was too late—the girl in purple pajamas had already vanished from his sight.

In her place, he felt a hard object pressing against his lower back.

"The one pressing against your back now is my sister, whose mother is Donna, the Second Miss of the Absolute Blade Mech Company. Her specialty is massaging people with 9mm metal blocks. If I were you, I'd spit out the words you just swallowed. Tomorrow's you will thank today's you for making a wise decision."

Annan had somehow moved behind Ashe and climbed onto the bed, making a very serious threat. However, everyone except Ashe could see her earring was still hanging properly on her ear, and she was just holding a metal spoon, pressing the handle against Ashe's back.

Although Ashe didn't know the threat was fake, he understood that resisting would only make things worse, and confessing would make things even worse. He clenched his teeth and resisted to the end.

"Spill it! What did Yvaren use to tempt you?"

"Your room key, but I'm an upright man, of course I refused such a heinous deal!"

"You're lying! All the doors here use iris recognition, there are no keys! Spill it!"

"It was actually a hypnotic spray that works specifically on you, but I am a man of pure love, so of course I refused such shameless temptation!"

"If Yvaren could hypnotize sorcerers, she would have turned us into her dogs long ago! Wait a minute, you even mentioned the hypnotic spray, which means Yvaren's offer was even lower than that. Just tell me honestly, and I won't be mad at you. The real culprit here is Yvaren, not you."

"Could you let go of me before you say that?"

Watching Annan lock Ashe in a cross chokehold while they wrestled on the bed, Lise and Banjeet had strange expressions on their faces—since when did those two get along so well? Meanwhile, Harvey continued fiddling with his precious skull.

Suddenly, Lise glanced at her new mirror gloves, then rushed over and pounced on Ashe, forcibly separating the two sweaty friends.

"Ouch~~~"

Annan quickly let go. "Did I hit Lise?"

Ashe hurriedly sat up to check. "Are you okay? Where did you get hit?"

'Lise' timidly raised her hand. "I think I twisted my wrist..."

"That's a relief." Ashe sighed, gently massaging her wrist and subtly slipping in the 'Joy Sword.' "This little injury will heal quickly."

"Mmh!" 'Lise' nestled into Ashe's embrace, nuzzling him like a small bear seeking warmth.

Given the situation, Annan couldn't continue play-fighting with Ashe. But as she walked away, she noticed 'Lise' smirking slightly, her eyes glinting mischievously—a dark, cunning version of the white-haired girl. Yet, when Annan looked directly at her, 'Lise' was buried in Ashe's arms, her face hidden.

A hallucination?

Or was Yvaren's influence at play? Could there be a large-scale Miracle affecting their minds and causing hallucinations?

As Annan sat back down, still suspicious, Banjeet returned to the main topic. "If Miss Yvaren had made such an offer to Mr. Harvey or Ashe, I would have been surprised but could understand it. But her choice was Mr. Bukin, and that confuses me."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## **Chapter 391: How Can We Watch Igor Find Happiness?**

Banjeet's confusion was shared by everyone.

Ashe nodded, "Exactly. After all, both Harvey and I have made appearances in the Future Ranking, while Igor hasn't shown up even once... Why is Yvaren so partial to Igor? What does she hope to get from the male Bewitcher?"

At this point, everyone looked at Annan.

Annan raised her eyebrows, "Why are you all looking at me?"

"Because it was your decision to bring us to Mephila," Ashe said. "And you know Yvaren. If anyone here understands Miss Belldate best, it's you."

Banjeet was also curious, "I only found out about your relationship with Miss Yvaren when we got here."

Annan crossed her legs and lightly played with her earring, as if processing information in her mind to cook up a Funeral delicacy. "Yvaren... my relationship with her goes way back. We haven't been in contact since she took over as the patriarch."

She seemed unwilling to reveal the secrets of “How to Meet a Super Rich Beauty and Get Rich,” and went straight to the point. “Yvaren’s personality is actually quite normal. Growing up in an environment where everyone fawns over you, even if you were ice cream, you wouldn’t melt. Her character, qualities, and virtues are naturally impeccable. Apart from being very particular about height, she’s pretty much like any other girl.”

“If I had to say, it’s that she’s too ordinary—so ordinary that she actually yearns for a simple and sincere sweet romance. She knows her biggest obstacle in love is her own status, so she once ran away from home, hoping for a thrilling and exciting adventure.”

“And what happened?” Ashe asked.

“Well, the previous patriarch of the Belldate family paid for her to experience her dream adventure,” Annan shrugged. “When she found out the truth, she gave up on pursuing that kind of ordinary happiness and returned home to inherit a trillion-dollar conglomerate.”

“Speaking of which, Yvaren looks quite young. How did she become the patriarch at such an age?” Harvey asked. “What about her parents?”

“Besides knowing that they’re deceased, there’s not much information. But their deaths have nothing to do with the patriarch position—Belldate patriarchs are generally unmarried, and the heirs are usually nieces or nephews. So, Yvaren’s parents were not the patriarchs; her aunt was the previous patriarch.”

Annan continued, “And almost all Belldate patriarchs have taken up the position at a young age. If the previous patriarch didn’t retire and live in anonymity but rather died, then no Belldate patriarch has lived past 40.”

“Wait!” Ashe raised his hand. “What about the death times of the patriarchs’ biological parents?”

Annan’s expression turned a bit subtle. “Not clear, but there’s no record of a Belldate patriarch’s parents being alive. Statistically, it’s safe to equate ‘becoming patriarch’ with ‘having no living parents.’”

“Then we have to tell Igor this—”

“It won’t help,” Harvey said calmly.

Ashe looked at the necromancer in surprise. “How can it not help? He’ll end up as a sacrificial offering for his own child!”

“So what? It takes years for a child to grow up.” Harvey shook his head. “Do you think a Con Artist cares about long-term benefits that span over a decade? Do you think a Con Artist fears a risk that won’t materialize for years?”

“And considering his nature, any loophole you can think of, and even those you can’t, he’s definitely investigated thoroughly. As meticulous as I am during dissections, he’s just as thorough in his investigations. Trying to warn him in his professional domain only makes me feel you’re underestimating Igor Bukin.”

Ashe was slightly taken aback and slowly closed the Gospel Book.

“Could it be that Igor’s appearance caught Miss Yvaren’s attention?” Banjeet speculated.

Annan shook her head and waved her hand, giving the butler a double negation. “I already said, Yvaren is just an ordinary girl. She’s not infatuated to the point of being lovestruck. Even if she were, why would she have her sister marry Igor? In this world, who would like a forbidden love?”

Ashe blinked and subconsciously wiped away non-existent blood from his face.

Annan continued, “Betting the entire Belldate conglomerate on one person—Igor being handsome aside—even if Igor were the reincarnation of her Angel ancestor, she’d still have to think it through.”

“Actually, you can think about it the other way around; it might make more sense.”

Everyone looked at the ‘Lise’ in Ashe’s arms. ‘Lise’ said, “Why didn’t Yvaren choose Harvey or Ashe? There must be reasons why she couldn’t choose them.”

Banjeet suddenly realized, “Right, if I were Miss Yvaren, I definitely wouldn’t choose Mr. Harvey. Not to mention Mr. Harvey’s future theft of his ancestor’s legacy, more importantly, Mr. Harvey’s reputation is already completely ruined. Supporting Mr. Harvey means going against the entire Gospel.”

Harvey scratched his ear awkwardly. “Thanks.”

“That’s not a compliment,” Annan said irritably. “And not choosing Ashe is also understandable. The Empire is still hunting him. Tying Ashe to the Belldate’s chariot would be seeking one’s own doom...”

Ashe nodded, then shook his head. “But those are just reasons not to choose us. The conditions that Dwarf proposed to Igor are too favorable. Igor must have something Belldate needs.”

“That I don’t know,” Annan shrugged.

The room fell silent for a moment before Harvey spoke up, “So what do we do?”

“If Igor decides to defect and become Belldate’s son-in-law, do we send two coffins as a wedding blessing, or do we try to destroy this rare, possibly once-in-a-lifetime chance for Igor to turn the tables?”

Whether to first mock ‘defect’ or ‘send two coffins’... The points to ridicule were so dense that Annan felt her ability to verbalize her thoughts couldn’t keep up with her growing need to mock, so she remained silent.

“If Igor successfully falls in love with Anfel,” Ashe counted on his fingers, “he not only escapes the Funeral Firm, he also gains control over Belldate’s trillion-dollar assets, gets Belldate’s support to continue sweeping the Weaving Festival, and could even end up dominating us... Most importantly, he gets a pure, kind, beautiful, and lovely wife.”

“I think the answer is pretty obvious,” Ashe said, spreading his hands. “As a friend, a comrade, a cellmate, I can’t convince myself not to cause trouble! How can I just stand by and watch Igor find happiness!?”

Harvey reminded, “But don’t forget, if Igor manages to dominate Annan, we can also break free from the Funeral Firm. Supporting Igor could be beneficial for us.”

Annan glanced at the necromancer, but she wasn’t angry because Banjeet helped dispel their treacherous thoughts of betrayal. “Mr. Harvey, do you think Mr. Bukin would cancel your Pact with Miss, or would he continue to control you through her Pact?”

Harvey suddenly realized, “Right. How could I doubt Igor’s character?”

“Besides,” Ashe said seriously, “don’t you feel sick seeing someone else find happiness?”

“Indeed,” Harvey nodded.

“In so many ways, it’s unforgivable,” Annan said, lightly flicking her earring.

Although Banjeet naturally agreed with interfering with Igor since he was on the Funeral Firm’s side, watching the three like-minded individuals in front of him made the sixty-something butler feel a twinge of guilt in his conscience...

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## **Chapter 392: Maybe Not**



After hastily finalizing the “Rescue Igor from Happiness (Top Secret)” plan, everyone left Ashe’s room.

But just as Annan pushed open the door, she happened to see Igor’s blond hair disappearing around the corner of the hallway.

Ashe exclaimed, “Igor isn’t working overtime tonight?”

“He’s about to become Belldate’s son-in-law, why would he still need to work?” Annan whispered, gesturing for them to follow: “Our chance has come.”

They followed him all the way to the second-floor atrium. Because the manor was located on the city on the second level, there was nothing obstructing the view. The night sky was bright with twinkling Stars, the veil of soft yellow lighting several meters thick, makeup overlapping, rouge heavy, turning the pretentious gardening into a romantic backdrop.

The garden maze provided perfect cover. Halfway through, they heard Igor’s voice: “Sorry, have you been waiting long?”

“No.” Anfel’s cheerful voice carried an irrepressible smile.

“Hmm?”

“No, it’s just that my sister kept telling me you’re a mental sorcerer with plenty of romantic experience, and I should be careful with you. But you’re much more nervous than I imagined.”

“Huh? Did I do something wrong?”

“No, nothing wrong with your appearance, but I can feel it.” Even though they were only listening, everyone could almost see a girl squinting her eyes and smiling: “Mr. Igor, you’re just someone who is strong when facing the strong and weak when facing the weak. You act super calm and smart around my sister, but you’re at a loss when dealing with someone like me.”

“Who calls themselves an idiot?” Igor laughed as well. “All the idiots I’ve met never admit they’re idiots.”

“He’s talking about you, Harvey,” Ashe said, seizing the initiative.

“I’m an idiot,” Harvey said calmly. “Now it’s your turn to prove yourself.”

If an idiot never admits they’re an idiot, then someone who admits they’re an idiot isn’t an idiot.

Ashe didn't flinch: "I'm an idiot."

The moment Ashe spoke, Annan, "Lise," and Harvey simultaneously activated the recording function on their Gospel Book.

"Alright, recording complete." Harvey looked at Ashe with 'sympathetic' eyes, as if saying, "It must be tough for you to prove yourself like this."

