

Righteous Ps 171

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 171

Carney's body was still transforming.

His body was raised to more than three meters. The color of his skin became dark purple mixed with blue tones. His skin had veins bulged up, and his muscles twitched. All the wounds no longer bleed but leaked out dark and viscous flames.

His scorched face became even more terrifying. Perhaps, Carney would be terrified when he saw his looks.

The “organ” attached to his back appeared more like ribs connected with thin membranes, not so much wings.

Carney was gradually turning into a demon.

And this scene was familiar to Annan.

In Annan's first nightmare right after he came into this world, Guard Captain Klaus also attempted to become like this.

It was just that Annan slew him before he could finish his transformation.

Judging from Benjamin's reaction, demons should not only appear in nightmares.

This could be what happened after the erosion rate reached 100%.

...Or rather, what one of the transformations could manifest?

“Almost done.” Annan murmured.

More than a minute passed, Annan had charged up his magic eye.

To maximize the damage output, Annan should deliver his first round of combo now.

Of course, he should add a buff on himself before that.

Although Arthur didn't have the swordsman profession, Silver Knight was characterized in adapting to the environment (nightmare). This should allow Annan to use part of Silver Knight's power even in a nightmare as long as he possessed silver coins.

After all, his core competence came from divine art.

Ding—

A crisp “clink” of silver coin sounded in Annan's hand.

Annan finally stopped fidgeting with the coins in his hand.

Under the players' surprised gaze, Annan summoned a dazzling silver rapier as he flicked his hand in the next moment.

—It was a little different from before.

Annan noticed the thin ray reflecting off the blade in his hand.

The “Sharp Object” he summoned before wasn't imbued with holy light like now.

Frost traces spread from Annan's fingertips, soaking the blade quickly.

Annan glanced back at the bloodshot Carney, who had utterly lost his mind.

Annan squinted and activated the magic eye hovering in the air. Then, he released the most expensive Destruction spell stored in the magic eye!

—Deflagration Light!

The next moment, the sky shone brightly.

After a short delay, a golden-red beam manifested a sharp blade and fell like thunder.

It bombarded Carney in an instant!

The attack was like the descent of a comet.

Accompanied by a boom, the surrounding earth cracked!

At the place where the light beam fell, the ground was surging with lava that shot to the sky!

The hike in temperature ignited all the surrounding trees in an instant. But they weren't ordinary burning; the trees were burned into charcoal in the blink of an eye. It was like flames burnt from within and exploded out!

The scorching airwaves dispersed in ripples.

Some of the trees fell with their leaves turned yellow, with some invaded with dim flames.

But Annan was fine.

He still stood on the spot, unfazed by the heatwave, nor was he forced to retreat.

It was as if he didn't feel the harsh wind at all.

A dark-gray square appeared in Annan's pupils.

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In front of Annan, a gas wall that conformed to the shape of a cube emerged in the air.

The square wall was four meters high and made up of heat shimmers.

When the scorching airwaves arrived at the wall, they lost their speed and were intercepted.

It was Annan's Guided Spells, [Impeding Wall]!

After the explosion, the wall disappeared silently.

But, Carney was still alive even after all that.

The injuries on his body were terrifying. His upper body was almost burnt to charcoal, but he was still alive. The damage was recovering in haste.

At this moment, Annan didn't hesitate as he jumped into the smoke that hadn't completely dissipated.

In the meantime, he threw the bag full of silver coins directly into the air and chanted the Silver Hand incantation:

“Learn your lesson. This is the hand that seizes power eternally and forever—”

That was a tribute to silver coins.

That was a warning to believers.

As Annan chanted, all the silver coins in Arthur's purse flew out of their own accord and melted into a cold and shimmering silver liquid in the air. The liquid flew at a faster speed than Annan and enshrouded the blade.

Suddenly a strong curse aura erupted from the temporarily enchanted blade.

It was as if the rapier turned into a curse vessel.

Annan didn't have time to look at its properties.

Because he had rushed over to Carney's side already.

Carney raised his hand, trying to seize Annan's head.

On the other hand, an ice-blue light flashed in Annan's eyes.

Frigid cold air exploded in all directions, with Annan as the center. Carney's previously scorched skin experienced an extreme drop in temperature, with visible signs of frozen cracks surfaced.

At the same time, the frosty curse invaded and slowed Carney's movements.

With that, Annan's speed seemed a little faster. He squatted down abruptly, avoiding Carney's grapple.

Immediately after, Annan dashed past Carney from the side. At the same time, he raised his rapier and aimed at Carney's thigh.

But Annan swapped his attack to a diagonal slash at Carney's protruding wrist! There was no hindrance to the attack.

Annan slashed through the muscles and the solid bones on Carney's wrist like cutting an apple in the air.

In the first exchange, Carney's right forearm, dripping with oil-like black and viscous blood, flew high in the air!

After being slashed by the silver sword, a silver-gray web-like pattern began to surface at the injury, gradually spreading to the shoulder.

At the same time, a layer of frost covered the injury.

The frost layer sealed the black blood that should have burned on the ground and the squirming muscles from the swift regeneration.

The Frost Sword's mightiness was on full display!

Under the pain, Carney subconsciously attempted to withdraw his right hand.

That gave another opening for Annan to advance his attacks.

While maintaining Guided Spell – Frost Nova, Annan got in front of Carney faster than Carney retracting his right hand.

Another attack was launched.

Fortunately, Arthur's body was fairly tall this time.

Annan's blade penetrated Carney's lower abdomen. He just felt a slight obstruction, but the rapier wasn't stuck inside.

Hence, after Annan pierced the blade halfway in, he immediately slashed downward. At the same time, he rolled under Carney's leg openings and appeared behind Carney.

This attack quickly tore Carney in half from his belly. For some reason, no blood tainted Annan during the whole process. Only the blood, which was frozen into powders, dropped in large quantities.

The initially fragile “Sharp Object” was so strong under the Silver Hand's enchantment.

Annan exerted his strength and cut Carney's left ankle directly before he stood up behind Carney!

Starting from Annan cutting off Carney's right arm, this whole set of movements only took less than three seconds!

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Chapter 172: You Can Do That?

“Fuck...” Lin Yiyi was dumbfounded.

In the face of such a terrifying enemy, Annan assaulted the enemy in a flashy manner. Under three flashes of silver light, one slash was delivered each second, dismembering one arm and one leg.

The towering figure possessed great power, with flame enshrouding him. Yet, he appeared so vulnerable with no success in retaliating. With one of the legs severed, he lost his balance and fell forward.

“—666!”

(TN: 666 is a Chinese abbreviation to describe someone or something impressive.)

“—That's way fucking cool!”

“—Is this the combat you see in the movie's computer graphics...”

“—Are you a swordsman, or am I a swordsman?”

“—Shit, I feel excited now. I want to join the fight.”

Players knew more or less that “Don Juan Geraint” was equipped with the swordsman profession.

But now he was using Arthur's body!

Although Arthur was a sturdy and healthy adult, he was a pure wizard!

“—He has the guts to engage in this cloth armor.”

“—Wait, does the armor make any difference in front of a boss of this size?”

“—Light armor is like a thin paper, while heavy armor is like a paper folded in half. Anyway, it doesn't make a difference. Any hit will be lethal.”

“—There is a difference. The cloth armor weighs lighter.”

“—He's so cool. Oppa, saranghae.”

(TN: It's in Korean, which means—handsome, I love you. I guess that's what fans usually say.)

“—You gotta make it clear, are you confessing to Arthur or Don Juan?”

The elated comments in the bullet text were in high activity.

But only the four players who had experienced Carney's pressure at close range knew the level of combat power this young feudal lord had.

There was even a vague idea in their minds.

The little feudal lord brought them in the advancement ritual, seemingly intending to ask for help.

However, if it was an enemy who the four players felt pressured to face, would their help carry any meaning?

Annan had already severed all Carney's limbs while the players were still watching the stream in awe.

Annan stabbed the sacred silver rapier in Carney's heart and nailed him to the ground.

After doing this, Annan paused and lowered his head to confirm the opponent's status carefully.

En, everything's still fine.

Despite being in such a state, Carney's health is still alright.

Although Carney had utterly lost his sanity, his curse status seemed to have elevated to the next level.

Could it be that I could only kill with the designated weapons?

Annan looked at the three poisonous throwing knives in his possessions thoughtfully.

Annan turned his head and shouted, “You all can come over.”

Except for Delicious Wind Goose, the other three players ran over from behind the carriage.

“Have you guys decided?” Annan ignored the dismembered towering man who was nailed to the ground and asked the players, “What profession do you all want to advance?”

“Huh? Do we get to choose?” Lin Yiyi was a little surprised.

