

Righteous Ps 211

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 211

It was completely different from the uncontrollable and tingling discomfort when looking at the two false deities.

When Annan looked at Silver Sire, he didn't feel any fear, panic, or reverence.

Even if Annan looked directly at Silver Sire, his thinking wasn't affected at all. The tingling warning sensation like spider-sense didn't surface.

If he didn't witness Silver Sire walking out of the light beam, Annan would think that he was just an ordinary young man next door. Silver Sire's appearance was clean and elegant without the slight hint of being inhuman and unnatural like Rotten Man.

Silver Sire didn't even have the sense of incongruity with the world that Transcended had—the kind of anomalous feeling of being out of tune with the world that could always be noticed at a glance. In other words, Silver Sire wasn't giving a conspicuous vibe that made him stand out even if he blended in the crowd.

On the contrary, this sense of abnormality was apparent in false deities.

Annan could feel a chill in his back when he was one block away from the Venerated Skeleton. In comparison to before Rotten Man appeared, his body would give off panic.

The players and Salvatore couldn't even look directly at the two false deities.

But they could look at Silver Sire naturally as if there was no such pressure at all.

Seeing Silver Sire appear, the two false deities bow their heads to the cheerful youth wearing a monocle.

“Wish you good health, Silver Sire.”

“Greetings, Silver Sire!”

Rotten Man sent his greeting to Silver Sire a bit later.

He raised his head and asked respectfully, “I wonder why you are here.”

“When I noticed that a new deity was going to be born, it just had to come.”

Silver Sire smiled. His voice was loud and clear; he naturally gave off a great impression, “But, you two, why are you fighting in my kingdom?”

His voice was like a lecturer, like a parent, like a king.

It wasn't impassioned words, but loud and clear. There was no sign of timidity while not being harsh either.

“We aren't fighting, Silver Sire.” Rotten Man, who took the initiative to attack previously, explained first, “I just responded to my believers' summoning. I came here as a mirror image.”

“My deal with Old Grandmother made me follow the young dragon to this place.”

The Venerated Skeleton replied directly, "He asked me to protect the descendants of Frostwhisper. You are the witness of all transactions. You will know this is true."

"En, I know that." Silver Sire nodded, "I heard it the other day."

Then he looked at Rotten Man and said directly, "You should leave, Rotten Man."

"I have already made an oath for this country. In the land of trade, the deities are forbidden to fight for their selfish desires."

As Silver Sire's voice came, the two false deities seemed to be walloped by something invisible, staggering and stepping back a few steps. Their aura was suppressed to the extent that they couldn't affect the players.

"I have no intention of starting a fight, Silver Sire. I also apologize to Rotten Man for calling him by his name."

The Venerated Skeleton didn't want to linger further and bowed to Silver Sire respectfully, "Since you have come, I shall retreat."

After all, his body gradually shattered. It turned into countless bones and dissipated in the earth, like snowflakes falling on the ground.

On the other hand, Rotten Man's body was filled with cracks, but it remained intact. It was like bulletproof glass that sustained a devastating blow.

His face was a little fuzzy. The fragrance emitting from his body was erased. The soft-spoken voice turned into static noises like electric microphones. "Silver Sire, I..."

"Rotten Man, I still suggest you leave here immediately."

Silver Sire's voice was clear and loud. He interrupted Rotten Man's words directly, "I won't hand you the Book of Divine Transporter. You need to find your own way."

Annan was slightly surprised when he heard that.

But Rotten Man remained silent.

Silver Sire glanced at the Rotten Man and said calmly, "I don't care about Henry's problem. I didn't vow you to become a deity, after all. It's because you only let your believers induce him. Also, I have always stayed away from mortal affairs."

"If you are capable, let your believers fool Little Henry into completing the ritual. I will never stop you. Since I agreed to the bet, I can accept my losses. Similarly, there are wins and losses in some trades too. As long as you don't personally participate, I won't interfere. That's 'fairness.'"

"If you want Annan's Book of Divine Transporter, get your believers to come and take it. You can't intervene in this. If you touch him, you better brace yourself from which I will confront you personally. Hmph! Forget about if you're breaking the rules or not. You should be informed that Annan is my Silver Knight."

"Are you trying to kill the Silver Knight that I blessed in front of my face?" Silver Sire snorted softly.

The Rotten Man still looked lifeless, just smiling like a friendly business person who prefers diplomacy rather than confrontation.

However, it was notable that Rotten Man lowered his gaze, not daring to bat an eye at Annan again.

“I kindly remind you one more time, Rotten Man. Since you're willing to pay respect to a small tradesman like me and follow the rules at my place, consider these words a gift. It's free-of-charge.”

Silver Sire glanced at Rotten Man and said casually, “The situation at Austere-Winter's house is different from our 'king.' The king is only the spokesperson chosen by us, but over there is the Old Grandmother's blood-connected heir.

“Old Grandmother attaches great importance to blood kinship. After all, dragon blood in this era is rare. So you dare to murder her blood-connected heirs while she is sleeping. If I were you, I would never step into the land of ice.

“Don't disturb the dragon, my friend. Since your main body is still fleeing, you may have a chance. You can either go to the south and ask if the Elegant Elder will take you in or go underground and go back to your hometown.

“If you're hesitant to flee, you won't be able to run away during this year's snowfall,” said Silver Sire with a smile.

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Looking at Silver Sire standing in front of Annan, Rotten Man was silent.

Listening to the baby's cry in the sky grew louder, Rotten Man thought for a long time. In the end, he said softly, “Silver Sire, I never intend to provoke a civil war between the deities. But Michelangelo hasn't fully sublimated yet. He is still a mortal.

“You aren't involved in mortal battles, but no rules are forbidding other deities to punish mortals, right? Besides, you don't know this new deity, and he has never received your engraving.

“If you need a reason, Michelangelo killed my believer more than 20 years ago. So I think this should not violate your rules, right?”

Rotten Man bowed his head respectfully and said, “I will not handle it personally either. Michelangelo has an Immortal Gold Soul, and now he has half his feet into eternal life. I only send a silver rank unsullied person to revenge. Isn't this considered fair?”

The smile on Silver Sire's face gradually faded, “It does not violate my rules. It is indeed fair.”

His voice became a little colder, but it was still clear, “Have you thought clearly about it?”

“I have thought it through, Sire.”