"This is bullying, right? This is definitely workplace bullying!" Ashe gritted his teeth. "I'm going to complain about you to the Gospel!"

"What are you all doing here?"

Everyone turned to see a blue-haired girl standing behind them, her hands on her hips, glaring furiously at the Funeral Firm like a boss catching employees slacking off.

"We're not working overtime tonight; we can go wherever we want," Annan retorted. "But what about you, Yvaren? What are you doing here?"

"My sister is on a date, so of course, I'm here to eavesdrop and check things out!" Yvaren shamelessly declared.

"You actually don't trust our 'good friend' Igor Bukin!" Annan feigned shock. "A date being monitored—I'm appalled! I must talk to Bukin and let him know your true nature!"

"Annan, your acting is still terrible," Yvaren said with disdain. "You look so punchable."

"Then come hit me. Do I need to kneel to compete with you? Considering my height, it would be like fighting a fire hydrant from the second floor."

"An—nan—"

"Wait a minute," Banjeet said, puzzled. "We're making so much noise. Why are they still chatting normally inside?"

"Hmph, you think I didn't anticipate you troublemakers coming to disrupt?" Yvaren raised an eyebrow. "Not only is there a soundproof Miracle barrier here, but as soon as Igor entered, the garden started moving. The inner and outer mazes are completely isolated. Now, not only can we not get in, but they'll also get lost if they try to come out. They can take their time building their relationship!"

"What if they want to leave?" Ashe asked curiously.

"I'll be here listening. When I feel their date should end, I'll press this button." Yvaren took out a controller. "Then the garden maze and the soundproof barrier will be lifted."

“Of course, you could always destroy the facilities here to ruin this date. But the damages... I hope you can afford them.”

This turned out to be a multi-layered trap. If the Funeral Firm dared to damage private property, Yvaren could gain a new employee!

“Oh~” Annan nodded. “Such a meticulous setup... Hey!”

Yvaren deftly dodged Annan’s grab. “Damn! I knew you were as rough as an orc.”

“And you’re as slippery as a Goblin!” Annan gritted her teeth and looked at the others. “What are you standing around for? Help out!”

“Trying to gang up on me?” Yvaren laughed. “Without weapons or offensive spirit Miracles, I’d like to see how you handle a two-wings fist-claw sorcerer like me.”

“Don’t damage the nearby garden; you can only use spirit Miracles to enhance yourselves,” Banjeet reminded. “Miss Yvaren is deliberately provoking us to damage her family’s property.”

“Do you like the stars?” Igor asked.

“Very much,” Anfel replied. “When I look at the starry sky, I feel so small, and all my daily worries become insignificant. Two things always amaze me: the magnificent starry sky and the persistence of people in legendary stories. The brilliance of humanity and the starlight are equally dazzling.”

Harvey lunged at Yvaren, but she nimbly jumped aside, causing the necromancer to fall flat on his face.

Annan and Ashe attacked from both sides, but the blue-haired girl slipped under Ashe’s arm, making them crash into each other.

“Mr. Igor, you must have visited many places. Do you have any thrilling adventure stories?”

“I do, but the content might not be very wholesome.”

“That’s perfect! I love dark and realistic adventure stories.”

“Do you yearn for adventure?”

“Yes, I’ve loved adventure stories since I was a child, but the farthest I’ve ever been is to other cities. The only place I can explore is the manor... My favorite adventure series is about finding traces of ancient civilizations in the wilderness, far from the city. Have you ever had such experiences, Mr. Igor?”

“Once, during a gang war, I discovered that a remote trading spot used to be the dining hall of an Ogre tribe from a few hundred years ago. Does that count?”

“◁(≧▽≦)o Gang war!”

Banjeet seized the opportunity and lunged to hug Yvaren’s legs. Yvaren remained unperturbed, pressed her body forward, lifted her legs with a fluid motion, and freed herself while delivering a hard kick to the young butler’s chin.

But just then, Annan rushed over to try and grab Yvaren. Yvaren let out a soft “tsk”, did a split, and Ashe noticed she was wearing safety shorts under her skirt. Her legs spun like a windmill, tripping the Purple Moth directly!

Yvaren let out a disdainful laugh, did two flips, and landed proudly like a champion—

“Mm-hmm!”

As Harvey grunted, Yvaren, stepping on the necromancer, fell flat on her face. The controller in her pocket flew out until it landed by a pair of small feet.

‘Lise’, who had been watching the spectacle, blinked and handed the controller to Ashe.

“By the way, let’s get our story straight! When I go back, I’ll tell my sister that I’m very pleased with you. That way, the ball’s in your court.”

“Why?” Igor asked.

“Hmm?”

“Why are you helping me?”

“It’s not really helping,” Anfel replied. “After all, I’m genuinely pleased with you, Igor, and that’s not a lie. Plus, you were coerced by my sister. Doing this gives you more room to maneuver.”

“Coerced? But this deal was of my own—”

“Choosing between ‘making me like you’ and ‘being a servant to the Belldate family for life’ isn’t exactly a free choice,” Anfel said, seemingly twirling her teacup. “But I understand my sister has her reasons, and you, Igor, have your own goals. Your positions are ultimately opposed. I’m just trying to delay the inevitable conflict between you two.”

“But... you and your sister are both smart. Maybe if we buy some time, you’ll find a mutually beneficial solution? Hehe, worst case, I’ll just get scolded by my sister. A fair gamble.”

“Ashe, now’s your chance!” Annan shouted as she rushed to grab Yvaren’s leg.

“Ashe, don’t you dare!” Yvaren threatened, baring her teeth like a little tiger.

Harvey was busy treating his stomped injuries, and Banjeet, who had been kicked in the chin, was still dazed.

Ashe looked at the controller in his hand, thought for a moment, then turned and tossed it towards the garden center, where Igor and Anfel were.

“Let’s just call it off.”

The Cult Leader clapped his hands and, holding ‘Lise’s’ hand, walked away.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 393: Hypothesis

Virtual Realm, Time Continent.

“What are you thinking about?”

Ashe was slightly startled and turned to see the Sword Princess leaning in close, their faces almost touching. Their breaths mingled, and Ashe could even see his reflection in her mischievous eyes.

In a split second, Ashe suppressed his instinct to pull away with his strong mental fortitude and maintained eye contact with her.

One second, two seconds, three seconds passed. Sonya’s alabaster face started to blush faintly, but she seemed determined, refusing to blink as she stared at Ashe. Suddenly, she stuck out a small part of her pink tongue and lightly licked her lips. The smile spread from her curved lips, crossing her cute face and leaping into her clear eyes. The chemistry between her nervous pupils and her smile invaded Ashe’s nerves like a virus, making him want to laugh too.

Smack!

As Sonya turned her head toward the source of the sound, Ashe immediately raised his fist in victory. “I won!”

“I wasn’t playing a staring game with you! How childish can you be?”

The village girl was furious, glaring at the Witch who had fallen outside the carriage and interrupted them. “What are you doing?”

“I-I was just thinking about whether to walk away and give you some space...” the Witch said sheepishly. “You see, the Rain Curtain of the Reverse Golden Rain is quite effective at blocking the view. If I walk just ten steps away, I won’t be able to see you at all. It’s very safe! Sorry for disturbing you. I’ll leave now!”

Deya had originally planned to sneak away quietly, but because she was trying to be too careful, she lost her balance and tripped on the carriage door, hitting the ground headfirst. She was quite regretful herself—after all, she had only seen the prelude in fairy tale picture books before. She and her sisters were very curious about the thousands of words of text that followed the Sword Princess and the Observer.

Even though Sonya had practiced her acting in front of a mirror, she was still embarrassed by the Witch’s words. Her face turned red, and her ears started to burn. She quickly went over to pull her back. “You’re not disturbing us! Come back and sit down!”

“So, what were you two doing just now?” Deya asked curiously.

“We... we were just playing a staring game!” Sonya explained. “Whoever looks away or blinks first loses!”

“Sword Princess, you’re so childish,” Ashe sighed, shrugging helplessly. “How old are you? Can you be a little more mature?”

The village girl’s face turned bright red again—this time out of anger. She felt like her fury was about to burn through her stomach, and she was sure that if she drew her sword and performed the Blood Moon Blossoms on the Observer, it would be a guaranteed critical hit.

“By the way, I found some interesting information in the earlier,” Deya said. “It’s about the investigation of the Rainbow Tail.”

Earlier, Ashe and Sonya had run over another sorcerer projection that had been wandering carelessly on the road.

The spirit dropped by the sorcerer projection was handed over to the Sword Princess to sell, while Deya usually handled the s. Only particularly difficult handbooks were passed on to Ashe. Honestly, Ashe was quite satisfied with this recycling mechanism. Deya filtered out most of the ‘ordinary’ handbooks, so Ashe only ended up with the especially sensational ones, each containing at least a dozen R18 tags, refreshing his understanding of biological diversity with every read.

At the mention of the Rainbow Tail, Sonya immediately extinguished her inner fire, and Ashe began driving in pursuit of the White Bull.

“The handbook’s owner collected a lot of information about the Rainbow Tail and, after field verification, disproved most of the hypotheses,” Deya said. “Among the hypotheses he knew, the most likely ones are the Three and a Half Sorcerers Hypothesis, the Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis, and the White Bull Hypothesis.”

“The Three and a Half Sorcerers Hypothesis and the Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis are essentially the same. Sorcerers believe that the ‘rainbow’ in Rainbow Tail refers to the color of a sorcerer’s virtual wings. Although we have Silver Wings and Golden Wings, if you examine closely, each person’s virtual wings have different colors and shapes. It’s not an exaggeration to say they are different colors.”

“Therefore, some sorcerers think that if you can gather seven different virtual wings, it might trigger the virtual realm mechanics to generate the Rainbow Tail. The Three and a Half Hypothesis is a simplified extension of this idea. If everyone is fully developed as two-wings sorcerers, then three and a half sorcerers could collectively gather seven virtual wings.”

“There’s another version of the Golden Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis: only fully condensed golden virtual wings count as one ‘color.’ Silver virtual wings are not counted, so seven two-wings sorcerers are needed to trigger the Rainbow Tail. This hypothesis has some basis—sorcerers believe that when they gather seven Golden Wings, they will become ‘seven drops of rain’ and fall upwards with the Reverse Golden Rain.”

Ashe and Sonya nodded repeatedly. Although the reasoning process seemed far-fetched, compared to the Golden Fish Secret Toxin, this Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis was quite convincing.

Moreover, the advanced version of the Golden Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis considered the Reverse Golden Rain, the largest mechanism on the Time Continent, making it highly persuasive. Even Ashe felt that its possibility was very high.

Despite having only experienced the Golden Fish Secret Toxin, Ashe had a vague premonition: the Virtual Realm’s smuggling mechanisms likely belonged to the category of ‘brain teasers,’ ‘hidden in plain sight,’ ‘impossible to figure out until you know, then it seems straightforward,’ much like the intricate and obvious murder methods in detective novels.

However, this did not mean that smuggling in the Virtual Realm was easy. On the contrary, sorcerers had to meet extremely stringent conditions. Take the Golden Fish, for example. It had no specific location requirements; you just needed to be able to fly. But aside from sorcerers like Ashe and the Sword Princess, who grew up together as

'childhood friend sorcerers,' other silver sorcerers needed exceptional luck to meet and convince another sorcerer to team up for flight.

Therefore, the Rainbow Tail was also likely something that could be triggered anywhere on the Time Continent, but the conditions were particularly harsh, making it almost impossible for a single sorcerer to meet them. The Golden Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis encompassed all these factors, leading Ashe to believe it might be the truth, but...

"Three and a half is manageable, but seven sorcerers... that's a high bar."

