

Righteous Ps 181

The Righteous Player(s) C181– The Final Work “David!”

Chapter 181: The Final Work “David!”

When Annan said the first password, Benjamin's pupils shrank slightly and remained calm. When Annan said the second word, Benjamin's right hand shook slightly.

Annan felt a transparent barrier covering him.

Klaus's hearing wasn't that bad.

He naturally heard Annan's words at such a close distance, but he didn't quite understand the meaning.

But the moment he saw Benjamin's reactions, he also reacted with hindsight.

—This may be the password Benjamin set for himself in the nightmare!

In other words...

I'm in a nightmare!

He became furious immediately and realized that he had been deceived.

But those are information that only the Venerated Skeleton's believers can know.

Could it be that the Venerated Skeleton and Rotten Man officially went to war?

Klaus was a little confused.

But he didn't hesitate anymore.

Klaus drew his sword, and the silver hilt of his long sword shone brightly.

He mustered his energy and then slashed at Annan with all his strength.

A sharp white wave of air whizzed and slashed towards Annan. It seemingly would cut Annan in half in the next second!

It even cut the table in half directly.

In the blink of an eye, Klaus' attack reached Annan. At this moment, Annan didn't even raise his hand or respond.

A layer of illusory white shield circulated Annan like smoke had already emerged, resolving the attack and blocking it.

Annan couldn't even see what school of magic this was.

“...Ah.” Klaus also seemed to calm down a bit when he saw the results of this attack.

He seemed to know what spell it was, so he simply gave up his plan to continue to launch long-range attacks on Annan. Instead, he turned around and jumped back, stepped directly on the thin air, and began to speed up in the air.

“Can you stop him?” Benjamin asked suddenly.

Annan nodded in response, “Probably.”

“Then I will make it quicker...” Benjamin suddenly mumbled.

What happened in the dungeon nightmare this time was completely different from the past.

A pure white light began to shine at the ring on Benjamin's right hand.

The old wizard sat on the table calmly, closing his eyes and chanting intently, “The sun is the all-father, the moon is the all-mother. The fertility wind, and the nurturing land—”

Annan also took Don Juan's silver pocket watch out of his pocket.

The pocket watch case was engraved with a three-eyed bird pattern and inlaid with precious stones. There was no doubt that this item had great monetary value.

Seeing Annan's actions, Klaus was suddenly stunned.

“Hahaha, the Silver Hand?!” Klaus laughed a little hoarsely. Then, he dashed forward against the oncoming wind, “It seems that my plan is still successful.”

Klaus' goal was to break the defense.

He didn't accelerate for too long.

In the exchange of a couple of words, Klaus galloped in with the wild wind!

Although Benjamin could easily stop Klaus's quick attack, Annan immediately activated “Clanging Object” to be on the safe side.

A white light was shot from the pocket watch. It dashed at the speed of sound and collided with Klaus.

As a large amount of smoke burst out, sharp and high-frequency noises rang in all directions in the air. The sensation of distortion and shock visible to the naked eye spread violently around the contact surface.

The plates and bowls on the ship were instantly shattered. Annan felt an intense discomfort in the body's heart, like a palpitation.

The power of this pocket watch was more potent than Annan thought!

Klaus collided with this blow but retreated in embarrassment. Except for his ugly complexion, he didn't seem to be injured much.

When facing Klaus's charge attack, Annan finally realized how powerful the swordsman who utilized the storm's power had.

It wasn't that Klaus was too weak, but Benjamin was far stronger than him.

As if realizing something, Don Juan quickly took off his silver jewelry and handed it to Annan along with a few silver coins.

At the same time, Don Juan also began to recite spells, “Freezing element—”

As he called for the elemental power, his bronze ring shone with a faint brilliance.

“—The frost is the wheel, Klaus is the path.”

Don Juan threw out an azure blue halo that rapidly expanded in the air. It turned into a one-person's height frost wheel that homed toward Klaus.

Klaus realized that the Frost Wheel was chasing him, so he immediately gave up attacking Annan and the others and dashed in the air.

Although the Frost Wheel had been accelerating, it couldn't catch up with Klaus moving swiftly in the air. In just two or three seconds, Don Juan's face began to turn pale.

At this time, Klaus finally responded.

He knew what kind of tactic should he use—

Benjamin is chanting now. He can't interrupt my actions!

Realizing that this was a nightmare, Klaus didn't need to worry about the safety of his subordinates...or rather, he didn't need to worry about the Book of Divine Transporter's page fragment that Don Juan hid. Instead, he incited a storm on the ship with all his strength.

Accompanied by his extreme speed in the air, the storm blew the ship, making it sway fanatically on the sea.

He hoped this could interrupt Benjamin's chanting. The best result would be having Don Juan's forces fall into the sea.

Several of the guards who stood by the ship were caught off guard.

If it hadn't been for Don Juan grabbing Annan's hand quickly, he would have been thrown to the sea directly.

The scene was a storm without rain.

As the boat swayed wildly, many waves were blown by the hurricane and spread in all directions. Then, higher and higher waves were raised and slammed onto the deck.

Faced with this intense dizziness powerful enough to incite nausea and vomiting, “John,” being an ordinary person, was defenseless against it.

But Annan didn't hesitate.

He just put on a weird posture facing forward sideways.

—That was the pose of the “David” statue!

The next moment, “John”'s appearance suddenly changed.

He instantly became a kind middle-aged man with black hair, black eyes, and well-defined features!

That was “Ghirlandaio·David·Buonaro!”

This was exactly the effect of Annan's curse, The Last Work “David”!

David was a Great Wizard at the peak of Silver Rank but completely unable to use Destruction spells. He possesses the spell casting abilities of the Prophet school and Idol school. When using the spells of these two schools, his level was temporarily regarded as Level 30.

At the same time, he could be regarded as a mighty machine-operated golem with divinity.

Although Annan still hadn't obtained the Prophet and Idol spells, it didn't stop him from transforming into Ghirlandaio.

On the one hand, that granted him a heavy weight.

Yes!

Ghirlandaio was a marble statue, close to 1.8 meters; he weighed one-third of a ton!

He stepped on the ground hard, made a hole in the deck, and reached in with a foot to fix his body firmly. Then he lunged forward, reached out one hand, and pressed that hand on the ground so that he could stay firmly on the ground.

Since David had no internal organs, there was naturally no seasick issue. Its heavy body allowed Don Juan to grab him while he held Benjamin's sleeve to prevent them from being thrown out to the sea!

As Don Juan's wheels chased to the limit in the air, they collapsed.

Klaus looked at Annan and others again. The storm gradually subsided.

Annan didn't continue altering all the silver products Don Juan handed over as cannonballs.

Instead, he stood up and turned one of the silver ornaments into a rapier. He then used all the remaining silver coins to strengthen it. He held the sword with the hand he had just supported himself on the ground.

Defending with such a fragile sword was a bit ridiculous in front of the Silver Rank swordsman.

But for the time being, it was better than nothing.

“Is this what you look like, David...” Klaus's vague voice came along with the storm.

Like a tornado bending down in midair, he launched another Charge at Annan again!

Annan only had time to swing his strongest attack at Klaus.

—His Frost Sword!

But at this time, Benjamin's spell had completed.

To be more accurate. Benjamin had already completed the spell, only to activate it in the most timely manner.

The plank of the entire ship had seemingly become alive.

The dense vine-like tentacles sprang up quickly, growing between Annan and Klaus, completely blocking the hurricane that was blowing at the group.

Realizing that the situation turned dire, Klaus braked immediately to flee upwards.

But those tentacles grew upward swiftly along with Klaus.

In the end, a massive wooden palm nearly fifty meters high protruded from the deck.

It quickly pinched Klaus as if he was a mosquito.

At this time, the ship had lost its original appearance.

It was now a wooden fist floating in the sea.

Just like the Riot's company logo [1].

Annan, Don Juan, and Benjamin all stood on the thumbs that clasped inwardly.

"Don't panic. None of them died..."

Benjamin gave Annan a rare smile and said slowly, "I keep them alive so that we can talk."

Annan's pupils shrank slightly.

...Is the power of the Alteration Wizard?

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After a brief silence, Don Juan Geraint spoke softly, "Is this my nightmare?"

After he saw "John" using Silver Sire's divine art, he roughly understood the situation.

"Yes." It was not Annan who replied, but Benjamin Foster.

He patted Don Juan on the head and chuckled softly, "Didn't you expect it a long time ago, Don Juan?"

"Ya, but I'm just worried." Don Juan Geraint shook his head.

His eyes weren't gloomy because he knew that he was dead.

Rather, he frowned and went into deep thoughts.

His attitude is a bit strange. Annan noted down.

