

Righteous Ps 121

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“You want me to be Roseburg's bishop?”

When Annan heard this, his eyes widened in surprise, “Bishop?”

Although Annan did think about it, Bishop Daryl should give himself some benefits.

But he didn't expect that this fat and bald guy would offer his position away.

Soon, Annan realized something. He slowed down and asked softly, “What about you?”

“Naturally, I want to return to the capital. I'm not originally from the North Sea. The climate here is too humid and cold for me as an elderly person.”

Daryl shrugged and took out his pocket watch to check the time. Then, he raised his head again, looking at Annan eagerly, “What do you think, feudal lord?”

“I'm just putting my name out there without the need to change my beliefs, right? Silver Sire does not insist on such pleasantries. It matters more for the development of the church. The beliefs of Silver Sire and Cold-Blooded Lady have no conflict.”

“Uhm...” Annan groaned.

Annan thought for a moment, stretched a bit, and got up. He put on his clothes and his coat.

He opened the room's window, and the cold air rushed into the bedroom. It helped him to be more awake.

Annan squinted and took a few deep breaths of the cold wind.

He turned his head and looked back at Bishop Daryl, who was waiting for a reply.

There was no drowsiness in Annan's eyes. Instead, he became calm and indifferent again.

Annan pointed to the stool next to the tea table in the bedroom and motioned for Bishop Daryl to have a seat.

“Please have a seat, Master Bishop.”

He said respectfully and then walked to the door, “I'll make you a cup of tea.”

At this time, Annan did not choose a more intimate address but adopted a professional attitude for business affairs.

After that, Annan temporarily left his bedroom. While he was strolling, he was thinking it through.

Annan had quite a clear picture.

The main reasons for this invitation were because he got the Silver Sire's holy light engravings.

—But in Bishop Daryl's words, there was indeed a hint of probing.

His invitation was divided into two parts.

One was to “put his name in the church of Silver Sire,” and the other was to “serve as diocese bishops in the North Sea Territory.”

It was acceptable for the first condition.

But “Annan-Austere-Winter” would not accept the latter condition altogether.

He was the sole heir of Austere-Winter's Grand Duke, the future Grand Duke.

It was not suitable for him to hold such a high office in the church of a neighboring country. Worse still, an enemy country.

This would make Austerian doubt Annan's decision. It would also become an excuse for others to attack Annan. Worse still, it could become the motivation for the Austere-Winter Dukedom and the old grandmother's priests to leave the Grand Duke's side. Hence, this decision would weaken the Grand Duke's authority.

Of course, there were also benefits.

The most significant advantage was that Annan could get strong support from Silver Sire and the asylum from the entire Silver Sire church.

No one dared to attack an upright deity's bishop, let alone a diocese bishop with seniority half a level higher than typical bishops.

After all, it was different from the nobles.

If one of the nobles was assassinated, it was possible that other nobles would make up for the victim's family via the joint release of a wanted notice. But that was it. After all, interests far outweigh responsibilities in the noble's perspective.

The church would be different.

All the priests of upright deities had the common responsibility of purifying nightmares.

Any priest who died outside the nightmare was a considerable waste of resources.

After all, not everyone had the talent to be a priest.

If someone killed a priest, it was equivalent to other priests being notified to work overtime: to complete the work of your dead colleague, and you cannot leave work if you don't finish it.

Undoubtedly, every priest's death would harness the hatred of all priests.

—We are already quite busy. Stop disrupting us.

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Therefore, even if the priests did not know each other and they were not even the priests who believed in the same upright deity, they would do something about it once they heard that someone in their

diocese had killed an upright deity's priest. The bishops would seek a way to find the murderer, kill the criminal directly or transfer the criminal to the diocese of the incident.

The bishop's responsibility was even heavier than the priests'.

Their mission was to regularly clean up nightmares above Silver Rank in their diocese, to prevent ordinary people and innocent Transcended from entering nightmares by mistake.

In other words, they were all players playing at a higher difficulty.

Freezing Water Port was a special case.

According to Salvatore, this nightmare was attempted forty-five years ago but failed.

In the end, the bishop had no choice but to lock the "key." Therefore, only an ordinary priest like Louis was needed to guard it.

It was a pleasant surprise if Priest Louis could purify the nightmare, but it didn't matter if he failed. Anyway, there was no expectation for him to resolve it.

After all, it was a nightmare of distortion difficulty.

A nightmare of this level was prone to life-threatening. The victim would either be eroded by the curse and become a monster or get afflicted by a harsh curse and be cursed to death.

All in all, bishops were genuine high-risk professions.

Naturally, they were respected by people.

Annan learned from Salvatore that nobles hired assassins to murder a bishop in the Noah Kingdom twelve years ago. The bishop had ruined the king's plan to hoard goods and sell them at a higher price resulting in the king suffering a loss.

In the end, the assassin was wanted all over the country and was arrested on the fifth day later. Even the nobles involved in the murder case had their lands confiscated, deprived of their titles, and exiled from the country.

Even if the bishop had flawed character and committed a heinous crime, they would usually be arrested after the trial and sent into a nightmare of "distortion" level or higher. Then, they had to purify the nightmare non-stop.

That was to squeeze out the final value of their existence and kill them before they became monsters.

All in all, it was a serious crime to murder a sensible and mentally sound bishop.

It was because it would be a "waste."

Because not all the "keys" of nightmares were materialized.

For the nightmare of distortion level and above, the key was usually something strange.

For example, “say the word 'the Venerated Skeleton,’” or “hold a frozen fish that exceeds seven pounds and open the door,” or “say twenty different names in a day” were the standard of weirdness in the keys.

The job of bishops was to handle the nightmares.

If the key to the nightmare were announced, ordinary people would try to become Transcended, break into a difficult nightmare and die tragically; or simply use these nightmare conditions to commit silent and deliberate murder.

Yes, the nightmare would be dispelled at sunrise.

But not everyone who entered a nightmare for the first time could survive until sunrise.

Moreover, ordinary people were almost unaware of nightmares. It was like being in a dream.

For them, this was just a real “death” in a nightmare.

In the case where ordinary people became Transcended, they would Lose Control, be cursed, or die by accident. Thus, a new nightmare would be born.

In this way, the number of nightmares would increase!

Therefore, controlling the number of nightmares and continuing to reduce them became meaningful and long work.

As Salvatore said.

If you want to embark on the Transcended path, you must possess the corresponding talent and determination.

The North Sea Territory was sparsely populated because of the cold weather. Nightmares were not frequent here, so bishops were not too busy.

Bishop Daryl was enough to suppress all high-level nightmares in the diocese without the assistance of other bishops.

On the other hand...

If the bishop died suddenly, the entire North Sea Territory might turn into a mess.

So, as long as Annan becomes North Sea Territory diocese bishop.

Whether it was enemies from the Noah Kingdom or hostility from Austere-Winter Dukedom, it would end here. The premise was that as long as Annan did not step down.

Then the conclusion was clear.

If Annan accepted this condition, it would be equivalent to revealing that Austere-Winter Dukedom did not send him.

—But Annan was under Austere-Winter Dukedom's pursue.

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Annan Austere-Winter came to the Freezing Water Port.

Is it because of the arrangements made by Austere-Winter Dukedom...

—Or because he is hunted down and has nowhere to go?

This would greatly affect the next negotiation between Bishop Daryl and Annan.

“This terrible old man is so sly.” Annan snorted.

This fat old man with golden teeth looked like a kind old man with a smiling face. Annan knew such an old man would be difficult to deal with.

Sure enough, the main reason was that Annan didn't know what Bishop Daryl wanted.

Annan preferred to know Bishop Daryl's true purpose.

Because now, Bishop Daryl clearly had something he needed from Annan. On the other hand, Annan didn't know where 'Annan' came from or what 'he' was going to do.

If Annan could know the opponent's hand, the position of the two would be reversed instantly.

“...En.”

Annan paused slightly before strolling as usual.

He had found a way.

Holding the freshly brewed black tea and snacks, Annan walked back to the bedroom.

Bishop Daryl held a silver metal pen, writing something on the notebook.

Looking back when Annan came in, Bishop Daryl smiled and put the pen back near his pocket watch.

“Without a servant, it feels inconvenient, right?”

“Haha, not really.”