Deya nodded. "The handbook's owner once gathered three and a half sorcerers by chance, but despite trying everything, they couldn't trigger the Rainbow Tail mechanism before the static domain caught up with them, so the Three and a Half Hypothesis is likely incorrect. The Golden Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis has not been disproven and is considered the second most likely option by the handbook's owner."

"The second most likely?"

"Because the White Bull Hypothesis, which hasn't been disproven, is considered even more likely," Deya explained. "Sorcerers believe that the White Bull's four legs are the gateway to the Rainbow Tail."

Ashe and Sonya immediately looked up at the distant white pillar on the horizon.

"Right," Sonya suddenly remembered something. "When white light passes through a prism, it refracts into a rainbow... that's basic knowledge of the Light Sect!"

"Yes, the handbook's owner wrote about that," Deya nodded. "The White Bull Hypothesis suggests that the white bull's four legs are actually four tails. If a sorcerer can enter the white bull's legs and use their soul as a prism, they can refract into the Rainbow Tail and ascend along the light pillars to the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm."

Ashe decided to retract his earlier statement: the White Bull Hypothesis was indeed more convincing than the Golden Seven Sorcerers Hypothesis. After all, the latter required gathering seven sorcerers, something even Ashe couldn't achieve without recruiting four more operators. Moreover, that hypothesis only ended with turning into raindrops falling towards the sky. The White Bull Hypothesis, however, provided a direct ascension path, and the scientific reasoning of "white light refracting into a rainbow" greatly appealed to Ashe.

"So what prevented the handbook's owner from verifying the hypothesis?" Sonya asked.

"The white bull is too fast," Deya explained. "The white bull never stops; it moves forward by several seconds every second. Moreover, its front legs are usually in the breach area of the Golden Flow. It's almost impossible for a sorcerer to bypass the Golden Flow and enter the front legs."



Ashe said, "What about the hind legs..."

"The hind legs are surrounded by the static domain," Sonya pondered. "If a sorcerer fails to maintain relative stillness with the hind legs and gets thrown into the static domain, there's no saving them."

"And no one knows if the white bull's four legs are even dangerous," Deya continued. "The handbook's owner's most successful attempt only got him within ten meters of the front legs. He never saw anyone enter the white bull's legs, so they might be crushed by the bull."

"Moreover... he felt that the white bull's legs might not exist at all."

"What do you mean?"

"Although we can see the white pillar clearly from here," Deya said, "once you get close to the legs, the white pillar becomes invisible. The handbook's owner only inferred the position of the front legs by the density of the Golden Flow. He once pursued the hind legs but was thrown into the static domain upon turning around. The closer he got, the less he could see the hind legs, almost as if..."

"Almost as if it were a rainbow," Sonya concluded.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 394: The Second Trap

"It seems like we still can't smuggle ourselves into the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm," Ashe sighed.

In fact, this was to be expected. If there were truly a simple and understandable way to smuggle oneself in, the sky over the Time Continent wouldn't occasionally echo with the wails of sorcerers being attacked by knowledge creatures. Many sorcerers might know about the golden seven sorcerers and the White Bull Hypothesis, but these hypotheses are too difficult to realize. Left with no other choice, they can only fly straight into the sky, trying to grasp the elusive Rainbow Tail.

Golden sorcerers are the hardest to accept their fate.

They are more talented than silver sorcerers, and in the mundane world, they are generally top-tier managers, often having seen the boundless glory of Sanctuary

sorcerers. The secular world considers them geniuses, and they think of themselves as geniuses too. S

But the chasm between realms and sects is harder to cross than any other challenge. If your girlfriend doesn't love you, you can use hypnosis and charm to win her back. If you're shot in the head, a healing sorcerer can use hydrotherapy to reconstruct it. Even water that's been spilled can flow back with time-reversal spells. But if you can't understand high-level knowledge, then you just can't understand it.

If the smartest people in the world haven't found a smuggling route after hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of years, then the unlearned Mudborn Ashe naturally doesn't have much hope for himself either.

"Tsk," Sonya bit her nail, "If we could get to the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm, all our troubles would be solved."

"Trouble's here," Ashe suddenly said. The sports car made a sharp 45° turn, accelerating diagonally upward.

Sonya immediately gripped her sword hilt and drew it slightly. Deya pulled out a Water-born Thread with both hands. The two of them dropped their playful demeanor and instantly entered combat mode.

On the virtual realm map in front of Ashe, the eastern region showed a group of raptors and some Thousand-feathered Drakes. Clearly, it was a mixed unit from the heroic soul legion.

Tonight, they had already arrived in the Spider Tower area.

Along the way, Ashe had hardly stopped to scavenge any resource points. Except for occasionally crushing a sorcerer projection to rest for a moment, most of the time he was driving, chasing the White Bull.

Their goal tonight was not to scavenge, not to grow stronger, but simply to survive. According to the pact with the Empress, they only needed to linger in the Spider Tower area for more than three hours to be able to leave the Virtual Realm. Thus, Ashe's best strategy was naturally to keep driving and changing locations. Once the three hours were up, they could return to reality, preventing the Empress's heroic soul legion from surrounding and annihilating them.

The naive thought that "the Empress's heroic souls might not be able to lock onto their coordinates" never crossed Ashe's mind. Ashe even suspected that the pact marks on his body might serve as natural trackers.

Steel machinery inevitably outperforms flesh and blood. With the sports car operating at peak performance, Ashe easily shook off the heroic soul legion from the east. However,

before they could catch their breath, traces of the heroic soul legion appeared in the northeast.

Ashe pondered for a moment and decided to accelerate towards them. The heroic soul legion also immediately sped up, trying to block the road. With no other choice, Ashe continued at a 45° angle, speeding northwest.

But as Ashe tried to head directly north, the heroic soul legion once again attempted to block his path.

This time, however, Ashe finally sensed something was off.

“It’s a hunt!” Ashe slammed on the brakes, causing the sports car to carve a donut-shaped arc on the grass. “They’ve been herding us west... There must be an ambush waiting there. We’re going to charge straight through. Ready?”

“One!”

“One!”

After the operators’ urgent short responses, the sports car roared like a giant beast. Its front end sprouted wicked fangs, transforming into a war monster ready for battle!

The steel monster tore through the Rain Curtain. Ashe noticed that the northern troops were already armed, but there were still gaps on the sides. Just as they were about to crash headlong into each other, the sports car gracefully veered at a right angle. The rear end spewed a thick, green Toxic Mist, splattering all over the northern troops, before speeding off to smash through the fragile northeastern defense line!

The wind howled, the rain pounded, and the monsters on either side scattered in panic!

Boom!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The slender and sinister Thousand-feathered Drakes transformed into Red Hat long rifle soldiers. They lowered their hats and raised their long rifles, aiming at the sports car and firing. Although their firing rate was much slower than in their original form, their accuracy was exceptionally high, and the damage was significant!

The “Refracting Wall” rippled, and the energy of the shield rapidly decreased, but it was all worth it. Sure enough, the heroic soul legion lying in ambush to the south and west immediately surged out. Ashe pushed the sports car to its limits, desperately charging towards the heroic soul legion blocking the northeast direction. Soon, they left their pursuers behind, leaving only a trail of lingering Toxic Mist.

As Ashe watched the heroic soul legion disappear one by one from the virtual realm map, he sighed with relief. "We should be safe tonight... right?"

At that moment, he noticed a special golden area occupying three full grids on the virtual realm map to the northeast.

The description of the special area read: "Everyone will die of old age, including you, so hurry up."

"The Golden Flow..." Ashe muttered. "Could it be..."

From afar, the ground-shaking sound of marching thundered. Ashe looked down at the virtual realm map and saw the heroic soul legion emerging from all directions!

Many Swiftblast Dragons!

Many Dog-headed Dragons!

Many Blade Fish Dragons!

The outermost regions of the virtual realm map were painted a vivid, blood-red color. The only escape route was the golden area to the northeast, but that was the Golden Flow, which could reduce them to skeletons in mere seconds!

The sports car engine slowly came to a halt. The sorcerers sat on the grass, quietly awaiting the butcher's arrival. The operators sensed what was happening. Deya stood on her seat, facing the rear, while Sonya gently placed a hand on Ashe's shoulder.

"No apologies," she said.

The real ambush direction was the northeast.

The heroic soul legion had deliberately driven them west, luring them into breaking out in the opposite direction, right into the trap the Empress's heroic souls had set for them!

There was even the Golden Flow blocking the way, giving the Empress's heroic souls more time to deploy their forces!

The timing: Ashe and his team had to stay for three hours.

The terrain: The Empress's heroic souls were familiar with the surroundings.

The manpower: The Empress's heroic souls had mobilized a large part of the heroic soul legion from the Spider Tower!

Ashe lost this time with such swiftness and decisiveness that there was no room for excuses or complaints.

At that moment, a familiar voice rang out amidst the golden rain.

“You are clever people,” Danzel’s words sent chills down their spines. “And I am best at dealing with clever people. All it takes is a few insignificant flaws, and a pretense of regret at having my schemes uncovered, to lull your cautious hearts into a deep, lion-like slumber.”

“This is the second time you’ve fallen for it, and it will be the last.”

“Still, since we know each other, I can offer you some courtesy. There is still a bit of time before the three hours are up. You can indulge in these final moments of your lives—love if you wish, entertain yourselves if you wish. That way, when you die, you might leave behind a decent .”

Their spirits wavered, their will faltered, and their fighting intent crumbled.

The Empress’s heroic soul’s seemingly compassionate words were filled with overwhelming killing intent. Even with them cornered, the Empress’s heroic soul seized every opportunity to strike at them, perhaps as revenge for the setback in the cabin, or maybe it was just her personal sadistic pleasure—Ashe leaned towards the latter.

In this tense moment, Sonya suddenly leaned close to Ashe, whispering in his ear, “You still haven’t answered me.”

“What?”

“What were you thinking earlier?”

Ashe’s attention was forcibly pulled from their dire situation. “Why are you so curious?”

Sonya blinked. “Because it’s been a long time since you’ve talked to me about your life in reality.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## **Chapter 395: I am the Ornament**

Screech—

From the rain curtain ahead came the spine-chilling sound of steel bones grinding, as if the listener's own spine was being bent.

The sports car had retreated to its limit, with just ten meters behind it the ever-flowing Golden Flow. If they crossed one more thin layer of the rain curtain, the heavy weight of time would instantly crush their souls.

The most terrifying monster is time; it is everywhere, relentless, chewing on all beings, devouring civilizations.

In the virtual realm map, only three colors remained: the green safe zone where Ashe was, the "seeking one's own doom" red zone painted by the heroic soul legion, and the golden zone of the Golden Flow.

Though the Empress had promised them time for love, she hadn't said it would be enough space. The heroic soul legion was pressing in, leaving Ashe with no room to maneuver.

Ten meters beyond the rain curtain, the horrific and grotesque heroic soul legion was poised for action, ready for their midnight snack.

Yet they remained outside the rain curtain, their figures completely obscured by the Reverse Golden Rain. Ashe and his companions could only hear the rustling, gnashing, and scraping sounds, which was even more unnerving than if they had charged through—their imaginations led a grand rebellion in their minds, eager to overthrow the dictatorship of reason and welcome the arrival of the terror.

Besides the rebellious imagination, the court's instinct for survival was also scheming. This thin layer of rain curtain allowed the rebel survival instincts to swell endlessly, singing triumphantly as it defeated the guards of dignity, smashed the inner minister of courage, and dragged reason from the throne, forcing it to kneel and surrender.

There is great terror between life and death.

This was no joke; the Empress' heroic soul legion would definitely swarm them, devouring them completely, leaving at most a layer of soul skin to escape back to their bodies—but just like 100 milliliters of blood can't drive the body, a tiny bit of soul fragment can't reboot the operating system of consciousness.