Rotten Man smiled and bowed to Silver Sire, “Even if you deport all my believers in your territory tomorrow—or even hang them directly, I won't complain even a word about it.”

“Is this the transaction you initiated to me?” Silver Sire asked in confirmation.

Rotten Man replied affirmatively, “Yes.”

Silver Sire nodded slowly. He took a deep look at Rotten Man and reaffirmed, “You use the lives of all the believers stranded in the Noah Kingdom to initiate a transaction in exchange for me to stop interfering with you. On December 14, 1503, this transaction took place at the Noah Kingdom, North Sea Territory, Roseburg. Your deal is for you to take revenge on the newly reincarnated 'Michelangelo Buonaro' — the newly born 'Michel Nottddamm.' Do you confirm?”

“Confirm.”

Rotten Man replied without hesitation, “Neither you nor the Venerated Skeleton can interfere with me.”

“I can agree with that.”

Silver Sire said slowly, looking at Rotten Man coldly, “But before the transaction is initiated, I also want to point this out to you. Although I will not interfere with this matter, you can no longer attack him if Michelangelo becomes a deity.”

“As long as you don't find other deities to stop me.” Rotten Man replied with a smile.

“Wait a minute, Silver Sire. I have another question about this transaction.” At this moment, Annan spoke suddenly.

He watched on the side for a long time, and he understood a bit of Silver Sire's character.

Silver Sire lowered his head to look at Annan with a cheerful smile on his face again.

Rotten Man had offended him. Hence, he was delaying Rotten Man's time, hoping that Michelangelo could be faster.

Silver Sire squeezed Annan's cheek, put a hand on Annan's shoulder, and asked softly, “What's your question, my little knight?”

“If I use this bottle of Sage's Stone...” Annan asked without hesitation, “Can I stop Rotten Man's mirror image in a short time?”

Although Annan didn't know why Rotten Man wanted to interrupt Michelangelo's ritual so much, he would hinder the Rotten Man as much as possible. Of course, the more the enemy wanted it, the more the hindrance he would impose.

Rotten Man's ritual had stuck, and he needed the Book of Divine Transporter. Obviously, he wanted Annan's life as well.

It was even possible that Rotten Man was behind Annan's murder and the ship incident.

It wouldn't be beneficial if Annan just allowed Rotten Man to get what he wanted.

Naturally, Annan wouldn't make it easy for Rotten Man.

Also, if Annan successfully stopped Rotten Man this time, the Rotten Man's believers must be traded to Silver Sire as per the transaction established.

Because as Silver Sire said before, he only mentioned the item “Silver Sire and the Venerated Skeleton can't participate nor hinder” in the transaction contract.

Annan found that Silver Sire didn't seem to see eye-to-eye with Rotten Man.

So he came up with a bold idea.

It isn't Rotten Man's main body but a mirror image.

Also, I have the Book of Divine Transporter. So after taking Sage's Stone, I will enter the Truth rank instead of the Gold rank.

So, can I delay Rotten Man for another 3 minutes?

Even without hindering the Rotten Man for 3 minutes, this question alone and waiting for Silver Sire to answer it could delay Rotten Man sometime.

And if Michelangelo needed far more than 3 minutes, Silver Sire would have stopped Annan's plan.

But in any case, it was a rare opportunity to face off a deity while having a true deity supported by the side.

My parents are right there while they put up an ugly expression in the meeting with the teacher at school.

Come fight me? Do you dare to hit me hard?

(TN: Corporal punishment is still practiced in some Asia schools.)

Hearing this, Silver Sire was taken aback and looked at Annan again with some surprise.

Immediately, Silver Sire patted Annan's shoulder with a smile. His gaze on Annan became warm, “I haven't seen you in a few years, but you have become a lot braver, Annan. Old Grandmother will be proud of you. The deity of mirror and clock would also owe you a favor if you can succeed. You have my guarantee for this matter. He can't renege on the debt.

“Go and give it a try. If you are lucky, you do have some chance of winning.

“Rotten Man, you have to agree on that.”

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Rotten Man: ?

Look at what you said, aren't you over-courteous?

Can I not agree to that?

Do I fucking dare?

Facing the partial Silver Sire, Rotten Man found the situation difficult for him.

Once the contract was signed, Silver Sire no longer had the friendly business person's face. He took the initiative to stir up trouble for the Rotten Man.

If Rotten Man expressed dissatisfaction with this or rejected the proposal, Silver Sire would drag the conversation longer.

“Sure,” replied Rotten Man. He could only agree and had no other choice.

Also, he was confident because he knew what Annan's trump cards were.

“Book of Divine Transporter, isn't it?” Rotten Man glanced at Annan deeply.

There had been no new Book of Truth spawned in the recent centuries. Faced with such a situation, many people didn't dare advance into Gold Rank. Those who had attained the Gold Soul Rank could only find other ways for their ascension.

One successful example would be the ritual invented by the Venerated Skeleton. Through a massive ritual, it allowed the user to obtain the temporary Truth awarded by the world. If the user managed to keep the ritual going, he could utilize this as an opening to forcefully promote himself to become a deity. Of course, it took more than the ritual but various elements for the ascendancy process.

Indeed, this was the 'hope' to ascend into deityhood.

As a sage, the Venerated Skeleton's alchemy level was excellent. His train of thought was foolproof somehow.

Since this new ritual could be realized without relying on the deity's power, it meant that the Truth could exist in this world independently. But, the Truth might not have fully formed yet. Perhaps, it hadn't yet been separated independently. It was also possible that it only appeared in the future or the past.

Rotten Man also promoted himself to deityhood in the same way the Venerated Skeleton utilized.

Michelangelo approached this challenge the same way too.

But the difference was that the Venerated Skeleton and Michelangelo's ritual was complete. Only their ritual area was difficult to destroy.

The Venerated Skeleton's ritual area was hidden underground of the Elegy Dukedom.

Michelangelo's ritual area was hidden in the past.

But, Rotten Man was different.

Only his ritual wasn't fully completed yet.

Strictly speaking, the Rotten Man wasn't even a false deity. He only got the essence and power of a deity, but he didn't acquire the Truth.

This was why he wanted the Book of Divine Transporter.

In Rotten Man's view, what the Book of Divine Transporter represented was the Truth he “rented.” As long as Annan relied on the Book of Divine Transporter to become a deity, Annan would take away Rotten Man's slot to become a deity.