Annan raised his eyebrows and showed a sunny smile, “Naturally, that's why I requested you all to think deeper about which profession advancement is suitable for yourself.”

Wandering Child and Delicious Wind Goose looked at each other.

Then, Old Goose said, “Kid and I want to become a Swordmaster.”

They instinctively felt that this should be the most orthodox profession upgrade.

Of course, their reasons for choosing this profession were also different.

Delicious Wind Goose's reason was that he was trained in sword fighting techniques.

Child God's reason was because of a hero with five swords behind him in a particular game.

“I want to advance into the Guardian profession.”

Lin Yiyi raised her hand carefully and glanced at the demon hesitantly, “Of course, anything else will do.”

“I want to become a Berserker.” Jiu Er answered without hesitation.

Regarding her answer, the others didn't feel surprised.

“It's easy.” Annan nodded.

Then, he reached out his hand to Jiu Er and motioned her to hand her sword to him.

Jiu Er was stunned for a moment. She took a look at the demon pinned down by the silver sword and then handed her sword over.

With that, Annan stabbed Jiu Er's abdomen with the sword.

Puff. Jiu Er's eyes widened suddenly.

Although she had an idea of what Annan planned to do, she had the feeling that she couldn't parry, block or dodge this attack if she were to try.

As the blade was pulled out mercilessly, she saw that her Health instantly dropped to 22% and continued to diminish slowly.

Then Annan looked at Lin Yiyi and said slowly, “I will attack slowly. You try to block.”

As soon as Annan ended his sentence, he struck Yiyi with the sword.

It was the standard Austere-Winter Swordsmanship.

But Annan disassembled the move and slowed down its movements. The difficulty of blocking it seemed not high.

Lin Yiyi performed [Parry] instinctively.

Although Annan had already used all his strength to attack, Arthur's strength was inadequate. Since Lin Yiyi was already on guard, she could block most of Annan's attacks, but some of the attacks still injured her.

Just in case, Annan had been attacking more than thirty times in a row. It wasn't until Lin Yiyi blocked his attack eleven consecutive times that he slowly stopped.

What the heck!

You can do that?!

The spectating players were mindfuck.

But what the spectating players didn't know was that even Annan himself didn't know if this could work.

However, there was something else Annan was certain of. Judging from the previous combat that took place on Delicious Wind Goose, the four players probably didn't have the chance to achieve the condition of "near death" and "block" during the second-stage boss fight (after transformation). Annan realized Carney's Strength was at least 20. For direct confrontation, only Annan wielded with an axe could fight Carney.

Hence, Annan had to try on this option.

After all, it didn't cost money. So, there was no harm in trying.

"Alright."

Annan said, returning the weapon to Jiu Er, signaling the other three to attack the demon, "Kill him."

As he said, he took out the throwing knife from his arms.

He threw it casually and hit the demon's eyes.

Immediately, the spell on the throwing knife was triggered.

The demon uttered an unprecedented scream of pain. Many wounds on his body also began to deteriorate rapidly.

The three players looked at each other. They were elated to have a powerful NPC (Annan) to carry them.

—Don Juan is awesome! (Screech)

But even if the three of them tried to cut the demon's head with their sword, they had no way to break through the demon's defense. The head was tough. Only the place that suffered the heat fluctuations could cause the sword damage.

Seeing the demon being dismembered cruelly, many complaints surfaced in bullet text:

"—Is this a simple dungeon instance? Why do I find it harder than the gallery?"

"—Obviously, it's much simpler than a gallery. You face the boss directly. It's over after the fight."

"—Easier said than done. But, if it weren't for Don Juan, how could it be so easy?"

...No, it's actually quite easy. Annan glanced at the bullet texts.

The difficulty of this dungeon instance lay in the cooperation. The team had to cooperate well to find Carney, persuade Wizard Arthur to kill the demon, and ensure they wouldn't die.

Arthur could utilize his orb to overcome the invisibility with "Scorching Sight." Its power was enough to put Carney into a near-death state with just one hit. The enchanted "pain-amplification" throwing knife would cause critical damage to the demon with wounds all over the body. Arthur had the armband's blessing. His magical output was far more potent than Annan.

From the very beginning, Carney had no chance of winning. He even knew it himself.

Even if Carney was at the peak state in his lifetime. In this nightmare, he held many curse vessels he couldn't have in his peak state and gained strong flame resistance. His mediocre physical fitness and combat skills were elevated too. Moreover, the erosion rate topped, granting him the transformation after his invisibility was broken.

But even he achieved the transformation, he still couldn't kill Arthur.

Although the two were both in the Bronze Rank, the strength gap between them was vast.

This was the most painful truth that Carney could never deceive himself, and he didn't want to face it.

The truth was that he was "trash."

"...'Witch Hunt', right?" Annan murmured.

But this nightmare, who was hunting?

This is ironic.

The players took apart the demon's skin layer by layer, took apart its ribs, and smashed its heart. Finally, the nightmare was over.

At the last moment when the nightmare was over, Jiu Er flipped the sword in her hand over and pierced her abdomen with all her strength swiftly.

It was because of Berserker's curse. She was required to die in the final battle.

This requirement was challenging.

But if her suicide could be regarded as taking down someone with her own's demise, it would be simpler.

Jiu Er seemed fearless. The sword pierced through her abdomen. She even stirred it up a bit.

Puff—

Annan felt his eyelids twitch as he watched from the side.

Why do I feel like this stab is more severe than how I stab?

What's wrong with this woman?

In the next moment, the whole world was centered on the demon and distorted inward.

The players witnessed all of this with some trepidation while Annan closed his eyes, waiting for the nightmare to end.

Soon, intense dizziness struck the players. The players lost consciousness.

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The world had the demon's corpse as the center, with everything distorted slowly towards its direction.

It felt like riding on a merry-go-round. Delicious Wind Goose suffered terrible motion sickness from it. Intense nausea invaded his senses. Soon, he felt a large amount of black silt soaking every pore of his body. The crackling sound of fire surrounded him. There seemed to be a drooling giant breathing heavily behind him.

But when he regained his consciousness, all these visions were gone.

He stood in the void—a demon's corpse burning with blazing flames situated before his eyes.

Two lines of text emerged:

[Advancement ritual completed.]

[Promoting your rank—]

As the demon's corpse was burned to crisp, three clusters of bright red light emerged from the embers.

When it rose to Delicious Wind Goose's eye-level, the crimson brilliance intensified.

Its bright red coating faded, leaving only three white clusters of light floating quietly in the air.

In the light group, there was a gif [1] of a man tumbling on the ground, an abstract picture of a man pointing a long sword shimmering holy light at a demon, and an abstract picture of a person standing in place with countless arrows passing by him.

[Curse manifestation—]

[Lucky Roll (Resolve Type): You must roll at least three times a day. Otherwise, you will temporarily lose 1 point of the Agility attribute the next day. This effect can be stacked once a day and disappear after you compensate for all roll counts.]

[Demon Slayer (Resolve Type): You must slay a demon every year.]

[Stray Arrows (Taboo Type): You cannot use crossbows, bows, and other weapons that use mechanical principles to shoot arrows, nor can you consciously train yourself on such proficiencies.]

Three taboos? Delicious Wind Goose frowned slightly.

The four players had already learned about what the curse was from the young feudal lord.

Power was granted with the curse bound to them.

But, it now seemed that players could learn about the specifics of the curse, but its power would remain unknown.

Old Goose subconsciously asked, "Brothers, which curse do you think is better?"

It seemed that the other players couldn't hear Delicious Wind Goose's questions in this face. But, it didn't stop these spectating players from bombarding their comments in bullet texts.

"—First."

"—The first one, what are you hesitating about?"

"—Lucky Roll."

"—Roll on the floor. Hahaha!"

"—Logically speaking, the first one is indeed the best."

"—Indeed."

"—I'm not kidding. The first one is the best."

...Ya.

Seeing that bullet text chose the same answer consistently, Delicious Wind Goose also nodded slowly.

He thought that the first option was the most flexible too.

The second option seemed the most straightforward, but Old Goose didn't know if demons were scarce.

What if the probability of encountering a demon appearing was the same as that of a shiny Pokemon [2]?

The third option would restrict Old Goose's fighting style.

According to the young feudal lord, violation of the curse would bring severe aftermaths. Like a paladin whose alignment had shifted, he would lose part of his Transcended power. To regain this power, it was obligatory to clear another ritual.

Warriors typically held two curses. They would lose half of their power if they were to violate one curse. For example, let's say a person had a warrior's curse and a hunter's curse. After violating the curse relating to hunter's advancement, all powers relating to the hunter profession would be lost.

