

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 121 : Padding an Exam Paper with a Watered-Down Thesis - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 121 : Padding an Exam Paper with a Watered-Down Thesis

Chapter 121: Padding an Exam Paper with a Watered-Down Thesis

An hour later, Leon and the others participating in the assessment were led into a large lecture hall and seated according to the assigned seating arrangement.

Aside from him, five others were taking the examination this time across the four prefectures of the Southeastern Diocese.

The proctor in charge was Archbishop Miller, an elderly man who appeared refined and gentle.

The emblem of the Prophet Church was embroidered upon his sacrificial robe. Standing before the lectern, he read aloud the examination regulations and then led the group in swearing an oath before the statues of the Four Gods of Origin carved in relief behind the platform.

Afterward, the Delegate Officers distributed the exam papers to the candidates. Bishop Miller announced the start of the examination and instructed the Delegate Officer beside him to invert the massive hourglass.

Leon picked up his pen and began answering swiftly. Around him, all he could hear was the rustling sound of pens moving rapidly across paper.

Everyone wrote with remarkable speed, progressing smoothly through the questions.

Leon had heard from Bishop Beckett that in previous years, the pass rate for the written examination for Fully Appointed status had exceeded ninety percent.

Those with the connections to obtain a qualification for evaluation generally did not lack educational resources; they would not be hindered by such a written test.

Cases did exist of individuals so lacking in knowledge that, after finally obtaining qualification for evaluation, they performed disastrously in the written examination—but such cases inevitably became rare jokes within the circle.

Leon himself encountered little difficulty with the questions.

Although Bishop Beckett had said that his learning would pose no major issues, Leon had still reviewed past exam question banks and reference books over the past few months to be safe.

Though this world was ruled by religion, it was by no means mired in ignorance.

The gods truly existed here; the Church's shaping and worship of them was not some fabricated means to deceive the populace.

On the contrary, they regarded the world as a gift created by the gods and devoted themselves to studying the world's origin.

Although the Church had gone through periods of obscurantism in the past and had performed many peculiar operations, looking across the span of history, their enlightenment had come rather early.

In the present age, theology and natural philosophy were essentially bound together.

In a transcendent world, it might seem contradictory for an institution that wielded supernatural power to advocate science—but upon reflection, it was not strange at all.

Before the intervention of Blessings, the operation of all things in the world still followed certain laws. The gods' Blessings merely modified those laws on that foundation.

Only by understanding the original laws of nature could one truly appreciate the greatness of the gods.

Without understanding nature, one could not comprehend the meaning of the supernatural.

Thus, the Church of this era strongly encouraged scientific research. Within the Empire, most leading scholars of natural philosophy—fields such as physics and chemistry—were bishops from the Four Great Churches.

Aside from the Saint Rosalia Research Institute, the Church had established numerous research institutions and higher academies throughout the Empire.

“Since academic development is so strongly encouraged, why can't Primordial Witch Moilai be studied objectively?”

Whenever Leon considered the Church's investment in scholarship, he found it difficult to understand its absolute prohibition regarding Primordial Witch Moilai.

No matter how one looked at it, it was an undeniable fact that Primordial Witch Moilai possessed transcendent power comparable to that of the Four Gods of Origin.

The value of studying her was self-evident.

Yet the Church maintained a completely prohibitive stance toward Moilai alone—sealing Labyrinths, slaughtering Magical Beasts, judging Witches, and placing Magical Beast materials and Mana under strict control.

In research, they seemed to treat Witches and Magical Beasts solely as enemies. The results of such research were almost entirely confidential.

Scholars like Bishop Weiss, who sought to break established conventions, could even be marginalized within the Church.

Two hundred years ago, a renowned bishop had once proposed a shocking theory in his personal notes: “God is dead.”

He suggested that the principal entities of the Four Gods of Origin might already have perished, leaving behind only residual consciousness—what was known as Blessing—to influence the world.

The throne of divinity held nothing but hollow echoes. This, he argued, explained why the Four Gods of Origin did not directly rule humanity or deliver divine revelations.

He had later been reported and, in that era, sentenced severely for the Crime of Blasphemy. But in the present age, he had been rehabilitated.

Even so, in an era where even declaring that the gods were dead could be openly accepted by the Church, Moilai remained an untouchable taboo.

If someone were to write a paper arguing that the Islander Nation’s parallel worship of Moilai alongside the Four Gods of Origin was not entirely without reason, they would likely meet the same fate as that bishop.

Halfway through the exam, Leon began tackling the final major questions.

One of them was a mathematics problem. He scribbled formulas continuously on his scratch paper before finally deriving the result.

At that moment, he suddenly sensed someone standing beside him. Glancing sideways, he was surprised to find Bishop Miller standing there intently, studying his draft work.

“What is he looking at?” Leon wondered in confusion.

Bishop Miller had initially remained at the lectern and only later descended to patrol the hall.

He had not, however, stood beside any particular candidate to scrutinize their answers like this.

Having the proctor stand beside one during an exam inevitably created pressure.

Did I make a mistake somewhere? Leon could not help but wonder.

The mathematics question was not particularly difficult.

After all, this was merely the Church's General Knowledge Assessment, not a selection process for mathematicians. With the remnants of knowledge from his previous life—revived during these past months of review—Leon could easily handle it.

As though realizing his presence had affected Leon, Bishop Miller soon stepped away and continued patrolling.

Uneasy, Leon recalculated the problem once more before writing down his answer.

Having completed nearly all the questions, he soon arrived at the final essay section.

This portion was open-ended. Candidates were to briefly describe research they had conducted—it could be an understanding and extension of frontier research in their field of study, or they could freely propose conjectures.

Essentially, it was equivalent to submitting a brief academic paper.

“You're only taking the Intermediate Inquisitor examination. There's no need to engage in anything too academic. I can casually piece together something from a few papers for you. Of course, if you truly have something to write, even better—it could improve your evaluation. If you manage to catch the attention of those academically inclined bishops, it would certainly benefit your future development.” Bishop Beckett had told him this at the time.

Leon had prepared for this long ago.

He had skimmed through some of the Church's academic journals. Within the Church—especially in the Creator Church—there was great enthusiasm for researching the origin of matter.

Moreover, since the Creator's Blessing allowed Transcendents to directly manipulate matter and phenomena, the Church's research in this field was remarkably advanced.

In his previous life, scholars had needed to devise all sorts of methods to capture lightning or static electricity in order to study discharge phenomena. But Transcendents like Johnny could generate electric currents with a snap of their fingers—making research vastly more convenient.

In exploring the origin of matter, scholars within the Church had long since proposed atomic theory. And not merely the simple notion that “matter is composed of indivisible atoms.”

They had already realized that atoms contained at least two types of particles bearing opposite charges. However, opinions varied widely regarding the internal structure of the atom.

Considering the level of productive development in this world, this understanding was already rather advanced compared to the historical timeline of Leon’s previous world.

Thus, Leon decided to directly write a conjecture regarding a nuclear model of the atom. After all, similar conjectures abounded in Church papers.

Given the current level of technology, it seemed impossible to conclusively verify such a model; it would not cause any great sensation. But as an academic paper, it should suffice.

With his knowledge, composing a conjectural paper to pad out the requirement was hardly difficult in this era.

Leon wrote swiftly, completing the brief exposition he had long prepared, even drawing a model diagram.

Just as he was finishing up, he sensed something again and glanced sideways.

Bishop Miller had once more appeared beside him, carefully examining his exam paper. His brows were slightly furrowed, his expression solemn, as though deep in thought.

I didn’t write anything strange, did I? This has nothing to do with Moilai or any heresy at all. Leon felt a trace of unease under that scrutiny.

Bishop Miller snapped out of his thoughts, noticed Leon looking at him, and offered an apologetic smile before returning to the lectern with his hands clasped behind his back. “Fifteen minutes remaining. Please finish your answers promptly.”

Leon let out a slight breath of relief. Judging from that reaction, what he had written should not pose any major issues.

He reviewed everything twice.

When Bishop Miller rang the bell, Leon and the others set down their papers. Bishop Miller spoke softly to the Delegate Officer beside him, who then descended to collect the scripts.

When the Delegate Officer reached Leon and lowered his head to take the paper, he suddenly said in a hushed voice, "Please wait in the Reception Room next door later. Bishop Miller says he has something he would like to ask you."

Leon instinctively looked toward Bishop Miller at the front. Bishop Miller returned his gaze with a calm smile.

Leon felt somewhat puzzled, but upon reflection, he had merely answered the exam normally. He should not have written anything inappropriate.