Annan spoke with a subtle smile at the corner of his mouth, “I've long been used to it.”

With that, Annan poured a cup of black tea for Bishop Daryl and himself. Then, he took out the snacks and put them on the table.

Annan said casually, “Fortunately, the things that the viscount has at home are quite complete. Oh, by the way—these snacks are leftover from yesterday, do you mind?”

With that said, Annan took out a delicate cake and put it in his mouth.

Bishop Daryl quickly smiled and waved his hand, “Even you as the feudal lord don't mind it, naturally it's fine for me. How can we commoners be so pampered?”

“Can our esteemed Master Bishop be considered a commoner?”

Annan said with a smile and sat across from Daryl, “I thought Master Bishop's food, clothing, housing, and transportation should be like nobles.”

Annan's smile was like a child of the same age, pure, innocent, and pleasant.

Bishop Daryl's face was solemn, "That's impossible.

"I don't know about other churches, but at least in our case, the priest has no personal savings." Having said that, Bishop Daryl paused slightly.

Bishop Daryl suddenly realized that this was not something that should be said at this time.

If Annan inherited the Grand Duke's position, it would have little effect. His wealth was not stored in his own hands.

But he was different now.

Annan came to a neighboring country alone. If he joined the church, it meant that all the money he had on hand must be spent.

For the son of a noble duke, this was undoubtedly an unacceptable condition.

It was like the seller discounted his price by mistake.

So Bishop Daryl was silent for a while, then added, "But at the same time, we can also use some simple means to bypass this curse."

As he said, the bald and fat bishop smiled and pointed at his golden teeth, "This can be considered as small pocket money.

"In addition, since I am using gold teeth, then it's reasonable for me to keep some spare gold teeth in the church. After all, I am more or less the face of the church. I can't meet people without my teeth, right?"

Then, you can use these golden teeth for transactions.

Annan looked at this shameless fat man in surprise.

This guy...

What a witty fellow.

Isn't Silver Sire too tolerant to the priests?

Hmph, it still doesn't click though.

Annan quickly realized the problem.

"Priests are forbidden to possess wealth." This practice isn't necessarily to please Silver Sire.

This is more like a kind of "discipline."

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On the one hand, this practice was used to remind these priests that their deity was watching them; on the other hand, it was a display for civilians.

The practice was to let them know, "Even the priest must follow the rules."

But it seemed right at the same time.

The deities of this world didn't need believers to provide faith power or something. The deities just needed the priests to maintain their core rules.

It was more like a boss-employee relationship. When the company was under-employed, the employees' primary responsibility was to complete their tasks first, and only then would they try to spread the corporate culture.

So the priests didn't bother to preach.

However, it was necessary to maintain the image and influence of the priests so that the public would "cooperate" with the upright deities' rule.

The image of priests and the importance they attached to the rules directly determine the people's perception of the deities.

In turn, it might affect people's recognition of the national diocese rules.

In the Noah Kingdom, Silver Sire adopted "Smile Service," taking a more gentle approach. It was like a kind reminder not to "hoard goods for individual benefits."

Other countries and other churches should have completely different styles.

What kind of rules does Old Grandmother adopt? Annan's thoughts ran quickly in his mind.

So he sighed slightly with a little sympathy on his face, "I'm sorry for being blunt. At Silver Sire's side, there are so many strange rules."

The statement was ambiguous. It should be quite unexpected for those hearing it for the first time.

Moreover, it would tend to get secret information to bring out from other's complaints.

Sure enough, the fat bishop smiled awkwardly and subconsciously complained to Annan, "It's naturally incomparable with yours.

"Strictly speaking, our side is a bunch of businesspeople, not even armed by the church. How can it be compared to the Austere-Winter? There's a special service such as Winter's Hand to help with the inconspicuous work. The Grand Duke also agreed to form defensive armed forces for the church. Let's not dawdle in such idle chatter."

...Um?

Annan keenly extracted key information.

He then sighed without a trace and changed the subject to prevent Bishop Daryl from reacting, "It's not always the case.

"Master Bishop, do you know Austere-Winter Dukedom well?" With that, Annan's expression became serious.

It was the professional look for business affairs.

Upon seeing this, the smile on Bishop Daryl's face also narrowed slightly.

He pondered for a moment and then slowly nodded, "I know a bit here and there, even before this."

"Before this— What do you mean?"

"It's a year and a half ago. The latest news I got was in February this year."

Bishop Daryl smashed his mouth and sighed, "Feudal lord, your side is so chaotic this year. I dare not cross the border anyway.

"I remember you are Austerian, right? Then, you should have participated. No. Speaking of which, when did you come to the Freezing Water Port?"

"I have been here for a while."

Annan's body leaned back slightly, his expression a little helpless, "I can't say anything. It's for your good, Master Bishop."

"It's fine. I understand."

Bishop shook his head, "The Grand Duke was assassinated, and there are too many things involved. This is not a provocation. But Annan—I call you that way because I don't want to leak this sentence."

He no longer called Annan by his honorific.

His expression also became serious and solemn,

"There must be something wrong with the higher-ups in the Cold-Blooded Lady Church. I don't know who or how many, but there must be a problem.

"You are too young to know. When the upright deity's blood is assassinated, sick, or suffers an accident, the upright deity's church will be notified when they die.

"They didn't rush to the crime scene immediately, which means that in the process of receiving the notification, passing it to the notification hall, and then passing it to Winter's Hand – there was at least one traitor."

Bishop Daryl said thoughtfully, "Seriously, I shouldn't say this, at least not at this time. I'm telling you this now, and I'm not trying to persuade you to join us. I don't want your judgment to be flawed because of the lack of knowledge on this incident.

"If Austere-Winter Dukedom has a gentle Grand Duke like you, it will be good for us.

"People of Noah should no longer dwell in a meaningless war."

...So that's the case.

Annan nodded slowly, "I see..."

He finally understood.

After thinking for a moment, Annan changed the topic back, "We can talk about the bishop matter another time.

“But, the matter of putting my name out as a priest, I am indeed interested.

“I am quite curious about holy light engravings and the extraordinary ability of our priest. Please explain more to me.” Annan's expression was humble and gentle.

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Hearing that, Bishop Daryl's expression relaxed a lot.

He leaned back, resting on the back of the seat.

The bald bishop, with his age indiscernible, reached out his chubby fingers while tasting the warm black tea. He pointed at the ring on Annan's hand.

“Holy light engraving is not something complicated and bizarre. You can understand it as the priest's 'vessel.'

“Let's start from the beginning. We 'churchman'...or in ancient terms, 'priest' does not require a curse vessel made of metal because we are different from Transcended. We don't store the curse in our body.”

Having said that, Bishop Daryl's expression was slightly serious.

“This is because anyone above the level of 'bishop' will not end well. We will die in a nightmare somewhere.

“After all, it doesn't take a good physique to purify the nightmare. It's better to have fewer curses stored in your body so that your body is weaker. If we become a monster, it won't hurt the innocent.

“Just like you Transcended, you can use the means of carrying and granting curse to transfer the invisible and untouchable curse. Of course, the curse can be transferred. Even if you are not the priest, you will quickly strengthen yourself after purifying the nightmare. This is because the curse that composes the nightmare has been purified and absorbed by you.

“The obsession that constitutes a nightmare is like a skeleton; these curses that can be absorbed are flesh and blood. No matter which one is missing, the nightmare will collapse.

“As for the remnants, the most turbid curse that humans cannot purify will be handed over to the upright deities in the involved diocese for in-depth purification; if there is no church nearby, it will be passed on to this month's upright deity to handle.

“But presumably, you also know... For this world, the curse is power. It is the same for Silver Sire. These curses that we cannot purify, whether for upright deities or false deities, are all great tonic.”

Bishop Daryl observed Annan's expression.

He was roughly convinced that Annan understood what he meant and then slowly continued, “The reason why we can avoid storing curses in our bodies and yet capable of utilizing Transcended power is not that the priest has a power system beyond curses, but our curse has always been stored in our respective deities – like deposits in a bank.

“Engraving is a voucher to borrow Transcended power from different deities temporarily. In essence, they are still our curse. Think of it as a kind of banking business of the Transcended circles.”

I roughly get it. Annan nodded slightly.

This mechanism is not so much a bank but cloud storage.