To put it simply, all the profession's levels obtained after getting this curse and before getting the next curse would be grayed out, losing the profession's ability and the spells obtained. Worse still, the increased attributes would be invalidated.

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If the person violated all the curses he possessed, he would die directly.

Because after losing those powers, the human soul couldn't endure the curse.

Delicious Wind Goose wasn't interested in being the test subject and validating whether this curse would apply similarly to the players.

Moreover, the curse should be as simple as possible in perspective to avoid being restricted.

It was just that the Delicious Wind Goose found the first curse to be embarrassing.

He felt regretful. I shouldn't have rolled to dodge the attack just now.

If I were to dodge it normally, I might get a more decent curse.

Also, so many players had seen my curse. Does it mean that I don't need to find a secret keeper then?

That's pretty reliable.

As long as there are no big mouths among the players...

.....emmmmmm。

...Emm. Delicious Wind Goose was lost in thought.

"...It's still the first one better." He thought for a moment but chose the first option.

Even if the curse were accidentally leaked out or forced to be violated, he wouldn't lose immediately. It was just getting weaker and weaker until the "daily mission" that he owed was paid off.

To kill me with the curse, it will only happen when my Agility is deducted to a negative value, right?

I just need to roll on the floor three times.

Omg, let's just do it!

The ball of light burst quickly.

As the other two light groups dissipated, the curse's detailed explanation was revealed to Delicious Wind Goose:

[Lucky Roll: It can be activated 3 times a day. Every point in agility is equivalent to 1 second of skill duration; the cooldown time is 10 seconds after activation.]

[Enter the "Lucky Roll" state. Rolling under this state will be blessed by the "Stable Luck" effect. This state is equivalent to the divine art relating to the lucky domain of the same name. If you're already blessed with "Stable Luck," the effect will be temporarily upgraded to "Extraordinary Luck."]

"Oh, wow."

Delicious Wind Goose's eyes lit up, "This is splendid!"

On the other side, Wandering Child also made a choice.

"I shall choose this." He reached out to an abstract painting lying in ambush in the grass.

[Forest Child (Persistent Type): You must fall asleep in trees or lush grass in the evening on the first day of every month.]

[Forest Child: A state blessed to the user with no maintenance cost.]

[When entering the environment (Forest), your Strength, Agility, and Constitution will temporarily acquire the addition of 4 attribute points bonuses (Value is determined by 50% of the lowest attribute among the three) and the blessing "Environment Adaptation (Forest)." Entering the environment (Grassland) will grant you 2 attribute points bonuses temporarily for Strength, Agility, Constitution (Value is determined by 25% of the lowest attribute among the three).]

"So, I have to add my attribute points equally?" Wandering Child was dumbfounded.

Am I forced to tap the yellow Attribute Bonus button [3]?!

"I choose this."

Lin Yiyi didn't hesitate to choose the only curse that didn't look flamboyant.

[Front Parry (Resolve Type): You must successfully parry 10 times a day. Otherwise, you will temporarily lose 1 point in Strength and 1 point in Agility the next day. This penalty can be stacked once a day and disappear after you compensate for all the parry counts.]

[Front Parry: The blessing will be added on any weapon with no maintenance cost. The cooldown after ending the effect will be 1 hour cooldown.]

[When holding the weapon with both hands, you can see all the attack trajectories that will hit "you" in the next 3 seconds. Even if your parry attempt fails, you will not enter an unbalanced state or fall.]

[You cannot move when using this ability; the attacker must be in sight.]

[3] Attribute Bonus icon in Dota where clicking the button grants attribute bonuses rather than learning a new skill.

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As agreed in advance, Jiu Er chose the only curse with the "self-harm" type attribute in her pursuit to advance into a Berserker.

Although she was informed of such a type of curse, the unusualness still caught her off guard.

After Jiu Er finished the selection, the red bubble flew out and swallowed the other two white bubbles consecutively.

Then it gradually became smaller and slowly darkened.

It flew over and stuck to Jiu Er's lower abdomen.

Wherever it flowed, there was severe pain like corrosion, leaving a black scar visible to the naked eye. It looked a bit like an unknown bird with its wings spread. At the same time, the pattern appeared like having blood falling from a height, splashing out when it landed.

Afterward, new words appeared in front of Jiu Er's eyes again:

[Blood Sustenance (Resolve Type): On the last day of each month, you must drink the uncoagulated blood of the "enemy you have killed."]

[Blood Sustenance: Weapons stained with the user's blood will cause greater damage to the enemy (the lower the user's health, the greater the increase in damage); when weapons stained with the enemy's blood attack the user, the user's health recovery speed will be significantly increased in a short period (The lower the health, the faster the recovery speed).]

After Jiu Er's curse was revealed, the spectators in the bullet text became rowdy:

“—So, you have become Olaf [1]?”

“—You have become a Berserker!”

“—Fuck, this is a bit overpowered.”

“—That's normal. Jiu Er's curse is the most demanding.”

“—Wait, I know how to activate the first effect. You just hurt yourself before the battle. But, how about the latter one?”

“—Are you stupid? The trigger conditions for both are the same. You just have to slash yourself first before slashing your enemy and then repeat it over again.”

“—Haha, that seems a bit comical.”

“—Wait, where am I now?”

Soon, Jiu Er passed out after reading the bullet texts.

When she woke up again, she found that her party member had already woken up one after another.

Until then, the glimmering score panel appeared in front of Jiu Er:

[Nightmare has been purified.]

[Purify the nightmare with a designated identity. Evaluation ratings increased.]

[“Arthur” was unharmed throughout the entire process. Evaluation ratings increased.]

[Killed Carney. The evaluation ratings increased significantly.]

[All party members survived. Evaluation ratings increased.]

[Comprehensive Evaluation—A]

[Obtained 30 points in Shared Experience. Perception+1.]

[Obtained dungeon instance clearance reward: Profession (Swordsman) rises by 1 level]

With that, Jiu Er's profession description has also become like this:

Berserker LV11: [Basic Swordsmanship LV1, Parry LV1, Charge LV1, All-out Blow LV7, Death's Embrace LV1]

Jiu Er ignored the first three skills for now and prioritized developing the latter three skills.

[All-out Blow LV7: Use all your power to launch a fierce attack. The Strength check of the next attack gains a 30% bonus and increases the typical stamina consumption by three folds. The cooldown time is 30 seconds.]

[Effect after acquiring LV4: Reduce the cooldown time to 18 seconds.]

[Effect after acquiring LV7: Reduce the cooldown time to 6 seconds.]

[Death's Embrace LV1: The closer your state to death, the more resilient you are from dying. For every 10% drop in Health, there will be a temporary +1 attribution bonus on either Strength, Agility, or Constitution. If Health increases, the temporary attribute bonus will be gone. When your Health is lower than 40%, this buff takes effect; when Health is higher than 40%, this buff is calculated normally, but it will not take effect.]

[After this buff takes effect, when it returns to 100% Health again, the user will fall into a state of "exhaustion" that lasts for a day. Skills such as "Charge," "All-out Blow," "Power Attack," and "Final Slash" cannot be used at this time.]

Oh, have I completed the advancement already? Jiu Er was still in a daze.

But Annan's voice had already sounded beside her.

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Annan was also a little confused, "Jiu Er, where is your curse?"

"My abdomen." Jiu Er was silent for a while and replied in a soft but awkward voice.

Annan was also a little at a loss. What the hell?

For a moment, Annan remembered the joke he had made with Don Juan:

—Where do you keep your curse?

—You may not believe me, I have an iron crotch.

Annan hesitated and gave Jiu Er a bronze necklace for the time being, "You can use it as a disguise for now. If you want to replace the curse vessel later, let me know."

However, there was no need for the Bronze Rank's vessel to be too close to the curse mark.

Unless it was to absorb the other's curse.

In other cases, only when the Transcended power above Silver Rank was used would the curse vessel be necessary to activate the curse.

"Have you all upgraded your profession?"

Annan watched the four players equip their respective curse vessels and asked, "Is everything going well? What are your new Transcended abilities?"

"I successfully took the Swordmaster's profession, feudal lord."

Delicious Wind Goose was the first to speak.

He closed his eyes as if recollecting the feeling.

But Annan knew in his heart that Old Goose was staring at his attribute panel and began to think about how to use words that the NPC could understand, “The 'Swordmaster's' ability can greatly increase my agility.”

En, ya, adding 2 points in Agility for each level upgrade. Annan understood Old Goose's description and nodded.

But soon, Delicious Wind Goose began to feel a little troubled, stammering, “Well, it enables me to learn a couple of sword skills. En, it improves my basic swordsmanship too.”

Huh? Annan froze for a moment and couldn't understand it.

Immediately Annan opened the Delicious Wind Goose's panel directly from the backend interface and flipped through Old's Goose skills.