Even the prepared paper had been reviewed by Bishop Beckett beforehand. Though Bishop Beckett was not an academic, he had at least commented that it was "not bad."

If there had been any issues or taboos touched upon, Bishop Beckett would have noticed.

Leon could only rise and leave with the other candidates. Enrique Davison, the Viscount's son, invited those present to attend a small gathering.

Leon found an excuse to postpone briefly and, following the Delegate Officer's message, returned to the lecture hall area and entered the adjacent Reception Room.

Upon entering, he was surprised to find Bishop Miller already inside. At the sound of his arrival, Bishop Miller turned around.

"Ah, you've come." Bishop Miller nodded to Leon.

"My respects, Bishop." Leon bowed.

"Haha, no need to be so formal. You're Inquisitor Set, correct?" Bishop Miller noticed Leon's nervousness and smiled kindly. "Rest assured, I did not summon you because of any problem—"

"Then?" Leon asked cautiously, lifting his head.

"I'll speak plainly. I would like to understand your intentions in advance. Would you be interested in joining the Prophet Church?" Bishop Miller asked, looking directly at Leon.

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

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Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 122 : A
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Chapter 122: A Conjecture That Attracted the Saintess

"Is this...an invitation to me?" Leon finally understood why Bishop Miller had asked him to stay behind.

"That's right." Bishop Miller replied with a smile.

Earlier, Bishop Becket had said that which department he could enter would depend on which Church wanted him.

This largely depended on the results after evaluation and the Church's internal allocation. Yet he had only just finished the examination when the Prophet Church had already extended an invitation to him.

"Is it because of the conjecture I wrote at the end?" Leon asked tentatively.

"Yes, that is one of the reasons." Bishop Miller nodded.

"So, you think what I wrote was..." Leon attempted to probe for his impression.

"Very interesting. An exceptionally bold idea." Bishop Miller praised him with an approving expression.

"Is that so?" Leon smiled faintly, his mood somewhat complicated.

What he had provided was merely a simple conjecture, without corresponding experiments to verify it.

In his world, the basic structure of the atomic nucleus was middle school knowledge. But in this world, the internal structure of the atom remained a domain shrouded in mystery.

Before verification through various experiments, the model he had proposed could only be regarded as a bold hypothesis.

Naturally, the most Bishop Miller could offer here was praise for his imagination.

"The development of new theories has always relied on such bold ideas. This is a talent many seek but fail to obtain. The model you established is not a fanciful illusion detached from reality; rather, it completed a demonstration based on existing discoveries. It is a relatively mature conjecture. Your foundational knowledge is solid, and you are talented. I believe you possess the qualities of a scholar," Bishop Miller said slowly.

"You overestimate me..." Leon felt somewhat guilty under such praise.

"There is no need for modesty. I have reviewed all the answer sheets present. Your results ranked among the upper tier," Bishop Miller said.

"There must be people more outstanding than me."

"But you are undoubtedly the most distinctive. I have looked through your background. The others were all recommended internally; they studied at district Church academies. Only you—if I recall correctly—have no formal academic credentials from a Church institution. You largely taught yourself, correct?"

I examined your derivation process in the mathematics problems.

Some of the symbols you used were nonstandard, and your solution approach differed from the standard answers.

Even I needed some time to follow part of it. I could sense that although your methods were somewhat unconventional, they were highly efficient—and the results proved you were correct." Bishop Miller nodded repeatedly at Leon.

Leon felt a bit nervous as he listened.

The mathematics problems provided by the Church had not required a mandatory derivation process.

Fortunately, because of this, he had only needed to calculate the results on scratch paper and write down the answers.

The numbers and basic symbols in his draft followed this world's conventions, but some symbols were based on his own habits.

His problem-solving methods also incorporated fragments of modern knowledge retained within him. He had assumed only he himself could understand them.

Yet this elderly Bishop had said he could follow them after some effort. It was evident that the Bishop's mathematical attainments were considerable.

"Your Excellency, could it be that you specialize in mathematics?" Leon asked.

"Haha, I am the dean of the School of Natural Philosophy at the district Church here. These questions were set by one of my students, who serves as a professor," Bishop Miller replied candidly.

"My apologies for the oversight!" Leon adopted a posture of solemn respect.

Even across different eras, when encountering a true expert who served as a foundational pillar of a discipline, he felt he could not be overly presumptuous—even if he possessed knowledge from the future.

His knowledge in this era was like grass without roots.

What he grasped could not necessarily be traced back successfully. Especially in mathematics—for instance, he understood certain usable theorems, but that did not mean he could smoothly produce their derivations.

"The tuition fees for Church-established schools are very high. To study from the town Church school all the way to a district Church academy is something ordinary families simply cannot afford. To enter the Church's educational institutions, background and financial resources are often more important than ability. I do not know how many geniuses we have missed because of this. It is truly regrettable," Bishop Miller sighed.

A genius? Me?

Hearing Bishop Miller say this, Leon felt somewhat ashamed. It seemed that his background, combined with his use of knowledge not belonging to this era, had caused this old professor to misunderstand him.

"If you are interested in academia, I recommend that you join the Prophet Church. Among the Four Great Churches, the Prophet Church has the best academic atmosphere and conditions. After all, the Supreme God is the patron deity of scholars like us. And do you know what the foundational blessing of the Supreme God is?" Bishop Miller said with a smile.

Leon had actually heard Bishop Becket explain some information about blessings.

When a person underwent a Church ritual and became a Transcendent, they would typically receive two types of blessings.

One was the foundational blessing.

All Transcendents blessed by the same deity would possess the same foundational blessing.

The foundational blessing of the God of War was to strengthen the body and, when entering a combat state, greatly enhance physical capabilities for a short period—enough to wrestle fierce beasts with bare hands.

However, this state carried a burden. After it ended, the body's functions would decline for a time.

The foundational blessing of the Secret God was a form of spatial perception independent of sight and hearing.

Even in darkness or when obstructed by barriers, Transcendents blessed by the Secret God could still vaguely perceive their surroundings to a certain degree and lock onto a target—similar to a combination of x-ray vision and night vision.

The foundational blessing of the Creator was the ability to temporarily and slightly alter certain physical properties of materials they touched, mainly hardness, temperature, and ductility.

As for the foundational blessing of the Supreme God, it allowed one to revisit their own memories clearly, achieving an effect close to photographic memory.

The other type of blessing varied by individual and manifested as divine arts. For example, the assassin Leon had once seen at Potter Winery, who possessed the Secret God's blessing, had the divine art of Shadow Passage, enabling him to erase his presence.

Bishop Becket, also blessed by the Secret God, commanded a divine art that could transmit sound and light images over long distances.

In fact, the Witch's blessings were similar. The foundational blessing of a Witch was control over low-level Magical Beasts. Beyond that, there were individual "divine arts," such as Rena's Blood Pact and his Cursed Blood.

Moreover, whether foundational blessings or divine arts, both possessed the potential for growth and breakthrough. For instance, after a Witch matured, she would gain the blessing of transforming into a Demonized Humanoid Form, and the power of her divine arts would evolve as well.

However, facing Bishop Miller at this moment, Leon could only pretend ignorance and shake his head.

The foundational blessing of the Supreme God could not be called bad, but somehow...it did not seem particularly suited for combat.

As a transmigrator who yearned for Transcendent power, he naturally valued combat capability more highly.

"The foundational blessing of the Supreme God allows one to clearly revisit memories, achieving near-photographic recall. The Supreme God is the patron deity of scholars. His blessing is most suited for seekers of knowledge like us. Those three who possess the Miracle of Omniscience are the three individuals in this world closest to the truth," Bishop Miller said with a devout expression.

"But Your Excellency, I am an Inquisitor," Leon reminded him awkwardly.

"I know. What I mean is, if you are willing, I can also recommend you to serve at the district Church's School of Natural Philosophy as my student, participating in academic research. You could obtain the title of Bishop. The work here would certainly be more stable than serving as an Inquisitor," Bishop Miller said earnestly.

Leon felt Bishop Miller's appreciation.

At the same time, he realized he absolutely could not accept this proposal. He had to become the Director of the Hamel Inquisition. There were things he had to accomplish.

Moreover, if he devoted himself to academia, mastering that knowledge might not allow him to maintain this "genius" persona in Bishop Miller's eyes forever.

If it were natural sciences, he might still muddle through by proposing new theories. But if it came to mathematics, one careless step could expose him.

It would be better to treat it as a hobby and a social tool, maintaining connections with academic figures within the Church.

"I am sorry, Bishop Miller. My superior has shown me great kindness. I promised to return and assume my post," Leon said in a regretful tone.