A temporary rented Truth was naturally inferior to the genuine one.

The Venerated Skeleton had gradually stabilized his temporary Truth by practicing the curse he got when he became a deity. After all, for hundreds of years, he had been diligent in practicing his Truth on “bones” and “betrayal” in different places. His efforts in guiding others to betray relatives and friends and craft powerful curse vessels based on bones were incessant. As a result, his name had become well-known in many countries.

But for Rotten Man, he hadn't yet completed his ritual.

If he knew that Annan was the holder of the Book of Divine Transporter, Rotten Man would never make a move so quickly. Instead, he would try to foster a good relationship with Annan and search the Book of Divine Transporter in Annan's name.

After Annan collected at least four pages, the Rotten Man would kill him, snatch the Book of Divine Transporter and run away.

But he was also self-aware now.

Old Grandmother had woken up. Silver Sire would be sheltering Annan. The odds of murdering Annan through his believers would be unlikely. Only fools believed that Silver Sire would let Rotten Man believers murder Annan.

When interests and benefits were involved, a businessman's promise was the least credible.

Silver Sire could even sit out. He only needed to inform the royal family and ask them to send some guards to protect Annan. Moreover, he could run a census and find excuses to lock up the suspicious people.

Instead of killing Annan and taking the Book of Divine Transporter from him now, it was better to give him the space to grow.

But, Rotten Man could no longer stay in the Noah Kingdom.

Holders of the title page of Book of Truth were always attracted to other “eggs” subconsciously. A complete Book of Truth must have at least six or seven pages. Even in terms of probability, there would be at least four pages outside of the Noah Kingdom and Austere-Winter Dukedom.

Hmph, I have time to wait for it.

When Annan goes abroad and collects at least four pages of the Book of Truth, I will come to trouble him again.

For Rotten Man, the utmost priority now was to interrupt Michelangelo's ascendancy ritual quickly.

It wasn't because he and Michelangelo had a grudge.

Instead, Michelangelo could successfully reincarnate with the aid of Rotten Man's power.

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Five years ago, Rotten Man himself was in Austere-Winter Dukedom.

The five elements of becoming a deity were “four rotating wheels,” “the creation,” “supreme crown,” “prototype of truth,” and “perfected element essence.”

After all of them were gathered together, the ascendancy ritual could be started.

Compared with two wheels and three wheels, a four-wheeled chariot was much more stable; compared with the six-wheel and eight-wheel upgraded version, a four-wheeled chariot was the most cost-effective.

It represented the “minimum cost on smooth operation” and also represented the “equilibrium” of the deities' center of gravity. Therefore, they shouldn't have any apparent weaknesses. In other words, the person had to make up for their flaws.

In other words, this represented a rigid requirement for attributes and levels. The Venerated Skeleton and Rotten Man's ritual had allowed them to get this power.

But Michelangelo didn't need to do that. The Venerated Skeleton and Rotten Man both rushed to become deities without preparation, while Michelangelo made plans to become a deity from the beginning.

He had been stranded in the Gold Rank for a long time, and he had accumulated enough curses for promotion. “Four rotating wheels” was established for him.

Michelangelo succeeded in making divine creations such as “living stone statues” and had some powerful curse vessels named after him. This fulfilled “the creation” requirement.

As the most potent surviving Prophet wizard in the world, he had the title of “Time Stopper Eye.” When his prophecies conflict with others' prophecies, people would unconditionally choose to believe in him. This was his “supreme crown.”

Michelangelo had no truth, but he relied on the taboo ritual he designed to put himself in a paradox state of both life and death. No existing deity could do that, but he had established it. Hence, it became the temporary Truth he rented.

The problem was that Michelangelo had developed his elements of “mirror” and “time” to the limit.

There was no perfect Sage's Stone as a substitute. He would need to improve the elements continuously. This difficult project was supposedly achieved through the Truth power after getting the Book of Truth.

However, as a mortal, Michelangelo couldn't control “time.”

Michelangelo pondered for a long time and had a bold idea.

He used a Rotten Man believer he killed as a medium. He initiated a seemingly harsh deal with a particular deity who had been stuck on the final step to achieve deityhood for hundreds of years.

Rotten Man would resurrect Michelangelo at the appointed time and place. After that, if Michelangelo succeeded and wholly ascended into a deity, then he didn't need to pay any price. However, if Michelangelo succeeded in the resurrection but still failed to attain deityhood, all the power Michelangelo accumulated, including his soul, would belong to Rotten Man.

At that time, Rotten Man thought to himself. Isn't this a Gold Rank envoy for free?

Although he had to wait five years and spend his power to reincarnate him, the Rotten Man Church would immediately have an elite at the peak level of Gold Rank. He would acquire the curse power Michelangelo accumulated and Michelangelo's soul in this process.

Rotten Man had his judgment in the situation.

Although Michelangelo was strong, his elemental power hadn't exceeded the limit. Moreover, he hadn't yet obtained the Book of Truth or a temporary Truth. He was still very far away from the road of ascendancy.

So, the Rotten Man agreed without hesitation.

Soon after that, Michelangelo sent a letter to the 8 Silver Rank Wizards, inviting them to the White Tower.

Now, Rotten Man had completed the first half of the agreement.

But he realized something was wrong.

Michelangelo's ritual seemed much more complete and reliable than the ritual he duplicated. The last component of this ritual was the "Michelangelo's Resurrection," or rather the "Michel Nottdamm's Birth."

The overlapping crying sounds were the manifestation of the ascendancy in the element of the "mirror."

Seeing that his investment was about to lose, Rotten Man decided to intervene in person and make some "fine adjustments." All his efforts were to ensure that Michelangelo's promotion would fail in the end.

After all, Michelangelo wasn't a believer of any upright deity.

There was no need to worry that his ascendancy ritual would be protected by an upright deity, turning him into a subordinate deity after attaining deityhood.

What he believed in was only the Elegant Elder's subordinate deity, the deity of palace and sculpture, "Father Stone." Worse still, he was even disrespectful to Father Stone, thinking that his works in the mortal period "weren't as good as the people had preached."

Rotten Man's initial idea was right.

As he paid a specific price to reach a deal with Silver Sire, he was confident that he could increase his power and acquire an envoy at the peak of Gold Rank through this transaction. With that, even if he lost all the believers in the Noah Kingdom, he could easily make a comeback.