Even if they hadn't offended the local natives, other sorcerers dying in the Virtual Realm wasn't uncommon. The Virtual Realm isn't a charity, nor is it a lenient Party A. It's a cold, indifferent filter that selects melodies that can adapt to the environment and destroys the dissonant noises that don't belong to this era—whether you're an outdated aria or an avant-garde rock.

The power of a Secret Incarnation is absolutely beyond their realm's reach. Such a noisy dissonance naturally attracts widespread condemnation—though it might not be a thousand, at least a hundred armed units were besieging them.

The dominance of academic sorcerers makes sense; after all, adventurers might find themselves dead and buried at any moment, whereas academics can trade time for safety, steadily improving their sect's realm and climbing step by step to the higher echelons of the Virtual Realm... Ashe couldn't help but let his mind wander.

Smack!

A splash of unconditional malice landed outside the protective shield of the "Refracting Wall," the dark green rotting aura almost melting their souls through their respiratory tracts. The sorcerers tensed up in fear, but the Empress' heroic soul giggled and said, "Oops, my spider's throat was a bit itchy, and I accidentally spat. I hope I didn't disturb you?"

Ashe angrily shouted, "You did disturb us! We were just getting into the zone, and now you've ruined the mood. What are you doing!?"

"Hmm~ How about I offer myself as compensation?"

"Sure, sure! We're short one player, you came just in time!"

"Sorry, I prefer to take the initiative. How about I send someone to bring you over?"

Ashe's heart skipped a beat, but the sword princess responded before he could, "We only accept multiplayer games, no solo affairs allowed."

"Oh~ Times have changed. Sorcerers today are much more open than in my time," Danzel's voice was full of amusement. "What a pity, so vibrant, so beautiful, so delicious..."

"Hearing my own eulogy while still alive is quite a novel experience," Sonya sneered, turning to Ashe and whispering, "Don't even think about going over and threatening the Empress! You'd need more than a few lives to survive that!"

"Huh?" Deya was stunned. "So, the Observer's hesitation just now was about planning to assassinate the commander? I thought..."

"What else? Could there be any other possibility?" Ashe interrupted the Witch righteously.

He glanced at Deya's hair, which was starting to darken, and felt a slight sinking in his heart.

“The last time we managed to gain an advantage over the Empress, it wasn’t because we were so powerful, but because the Amnesia Cabin helped us a lot,” Sonya said. “This time, the Empress is prepared. Any flaw she shows is just a trap; there’s no opportunity for us to exploit.”

“So what do we do?” Deya’s voice was a bit shaky. Although she hadn’t entered the duet yet, her tone was vastly different from before, a mocking sneer forming at the corner of her mouth. “Are we just going to wait here to die? Maybe you two might be satisfied with that outcome, but there are still people waiting for me to return in the real world.”

“Fight our way out!” Sonya ignored Deya’s unpleasant tone, declaring resolutely, “The Refracting Wall hasn’t been broken, and the sports car still has the Evil Blade to clear the way. Our combat strength is intact! The Empress has been setting up here for days; all our strategies are just bubbles that she can pop effortlessly. The only way is to break out with force, to carve out a bloody path with all our might!”

As she spoke, the village girl’s calm face showed no trace of anger, but her right hand had already gripped the sword hilt tightly, and the red in her eyes deepened with a dark intensity.

The Witch’s hair color grew dirtier, but her eyes only shone brighter. Her innocent, cute face revealed a vivid, dripping madness. She even put her arm around the sword Princess’ shoulder, laughing and saying, “Haha, I like this plan. I didn’t expect that despite all your little schemes, you’d still be so adorable at a critical moment~”

What part of this plan that screamed “reckless” had anything adorable about it?

Though Ashe grumbled inwardly, the operators’ states relieved him. What he feared most was that the sword Princess and the Witch would lose their sanity and judgment under the terror of life and death. After all, just suppressing the insurgent imagination and survival instincts within himself had already drained much of his energy. If he had to deal with one or two more burdens, Ashe’s mindset would collapse.

Even if the sword Princess is stunning and the Witch is adorable, if they became burdensome negative monsters at this moment, Ashe would downgrade their trust level in his heart.

Nothing is more exhausting than having incompetent teammates, especially at the project’s most critical moment. The Virtual Realm team needs not mascots or ornaments but reliable comrades.

However, not only were the sword Princess and the Witch not burdens, but on the contrary, Ashe felt he was their accessory. Facing life-and-death crises, they were braver than one another, wishing they could slash through the gates of life and death with one sword, and open the doors of right and wrong with their hands. Fear, regret,



despair, and cowardice all transformed within them into the most resolute killing intent. Standing with them, Ashe felt as if he commanded thousands of troops.

But Ashe pushed them back into their seats. "Wait a moment; let me see if there's another way."

"Paramour!" Ashe called out loudly, "I have a gift for you!"

"What gift?" Deya, Sonya, and Danzel's voices rang out simultaneously.

Ashe pressed down the operators' heads and shouted, "My soul summoning spirit, do you like it?"

"It's so-so, not particularly satisfying," Danzel said very picky. "But since it's from you, I'll reluctantly accept it."

"After accepting it, can you let us go?" Ashe spread his hands. "We don't have deep hatred between us. How about we pretend nothing happened? You fight your wars, and we explore our Virtual Realm."

"What are you talking about, my dear little paramour," Danzel chuckled. "If you don't die, how can I take back the soul summoning spirit? Don't you remember, once a spirit is abandoned in the Virtual Realm, it immediately disappears? Only the spirits that drop upon the sorcerer's death, with the soul imprint of the original owner, can linger briefly, allowing other sorcerers a chance to capture them."

"But didn't the Pact say if you catch me, I have to voluntarily hand over the soul summoning spirit..." Ashe was puzzled. If he couldn't hand over the soul summoning spirit, why would the Empress include this clause in the Pact?

"So the real meaning of that clause is that once I'm caught by you, I'll obediently commit suicide without resistance," Danzel spoke lightly, her tone cheerful like she was singing. "Every clause has a hidden trap beneath its literal meaning. You accepted all of them without changing a single one. I really had to hold back my laughter at the time. My dear paramour, you're just so considerate."

"But you still have concerns."

Facing the Empress's mockery, Ashe wasn't angry at all. He calmly said, "If it were really just as simple as catching me, and I would obediently commit suicide to hand over the soul summoning spirit, you wouldn't waste so much time and effort chatting with me. You'd just rush over and tear me apart."

The laughter outside the Rain Curtain gradually ceased.

“You’re using your army to hunt me, using mockery to suppress me, using your legion to intimidate me, and using words to tease me. Even I feel tired for you. If you want to devour me, why not just come directly and peel me open? Why go through all this trouble? Would this whole process somehow improve the quality of my flesh to a premium level?” Ashe said. “You’re trying every possible way to wear down my will to resist. There’s only one reason for this — to make me completely lose my judgment.”

“If I’m not mistaken, once we become hysterical and lose our rationality, you’ll present us with a very generous offer. The content would probably be something like, as long as I willingly die by your hand, you’ll spare my companions, and you won’t completely kill me. You’ll just take the soul summoning spirit from my soul... right?”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 396: Crossing the Golden Flow

Beyond the Rain Curtain, silence reigned, as if the Heroic Soul Legion had vanished without a trace.

“You’re afraid I’ll go down with the ship.”

Ashe declared with absolute certainty, “Yes, the Pact states I’m not allowed to abandon or destroy the ‘soul summoning’ spirit, but the enforcement of this Pact lies in the Virtual Realm’s immediate punishment. Which means, if I believe I can bear the risk of the Virtual Realm’s punishment, this Pact is no more than a piece of useless paper to me.”

“The Virtual Realm can only punish after the fact; it can’t stop me midway. At most, it can kill me once the dust settles, but if destroying the ‘soul summoning’ spirit means death, and being caught by you also means death, I’d rather die at the hands of the Virtual Realm than be completely consumed by you, my dear paramour.”

The world fell silent as the Reverse Golden Rain silently fell towards the sky. After a moment, Danzel’s voice slowly emerged, “There’s just one thing that needs correcting.”

“In the ‘generous plan’ I’ve prepared for you, there’s only one spot for someone to leave alive.”

Ashe frowned, his expression turning cold. “So I’m definitely going to die, which means...”

“You have to choose someone to die with your own hands,” Danzel’s voice was now unabashedly filled with amusement. “One lives, one half-dead, one fully dead. That’s the ending I’ve prepared for you. Do you like it?”

“...I’ve heard that heroic souls can only regain their emotions by retrieving soul fragments from hell,” Ashe said. “I’m curious, in this vile form that makes one want to vomit, how much of your former charm remains?”

“You seem to know us well. If we’re talking proportions, about one-sixth,” Danzel said cheerfully. “Have you decided who’s going to die? Your lover, or your sister?”

“Oh, and a reminder: if you kill your companion with your own hands, it means she’ll exit the Virtual Realm early, violating the ‘three-hour stay in the Virtual Realm’ condition, which will result in her being killed by the Virtual Realm. I don’t recognize that kind of death! It has to be done by us. I want you to watch your companion being dismembered and devoured by my adorable minions.”

“...Did the Gospel Incarnation find you in a trash can?” Ashe said with disgust. “Thank goodness you love a god. If you loved a person, you’d have worn them out long ago. Being loved or hated by you must be a disaster.”

“Oh, stop it, I’m not that bad,” Danzel laughed. “By the way, I like smart people who know the times and hate those who say, ‘No, I’d rather die than let you have your way.’”

“So... are you a smart person or a stupid one?” the Empress’s tone dripped with arrogance. “Even if you’ve guessed my plan, what difference does it make? Do you even have a choice?”

Indeed.

Ashe’s situation hadn’t improved one bit despite his sharp mind. This was an open Scheme. If Ashe was scared senseless by the Empress, he’d naturally make the emotional choice. If he was smart enough to see through her Scheme, he’d make the rational choice.

With only two options, there’s no real freedom of choice. Anyone would have to choose the lesser evil.

As Ashe fell silent, the Sword Princess and the Witch turned to look at him.

Especially the Witch. Her hair quickly lost its luster, the Water-born Thread flickering between her fingers, her eyes growing increasingly murky, like a cat bristling in alarm. If Ashe made a wrong move, she’d react violently.

“It’s hard to make a decision, isn’t it? Especially when it involves your own companions, and you have to pronounce their death sentence yourself,” Danzel said suddenly, almost kindly. “I’m not that bad, my dear paramour. How about I help you out?”

“I’m sure you’ve considered the possibility of breaking through head-on, right? Here’s the deal: when you make your breakout attempt, I’ll have my minions focus their attacks on your two companions. You just need to give a look or a gesture indicating which one you want to abandon, and my adorable minions will do the rest. They’ll tear apart and devour the companion you’ve chosen to forsake. Your companion will think they just died in battle, and you can console yourself that it was merely the result of a failed breakout plan, something you didn’t intend.”

As she said this, the Witch’s shoulders trembled slightly.

Even though she quickly turned her head away to hide her expression from her teammates, both Ashe and Sonya knew that their breakout plan had completely fallen apart.

On one hand, the Empress’s heroic soul had reached a level of Mental Miracle with her words, easily sowing discord among them. On the other hand, the Bond with the Witch hadn’t reached a level of unconditional trust.

A chill ran down his spine as Ashe finally realized the level of the enemy they were facing. Though they were only up against three sorcerers, the Empress’s heroic soul had spared no expense in deploying a large legion, using the terrain to corner them, and constantly digging into the cracks in their team’s relationships to gain even a slight advantage... They hadn’t even engaged in a formal battle yet, Ashe hadn’t even seen her legion, but he knew they had already lost.

The battle for sorcerers ends before it even begins.

Ashe let out a breath. “Witch.”

“Hmm?”