On the other side, Benjamin smiled slightly at Annan, "It's been a long time, 'Ghirlandaio.'"

"But, I'm not the Ghirlandaio," Annan confessed in advance.

Benjamin shook his head, "I naturally know very well what exactly is 'Ghirlandaio.'"

"Just when I saw your face, I knew where you got your password and what you're going to ask me. People who Master Michelangelo can recognize naturally have promising character and capability."

"Let me guess." Annan replied softly, "Have you already figured out that the Third Prince would want to kill you?"

Benjamin smiled slightly.

He didn't answer directly but asked a question instead, "How many times have you come to this nightmare?"

"If you count my failed attempts, this is the third time," Annan answered quickly.

Benjamin chuckled.

Three chairs with backrests and armrests were slowly growing out of the massive wooden hand.

Benjamin gestured to Annan and Don Juan to sit down.

"Since you can get Master Michelangelo's approval and can see him, I guess you have already entered Gerald's nightmare."

Benjamin asked slowly, "In other words, Gerald is dead... right?"

"Yes." Annan replied honestly, "Besides, I saw Don Juan being killed. Klaus killed you by violating your curse conditions."

Upon hearing this, Benjamin grinned and smiled silently.

Don Juan on the side also looked at Benjamin blankly.

Don Juan looked at Annan curiously and asked, "What curse violation? You mean, teacher's curse?"

"What's wrong?" Annan saw Don Juan's reaction and asked in reflex, "It's your housekeeper. He fed Benjamin the poisoned wine mixed with squid juice. Is there something wrong here?"

"This is where the problem lies." Benjamin smiled.

He knocked on the hand rest and asked Annan back, "You should know my curse, right?"

"Yes. 'You can't eat squid' and 'You can't refuse wine offered by someone older than you.'"

"So, when I drank the poisoned wine, how many curses did I violate?" Benjamin asked.

Annan's pupils shrank slightly.

He suddenly realized one thing.

He had been thinking about the issue of "poisoned wine."

But the real problem was...

If Benjamin drank the "poisonous wine mixed with squid juice" and if the poisonous wine itself were enough to poison him to death, there would be no need to mix it with squid juice.

If the power of the poisoned wine wasn't lethal for him, then if he drank the poisoned wine, it meant that he had not rejected the poisoned wine. So, in that case, Benjamin didn't violate the latter curse.

In other words, the two curses held by Benjamin were mutually exclusive.

In any case, only one curse violation could be met.

There was only one possibility that Klaus would adopt this condition as his trump card.

“Is the information obtained via the Third Prince false?” Annan blinked and reacted, “He thought your curse was 'You can't drink the wine from the old man' and 'you can't eat squid?’”

Don Juan looked at Benjamin blankly.

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But Benjamin nodded calmly, “It's 'you can't drink wine offered from the elders' and 'you can't eat roasted green plums.’

“Great. You figure that out. Good memory. But, your thinking direction is quite narrowed and tunneled.”

Benjamin made some harsh comments, “Let me ask you again. You should have seen my body, right?”

“Yes.” Annan nodded.

He recalled the scene when he came out of the dungeon instance:

Benjamin was lying prone on the table with his mouth full of blood. His teeth and plates were stained red, and his eyes were pitch black. Next to him lay Don Juan, whose mouth was filled with blood. The old housekeeper had a long sword pierced from his back.

The only difference was that the silver ring on Benjamin's right hand was gone. The robes and jewelry on his body were all removed, appearing just like an ordinary old man.

...Like an ordinary old man? Annan's pupils shrank.

Until then, Annan finally understood everything.

Benjamin was Transcended!

There wouldn't be any abnormality to Bronze Rank Transcended after death.

But the situation would be different from Silver Rank Transcended.

For example, when Gerald died, his body turned into a skeleton, breaking into pieces.

How could Benjamin's dead body be so normal?

Benjamin's body only had his curse vessel and robes missing. Otherwise, he was just like an ordinary old man.

But the problem was that Benjamin wasn't an ordinary old man at all!

“That's a fake corpse,” Annan answered quickly.

Benjamin nodded in approval and said, “Yes. It's like the body you are using now. It's an Idol's basic spell, called the 'Puppet Clay Body.’

“My original plan was to use the 'I'm Not Here' curse to hide my existence after taking poisoned wine and feigning death. Then, I will use Shaping spells to manifest a substitute that looks exactly like me on my seat using the 'Puppet Clay Body.’

“So if you examine my corpse carefully, you should be able to find that it weighs a lot more than an old man.”

Benjamin habitually had a mentoring tone and commented, “Those people failed to conceal their emotions. Klaus is a mistake in advancement ritual and a countryman who can't achieve Gold Rank for life. He doesn't know how great the wizard is. The fear and restlessness in the hearts of those people he brought are so obvious in my eyes.”

I can't help it. I wasn't a Transcended at that time. Annan shook his head and was silent.

Benjamin is indeed capable of using Soul Snatch spells. Annan still remembered what Salvatore told him.

Benjamin could use the four schools of spells: 'Soul Snatch,' 'Alteration,' 'Shaping,' and 'Idol.' However, only his Alteration and Shaping had levels close to the Gold Rank.

For Soul Snatch and Idol school, they should at least be at the bottom level of the Silver Rank.

The answer to this question created more questions in Annan's mind.

“So, what happened to Klaus in the end?” Annan asked.

The corner of Benjamin's mouth rose slightly, “Are you asking me about the future?”

He didn't reveal too much but just replied, “I should have let him go because we don't want to alert the enemies.”

“Teacher, am I really dead?” Don Juan Geraint asked unbearably.

Benjamin looked at Don Juan Geraint with a calm gaze, “Then it depends on how you define 'death.'

“This is your father's request to me. He doesn't want you to enter the Freezing Water Port because there is a deity there. A deity who can sense who owns the Truth Fragment at a glance. But, his majesty issues your death. You need to die here. This is the only place where the Rotten Man can't infiltrate his force in this vast Noah Kingdom, so you can only die here.

“His Majesty would rather give the Truth Fragment you are about to conceive to the Venerated Skeleton than to Rotten Man.

“Three-eyed Crow will never betray the crown, so you have no choice.

“Because you are the one who spawns the Truth. Only when you die can the Truth Fragment be revealed.

“If you stay in the royal capital, you will only die suddenly one day, making Rotten Man a true deity.

“So my plan with your father is to let you die here directly. Throw out the hot potato on your side, the Truth Fragment. Then, we will try to find a way to find your soul and resurrect you. After all, you are Transcended. Although you're only bronze, there is at least a slight possibility of resurrection.

“I didn't tell you this in advance because your acting skills aren't adequate. Only a real death can win Klaus's trust.”

Benjamin said plainly, "So, 'Don Juan Geraint' must die, but you may still survive. I brought the lantern that imprisoned souls which could save you. Then, I'll find another baby with Geraint's direct blood. You may be resurrected.

"But from now on, you won't be Don Juan Geraint anymore. You must never think of him as you. You will never be connected with this name anymore. Remember that.

"Don't covet the name of the past life."

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Don't covet the name of the past life? Annan was slightly confused.

Benjamin glanced over and addressed the confusion for both Annan and Don Juan at the same time, "For a curse to be available for use, having 'oath' power to restrain it is mandatory.

"And the 'name' is the strongest oath that everyone gets in life—the oath that accompanies a lifetime.

"If you're going to re-use the name you have already abandoned, it means you have sworn to reclaim this fate. Then, the curse you have suffered, the fate you have escaped will return in greater intensity. Since it was a choice to evade debt, don't look back. Otherwise, you will only face a backlash of more debts."

All the Transcended power in this world was a curse.

Then the realm of "fate" was naturally a curse.

After all, "Lady Luck," the luck and accident deity, was also an upright deity.

So from what has happened, I can utilize Don Juan's identity while "Don Juan" and the Gerant family wouldn't find trouble with me.

Besides that, the king wouldn't be displeased with me.

After all, the king only wanted "Don Juan Geraint" not to die in the hands of Rotten Man. Hearing that Don Juan wasn't dead, the king would be surprised at most and lament: "Hey, I didn't expect the Venerated Skeleton to be kind." With that, he wouldn't heed any attention to this.

But as long as Annan didn't escape too far from the Freezing Water Port, the king shouldn't care where he went.

The only party sensing something was amiss with it would be the Third Prince.

But at best, he would think that Annan was just a fake.

Doesn't that mean no one can control me? Annan felt a burst of excitement.

Annan was well-behaved, afraid to cause trouble or attract attention for fear of attracting the eyes of the capital. But, he didn't expect that Don Juan's identity would be so safe to use!

No one cared if he was dead or alive.

If they wanted Don Juan to die, they only wanted him to die farther away.

“But, who owns this nightmare?”