It is inconvenient to store the curse in the body for various reasons, so it is stored in the cloud. When you need it, you can download this data by relying on your credentials or encryption and store it when you don't use it.

You're making it so easy to use, Deity Lords.

But, in other words, is the curse the “experience” the players get?

Annan came into deep thought. In this narration, he had a clearer picture.

Annan and the players were different from the natives of the world. Perhaps the natives could not transfer the curse by killing each other.

Annan soon made sense why he gained so little experience after killing a Silver Rank wizard. Most of the experience was used to construct nightmares. The profession level obtained after purifying the nightmare was only the part that was easier to be digested and absorbed.

“That is to say holy light engraving is the proof obtained after the nightmare is completely purified?” Annan asked.

Bishop Daryl nodded, “Yes. Our priest is not divided into ranks. The difference in strength comes only from how many engravings we hold.

“The more distorted the nightmare, the more engravings we can get after complete purification, for example...”

As Bishop Daryl spoke, he stretched out his right hand to Annan, palm down.

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On the back of Daryl's hand, many finely divided and profound silver runes suddenly appeared. Starting from the back of his hand, the silver runes densely spread out to his sleeves to his neck, chin, and right cheek.

These complicated silver runes gave people a sacred charm. Daryl's right eye seemed to be mixed with some rune, shining with a mysterious silver light.

Annan just stared at those runes, and he could feel intense dizziness.

Annan forcibly looked away and held his forehead with his hand.

“This is-“

“These are holy light engravings, the medium through which we perform divine arts. Not everyone can communicate with deities, but you can,” said Daryl as he waved his hand.

Annan vaguely perceived that something seemed to be spreading in the room.

In other words, it was as if something originally existed in the air, but now it had been cleansed.

“After you have just thoroughly purified the previous nightmare, I could sense that I gained 1 engraving.”

Daryl pointed to somewhere on his cheek, “I initially predicted that with the intensity of this nightmare, I should have gotten 10 engravings.”

The face that looked simple and amiable at first looked majestic with the silver rune.

“This should be because I only purified the nightmare once. You have found the key and destroyed the nightmare's cornerstone. So you should have gotten far more than me.

“Yes, I got 9 engravings.” Annan nodded and admitted.

—It turned out to be like this.

Annan had a better grasp now.

Only after a nightmare was wholly purified would the rewards be given out. In this nightmare, the more it was purified, the more engravings would be obtained.

“Then what if the priest doesn't clean up the nightmare, but by other Transcended?” Annan remembered the existence of the players, so he asked.

Daryl shrugged, “Naturally, you can only get part of the nightmare you worked for, as long as you hadn't left the diocese you belonged to when you purified the nightmare.

“After all, when we purify nightmares, we won't get power from the nightmare, like Transcended. The Transcendeds were paid on a daily basis, while we settled on a monthly basis. However, some nightmares were difficult to purify. Or, if the mission were tough, we would also temporarily hire Transcended. We would use the nightmare 'key' as a reward to let them enter the nightmare to assist in the purification. Otherwise, we were equivalent to being trapped in the situation. In short, everyone would get what they deserve. The officials, or at least innocent Transcendeds, help us to purify the nightmare quicker, and we temporarily open the nightmare to them so that they can improve their strength.”

That doesn't entirely make sense, though. Annan suddenly realized something.

When Transcended purified the dungeon instance, they could only get the profession level when clearing the dungeon nightmare.

After the priest thoroughly purified the dungeon instance, they could only get the holy light engravings.

But Annan, a transcended and also a priest, got both benefits.

Then was he paid twice for doing the same job from two different bosses?

Is this a bug or a mechanism?

For an instant, Annan felt as if he had pilfered the upright deities' benefits.

This feels awesome...

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After showing it to Annan, Bishop Daryl hid the engravings again.

He picked up the teacup and took a sip of the already warm black tea.

Afterward, Bishop Daryl took a silver coin from his arms.

“The biggest advantage of divine arts lies in its versatility.”

He explained, “In the nightmare, we are sometimes a swordsman, sometimes a wizard. Sometimes, we're tested on the skill of using a bow. Sometimes the mission is about assassination. Sometimes we become the elderly, sometimes we become the children, and there are even times we become disabled.

“Occasionally, we will enter the dreams of giants and centaurs. Anything can happen. The abilities and skills we learned in the real world may not be applicable in nightmares.”

For example, if the person in the dream had not learned swordsmanship, it would be difficult for that body to use advanced swordsmanship; if he were not systematically trained on archery, even if the person entered the body was a veteran archer, it would become difficult to use that body to fight.

In the same way, factors such as the spell mastery and mana pool held by the nightmare's body would always limit the Transcended.

After the last dungeon instance ended, Annan had a general understanding of Silver Rank's wizard combat power.

The combat strength was incredible.

Many schools of wizards displayed high combat power even without spell casting. For example, Carl could manipulate the items within 10 meters of his proximity at will as if the item was his arm, no matter if it was solid rock walls and floors, silver tea sets, liquids, or flames.

There was also the Soul Snatch wizard, who could control the minds of others in one word, one glance, and one action. In comparison, the destruction wizard could trigger earthquakes after death.

But corresponding to the combat strength outside the dungeon instance, the wizard's combat power in the dungeon instance was almost the worst.

When profession and school did not match, the wizards could hardly use most of their abilities.

Their incredible combat power made them lack the experience of evenly matched battles and even the psychological preparation of dealing with strong enemies when they were weaker.

“But, engravings can be used in nightmares just like curses. Both curses and engraving are engraved in the soul and will not be affected even by body change. Similarly, if you are cursed, you can't escape by simply changing your body.

Bishop Daryl said in a deep voice, "In other words, as long as you don't go back to the far past, as long as constellations are belonging to the upright deities in the sky, as long as there is the 'essence' of the communication deities..."

"Then, no matter who we become, we can use divine arts as usual. Now that you have engravings, you have the ability to release divine arts. Let me show you..."

With that said, Bishop Daryl took out a silver coin, like a magician. He clamped the silver coin with the two fingers of his right hand and showed it to Annan.

Then he moved the silver coin to the side and flicked it with his left hand.

Accompanied by an inaudible "cling," a dim silver light flashed.

A teacup fell apart in an instant.

"This divine art is called 'Clang Object.' Its might was capable of killing an unwary low-rank Transcended. It was one of the simplest divine arts in Silver Sire."

Bishop Daryl said, but Annan was taken aback.

Because he suddenly saw two glimmering panels before his eyes:

[Cardinal Bishop Daryl is imparting you the "priest" profession. Would you like to spend five holy light engravings to acquire this profession?]

[Cardinal Bishop Daryl is teaching you the divine art "Clanging Object." Would you like to spend a holy light engraving (Silver Sire) to learn it quickly?]

This guy is a Cardinal Bishop?!

Compared with the notification to learn a new skill, this information stunned Annan.

Bishop Daryl shook the silver coin suddenly.

Like a magic trick, the silver coin suddenly became a slender and sharp dagger. Its width and length were like five mutton skewers tied together.

"This divine art is called a 'Sharp Object.' It is sharp but fragile, unable to withstand the slash of a sword, but it is enough to cut off the finger easily. It is generally used for stabbing, but it can also be used to cut ropes or a throat cut. If your hands and feet are tied up with a rope, it can help you out."

As the fat bishop spoke, he demonstrated to Annan the sharpness of this temporary weapon.

He pressed the weapon tightly on his left arm, then slid it gently, and blood oozed out.

Annan could tell right away that its sharpness was similar to a razor blade, but it was thicker and harder.

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At the same time, a third glimmering panel popped up in front of him again.

"The last thing is our signature divine art."

Bishop Daryl said, putting down the temporary weapon and taking out another silver coin.

He put the silver coin on his forehead and flicked it lightly.

The silver coin had a faint edge blacked out.

He passed the silver coin for Annan for take a look.

“This represents my health. If the color changes, it means that the injury can be treated with divine arts.”

Daryl said, shaking the silver coin vigorously, and then the black edge was thrown out. It was like using a clinical thermometer.

“This divine art is called Eternal Youth.”

Daryl pressed the silver coin to his wound and gave a wry smile, “Although that's supposedly the case...”

As Daryl spoke, he gently cut the wound with the silver coin.

It was like being pulled up by a zipper.