“I know whatever I say won’t matter because you think I’m closer to the Sword Princess. You know that the Bond between you and me hasn’t reached the level of unconditional trust—perhaps it never will because Bonds are something that depends a lot on fate.”

“Hmm.”

“But I need you to trust me,” Ashe said earnestly. “We must work together to—”

“Does saying this help?” Sonya abruptly interrupted Ashe. “Witch, wrap a thread around my neck.”

“What?”

“If you feel the Observer has abandoned you, cut my throat immediately. Such a severe injury will send me straight to the Virtual Realm, violating the Pact and invoking its punishment,” Sonya said seriously. “I won’t ask you to trust the Observer as I do. If you think he will only save me, then I’ll place my life in your hands.”

“And put one on me too,” Ashe suddenly said, his tone as casual as asking for a cigarette.

Deya looked at them and nodded firmly. “Alright!”

The Witch did as she was told. Two transparent Water-born Threads wrapped around their necks, one in each of the Witch’s hands, as if she were holding two balloon heads. Though neither Ashe nor Sonya felt any discomfort, they couldn’t shake the feeling that their heads weren’t quite stable.

“Alright.” Sonya took a deep breath and gripped her sword hilt tightly. “Let’s carve a bloody path—”

“Who said we’re fighting our way out?”

The Witch and the sword Princess were stunned. Suddenly, the sports car roared to life, and the powerful thrust wiped away all their extraneous thoughts.

Danzel’s voice, filled with both rage and shock, boomed like thunder. “Paramour, come back! Are you trying to get yourself killed?”

“No, even if I die, I won’t let you have your way!” Ashe responded calmly. As the heroic soul legion charged with a roar, he drove the sports car into the Golden Flow area!

The moment they crossed the Rain Curtain, the car’s Refracting Wall quickly disintegrated, and even the car itself began to corrode and fall apart. At that moment, Ashe stretched his hands back, and the sword Princess and the Witch immediately grasped his hands, understanding his intent.

Red and blue hues surfaced on the sorcerers’ bodies, forming a fairytale-like armor as if drawn with crayons.

Armed Troop Type: Two-tone Anchor!

As the car shattered into pieces, all three leapt forward simultaneously. The heavy flow of time battered their souls, making them feel as if their spirits were weighed down with lead and their thoughts rusted and sluggish.

However, as they tumbled to the edge of the Golden Flow, a surge of immense joy filled their hearts.

Anchoring activated!

“Anchoring: When you encounter any external influence (physical attack, mental shock, curse weakening, etc.) or voluntarily change yourself (consume spellforce, enhance yourself, etc.), there is a chance to trigger the anchoring effect. Once triggered, for the next 5 seconds, you cannot be affected by external influences, nor can you affect the external world.”

Although there was only a 20% chance, the Golden Flow area accelerated the aging of sorcerers every single moment!

In their ‘anchored’ state, they no longer felt the corrosion of time. The Golden Flow vividly appeared before them, with the golden waters stirring waves of history. Time spirits bathing and swimming in the Golden Flow curiously watched the Uninvited Guests. Rare Spirits like ‘Reverse Day,’ ‘Hear Month,’ and ‘Fixed Year’ peeked their heads out from the river, keeping their distance yet unable to resist observing the sorcerers, showing no fear at all.

“Let’s go.” Ashe noticed his voice had become more resonant. “We need to cross the Golden Flow.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## **Chapter 397: Unexpected**

So heavy.

Even with the protection of “anchoring,” the moment Ashe stepped into the Golden Flow Water, a deep sense of powerlessness overwhelmed his soul.

It wasn’t because of the speed of the current or the weight of the water. In fact, “anchoring” literally blocked any external factors from affecting him. In this state, Ashe could wade through mountains of filth without getting stained.

But “anchoring” only blocked external influences on the sorcerer; it didn’t prevent the sorcerer from receiving external information through his senses.

When one is too weak, an overload of information can be poisonous.

The countless echoes stirred by the Golden Flow Water, the myriad reflections in the surging waves. Ashe seemed to hear the sighs of countless beings as they lived and died, and saw the intertwined images of all living things over long ages. Just processing this overload of information almost made his soul freeze!

With his limited information processing ability, it was impossible for him to digest so much information at once. It was like being a struggling student in a math class, only able to grasp the simplest concepts, while the advanced formulas on the blackboard were beyond comprehension and retention.

But now, it was as if the teacher was drilling into the student's head, forcibly stuffing hundreds of gigabytes of study materials into the student's brain!

Even if Ashe closed his eyes and covered his ears, he could still feel that what was flowing over him wasn't just water, but the lives of all beings. When he moved his fingers backward, he swept through the pasts of millions of people; when he splashed his feet in the river, he inadvertently trampled on the glorious history of a city.

Suddenly, he had an epiphany: the so-called Time Sect didn't refer to a force called 'time,' but rather the flow of all beings forming time. The essence of time is flow.

Each drop of water in the Golden Flow Water originated from reality, possibly from people, long-lived species like elves, ephemeral mayflies, or perhaps floating clouds, immobile rocks, and withering leaves. Understanding this, Ashe found that while he was still constantly receiving excessive information, it no longer affected his thinking. Moreover, his excellent forgetting mechanism kicked in, quickly throwing the new files crammed into his brain straight into the recycling bin for complete destruction.

No wonder the Golden Flow Water is considered the most terrifying natural phenomenon on the Time Continent. Even "anchoring" couldn't fully protect a sorcerer. As Ashe couldn't help but worry about his operators, he looked up and saw the two of them already swimming ahead of him.

The Witch swam the fastest, followed by the Sword Princess—there's no sorcerer who can't swim. Swimming is a basic requirement for crossing the Sea of Knowledge, so even a sorcerer from the desert becomes a swimming expert.

Faced with the informational onslaught of the Golden Flow Water, Ashe needed a second to update his mental processes, while the Sword Princess and Witch adapted to the river's environment almost instantly.

Ashe couldn't help but marvel: No wonder they were top-rated geniuses selected by "Aurora's Sorcerer Handbook". Ordinary people like him were indeed far behind them.

But they had only crossed the basic threshold of the Golden Flow Water. The real danger was yet to come.

The “anchoring” lasted only five seconds, and the moment it wore off, the immense pressure of time nearly crushed the three of them instantly!

Ashe felt his stamina plummet rapidly, his vision blurring as if he were viewing through an old phone camera, and his throat produced a broken, fan-like rasping sound. His thoughts slowed, like screws that had locked up.

Although Ashe quickly re-entered the “anchoring” state, in those brief moments exposed to the Golden Flow Water, he had almost aged decades!

This was to be expected. Simply approaching the Golden Flow Water accelerated aging, and they were now swimming directly in it. It was a miracle the river hadn’t dissolved them on the spot.

Because of the “anchoring” state, Ashe couldn’t expend soul energy to restore his aged soul body. He had no choice but to continue swimming. Although the river wasn’t wide, and it seemed like he could swim across with a burst of speed, Ashe estimated he could only withstand two or three more waves of this before he would be literally swallowed by the ‘tides of time.’

The “anchoring” effect of the Two-tone Anchor had only a 20% activation chance. Unless the activation chance could be raised to 100%, the Golden Flow Water would continue to be a forbidden zone for the living!

The Golden Flow was teeming with time spirits. Seeing Ashe swimming so bravely, they might have mistaken him for a new species of spirit and swarmed around to greet him. Among them, Ashe recognized more than a dozen rare spirits, including the precious spirit “Hear Day” that the Witch had lost in the Amnesia Cabin. However, he had no time to spare for even picking up trash, and he struggled desperately to swim forward.

Perhaps because this section of the Golden Flow was just a small tributary, Ashe and the others soon swam halfway across. When they were only one or two meters from the shore, the five seconds elapsed, and the anchoring deactivated once more.

Ashe was prepared to endure the time wash again, but perhaps the white bull had moved away, causing the current of the Golden Flow to suddenly accelerate. The churning waves splashed several drops of golden liquid, and one drop landed on Ashe’s ear, slipping into his soul like silky milk.

Even though Ashe immediately re-entered the “anchoring” state with his next breath, his ear still exploded with sound. But this time, what he heard was not the echoes of others’ lives, but the echoes of his own soul!

“Such an ugly baby, looks a lot like you.”

“No, more like you. I’m not this ugly.”



"I just gave birth; can't you cut me some slack? Clearly, the baby looks ugly like you!"

"You two, all newborns look this ugly!"

"Brother, why are we different sizes?"

"Ashe, that's normal. When you grow up... Σ(⊃°Д°;)⊃What!? Wait, why?"

"(\*ω\\*) Shh, Ashe, keep your voice down. This is my classmate, here to study..."

"Mom! Brother brought a girl home!"

"Such an ugly baby, looks like your dad."

"Do you have any manners? How can you insult my grandson like this? If you want to insult your brother, just say it directly!"

"Exactly, exactly!"

"I found an internship. If I'm lucky, I might get a job at this company."

"Did you find a girlfriend?"

"It's a mobile game company. They offer fourteen salaries and a year-end bonus, and they provide housing benefits..."

"Did you find a girlfriend?"

"Can't you ask something else?"

"How much did your fund lose?"

"I didn't find a girlfriend."

"I told you there's no need to come back. Dad just strained his back a little; I've got it covered."

"You, you stay away!"

"What's the matter, Igor? Didn't you want to fight me ten times? Now you've won once, and I've won once. There are still eight more times to go."

"Cough, cough, haha! What a pity, Valcas! You almost dragged me down with you, but thankfully the Executioner was faster... thankfully you're an Elf despised by the people!"

"Freya, come with me. I need you."

“Bewitcher, the Gospel Kingdom almost doesn’t have your kind anymore... But neither of you are sorcerers, so how did you cross the virtual realm passage? Never mind, from today onwards, you’re employees of my Funeral Firm.”

The Echo stirred memories, and the memories surged with emotion!

His ears were filled with these vague voices, and Ashe’s mind was almost instantly shattered by the noise. His soul was trapped in the past echoes, making it difficult even to keep himself afloat, let alone continue swimming!

The Golden Time Flow, a moment, a lifetime!

The Sword Princess seemed to notice something was wrong with him and struggled back to pull him along. However, this delay caused the five seconds to slip by quickly, and the third wash of the Golden Flow Water almost turned the two of them into withered corpses!

They had lost the ability to cross the Golden Flow.

“Alarpha Senhaeser,” Danzel said, “you have an armor specialty. Try to bring them back.”

The named heroic soul commander nodded silently, armed his troop type, and stepped into the Golden Flow region. The time power of the Golden Flow was just as effective on heroic souls, but the armor’s reduction effect was equally effective against time. For a commander like Alarpha, his maximum armor reduction reached an astounding 95%. Although soul power consumption was enormous, it could have a decisive tactical effect at critical moments.

Alarpha soon returned to the legion, empty-handed.

“They’re not at the shore,” Alarpha explained. “To cross the Golden Flow, you need to break through the Time Barrier. My Time Sect realm is insufficient.”

“Time Barrier...” Danzel bit her thin lip, feeling a wave of helplessness.

She had already maximized the resources at her disposal, but those sorcerers somehow had special troop types that could resist the Golden Flow and even break through the Time Barrier to cross the Golden Flow. The Golden Flow Water itself was toxic to sorcerers; only geniuses who understood the essence of time could utilize or even touch it. This was the so-called Time Barrier.

In simple terms, the Time Barrier was a mechanism for gauging a sorcerer’s potential. Only those with the potential to ascend to the legendary realm of the Time Sect could possibly pass through the Time Barrier.

Though it was merely theoretical potential, the fact that all three sorcerers managed to pass was outrageous. Then again, the fact that they could team up and drive through the Time Continent was already absurd enough. Compared to that, being genius sorcerers seemed almost insignificant.