As his capabilities improved, his church would have more substantial backing. At least in the future, the situation would be better when his believers fight with other deities' believers, and both parties summon divine envoys. Otherwise, the divine envoys summoned at Rotten Man's side could only peak at Gold Rank.

It was originally that way.

Rotten Man gave Annan a deep look.

Michelangelo doesn't have much popularity to get someone to help him.

But my grudges will persuade people to stop me.

Fine, Annan.

Since you stood up and provoked me...

If I respect your power and hurt you by accident for not restraining myself, I can't be blamed, right?

It's just a pity that Annan hasn't accumulated four pages of the Book of Divine Transporter yet. After he dies, the title page will disappear again.

Hmph, I have to look for the next holder of the Book of Divine Transporter.

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On the other side, the players on the forum were in a commotion.

“—I knew it all along. Annan's identity isn't simple!”

“—Don't boost yourself in hindsight. No one has guessed that Annan is a true deity's descendant.”

“—Shh! The fact that Annan is 'Annan' instead of 'Don Juan' was only made public last night. Stop bullshitting me.”

“—Engh! I want to pinch Annan's face so hard.”

“—Wait, the Venerated Skeleton mentioned dragon blood? Is Annan a dragon descendant? Will he become a dragon in the future?”

“—Then I want to transfer my profession to Dragon Knight!”

“—Stop fussing around. Could Annan defeat Rotten Man?”

“—Certainly, because Annan is the protagonist. In the end, the plot will kill the Rotten Man.”

“—Wait, no, I'm more worried about Sister Hyphen and the others. If the fight breaks out, they will get instantly killed. So how do we continue to watch the live broadcast?”

“—@SisterHyphen! Run away! Go and hide in the house. It's safer there!”

“—@SisterHyphen—Quickly—Run—Away—”

“—Yiyi! Flee!”

Shut up! How can I run away?

Lin Yiyi was irritated after reading the comments on the posts that persuaded her to flee.

If I run away at this time, wouldn't Annan's affection rating on me plummet?

Even if I die here without stopping and even respawn terribly, I will never flee!

“Senior, Old Goose, Yiyi, go and hide in the house first.” Annan saw the post on the forum and found it reasonable.

If these two players kept dying, the scene wouldn't be of good quality as if an amateur was holding the camera.

Annan had already made plans to edit the recorded live broadcast into a promotional video.

Annan injected Sage's Stone into his deltoid muscle while warmly admonishing Yiyi and the others, “This isn't a battle you can participate in. Protect yourself and Master Michelangelo.”

“Yes, feudal lord.” Lin Yiyi immediately responded.

Since you asked me to flee, then I will do just that.

She and Delicious Wind Goose dragged Salvatore into the mansion at No.44 Clear Water Street without any hesitation.

Salvatore still hesitated.

He wanted to help Annan.

Although he was surprised that Annan was familiar with Silver Sire, he was also amazed at the arrival of the Venerated Skeleton and Rotten Man. He was also awed at his imminent witness on a deityhood ascendancy.

Aside from the excitement, Salvatore didn't forget Annan was just a Bronze Rank Transcended.

Even if Annan administered Sage's Stone, it only temporarily upgraded his power to Gold Rank.

But that wasn't to say that Annan could truly master all the abilities in Gold Rank.

Salvatore, who had used Sage's Stone recently, had experienced this fact.

“Annan...” Salvatore was dragged into the room, staring at Annan.

He bit his lip with his eyes filled with regrets.

In Salvatore's opinion, Annan would stick out at this time, entirely because of him.

He once told Annan that he hoped that a master like Michelangelo would survive.

At this moment, the source of Annan's confidence was the semi-finished Sage's Stone. Salvatore was the person who made it and handed it over to him.

If something happens to Annan, that's undoubtedly my fault.

Salvatore stood dumbfounded there like a wooden target, silent for a moment.

He suddenly said in a low volume, “Teacher, are you here?”

“Yes, I am.” Benjamin's somewhat old and unperturbed voice sounded, “What a guess.”

Only then did the players realize that an old wizard was sitting at the table in the living room.

Salvatore looked at Benjamin with a complicated expression. "Do you know Gerald?"

"Certainly." Benjamin nodded calmly, "When he enrolled in Black Tower, I took care of his daily life. We're pretty good friends."

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"So, the news about Gerald being expelled from Black Tower for stealing curse vessels and killing our students... Is it fake?"

"Yes and no." Benjamin looked at Salvatore, who was trembling slightly, with a somewhat relieved expression.

"That's just a transaction." Benjamin said those cruel words calmly, "I let him kill my students, as a price—I will help him steal the Venerated Skeleton's Bone Blood Trigger."

The words shocked Salvatore like thunder. He looked at Benjamin in disbelief and asked, "Why?"

"Of course, it's for the materials." Benjamin sighed, "You wouldn't think that such a powerful Sage's Stone doesn't need any expensive or troublesome ingredients?"

Hearing this, Salvatore shivered. "One of the main materials of Sage's Stone is wizard's bone marrow extract."

Benjamin spread his hands out, "But in the age of peace now, where can I find the bone marrow of the wizard? Those with their marrow emptied, can they still live?"

"Gerald looked directly at the Venerated Skeleton in the ritual. His erosion rate is too high, and he can't be saved. He wants to get his hands on the curse vessel and study to see if there is a possibility of survival. I will naturally help him. But he can't stay in Black Tower anymore. For my students... Heh! They aren't the same as you. They are just a group of untalented people trying to learn Alteration spells and want to profit from it. What a bunch of fools."

The old wizard said plainly, "When they jokingly came over and asked me, 'Teacher, is there any formula that is low cost and can make a lot of money?' I intended on killing them already."

"The Way of Alteration isn't to help these idiots make money!" His voice wasn't loud but resounded in a low voice.

However, the players and Salvatore seemed to be blown by an invisible hurricane. Their footings became unsteady and staggered to the floor.

Salvatore sighed deeply.

He temporarily set aside all the random questions about Sage's Stone, his senior sisters, and other matters in Swamp's Black Tower. Instead, he followed his initial thoughts and continued to ask slowly, "After that, Gerald was wanted. Is it because you want to host this ritual?"

"Yeah. It's our mutual intention too." Benjamin smiled, "I sent 3 waves of hitmen to hunt him down. On the other hand, he attempted assassination on me 4 times by various means. But we all failed."