Wherever the silver coin passed, the wound recovered.

But after it was used up, the silver coin suddenly turned black, cracked, and disappeared into the air.

“See? You have to use at least one silver coin at a time. It depends on the number of your engravings in terms of the ability's upper limit. But generally speaking, it is quite expensive.”

Bishop Daryl reminded earnestly, “Silver Sire's divine arts' medium is 'silver coins' and 'silver jewelry of equivalent value.' Although it is not easy to find in a nightmare, you can usually find it if you look carefully. Several other upright deities' mediums are much easier to find.

“The pocket watches we carry with us hide the curse that 'makes it more expensive.' Some pocket watches have signatures of some important people and are inlaid with some precious gems. This is also the reason.

“This pocket watch is the last counterattack for us, the Silver Sire's priests, when we encounter a strong enemy. With the ultrahigh value of this pocket watch, we can deliver a formidable counterattack.”

Having said that, the fat bishop paused slightly, emphasized his tone, and reminded seriously, “Of course, if the pocket watch is expended, the church will not easily provide a second one!

“If you dream of Silver Sire, you can spend three engravings first and ask him to bestow you these three divine arts. If you learn it on your own, it will be better. This shows that you have a good fate with Silver Sire. With how fast your learning speed is, it shows your talent is substantially higher.”

The fat bishop hadn't finished speaking yet, but he saw Annan silently taking out a silver coin.

With a simple swipe, Annan summoned a sharp and slender dagger.

“Is this how you do it?”

Annan spoke in an innocent and ignorant tone, like a cute seal that came ashore to bask under the sun, "I don't quite understand this divine art. What's the standard?"

There was a silver gleam in Annan's eyes.

Watching this scene, Bishop Daryl became silent for a moment.

His complexion changed several times, and he spoke with some difficulty, "Annan, although you are a foreigner, you still can be a cardinal bishop."

"Tell me more about it after you become a cardinal."

Annan smiled and interrupted Bishop Daryl's words, "It's almost nine o'clock. Let's go to Salvatore. I will come back to ask you for advice later. Remember to call me Don Juan in front of outsiders, Grandpa Daryl."

"Alright."

Bishop Daryl's complexion changed for a while, but he sighed and responded softly.

Annan politely bowed to him.

Annan was still grateful to this Santa Claus who gave him an identity, important information, profession, and skills.

—Grandpa Daryl, please come to chat often in the future~

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"...En." Salvatore opened his bloodshot eyes.

It was 9:00 p.m..

He hadn't slept enough, but he couldn't sleep anymore.

The black spider-web-like fragmentation marks had already crawled out of the bronze necklace on his neckline, quietly covering his collarbone and throat.

After Salvatore woke up, they began to shrink at speed visible to the naked eye and gradually returned to the necklace.

"...Almost."

Salvatore murmured, "I have to find someone to knock me out once. After that, my body can't take it anymore."

Only if he fainted suddenly, the curse would not be able to react.

Back in Swamp's Black Tower, Salvatore usually finds a Soul Scratch wizard to knock him out and make him sleep, especially when he is at his limits.

In that case, Salvatore wasn't sleeping, hence avoiding the curse.

Similar to all Transcended, Salvatore's power gained from the curse was also related to his curse details.

“Can't take it anymore? I smell the cleansing of a nightmare. Salvatore.”

A deep, echoing voice sounded in Salvatore's heart, “Don Juan is amazing, much better than you.”

“What?”

Salvatore was a little surprised, “Did he enter a nightmare?”

He was not surprised by this sound that was always attacking him.

Many people thought that Salvatore's curse helped him do something in a dream. For example, learn in a dream or remember something. So most people determined that as the reason why his strength snowballed since he seemed to remember everything.

But only Salvatore knew; they all guessed wrong.

Few people know what Salvatore's real curse was.

Salvatore's curse was called “Restless Reflection.”

The entity had the same memory as Salvatore, but its personality was opposite to Salvatore's. Furthermore, it was far better and more talented than Salvatore because this entity was Salvatore's reflection.

The more inferior Salvatore was at something, the better the reflection was.

It also meant that Salvatore could process parallel thinking at the same time.

Indeed, the mystery that he mastered a new skill very quickly was that he started learning simultaneously with his reflection.

Generally speaking, Salvatore learned slower than his 'shadow.'

So only Salvatore knew he was not a genius. On the contrary, he was a fool.

Otherwise, why was his reflection stronger than him in every way?

But he was also grateful for his reflection.

It was under the endless mockery of the reflection that Salvatore's mental fortitude and emotions could be so stable.

Through referring to the reflection, Salvatore found out the condition for his success and what kind of person he should be.

“You should ask Don Juan for some benefits, Salvatore. You will succeed.”

The shadow whispered in Salvatore's heart, “He owes you too much.”

“Okay, then I understand.”

Salvatore nodded and decided to take the exact opposite action of the shadow's suggestion as usual, “In other words, I should thank Don Juan.”

“Hmph... Go, trash.” The shadow did not object to Salvatore's opinion.

He just whispered mockingly, "Today, you almost couldn't wake up.

"You will doze off one day. You can hardly hold it anymore."

The shadow's voice was like a hungry wolf, hoarse and echoed, "Then give me the body."

"You are wrong. I won't..."

Salvatore covered his eyes with his hands, closed his eyes with his emotions unfazed.

Even in Swamp's Black Tower, only his mentor Benjamin knew about Salvatore's real curse. This was why Salvatore speculated that Benjamin did not die.

Because his curse did not go out of control.

This meant that Salvatore should still have a secret keeper.

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According to Benjamin's speculation, the correct way to use this curse should be to exchange two selves with different thinking and areas of expertise from time to time. With that, Salvatore was technically studying and working at the same time, with two selves taking breaks alternately.

But the problem Benjamin alerted Salvatore was that because Salvatore had a kind personality, his "shadow" was absolutely untrustworthy.

Therefore, Benjamin set a double seal for this curse.

At six o'clock in the morning, Mr. Ray sprinkled purification light on the world. With that as an anchor point, its effective period expanded to three hours before and after. In this case, the starting period was 3:00 a.m. and the ending period was 9:00 a.m. In that case, the total hours were expanded threefold.

—Another thing to take note of was that number "3" was magical in this world.

Silent Lady, the Deity of Darkness and Veto, was the protector of the third month. Therefore, all involving rituals must have the number "3." Many wizards believe that in the ritual of the same specification, the more the number related to the "three," the more power could be borrowed, and the better the ritual effect would be.

Yes, Salvatore was not limited to sleeping in the period from 3 a.m. to 9 a.m.

But only during this period, his control over his body would not be robbed away when he slept.

In other cases, if Salvatore slept, the shadow would crawl out of the necklace and gradually spread. When the black mark spread to the forehead, it meant that another Salvatore had come out.

The only way for the shadow to return was when the other "Salvatore" went to sleep again.

"Don Juan is here, Salvatore."

At this moment, the shadow suddenly reminded, "There is another terrifying person following him. I can't smell him."

"...A terrifying person?"

Salvatore was puzzled and opened his eyes slightly.

Is the person terrifying for me...or my shadow?

“Senior, did you sleep well?”

Annan knocked on the door very lightly and asked in a low volume, “Are you awake?”

“Come in, Don Juan.”

Salvatore's gentle voice sounded, “I have been awake for a while.”

Annan walked in with a smile while Bishop Daryl followed behind him.

Seeing Bishop Daryl, Salvatore was visibly startled.

“Master Bishop?”

“Yes, Bishop Daryl,” Annan replied thoughtfully, “With his assistance and guidance, I have almost purified Gerald's nightmare.”

Bishop Daryl just smiled and nodded.

The chubby face had a kind smile, seemingly without any ill thoughts.

“May Silver Sire bless you today, esteemed Black Tower's Son and our esteemed feudal lord.”

Bishop Daryl said, bowing to Salvatore and Annan, respectively. His fat body made his movements look a little clumsy.

Salvatore felt his heart tremble when Bishop Daryl spoke.

“Ask him... Can he see me?” The shadow's low and hoarse voice sounded in Salvatore's heart with some excitement.

But Salvatore chose to remain silent to avoid troubles.

“It seems you're all busy.”

Bishop Daryl smiled and said, “Then this old man will not bother you anymore.