...Oh, that seems tough to describe.

Swordmaster's newly acquired profession ability was called “Multiple Swordsmanship Mastery.”

Old Goose was granted “Basic Swordsmanship slots.” When learning Basic Swordsmanship, its skill level would be upgraded by one level. However, each swordsmanship couldn't exceed LV6.

In other words, the Delicious Wind Goose's previous profession panel looked like this:

Swordsman LV10 (Max): [Basic Swordsmanship Lv4, Parry LV4, Charge LV1, All-out Blow LV1]

And it now became:

Swordmaster LV11: [Basic Swordsmanship LV4 (Parry, Charge, All-out Blow), Multiple Swordsmanship Mastery LV1 (Empty)]

Every time “Multiple Swordsmanship Mastery” was improved, Delicious Wind Goose could learn a new kind of swordsmanship.

—For example, military swordsmanship.

Or the bodyguard swordsmanship...

As for Frost Sword, the requirement was to master the frost element. Old Goose should not be able to learn it.

But when Old Goose was promoted to the Silver Rank, he had the option to master ten other swordsmanships and raise its accompanying skills to LV1. But this wasn't quite worthwhile. After all, he would become a jack of all trades but master of none.

Annan took a rough guess. It would be most effective to master two or three complementary swordsmanships with different styles and upgrade them to LV4 for the attribute bonus.

So that's the case. It's a profession that relies on skill level.

Annan nodded, “I see...”

“Wait!”

Wandering Child, who had repeatedly looked at the panel several times, suddenly raised his voice, “Why isn't yy profession Swordmaster?”

“En?” Annan was startled.

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Annan took advantage of the fact that the backend interface was still readily accessible and swapped to the Child God panel.

As a result, he was also bamboozled that Child God advanced to the wrong profession.

Moreover, it seemed to be an advanced profession. It even altered most of Child God's skills:

Forest Walker LV11: [Elven Swordsmanship (Forest) LV4, Precision Block LV2, Geo Strike LV2, Hydro Strike LV2, Vine Strike LV2]

[Elven Swordsmanship (Jungle) LV4: The power that controls the balance of everything. You tend to get enlightenment in the jungle. You can control the natural objects around you to a certain extent by planting your curse in them. It takes 3 skill points to improve the skill by 1 level.]

[Effect after acquiring LV4: Your remaining skills are increased to LV2.]

[Precise Block LV2: You have better blocking proficiency than an ordinary swordsman.]

[Geo Strike LV2: By swinging a sword to the rock, you may cut the rock or make the rock bulge.]

[Hydro Strike LV2: By swinging a sword to the water surface, you may cut the water surface or freeze the water surface.]

[Vine Attack LV2: By swinging a sword to the jungle, you may dispel or summon vines.]

—Are you Kiana [1]?

I think the four of you can make up a balanced party for matchmaking.

“How did you do it?” Annan had question marks all over his head.

He didn't see what Wandering Child had just done.

If the condition was lying in the grass, Annan thought that everyone before him should also meet this condition.

Wandering Child was also at a loss, “I don't know.”

I don't know either.

“Well, I think the only explanation is...” Wandering Child said hesitantly, “I actually saved up some of my strength for the preparation after the advancement.”

Annan asked repeatedly and scrolled through the forum. In the end, he had a rough idea of what was going on and roughly guessed the advancement conditions of this profession.

Child God was a master in spreading out his attribute points.

Moreover, this guy was really patient because he had secretly saved some attribute points and didn't add them.

The player's initial level was LV5 with all attributes as follows: Strength 6, Agility 6, Constitution 6, Perception 5, Will 5, and 2 free attribute points to add as they pleased. Each of the four skills was LV 1 with 1 additional free skill point.

—Child had not used these attribute points and skill points but habitually hoarded them. He planned to add it when needed.

Because when the closed beta started, Child had great luck without encountering anyone. So, he was unhurt.

But, Child noticed from several other players that there were additional effects when they pushed the skill levels to LV4 and LV7. He felt regretful.

So under his obsessive-compulsive disorder tendency, when he was in LV7, he pushed “Swordsmanship,” “Parry,” “Charge,” and “All-out Blow” to LV2. For the remaining skill points he had, he had saved them up.

His goal was to contribute these two skills points directly to the advanced profession after the advancement. With that, he could learn advanced abilities as quickly as possible. There were also some other players doing this.

Anyway, their main path to grow now was via nightmare. Spending up those points wouldn't bring a significant advantage.

It was better to save some points and use them after advancement.

When Child was promoted to LV10, his attributes were Strength 8, Agility 8, Constitution 7, Perception 7, Will 5. At this time, he spent 1 attribute point in the Constitution to become 8—just so that it was pleasing to the eyes.

The child also knew that after clearing the dungeon, the Perception attribute would be increased by 1.

In the end, it looked much better with four 8s!

If there were three 8s and one 9, it wouldn't look so good.

In other words, after he came out of the dungeon instance, he had four main skills at LV2 and four main attributes of 8 points.

This pattern in distributing everything equally seemed to have triggered some mechanism that allowed Child to obtain the [Elven Swordsmanship] ability.

I see.

Precision Block corresponded to Agility; Geo Strike corresponded to Strength; Hydro Strike corresponded to Perception; Vine Strike corresponded to Constitution.

“Child, you are really lucky...” Annan couldn't help but lament.

You might as well change your name to Lucky Child.

This guy is simply a mascot.

In the beginning, although he didn't invest any attribute points, he did not encounter any enemies and completed the initial mission with full Health.

Then, while wandering around to explore Roseburg, he inexplicably discovered Gerald, who was hiding so well.

If it weren't for Gerald, who reacted fast enough, Wandering Child would have slammed the Black Fire barrel on him as soon as he opened the door.

Now, Child accidentally triggered the conditions for a new profession because of his obsessive-compulsive disorder tendency.

This guy is auspicious.

With that, the players learned a new way to advance.

Although this batch of players might no longer duplicate it, the next batch of players still had a chance.

“...En.”

Yiyi raised her hand timidly, “I seem to have advanced wrongly too.

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“But this profession seems to be quite strong?” Annan was startled.

What the hell is wrong with you all?

Why are there problems coming out one by one?

Am I the problem?

Annan rolled his eyes and found that Yiyi's situation seemed more complicated than Child's.

Because she actually had a profession with a mature combat system:

Treasure Diamond Island Guard Knight LV11: [Bodyguard Swordsmanship LV4, Parry LV4, Charge LV1, Disarm LV1, Full Defense LV1, Club Proficiency LV1]

Indeed, Treasure Diamond Island.

It was the Treasure Diamond Island where Joseph was born.

Her previous [Basic Attack] became the [Bodyguard Swordsmanship] Annan was very familiar with; her previous [All-out Blow] became the [Disarm] that Annan had but never used.

The two new skills she got were also quite strange:

[Full Defense LV1: Treasure Diamond Island guard knights are good at blocking in light armor. When wearing light armor and lower-level armor, Parry's efficiency is improved; when holding weapons with both hands, Parry's efficiency is further improved.]

[Club Proficiency LV1: You can use existing skills with clubs or double-headed swords.]

I got it now. Annan completely understood this time.

Some advancement conditions depended on the achievements completed in the nightmare.

But, the curse obtained in the advancement dungeon instance would also significantly affect the advanced profession they would get!

Annan recalled something that brought him lingering fear for a while.

Fortunately, what I advanced was the wizard apprentice profession...

The wizard apprentice has only one type of advancement in the Bronze Rank, "wizard."

Otherwise, if Annan advanced his swordsman profession, he would advance into a strange profession as he got the curse of "Butcher's Knife."

—Will I really become a butcher?

That's terrifying.

"Two successful advancements according to the plan. Although two advancements stray away from the plan, they became stronger."

Annan sighed, "This result looks okay.

"But this is enough to prove that my participation will bring a great impact on your advancement. Hence, I will not participate in your advancements anymore. This nightmare is about to be purified. You may not be able to encounter a coop nightmare like this in a short while."

Hearing Annan's words, there were bitter cries in the bullet text:

"—I thought someone would carry me in a dungeon instance!

"—Ah~, I want to become Kiana too!"

"—I want to become a Berserker."

"—I don't think becoming a Berserker will pose a challenge."

"—Oh, you like to stab yourself too."

"—Then, also leave those marks on the stomach?"

"—Stretch marks?"

"—Fuck off!"

"—If he dares to let me advance, I dare to leave a curse mark on my stomach."

“—Then I hope you will give birth to a phoenix. You know, phoenix stands atop all birds.”

(TN: Phoenix is a Chinese expression of fraternal twin.)