"Your superior is?"

"Bishop Becket of the Church of the God of War. He is currently serving temporarily as the Director of the Hamel Inquisition," Leon explained.

"I see. Are you planning to join the Church of the God of War? To be honest, its academic atmosphere is relatively weak," Bishop Miller said with regret.

"It is not yet certain which Church I will join. I am only speaking of my appointment," Leon clarified.

"Oh, in that case, even as an Inquisitor, I still suggest you consider the Prophet Church. These do not conflict. Do not abandon the scholarship that interests you. The Gate of Truth is open to every seeker of knowledge," Bishop Miller said sincerely.

"Your appreciation truly overwhelms me. I will consider it carefully." Leon bowed to Bishop Miller.

Several days later, at the Saint Rosalia Research Institute.

Bishop Weiss entered the Institute's office as usual to retrieve documents. She noticed two colleagues gathered intently around a table, enthusiastically discussing what appeared to be a paper.

"What are you looking at?" Bishop Weiss struck up a conversation immediately.

She rarely engaged in idle chatter, but academic discussions—especially those concerning cutting-edge disciplines—interested her.

"Ah, Your Holiness, Saintess!" The two Bishops, both lower in rank than Weiss, immediately bowed to her.

"Your Holiness, you should take a look at this." One Bishop eagerly handed the paper to Weiss. "Someone published this. It's a conjecture about atomic structure. Very interesting."

"This..." Bishop Weiss glanced at it briefly and was instantly drawn in.

She read it carefully, compared it with the model diagram, and her expression gradually grew serious.

After a moment, she asked casually, "Who published this research?"

This model was far more than merely interesting.

The Creator Church actually had several unfinished and unpublished experimental projects concerning atomic theory, known only to a few—including herself.

Some anomalies observed in those experiments seemed to find explanations within this model!

"The interesting part is this: it wasn't a formal paper published by a Bishop of the Church. It was a conjecture written by a candidate in the final open-ended question of this year's first-half fully appointed examination. Bishop Miller of the Prophet Church later compiled and published it," the Bishop explained.

"What?" Bishop Weiss was surprised.

This was akin to discovering a master-level work among student exercises. She quickly searched for the original author's name—then widened her eyes in even greater astonishment.

She recognized the name.

"Leon Set?"

The face of the Inquisitor she had met twice surfaced in her mind.

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 123 : Money Came Too Fast - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 123 : Money Came Too Fast

Chapter 123: Money Came Too Fast

Arend Island Pier.

Accompanied by Father Oden, Leon stepped off the ferry and onto the wooden pier.

“Oh, I truly hate drifting on the water!” Father Oden, after stepping onto the pier, planted his hands on his hips and took deep breaths of fresh air. His constitution made him especially prone to seasickness whenever he traveled by boat.

Leon inspected the newly refurbished pier.

The damaged wooden planks had been completely repaired, and the flat ground and roads along the shore used for boarding and unloading had also been repaved.

The rotten warehouses had all been torn down and rebuilt into sturdy brick houses.

Some hired craftsmen were still busy laying bricks.

The lighthouse had also been repaired; one of Leon’s subordinates was stationed inside, keeping watch in all directions. When Leon looked up, their gazes met, and the man immediately bowed respectfully.

The scattered trash and those broken ships that had once littered the pier had all been dragged away and disposed of.

Now several cargo ships transporting reconstruction materials and personnel were docked there.

Workers moved back and forth with handcarts unloading goods from the ships. Seabirds rose and fell upon the gunwales. The place had already begun operating like a normal pier.

“The pier can already be used. It’s just that transporting goods to River Valley County now means your ships aren’t quite enough. Shall I introduce you to purchase a few more? How about three cargo ships the same as before?” Father Oden asked Leon for instructions.

“That’s fine,” Leon replied.

“There’s another matter. The goods used for disguise—you’d better not reuse them. Shipping them over and then shipping them back again. If discovered, it would look suspicious at a glance, and the accounts would be hard to handle,” Father Oden said.

The mana essence, magical potions, and various magical beast materials produced from the labyrinth were all prohibited items that would be reported immediately upon inspection.

Naturally, they had to be mixed in with normal goods as camouflage.

Arend Island had no real industry.

On Leon’s side, flour, sugar, spices, handicrafts, and other common cargo items were transported to the island, then mixed with the prohibited goods produced by the labyrinth and shipped back, after which they were distributed layer by layer.

“So what do you suggest?” Leon asked.

“I suggest you establish some industry on Arend Island. For example, in the village on that side of the island, there’s a windmill mill owned by Viscount Arend. It’s currently mortgaged to the Watcher Merchant Consortium. Hardly anyone farms the island’s land, and what little is grown are just potatoes and vegetables. The mill has been sitting idle until now.

You could buy the mill. In the future, transport some wheat to the island, grind it into flour at the mill, bag it up, and mix my goods into the flour sacks for transport. Not only would it be easier to disguise, it would also reduce transport losses caused by bumps and knocks,” the priest said.

“You’re asking me to handle the debt assets of your other client again?” Leon raised an eyebrow.

Father Oden had been urging him to purchase assets on Arend Island. It seemed the priest had not given up on letting him absorb Viscount Arend’s bad debt.

That way, he could obtain a money laundering fee from Leon, settle the debt handled by the Watcher Merchant Consortium through his hands, and also receive a hefty commission—profiting from both sides!

“I’m merely offering the best advice as your consultant. This proposal is simply a win-win. It benefits me, and it benefits you,” Father Oden said.

“If we purchase assets on the western side of the island, won’t that Viscount’s daughter have objections?” Leon asked.

Now that Viscount Arend and Adele had already relinquished control over the eastern side of the island, whether it was the labyrinth that had once served as a mine or the pier, whatever Leon did there, they could only turn a blind eye.

But on the western side of the island were villages and the Viscount's residence. Purchasing assets and transporting goods there—Adele would certainly notice.

“The mill has already been mortgaged to the Watcher Merchant Consortium. The fishermen don't need the Viscount's consent to sell their goods to anyone. This has nothing to do with her. And the transport of prohibited goods won't pass through there anyway. Even if Miss Adele has any objections—” Father Oden paused here, “all I need to do is tell her you'll go speak with her, and she'll behave.”

By now, Leon's existence had become Father Oden's trump card against Adele.

In the past, when he couldn't win arguments against her, he could only resort to evasive tactics by bypassing her and negotiating directly with the Viscount.

But now, at the slightest dispute, all he had to do was invoke Leon's name, and Adele would fall silent, grinding her teeth and muttering “despicable” at the priest.

“Also, regarding the pier east of Caster Town that we often use—there's actually a guild there. Well, to be honest, it's a gang. If your fleet increases in size, according to their rules, you'll have to pay them dues. Otherwise, they'll cause trouble. And if they happen to discover we're transporting prohibited goods, it would be troublesome—” Father Oden said.

“Do I need to handle such people myself?” Leon raised an eyebrow at the priest. “Don't tell me Porter had to look at the faces of people like them.”

The gangs and guilds at the pier were nothing more than violent groups made up of ship captains and dockworkers.

Such people were not on the same level as them. Sending a team of his thugs to have a little talk with them would be enough to make them obedient.

“Handling them is simple; there are various methods. But whichever method is used, I should seek your instructions first. Besides kicking their backsides, you could also incorporate them. In that kind of territory, these people can be useful. Their advantage is that they're cheap, and sometimes they're quite handy,” Father Oden said.

“Give them the stick first, then the sugar. Pick a cadre in Caster Town to handle it,” Leon replied.

“Very well. As for the ships and the mill, I've already organized the accounts. Let me show you,” Father Oden said, intending to hand the ledger to Leon.

“We’ll look at them together when there are other accounts later. I don’t want to look at numbers right now.” Leon raised a hand to stop him.

“If you don’t examine the accounts carefully, aren’t you afraid I’ll skim your money?” Father Oden frowned slightly.

“I’ll conduct spot checks,” Leon replied.

“Working for you is sometimes rather dull. You’re completely insensitive to money,” Father Oden sighed as he put away the ledger.

“Shouldn’t you prefer such an employer?” Leon replied.

For Father Oden, the less attentive an employer was to accounts, the greater the room he had to maneuver, and the more profit he could skim.

Yet Father Oden seemed rather displeased instead.

“If you don’t look at the accounts, you can’t appreciate how high-quality my services are. Handling money is an art!” Father Oden patted the ledger. “It seems Porter and I have more common ground in this regard. Though he lacked the boldness for this line of work, he was sharp enough as a merchant.”