“As for what we want, it's straightforward.” When Benjamin said this, his expression became slightly serious, “When our soul rank is promoted, we will get a new curse.

“Then, naturally, you need a secret keeper to keep the curse's secret. In this way, we use the oath power to restrain the curse.

“The new curse that people get after being promoted to deities naturally needs a secret keeper. The secret keeper is generally the “pope” of the deities,” explained Benjamin slowly.

At this time, Annan outside the room also felt the strange burning sensation as the blood all over his body began to boil.

But there was no pain.

The curse on him became active similarly in Salvatore's situation. They crept and spread all over his body. But it wasn't black, but golden runes shining with dazzling light.

That seemed to be the function of the Book of Divine Transporter.

[Detecting level promotion, currently Level 19.]

[Detecting level promotion, currently at Level 26.]

[Detecting level promotion, currently Level 31.]

The prompts flashed rapidly and slowly stagnated.

[Your level has been promoted, currently Level 41.]

[Extracting elements—]

[Blood Elements: Frost (100%)]

[Soul Elements: Brilliance (63%), Wisdom (45%), Understanding (10%), Beauty (3%), Strict (1%)]

[Element Manifestation: Frost, Brilliance]

[Truth Is Manifesting—]

[Book of Divine Transporter 2/6]

[Available Truth: the Undying, the Way to Rise and Change]

After that, a strange cooling sensation suddenly hit.

All the clothes on Annan's body were torn to pieces by the surging power.

Cold air leached on him, and the ground was frozen. Annan's skin became paler and even approaching transparency.

Two pairs of wings emerged from Annan's back; one on the shoulder and one at the waist.

A pair of wings held up to the sky.

Another pair of wings drooped downward to cover the lower half of the body, hiding the runes all over the body that was shining with brilliance.

After the runes on Annan's body were covered by the wings, they all became slits.

The golden spheres shining with brilliance glimmered quietly in the slits.

These golden spheres somehow resembled eyes, and there were 40 of them!

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Chapter 214: Minimalist Loop

In the tiny cracks on Annan's body, dazzling brilliance shot out.

There were like countless eyes.

But if one were to look closely, one could see that there was no flesh and blood in the cracks but the endless darkness and complete emptiness.

However, in this endless darkness, countless points of light could be seen flashing like fireflies, piercing their lights out from the endless darkness.

The sky became gloomy rapidly, blocking the early morning sun.

Under the dim sky, Annan gradually floated in the air.

From his cracked body, fragments of light burst out. As Annan's body moved, these spots of light also swayed according to the inertia, giving people a strong sense of dizziness.

It was a glorious, noble, and sacred state.

But the players were discussing this from another angle.

“—The wings are in the way.”

“—It's fine. The wings only cover half of his ass. I'm delighted with the exposure!”

“—He's even barefooted! It would be better if Annan has long hair.”

“—Annan has back muscles?”

“—Wait, does this count as tanned?”

“—Hey, would that look good on a male's body?”

“—Of course!”

“—To be honest, this light made me a little dizzy.”

“—The position of the wings feels like a succubus.”

“—Annan's whole body cracks and shines as if he is going to kill the final boss in the next second.”

“—Annan: Cracked Version.jpg”

“—Annan: I Can't Close it up.jpg”

“—This is an Ophanim, right? I remember the Ophanim has many eyes and the Seraph [1] has many wings.”

(TN: I chose the name Ophanim [2] because it's often referred to as many-eyed ones.)

“—But I remember that many-eyed is the characteristic of a Throne Angel?”

“—Ophanim isn't an entity. When it appears, it should have four wings and four faces. Annan has three faces less than that. As for the Throne Angel before the fifth century, the Throne Angel should have countless burning eyeballs. The moving wheels represent the divine transporter.”

“—So, is the current angel image personified by the painter back then? Just like the current ship, gun, food, and Pokémon?”

“—Shut up, it's different!”

“—Wait, something weird got in there.”

“—Don't discuss settings outside this world. For example, there are no angels in the mist world, right?”

“—At present, it seems that there is none yet.”

“—Wait, the comments have gone wrong. Aren't we discussing Annan's beauty here?”

After this post appeared, everyone took a pause.

Then, the atmosphere became harmonious again.

“—Upvote.”

“—Upvote +1”

“—I kind of want to see what Annan looks like when he changes back.”

“—Upvote +1.”

“—Upvote +1 & +1.”

Annan didn't visit the forum to concentrate on dealing with Rotten Man.

Otherwise, he might smile graciously and ban those players from commenting and chatting for a week.

At this moment, Annan tried to stay calm and indifferent.

He took out the Elven's Skin Glove with granulation tissues that hadn't fully retracted from the wings and put them on his hands.

As for the hammer and the kitchen knife, Annan's surge of power previously had knocked them away. It was just that the gloves were lighter, so the wings stopped them.

Rotten Man watched Annan from a distance and asked quietly, “Are you ready?”

Facing Annan, who was delaying time, he didn't feel any anxiety.

“Yes.” Annan looked at Rotten Man and said emotionlessly.

At the moment, his voice echoed in the air, and his icy blue pupils had already condensed into gems.

The subtle silver-white vertical pupil was looming in it.

The thunder followed immediately after Annan's voice.

Pouring freezing rain came without warning!

Before the freezing raindrops hit the ground, the white ice mist had frozen them.

In the blink of an eye, multiple crystal thorns were condensed out of thin air. They twisted and grew upwards to form an ice flower.

This was “icy rain” that could reduce the speed of thinking.

It was Annan's Soul Snatch spell, Notion Rain!

The icy rain was initially used to conduct the Energy Falteration spells. However, now that Annan's power skyrocketed, the rainfall was enough for Annan to build a territory.

Facing the frosty street in the blink of an eye, Rotten Man didn't panic nor even move at all.

He stood on the spot with a gentle smile on his face and gently raised his right hand like a prayer.

With Rotten Man making such strange gestures, the ice on the path between him and Annan shattered!

Annan felt like he was being torn apart by an inexplicable invisible force, almost tearing himself into two pieces. A strong warning suddenly appeared in his heart.

What is this?

With a thought in his mind, he levitated in the air.

Without the need to use his feet, Annan dashed away at a speed leaving phantom images as his trails.

As Annan moved, the ice on the ground also shattered into pieces wherever he passed by.

Annan lifted his right hand slightly.