Annan breathed a sigh of relief as those comments in the bullet texts ran off the topic quickly.

I have finally fed these Four Transcendents up.

Although their equipment is poor, I manage to get some urgent fighting forces...or rather, got some cannon fodder.

After at least two days, it wouldn't just be Salvatore and me only.

Salvatore had one more day to go for this tinkering.

During this day, Annan was busy with his affairs.

He planned to challenge the “Betrayer” nightmare again.

Using the code he got from Benjamin, Annan planned to ask Benjamin for information about Don Juan and ask Benjamin what happened to Michelangelo in the end.

Also, Annan wanted to know information about Rotten Man.

—Indeed.

With the Venerated Skeleton's reminder, Annan flipped through the research report on Rotten Man and got some information.

For example, Rotten Man's real name and Rotten Man's origin.

—There was also the ritual that could “eradicate the reincarnated.”

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Annan sent the players back to Freezing Water Port after they had a sumptuous dinner. He didn't leave them in Roseburg.

This was to prevent the players from stirring up troubles. Annan specifically asked them to stop appearing in the city for these two days, and it was best not to let others know that they were here.

The players also realized that there might be a grand plot next. So they obediently agreed.

But, Annan thought for a while and still wasn't quite at ease with the players' tendency. So he brought the players back to Freezing Water Port. Then, he would bring them back here tomorrow.

He took John's broken sword from the city lord's residence and entered the nightmare once again.

But this time, the prompt when entering the nightmare was different.

It no longer had the requirements in level and profession:

[Detected a bound nightmare fragment.]

[Falling into a nightmare after 10, 9, 8...]

Bound? Annan was startled.

Speaking of it, it seemed that the “Betrayal” nightmare was indeed the only nightmare that needed to be bound. After that, whether it was “gallery,” “white tower,” or “witch hunt,” there was no mention of “need to be bound.”

Is it because the vessel of this nightmare is special? Annan reminisced.

The key to the gallery nightmare was the word “the Venerated Skeleton” and the Freezing Water Port city.

The key to the White Tower required Gerald's bones.

The key to the Witch Hunt was Carney's “scarred skin fragments.”

Only the “Betrayal” nightmare required multiple purifications, but there was only one key.

It turned out that the upper limit for the number of people who could enter the nightmare depended on how many parts of the “key” could be divided.

—In other words, the “key” used by others couldn't be used again.

As expected, the dungeon instance had a prompt to load the saves:

[Falling in a nightmare. A dungeon instance is being generated.]

[Dungeon instance difficulty is easy. You can enter at most three times.]

[The current purification progress is 1/3.]

[The total erosion rate of the team is 8%. The dungeon instance difficulty rises by 8%. The nightmare mutation probability rises by 8%.]

[This dungeon instance has 1 save point, and the erosion rate is increased by 1% for each death. You will be forced to exit the dungeon instance after three deaths.]

[This dungeon instance provides an introduction to the plot and has decryption rewards.]

[Dungeon instance clearance reward: Profession (Swordsman) increases by 1 level.]

[Dungeon instance decryption rewards: Profession (Wizard) increases by 1 level.]

[Acquired save point: The Tongue in the Mirror]

[Please choose the nightmare entrance—]

[Don Juan Geraint's room]

[Obsolete miscellaneous room]

I shall choose [Obsolete miscellaneous room]. Annan chose the second option.

It seemed that because of his choice, the dizziness that invaded Annan wasn't too intense. In other words, his “loading” time was also reduced when he entered the nightmare.

When Annan opened his eyes again, he smelled a pungent fishy smell.

His line of sight raised a bit. Apparently, he returned to the silly guard "John's" body.

At this moment, Annan was in the empty room.

The room was empty, and the mirror with a broken screen in the center was lying peacefully on the ground.

Annan walked over and picked up the mirror.

The glimmering panel that gave him some Déjà vu appeared in front of him again:

[The Mirror without Tongue]

[Type: Material/miscellaneous (Blue)]

[Description: A ruined curse vessel that lost its original function.]

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[Effect: The holder will suffer the curse "Speak No Evil."]

[Speak no evil: If the holder is attacked before finishing his sentence, the attack ignores the defense.]

"So, the save point is here?" Annan lamented.

In that case, if Guard Captain Klaus killed him afterward, he would be resurrected here.

Annan checked his equipment immediately.

Lucky.

Don Juan's silver pocket watch is with me.

Annan raised his head and looked at the door.

The memory of half a month ago quickly emerged in his mind.

After a while, Klaus, who felt that the ritual was interrupted, would rush here.

Most importantly, Annan couldn't have Klaus noticed that he had ruined the ritual in this room. So he had to make Klaus believe that he had redirected the ritual to himself.

This wasn't difficult. He just had to change the symbol on the tongue a little and then engrave the corresponding symbol on his tongue. Also, he could replace the cow tongue with his prepared version.

Arranging the ritual was a technical task.

Destroying or rewriting rituals was much simpler.

It was just like although players didn't understand the data in the character file of our single-player games, the players could still identify and modify the numbers in regards to "money," "attribute," or "number of items."

Annan threw the mirror away. There was no need to hide it because Klaus couldn't be allowed into the room in the first place. Otherwise, as long as he saw that the ritual was ruined instead of being rewritten, he would attack Annan as well.

If Klaus were to enter, I have to activate "Clanging Object."

To make up for the loophole, Annan used a knife to cut his tongue, this time. Then, he sucked the blood out a bit, making his tongue as blurred as possible.

Even if Klaus were skeptical, after seeing the blood on Annan's tongue, he would dispel the idea that it was a fluke. It also prevented Klaus from seeing Annan's tongue clearly.

—Anyway, this was John's body, not Don Juan's.

If it weren't for worrying about the inconvenience of talking for a while, Annan would chop off his tongue directly and slice it. He wouldn't feel any psychological pressure to stir-fry his tongue with spices.

So Annan walked out of the room, turned around, and closed the door.

This time, Klaus arrived much later. Or probably because Annan didn't need to hide the mirror, Annan came out of the room earlier.

When Klaus hurried past the last corner, he saw John, the strong and tall guard. John leaned on the door of the ritual room, looking at him maliciously.

Klaus's heart trembled.

He put on a solemn expression and drew his weapon with murderous intent on his face.

But, John just put his right hand in front of his mouth and made a silent gesture with a smile. The simple and honest face belonging to John gradually showed a bright and proud smile.

Neither of them moved nor spoke.

Suddenly, there was a terrible silence in the narrow corridor.

"Do not come over." John smiled and said, "The Tongue in the Mirror, right?"

Hearing this keyword, Klaus's expression finally moved.

His face showed strong unwillingness. In the end, he sighed deeply and put down his right hand on the long sword around his waist.

"You won, John." Klaus sighed and stopped pretending to remain silent.

Annan nodded and opened his mouth slightly with a smile.

That allowed Klaus to glance at his blood-stained tongue. Before Klaus could see it clearly, Annan closed it again quickly.

Seeing this familiar scar, Klaus let go of the last line of defense in his heart.

"What do you want?" Klaus asked in a deep voice.

Annan just showed a simple expression, "I know you're under the Third Prince. Who do you think I serve?"

"Do you serve Princess Royal?" Klaus asked rhetorically.

Annan smiled slightly.

"No, you have guessed wrong." He whispered.

Annan looked directly at Klaus, who was a little nervous, with a gentle and harmless smile, "I serve..."

"The Venerated Skeleton."

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It would be short-sighted to only focus on Benjamin to acquire more information.

Klaus knew a lot as well.

The way to clear this dungeon instance was to kill all betrayers.

Basically, that was to kill everyone except Benjamin, Don Juan Geraint, and John. Although Annan did see a handful of "loyal underlings," their numbers were too few.

And in the second live, they all died of unknown AOE from Benjamin.

When they were dead, and Klaus was also dead, the dungeon instance was forced to an end.

Annan could no longer ask Benjamin those questions.

Yet, Annan didn't plan to spare Klaus's life for detailed questioning.

After all, Klaus was too dangerous.

After seeing so many Transcended, Annan fully understood how dangerous a Silver Rank Transcended was.

Carney of the Bronze Rank could become so powerful after becoming a demon. His combat strength was far beyond the ordinary Bronze Rank Transcended. When Annan cleared this dungeon instance last time, Klaus was desperate. He activated the curse and tried to demonize himself.

This was probably why Benjamin was so nervous back then and asked Don Juan to freeze Klaus to death.

Once Klaus completed demonization, a Silver Rank Wizard (especially the Alteration Wizard) muted from spell casting might not be able to beat him.

So the most proper choice was to kill Klaus with a backstab as soon as there was an opening for it.

Until then, some "betrayers" should be kept alive and let them take refuge in the cabin ahead of time.