Annan asked again, “If Don Juan Geraint is still alive...”

“Naturally, it still belongs to Don Juan. Since he will be reincarnated, the curse accumulated in his body naturally needs to be emptied. Newborn babies can't be born along with jewelry.”

Benjamin smiled again at Annan and explained patiently, “I think you didn't enter this nightmare through Don Juan's curse, right?”

“Wizard plays the role of alteration in the curse. It's doable if it's just to transfer the curse from Don Juan's corpse to another person.

“Little Don Juan's last resentment must be to 'kill' or 'catch' those traitors. Otherwise, he wants to know the traitor's goal.

“This allows us to impart false information in this nightmare. Those who came to investigate later will think that Don Juan and I are dead.”

Don Juan and Benjamin, who died in this nightmare, didn't perish. But, just before discovering this, the dungeon challenger would either fail, get kicked out, be promoted, and leave. So they can't see the plot at the end.

The only one who died was “John.”

Among them, Benjamin was already dead in the world's eyes.

Everyone thought he was dead, and he completely escaped into the shadows.

Benjamin had Don Juan's soul too. So either he would be resurrected or not still retained as a mystery.

“But why are you telling me this?” Annan asked.

“Because I guess you are the successor to the new torn Truth pages. Now, it's my turn to ask some questions.”

Benjamin smiled and said, “Otherwise, I can hardly imagine why you would want to return to this nightmare. This is just a Bronze Rank nightmare. It can only provide power for Bronze Rank Transcended.

“Torn Truth pages isn't something that everyone can inherit. As long as a curse conflicts with the Truth's element, the host's body can't contain the pages at all. Likewise, if the host's talent isn't enough to attain the Gold Rank, the pages will not be manifested in front of the host.

“In other words, even though you may be weaker now, you are the Truth wielder in the future.

“The Truth level is the reserve of the deities. The Truth wielder can become a new deity after attaining other torn Truth pages, perfect their book of truth, and store enough curses. It's just a matter of time.

“Since the Truth torn page hasn't manifested before me, it means that I'm not compatible with it. So then, it makes sense for me to answer all questions of a future deity. If you have any questions, ask. I will answer it if I can,” said Benjamin frankly.

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Annan had no objection.

What Benjamin said is true. I want to make good friends with you while you're weak and even offer you some benefits. I have already expressed my intention directly. It just seems like a natural thing to do.

With that, Annan behaved obediently.

The "Book of Truth" was equivalent to the Godhead.

As long as the Gold Rank elite could have a piece of torn Truth pages, he could attain the Truth level. Frankly speaking, the Truth level was the process of searching and hunting each other who possessed the pages of the same Book of Truth.

As long as one could complete the Book of Truth and accumulate enough power or "experience," the person would become a new deity.

It sounds like it's not too difficult.

Annan was only at the Bronze Rank, but he already had two pages.

At this rate, he wouldn't even attain Gold Rank even after he had collected all pages.

But, the Book of Divine Transporter...

What's the truth in this?

Many thoughts flashed in Annan's mind.

Finally, he decided to tell the truth.

Anyway, in the real world, Benjamin and Don Juan wouldn't know what they were talking about here. So the worst outcome was that the other party refused to cooperate. In that case, Annan would commit suicide 3 times to leave the dungeon instance.

After 3 days, Annan could enter the dungeon instance again and ask again.

Even if the information was mixed with false news, it didn't matter much.

Anyway, Annan would not have believed them all.

"...En." Annan nodded, "And, I need your help.

"I'm Annan Austere-Winter. I temporarily lost part of my memory, and I was trapped in the Noah Kingdom. Because of the similarity in appearance, I temporarily borrowed the identity of Lord Don Juan to manage his territory. Using torn Truth pages power, I'm going against the Venerated Skeleton and Rotten Man at the Freezing Water Port.

"Now, Master Michelangelo is about to be reborn. My friend Salvatore wants to help Master Michelangelo to complete the resurrection. Rotten Man Church intends to use 'Ritual: Eradicate Reincarnations' to interrupt the resurrection ritual on that day. I hope you can tell me more details

about the habit of 'Don Juan.' Also, Master Benjamin, do you know what Rotten Man's plan is in Roseburg? How should I help Michelangelo and how to stop Rotten Man's church plan?"

Annan originally wanted to say, "If things go well, I will return the favor in the future." But when he was about to say this, it felt weird and didn't make sense.

That promise simply felt like a scam.

Benjamin and Don Juan looked at each other.

Don Juan thought for a long time before nodding slowly.

"Sure." Don Juan replied seriously, "Then, the future Duke, Your Majesty Deity. I hope you can treat my people kindly."

"That's natural." Annan breathed a sigh of relief. He managed to achieve his goal in the nightmare this time.

"But before that, I have one more question. Why would they believe that you would drink that glass of wine?" Annan interrupted and addressed his confusion.

He asked carefully, "In the false information they learned, they would think that your curse is 'can't drink wine given by someone older than you' and 'can't ingest squid.' The wine is intended to incur the curse backlash. Then why would they believe that you would drink the wine from the old housekeeper? As long as you don't drink it, it would be right, right?"

"Naturally, it's because Adolphus isn't older than me."

Benjamin said leisurely, "Sir Count knows my real curse. He won't send someone older than me to bring me wine, and I know Adolphus. He has always been Don Juan's housekeeper. I know everything about him. He has always poured my wine.

"So, to kill me, they must curse Adolphus. I have sensed the smell of decay. The scent belongs to the Ritual: Aging Curse.

"—And this is a voluntary curse."

At this point, Benjamin's expression was a bit stern.

Don Juan also realized something and was silent.

Benjamin said softly, "In order not to have my perception detect it, they can only use the excuse of murdering Don Juan to divert the murderous intent. In other words, Adolphus willingly accepts the curse of aging and assassinates his master Don Juan rather than believing and asking us for help.

"Sigh...never mind." The old wizard sighed deeply and slowly

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[Nightmare has been purified.]

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

[Sever the Curse: The Tongue in the Mirror. Evaluation ratings increased.]

[Ensure Don Juan survives until the end of the dungeon instance. Evaluation ratings increased.]

[Learn all the truth. The evaluation ratings increased significantly.]

[Completed a powerful purification. The evaluation ratings increased significantly.]

[Comprehensive Evaluation—+]

[Obtain 68 points in Shared Experience. Perception+1.]

[Obtain dungeon instance clearance reward: Profession (swordsman) rises by 1 level]

[Profession not detected (swordsman)]

[Hidden secrets have been cracked: 100%]

[The third stage reward is available (Obtained when completion reaches 100%).]

[Obtain dungeon instance decryption rewards: Random spells available (choose one out of 'Soul Snatch,' 'Alteration,' 'Shaping,' and 'Idol').]

[The current purification progress is 3/3—the nightmare is over.]

[Based on the area of the nightmare, you got the holy light engraving of Silver Sire.]

[Current total engraving(s): 3 (Silver Sire)]

It's finally over. Annan watched the rapid flow of text before him and sighed softly.

The good news was that he acquired many details on “Don Juan” behavior. This would undoubtedly make his acting more real.

The bad news was that even Benjamin didn't know the specifics of what Rotten Man Church intended to do or how their ritual would be held.

Benjamin wasn't from the future, after all.

Since Annan, as a “future person,” asked about the future enemy's thoughts, Benjamin naturally wouldn't be able to answer it.

“However, I can tell you one thing.” Benjamin said to Annan back then, “Rotten Man isn't a complete deity. It is impossible for him to conceptually 'eradicate reincarnations' because he does not have the concept of 'immortality' at all. This authority does not belong to him yet. “

“...That is to say?”

“That is to say that for this ritual to work, they need to summon some kind of visible and tangible entity.”

Benjamin added, “The false deity ritual you come into contact with may be relatively less. In fact, there are many false deities rituals, which are classic rituals modified from their truths. Perhaps, some are

simply rituals copied from an upright deity's ritual. After all, the truth held by false deities is basically limited, while the requirement for believers is strict.

“If I'm not wrong, they should summon otherworldly monsters that can attack the soul. It will be on par with a 'soul hunter' at the peak of Silver Rank, who isn't armed with a curse vessel. The prerequisites are [Hunter] and [Lurker] in the Bronze Rank, and they can advance into this profession via attaining the Silver Rank.

“The otherworldly monster should have some difference in their abilities. Though, they are often regarded as a race. This is the most direct and cost-effective way to attack the soul without the direct participation of the Gold Rank Transcended.

“The prototype of this ritual is Silent Lady's ritual 'Summoning the Soul Eater.' What Rotten Man can use should be its alternate and even a version modified multiple times. But, we can be certain that the monster must belong to the dark realm.”