A Frost Wheel was formed directly in his hands without chanting.

The hollow pattern on it was much more gorgeous and complicated than when Annan chanted the spell on his own previously. Its details were more accurate, and even traces of wear and tear could be seen. This wasn't like an illusory light wheel constructed by energy, but more like summoning a lost item to this world again.

Annan didn't launch the light wheel.

Instead, he waved it horizontally, slashing towards the air behind him like a hand-held blade!

With the sound of shattering, Annan crushed some fragile, intangible thing.

Rotten Man did alterate the ice into something invisible.

But before Annan managed to catch a breather, those transparent crystal fragments suddenly appeared in front of him and froze in the air.

In the blink of an eye, they sparkled brilliantly.

A sharp blade of light emerged from the crystal shard.

Then, they grew into a few, a dozen, and then a few dozen.

The light sword underwent rapid proliferation, and they were covered with a layer of ice in the next second.

After aiming at Annan, it turned into streamers and galloped. A low buzzing sound accompanied the onslaught at Annan!

Annan backed away quickly, waving the wheel of light in his hand and smashing the incoming ice sword. But the crushed ice sword turned into more embryos of the sword of light. The process repeated with more swords of light proliferated endlessly.

Salvatore's pupils shrank slightly.

This is a [Minimalist Loop]!

In Alteration spells, the more complex the elements on the alteration process chain, the greater the ultimate power, the more uncontrollable it would be, and vice versa.

But there was an exception here.

When two spells were used as a cycle, the output could be magnified to the limit.

This was called a [Minimalist Loop], also known as an uncontrollable loop.

Because Alteration's "raw material" was the "product" too. In this way, there was no need for any medium. The infinite loop was constructed with itself and a single catalyst.

Rotten Man initially altered the ice into the Gold Rank's Alteration product, [Invisible Pillar] — a semi-activated space crack used to cut off objects or send small targets into designated spaces.

After that, he utilized the [Light Blade]. Various weapons made of light with combat awareness could spontaneously attack the enemy or defend the target. They were the guardians of many tombs.

This loop wasn't unbreakable. As long as it was melted when it altered back to [Ice] again, or the invisible pillar was filled with a large amount of material, the alteration would end.

But, Rotten Man coated the exterior of the light blades with a layer of ice to initiate a Minimalist Loop, and the light blades could proliferate infinitely.

If you want to extinguish the light, you must eliminate all the ice. However, the shattered ice will turn into new lights. If you melt the ice with fire, the nourished light can separate a part of it and turn it into fresh ice to achieve an infinite loop.

Salvatore stared blankly at the ever-changing light and ice in Rotten Man's Will.

So this is the power whom the Gold Rank Alteration Wizard should have?

Rotten Man only used his power at the Gold Rank.

This was by no means an authority belonging to the deity.

He was merely showing the side of a skilled Alteration Wizard. Or, in other words, the combat alchemy only the "great sage" could muster!

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The frost-coated [Blades of Light] doubled in a matter of seconds.

Annan was keenly aware of the alteration mechanism at this time but couldn't figure out how to overcome it at the time.

He could only continue to intercept and smash the ice blades assaulting him with the wheel of light in his hands. However, once the number of blades counted more than 50, Annan began to feel the pressure. Wounds appeared on his body, and his blood was being frozen before it could even flow out.

At this moment, the Rotten Man silently pointed his unoccupied left palm towards Annan.

Annan was sweeping his arms while retreating at that moment, severing a couple more of the ice-coated blades.

However, the shattered ice fragments did not transform into more light blades.

They all melted in the air, turning into a faint mist that surrounded Annan.

Suddenly, he smelled a strange fragrance in the air.

It was like a boiled rose, exuding a warm and mellow fragrance.

The scent plunged into Annan's body in the blink of an eye.

Immediately after, Annan felt his body grow weaker and became unable to muster his full strength. The world in front of him began to be distorted as well. The colors of the world became bright, with dazzling purple, blue and cyan lights assaulting his eyes. On the other hand, the color of red was robbed away from his world.

Everything in front of Annan blurred and distorted as if he had drunk too much. His vision suddenly zoomed in and out. Even if he closed his eyes, he still felt a strong sense of dizziness.

Worse still, the fragrance became more intense. Its smell had also become more complex and more apparent.

With the slight sourness of a red wine emerging, it overwhelmed the sweet scent of the rose.

Immediately after, Annan lost his hearing.

He could no longer hear the wind, only a rustling like the sound of a static screen on a TV. Then, there came endless vague and malicious murmurs.

“...Ugh.” Annan bit his lower lip suddenly. He felt a stinging sensation in his abdomen.

Annan's sense of distance and hearing was deprived. His color perception was distorted; the dizziness assaulting his head and the sense of powerlessness from his limbs revealed obvious flaws in his blocks.

Several ice blades pierced through his belly.

Fortunately, Annan possessed the [Frost Element], which allowed him to ignore the frost damage of the ice blades. Rotten Man himself shouldn't be proficient at ice alteration. He just took advantage of the territory that Annan made and launched attacks on Annan.

Annan soon had a gist on the situation.

He recalled the smell of tulips when he met the Rotten Man. The fragrance made his consciousness blurred and drowsy, rendering him into a lethargic state like a muddle-headed puppet.

Then, there was the fragrance attack.

This particular “scent” alteration might be the Rotten Man's unique spell!

Soon after Annan realized this, the sweet and sour mellow wine and the mysterious sweetness of the boiling rose surrounding him had a new addition, an icy cedar fragrance.

What Annan was deprived of this time was the sense of touch.

He felt a strange warm touch from his hands. It was like being held by a pair of warm hands. But, he could see that his left hand was empty, and his right hand was holding the Frost Wheel.

Immediately afterward, this strange sensation spread upward from both hands.

First, the sensation came to the back and shoulders. Then, it spread to the abdomen and the thighs. Annan felt countless warm hands of different sizes pressing on his body. This warm touch obscured all of his tactile perceptions.

He couldn't feel the touch of the cold wind when moving at high speed or even the ground under his feet, as if he was stepping on cotton. The discomfort of being pierced by the ice blade in his abdomen gradually became unnoticeable as if it was an eraser rubbing it away.

“Annan! Dodge!” Salvatore couldn't help but shout out loudly.

But Annan couldn't hear anything.

He was like a drunkard, slashing the air and smashing away the ice blades. But more ice blades pierced through the body.