In this way, Annan got to guarantee that the dungeon instance wouldn't end even when Klaus was killed.

So, Annan had to finish his question with Klaus before meeting Benjamin.

What kind of identity should Annan choose?

First of all, Annan was certain that Klaus was also a believer of the Rotten Man Church and a subordinate of the Third Prince. Moreover, the Third Prince might not know that Klaus was related to the Rotten Man Church.

Hence, taking sides with neither “Princess Royal” nor “King” would work.

If Annan intended to betray Don Juan Geraint's forces, then Annan's status was lower than Klaus. Everything would be the same as his previous live in this nightmare.

If Annan claimed to be a member of the Rotten Man Church or the Third Prince, then it became inconvenient for Annan to ask for information.

—Hence, there was only one faction that could work.

That would be the Venerated Skeleton.

The Rotten Man's forces knew from the beginning that the Venerated Skeleton himself had been at Freezing Water Port.

That was why Klaus and the others didn't dare to stay. Instead, they ran away after getting off the ship. It was even possible that they had escaped by boat without getting to Freezing Water Port.

They knew that the relationship between the Venerated Skeleton and Rotten Man was terrible.

Just as the Venerated Skeleton came over to give Annan a hint over Rotten Man's intelligence. Rotten Man was reluctant to provoke the Venerated Skeleton, but the Venerated Skeleton was actively looking for Rotten Man's trouble.

“I think you might be disembarking soon?” Annan smiled slightly, “Why don't you visit us at the Freezing Water Port?”

Annan could see a horrified expression on Guard Captain Klaus's face.

Klaus was taken aback by this answer.

He blinked his eyes intermittently.

Then, he stepped back a little hesitantly, looked at Annan with some suspicion, and asked in a low voice, “Why do you ask me if I serve the Third Prince?”

“This is because I want to tell you that our next conversation has nothing to do with those two.”

Annan smiled and said, “It's just a matter among the mortals. Don't overcomplicate it.”

Of course, Annan was hinting at something.

Hearing this, cold sweat broke out from behind Klaus.

He knows that I'm serving the Rotten Man church.

This is a secret that even the Third Prince doesn't even know!

Their Rotten Man church had just evacuated from Austere-Winter Dukedom. They were in the middle of transferring their forces to the Noah Kingdom and infiltrating the royal family.

Yet, news had already leaked to the Venerated Skeleton side.

“Does that lord already know about this?” asked Klaus respectfully.

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Annan nodded solemnly.

John's honest face gradually became a little indifferent, “The Venerated Skeleton knows your goal from the beginning, no matter it is about's Rotten Man's intention to complete his Immortality Ritual and what you did in Austere-Winter Dukedom.

“That's why he sent me into this man's body.”

Annan learned about the Rotten Man's “Immortality Ritual” from the book.

Rotten Man wasn't a complete deity.

According to the book, “He is the same as the Venerated Skeleton.” Both were deities who didn't fully grasp the truth.

According to the typical soul promotion pathway, only by obtaining a complete Truth Fragment and forming your book of truth could you organize the ascendancy ritual and become a true deity.

As for the boundary between false deity and upright deity, it wasn't so clear. The difference between false deity and upright deity was that upright deity had a “human appearance.” Also, the upright deity had its own asylum month.

After all, there were no planes such as “star realm” or “deity realm” in this world. The deity's body still existed in the world.

Since the deities were visible and tangible physical entities, naturally, there was a small probability that they would fall and perish.

For the upright deity in its asylum month, it could radiate its power to the whole world and could be resurrected when the month comes.

In other words, only the upright deities possessed immortality.

But the situation of Rotten Man and the Venerated Skeleton was different.

When they became deities, they did not get the book of truth.

The Venerated Skeleton probably sacrificed the corpses of the whole nation through ritual and obtained a temporary truth. In other words, all he got was temporary clergy. As long as that ritual was ruined or stagnated for some reason, the truths that he utilized to become a deity would dissipate altogether.

The situation of Rotten Man was similar to the Venerated Skeleton.

He was a eunuch before becoming a deity.

At the same time, he was also a powerful “alchemist” – the Alteration Wizard.

His curse allowed him to complete the “Alteration of Life.”

That was to transfer the life span of blood relatives to another person.

So, he continued to hold taboo rituals for his king and transferred the lifespan of the king's offspring to the king.

At the same time, he carried out another ritual.

He transferred the king's blood to newborns all over the country in the disguise of “blood testing for newborns.”

With the secret support of the old king, he completed this compound ritual without the spy agency knowing it.

However, it wasn't certain whether Rotten Man betrayed his king in the end.

These lifespans were still impossible to reverse the aging king's body.

So Rotten Man brought destruction upon the Great Barrier, letting the gray fog sweep across the country. The immense curse power immersed in the newborns of the country. Using these pure babies as purifiers and the connections of blood, the power of clean curses flooded into his king's body along with infinite vitality.

Indeed, he wanted to initially imitate the Venerated Skeleton's ritual and make his king a deity with an infinite lifespan. He and other citizens would be reborn again with the power of “Immortality God.”

His plan was refined.

But the king was furious about this.

He personally executed Rotten Man, who was loyal to him and grew up with him.

What Rotten Man didn't expect was.

The king wasn't angry that “so many newborns are dying because of this evil plan,” but at him for “destroying the barrier and destroying the land passed down from generation to generation.”

But because the ritual wasn't completed, the king hadn't yet received the truth. These curses made his lifespan depleted faster, and he died after seven days eventually.

Through the blood connections, immense curses and vitality poured into Rotten Man's corpse, resurrecting his decaying corpse.

He originally planned to form the king's temporary truth of “eternal life” and “heirless.”

In the end, Rotten Man, who had never thought of becoming a deity, became a deity.

Soon, he grew fond of this state.

So he didn't plan to resurrect the king and those innocent newborns.

He only needed to repeat this ritual six times to complete his ascendancy ritual truly.

In this way, his temporary truth could be solidified and allow him to become a true deity.

Compared with the Venerated Skeleton, Rotten Man's advantage was that he didn't have a ritual base that could be physically destroyed. However, the Venerated Skeleton's ritual base wasn't easy to destroy since it was in the depths of the gray mists—the old kingdom.

The Rotten Man's power was also far weaker than the Venerated Skeleton.

In a stricter sense, only one-seventh of the Rotten man was a deity. That was why he was much more active.

Of course, this was the information when the book was written hundreds of years ago.

No one knew how much ascendancy Rotten Man had obtained out of seven at this moment.

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Rotten Man's ascendancy ritual named “King of the Immortal.”

In the ritual, there would be seven immortals fighting each other. In the end, the only one who survived could get the truth of “immortality.” Thus, granting the winner the opportunity to become the true deity of “immortality.”

But Rotten Man himself had already completed his advancement to become a deity.

He just lacked the complete “immortality” truth.

—The first immortal in this world was Rotten Man himself.

And he was obviously not a fool to let his ritual benefit the others.

Therefore, Rotten Man directly used the deity's authority to monopolize the “immortal” curse.

The only way in the world to obtain the “immortal” curse was to complete the Rotten Man's ritual.

“Immortality” at the magnitude of “recovering youth” was unfit to get this special curse. To become a true immortal, one must complete the highest ritual in the Rotten Man domain.

Of course, no ritual could please Rotten Man more than the extinction of the royal family.

Examples of such rituals were “Offspring Bloodbath,” “Regicide,” or “Heirless and Lonely King.”

Indeed, Noah's Kingdom was plotting an immortality ritual.

The Offspring Bloodbath ritual was to have the current king survive and let all his direct bloodlines fight and die altogether. After that, the king had to receive Rotten Man's blessing to become a “eunuch.”

The Regicide ritual was to let a blood-related heir kill the monarch, all his brothers and sisters, successfully take the throne and accept the Rotten Man's blessing.

The Heirless and Lonely King ritual was to have the previous king kill all blood relatives, have no offspring, and accept Rotten Man's blessing.

The ritual condition of the first and the third was relatively close, but the first ritual targeted the current king's descendants while the third ritual targeted the previous king's descendants.

The king could acquire the powerful "immortal" curse and directly advance to the Silver Rank, no matter which ritual was completed.

After that, Rotten Man should immediately become hostile and kill the ritual user directly.

On the one hand, that was to cut off any opportunity for this new immortal to develop and compete with him.

On the other hand, that was also for waste utilization.

After the Great Barrier shattered and after a long "Sanguinary Battle," only the last five countries were left in the world that mankind could reach.

The country where Rotten Man held the first ritual was now the "Twin Goddess Republican Federation," also known as the "Underground Federation."