“So, could this ritual cause natural disasters or accidentally injure civilians?” Annan asked, “I heard that the Rotten Man Church intends to send a disobedient member of the royal family to Roseburg.”

“—Impossible.” Benjamin asserted, “The statement you heard should be that they intend to attack Master Michelangelo with the summoned monster, and then issued the monster to attack the royal family member later.

“Because Rotten Man isn't a complete deity, and he isn't a wizard who specializes in Idol school. When the truth is incomplete, he cannot transmit power at will. His believers can only attain miraculous effects like bestowing lifespan, rejuvenation, resurrection, recovery, cure, and reducing lifespan through rituals. Unless...”

“...Unless?” Annan pondered.

“Unless Rotten Man comes in person.” Benjamin shrugged and gave the final explanation, “But in that case, there's no point to struggle.”

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Rotten Man was almost the weakest false deity with no completed truth. Even if he disposed of his nanny-like authority and dispersed his divine power, he was still a proficient Gold Rank Alteration Wizard in the end.

[TN: Nanny-like authority should refer to the replenishment of longevity (hence like healing support in the games) since the Rotten Man is the deity of immortality and heirless.]

After he became a deity, he lived for hundreds of years. He would be at least capable of overpowering five Bronze Rank. Defeating Annan and Bread Daryl would be just a piece of cake.

But after receiving this information, Annan was somehow relieved.

Since Rotten Man couldn't conceptually defeat the soul of the reincarnated Michelangelo, Annan was limited to having “find the ritual area” and “interrupt the ritual” as the only victory conditions.

Defeating the summoned monster would promise the same result.

That should be much simpler.

The monster would be at the Silver Rank's peak, having dual profession — the tracking ability and high-speed movement ability of the hunter profession, and the stealth ability and assassination ability of the lurker profession. The monster had no curse as a weakness but no curse vessel to further amplify its power at the same time.

It's still a brutal enemy.

But it still has a health bar.

“This reminds me of Saint Seiya: Knights of the Zodiac. Back then, Athena could use five Bronze Ranks to defeat the 12 temples. Today, I have five Bronze Rank and one loaf of bread. It shouldn't be a problem to kill one Silver Rank.”

Annan thought for a while, feeling calmer.

Since you have an HP bar, and I can break your defense, why can't I defeat you?

It was a pity that Annan no longer had a swordsman profession anymore.

Because of that, Annan didn't acquire any level upgrade aside from the guaranteed experience after the dungeon instance was cleared.

Benjamin said before that this was a dungeon instance dedicated to the Bronze Rank Transcended.

It was because even those inferior to Bronze Rank could acquire the dungeon instance reward.

The reward was far inferior to its difficulty.

This should be an adjustment Benjamin made to keep this false information alive.

But fortunately, after Annan completely decrypted the dungeon instance, the “gift” left by Benjamin was still sufficient.

“A spell from one of the four schools...” Annan murmured, frowning slightly.

Soul Snatch, Alteration, Shaping, idols.

Soul Snatch was undoubtedly the school that best fit Annan's character and personal abilities. However, Annan didn't have a situation in which he needed it in particular.

Alteration was of no use to Annan. After all, Annan had senior Salvatore. Having the same and repeated ability was of little significance.

Shaping still seemed pretty okay.

The spell that Master Benjamin used, which looked like a semi-finished product of Buddha with thousands of hands, was a composite spell of Shaping and Alteration School. In Nightmare: White Tower, Annan also saw the scope of the Shaping spell.

It was close to the kind of “mage” Annan imagined—transmutation.

Having a few fireballs that could turn into shooting arrows floating behind him and the flowing water rotated at high speed like a knife would be super cool.

But, Annan still fixed his attention on Idol school.

He immediately realized that this was his only choice.

His other disguise, “Ghirlandaio·David·Buonaro,” was at the peak of Silver Rank, who practiced two schools: Prophet and Idol.

David could inherit Annan's spells list and activate them at Level 30. In other words, if Annan had a spell that only could be learned at Silver, he could use it through this functionality.

But the problem was that Annan didn't even have a Prophet school and Idol's spells, let alone having Silver Rank spells.

“But if I claim a spell now...” Annan quickly made up his mind. He wanted to try to see if he could get a high-level spell.

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How to generate the bug?

The principle was simple:

Just like when Annan acquired “Notion Rain,” the reward mechanism of giving spells immediately would give Annan a spell that could be “immediately equipped” and used.

Chilling Touch, Slothful Eye, Impeding Wall, Frost Nova, Notion Rain, Frost Wheel... Annan had only mastered six spells now. So there was only one vacancy in the “instant spells” slots.

If he received the reward directly, he could only get one instant Idol spell.

But the power of instant spell obviously couldn't satisfy Annan.

Whether it was [Chilling Touch] or [Slothful Eye], they were more of a “normal attack.”

There wasn't much consumption, but there wasn't much versatility at the same time. The only advantage was that it was instant and low consumption.

Moreover, the difficulty of learning instant spells was the lowest.

Annan's current mentality was like he originally planned to buy a phone worth about 3,000 yuan to make do with it. But he suddenly received a 50% discount coupon. To make it feel worth it, he resorted to buying a more expensive one.

—If Annan switched to David, the situation would be different.

As a Level 30 Wizard, David had plenty of spells he could equip.

With that, Annan would acquire a Silver Rank Guided Spell or even a Chant Spell.

But I don't think I can use it while being in Annan mode?

Though, it won't be a loss.

Anyway, David is also a spell caster, and he won't be just a heavyweight anymore.

Annan was excited. He didn't have any hesitation and did what he had planned.

—It turned out that his attempt to utilize the BUG was successful.

[Based on your characteristics and the existing profession level, you have acquired the Chaos Spell: Denial of Life (Guided Spell)]

[Denial of Life (Guided Spell): Summons violent curse power to immerse the user's body and then triggers a violent negative energy storm, repelling all creatures while causing damage and trembling effects. The effect disregards whether the creature is an ally or hostile. The repelling effect will last for a certain period of time. Any creature that tries to advance toward the user will be repelled back by 30 steps for every 10 steps advanced closer to the user (Wizard profession total level: 40). There will be a probability to incur instant death based on Will attributes.]

[When this spell is interrupted by others, the spell caster will encounter an instant death probability check based on the Will attribute. Regardless of whether the user is interrupted, the user will suffer substantial negative energy damage based on the Constitution attribute at the end of the spell. The spell damage incurred to the user is proportional to the channeling time. The effective radius of this spell and the negative energy damage is proportional to the total level of the user's wizard profession total level. This spell costs 3 points of chaos power when activated, and it costs 1 point of power every 10 seconds to maintain it.]

[Warning: This spell is a Chaos Spell. Each use will increase the erosion rate equal to one-tenth of the user's "wizard profession level (always round up)" and be branded with the "Basic Influence: Remains of the Death Howl" mark. If it isn't removed in time, the host will fall into a random nightmare (difficulty: hard) with the keyword "the dead" after three days.]

What the hell. Annan blinked his eyes.

Idol's Silver Rank spell seemed overpowered.

Or is it because this spell is a chaos spell?

This was the first chaos spell Annan had ever obtained.

Chaos spells seemed to have completely different mechanics from Order Magic.

Its performance was far more potent than Order Magic of the same rank, and the cost was relatively lower. But once it was used, it would increase the erosion rate. Worse still, if it was interrupted, the user bore the risk of death.

If it were a chant spell, the user would suffer a backlash if the spell wasn't released properly.

Also, upon usage, the user would be branded with "remnants." Failure of removal would result in being dragged into an unknown nightmare.

Annan paused suddenly.

If every time you use a chaos spell, you will be dragged into a random nightmare.

Can this be a means of getting free dungeons to grind?

Annan was excited about it.

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The punishment had turned into a reward for Annan.

Moreover, Annan recalled that he had Old Grandmother's real name, which could also be used as "Advanced Influence: Remains of the Frost Deity."

Hence, Annan could use this mysterious knowledge to enter a high-level designated dungeon related to Old Grandmother.

If it weren't for Annan couldn't find a way to clear his erosion rate, he might have queued up for the dungeon already.

Also, Annan realized why "David" got this spell.

According to curse's description, "Ghirlandaio·David·Buonaro" was immune to petrification, instant death, mind control, and unconditionally deflecting "Prophet" and "Idol" school spells below the Gold Rank. When David was subjected to "Alteration," "Destruction," "Shaping," and other school spells, the body's material was judged to be "marble" instead of "flesh."

Marble was immune to negative energy damage.

David was also immune to the instant death effect when his spell casting was interrupted.

This chaos spell basically had no punishment for him.

"This is awesome," Annan exclaimed.

Immediately after, Annan swapped back into his own body.

Then, Annan was pleasantly surprised to discover that he had succeeded in abusing the bug.