Unexpected, unexpected, unexpected...

Although this was just their first pursuit, there were many more Spider Tower rounds to come, and these three sorcerers would undoubtedly stay in the Time Continent for many more turns. But Danzel's one-sixth soul fragment was telling her—using the same trick on them twice would be ineffective.

She needed to resort to more underhanded tactics, she thought.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 398: Golden Level Time Sect

When Ashe regained consciousness, he felt someone in his arms.

He blinked, his gaze slowly drifting downward...

And then he saw a pair of black and white silk legs.

The Witch had placed her legs on him, curling up like a child in the Sword Princess's arms. Although he was relieved that it wasn't an operator in his arms, being used as a footrest by the Witch was something he couldn't quite accept—especially since she hadn't taken off her boots!

As Ashe woke up, Sonya also regained consciousness. She first felt the soft warmth in her arms, blushed slightly, and looked down to see it was the Witch. Instantly relieved, she then turned her head and saw Ashe.

Noticing the reproach in Ashe's eyes, Sonya's nose twitched slightly, she pouted and avoided his gaze, then nudged the Witch. "Wake up!"

Deya sat up groggily, her hair color now back to normal, and yawned, "I'm exhausted..."

"I remember that the Sword Princess and I didn't make it across the Golden Flow," Ashe said, glancing sideways at Sonya, who pretended not to see.

“I was the one who pulled you up,” Deya said. “But I wasn’t foolish enough to turn back in the Golden Flow. I climbed to the shore first and then pulled you both up.”

Sonya blushed deeply with shame—she had been called a fool by the Witch and had no way to refute it.

“But what did you use to pull us up...” Ashe trailed off, realizing the answer himself.

The Water-born Thread!

Both he and the Sword Princess had the Water-born Thread placed by the Witch around their necks! Initially, it was just a ‘mutual destruction line’ to ease the Witch’s mind, but it had unexpectedly become their ‘lifeline’!

Sonya asked, “But wouldn’t the Water-born Thread cut our necks?”

“I can increase the density of the water spell spirit, making the Water-born Thread soft and tough,” Deya said, spreading her hands. “For example, the Water-born Thread I hold in my hands feels as soft as a teddy bear’s paw, no matter how hard I pull, it won’t cut my hands.”

“How long have we been resting?” Ashe asked.

“About a few minutes, I think,” Deya replied uncertainly. “After dragging you out of the Golden Flow, I collapsed from exhaustion myself.”

Ashe opened the virtual realm map and found that the surrounding area was normal, with no trace of the heroic soul legion. Although Ashe didn’t know how long the Golden Flow stretched, neither did the heroic soul legion—in the commander’s map, the Golden Flow was the only unmarkable landmark because its position changed every day, every hour, and every second.

The Golden Flow was the trace left by the white bull, which was constantly moving, so the Golden Flow was always changing. Generally speaking, there were actually only two main branches of the Golden Flow, corresponding to the two front legs of the white bull, but these main branches split into countless smaller branches, forming a network of the Golden Flow that created normal flowing spacetime.

The tributary they had just crossed might be an end branch, extending only a few dozen meters; but it could also be a third-level or even second-level branch, stretching for kilometers, making it impossible for the heroic soul legion to catch up within a few hours.

Besides, even if the heroic soul legion could rush over, Ashe had no solution. Their soul energy was entirely spent on repairing their soul bodies, leaving no extra energy for movement.

Moving in the virtual realm required soul energy. Previously, they had saved energy by riding in a car, but now that the sports car was wrecked and they had no other means of transportation... Wait a minute?

Ashe suddenly remembered that the Substitute could carry him, couldn't it?

Although he could only summon one Substitute, if the Substitute carried him, and he carried the Sword Princess, and the Sword Princess carried the Witch, forming a human stack, wouldn't they still be able to move normally?

When Ashe proposed this idea, it was met with unanimous opposition from the Sword Princess and the Witch.

Sonya said, "How far can the Substitute go? If the heroic soul legion really catches up, the Substitute definitely won't outrun them. If the heroic soul legion doesn't find us, we can leave in a few minutes, so there's no need to complicate things."

"Just thinking about it feels weird," Deya said. "But it's interesting that the Substitute can be used this way... Speaking of which, is the Substitute considered a Rare Spirit?"

"In my place, it doesn't count," the village girl shook her head. "But it's not very useful. The Substitute can't inherit the sorcerer's spirits, can't speak for precise operations, and collapses at the slightest touch. In battle, it can only serve as a decoy. In daily life, it can handle some basic chores. However, the Substitute spirit has a huge appetite, needing to consume a silver coin every few days, which is two to three times that of an ordinary spirit... If a sorcerer is particularly lazy, they might specifically acquire a Substitute spirit." Search the [novelFire.net](http://novelFire.net) website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Deya nodded repeatedly. "Indeed."

Ashe also abandoned the idea. Due to the Golden Flow, the surrounding area was actually quite safe, as virtual realm creatures instinctively avoided the Golden Flow.

If they wandered too far, they might encounter a sorcerer projection or a wandering Blade Fish Dragon, and moving around now would put them in a weakened state, risking being kicked out of the virtual realm. Escaping only to violate the Pact and die would be too unlucky.

"Let's sort out what we've gained and lost," Ashe said, rubbing his temples. "Sword Princess, you..."

"Witch, we really owe it to you," Sonya interrupted, pressing down Deya's stray hair. "Without you, we wouldn't have made it. The Witch is the best!"

"Hehe," Deya scratched her head shyly. "I'm not that great..."

“This time, the Witch really did a great job,” Ashe said, reaching out to pat the Witch as a gesture of praise, but Deya dodged. “Compared to that, Sword Princess, you...”

“Are we still in the Spider Tower area tomorrow?” Sonya asked.

Ashe checked the virtual realm map. “The Celestial Bull will spend half of tomorrow night in the Spider Tower area, but the ‘mandatory three-hour stay’ requirement only triggers once when the Celestial Bull enters the Spider Tower area. The next activation will be when the white bull enters the Spider Tower area again, so we don’t need to enter the virtual realm tomorrow.”

“Is the car breaking down a problem? The newly made Alchemy Throne won’t fail, will it?”

“It should be fine...”

“Oh, by the way, Witch, you were so arrogant just now. Let me mimic it for you...”

The Sword Princess deflected the conversation.

Ashe returned to reality, feeling somewhat frustrated.

The sword Princess’s act of rescuing someone in the Golden Flow was incredibly foolish. Ashe had intended to find an opportunity to give her a stern talking-to, and it had to be in front of the Witch. He wanted to prove that he was impartial, holding every operator to the same strict standards, and that he would never cover for incompetent teammates as the Extreme Mode captain.

However, the sword Princess was exhibiting her extrovert extraordinaire tendencies, leaving Ashe no chance to interject. It wasn’t that there were no opportunities, but every time Ashe tried to speak, he was cut off by the sword Princess’s pitiful gaze, forcing him to continue refining his words.

By the time Ashe had formulated a stern yet gentle speech in his mind, their Virtual Realm work shift had unknowingly reached the three-hour mark. The sword Princess clocked out immediately, giving Ashe no chance to hold a meeting.

Still, Ashe knew that deep down, he didn’t want to scold the sword Princess.

After all, he was a Cult Leader, not a saint. The fact that the sword Princess dared to turn back to save him in such a situation, even if it was a misguided and futile action, made it impossible for Ashe not to feel grateful.

But Ashe needed to think about the team.

In their recent clash with the Empress's heroic soul, the cracks in their team dynamics had been laid bare. On a normal day, things might be fine, but in truly critical moments, the Witch instinctively didn't trust the two of them. If it came to a situation where someone had to be sacrificed, the Witch would believe she was the one to be discarded first.

In fact, the Witch's feeling was accurate.

It's the existence of favoritism that allows for distinctions in closeness. Ashe was only human, not a Divine Sovereign; how could he possibly achieve a completely emotionless 'fair and just' stance?

Even the Blood Moon Sovereign favored the Blood Saint Moonshadow.

But thinking this way and acting on it are different matters. Ashe had to find a way to demonstrate his stance, or the team would eventually become united only in appearance while divided in reality.

It was time to show his true management skills!

But if managing just three people was this troublesome, how would he handle a larger team in the future...?

Ashe sighed. Just as he was about to get up, he suddenly felt someone in his arms.

He looked down and saw another pair of feet.

It was Lise. She was sleeping right next to Ashe, her little feet resting on his stomach, drooling on her teddy bear. Ashe remembered that Lise had asked to sleep with him last night. Since he was going to the Virtual Realm anyway, he had let her.

Why does everyone like to use me as a footrest...?

Since it was still early dawn, Ashe lay back down and summoned the Gospel Book. He opened \*Aurora's Sorcerer Handbook\*, and information immediately popped up.

"Growth Report of Death Maniac Sword Princess 5.17~5.23"

"Swordsmanship Sect: Golden → Golden"

"Light Sect: Silver → Silver"

"Water Sect: Silver → Silver"

"Time Sect: Silver → Golden"

“Spellforce: Golden One-Winged → Golden Two-Wings”

“Training Evaluation: A!”

“Due to receiving an A-level evaluation, Death Maniac Sword Princess obtained the Sorcerer Handbook’s class enhancement: Annihilation Golden Sorcerer → Crippled Troop!”

“Crippled Troop Class Trait: Deals 20% extra damage to heroic soul commanders, each strike breaks one layer of troop armor.”

“Growth Report of the Black and White Witch 5.17~5.23”

“Bond Level: 1 → 2 (40% experience sharing)”

“Mental Sect: Silver → Silver”

“Fist-Claw Sect: Golden → Golden”

“Time Sect: Silver → Golden”

“Water Sect: Silver → Silver”

“Spellforce: Golden Two-Wings → Golden Three-Winged”

“Training Evaluation: A!”

“Due to receiving an A-level evaluation, the Black and White Witch obtained the Sorcerer Handbook’s class enhancement: Annihilation Follower → Death Warrior!”

“Death Warrior: Deals 20% extra damage to heroic soul commanders, each strike causes a brief pause for heroic soul commanders.”

Ashe immediately noticed something was wrong—how had both the sword Princess and the Witch’s Time Sect reached the Golden level!?

It made sense for the Witch to advance to Golden since she naturally possessed a time talent. But the sword Princess had obtained her Time Sect realm from the Amnesia Cabin; she hadn’t undergone any training!

The Cult Leader realized something, opened his operator interface, and found that his own Time Sect was already at the Golden level!

His Swordsmanship Sect was still at the Silver level!

What is this? The hard-earned efforts can’t compare to the sudden windfall?



Ashe could figure out the reason for their Time Sect's rapid growth with his toenails—Golden Flow!

The Virtual Realm is the fairest; you get as much as you give. Although the three of them barely survived in the Golden Flow, they directly faced the essence of time, gaining a massive amount of sect experience, which pushed their Sect Realms to the Golden level!

However, this kind of thing is probably a one-time deal; only the first adventure yields such huge rewards. Even if they gain experience in a second attempt, it won't push their Sect Realms to the Sanctuary level.

On another note, the sword Princess and the Witch's new classes, 'crippled troop' and 'death warrior,' are quite interesting. They seem specifically designed to deal with the heroic soul legion. But right now, they're trying to avoid the heroic soul legion, so how could they possibly provoke those monsters?

Besides, the Witch's Bond Level also increased by one. Perhaps it's due to the Shared Life they experienced earlier.

"Mm..."

Lise let out a cute, lazy sound, kicking her legs on his stomach, smacking her lips, and then hugging Ashe, wiping her drool on his clothes. Ashe pushed this 40-pound attachment away and got up to wash.

Ashe was halfway through brushing his teeth when Lise, still sleepy, walked into the bathroom, tearing open a new toothbrush cup to brush her teeth next to him.