The guardian deities of this country were Mysterious Lady and Silent Lady. The two deities rarely showed their trace and had been a mystery, unlike Silver Sire and Old Grandmother, who stayed near their own country. This also directly led to their respective churches having weaker power in the Underground Falteration.

One of the main countries of this federation was the country Rotten Man scoured. The country lost an entire generation of newborns and all royal blood.

All newborns born in the particular span of seven years had died due to curses. With that, the country had lost half a generation of people and many potential Transcendeds.

But there were also a large number of ordinary people desperately digging the underground passages. Before any further heavy casualties, they managed to get most young people and a few middle-aged and elderly people to migrate to the underground, absent of gray mists.

Their royal family was completely dead.

Due to their fear of the Rotten Man, who had already become a deity, they dared not elect a new monarch. Of course, it was also possible that some usually authoritative people had found an opportunity and thus propagated this way.

In short, they established the "Diggers Council" and established a "state without a monarch."

Finally, their guardian, Silent Lady, realized the situation and hurried home.

She held up the barrier again, but it was too late. There were only bones and ruins in the earthly world.

Fortunately, she finally found survivors who moved underground.

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But they were reluctant to return to the ground.

Some survivors believe that after the Great Barrier was broken, establishing the underground world was necessary. With the protection of the deity's power, they could survive underground.

Hence, it seemed to have a great outlook to be the first to occupy this vast land that no one had ever realized.

Silent Lady also agreed with them a lot.

So she invited Mysterious Lady to help her and carried out a large-scale transformation of the underground world.

Since then, every child born in the underground world had night vision and could survive in a completely dark environment. They were also granted unique "curse vessels" made by Mysterious Lady to help them build cities underground.

For example, the moss that could illuminate consistently in the dark and could be made into street lamps. In addition, there were crops that could grow underground, some breedable carnivores that could survive in the dark, clean groundwater and water-drawing equipment.

Soon, several small countries with Mysterious Lady being their guardian also learned the news. After they sought their guardian deity's approval, they came over quickly. The purpose was to avoid the "Sanguinary Battle."

Those who failed to seek the deity's asylum in the Sanguinary Battle also fled after hearing the news. Fortunately, the underground world was vast. Without the invasion of gray mists, it could accommodate many people.

Then, they united together and established the "Twin Goddess Republican Federation."

They didn't establish a monarch but were governed by the dual parliamentary model of the "Digger Council" and the "Wise Council."

After all, the underground world was vast. The current Underground Federation could be regarded as the country with the largest number of people.

In fact, the Underground Federation presided over the construction of the underground passages leading to the other four countries.

Mysterious Lady was "the deity of secrets and ritual." There were many wise people among her followers, especially with technology. For example, the underground rail train that utilized gray mists as an energy source.

Of course, if other countries wanted to use underground passages or other underground technologies, they would have to pay hefty service fees to them. Usually, the underground dwellers didn't want money but fresh fruits and vegetables or meat and fiber products from above the ground.

Because they were deep underground, there was no need to worry about gray mists. After the Underground Federation began to operate normally, the two deities left again.

The Underground Federation was also the only country with no upright deity's protection almost all year round.

Although the seven upright deities of religious countries wouldn't often stay in the Sky Tower, they would leave at least one or two housekeepers.

After all, those who lived in the Underground Federation didn't need the Great Barrier's protection. People in the earth world couldn't adapt to the underground living environment without Mysterious Lady's transformation. The underground dwellers also felt contempt for the world on the ground, and they had a sense of superiority in the underground world.

Religious countries dared not to visit because there was no king in the Underground Federation.

The Rotten Man's ritual seemed straightforward, but it could only take place in United Kingdom, Austere-Winter Dukedom, and the Noah Kingdom.

It had been hundreds of years since Rotten Man became a deity.

Annan had every reason to suspect that he didn't progress in his ritual.

Because when Annan read the history books, he had never heard of a similar situation before in the Noah Kingdom. Moreover, the Elegant Elder, Silver Sire, and Old Grandmother were all intimidating upright deities. Rotten Man might not be able to find any opportunities.

—So, he resorted to looking for the Book of Divine Transporter.

His “King of the Immortal” ritual was stagnant for hundreds of years because of the three upright deities.

Rotten Man might have given up this ritual.

He was now just using this ritual to cover his plan in secretly collecting the “Book of Divine Transporter.”

At the same time, the player happened to fulfill the condition of “immortal” and “heirless!”

The Book of Divine Transporter's first fragment granted “respawns” to the players.

For Rotten Man, this was basically the truth of “summoning and controlling the immortal warriors in other worlds!”

No wonder he would covet after the Book of Divine Transporter.

But through the Venerated Skeleton's tone, Annan vaguely noticed that he seemed to know this.

He might know Rotten Man's plan and even the fact that Annan possessed the Book of Divine Transporter.

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Are you some evil spirit possessing John?

Klaus found what Annan said believable.

Of course, Klaus was familiar with "John."

It was a euphemism to describe John as a more insensitive and straightforward person.

John had no sense of pleasantries at all. Moreover, he was easily offended by a more direct approach. Probably, the only good aspect John had would be his firm loyalty to Don Juan. Other than that, his swordsmanship was mediocre. He was dim-witted, irritable, and seemingly didn't even have the qualifications to embark on the path of transcendence.

In short, he was the muscle brain that tends to offend many people.

Others might accept that John could be a spy, but it still didn't seem quite natural.

Not to mention, "John's" attitude to Klaus revealed a hint of arrogance. Moreover, he showed obvious signs of quick thinking, quick reaction and even knew how to modify the Transcended's ritual.

Hence, the argument that "John's" body was just an empty vessel seemed more probable to Klaus.

After all, most believers in false deities tend to end up in this fate.

These believers weren't evil by nature, nor were they advocating the unholy.

They were tainted by darkness and continued with the flow.

Moreover, these believers were active and nomadic. After all, they were subjected to expulsion and surveillance wherever they went. Hence, they were much more unscrupulous, unlike upright deities.

After all, if they were to settle down in one place, they might be notified to leave the city or even the country within a month or two. With the protection of their deities, they didn't need to be too conscientious.

They always do whatever they want, completely ignoring local customs and laws.

They were known to be blamed for any Transcended deaths, especially unregistered Transcended to fulfill the material requirement of ritual.

Of course, there were some exceptions.

Some upright deities voted the false deities to be neutral and partial, enforcing the monitoring on them. Hence, when the false deities' believers did evil deeds, it would eventually hurt those deities and the church. With that, they would be attributed to "evil deity."

Every few years, there would be news of a particular deity's faction change.

It was also possible that a particular false deity was attributed as evil in religious countries, while they were labeled as false deities in the Noah Kingdom. Such a situation was also common.

After all, faith wasn't a requirement for some false deity.

They only need to collect curses, spread their ideas, and complete rituals.

In other words, the deities only need employees, not fans.

False deity itself couldn't recruit many employees. They often targeted egoistic bunch who preferred to "do whatever they want." If the most capable and outstanding employees did a lot of evil deeds, many false deities would turn a blind eye to it. Only a minimal number of false deities having a high morality tackled these evildoers.

These false deities, who didn't want to stir up trouble, would eventually side with upright deities to become subordinate deities. It was just like the company chose to be acquired. It simply gave up thinking and became a "subsidiary" of the other party.

Some upright deities were relatively stingy and only shared some nightmares with the subordinate deities' believers. Those who were favored by an upright deity might be granted an "asylum day" every year.

—That was the reality of "holidays" in this world.

For example, every January 14th was the "River Protection Day" because it was the asylum day Bone Burying Grandma granted to "Springs and Rivers Deity."

Also, May 4th was "Journey Day." This was the asylum day that Silver Sire entrusted to the "Transport Deity."

The deity who acquired an asylum day could also be regarded as a half upright deity. At least if they die, they would be resurrected again on the asylum day next year.

The Venerated Skeleton's believers would claim that the Venerated Skeleton was "Bone Burying Grandma's" subordinate deity. Anyway, Bone Burying Grandma's beliefs were in far religious countries. Most local people lacked the intel about it.

But Klaus knew it.

The Venerated Skeleton wasn't subordinated to that upright deity at all.

"The Elegant Elder" had a pigeon as a holy symbol. He disliked the Venerated Skeleton, thought he was lazy. Unlike the Rotten Man, he didn't stir up trouble everywhere.

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Of course, the Rotten Man's believers were digging their own grave, mainly because of their preference in cutting off male genitals.

Worse still, they always liked to trouble the king and provoke the king's authority.

"I think that that master didn't have you descend into John's body just to say hello, right?" Klaus chuckled and whispered, "Although you said that this topic has nothing to do with the deities, is that true?"