His wizard profession became like this:

Wizard (Energy Falteration School) LV13: [Instant Spells LV3 (Chilling Touch, Slothful Eye, not yet)], [Guided Spells LV3 (Impeding Wall, Frost Nova, Notion Rain, Denial of Life)], [Shant Spell LV1 (Frost Wheel)]

Guided Spells were still at LV3. Theoretically, only three spells could be equipped. However, Annan still acquired the "Denial of Life," indicating that the spell could still be used normally.

However, the problem was that although Annan had successfully incurred the bug, he didn't dare to use it in Annan's state.

If he wanted to use this particular skill, wouldn't it be better to manifest David and then swap back into Annan mode after using the skill?

This extra gain would be meaningful only when Annan couldn't become David and needed to use this spell urgently.

"It's not that bad." Annan comforted himself.

At least he now had one more trump card.

If Annan were unlucky, he would soon use it later during the fight with the monster Rotten Man Church summoned.

After the "stone statue state" was lifted, Annan checked the time.

It's 2 a.m.

"...En, I shall continue my sleep."

Annan grumbled and rolled onto the bed again.

When he woke up again, it was half an hour later.

He felt a violent shaking.

After Annan opened his eyes, he found Salvatore's highly excited expression.

Annan had messy hair and a stunned expression on his face for just waking up. He shrank into the quilt and looked at Salvatore, subconsciously tightening the quilt, and shrank inside again.

"Don Juan!"

With heavy dark circles under his eyes and greasy and messy hair, Salvatore yelled, "I have succeeded!"

Okay, I see, you succeeded.

But I can't sleep anymore!

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This guy, Salvatore... What did he manage to do?

It was rare to see this guy so excited. Even Annan was a little curious.

This guy...

He always lowered his head with his eyebrows frowned; he had a grumpy look due to the long-term lack of sleep, just like Gaara [1].

No matter what Salvatore was doing, he looked unmotivated and impatient.

But even though he was impatient and tired, he would still carry out his work orderly. Annan was pleased with that.

The corners of Salvatore's mouth rose.

But no matter what Annan asked, Salvatore remained silent about the mystery.

Salvatore just urged Annan to put on clothes and follow suit into the basement to see for himself. "There's no need to encumber yourself with clothing. The basement is somewhat warm. You don't need to wear shoes, or else you have to take them off when you go down. Come on. Hurry!"

"Alright." Annan couldn't help but put on only two pieces of clothing and got out of bed.

This was the first time Annan entered Salvatore's basement.

"Speaking of which, senior." Annan felt a little cold, tightened his clothes, and asked casually, "As for your basement, is it there since the previous city lord took residence in this place?"

Salvatore, who walked quickly ahead, replied, "That's right. It's a temporary shelter connected to a private dungeon and storage room.

"After I arrived at the Freezing Water Port, I thought I wouldn't need it anyway, so I connected the path. Well, Don Juan, if you want to use it, I can help you change it back to how it was before I leave."

"No need, I probably don't need this place either..." Annan shook his head, rejecting Salvatore's kindness.

Why does he want a dungeon?

If Annan had to lock someone into the dungeon, it would be better for Annan to utilize that person to satisfy the curse condition of the month—getting his kitchen knife out and killing the person.

The dungeon wasn't far from the storage room.

Pushing away the big picture frame, the two followed the steep stairs into the basement.

Stepping on the stairs barefoot, Annan was stunned.

The more he walked down, the more pronounced the warmth came from underground. It felt comfortable.

It feels like floor heating...

"What's down there?" Annan asked, a little surprised, "Why is it so warm?"

"Because I set up a heat regulatory barrier. That's why I ask you to put on fewer clothes."

Salvatore replied, "Freezing Water Port is too cold, and the vegetables outside the house are frozen. At this temperature, many of my reagents will be denatured.

"The temperature at the door is relatively high, and the inside of the dungeon is colder than outside. It is used to store different types of reagents."

After reaching the bottom, the two walked in the narrow and dark corridor.

Annan felt that the temperature here was about 24 degrees. It would get hotter the farther he went, and even the floor under his feet was a little hot.

He sensed the air movement through his skin and realized that the basement had good ventilation, not as airtight as a typical basement.

“This breeze...”

“I made four vents and let them circulate the air within. It also helps with discharging harmful and toxic gases.”

Salvatore quickly replied, “Without airflow, it will be dangerous to stay in the basement for a long time.

“I don't have so many high-quality gems that can cover the entire basement with a heat regulatory barrier. So except for the places where the temperature is the most stable, the remaining barrier spots are placed where air flows in or discharges. With that, a complete airflow cycle is formed.”

With that said, Salvatore took out the key and opened the basement door.

Annan noticed that it was a strangely shaped, long-handled key.

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The key was perpendicular in shape. Its handle was long, and the tip was thick and geometrically shaped.

Salvatore inserted the key to about $\frac{1}{5}$ of the key in terms of depth and then rotated it $\frac{1}{2}$ to the right. Later, he altered the depth of the key inserted as $\frac{2}{5}$, rotating it 360° to the left. Finally, he inserted the key all the way in and rotated to the right for 180° .

The process felt like opening the door of a safe.

Annan subconsciously remembered the password to enter.

Annan was about to move forward, but Salvatore reached out and stopped him.

“Wait a moment,” Salvatore instructed.

With the dull mechanical sound of a click, the door opened inwardly on its own.

Annan looked up and saw that two copper balls were triggered by the mechanism and slid on the brass track as the door opened.

As the two copper balls reached the end and overwhelmed the seesaw, two smaller copper balls were shot out. After colliding in the air and changing their trajectory, the two smaller copper balls entered a new course. Until the end, four huge copper balls rolled slowly and pressed onto the four stone slabs on top of the four walls simultaneously.

“—You may enter.” Salvatore explained, “I have set up a trap here.

“Because there are some things inside that shouldn't be known by others. I'm worried that someone will open the door via brute force or steal my key. So if you don't correctly open the door, you will be killed by the mechanism after entering the door.

“Teacher Benjamin himself designed the core of this mechanism. The trap is capable of killing unwary Silver Rank 'Gladiator' or 'Royal Knight.’”

Annan followed Salvatore into the basement. It had a large area, seemingly like a square. The walls on all sides were blazing with fire, illuminating the place.

All four walls were opened up. Only large platforms and tables were placed after each division. Silver lines were used to demarcate the place.

Not far in front of the duo was a barrier made with a red gem as the center. It was emitting a billowing heat wave, surrounded by water tanks made of brass. Those water tanks were like a city wall, with red liquid swirling and flowing inside.

On the other side, there were many bottles and cans, as well as various measuring cups and incomprehensible instruments.

Annan felt dizzy at a glance.

Noticing Annan's gaze, Salvatore quickly explained, "I have labeled the areas in an organized manner. I only need to draw the barrier with silver and lead powder to prevent different curses from interfering with each other. There is no need to build a lead wall. Otherwise, it will be inconvenient even for me to go around this place."

"Where are your things?" Annan asked obediently, "Can I touch the things here?"

"It's fine. You can stroll around."

Salvatore raised the corner of his mouth proudly, "Just see what you like and take it away."

He quickly added, "But be careful not to burn yourself. Don't touch the gem within the heat regulatory barrier. It's scorching hot."

Annan nodded.

He went to the table of bottles and cans first because there seemed to be several finished reagents on it.

It had a glass outer shell, a silver mesh pattern on the outside, and a bronze base. There was a golden turbid liquid flowing inside.

—It looked a bit like Minute Maid's Juice [2].

When Annan picked it up, he was taken aback.

Because at this moment, a line of information emerged in front of Annan:

[Elixir (Type III)]

[Type: Consumables (Blue)]

[Description: The elixir with an upgraded formula can be formulated without using golden mistletoe, but the effect will be poorer.]

[Effect: Restore 100% Health (for those Bronze Rank and below); restore 20% Health (for those above Bronze Rank)]

Is this the crimson red health potion bottle typically found in-game?

Annan opened his eyes widely.

After coming to this world for so long, he finally saw what a health potion looked like!

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“Did you craft this?” Annan turned around and asked.

It seems I can give these to the players as mission rewards.

Isn't it too op to replenish to full health?

“This is Elixir. It's useful but troublesome to make.”

Salvatore took a look and explained casually, “It can be used to treat trauma and internal injuries. It is mainly used to treat injuries of unknown origin. Look over there. There are also medicines to relieve burns, torn wounds, fractures, snake venoms, negative energy, etc. Those are generally prescribed after determining the cause.”

Annan soon understood the value.

It seemed that elixir should be used to treat injuries like “I don't know what happened, but I lost my health points.”

“Elixir has a short shelf life. I made these a few days ago.”