“Then I truly apologize,” Leon smiled, looking toward the direction of the labyrinth. “The money has been coming too fast lately. I haven’t quite adjusted yet.”

After the labyrinth began operating, magical potions and mana essence had been produced continuously from within.

They were repackaged in the warehouse, mixed into other goods, transported to the pier, and then shipped to various places in River Valley County and South Harbor County.

Some mana essence was also transported to Foyle, where it was purchased by the Count and supplied to other territories.

In less than half a year, the assets in his and Rena’s hands had snowballed, now long surpassing ten million.

This was something he could never have imagined in the past. The money had come too fast; to him, it seemed to have become a mere number.

Whether it increased or decreased slightly hardly mattered.

“Oh, what a luxurious trouble,” Father Oden raised an eyebrow. “But don’t forget how hard it was for you to earn that money. Have you forgotten how you once struggled?”

“Of course I haven’t forgotten, Father. But for me, money is no longer the most important thing. I don’t lack money now. What I need now—” Leon said thoughtfully, “is power!”

To rescue Sally from prison, what he needed was power.

For that, the position of Director of the Hamel Town Inquisition was the minimum requirement.

“You’ll soon obtain it, won’t you? The assessment went smoothly, I presume.” Father Oden seemed to think of something and grinned. “To earn the appreciation of that Wilson Miller—impressive indeed.”

“How do you know about that as well?” Leon glanced at Father Oden in surprise.

After returning, he had never mentioned the details of his assessment, nor had he spoken of Bishop Miller.

“I subscribe to the academic journal issued by the District Church. The esteemed Bishop Miller recently presided over the rank advancement assessment and published, in the column he oversees, a conjecture on atomic theory written by a certain examinee during the assessment—authored by Leon Set. Unfortunately, I have little study in Natural Philosophy and can’t quite understand your work. I had no idea you were such a cultured man, with such research in this field!”

This was the first Leon had heard that Bishop Miller had actually published his conjecture in the Church’s journal. He could only respond casually, “Just a slight interest.”

“In any case, given Wilson’s influence, your paper should stir some discussion in certain circles. Quite rare for him to do something like this,” Father Oden remarked.

Leon felt something was off upon hearing this. “You speak as though you’re quite familiar with him?”

Bishop Miller was the Dean of the District Church’s Institute of Natural Philosophy, a First-Rank Archbishop.

Compared to a local priest without rank like Father Oden, he was worlds apart. Yet Father Oden addressed him rather casually.

“We were classmates.” Father Oden shrugged. “From the town church school to the District Church’s Institute of Natural Philosophy, we studied together the whole way. We were on good terms. Even now, we occasionally correspond.”

“Seriously?” Leon was somewhat surprised. “Your classmate is an archbishop, and you’re a small-town priest in Hamel Town—an unruly priest who mixes with the underworld?”

“He came from a prestigious family and was a genuine genius. Children of commoners with some means and children of nobles could both attend Church schools, but that didn’t mean their futures were the same. Many things are decided at birth—” Father Oden paused, looking at Leon, then changed his tone, “not everyone can carve out a path like you did.”

At this point, Leon recalled Bishop Miller’s invitation and asked, “Father Oden, how much do you know about the Prophet Church?”

With Father Oden’s sharp mind, he immediately sensed something. “Don’t tell me Wilson invited you to join the Prophet Church?”

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 124 : The Saintess Has Specifically Requested to See You - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 124 : The Saintess Has Specifically Requested to See You

Chapter 124: The Saintess Has Specifically Requested to See You

“Yes, he invited me to join the Prophet Church. He even wanted me to become his student and be made a bishop.” Leon said.

At present, the only church that could be confirmed in advance as willing to take him in was the Prophet Church. Wilson Miller was an Archbishop, and his recommendation should carry considerable weight.

Therefore, Leon wanted to confirm with the Priest the value of the Prophet Church’s invitation.

After all, Father Auden could at least be considered a member of the Prophet Church.

“You actually managed to catch his eye to that extent? So publishing your work was his way of publicly declaring this?” Father Auden stroked his chin and sized Leon up for quite a while. “So tell me, did you hire someone to take the exam for you, or did you buy someone else’s research?”

No matter how he looked at it, he simply could not believe that the ruthless, dirty-money-making man before him could resonate with his old classmate.

That old classmate of his was a pure scholar.

“If I could so easily fool the Church’s supervision, that would be my skill,” Leon replied, having no interest in offering further explanation.

“You’re not seriously planning to switch careers into academia, are you? I can’t even imagine what you’d look like as a mathematics lecturer. As for running the business here, it’s safer for you to remain an Inquisitor.” Father Auden said, somewhat uneasy.

If this fellow stopped making dirty money, how was he supposed to profit from him?

“Of course I won’t switch careers. But my rank can be registered under the Prophet Church. It’s not as though there aren’t Inquisitors affiliated with the Prophet Church.” Leon said.

“That’s true. The current Grand Inquisitor who oversees all Inquisition institutions within the College of Cardinals is Cardinal Stuart of the Prophet Church. Incidentally, he is one of the three who hold the Miracle of Omniscience. Perhaps he was the one who approved the Supreme Investigation Warrant back then.” Father Auden remarked teasingly.

“What I want to know is how much value joining the Prophet Church would bring me.” Leon clarified his question further this time.

“That’s hard to say.” Father Auden thought for a moment before speaking. “You should know that the Prophet Church has the fewest members, yet among the Four Great Churches, its status is the highest. It’s very special.”

“After all, it serves the Supreme God, who holds the highest position.” Leon echoed.

“Did the God ever say that?” Father Auden suddenly let out a disdainful chuckle. “From beginning to end, the only ones who elevated the ‘Prophet’ to the highest position were the believers themselves.”

Leon looked at Father Auden in surprise. Such words coming from a Priest were indeed somewhat heretical.

But on second thought, this unruly Priest had always been heretical by nature.

“But the authority over time does sound like the highest rank.” Leon said.

The Supreme God, the Secret God, the Creator, and the God of War corresponded—at least from the perspective of natural philosophy—to the concepts of time, space, matter, and energy. Among these, time indeed stood apart.

“But if the Prophet Church, which worships the Supreme God, did not possess sufficient influence itself, how could it maintain such a status? By relying solely on the concepts written in the Holy Scriptures?” Father Auden countered.

“Stop keeping me in suspense. So what exactly makes the Prophet Church special?” Leon asked.

“If you study history more closely, you’ll find that since the founding of Noren, how many times has the nation experienced major events capable of altering its destiny? The great flood twelve hundred years ago, the great plague nine hundred years ago, the barbarian invasions, the Labyrinth Disaster—and then the repeated wars and dynastic changes. Within the Prophet Church, a Saint would often emerge to act as a prophet, issuing warnings to the Church and the rulers of the dynasty in advance. Some heeded the prophecy and seized their fortune. Others scoffed and paid the price.

The Four Great Churches each had periods of independent development. The other three churches rose and fell throughout history and even suffered devastating blows at times. Only the Prophet Church remained consistently stable. Looking at history as a whole, the Prophet Church always stood with the victors—or perhaps it was itself the victor.

Think about how the current royal family rose to power. When the previous dynasty ended, the four great families established their own duchies and waged war for sixty years. In the end, the Wolfgang family, with the support of Saint Astarte of the Prophet Church, defeated the other three duchies and reunified the Empire. It was said that Saint Astarte possessed the miracle of foresight and had predicted the victory of the Wolfgang family in advance.” Father Auden explained slowly.

“Did those Saints truly possess the ability to foresee the future?” Leon had heard the legends and records of Saints within the Prophet Church who could foresee the future, but he remained doubtful.

“It is said that foresight is a miracle even higher than omniscience. But who knows? Perhaps they truly could see the future. Perhaps they were merely charlatans. What is undeniable is that they controlled the course of history. The destruction of the Islander Nation three hundred years ago was also said to have been guided by Astarte of the Prophet Church—he had foretold the civil war there.

Taking such history as reference, you can imagine how much weight the words of a Pope of the Prophet Church would carry if he claimed—or was believed—to possess the power of prophecy.” Father Auden said.

“That does make sense.” Leon understood.

The Prophet Church always stood on the side of victory throughout history.

Over time, other forces naturally aligned themselves with the Prophet Church—whether the other three churches or the rulers of the dynasty.

“The Prophet Church holds the highest status, and its entry threshold is also the highest. The Prophet is the patron of scholars. His Blessing grants an unforgettable memory. Over time, the Prophet Church became a gathering place for self-important scholars and literati, and the threshold rose even higher. Eventually, it became what it is now.