If Annan were an ordinary person, he would have died long ago. Even though wings helped cover his lower body, his upper body was already riddled with holes.

After the first few ice blades penetrated his abdomen, an eye somewhere on his body lost its light. It was like a crack to the world of darkness. Then, when Annan's heart and head were penetrated, another eye was shut.

After that, Rotten Man didn't attack Annan's body at all but instead focused on the "eyes on his body." In every move, ice blades penetrated several "eyes" on Annan. Soon, there weren't many left on his upper body.

Annan, what is going on? Salvatore frowned and murmured.

Salvatore saw how Annan gradually lost his defensive stance.

His body gradually turned red, and his movements became more sluggish.

Is that poison? Salvatore soon realized something.

He looked back at the Rotten Man.

The Rotten Man's raised left hand was locked onto Annan. Among the ice blades Annan crushed, a few smaller ice pieces melted directly, without hatching into a new light blade.

Damn it!

What should I do?

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The battle has only been going on for less than half a minute, yet Annan's sense of touch has already been stripped.

On the other hand, once Annan noticed that his sense of touch was removed, he had already thought of a way to overcome the situation.

Truth: The Way to Rise and Change— Annan called for his Truth.

As Annan activated the Truth Power attached to the Book of Divine Transporter in his heart, a glimmering panel appeared before his eyes.

[Subject to be improved?]

Element, Brilliance.

Annan muttered in his heart.

The text on the glimmering panel flashed across Annan's mind.

[Assessing Shared Experience Pool. There's no Shared Element stored.]

[Initiating in-depth element extraction.]

[Warning: The safe extraction limit of the element "Brilliance" of the target "Annan·Austere-Winter" is only 85%.]

[Probability of sublimation 0%.]

[Automatically optimizing the extraction plan...]

[Detected high enrichment of Brilliance element.]

[Route 1: Extract nearby Brilliance elements, which can temporarily increase the safe extraction limit to 100%.]

[Sublimation probability 3%]

[Do you confirm?]

So is this “the Way to Rise and Change”?

Confirm!

Annan roughly understood the essence of his Truth, “the Way to Rise and Change” was.

To put it simply, this seemed to be a backend authority to alter the data!

Annan suddenly stopped retreating.

At the next moment, all of Annan's eyes closed at the same time.

He levitated in the air, but no light emitted from him. On the contrary, he resembled a black hole, absorbing the light around him and making the surroundings dimmer.

That wasn't just a metaphor. The glowing blades of ice all trembled and stopped in place. Soon, the light within them extinguished. It was like Annan had taken the soul out from them. As the ice blades lost their spiritual aura, they fell to the ground.

Then, Annan's eyes opened again.

His body was once again covered with eyes.

Simultaneously, the freezing rain in the sky became dense and gentle.

The difference happened so naturally within the freezing domain, it was hard for others to notice.

But only Annan knew.

He had switched the “freezing rain” to “drizzle” through the power of his emotions!

Through his closed eyes, the rain was like a radar, marking the location and mood of everyone within this half of the city, including Rotten Man, Silver Sire, and even Annan himself!

In the “drizzle” perception territory, only the mood of the Rotten Man and the Silver Sire couldn't be perceived, but it was enough to inform Annan of where his enemy is!

There was no need for sight or hearing.

Simply through the perception of his heart

Annan's wings unfurled majestically behind him. A stream of light emerged as well, pushing him forward swiftly. He closed his eyes and slammed into the Rotten Man at full speed!

The [Blades of Light], dozens of times stronger than before, pierced out from every “eye” of his!

Those were near-solid light blades.

With the blades protruding out from all over his body, Annan reached out and hugged the unsuspecting opponent!

The instant the Rotten Man was caught in Annan's hug, he was pierced all over by the light blades.

Even so, Annan didn't immediately let go of the Rotten Man. Instead, he hugged his enemy and continued to fly upwards together.

The light blades intertwined the moment Annan raised his altitude. Rotten Man was sliced into pieces in the process.

However, those pieces didn't shed even a trace of blood.

They began to slowly melt in Annan's arms like ice...

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How did he turn into ice? Annan's silver-white vertical pupils shrank slightly.

Soon, he quickly realized what was happening. Benjamin cast this spell before.

It's the Idol spell [Substitute], but why would the Rotten Man know Idol spells?

During the era when the Rotten Man became a deity, the Wizard War hadn't commenced yet. Alchemists were purely alchemists. If one desired to learn spells from other schools, it was extremely difficult. Now, spell knowledge was shared publicly for all wizards, enabling the "alteration" school's apprentices to learn spells from other schools.

Salvatore stared at Annan from across the room confused, "What is this...?"

Benjamin glanced at Salvatore and replied casually, "This is self-alteration. Annan carried out a Taboo Alchemy spell known for its high-risk factor.

"Also, stop shouting. Annan can't hear you. He's already poisoned."

The old wizard looked at Annan deeply and said calmly, "The Rotten Man was a famous perfume master before he became a deity. He utilized his personally concocted perfumes to murder the regent queen dowager without leaving any evidence, and imposed the new king into power. The tale was recorded in [Red Rose and White Rose]."

The [Blades of Light] that popped out of Annan slowly retracted into the "eyes."

The shattered ice pieces melted quickly; they quickly scattered in Annan's arms, falling to the ground.

Suddenly, the ice pieces spewed out a large amount of purple slime. The viscous slime glued Annan from all directions as if he was a butterfly in amber.

"Hmph." The Rotten Man's chuckled.

Then, the ice pieces in the air gathered and manifested into the Rotten Man behind Annan.

He still wore that same white robe and white mask, and there wasn't even the slightest wound on his body.

“This is the end.” Looking at the trapped Annan, the Rotten Man smiled and snapped his fingers lightly.

Click! Following the crisp snap, the purple slime that enveloped Annan exploded!

The shockwaves coming from the explosion collapsed the surrounding walls, releasing a wave of scorching hot air and dense smoke. They assaulted Annan from all sides, trapping him in the air.

Immediately after, an eye behind Annan lost its light.

The smoke and fire coming from the explosion swarmed back to its source as if time had been rewound, re-manifesting back into purple slime.

This time, before the slime stuck onto Annan, they exploded when they came into contact with the existing flame!

Consecutive explosions took place around Annan incessantly!