Salvatore added, “It must be stored statically and cannot be shaken. Once it shakes, or in other words, taken out, it will lose its healing effects after three days. It must be stored in the 'early spring' temperature with appropriate light exposure to maintain its reactivity. At most, the elixir can be stored for a month.

“Actually, at the very start, I thought to myself. I should prepare more elixirs since I have the materials. As I spent one day only on elixir, I could only produce three brews. Then, I quickly realized the situation.

“If we encounter a situation that needs a lot of elixirs to resolve, then my effort is of no use.”

Salvatore sighed. He walked over, gently raised a tube of Elixir, slowly flattened it, and aimed it at the burning torch on the four walls.

“Look, Don Juan. Elixir is still within its validity period. If you point the item to the light, you may see hair-like transparent lines. If the item loses its effect, these transparent lines will become turbid. The more turbid the elixirs, the shorter the validity period.”

“I see.” Annan nodded, indicating that he had understood it.

He immediately asked, “But, you have been busy for several days. What have you been working on?”

“This.” Salvatore pointed with his chin to the barrier radiating the heat.

A ruby the size of a pigeon egg was tied with a brass chain and floated in the air. The four chains were all stretched tensely. The place in contact with the tabletop was four crimson jade plates. There were also electric circuits carved on the table.

Right in the middle were eight brass walls that looked like a mahjong arena. The inner four walls were connected, and the outer four walls were all disconnected. The red liquid didn't overflow but kept rotating counterclockwise around the center.

“What is this?” Annan asked.

Salvatore replied, “Sage's Stone.”

What? Annan was taken aback.

Upon seeing this, Salvatore quickly added, “It's a semi-finished product. I can only achieve this level, but luckily the item can already be used normally.”

Annan blinked his eyes. He looked at the red liquid carefully.

“What is it for?” Annan asked.

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Although the name “Sage's Stone” seemed bombastic, Annan wanted to confirm whether this was the same item he had in his mind.

“Four rotating wheels, the creation, supreme crown, prototype of truth, and perfected element essence. I think the teacher should have told you the five major components of the ascendancy ritual. There are things which every Transcended has pursued.”

Salvatore said slowly, “Sage's Stone, it is the supreme treasure in nature. It can serve as the perfect essence of all elements. Therefore, it can also be said that it is the true deity's blood, the key to the shortcut of becoming a deity.

“For this reason, Sage's Stone can turn imperfect things into their perfect form. For example, turning sand into gems, making copper into gold, and ascending people into deities. If you're not a Transcended, you wouldn't be able to see it or touch it at all. Even the deities can't destroy it.

“In other words, the power of any element can't destroy it. It will not be burned, frozen, cut, or broken. This is one of the very few substances in the world that can completely resist the deity's power.

“Before the 'Wizard War,' that is before the 'Great Unification War,' the Alteration Wizard is regarded as an alchemist. Our main goal is to create Sage's Stone artificially. So far, the Alteration Wizards who could forge the Sage's Stone have become a deity. But strangely, none of them left a clear way of making the Sage's Stone.”

Looking at the endless stream of red liquid, Salvatore looked complicated, “I didn't anticipate myself succeeding.”

“Then, what gives you the courage to do it?”

“It was when I was sleeping—I mean, when I was dreaming.”

Salvatore replied subconsciously, but before he could say it, he reacted and changed his words, “I dreamt of a part of the refining method. Although it is incomplete, I think it's worth a try.”

Annan glanced at Salvatore in suspicion. He could sense keenly that this wasn't the truth.

But Annan was tactful.

Since Salvatore tried hard to hide the fact, he naturally wouldn't expose him.

Annan just changed the subject, "So, how should it be used? What are the specific effects?"

"It's simple."

Salvatore breathed a sigh of relief and quickly answered, "What I made is only a semi-finished product of the Sage's Stone, which can only be effective when it is dissolved in the blood.

"Sage's Stone is a living thing, and it will automatically move towards the sun. So I made a powerful heat regulatory barrier with this 'vermillion blood' gemstone. The concept of this alteration is the 'sun.' I use gilded brass to replace the concept of "the land that accepts sunlight" to adhere it in place. Otherwise, I can't control it.

"As for the effect..." The corners of Salvatore's mouth rose naturally, revealing a confident and happy look.

He pretended to be nonchalant, tried his best to suppress happy and contented emotions, and calmly replied, "For us, it can be used as a powerful soul fuel.

"After reaching the Gold Rank, the soul will burn, developing its elements. While your life span is considerably shortened, it immediately offers all kinds of mysterious methods to approach deity hood.

"But in our Swamp's Black Tower, there is a theory. For transcended souls in Gold Rank, their elemental power only comes from the 'burnable ascended soul' part, rather than having to burn the entire soul into ash to get it. That is to say...

"After using the Sage's Stone, we can temporarily raise our soul rank to Gold Rank. Therefore, it is possible to awaken a complete elemental power. Though, I'm not 100% sure about this."

Salvatore looked at the liquefied Sage's Stone that was constantly flowing on the table and said slowly, "In short, with the strength of our soul, we can only do this three times. Each time is about three minutes.

"It should be enough."

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This item is displaying vigorous reaction.

"Since it will dissolve in blood, can I touch it?"

Annan asked, "Will I pollute it?"

"How could that be? Just touch it."

Salvatore couldn't help but laugh, "If it contaminates so easily, it wouldn't be called Sage's Stone. Even if you spill the dust into it, it won't be contaminated.

"But be careful. Although it looks like a liquid, it weighs like mercury and is much heavier than it looks. If you're not careful, you may suffer a bone fracture."

Watching Annan about to step forward, Salvatore alerted.

Annan nodded, "Got it."

As he approached the ritual area, he felt a heatwave sting his face.

After inching a little closer, the temperature had increased a lot. Annan soon broke into sweats. The sweltering air made his breathing difficult. Worse still, he vaguely felt his eyeballs getting hot.

It was just like he was in the boiler room. No, it should be hotter than the boiler room.

Annan suddenly realized why Salvatore reminded him to wear less just now.

When Annan touched the endless flowing liquid Sage's Stone, he felt a sharp pain on his finger.

A glimmering panel immediately appeared before his eyes:

[Hermetic Sage's Stone (34% purity)]

[Type: Consumables/ritual material/sacrifice/wondrous item (Gold)]

[Description: Sage's Stone of the Hermetic School, unrefined.]

[Description: You have never heard that it can be used as a ritual material ("Advanced Mysterious Ritual" check failed).]

[Description: You have never heard that it can be used as a sacrifice ("Advanced Mysticism" check failed)]

【Effect: After a certain amount of injection, a temporary level is obtained within 180 seconds. Currently, your level can be increased to LV 41.]

[Price: Severe pain throughout the body within three days.]

...Level 41? Annan was startled.

According to the current rules, the Bronze Rank was LV11 to LV20. For the Silver Rank, it would be LV21 to LV30. For the Gold Rank, it should be LV31 to LV40.

According to Salvatore, it was considered lucky that the stone of truth brought about the increment to LV40 after use.

But, LV41...

This should be the truth level, right?

Is it because of the Book of Divine Transporter?

That seems to be a possible explanation.

But... What's Hermes?

Is there a Hermes in this world? Or is there a deity by this name?

No, it is unlikely.

Annan quickly rejected this idea.

If Hermes was a deity's name, this item should be labeled with a mysterious knowledge tag. It wouldn't be so easy to acquire it.

"It's quite heavy, isn't it?"

Salvatore said contentedly behind Annan, "I didn't expect that I could successfully craft this."

"You're quite a genius." Annan couldn't help but exclaim.

Hearing this, Salvatore was silent for a moment, then coughed slightly, "En, thank you. Your words are too kind."

Salvatore clasped his arms tightly and bent his body within. It seemed he had become low-spirited and was silent.

Looking at Salvatore's behavior, Annan was in deep thoughts.

He probably guessed why Salvatore acted so.

There was always an inexplicable, heavy pressure on Salvatore and a sense of inferiority.

But this wasn't unreasonable.

As Black Tower's Son, this proved that his talents were better than the tower master.

It was rare to have such a great young talent not to be arrogant. In comparison to Arthur, Salvatore had the character and psychological quality of a valid Gold Rank.

Compared with the confident Arthur, Salvatore was more than low self-esteem, almost like a shut-in.

It appeared that his extraordinary talents didn't seem to be consistent at all times. Salvatore was deeply troubled by this.

Annan couldn't help but shake his head.

Why let it bother you?

As an erratic genius like me, is it enough to use the external power to make up for the shortcomings? You, as my teammate, shall safeguard the lower limit, and I will push the upper limit for you.

Yes, those in the protagonist's team typically become strong rapidly and suddenly like the light novels.