Without sufficient education, you can’t squeeze into that circle. Even someone like me, merely serving as an unranked Priest, needed to graduate from a prestigious institution and possess outstanding academic ability.” Father Auden said.

“You count as academically outstanding?” Leon smiled.

“In the year we graduated from the Institute of Natural Philosophy, Wilson Miller ranked first. I ranked second. I didn’t delve deeply into other fields, but I was fairly good at mathematics.” Father Auden replied.

“Was being one rank lower enough to cost you the opportunity?”

“The third-ranked fellow became a bishop of the Creator Church—because his father was a bishop.” Father Auden said expressionlessly. “I told you. Some things are decided at birth.”

Leon could only nod. Without the Earl’s connections, he would at most have risen to the position of Deputy Director.

Though a Priest held no formal rank, in the eyes of ordinary people he was already a notable figure. For someone of common birth, that was roughly the limit in this country.

“But you’re different, Fenrir. You fought your way through. When you enter the Church, you already hold rank. You have room to rise. The Prophet Church has the highest ceiling among all the churches. The Cardinals of the Prophet Church hold the greatest speaking power within the College of Cardinals. But climbing to that position is not easy.

The internal hierarchy of the Prophet Church is highly rigid. Its mobility is the worst among the four churches. The higher positions have always been one carrot per one pit. And the Prophet Church’s Blessing—when cultivated to a high level—is said to extend a person’s lifespan greatly, much like the power of a Witch. The current Pope is already one hundred and fifty years old. There are two Cardinals around a hundred years old, and Saint Astarte reportedly lived nearly three hundred years. If he had not perished sealing the great Labyrinth of the Islander Nation, he might have lived even longer.” Father Auden continued.

“Sounds like the Prophet Church enjoys such comfort because a few old monsters are holding the fort.” Leon commented.

“If it were you, once inside the Prophet Church, you’d probably think about killing those old monsters to take their place, wouldn’t you?” Father Auden laughed.

Leon cast the Priest a complicated look.

In Father Auden’s eyes, he truly seemed somewhat unhinged.

“That’s not necessarily the only option.” Leon shook his head. “Perhaps other churches will want me.”

“Then my advice is this: choose the side where you have connections. Wilson may be a pure theoretical scholar with limited real power, but he’s still an Archbishop and has connections. Since he’s willing to recommend you now, your chances increase significantly. If the other churches don’t offer comparable conditions, you might as well choose the Prophet Church.” Father Auden said.

“That’s very pragmatic advice.” Leon nodded.

“Then I’ll go handle the paperwork for your mill. Are you going to continue inspecting the Labyrinth?” Father Auden asked.

“Of course. That was my plan for today.” Leon replied.

After completing the assessment at the Southeastern Diocese of the Empire, he had been delayed two more days by miscellaneous matters, then spent another two days on the road.

It had been quite some time since he last returned to Arend Island.

Naturally, he needed to check on the operations of the Labyrinth and reunite with Rena.

She now lived on Arend Island. Even when Leon was away, she could command her subordinates to run the Labyrinth, with demonic wolves guarding her.

They had constructed sentry posts and a simple fortress at the Labyrinth mine, and renovated one of the original mine buildings for Rena to live in—though now it could also be considered Leon’s home.

Leon was genuinely impatient to reunite with Rena.

That morning, before returning to South Harbor County to handle other matters, he had sent her a letter informing her roughly when he would be home.

At that moment, someone came running hurriedly from the direction of the lighthouse. Leon recognized him as one of his subordinates.

“Mr. Fenrir, a woman dressed as an Inquisitor is rowing toward this place!” The man approached and reported in a low voice, his expression panicked.

For these Underworld figures, the Inquisition discovering this place would undoubtedly be fatal. Father Auden also cast Leon a questioning glance.

But Leon remained calm. “Where?”

The subordinate handed him a spyglass and pointed toward the sea. “Over there. You should be able to see her from here.”

Leon walked onto the pier and looked into the distance through the spyglass. Indeed, he saw a young woman rowing a small boat toward them, dressed in an Inquisitor’s uniform.

Recognizing her face, Leon returned the spyglass. “No need to worry. She’s one of ours.”

Inquisitor Zona Mendes was a subordinate of Bishop Becket.

Since Bishop Becket held office here and was responsible for management and supervision before Leon fully assumed control, he naturally had arranged his own subordinates.

Including Zona, he had placed three Lower-Ranking Inquisitors in the Hamel Inquisition.

All of them were the Earl’s people. Leon was aware of this, and they obeyed his commands.

If Zona had come specifically to the island, it was likely that Bishop Becket had urgent business.

Leon told the Priest and his subordinates to attend to their tasks, then walked onto the pier to wait for Zona to approach.

When Zona drew near and noticed Leon, she saluted him before rowing closer at increased speed.

“What’s the matter, coming all the way here?” Leon asked, standing on the pier with his hands behind his back.

“Director Becket’s orders. You are to return to Hamel Town immediately. Bishop Weiss Rogers of the Creator Church has arrived and specifically requested to see you!” Zona replied in an official tone while standing in the boat.

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 125 : The Earl’s Intervention - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 125 : The Earl’s Intervention

Chapter 125: The Earl’s Intervention

An hour later, Leon and Zona took a ferry back to the pier of Caster Town in South Harbor County.

Zona then led Leon to a prepared carriage and handed him a black Secret God Emblem badge. “Director Beckett asked me to pass this to you.”

“What is this for?” Leon asked as he sat inside the carriage compartment.

“This is the Secret God’s Mark, a sacred item crafted by the Secret God Church, used for communication. Next, I’ll take you straight back to the Cathedral in Hamel Town. Bishop Weiss is already waiting there. On the way, Bishop Beckett will contact you,” Zona said. After closing the carriage door, she leapt onto the driver’s seat and drove toward Hamel Town.

Leon sat inside the compartment and knocked on the carriage wall. The compartment was thick and should have excellent soundproofing.

There were no windows, and it was illuminated by a lantern. It was a place well suited for confidential discussions.

He picked up the badge and examined it for a moment, understanding a few things, and tried speaking, “Sir?”

After a short while, Bishop Beckett’s voice sounded from within the badge. “Zona already told you about the situation, right?”

“Yes,” Leon replied.

As Leon had expected, this badge was actually a tool that facilitated Bishop Beckett’s use of divine arts.

Bishop Beckett could transmit intangible things such as light, shadows, and sound across vast distances.

However, to send them to a specific location, he likely needed certain auxiliary means to achieve precise positioning.

Presumably, this was that auxiliary terminal device. This object had been marked in some way by Bishop Beckett using divine arts.

He could transmit his voice to wherever the badge was located, effectively turning it into a two-way communicator.

Whether the badge was activated or not should have depended entirely on Bishop Beckett.

In that case, Bishop Beckett could hear the movements around the badge and perhaps even see part of them. Thus, it could also be considered a surveillance device or eavesdropping tool.

The fact that Bishop Beckett had never given Leon such a thing before was probably because he had considered that Leon would have reservations about it.

Holding this item allowed constant communication with a marked Blessing Recipient of the Secret God, but at the same time, it also placed one under the other party's surveillance.

"I don't quite understand what you released during the assessment, but the academically inclined figures within the Church seem to like it very much. They've published it in the Church's academic journals. Weiss Rogers has come this time to conduct academic discussions with you and to persuade you to join the Creator Church. She plans to personally recommend you. She may even have reserved a position for you at the Saint Rosalia Research Institute," Bishop Beckett said.

"So now there's another option?" Leon said.

Bishop Beckett had previously told him that under normal circumstances, those who took the fully appointed assessment had no opportunity to choose which Church to join afterward.

Most people who participated in the assessment through internal recommendation had already decided from the start which Church they would use their connections to join.

As for the rest, after the assessment rankings of each diocese were released, they would be cross-selected by the Four Great Churches and finally assigned directly to whichever Church still had recruitment vacancies.

The only time one gained the right to choose was in a situation like this—when, like receiving the favor of Archbishop Miller, one was recommended by a major internal

figure before the allocation process, thus gaining the chance to directly select that Church to join.

And this time, following the Prophet Church, Weiss had also extended an olive branch to him on behalf of the Creator Church.

Weiss herself was a Saintess Bishop of the Creator Church with boundless prospects. Her father was Archbishop Rogers, who was about to run for Cardinal.

This background was, in fact, even stronger than Archbishop Miller, who merely held a teaching post.

However, Bishop Beckett replied in a tone that brooked no argument, "No. This time, when you go, you must refuse her invitation!"