“Feudal lord, I will first take the viscount's dead body to the police station and wait for you there. Then, after you have taken care of everything, just come to me.”

“Thanks, Master Bishop.” Annan nodded seriously.

Soon, Daryl closed the door and left.

“Tsk, what a lovely child.”

The shadow smiled at the bottom of Salvatore's heart, “It's just that he's too indulgent into scheming. Having too many schemes does no good.

“He's acting, Salvatore. How about you ask him – who are you? I promise you can figure out his identity.”

—Speak all you want. I lose if I believe your nonsense.

As always, Salvatore completely ignored all of the reflection's suggestions.

From this perspective, he was also quite grateful for his shadow.

The shadow was undoubtedly a mirror of himself. It could be used to alert him to be grateful, remind him to maintain moral standards, and remind him not to doubt others easily.

This stubbornness that was never willing to change oneself was also the opposite of the reflection. This was Salvatore's unique characteristic.

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“Don Juan.”

Salvatore asked with some uncertainty, “Are you getting stronger again?”

“Your perception is quite sharp, senior.”

Annan smiled and leaned on the door, “Purifying nightmares will help you become stronger.”

“That's true.”

Salvatore recalled the nightmare he had entered and nodded with a lingering fear, “But if I can, I still don't want to enter the nightmare.”

“I appreciate the honesty.” Annan shrugged.

Salvatore had a rare honesty. Though, this train of thought was quite rare.

On the other hand, Annan liked nightmares mainly because he wanted to experience the lives of others, which would give him a sense of pleasure in peering into the other's fate.

“Quickly ask him – What is Gerald's nightmare?”

The shadow's deep and hoarse voice sounded from the bottom of Salvatore's heart, “Maybe you can find the teacher's information!”

This was not an unreasonable suggestion but merely a “reminder” of something Salvatore had forgotten.

Salvatore still had to think carefully about this suggestion. But he quickly made up his mind.

—It's better not to ask.

If Don Juan wants to talk about it, he will definitely say it. If he doesn't say it, he must have encountered something inconvenient to tell me.

So Salvatore changed the subject, “Do you have any arrangements for today? Do you need my help?”

“Yes and no,” Annan replied.

There were some arrangements.

Supposedly, Annan had to visit tax officer Nottdamm. This middle-aged man, who was about to get a son, asked Annan what he could do to repay Annan's life-saving kindness last night.

Yet, Annan responded to Salvatore with a smile.

“Just treat me to a home-cooked meal.” He answered so briskly.

Annan didn't need Nottdamm to do anything. On what Nottdamm could do, Annan didn't need the help.

In other words, Nottdamm was of no utility value for Annan.

If the two didn't know each other at all, Annan wouldn't notice him because their worlds would not intersect.

But since the two met because of the common enemy – Old Viscount, Annan would not cut off the connection between the two.

Because in the process of helping others, Annan, who had a normal worldview, would also feel joy from the heart.

Just like their conversation when they were on the carriage, Annan would instinctively influence the others to have a favorable impression of him.

“Let others like him” was a natural talent for Annan, like breathing.

As long as he wanted to, everything would come naturally.

Reason? It was simple.

Animals had the instinct to feel their kins' attitude vaguely.

Even if it might not be clear, one would subconsciously choose to be intimate or beware. This was not a problem that could be remedied in conversation skills.

A person with a malicious heart was, after all, a malicious person.

Annan was different. He did treat people with sincerity. Those with more sensitive instincts would trust Annan more.

Annan agreed with the common sense from the bottom of his heart: If you are a friend, then you should find a way to help him be happy and solve his troubles.

In this process, Annan would naturally win the trust of the other party.

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This trust and favor was just an insignificant by-product for Annan.

Because Annan chose to do good, not based on material demands or seeking spiritual approval. It was not even the aversion to evil nor the resentment of evil.

Annan did his kindness unconditionally.

The only sin worth noting on Annan was his tendency to send wrong signals to other girls while not having a romantic interest.

Because of all the troubles around him, Annan always knew what was abnormal about him, and he even thought it was some sort of curse.

He only wanted to pursue a peaceful and comfortable life and didn't make good use of his talent. This was his lazy heart that was afraid of trouble. Annan was still self-aware in some sense.

Nevertheless, for the former Annan, his side was unknowingly full of friends for both genders.

They all thought Annan was a creep, but they all wanted to be friends with Annan from the bottom of their hearts.

Annan could peer into the hearts of others, as well as himself. This also made Annan extremely sensitive to his actions:

Doing evil will make him feel guilty.

Doing good will make him happy.

...It was supposed to be like this.

But now, Annan lost half of his feelings.

Laziness and guilt disappear at the same time.

This made the harmless man dangerous.

Annan frankly thought this anomaly was commendable.

Praise the kindness; praise the sacredness so that you can be happy.

This is a beautiful trait that can be acknowledged with one's chest raised.

Why avoid it?

Why should I be scared?

"His wife is about to give birth. I should send my blessings. It is naturally best for you to follow. The identity of the two of us is enough to send away the people he has offended before."

Annan smiled and said, "Also, didn't Nottedamm want to thank me? If he keeps our kindness in his heart, it may not be good for him in the long run. If he is an upright person valuing comradeship, then the previous matter will occupy his thoughts. Undoubtedly, it will affect his work and judgment. If he is petty-minded, the previous matter might incite him to turn against us.

"No matter what kind of person he is, if I go to see him as soon as possible, he will be happy."

"Sure, he will think you value him very much."

Seeing Annan's incomparably clear eyes, Salvatore chuckled, "If it's okay, can you take me with you?"

"Let's go together. He will be happier."

Annan nodded, "I will go to the police station when I finish eating. Grandpa Bishop will accompany me through more complicated power transfer procedures. You won't like it. At that time, you can stay with him or come back and wait here.

Annan answered naturally, "We will go back to the Freezing Water Port at around three in the afternoon. We should be able to catch up with dinner. I mean your dinner. If you go to bed late, you naturally have to eat later, or you will be hungry after midnight."

"No problem." Salvatore responded quickly, "Wait for me to wash up."

In fact, Salvatore was not the kind of person who believed everyone. He had twice the amount of intelligence of ordinary people. It was difficult for anyone to deceive him.

But it was so comfortable to get along with Annan.

Salvatore believes that Annan was a guy who "would be identified as a good person in any first encounter."

If Annan were a mature and credible man, this strong personality charm would become a powerful leadership that was as warm as the sun.

But because of Annan's current image, the good impression would turn into love and trust.

But the essence was the same.

Although Salvatore only knew Annan for a few days, he wanted to be friends with Annan from the bottom of his heart.

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It could be because of the heavy rain last night.

Even at 10 a.m., the Roseburg streets still had a lingering cold.

The Viscount Mansion's servants were taken away and dismissed. Annan and Salvatore couldn't find a carriage for a while.

Fortunately, the viscount's house and the tax officer Rumu Notttdamm's residence were not far away.

The two didn't mind the walk either. So, they began strolling to their destination.

"Don't you need to care about your personal guards? They did a great job last night," said Salvatore casually.

Annan chuckled, "They must not be awake yet."

"It's almost noon now."

Salvatore turned his head back in surprise and looked at his companion beside him, "Are you so lenient with them?"

"No, it's just my guess. They must have had trouble sleeping when they went back last night."

The little feudal lord with black hair and blue eyes looked at Salvatore with a smile.

Annan watched the players tackle the dungeon instance all night long.

This morning, Annan watched the players turn off the broadcast, and they went offline.

Seeing Annan's attitude, Salvatore raised his brows slightly, "You look confident about it."

"Yeah, do you want to take a gamble?"

"Don't think of me as a fool, Don Juan."

Salvatore sneered, "Since you are so confident, I won't be fooled."

Annan looked at Salvatore in surprise.

Unexpectedly, this guy could be so clear and decisive in his mind in petty matters...

Or...

"—So you are not stupid," Annan exclaimed.

Salvatore became irritated, "Shit, what are you talking about, little kid?"

Because of course-

On such trivial matters, Salvatore usually followed the shadow's advice.

Breathing the fresh air, Annan took a deep breath and felt a little joy.

Yesterday was quite a long day.

This was especially true for Annan.

He killed Gerald, Justin, and Viscount Barber and then happily watched the body all night. Then, he got up at 6 a.m. and tackled another dungeon.