"By the way, senior." Annan asked nonchalantly, "Do you have any good items here? The more fun kind."

"Yes, I do." Hearing Annan's question, Salvatore thought for a while and then replied, "You should put on some clothes afterward. Here are my winter clothes in the closet over there, although the clothes

may appear a little too big. Put on your shoes and walk to the innermost dungeon. There lies a magic mirror.”

“Magic mirror?” Annan lamented.

For real?

Annan put on a baffled expression.

He was aware that the Black Tower's Son might have a more solid family backing than he thought.

The ruby the size of a pigeon egg wasn't something ordinary people could have, let alone the formula of Sage's Stone.

But, what kind of magic mirror?

Annan walked in the direction of the closet that Salvatore pointed at and asked casually, “What type of mirror?”

Is it a mirror in which you ask questions? Or the one that can watch videos?

Or is it just a brown-nosing mirror?

“It's a curse vessel.” Salvatore put the elixir back in his hand and explained with his back facing Annan, “There is a compound spell of the Prophet school and Idol in it, which allows you to see the essence of your soul. Of course, it is a more abstract version.

“For example, if I put the golden mistletoe in front of the mirror, it will reflect the golden oak tree, dripping blood, beating heart, baby crying, bull horn trumpet. This means it has resurrection capability and mighty healing power. We generally use it to check on unknown items, but in general, you still need to analyze on your own for what the mirror indicates.

“But in the absence of clues, it is still useful. At least it can reveal a vague research direction. For the time being, it is better than nothing.”

Salvatore turned around and smiled casually, “It's like the 'analysis' that Soul Snatch Wizard does to you. You don't need to take it too seriously. It's also something to pass the time.”

“Okay, I'll go take a look!” Annan put on funny cotton-padded shoes and walked towards the dungeon enthusiastically.

He didn't really want to see the magic mirror.

As he had finished assessing the Sage's Stone, it would seem that he had an ulterior motive if he left immediately. But it would be awkward if he just stayed in that place.

In the end, Annan just wanted to give Salvatore a personal space to adjust his mood.

“Salvatore, Annan have found out about your secret.”

A deep, crazy, reverberating voice sounded in Salvatore's heart, “Do you know what to do now?”

Salvatore went silent.

He approached the Sage's Stone, reaching out and gently touching the rushing red liquid.

The flowing liquid was only two fingers thick. At the time Salvatore's finger touched it, it flicked away, just like what would happen if a finger reached out to a high-speed spinning wheel.

"If I were you, I would kill him." The shadow smiled and said, "He knows too many secrets about us."

"Shut up." Salvatore said calmly, "At least, for now, I'm in charge of this body."

As Salvatore spoke, he put his right index finger into Sage's Stone.

The moment he connected his finger to the ritual, Sage's Stone instantly lit up with red light. The speed of rotation gradually slowed down and stopped. Then, the sunken lines on the table lit up. The red gem hung high-up like the sun shone with scorching brilliance.

A red gleam appeared in Salvatore's pupils, seemingly like the red gem's reflection.

Salvatore went silent for a long time before slowly pulling out his finger. The ritual went out instantly. The Sage's Stone began to spin again.

There was white smoke from his index finger, and his rotting injuries healed almost instantaneously.

"Has the purification failed? As I said, you have no talent. Salvatore, what can you do on your own?"

The shadow mocked, "You are just trash. You will fall asleep sooner or later; you can't hold it anymore."

"I may not be able to do anything." Salvatore calmed down instead, "But if you were me, you would have been unable to hold on for a long time and fell asleep."

"Efforts without talent are meaningless." The shadow repeated, "How many times have you failed?"

But Salvatore didn't say much.

He just looked in the direction Annan was leaving, gently and calmly.

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The deeper Annan moved into the dungeon, the more intense the biting cold.

Especially since he had just broken into a sweat just now and hadn't completely wiped those sweat off, he could feel the coldness overflowing in the air.

"The environment in the senior's basement seems quite harsh." Annan smashed his lips.

At the entrance, the temperature near Sage's Stone had exceeded 50°C. The temperature in the dungeon was at least below zero temperature, almost like cold storage. Annan could even clearly see the white mist puffing out when he breathed.

He searched around in the dungeon.

Annan first discovered the Black Fire Salvatore stored.

These items were all stored here, next to the wall. The white freezing air was like a veil, covering these Black Fires completely.

“...Oh.” Looking at these Black Fires, Annan suddenly remembered something.

Soon after he came to Freezing Water Port, Black Fire burned the ship Don Juan was on into crisp.

Annan was still secretly happy at the time.

When the viscount sent someone to burn the ship, it was tantamount to destroying all the previous evidence. What was left on the ship, how many people had been there, and the traces of battle on it had all disappeared.

They couldn't find any evidence that Annan wasn't Don Juan Geraint.

At first, both Annan and Salvatore thought this was Viscount Barber's work. In their interpretation, the viscount lured Salvatore to analyze and study the Black Fire in the basement and then took the opportunity to murder Salvatore in the basement.

It was precisely because of these Black Fires that Annan prioritized dealing with Viscount Barber and considered the viscount to be fully hostile. Subsequently, they discovered the Rotten Man Church's conspiracy.

But now, looking back, it didn't seem to be necessary for Old Viscount to get his hands dirty at all.

Because he didn't need to burn Annan and Salvatore to death.

He just had to make those Black Fires explode in the Freezing Water Port.

Many dead and injured civilians would immediately arouse the attention of the church and the kingdom. These Black Fires had Salvatore's personal signature. In the absence of other suspicious elements, Salvatore would inevitably be imprisoned and await investigation. At the same time, Annan, as the feudal lord of the North Sea Territory and the actual owner of Freezing Water Port, would be interrogated.

Moreover, the garrison of the North Sea Territory had always been Roseburg.

In other words, the only area eligible to temporarily detain the two Transcended was in Roseburg.

By that time, Viscount Barber would demand “Don Juan Geraint” and Salvatore to go to Roseburg, waiting for the investigation team from the capital and the people from Black Tower to arrive.

The two would be unarmed in the Roseburg's detainment. Thus, Annan and Salvatore's life and death were utterly in Viscount Barber's hands.

Even if Viscount Barber didn't have a chance to execute his plan, this incident could still be a stain on Don Juan Geraint's political career. It would then become an excuse for the Gerant family to do many things. After all, the Gerant family didn't intend to kill Don Juan but to rule the North Sea Territory until the ritual was completed.

Having Don Juan back to the capital would bring the same result.

But if it weren't for Viscount Barber, who burned the ship?

“Is it Benjamin?” Annan murmured.

Salvatore made only one batch of this inert Black Fire, and it was made before he and Benjamin left Swamp's Black Tower.

Also, it was later found out that the Black Fires were sold to Viscount Barber through Gerald. But, in the bigger picture, Gerald could only acquire it by purchasing from Benjamin.

Gerald of the Soul Snatch school realized the value of this batch of "inert" Black Fires. But, would Benjamin, as the master of Alteration School, completely ignore its value?

That was unlikely.

Benjamin should leave at least a batch of samples with him.

In other words, this inert Black Fire wasn't only in the hands of Gerald and Viscount Barber.

Benjamin also has a batch hidden in his possessions!

Hence, he had the tools to burn the ship. On the one hand, it helped him destroy the evidence that "Don Juan Geraint was dead." On the other hand, he used this as an alert to Annan and Salvatore.

It was a warning to them that Viscount Barber would use Black Fire as an excuse to attack them!

"At least at that time, Benjamin hadn't left yet." Annan frowned slightly, "Strange..."

Benjamin, what are you trying to hint?

Why does he want to do all these?

Did he recognize me as a stand-in for Don Juan?

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"He met Maria, so he should know that I'm Annan Austere-Winter."

Doesn't he have a suspicion as to why I am here? Annan paused his movements and went into deep thought.

There was only one possibility to explain the event perfectly.

—Benjamin knew from the beginning why Annan would appear here!

Perhaps even the reason why he would arrive in the Freezing Water Port was directly related to Benjamin!

"Yes." Annan had a clearer sense of the ordeal.

The Rotten Man Church feared the Venerated Skeleton. So the guard captain didn't arrive at Freezing Water Port and left by boat halfway through.

If the person who burned the ship was Benjamin, then he had at least arrived at Freezing Water Port. Since Annan didn't see his possessions and wizard robes at the time, it meant that he had already left at that time.

Judging from the hunger level after Annan Austere-Winter woke up, he had just arrived on the beach not long ago.

In other words, Benjamin must have met Annan!

But he knew that Annan was a noble and wouldn't get into trouble, so he didn't take Annan away with him.

This meant that Benjamin had planned to have Annan act as Don Juan!