"Not consider the Creator Church?" Leon frowned.

"It's not about not considering the Creator Church. It's about not having anything to do with Weiss Rogers! Have you already forgotten my previous warning?" Bishop Beckett said.

Leon naturally remembered that Bishop Beckett had mentioned Weiss was an enemy of the Earl's faction, yet Bishop Beckett had refused to explain the reason.

Bishop Beckett had specifically summoned him back to meet Bishop Weiss.

He had originally thought this meant he was allowed to treat the Creator Church's invitation as an alternative option, but it turned out he was being told to personally refuse it.

"It's only a recommendation opportunity. Do I really need to avoid her to this extent?" Leon asked for confirmation.

Given his current situation, no matter whose invitation he accepted, he would still return to Hamel Town to serve as an Inquisitor rather than take up the position recommended by the corresponding Church.

The Inquisition was an institution under the jointly established College of Cardinals formed by the Four Great Churches.

If compared to a company, the Four Great Churches each held a share. Inquisitors serving within it could belong to any of the Churches.

For example, even if he accepted Archbishop Miller's invitation to join the Prophet Church, he would not become Archbishop Miller's student or shift into a teaching bishop

position. Likewise, even if he accepted Bishop Weiss's invitation to join the Creator Church, he would not go to the Saint Rosalia Research Institute to join Weiss's faction.

Moreover, he was somewhat puzzled. If Bishop Weiss and Archbishop Rogers were enemies of the Earl, why would the Earl not consider placing his own people into their faction as spies instead of avoiding them entirely?

From Leon's personal standpoint, he would not blindly regard the Earl's enemies as his own enemies—especially when the Earl's side had not even explained the reason to him.

Bishop Weiss had given him the antidote to Cockatrice Venom. To him, that was a favor.

Moreover, Weiss had once expressed an intention to research a special medicine for Saltification Disease. He actually had a fairly good impression of her.

"Leon, this is an order, not a suggestion." Bishop Beckett's voice suddenly turned cold and stern.

"...I only need to find a reason to refuse her, correct?" After a moment of silence, Leon responded.

Bishop Beckett still did not explain the reason, but he had already made it clear that there was no room for negotiation.

It was not as if Leon absolutely had to follow Bishop Weiss's recommendation to join. At the very least, there was no need to incur the Earl faction's suspicion over it.

To rescue Sally and take the position of Director of the Hamel Inquisition, he still needed the Earl's support.

"I've already discussed this with the Earl. We've decided that you will accept Archbishop Miller's invitation and join the Prophet Church. You'll use the fact that you've already agreed to Archbishop Miller's invitation as the reason to refuse her. After dismissing her, we'll respond to the District Church and to Archbishop Miller," Bishop Beckett said.

"It's already been decided?" Upon hearing this, Leon suddenly felt a faint, inexplicable discomfort in his heart.

If he could not leverage Weiss's connection to join the Creator Church, joining the Prophet Church was not unacceptable to him.

As Father Auden had said, having Archbishop Miller's backing was certainly far better than having none.

It was just that making the decision himself and having the Earl and Bishop Beckett make the decision for him were entirely different feelings.

The Earl had not intended to discuss the matter with him at all. He had simply made the decision based on the organization's interests and ordered Leon to carry it out.

Since joining the Earl's faction, perhaps because they had been assessing his capabilities, aside from assigning performance targets, the Earl had largely let him handle matters freely.

This had given him the sense that he still had considerable freedom in his actions.

However, as he officially became a Cadre and began acquiring authority, the Earl's intervention also began to reveal itself.

There would always be certain decisions that would not seek his opinion.

"Up to now, none of our people has directly joined the Prophet Church. You have the ability to build good relations with the academically inclined figures within the Prophet Church. That is extremely rare," Bishop Beckett offered a partial explanation. "When you go to the Cathedral to meet Bishop Weiss, keep this badge on you. Do not let her discover it."

Even the conversation had to be monitored? Bishop Beckett's wariness toward Bishop Weiss was so high that Leon found it difficult to understand.

But in the end, he had no reason to refuse Bishop Beckett's request. "I understand."

"Remember, you must refuse her. Do not mention me. Do not say anything unnecessary," Bishop Beckett instructed. "Leon, this is for your own good."

"Understood." After responding, Leon carefully put away the badge.

By afternoon, Leon finally returned to Hamel Town by carriage and disembarked at the main entrance of the town church.

He stepped through the main entrance and presented his identification to the nun welcoming guests at the Church door.

The moment he reported his name, before he could even state his purpose, the nun immediately understood. "Please follow me. Bishop Weiss has been waiting for quite some time!"

Leon followed the nun through the grand hall and arrived at the monastery area at the back.

He ascended the stairs, crossed the cloister bridge over the courtyard, and entered a white tower within the monastery.

The white Tower of Truth was an academic facility found in both town-level and archdiocesan-level major Church monasteries.

Inside were archives, laboratories, and seminar rooms, used by bishops engaged in academic research.

Leon was led to a seminar room.

The nun knocked on the door. “Bishop Weiss, Inquisitor Set, Deputy Director of the Inquisition, has arrived.”

Footsteps immediately sounded from inside, and the door was opened at once. Behind it stood the tall figure of Bishop Weiss.

When their eyes met, Leon felt that Bishop Weiss’s gaze upon him seemed to glow faintly with delight.

Even the nun beside him noticed the unusual fluctuation in Bishop Weiss’s expression upon seeing Leon.

“Greetings, Your Excellency Bishop. I pay my respects,” Leon said, performing the proper salute.

“You’ve finally come. I’ve been waiting for you. Please, come in!” Bishop Weiss stepped aside.

“Thank you.” Leon entered the seminar room. After nodding in thanks to the nun, Bishop Weiss closed the door.

Then the nun heard a click—the sound of the door being locked.

Strange. Why would a fully appointed Third-Rank Bishop, and the Saintess of the Creator Church at that, be so eager to see a Lower-Ranking Inquisitor?

Was there some urgent mission requiring him to report in person?

As the nun speculated inwardly, she walked away.

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 126 : We Are Being Monitored - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 126 : We Are Being Monitored

Chapter 126: We Are Being Monitored

“Please, have a seat.” Bishop Weiss gestured for Leon Set to sit beside a tea table, while she began rummaging through a stack of documents on another desk.

“Thank you.”

Just as Leon sat down, Bishop Weiss turned back and placed an open academic journal on the tea table.

Leon immediately saw the nuclear model of the atom he had drawn. He realized this was the conjecture he had written, which Bishop Miller had organized and published in the Church’s academic journal.

“This—you wrote it, didn’t you?” Bishop Weiss leaned forward, bracing both hands on the tea table as she sought confirmation.

“Yes—”

Before Leon could finish speaking, Bishop Weiss leaned even closer, her eyes burning with intensity. “You’re researching atomic theory? Why didn’t you mention it when we met before?”

Isn’t her face a bit too close?

Under her close scrutiny, Leon felt somewhat uncomfortable and leaned back slightly. “I was merely interested, so I read a few materials. It was just a sudden whim.”

“This is far more than a simple whim. This is a cross-era innovation—a completely new line of thought for analyzing atomic structure!” Bishop Weiss picked up the journal and tapped it lightly, staring at Leon. “And at the end, you even connected the properties of material elements with this model, speculating that atomic numbers might, because of this structure, change periodically with increasing atomic weight. That’s not something an ordinary person could come up with!”

Leon thought to himself that it was called the periodic table of elements. Just like atomic structure, it was middle school knowledge back in his world.

“In fact, the Creator Church has established many experimental projects centered on atomic theory. Since they are not yet complete, most of them have not been made public. There are certain special phenomena we still cannot fully comprehend. But your

model just happens to provide explanations for those phenomena!” Bishop Weiss examined Leon curiously. “Logically speaking, you shouldn’t have had access to those experimental projects. Yet with a single model, you’ve managed to explain problems that many bishops have racked their brains over. This is truly—unbelievable!”

Hearing this, Leon began to wonder if creating that atomic model had been a bit excessive. From the materials he had checked, he had assumed the Church’s research remained at the stage where atomic structure could not be verified. Now it seemed he had underestimated the Creator Church’s progress. Some cutting-edge research projects simply had not been disclosed; he just hadn’t known about them.

He had thought his conjecture would at most serve to pad out a paper, and that Archbishop Miller would only praise his rich imagination upon seeing it.

But to Bishop Weiss of the Creator Church, his conjecture happened to align perfectly with the Church’s cutting-edge experimental results. It bore cross-era significance—perhaps even the embryonic form of a new theory.