He was under work for the whole day, his mind had not stopped, and his body only slept for an hour and a half.

But, this day was too fulfilling.

Damn it, do I have to make up for the overtime I owed in my previous life?

"Achu!" Salvatore sneezed.

It had just rained, and the sea breeze in the North Sea Territory in December made Salvatore's body tremble slightly.

"Are you cold?"

Annan asked with some concern, "You can have my clothes."

Seeing this minor who was more than one head shorter than him asked with such concern, Salvatore was slightly embarrassed. "Thank you, Don Juan, but I'm not so cold anymore-

"Also, we're already here!"

Following his gaze, Annan saw a residence typically dedicated to high-ranking officials.

The residence was about the size of a modern single-family villa. It had two floors, and the blue-black stone walls were covered with plants similar to "Parthenocissus." The courtyard was small, and some plantations were within the iron fence.

It seemed that this house was inhabited for at least 30 to 40 years.

That was quite a few years.

"Where is their servant?" Salvatore had a strange feeling.

He stepped forward and shouted, "Is anyone home?"

The strange thing was that there was no response inside.

"Is there no one at home... huh?" Salvatore was puzzled and wanted to check the lock.

The duo discovered that the iron door lock was destroyed from outside, and the door was not locked.

The two of them looked at each other, keenly aware that something was wrong.

They opened the iron door directly and walked in.

If it weren't for the two of them being noble enough, they might be treated as thieves or robbers.

But fortunately, the two of them didn't need to worry about it at this time. They opened the iron door and walked in. Before anything else, Salvatore closed the iron door to prevent anyone from following them in.

"Nottdamm?"

"Are you here, Rumu!?"

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They both shouted.

The door to the living room was not closed either.

No one responded even after they entered the living room.

Even in the whole house, there was no sign of life. The furniture and the floor were covered with a faint layer of ash.

"Are you sure his house is here?"

Annan frowned slightly and walked quickly ahead, holding the waist bag with his right hand. He had the trustworthy Mr. Boning Knife on stand-by.

Annan vaguely sensed something was wrong, but he couldn't tell what it was.

"Did he go out with his whole family?" Salvatore, who was following Annan, frowned slightly and murmured. He habitually closed the living room's door.

“Careful!” Annan's pupils shrank instantly. He immediately noticed an incoming mysterious danger.

A chill feeling that penetrated the heart seeped from his back and neck. Annan felt as if he was immersed in ice water and his body restrained, unable to move.

Annan and Salvatore looked at each other. He quickly confirmed through Salvatore's panicked eyes with eye bags and dark circles that this guy didn't know what was going on as well.

“I think they will come, Maemi.” A somewhat familiar voice came from the next room.

That was Rumu Notttamm's voice.

“Impossible, Rumu. They are just polite to you. How busy are those two big shots?”

It was the voice of a woman. She sounded firm and a bit aggressive.

Annan could roughly determine that she was not in a great mood right now, and she was irritable.

“Listen to me... Hey?” At this moment, the woman walked into the living room.

Seeing Annan and Salvatore appearing here, she was taken aback.

Annan immediately noticed-

It was a pregnant woman. Judging from the bulge of the abdomen, she was approaching labor at any time.

At the moment Annan met her eyes, he showed a pure and gentle smile immediately and greeted the woman, “Madam, good morning. As you can see, I am Don Juan Geraint. This is Salvatore Blacktower.

“Mr. Notttamm invited us to come over as guests, so we came. Sorry for being a little rude. The door was unlocked. So, we came in.”

“Yes,” Salvatore also reacted and quickly added, “We shouted twice outside the door previously, but no one opened the door.”

“Idiot, you shouldn't have said this!”

The shadow's low and hoarse voice sounded violently in Salvatore's heart, “You are all exposed, learn from Don Juan on what is acting! If things go south, let me handle it!”

Fuck off. I can't let you out. Salvatore muttered in his heart.

Sure enough, as the shadow said, the pregnant woman glanced at Salvatore suspiciously. Obviously, they didn't hear Annan's call.

“It's also possible that our voice is too soft,” Annan raised his head and looked at the pregnant woman earnestly, making a crisp and tender voice, “After all, we are all guests. It's bad to be too noisy.”

Probably because Annan's words were convincing, or Annan's face had subconsciously softened her attitude. The pregnant woman looked at Annan's face and couldn't help showing a smile, “Please have a seat, feudal lord! This is Lord Mayor, right? I'm going to serve you some tea. Rumu, come out! The lords are here!”

After that, she yelled into the house.

Soon, Rumu Nottdamm walked over in a panic.

He barely put on more formal clothes but still did not button all the buttons, "Sorry, I didn't expect you to come so early."

Annan and Salvatore looked at each other.

Indeed, it was the Rumu Nottdamm they saw last night.

But what happened just now...

The duo was a little wary.

Annan sat following Nottdamm's instructions and swept his finger across the table.

—There's no dust.

Annan was silent for a few seconds, then suddenly said, "We came so early to invite you out for a meal."

With that, Annan glanced at Salvatore.

Salvatore quickly understood: "Yes, we also have something to do today. You know. It's about Master Viscount."

"En, en... I know. So yes, you're leaving soon?"

Nottdamm hesitated, then nodded.

He yelled into the house, "Let's go out for lunch today, Maemi! No need to prepare. I'll be back after dinner!"

Nottdamm said to Annan with some embarrassment, "Sorry, my wife is about to give birth and can't walk away. But if it's not too far, it's okay."

"En, it's fine," Annan responded graciously.

Soon, the three of them left the house together.

After leaving through the main door, Annan looked back.

There seemed to be signs of life in the house this time, and the temperature was normal. They could even hear the sound of Maemi walking around in the house.

It was as if everything became normal.

This is strange.

What is going on?

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Since Annan and Salvatore felt the situation wasn't right, they didn't talk for too long.

It just so happened Nottddamm wanted to take care of his wife and couldn't stay with the duo for a long time.

After the meal and sending Nottddamm back, the duo went straight to the police station.

This was not the same as previously planned.

Originally, Salvatore didn't plan to get involved with this kind of trouble with Annan.

But what happened in Nottddamm's old house previously gave off lingering fear.

Without being urged by the shadow, Salvatore followed Annan's pace.

He also had something to ask Bishop Daryl.

"...Nottddamm? Do you mean that tax officer?"

After listening to Annan and Salvatore's narration, Bishop Daryl was surprised, "He and his pregnant wife are at home... 44 Clear Water Street? His wife is Maemi, a pregnant woman with a bad temper?"

Annan's heart trembled as he asked, "What's wrong? Is there something wrong?"

"This is a serious problem."

After confirmation, Bishop Daryl murmured. He glanced at Annan and couldn't help but sigh.

How can this guy get entangled in so much trouble?

After dismissing the others in the room, Bishop Daryl slowly spoke.

The following words from the fat bishop sent chills to Salvatore,

"Nottddamm should live at 12 Rusty Water Street right now. His new wife hasn't married him yet, let alone pregnant."

The fat bishop looked at Annan and Salvatore with a somewhat strange gaze and pointed to the map behind him,

"But if the wife is pregnant, you should be referring to Maemi. This is a nickname. Her full name is Maemis Nottddamm, but..."

"She passed away due to dystocia two or three years ago."

"...En."

Hearing this, Salvatore couldn't help but shiver with his face turned a little ugly.

Annan glanced at Salvatore and asked Bishop Daryl, "So, Grandpa Daryl, do you have any clues about this?"

"Or, do you think this might be a false deity's ritual?"

"As far as I know, it should not be."

Bishop Daryl quickly shook his head, "The Venerated Skeleton and Rotten Man's abilities are not related to 'time' and 'resurrection.' Although the Venerated Skeleton can reanimate the corpse, you two shouldn't fail in discerning the difference between a living corpse and a living person.

"Judging from your narration, the false deities that can achieve this effect are the "Faceless Poet" or "Bell Ringer." But their mortal vessel and church power aren't in the Noah Kingdom. Rather, they are far away.

"So, this matter should have nothing to do with the deities. At least, it is certainly not a conspiracy from any church," said Bishop Daryl confidently.

Otherwise, we can definitely detect it.

Bishop Daryl stared at Annan, and the two exchanged glances.