That was why he left Don Juan's token of identification.

Those letters, rings, pocket watches, Don Juan's dagger, and...

...Truth Fragment·Book of Divine Transporter?

Although Annan still felt that this speculation wasn't flawless, he found himself closer to the truth.

“What do you want?” Annan muttered, frowning.

He suddenly lost his interest in scrutinizing the dungeons.

Of course, part of the reason was that he found that many things here couldn't be stored at room temperature.

Never mind.

Anyway, if I want anything, I can ask the senior directly. There's no need to take it away. It doesn't matter where I put it.

I just need to make sure I don't waste them.

As Annan strolled around, he quickly found the location of the so-called “magic mirror.”

It was a standing mirror, about three meters high, covered with a heavy red cloth.

Annan took off a slight bit of the red cloth and draped it behind the mirror. It wasn't too overwhelming, but 1.6 meters high.

(TN: A quick reminder that MC is a kid.)

It wouldn't be inconvenient for Annan to put the entire red cloth back later.

Annan still had the decency and alertness to return other's possession to its original state after borrowing it.

Annan came to the front of the mirror enthusiastically.

Hehehe, bless my Gacha rate [1], what is the essence of my soul?

The black lines on the mirror surface looked like ice cracks. Apart from these lines, Annan could see another him in the mirror.

Black hair at shoulder-length, tightly pressed faint lips, glimmering icy blue pupils, and fair skin.

It doesn't seem that much of a difference?

Before Annan sunk deeper in his thoughts, the black lines on the mirror gradually faded.

“What?” Annan's pupils shrank slightly.

Under Annan's gaze, the pattern on the mirror suddenly changed!

He saw on both sides of his head, two other heads slowly appeared. There was a black bull's head on the left. The black horn protruding from the forehead seemed to be made from marble. For the majestic lion on the right, its brilliance ferocious as the sun entwined its fur.

In the mirror, Annan's heavy winter clothes gradually faded away.

Two wings of light wrapped in tender white light spread from his waist. The wings gathered, covering his body below his chest. They appeared like a long skirt at first glance. Behind Annan's shoulders, there were also two bright golden wings of light slowly spreading out.

At the moment Annan met his gaze with the middle face, there was a buzz in Annan's head. He immediately turned unconscious.

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 190

On December 13th, the sky in Roseburg was overcast.

A convoy slowly arrived at the main entrance.

Although the convoy wasn't grand and the carriage's decoration wasn't luxurious, none of the guards at the city gate dared to hinder its path.

Just because of the golden lion head embossed on the pure black carriage.

That was the symbol of Noah's royal family!

In the front carriage, there sat a middle-aged man with a serious and composed face.

He had black curly hair and dark red eyes. Also, he wore a pair of narrow-rim black square glasses.

The man opened the curtains and glanced outside.

“It's about to snow, Kafni.” He asked softly with concern, “Are you cold?”

The girl Kafni, who was in the same carriage with him, didn't respond.

Kafni ignored her father's words and just painted intently.

She looked only fourteen years old. Her black curly hair had draped to her waist. She wore a beret on her head like a painter.

She only wore a black lace halter dress. Her barefoot was revealed from the hanging boots. She sat securely on the long and soft bench seat. As she put the drawing board on her knees, she concentrated on smearing her artwork.

“—Kafni?” The middle-aged man received no response.

He reached out and grabbed Kafni's drawing board and pulled it away.

The man asked patiently again, "Are you cold? Do you need more clothes?"

"..." Kafni just shook her head silently.

Unlike the man, despite her having red pupils, those eyes were like fine translucent glass.

Sometimes, the alluring and mystifying eyes would even make people doubt whether she had a normal vision.

In response to her silence, the man also seemed distressed. It was like the common response parents get when they ask their children or a couple's banter on "what to eat tonight" and receive the answer "whatever."

"What do you mean when you shake your head? Is it cold, or you don't want the extra clothes?" As the man said, he looked down at Kafni's painting.

Then, he was taken aback.

In Kafni's painting, it was a lifelike bird with a human face.

Its posture was weird and twisted; its wings seemed to be broken. Each feather had an eye. It opened its feet and ran on the fire, but its feathers showed no signs of being burnt.

The moment the man saw this bizarre painting, a well-disguised fear and disgust flashed in the man's eyes.

He quickly asked softly, "What is this, Kafni?"

"...Deity." She whispered, "He wakes me up."

Her voice was so soft as if it was her muttering during a dream.

When the man heard this answer, he was shocked.

"Don't say that!" He threw away the painting as if in response to being jolted by an electric shock, stood up, and hurriedly reprimanded.

But, he didn't dare to teach Kafni a lesson.

Just staring at the clear and scarlet pupils would enshroud him in fear. A tingling sense of horror rose from behind. The man felt the skin peeling off his body without the slightest pain.

He tried his best to suppress the boiling fear in his heart, barely showed a gentle smile, adjusted his glasses, and said softly, "Kafni, we have arrived.

"This isn't far from the Freezing Water Port. Don't you want to see Amos Morrison's paintings? Tomorrow I will take you to the ruins of Morrison's gallery."

"No need." Kafni shook her head lightly without clearly indicating what she meant.

As she said, she silently picked up the painting that was thrown aside and went back to her seat.

She applied black paint vigorously on the picture, almost blacking out the painting entirely.

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Although he knew that he shouldn't talk to Kafni, who was painting, the man couldn't help but ask after seeing this strange behavior, "Did you draw something wrong?"

"Yes, I made a mistake." Kafni spoke tenderly like a princess and somehow added more description, "He should have four faces and four wings. I can't see far enough.

"In front of him is the face of a man, on the right is the face of a lion, on the left is the face of an ox, and behind him is the face of an eagle..."

When she said this, she raised her head and took a serious look at the man, "'Four' can represent time in ritual, papa."

"I don't understand this. I'm not a Transcended, and I don't understand what it means."

The man smiled bitterly and said, "You don't need to explain it to me. Just draw as you please."

"En." Kafni also seemed to lose interest in explaining.

She hummed softly and lowered her head again.

The man just leaned back in the back seat with a pale face. I saw it again.

Every time the man looked at Kafni, he seemed to see boundless darkness and shadowy tentacles under her skirt.

He was also a little confused whether this was some kind of illusion.

Because that might also be the illusion that Kafni's black lace skirt gave him on the carriage since the skirt was constantly swaying gently.

Who knows? The man rubbed his temples tiredly.

It's time to rest.

"—Wake up, wake up!" On the other side, Annan heard Salvatore's calling him.

At the moment when his consciousness returned, system texts appeared in front of Annan.

[You have completed a ritual. Will attribute +1.]

[You see a divine item with your own eye. Your erosion rate has returned to zero.]

[You have acquired the new mark "Advanced Influence: Remnants of the Wheel of Divine Transporter."]

[If it isn't removed in time, you will fall into a random nightmare (Difficulty: Chaos) with the keyword "brilliance" after seven days.]

"Don Juan? Are you awake?"

It seemed that Annan's eyelids were moving. Salvatore's voice had a hint of pleasant surprise, "Don Juan?"

“...En.” Annan opened his eyes and found that he was lying on the bed, wrapped in two layers of quilt.

For some reason, he felt that his quilt was stuffed with many warm glass bottles.

Are these warm water bags?

Weird thoughts flashed through Annan's mind.

Salvatore breathed a sigh of relief, stood up and drank a few sips of water, and complained, “I wanted to leave you some private space, but I didn't expect you to fall asleep in front of the mirror. Did you take the mirror to see something else? How did you faint?”

“Do you know how cold that place is? This winter suit itself doesn't fit you well, and lying on the ground can't protect you from the cold. The most terrible thing is that you have a peaceful face lying on the ground. When I saw you, it frightened me.”

Annan asked suddenly, “Senior, how long have I fainted?”

“More than an hour. Please don't interrupt me! I never expected that the elixir I crafted would be used in such a situation.”

Salvatore felt bitter, “What did you see? How could you still pass out? Can this mirror hurt people? Here, drink some hot water. How are you now?”

“No, it's not a problem with the mirror. I fainted for other reasons.” Annan shook his head, took the cup of hot water, and took a sip.

What Annan said wasn't a lie.

It was true that he fainted not because of a problem with the mirror. It might be a problem with the Book of Divine Transporter.

“As for how I am feeling right now...” Annan's expression was a little weird, “I think I'm in a great state. I think it should be because of the elixir.”

Annan found his mind clear with strong vigor in his body. It felt comfortable. After he came into this world, he had never felt so relaxed. To describe it, it was like a person who was in the rain for a long time finally put on warm and dry clothes after taking a shower.

But even Annan didn't know if it was really because of the elixir.

Or perhaps it was because of seeing another Annan in the mirror.