“It was merely a sudden inspiration, like a flash of insight. Your Excellency, when you conduct research, you must have experienced such flashes as well, haven’t you?” Overwhelmed by her enthusiasm, Leon could only attempt to explain in this way.

“Inspiration does not favor those without the ability to realize it. Without sufficient academic foundation in this field, you could not have made use of inspiration to propose such a complete and self-consistent conjecture.” Bishop Weiss looked at the published conjecture in the journal, a look of relief appearing on her face. “Fortunately, you chose to make this public during the rank assessment. Otherwise, it would have been such a pity. Twice I brushed past someone possessing such vision—”

“When I met you previously, I hadn’t yet conceived of this. And an accidental inspiration like that—how could I dare to display it before professionals?” Leon smiled.

“No. Even if this is not the final answer to truth, it will certainly become an important step in our pursuit of it. Your model will become a milestone in our exploration of the microscopic world. I believe your name will appear in textbooks.” Bishop Weiss spoke with certainty.

Becoming someone written into textbooks—that sounds a bit exaggerated. Leon thought.

“I only hope I’ll truly have such an opportunity. I never expected such a conjecture to receive your generous praise. I’m truly overwhelmed,” Leon replied.

“Inquisitor Set, although the assessment results have not yet been announced, since Archbishop Miller, who oversees the Institute of Natural Philosophy of the Southeastern Diocese, was willing to publish your work, your passing the assessment is practically

certain. You haven't been assigned yet, correct? Since you're interested in atomic theory, you must also be interested in participating in its cutting-edge experimental projects, aren't you?" Bishop Weiss asked seriously.

"I really can't imagine what I could possibly contribute to such high-end experimental projects—" Leon smiled awkwardly.

Sensing that Bishop Weiss was about to extend an invitation, Leon began laying the groundwork for refusal.

"Your conjecture has already sparked heated discussions among experts. Not only could you contribute—you are qualified, as the proposer of the conjecture, to give us lectures directly!" Bishop Weiss said.

"You must be joking. In such a setting, I'd probably faint on the spot." Leon laughed it off.

"I am serious! I wish to recommend you to join the Creator Church. I hope you will take a position at the Saint Rosalia Research Institute. You possess the talent to change the academic world—you should not be buried here!" Bishop Weiss finally revealed her true purpose.

"Your recognition truly flatters me." Leon deliberately displayed a look of surprise, then lowered his head apologetically. "But I'm very sorry. In fact, after the assessment concluded, I already accepted Archbishop Miller's invitation to join the Prophet Church."

"You intend to transfer to the Institute of Natural Philosophy of this Diocese? Do you wish to—study mathematics?" Bishop Weiss asked in surprise.

She knew Archbishop Miller was an expert in mathematical theory and only dabbled in natural philosophy.

"I have no intention of transferring to an academic post. I will remain in Hamel Town and assume the position of Director of the Inquisition. My superior has shown me favor through promotion; I promised to take over the role properly. There are still many cases here that need handling—I cannot leave them unattended. My joining the Prophet Church is mainly to express gratitude for Archbishop Miller's appreciation. As for academics, I will develop it as an interest outside my duties, just as before." Leon presented the prepared explanation.

After hearing him out, Bishop Weiss stared at him wistfully for quite some time before lowering her gaze and sighing. "I see—"

At this point, she could hardly compete with Archbishop Miller for him. After all, it was Archbishop Miller who first recognized Leon's talent. Had he not published Leon's work, the name Leon Set might never have appeared before her in academic circles.

They had met twice, yet she had remained unaware of the talent he possessed. Having brushed past him like that filled her with regret.

“I truly apologize that you came here specially, only for me to—” Leon said apologetically.

“No.” Bishop Weiss gently shook her head. “When I came here, I had already anticipated such a result. In truth, I mainly wished to see you. I felt it was necessary. We once spoke at length, yet I understood so little about you—nothing at all of the talent you possessed.”

Hearing this, Leon immediately became alert.

The situation he had feared had arrived. When Bishop Becket required him to carry the emblem, he had already anticipated such troublesome circumstances.

The last time he had “spoken at length” with Bishop Weiss had been secretly inside her carriage. He had not mentioned this to Bishop Becket—only to Rena.

As far as Bishop Becket knew, Leon had only discussed the matter of the “witch” Sally Hesh with Bishop Weiss in the reception room of the Inquisition.

Now he still carried the emblem Bishop Becket had given him. If Bishop Weiss brought up topics discussed in the carriage, Bishop Becket would be able to monitor everything directly.

Given Bishop Becket’s perceptiveness, even the slightest clue would reveal that he and Weiss had met privately.

If that were discovered, considering the Earl and Bishop Becket’s inexplicable hostility toward Weiss, he might not be able to explain himself!

“After all, we only discussed Mrs. Hesh’s matter,” Leon said with a smile, while trying to signal to Bishop Weiss with his eyes.

Bishop Weiss did not immediately notice anything amiss and continued, “Right—your injury—”

“Ah, that. Following the treatment plan you previously provided, it hasn’t recurred!” Leon cut in quickly, continuing to signal with his eyes.

His injury had already fully healed. Weiss’s prescription had taken effect from the very beginning.

Although his final recovery was mainly due to his unexpected acquisition of the ability to transform into a werewolf—werewolves, like Demonic Wolves, possessed immunity to all poisons, and his lingering injuries had healed along with the change in his physique.

However, Leon still suspected that his demonized form being a werewolf might have been related to the antidote formulated using Demonic Wolf blood from Weiss's prescription.

At last, Bishop Weiss sensed something unusual in Leon's expression and cast him a puzzled look, about to speak—when Leon blinked.

Bishop Weiss finally seemed to understand and temporarily fell silent, waiting for Leon's explanation.

Leon could not explain verbally. He was unsure to what extent Bishop Becket could monitor through the emblem—whether he could even perceive the surrounding scene and Leon's movements. Writing or overly obvious gestures both carried the risk of exposure.

At that moment, Leon's gaze fell upon the open academic journal. After skimming a few lines, an idea suddenly occurred to him.

"I can actually sense a kind of marvelous fate. Given the disparity in status between us, we shouldn't have had any intersection. Yet unexpectedly, I was fortunate enough to meet you for a third time. This time, it was thanks to this paper." As he spoke, Leon raised his hand and gently stroked the page.

Bishop Weiss immediately noticed and focused on his hand. With the slightest movement, Leon tapped his index finger on a single word.

That word was "observation."

Instinctively, Bishop Weiss looked up at Leon's face. The single word was not enough for her to grasp the meaning. Leon's eyes then darted quickly in a circle—up, down, left, right—before he blinked once more.

Observation—everywhere—eyes—nowhere to—

Bishop Weiss jolted awake, suddenly feeling as though countless invisible eyes had opened around her, their gazes converging upon her.

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

What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! #Chapter 127 : The Rose School - Read What Witch? A Deadly Apothecary! Chapter 127 : The Rose School

Chapter 127: The Rose School

Leon hoped that Weiss would understand his hint. As a Fully Appointed Third-Rank Knight, her understanding of Blessings should have been above his, and she most likely knew what kind of Blessing Bishop Becket possessed from the Secret God.

Once their previous secret meeting was mentioned while they were under surveillance, trouble would inevitably follow—whether for her or for Leon.

Fortunately, Weiss finally caught on to his implication. The surprise in her eyes vanished in an instant, and her expression quickly returned to normal.

“Yes, it truly is a kind of fate. But if only I had gotten to know you earlier.” As she spoke, her gaze drifted toward the window.

Leon sensed something and followed her line of sight.

The windows of the Church building were not fitted with the oil-paper panes common in ordinary homes, but with expensive, transparent glass.

Through the glass of the seminar room, one could see the monastery garden outside. It was the cusp of spring and summer, and the courtyard flowers were in full bloom.

Leon was still wondering whether he had misunderstood her meaning when the scenery beyond the window suddenly grew slightly blurred, as though a thin mist had settled over it.

Such a phenomenon was common in the cold of winter, but in this season it appeared distinctly abnormal.

Before Leon had time to be startled, hurried words suddenly formed upon the misted glass, as if written by an invisible hand.

The message read: “Six o’clock, the usual place.”

The mist and the writing vanished almost as soon as they appeared, like a breeze drifting past the window. The glass returned to its clear and bright state.

But the message had already been etched into Leon’s mind.

He turned back to Weiss. She was staring steadily into his eyes.

“In the future, will you continue this line of research?” she asked.

“If I have the time, I will continue,” Leon replied with a nod, meeting her gaze.