Then, the fat bishop spoke and asked in a low volume, "Do you need me to take a look?"

Although the bishop's attitude was tactful, the meaning in this sentence was clear.

Bishop Daryl was skeptical that Nottedamm might have received sacrifices related to "Faceless Poet" or "Bell Ringer."

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This was the only way to communicate with the false deity without the involvement of the "church."

Annan was silent for a while and shook his head, "Don't worry..."

Salvatore was staring at the map, frowning and thinking for a long time.

Seeing his troubled look, Annan's interest piqued, "Do you have any thoughts, senior?"

"I have an idea, Don Juan."

Salvatore looked cautious, recalling the event, and slowly said, "I seem to have heard the teacher talking about a similar ritual before. But it's not related to the two false deities..."

Salvatore took a pause. He reached out his hand and pointed silently to the two Nottedamm residences.

No. 44, Clear Water Street was close to the Western District where the Feudal Lord's house was situated.

No. 12, Rusty Water Street protruded from the east's slum area.

If they were to regard the central commercial avenue as a mirror, the two residences were exactly symmetrical under the circular Roseburg territory.

Immediately, Salvatore asked slowly.

"Don Juan, have you heard of the name Michelangelo?"

Hearing Salvatore's words, Annan and Bishop Daryl looked at each other and said nothing. The discussion came into a silence.

On the other hand, Salvatore was still stroking the map, measuring the land with his fingers, confirming something on the map.

Salvatore whispered, "The teacher once told me that five years ago, a powerful Austere-Winter Dukedom wizard held a taboo ritual. His name is Michelangelo Buonaro, and people call him 'Time Stopper Eye.'

"Although he is just a Gold Rank Great Wizard, many big shots who have mastered the Truth within themselves pay respect to Master Michelangelo."

"Since Master Michelangelo is particularly good at spells related to the elements of 'mirror' and 'time,'

"He can turn reality into a mirror surface, stepping into the past world that is symmetrical to the mirror surface of reality. Time is synchronized but passing backward. He can solidify and materialize anyone of the two worlds at any time.

"After he freezes the time, people in the past can't see him. The attacks he caused in the past will be all synchronized and mirrored back to reality. For the older wizards knowing Michelangelo's abilities, no one wants to offend Michelangelo."

Having said that, Salvatore took a deep breath.

He said slowly, "But this master who has mastered the spell of time faced a big problem in the taboo ritual five years ago, and he failed at the last moment. Hence, he unfortunately perished."

At this moment, Annan blinked his eyes. He vaguely realized something.

Annan looked at the fat bishop and spoke, "Maemis Notttamm, when did she die?"

"Two years ago. To be precise, it was two years and six months ago, maybe a couple of days more," replied Bishop Daryl immediately.

As a clergyman, the bishop's memory must be excellent. Otherwise, he might die without knowing when or how.

Salvatore turned around. At that moment, Annan saw a calm, indifferent senior with confident brilliance in the eyes,

"—The exact date of Master Michelangelo's death is November 30, 1498.

"The time now is December 9, 1503 of the Gregorian calendar.

"If you take the day when Maemis Notttamm died during childbirth as a mirror...

"It is only a few days away from mirrored time five years ago."

Salvatore said slowly, "Mr. Notttamm also said...

"His wife will be ready for labor in a few days."

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The deceased in ritual five years ago.

A pregnant woman died of dystocia two and a half years ago.

Today, the newborn baby...

“If you take the Black Sea as a mirror.”

Bishop Daryl pondered for a moment. His face turned a little serious as he spoke, “The locations of Roseburg and Howling White Tower are almost symmetrical.”

Obviously, Salvatore's speculation persuaded the fat bishops.

On the other hand, Annan frowned slightly, thinking hard.

The information he had was more than Daryl.

Nottedamm's new house, “Rusty Water Street 12,” was next to the Gerald Dental Clinic.

If Benjamin the Great Wizard wasn't murdered, he should have arrived at Freezing Water Port. The Freezing Water Port was only a few hours away from Roseburg.

Plus, Annan looked exactly like Maria Austere-Winter five years ago.

What does that mean? Annan's pupils shrank slightly.

According to Salvatore, Michelangelo's ritual went south at the end of the ritual. The news Annan got from the nightmare was that the ritual would end when there were only four people left.

Then, the final survivors should be “Michelangelo,” “Maria,” “Benjamin,” and “Gerald.”

In other words, when Michelangelo died five years ago, Maria, Benjamin, and Gerald were all beside him.

If nothing went wrong...

In the current situation, Annan, Benjamin, and Gerald should all reunite here. The only exception would be Maria.

Annan's thoughts ran quickly.

If he didn't transmigrate into this world as 'Annan' and Benjamin had not been murdered, what would the situation be like now?

—Benjamin and Don Juan would arrive when he was unconscious on the beach. Benjamin, who met Maria, would recognize Annan's identity immediately and protect him.

—Knowing that Benjamin, a well-known great wizard guarding the Freezing Water Port, the viscount would not launch an attack with Salvatore's Black Fire. But the viscount and Guard Captain Klaus were on the same side, and then they knew Annan's identity.

—To deter Don Juan from acting rashly and quietly completing the reincarnation ritual, the viscount would invite Benjamin, Don Juan, and Annan to a banquet in the viscount mansion.

The Viscount Mansion was adjacent to Nottedamm's house.

Just like Nottdamm's new home and Gerald's dentist's office were adjacent...

“Now that I think about it, something is wrong.”

Salvatore looked at Annan with a serious expression, “Nottdamm once told us before if Gerald wins, then Nottdamm will invite Gerald instead to show viscount's good favor.

“But we overlooked one thing. Nottdamm is just an ordinary tax officer, not even Transcended. So why did viscount send such a person? Is it to shoulder the blame? He mentioned his hard work under viscount and has never offended viscount.”

“He is telling the truth.” Annan continued on Salvatore's words and said thoughtfully, “At least Nottdamm was at a loss when he told those previous words.

“He doesn't even know why viscount wants to target him. But besides that, there is another possibility...

“That is, Nottdamm knows Gerald. But at that time, he didn't know Gerald...”

—If there were two tax officer Nottdamm at the same time, everything could be explained.

Annan remembered that when Nottdamm sent Annan and Salvatore back to the viscount house, he accidentally mentioned that his wife Maemis Nottdamm was a Black Tower's apprentice. His wife knew what Soul Snatch wizard was, and she also learned about Transcended.

Salvatore told Annan that the apprentices in the wizard tower were generally youths. Once they failed to learn the first spell at the age of twenty-four, they were usually dismissed because it meant that they lacked the talent to learn spells.

For ordinary people, learning the first spell was the hardest. It required them to control a part of the curse, sort out and absorb it via complicated but non-contradictory rules. The process was roughly similar to computer programming with imagination.

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If they had mastered a spell, they were deemed to have obtained the “wizard apprentice” profession, abbreviated “apprentice.” Therefore, they would be allowed to study until they were thirty-six years old.

By then, they must have learned enough spells. If twelve years had passed and they failed in advancing to the Bronze Rank, then it meant that they were either in the process of learning, profoundly understanding the misfortune of entering the transcendence or being afraid of becoming Transcended. But, in the worst situation, they were too stupid even to purify a nightmare successfully.

Only then would they be dissuaded from their Transcendent journey. Before that, if any apprentice decided to abandon the wizard path or no longer wanted to use the wizard path to step into the transcendence, they could leave at any time.

The only constraint was that once you left, you may not come back.

Maemis Nottdamm was an apprentice from Swamp's Black Tower, which meant she must have mastered one to four spells.

The magic schools taught by Swamp's Black Tower only included Alteration, Shaping, and Soul Snatch. Before Salvatore enrolled, Gerald killed all the Alteration School's apprentices.

In other words, Maemis Nottdamm had a high probability of knowing Gerald.

Calculating from her age, she was probably the apprentice taught under Gerald.

She might even be the chess piece prepared before Gerald left Swamp's Black Tower.

"If I didn't guess wrong," Annan slowly said while looking at Salvatore, "The key lies with the doors."

Looking back now at the creepy house, all the doors were unlocked, which was bizarre.

When Annan and the others walked in from outside, they barely touched anything.

The only thing that was interacted was when Salvatore closed the doors casually because of his habit.