The little girl glanced at the mirror, her body slightly stiffening. Then she quickly finished rinsing and washing her face, turning to hug Ashe.

"...There's a towel right there. Do you have to use my pajamas to wipe your hands?" Ashe said helplessly.

'Lise' shook her head, snuggling into Ashe's arms like a little pig.

"Why are you so clingy today?"

"...I had a dream last night."

"A nightmare?"

'Lise' thought for a moment, then shook her head again. "I dreamt that everyone had someone who cared about them, but I was all alone, excluded."

“Don’t worry, dreams are the opposite of reality. In real life, you’re probably the one excluding everyone else.”

After washing his face, Ashe took ‘Lise’ to the vanity, saying while helping her comb her hair, “Let me do your hair today.”

“Hey? Didn’t you always tell me to ask Aunt Bukin for help before?” Lise was a bit surprised.

“What if Aunt Bukin isn’t with us anymore?” Ashe said calmly. “We can’t always rely on him, can we?”

“But even if I don’t ask Aunt Bukin, I can still ask Aunt Annan, Uncle Banjeet, or Uncle Harvey for help!”

Ashe felt deeply humiliated. “It’s one thing if I’m not as good as Annan and Banjeet, but why am I even less dependable than Harvey!?”

“Alice is quite pretty...” Lise muttered. “But, is Aunt Bukin really going to leave us?”

“To be precise, he won’t need friends like us anymore.” Ashe shrugged. “In the journey of life, people come and go. Some leave for new opportunities, some to inherit family businesses, some because of their father-in-law’s support. Only the hardworking stay on the train... I’m used to it.”

“But what if Aunt Bukin gets scammed?”

“Him? A Con Artist? Scammed?”

“Doesn’t Aunt Bukin always say you tricked him? He seems to fall for fool’s tricks easily.”

“You have a point... Are you insulting me?”

After flicking Lise’s forehead, Ashe pondered. “Speaking of which, Belldate’s interest in Igor is indeed suspicious... As his friends, we should really vet Belldate properly to ensure her sincerity!”

Lise blinked. “So kind-hearted?”

“The main reason is that while my heart wants to wish him a happy marriage, I’m not magnanimous enough to accept a friend’s success,” Ashe said seriously. “If I can legitimately ruin his happiness, that would be fantastic.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 399: Dont Touch Me

Two days had passed, and Ashe hadn't found any dirt on Belldate.

It wasn't because the Yvaren sisters were particularly clean. Mainly, it was because their job list suddenly featured several high-paying jobs specifically requesting them, with an astonishing hourly rate of 30 bell points. Working ten hours a day could earn them 300 bell points, and a few days of this would allow them to buy their freedom and escape from the pit.

This wave, this wave is the alienation of people by capital. Ashe was vigorously polishing the statue while happily watching his savings grow.

At dinner time, Ashe saw Igor dining with Harvey tonight, with no sign of the red-haired Angel Anfel. For the past couple of days, Igor had been dining with Anfel, specifically choosing a table for two. Unless Ashe was willing to pull up a baby chair beside them, it was impossible to join their couple's table.

Seizing the opportunity, Ashe immediately grabbed his tray and sat next to the Con Artist. "Yo, Igor, how come you're so down tonight, reduced to eating with Harvey?"

The dark-skinned necromancer glanced at Ashe. "...Ashe, just in time. We were just discussing you."

"Discussing me about what?"

"Discussing your future," Harvey said. "I'll become the chief coroner of Mephila, Igor will become the mayor's secretary of Mephila, and you will become an unemployed single dad on welfare, sucking your daughter's blood. We all have bright futures ahead of us."

"Although I don't mind being on welfare, I'm not a Blood Saint, so why would I suck Lise's blood?"

"Don't you think Lise has the potential to become a child star?"

"Hmm..." Ashe pondered. "Lise does have a knack for performance. According to Gospel's educational philosophy of teaching according to one's aptitude, letting her get involved in acting might not be a bad idea. But I wouldn't suck my daughter's blood. Any money she makes, I'd help her invest in opening a store, and when she grows up, she'd have a bunch of assets!"

“Oh~” Igor nodded. “So you’re planning to bleed Lise dry. Even the Blood Saints aren’t as ruthless as you.”

“I said it’s for investment and management!”

“Even a Cult can go bankrupt under your management. Saying your investment vision and management skills are zero would be deceiving the shareholders.”

“Why are you talking about making a living in Mephila?” Ashe asked. “Shouldn’t it be Igor staying behind while the two of us leave?”

“How are the two of you going to leave?” Igor asked. “Have you gathered enough bell points to buy your freedom?”

“We haven’t, but don’t we have you?” Ashe said, wrapping an arm around Igor’s shoulder affectionately. “Once you marry Anfel and take control of the big corporation, I won’t ask you for any benefits, but you could at least get our Pact annulled, right?”

Igor glanced at Ashe’s arm on his shoulder and gently brushed it off. He replied slowly, “First of all, once I become Belldate’s man, you two will go from being ‘useful mocking followers’ to ‘sheep to be sheared.’ Even if, by some miracle, I suddenly felt like doing a good deed, a Pact is a Pact. Unless one party breaches it, it can’t be annulled.”

“What!” Ashe was shocked. “I thought for sure you’d help us—damn, I couldn’t resist buying Yvaren’s merchandise today. What if Annan and the others ask about my savings!?”

“Serves you right,” Harvey said. “I managed to hold back even when Yvaren brought out a perfect human skeleton.”

“For problems like this, you might as well consult Lise,” Igor suggested. “Your IQs are closer, so she might give you some sound advice.”

“Wait, Igor, you’re definitely going to help your brothers out when you make it big, right?” Ashe said. “We’re cellmates who shared our hearts and souls!” [search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.](#)

“Who was it that immediately turned on each other after the Prison Break?”

“We’re also comrades who’ve achieved great things together!”

“Do you have to brag about escaping Gerard’s sword twice?”

“And we’re friends who understand each other deeply!”

“You and he understand each other deeply?” Igor pointed coldly at the necromancer.

“Anyway!” Ashe brought the conversation back. “Igor, my dear brother, you can’t forget to help out your little brothers!”

“Why should I?”

“Because you still owe me a favor!”

“Wow.” Harvey was surprised. “Ashe, I didn’t know you had a card like that up your sleeve!”

“That’s right!” Ashe puffed out his chest and chuckled. “Back when we were at Shattered Lake, I made Igor join my great Prison Break plan. We signed a Pact, and I used a wish to force him to help me strategize, so…”

“Please let me owe you another wish!”

“So, it’s you who owes Igor a wish…” Harvey remarked, rolling his eyes.

“I’m full. You guys take your time.” Igor completely ignored Ashe, picked up his tray, and prepared to leave.

“Igor, wait…”

Slap!

Igor sharply slapped away Ashe’s outstretched hand, looking down at him calmly.

“Don’t touch me.”

“That’s how it is,” Harvey said. “I told Alice about it, and even Alice felt embarrassed for Ashe.”

In Ashe’s bedroom, the group from the Funeral Firm had gathered once more.

“Aunt Bukin treated Dad like that!” Lise pouted indignantly. “Dad, don’t cry. We won’t play with Aunt Bukin anymore!”

“Don’t move,” Ashe said, holding Lise in front of the vanity and carefully drying her hair.

“Is Mr. Bukin really that impulsive?” Banjeet pondered. “He hasn’t even officially joined Belldate and already wants to cut ties with you and Harvey?”

“Sudden success makes people lose their minds,” Annan shrugged. “But you could also say he’s smart. After all, you two are pure liabilities. Associating with you offers him no benefits. Instead of increasing his sunk costs with you, it’s better to short-sell your friendship early on.”

“Ashe, do you regret not sabotaging their date with us the night before?” Annan turned to Ashe. “Now you’re facing the backlash, aren’t you?”

Ashe didn’t look particularly upset. He said slowly, “I just feel that Igor is acting a bit strange...”

“What’s so strange about it?” Annan propped her chin on her hand and smiled. “Bukin is trying to go legit this time, so naturally, he doesn’t need old colleagues from the underworld like us. In this world, everything can betray you. Even a spirit might sneak away, let alone a Con Artist?”

“Is it just my imagination?” Ashe suddenly said. “It seems like, Annan, you don’t really care much about Igor’s defection.”

“Who said that? I care a lot!” Annan replied. “I’m even considering using my beauty to win him back.”

“You? Using your beauty?” Everyone was stunned, and then Ashe immediately shook his head. “No, absolutely not!”

“Why not?” Annan blinked and looked at Ashe with a smirk.

“Because you’re bound to lose!”

“Why would I lose? I’m in the top ten of the Azura Beauty Ranking. How could I not compare to that Dwarf’s sister?”

“Yes, you and Anfel are equally beautiful,” Ashe said, spreading his hands. “But the problem is, your soul is ugly.”

As Annan lunged at Ashe to playfully wrestle with him, the necromancer slowly spoke up, “The Con Artist is indeed acting strangely.”

Banjeet asked, “Why?”

“The Con Artist never cuts off communication with others. It’s not his style,” Harvey said. “Just like, no matter how much I dislike my enemies, I would never refuse to handle their corpses.”

“Could it be that Aunt Bukin feels she no longer has to tolerate you all, so she’s revealing her true nature?” Lise speculated. “Aunt Bukin always said that talking to Uncle Harvey is like sleeping in a coffin.”

“Hmm...?” Harvey asked, puzzled. “But... isn’t that a compliment?”

Lise looked at Ashe in the mirror and suddenly asked, “Dad, do you think Aunt Bukin has really abandoned us?”

“As if my opinion would make any difference...” Ashe said while brushing and blow-drying Lise’s hair. “If it rains, it rains. If a woman wants to marry, she marries. Everyone’s getting married, and I’m still single...”

“So, what do you really think?” Lise hesitated for a moment, then decided to say what the White Queen had told her to. “I don’t think Aunt Bukin will abandon us.”

If anyone in the Funeral Firm understood Igor the best, it wasn’t Annan or Ashe; it was the White Queen, who had once negotiated with him.

“Why do you think that?” the Purple Moth next to her chuckled. “Just because he braids your hair nicely?”

Lise ignored the malicious aunt and looked earnestly at Ashe in the mirror. “He values you all more than you think.”

Ashe lowered his eyelids and said, “I actually don’t care whether Igor abandons us or not.”

Everyone looked at him in shock as Ashe slowly continued, “I’ve now seen three forms of Igor. The first is the sweet-talking Con Artist, which means he’s trying to trick you into giving him something. The second is the Con Artist who deliberately puts you down, which means he’s trying to use you.”

“And the third form is the one I just saw, the Con Artist who distances himself from us.”

Lise asked, “What does that mean?”

“I don’t know,” Ashe replied. “I just see him acting on his own, forcing himself.”

There was a moment of silence before Annan spoke up, “So, do you still believe in him even now? Are you just going to waste your trust like that?”

“No.” Ashe slowly shook his head. “Trust should only be given to those who deserve it.”

After everyone went back to rest, Lise still lingered in bed. Since coming to Belldate, Lise had become increasingly clingy. Ashe figured it was probably because she was in a strange new environment and had to work every day, so it was understandable that she wanted to be pampered a bit. Since Ashe was going to enter the virtual realm later, he let her be.

“Can you not put your feet on my stomach tonight?”

“Then hug me to sleep, Dad!” Lise said excitedly, raising her hands.

Ashe thought it was doable. Given Lise’s surprisingly active sleeping style, she would probably roll away on her own within an hour, so he shouldn’t end up with a numb arm. He allowed her to rest her head on his arm and snuggle into his embrace. Then, he opened the to begin his “virtual realm exploration.”

As his consciousness connected to the virtual realm, Ashe slowly opened his eyes and found himself holding a Witch in his arms.