That meant he had accepted the invitation she had just conveyed.

“That’s good. Since you’ve made your decision, I won’t press the matter further. After you obtain your rank, we will still have opportunities for academic exchange. If you are ever interested in the Creator Church’s research on atomic theory, you may write to the Saint Rosalia Research Institute at any time. As long as it isn’t confidential material, I can discuss it with you whenever you wish.” Weiss ended the conversation neatly and rose to her feet.

“Very well. Thank you for your understanding,” Leon said, standing as well.

Weiss escorted Leon out of the seminar room. After bidding each other farewell, Leon left the town church and walked toward the nearby Inquisition.

“Respectfully greeting you, sir!”

“Good afternoon, sir!”

Along the way, former colleagues saluted him with marked deference. Leon smiled and responded to each of them, “Good afternoon.”

He had never liked the aloof, superior manner Caron Eso had displayed when serving as Director. Even after his promotion, Leon had not adopted airs within the Inquisition.

When he first became a Captain, his former teammates’ attitudes toward him had hardly changed. Even their salutes had carried a trace of teasing.

After he was promoted to Deputy Director, however, people’s attitudes grew noticeably more formal—especially colleagues from other departments who were less familiar with him. His old teammates began saluting him properly, though they still chatted with him as warmly as before.

But now, he could feel that they were beginning to look up at him. Their expressions were tense when saluting, their eyes nervous, as though afraid of offending him in the slightest.

After he rendered great service and was recommended by Bishop Becket to participate in the Fully Appointed assessment, rumors had already spread that Leon would assume the position of Director.

Bishop Becket was a civilian official in the military division of the Church of the God of War, only temporarily assigned to the Inquisition. In time, he would certainly be transferred elsewhere.

Once Leon obtained his rank, given his outstanding performance in Hamel Town, he would be the best candidate to succeed as Director.

In the eyes of ordinary people, obtaining a Church rank was no different from becoming a noble—it meant entry into the upper class.

An unavoidable class divide had already formed between him and his former colleagues. To them, he was now the new Caron Eso. No matter how approachable Leon acted, he remained their superior—at most, a more benevolent one.

Still, Leon understood that if he was to manage this Inquisition as its superior in the future, a necessary degree of authority had to be maintained.

He went straight to Bishop Becket's office. He had barely knocked when a voice came from inside.

“Enter.”

Leon opened the door, locked it behind him, and saluted the man seated behind the desk. “I've sent her away, sir.”

“Mm. Well done,” Bishop Becket nodded.

Leon felt slightly relieved. When he and Weiss had exchanged information, it had not been entirely foolproof.

But from Bishop Becket's reaction, he did not seem to have noticed anything unusual.

“And this—” Leon produced the Black Secret God Emblem Badge.

“If you don't wish to carry it, return it to me,” Bishop Becket gestured.

Leon placed the badge on the desk. Carrying something that could eavesdrop and monitor him made even going to the lavatory feel uncomfortable.

“These documents—fill them out. Then write a letter to Archbishop Miller. Attach my recommendation and send it to the District Church. After that, the Prophet Church will contact you in advance regarding the ceremony.” Bishop Becket handed him several personal information forms and application documents.

Leon stepped forward and took them, glancing through a few pages. It seemed that his decision to join the Prophet Church and receive the Blessing of the Supreme God had now been finalized.

“May I ask a question?” Leon looked up at Bishop Becket.

“About Bishop Weiss?” Bishop Becket sensed his meaning. “As I’ve said, that is not something you should know at present.”

“Sir, Bishop Weiss is passionate about research. She’s interested in the medicine studied by Sally Hesh, and she’s interested in my conjectures as well. In the future, if I have contact with academic figures in the Prophet Church and publish something, it may attract her attention again. You’ve told me only that she is an enemy of the Earl, yet I know nothing of the reason. When you are no longer here, how am I to handle her on my own?” Leon said.

“You make a fair point...” Bishop Becket pondered briefly before looking up at him. “Have you heard of the Rose School within the Church?”

Leon shook his head. “I haven’t.”

“The Church often regards thorns as symbols of the Primordial Witch Moilai and of witches in general. You are aware of that, yes?” Bishop Becket said.

“Yes.”

Leon certainly knew. In artistic depictions of the Primordial Witch Moilai, thorns were ever-present. The Church used the imagery to allude to witches. In the Holy Scriptures, there was a famous metaphor describing witches as serpents covered in barbs.

“Within the Church, witches are an absolute taboo. Yet at the Saint Rosalia Research Institute, many academic personnel believe that Moilai’s heretical power is not without value. They advocate reform—loosening the restrictions on Moilai’s power, studying it thoroughly, and applying it.

“These individuals gradually formed a school of thought. One bishop once said: since the gods can create the world itself, they can naturally cause roses to bloom among thorns.”

“Roses among thorns—meaning witches? So they are called the Rose School?” Leon immediately realized that Bishop Becket was referring to the same academic group Weiss had mentioned before.

In this world, the word “thorn” could refer to any prickly shrub. Roses themselves were a kind of thorned plant, yet they produced pleasing blossoms and could be made into herbal medicine.

The Rose School used the rose as a metaphor for witches—dangerous and barbed, yet still possessing value. The great gods would not object to developing that value. In fact, Leon had discussed similar ideas with Weiss.

“Correct. ‘Rose School’ was originally a term of derision used by others within the Church, but it was accepted by them. Most of the Rose School consists of the younger generation of researchers within the Creator Church. The Saintess of the Creator Church, Weiss Rogers, is a core figure among them. They have repeatedly proposed relaxing restrictions on research into witches’ Magical Potions. Their ultimate goal is to bring Magical Potions into practical application.” Bishop Becket looked at Leon. “You understand that such a stance fundamentally conflicts with our interests.”

Leon naturally understood.

Without the Church’s strict prohibitions, the Magical Potion trade could never be so lucrative.

It was precisely because the powerful and wealthy could not obtain Magical Potions through legitimate channels that the Mana and potions acquired at the risk of execution yielded such enormous profits.

If the Church itself were to sell Magical Potions as it did Holy Water, the profits would be diverted to the Church—and it would crack down even more harshly on private enterprises like that of the Earl.

If the Church went further and legalized the production of Mana and Magical Potions among the populace, the situation would be even worse. Countless competitors would emerge legally, profits would plummet, and the Earl’s status as supreme ruler of the Underworld would have to be maintained through other industries.

Thus, although the Rose School appeared to advocate loosening restrictions, its interests were fundamentally opposed to the Earl’s.

Leon, however, did not particularly care. On the contrary, he might even support the Rose School more.

He had already earned enough to last a lifetime. He would prefer to see witches’ powers brought into the open for the benefit of the world. If the Church relaxed its laws, then when he eventually washed his hands of the business, he would no longer have to live in fear over his involvement.

Still, Leon asked, “But can their proposals truly be accepted by the Church?”

“Of course not. They remain a minority within the Church,” Bishop Becket said.

“At present, the Rose School poses little threat to us. Bishop Weiss is not someone who wields real power. Why must we be so wary of her?” Leon asked.

Bishop Becket’s explanation did not fully account for their caution.

“The issue does not lie with her, but with her father—Archbishop Rogers. That man’s influence is not something to be ignored lightly,” Bishop Becket said.

“Is he also part of the Rose School?” Leon asked.

“No. His reasons are different. What you may know ends here. You need only understand that this father and daughter stand in absolute opposition to us. Avoid entangling yourself with them as much as possible. One day you will learn the answer. Do not be impatient.” Bishop Becket spoke earnestly.

“Understood.” Leon did not press further.

Bishop Becket had still revealed nothing particularly useful. As for the Rose School, Weiss had already told him about it; now he merely knew its name.

“I’ll attend to these matters first,” Leon said, preparing to withdraw.

“Wait. There’s one more thing,” Bishop Becket called out.

Leon’s heart tightened.

“Don’t forget what the Earl mentioned. After you assume your new position, someone will come to visit your Labyrinth. Make preparations to receive them as soon as possible.”

“Yes.” Leon exhaled inwardly in relief and took his leave.

He returned to his office, handled several matters, and when the clock neared six, he gathered his things and quickly left the Inquisition.

He still remembered the “usual place” Weiss had mentioned. He soon arrived at the third intersection east of the Inquisition, remaining alert along the way for possible surveillance or pursuit.

This was where they had met privately before.

Soon he saw the familiar black carriage approach slowly and stop before him. The door opened of its own accord.

Leon boarded the carriage and caught the familiar scent of incense. Weiss sat opposite him.

“Now, we should be able to speak freely,” Weiss said.

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