After all the doors were closed, the "Nottdamm couple two and a half years ago" suddenly appeared.

"I suspect it might be the same on the other side."

Annan looked at Bishop Daryl and lowered his head slightly, "Please investigate it. First, whether this ritual is related to the opening and closing of the 'door.' Then we need to check again if our previous speculation is correct, whether two different 'Nottdamm' in the timeline can appear at the same time?"

Bishop Daryl's true identity was the Silver Sire Church Cardinal Bishop.

There was no doubt Daryl had the highest combat strength, albeit his poor appearance. He should be among the elites.

It was better to have this "boss" scout the path.

It was not cowardice but being cautious.

"You can depend on me." Bishop Daryl nodded, not feeling anything wrong about it.

If Annan were rash with this, Daryl would need to be concerned about holding Annan back and telling Annan not to be suicidal.

It was worry-free to have good teammates who don't give 'free kills.'

"However, it sounds like..."

The fat bishop looked at Annan curiously, "Do you two have other arrangements?"

"Yes."

Annan and Salvatore looked at each other and replied, "We plan to go back to Freezing Water Port to make some preparations. In the next few days, please verify if the failed labor is the boundary. Then, what is the actual date of birth? After that, you can send someone to notify us one or two days in advance."

"Oh, this is not necessary."

Bishop Daryl smiled, "I did a mental calculation, and the final date should be December 14. It will be fine for you two to be back before the evening of the 13th.

"If you two have other plans, you may go back. I will settle the viscount matter for you too...

"Silver Sire reminded us to put priorities on our matters."

Fat bishop smiled kindly, "It just so happens that the mortals are motivated by profit. Those entangled with petty power struggles are the most insignificant batch.

"If they dare to stir up trouble at this time, I will let them pay the price."

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"Don't overthink it, senior."

Looking at Salvatore, who was sitting on the opposite side of the carriage with frowned brows, Annan didn't have the slightest fear or anxiety on his face.

He hugged his knees, leaned back on the carriage, and curled up lazily.

Annan glanced at Salvatore and said, "Master Bishop has the right idea. Both of us are young. Those people will inevitably do certain things to fight for power. This will increase the variables.

"Although Bishop usually looks like a nice guy, it's scarier when such a nice guy gets angry. Since we're in this situation, we shouldn't come forward. After all, what we need now isn't a Roseburg that completely obeys my command. Instead, we want a Roseburg who won't hold me back at critical times.

"If it is for this purpose, then it is best for us to leave the place. It would be better if all parties in Roseburg would mistakenly think that Bishop Daryl stole my power."

"No, I'm not thinking about this issue."

Salvatore shook his head and added, "The issue isn't about having Master Bishop scout the dangerous paths. Since Bishop Daryl has this job post, it means that he has at least the strength of Silver Rank Transcended. Moreover, he is old and experienced. Therefore, it is much safer for him to go than us."

When exploring the unknown ritual, the danger brought by a dumb teammate was impossible to be compensated by the bonus of having one more teammate.

It would be better to have no one holding back than having no one to help.

Not to mention, these teammates couldn't be utilized to attract firepower, but rather distractions one had to put their mind into protecting their life.

Annan and Salvatore weren't people not knowing their limits.

They knew that a formidable enemy was ahead, and they were inferior.

Since they were inferior, it was better off not giving 'free kills.'

"What I'm thinking about is," Salvatore whispered, "Do we have a reason to prevent Master Michelangelo from being resurrected?"

“He is a respectful master. In addition to his reputation and countless disciples in the Transcended world, he is also a distinguished artist in the mortal world.”

It might be due to Salvatore getting used to being attacked by the shadow.

Salvatore's timidity made him afraid to express his thoughts.

Especially when this idea was somewhat “unreasonable.”

After all, in Transcended's worldview, any unknown, unchecked, and unapproved third-party ritual was not credible. Therefore, these rituals must be treated with vigilance.

No one knew what the victim and material were necessary for this ritual.

No one could be sure of the side effects this ritual would bring.

No one had any idea of the perpetrator's purpose in the ritual.

No matter which condition went south, it might cost many lives.

To put it bluntly...

Since the ritual performer operated an unknown ritual that had not been registered, and no one was willing to be the guarantor, it meant that the purpose was shady.

So, for the public's safety, it was natural to stop them from running the ritual.

Therefore, once Transcended saw someone secretly holding an unknown ritual, the first reaction was to interrupt the ritual.

Salvatore's idea of “maybe letting the ritual succeed will be better” was a naive move that would be ridiculed in the Transcended's worldview.

But...

“I support you, senior.” Annan's tone was calm and sincere.

“I think your inclination is correct on this matter. If this ritual resurrects Master Michelangelo, then upholding the habitual thinking for safety and ruining the ritual without thinking will be an overly conservative move.

“We are all ordinary people, and we are all mortals. All mortals make mistakes. That is to say, the practice of 'aversion to all rituals' will be wrong at some point. So why don't we let the revolutionary moment be now?”

—There was no doubt that Annan's words had the sophistry of a child in them.

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No adult would take the words of a child seriously. No matter what the child was talking about, it was undeniable it was a form of guessing.

Taking risks while relying on guesses was by no means a wise move.

But Salvatore wanted to believe Annan's words from the bottom of his heart.

In other words, he had already planned to do this at the start. He just lacked an excuse.

“Thanks, Don Juan.”

Salvatore took a deep breath, “Then, I will stay in the basement when I go back and prepare a batch of pre-conversion agents urgently. When the fifth day is approaching, could you notify me in advance? I will make a batch of useful reagents on the same day. Thank God, I brought enough material with me before coming to the Freezing Water Port.”

Salvatore looked at Annan and asked in uncertainty, “After five days, will you accompany me back to Roseburg?”

Annan looked like he didn't want to ruin the resurrection ritual.

But for Salvatore, as long as Annan didn't intervene, it should be enough. He didn't expect Annan to accompany him on taking risks.

His shadow told him the same thing. Although the risk of failing his plan was not significant, once his speculation went wrong, the price was not something he could bear. Losing the title of Black Tower's Son was a minor issue. It was possible to be expelled or wanted if the loss was heavy.

—Salvatore still wanted to give it a try.

Master Michelangelo was undoubtedly a great person in this world. His value was much higher than that of a useless person with no talent. If he guessed wrong in the end, then Salvatore would even off his life, release the shadow, and escort the civilians to escape safely.

“Don Juan's” wisest choice was not to follow him.

That was the logic.

But, Salvatore still hoped that he could hear Don Juan's opinions when making decisions.

“Of course I will come. This is not the same as letting Master Bishop go and assess the situation. It is dangerous for you to go there. If I advocate that you take the risk and yet I don't support you, I'm no different from an insolent wretch.”

Annan went beyond Salvatore's expectation and just replied leisurely, “Notify me at that time.

“I'm just a little curious about one thing, senior. I hope you can answer it for me.

“Do you participate in this troublesome matter just because 'It is a good thing to resurrect Michelangelo?’” Annan asked. His eyes shone with curiosity.

Annan was already planning to get involved, but he was also curious about Salvatore's standpoint.

In Annan's analysis, Salvatore must be hiding something in his heart.

Otherwise, based on Salvatore's character, he should first persuade Annan not to go and then decisively choose to accompany Annan on the adventure after Annan refused. Salvatore's proactive stance

seemed inexplicable. Regardless of Annan going or not, he had planned to witness the unknown and great ritual established over several years.

Annan was curious about the answer.

Annan's joys in life included peeping into others' secrets while keeping his personality hidden.

Salvatore was silent.

He was thinking... Or rather, he was also asking himself.

Finally, Salvatore spoke with a firm tone, "Part of the reason is about Mr. Notttamm. I am a little worried about him, and I always believe that he is not a villain. My instinct tells me this.

"But I can't judge whether a person is good or bad based on my speculation alone. I must use my eyes to see for myself, my ears to hear for myself, and my heart to judge.

"If he isn't a villain, then he must be distressed now. He needs help, but when you look around, everyone wants him to die. Even if he did nothing wrong..."

It was the same as what he said on the carriage.

When Salvatore said this, he paused slightly.

He raised his head and stared at the carriage's roof.

It was as if looking at someone in his memory.

Salvatore whispered as though he was in a dream, "How can I turn myself away in the face of someone else suffering?"