Deya opened her eyes and found herself sitting on the Observer. As she looked up, she saw his face obscured by a swirling mist!

“Ah!”

They both screamed and quickly separated, looking back simultaneously – the Sword Princess was sitting in the back seat of the sports car, having witnessed their entire encounter!

“Sword Princess, that was just an accident when entering the Virtual Realm,” Deya hurriedly explained. “It really has nothing to do with me. If there’s any blame, it’s the Observer’s fault—”

“We’ve arrived in the Star Shrine area tonight, haven’t we?”

The Sword Princess seemed completely unconcerned with what they had been doing and calmly said, “Don’t waste time. Quickly plan the best route according to the map to gather resources. We’re on a tight schedule tonight.”

Ashe and Deya exchanged glances and quickly nodded. Deya cautiously sat next to the Sword Princess, but the Sword Princess seemed uninterested in her, gazing out at the Reverse Golden Rain.

Soon, Ashe drove to a gemstone mine resource point guarded by an Overlord Raging Slashing Dragon and a group of Dog-headed Dragons. Although this was a formidable monster group that could kill most sorcerers, for the three of them, even without armed troops, it was an easy task to wipe them out and loot the place.

After a glorious victory, Ashe and the others began collecting gemstone materials that their spirits could consume. Ashe found a Sharp Gem, the perfect nourishment for his swordsmanship spirit, and approached the Sword Princess. “Sword Princess, you—”

Smack!

Sonya swiftly slapped away Ashe’s hand as he reached for her shoulder, staring at him with wide eyes and calmly said:



“Don’t touch me.”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

## Chapter 400: Why is the Sword Princess Angry?

“Observer, why don’t you just apologize?”

During a battle at a large mercury resource point, Deya stepped back to Ashe’s side and whispered to him while they had a brief respite from fighting the Overlord Foxlamp Dragon.

“Even if I wanted to apologize, I need to know what I did wrong,” Ashe said helplessly.

“But if you did nothing wrong, why is she so angry?”

With a mournful cry, the Foxlamp Dragon exploded, dropping three spirits and an Experience Orb. One of the spirits was a two-winged Flow spirit, perfect for replacing Ashe’s one-winged Flow. The two-winged Moon Threads spirit and the light spell orb were both suitable for feeding the Sword Princess.

As Ashe handed over the spirits and the orb, Sonya snatched them from his hand instantly, as if she didn’t want to have even a moment of physical contact with him.

Deya watched from the side, shaking her head repeatedly with a ‘See, I told you’ expression, covering her mouth in schadenfreude until the Sword Princess glanced over, at which point she turned to scavenge for resources.

Ashe was equally at a loss-he had no idea what had happened!

Tonight, the Sword Princess was acting very strangely, treating him with extreme hostility. Even when they first met, she wasn’t this bad. But Ashe couldn’t recall doing anything to offend her. He hadn’t succeeded in scolding her the night before, and they didn’t even log in last night. So why had the Sword Princess suddenly turned into the Extreme Sword Princess Overlord Lord tonight?

Ashe thought about it seriously. He hadn’t drawn any special event cards for the Sword Princess recently, so it couldn’t be his fault. It had to be something in the Sword Princess’s own storyline.

Could it be that the TV drama the Sword Princess was filming had received terrible reviews, and her character was being trashed?

Or had she lost in a competition and been mercilessly mocked by the Anti-Sword Princess Alliance?

Or maybe a classmate had betrayed her, and there was an infiltrator in the Stretch Paw Club?

It could also be due to her physiological cycle...

There were too many possibilities for Ashe to figure out. He thought for a moment and walked over to Sonya under Deya's reverent gaze. "Sword Princess, I need to talk to you."

"Talk," Sonya said, still sifting through mercury materials.

"Even though I don't know why you're in a bad mood, taking it out on others isn't a good thing, you know."

Sonya looked up at him. "Do you mean taking out my anger on those who have nothing to do with it?"

"Exactly."

"Well, then I'm not taking out my anger."

Deya struggled to hold back her laughter, while Ashe, looking frustrated, went to collect the Mercury Essence.

They were currently in the Star Shrine phase, and Ashe had previously obtained the Star Shrine map from Demilo. This allowed them to explore the Time Continent as if they had a complete map. Usually, the commander's map couldn't be saved and could only be used on the night the commander was defeated. However, the virtual realm map had a memory function, turning a single-use item into an infinite-use one, allowing Ashe and his team to enjoy a well-planned sightseeing tour.

Ashe didn't blindly choose virtual realm locations with special mechanisms. Those places were widely scattered and had inconsistent rewards. For example, the Amnesia Cabin wasn't very profitable even without the Empress Heroic Soul issue. Similarly, while Ashe benefited from the Legendary Library, the Witch didn't get anything—mainly because the Witch was too greedy.

In comparison, scavenging resources to upgrade the Alchemy Throne was far more critical. Concentrating spellforce was always a guaranteed improvement, not to mention that scavenging resources often yielded spirits and Experience Orbs. Thus, Ashe

devised a route that passed through many rare resource points, hoping to significantly upgrade the Alchemy Throne by the end of the night.

After Ashe and his team finished scavenging the fifth resource point, he noticed on the map that a heroic soul legion was approaching.

It was still the Star Shrine phase, and it was the Spider Tower legion's turn to move. There was no way the Empress's commander legion could chase them down. Ashe didn't pay much attention, driving around to the next resource point.

However, as soon as they finished scavenging, they found the heroic soul legion right in their faces!

Several Thousand-feathered Drakes in the distance were continuously attacking the sports car's Refracting Wall. Ashe quickly drove away. This heroic soul legion didn't seem to have many troops, and they didn't engage in close combat, so the escape was relatively easy.

But this raised a significant issue—how could the Star Shrine's heroic soul legion precisely locate them and chase them down?

“Our paramour loves us too much...” Ashe gritted his teeth. “She actually leaked our coordinates to all factions!?”

This had to be the reason. The Empress, realizing she couldn't kill Ashe and his team, disclosed their coordinates and location-tracking method to all factions. She might even have revealed that they possessed a Secret Incarnation, enticing other factions to join the hunt for Ashe!

As for why the Empress would risk losing the Secret Incarnation to do this, the reason was simple—she knew she couldn't catch them on her own!

The Empress likely didn't know that they barely survived crossing the Golden Flow, but just having the ability to cross it put Ashe and his team in an unbeatable position. No matter how strong the heroic soul legion, they could only look wistfully at the Golden Flow.

If she couldn't have it, then no one else should either!

By releasing this information and inciting all factions to hunt Ashe and his team, the worst-case scenario would be the destruction of the Secret Incarnation. The best-case scenario would be Ashe and his team exhausting their soul power in other areas, arriving at the Spider Tower territory without the ability to cross the Golden Flow, and being easily captured by the Empress's heroic soul.

If she didn't release the information, her legion would certainly never catch Ashe, who could cross the Golden Flow!

Given this comparison, even a fool would know what to choose, let alone an Empress as malicious as her!

Moreover, don't forget that although the destruction of a conceptual Incarnation would cause all related spirits to collapse, the conceptual Incarnation could be regenerated given enough time. Losing the Secret Incarnation was a significant loss but still recoverable. If the Secret Incarnation were permanently taken to the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm by Ashe and his team, it would be an irreparable disaster!

Even if they were far in the static domain, the Empress could still chase them to exhaustion!

This tactic could be easily countered: Ashe and his team could simply avoid logging into the virtual realm except during the Spider Tower phase. However, this would drastically slow their growth, making it uncertain when they could reach the Third Layer of the Virtual Realm and giving the Empress's heroic soul more opportunities to ambush and kill them!

Each move was more devious than the last, and each step was more cunning!

When Ashe explained his thoughts, the operators gasped. Deya asked, "So, what do we do?"

"Develop as fast as we can!" Ashe said. "Our sports car is faster than a heroic soul legion. We'll grab resources and flee before they can catch up! As long as we have a detailed map, we can always find time and space to grow, even under siege!"

Although Sonya and Deya knew that the Observer's plan made sense, they still felt a bit surreal. Ordinary two-wing sorcerers carefully explored the Time Continent, considering an encounter with a Raging Slashing Dragon a significant Adventure. Yet here they were, planning to grow amid the encirclement and extermination attempts by the Time Continent's most fearsome presence—the heroic soul legion.

Is this really the kind of pressure a two-wing sorcerer can handle?

Despite their doubts, Sonya and Deya felt no fear. After numerous close calls and having personally defeated a heroic soul legion, they had lost their fear of it. In fact, knowing that the heroic soul legion would chase them only fueled their determination!

"We're here."

Ashe suddenly stopped in front of a garden surrounded by wooden railings. Inside, white mist swirled, shimmering with light, and they could even hear singing. Sonya was stunned. “The Misty Miracle Wonderland?”

“Hurry, grab the spirits!”

As soon as Ashe spoke, the three sorcerers used various Movement Miracles to rush in and snatch the spirits. The Misty Miracle Wonderland was a type of Miracle Wonderland where the spirits hid in thick mist. Sorcerers had to rely on luck to catch them. Once a sorcerer entered the Wonderland, the mist would quickly dissipate, and the spirits would vanish, requiring an entire cycle to regroup.

“Hey!”

Ashe dashed here and there but didn’t catch a single spirit, feeling like a pampered young master chasing women, only to be easily dodged. Was this going to be his turn to get nothing?

Taking a deep breath, Ashe remembered that the spirits here loved to sing. He should capture them by following the sound. Sound, sound, sound...

It’s over here!

Ashe leaped precisely towards the source of the sound, only to collide with someone and tumble onto the grass. Looking up, he saw the Sword Princess, who had been in a foul mood all day, sitting on top of him. He gasped, “Sorry, it was an accident—”

“Shh.” Sonya, lying on top of him, covered his mouth. “The Witch isn’t nearby, right?”

“(◉\_◉)?”

“Hehe.” The village girl laughed. “How was my act today? Convincing?”

“What?” The Cult Leader was taken aback. “Your bad mood today—”

“All an act!” Sonya winked at Ashe. “This way, the Witch will definitely think we’re not getting along, right?” search the website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Why would you do that...? Ashe didn’t need to ask; he already knew the answer.

Just as he could see the cracks in the team, the sword Princess could see them too. While Ashe hadn’t figured out a solution, the sword Princess had come up with hers: since the Witch thought they were too close to be trusted, why not make it seem like they were on bad terms?

Though the method seemed overly simple, it was effective because the Witch was actually a naive and inexperienced girl, perfectly fooled by their act.

“Phew.” Ashe sighed with relief. “I thought—”

“Thought I suddenly started hating you?” Sonya widened her eyes at Ashe, her gaze sparkling, her eyebrows arched, and the corners of her mouth curving like a fox that had snuck a treat.

“Yeah, I thought I must have offended you somehow.”

“You offend me in plenty of ways.”

At this moment, Sonya seemed to realize their position was quite awkward. Blushing, she moved to sit beside him while Ashe also sat up, pondering. “So, should we keep interacting like we did today?”

“What do you think?”

“I think it’s good. It makes things easier for me too—”

“Then I’ll tell the Witch tomorrow that I’ve forgiven you and everything’s back to normal. The effect is already there anyway.”

Ashe glanced at her. Sonya tilted her head. “You aren’t... mad at me, are you?”

“Why would I be mad at you?”

“If it were me, I’d definitely be mad...” Sonya looked down at her fingertips, touching them together. “Actually, I could hardly keep it up just now. I wanted to explain everything to you, but the Witch was always nearby.”

Ashe crossed his arms, looking quite troubled. “Restoring things to normal is fine, but if you plan to attack me like you did earlier, it’s best to wait until the Witch isn’t around—”

“I won’t do it again!”

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.