"What the Venerated Skeleton wants to know is about the Roseburg fellow. Did you guys participate?" Annan's tone was soft and soothing, somewhat ethereal, "The answer to this question will affect our next conversation."

Hearing this, Klaus's forehead was sweating slightly.

He hesitated for a while, then asked, "Who from Roseburg are you talking about?"

Huh, the fish bite the bait. Annan took a deep breath.

He stared at Klaus solemnly with a majestic demeanor, "Naturally, the one who hasn't been born yet."

Klaus frowned, hesitating longer than just now. "Is he connected to that master?"

"No." Annan said slowly, "Just that... Let's put it this way. The Venerated Skeleton is also preparing to conduct a ritual. So I want to ask if you do, what date will it be?"

Annan looked at Klaus with a threatening expression on his face, "Why don't you wait for the ship to dock and arrive at Freezing Water Port tomorrow? That way, you get to explain it personally to "the Venerated Skeleton" himself."

"No, no, no..." Klaus quickly refused.

He quickly replied, "Our plan is set on December 14. The future great prophet 'Michel Nottddamm' will be born on this day. We plan to prevent his birth.

"As for Master Viscount, he has nothing to do with our plan."

What a lie. Annan realized this immediately.

To be accurate, Viscount Barber was related to this plan. But, he had failed the ritual and was unable to attain Transcendence.

Is it possible that the viscount needed the Book of Divine Transporter I retrieved?

"Is it the ritual used to eradicate reincarnations?" Annan asked calmly.

Hearing this, Klaus couldn't hold it anymore.

He had a murderous intent on Annan immediately, but he quickly realized that Annan was "just a projection."

Killing John meant nothing to him but just proving Annan's suspicion was correct.

Still, his reaction confirmed the matter...

Klaus hesitated for a while and replied vaguely, "I don't know what you are talking about."

Fortunately, "John" didn't ask further.

"Fine." John nodded with a slight arrogance, "Just in case, before I go up with you, you go to the deck first. You have to find a few people you can trust and let them search Don Juan's room. Focus on looking for the documents in Don Juan's suitcase and the cotton wadding inside the quilt. Remember to ask them to close the door and seal the windows to find the items slowly. There will be surprises."

Of course, there was nothing there.

Annan intended to trick a few "betrayers" and get them to a safe place.

Backstabbing Klaus was still too dangerous for Annan.

After all, Klaus was also a Silver Rank Transcended.

Once Annan failed, he who couldn't use spells in this dungeon instance would end terribly.

So, Annan decided to change his approach.

He wanted to save 'game' first. That was to ensure he wouldn't immediately exit the dungeon instance after killing Klaus. The current plan was to combine Benjamin's power to kill Klaus without giving Klaus a chance to transform.

Seeing John's serious expression, Klaus nodded delightfully.

"If all goes well, Master Rotten Man will remember this kindness!" He affirmed. "How do I address you?"

Annan was startled slightly, then he spoke gently.

"David.

"Just call me David."

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Annan didn't dare to show too much abnormality.

For now, his behavior was entirely in line with the behavioral characteristics of a "Venerated Skeleton's priest."

After all, not many dared to call the Venerated Skeleton by the name near Freezing Water Port, except for the Venerated Skeleton's believers. Those who were insolent in committing this act would be dragged into a nightmare. This somewhat reinforced the fact that Annan was like his senior.

—Indeed, senior.

Rotten Man's ascendancy ritual was modified from the ascendancy ritual the Venerated Skeleton invented.

As the Venerated Skeleton became a deity by the name of "Grand Duke," he was second-rated in the face of Elegant Elder, the deity of nobility.

Likewise, Rotten Man, who borrowed the ritual base of the Venerated Skeleton to become a deity, was naturally substandard in front of the Venerated Skeleton.

Such rationality made sense to indicate that Annan had a higher status than Klaus.

But if Annan asks too many questions, especially low-ended ones, it would arouse Klaus' suspicion.

Klaus certainly didn't dare to bet whether he was in a nightmare. But he could also give some false information or refuse to answer.

So Annan could only ask a few brief questions and granted freedom to Klaus in executing the plan.

—But, Annan still managed to confirm some information in this encounter.

The baby who would be born on December 14 was indeed Michelangelo. The Rotten Man's forces even know the baby's future name – Michele Nottedamm.

For some reason, the Rotten Man Church also intended to ruin this ritual.

They had known this piece of news a long time ago and arranged the ritual of “eradicate reincarnations” in Roseburg in advance, intending to eradicate Michelangelo's soul before the resurrection. In other words, that was to sever the power and memory of the previous life from the baby.

Before that, they arranged some forces in Roseburg.

—Not Transcended, just mortals.

But they were all pious believers of Rotten Man and were adequate to act as the key to start the ritual.

It seemed the Rotten Man Church didn't even plan to surface.

In other words, they didn't dare to approach Roseburg when their intended ritual was activated.

Annan could figure out this because of another piece of information that was still pending to be verified:

Klaus and the Rotten Man believers had infiltrated into the kingdom's higher-ups. They had already been lurking by the Noah Kingdom's direct heirs.

—In other words, every prince's “advisors” knew each other. The purpose was to ensure that the ritual could proceed smoothly.

They were putting up a show in cooperation with each other.

And one of these heirs wasn't quite obedient.

That heir would arrive in Roseburg “just in time” on the day Michelangelo was resurrected.

Annan wasn't sure whether the heir would come or not.

But, from Klaus's vague hints, Annan could instead be sure of another thing. On that day, it would be a disaster for those ordinary people. Its destruction would put a royal heir protected by a Transcended to an “accidental death.”

If we were to look at Annan's force, there were only 5 Bronzes aside from Annan himself.

Unfortunately, this might be the strongest lineup Annan could muster.

This won't be easy. Annan thought about it.

He wished Benjamin could tell him more.

At this time, Annan's previous arrangements for Klaus were made. After watching the three followers left, Annan nodded and asked Klaus, “Is the person you arranged reliable?”

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“Don't worry. They don't know the ultimate goal.”

Klaus replied calmly, "They only thought that I was going to poison Don Juan. With that, the killing intent wouldn't be directed at Benjamin. So whether Benjamin had the Soul Snatch or Prophet school spells, he won't be aware of it."

"He is a wizard from Swamp's Black Tower. So, he must be equipped with the Soul Snatch spells." Annan solemnly told Klaus, "Do remember not to look into Benjamin's eyes. Also, don't have any conversations with your men until they have completed the mission."

This was what Klaus once said to him in the previous nightmare dungeon attempt.

Annan altered it, mixed in some false information, and returned the information to Klaus.

What Klaus wanted to say should be something similar. This would undoubtedly increase his acknowledgment of Annan's identity.

When Klaus heard Annan's words, he shuddered and nodded seriously, "Okay, I understand."

Then, he took Annan and walked onto the deck.

The banquet had started for a long time. The guards huddled in the corner and chatted as they assessed their surroundings while eating their last supper before they went ashore.

It was completely different from the previous dungeon attempts.

Annan, whose Perception attributes had been strengthened several times compared to when he first tackled this dungeon instance, keenly sensed the tension of these guards.

Everyone's eyes deliberately avoided Don Juan's table.

The atmosphere was stifling. The trio ate quickly.

Somehow, no one was causing a commotion, unlike the usuals.

So a suspicion immediately emerged in Annan's mind. It was a problem that he, as a Bronze Rank Wizard, could notice.

Benjamin, who was already at the Silver Rank's peak, would he not detect it?

Annan suddenly remembered something. Don Juan Geraint owned the nightmare he entered. He also found Don Juan's body on the ship.

But the problem was...

What about Benjamin's nightmare?

The Third Prince had long known the two curses on Benjamin. In this case, would Klaus, who wasn't loyal to the Third Prince, absorb Benjamin's curse?

Immediately, Annan noticed Benjamin's gaze.

Unlike what Annan told Klaus, Annan looked straight into Benjamin's eyes.

Benjamin watched the two approaching and looked at Klaus and other traitors who dared not look at him. There was a faint sarcasm in his eyes, but he still pretended there was nothing wrong, only revealing a slight suspicion.

But then, Benjamin looked at Annan with was a trace of confusion.

At this moment, Annan stepped forward in Klaus's somewhat surprised gaze.

Before being seen by Klaus, Annan's face had a frightened and straightforward look that belonged to "John."

"Young Master!"

"What's wrong, John?"

Don Juan immediately asked nervously, "What happened?"

Annan still remembered that Don Juan had agreed with John before that John would come to him immediately if something went wrong.

At this time, Annan had no intention of repeating the scene of the last time.

He knelt beside Benjamin.

He lowered his voice and said to Benjamin, "Evelyn Miller, the fox under the table, 15, the eighth soldier..."