The supposedly lethal explosion didn't blast Annan away. Instead, the impact force was enough to hold Annan in place, keeping him in a steady stream of chain explosions!

It was beyond doubt that Annan had no way out from his imminent demise.

As long as the power of the curse didn't run dry, the high-intensity chain of explosions could last indefinitely. Given the Rotten Man's abundant mana, this mirror image alone sufficed to extend the blast to three minutes.

“In your pathetic and short life, you have not left any long-lasting legacy to the world.”

The corners of his mouth rose slightly, “But it is a grand curtain drop to have your life taken by me.”

History will remember this moment, and you will compliment the stage on “The Birth of the Immortal Deity!”

All of a sudden, three light beams emerged from the smoke without warning.

The beams were so quick that the Rotten Man couldn't even react when they penetrated his chest and abdomen!

Immediately after, the three light blades filled with a silver colour, solidified, and stuck within the Rotten Man's body.

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That was Silver Sire's Divine Art, [Silver Hand].

He dragged himself out of the range of the explosions by following the trails of light left by the blades, straight towards the Rotten Man.

However, Annan didn't open his arms to hug the Rotten Man this time; he just laughed and stared at Him with wide open eyes.

His azure pupils seemed to be shining like a child. The joy and excitement exuding from it were extremely pure!

"I'm not so sure about that!" As Annan flew out of the dense smoke, he clasped his hands tightly together as if praying silently.

This motion resembled Annan trying to hammer the Rotten Man's head with his bare fists.

The ongoing attack wasn't Frost Nova nor Impeding Wall either.

The sacred golden eyes and runes on Annan's body turned into silver eyes and black runes in the blink of an eye.

An incomparably potent and violent mana immersed Annan thoroughly.

An ominous air enveloped Annan.

The sharp light blades protruding from the "eyes" on his body immediately melted and turned into icy, silver gray tentacles.

At the next moment, a silver-coloured negative energy storm spread into the surroundings from Annan!

Lin Yiyi felt a sense of horror just by looking directly at the shadowy rays of light.

She felt chills upon her back and trembled uncontrollably. As the storm came closer, she was swallowed up.

Before she was knocked into the air by the storm, the room she was staying in was sheltered by a mysterious golden brilliance. The immense fear in her heart faded away slowly.

She looked at Benjamin puzzledly with lingering fear in her eyes.

"You can treat this place more or less like a sanctuary." Sitting on the chair, Benjamin didn't panic at all, "This level of negative energy storm is enough to make the new deity feel endangered.

"Though the deity hasn't been completely born yet, with the intelligence of His previous life. He would know to protect Himself from danger."

The Level 41 Annan was barely able to perfectly exert the full potential of [Chaos Spell: Denial of Life].

—Any creature in range would be shoved 30 steps away from Annan and subjected to an instant-death probability check based on their respective Will attribute.

Salvatore was a little worried, "Spells that powerful would probably be a Chaos Spell, right?"

"Salvatore, you should not abuse Chaos Spells but there is no need to be afraid of them either."

Benjamin shook his head slightly and sighed in a low voice.

On the other side, Annan held onto the three silver swords and flew towards the Rotten Man.

The negative energy fluctuations that spread out from him drove the Rotten Man backward to the air.

Annan deliberately launched the Rotten Man into the air to avoid hurting innocent people. He soared with the Rotten Man alongside the silver sword stuck in His body. Finally, he utilized the gray tentacles to entangle the Rotten Man's limbs with him to make sure they wouldn't fall to the ground.

The battle scene unfolded was peculiar.

Annan appeared as if stepping on the thin air and took Him into the sky.

Someone on Lin Yiyi's live broadcast blurted out.

“—I've seen this move before!”

“—Isn't this Reverse Lotus [1]?”

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It happened similar to the players' anticipations, yet different as well...

Annan didn't grab and spin the Rotten Man upside down while launching him towards the ground. Delivering the attack in this manner wouldn't be effective.

Since the Rotten Man had managed to escape from death in the previous exchange, Annan was fairly certain He could avoid death using the same way.

Moreover, Annan was skeptical whether this level of physical attack would be effective against a near-deity level being.

The Rotten Man didn't feel nervous about receiving this attack either.

Annan's surprise attack via negative energy caught Him a little off guard. He hadn't prepared any corresponding countermeasures. However, the attack dealt negligible damage, and only served to give him a slight uncomfortable ache. After all, the deity was immune to the move's instant death effect.

He might need to put some thought into choosing the right Alteration to escape Annan's clutches, yet he wasn't concerned with Annan's plan to continue knocking him up to the air.

As a matter of fact, the sky of this world wasn't that high either.

If Annan continued to launch himself up to the sky along with the Rotten Man, he would soon exceed the barrier height of the Noah Kingdom and would be exposed to the Gray Mists. By then, the Rotten Man would be in an advantageous situation and would choose to instead not let Annan escape.

When the effect of the Sage's Stone on Annan was lost, he would lose control of himself and wither away after being exposed to the mists.

On the other hand, the Rotten Man could survive in the Gray Mists for a long time since he was a demi-deity.

This would be similar to the Rotten Man forcing Annan out of the Circle [1].

The Rotten Man would then be able to acquire the torn Truth pages without even killing Annan. After all, it was Annan himself who launched this suicidal attack. Even if the Silver Sire or the Old Grandmother confronted, the Rotten Man would have an excuse for it.

If the two Upright Deities couldn't get the evidence, they couldn't just vent their anger on the Rotten Man and violate the agreement.

The twelve upright deities didn't have much additional power in disposal due to their sacred mission in maintaining the barrier and conserving their energy. They were ancient beings, at the very least existed before the First Age. So even though their power was superior to the junior false deities, they didn't have the freedom to simply do as they wanted.

After all, false deities had no obligation to support the barrier. Instead, they were like online gamers who were not busy with work and study.

Thus, in the face of Annan's sudden attack, the Rotten Man didn't resist nor break free.

No matter if Annan pushed the Rotten Man forward and killed innocents in the process, pushed him up until he left the barrier, or stopped the magic, he wouldn't take the initiative to escape.

Only if Annan tried to ground him would he consider taking a risk and performing alchemy with himself as the subject.

At the same time, Annan also guessed what the Rotten Man was thinking.

When Rotten Man barely resisted, Annan had already realized the Rotten Man's goal as he launched him continuously to the air at a higher altitude.

Therefore, Annan had adjusted his plan.

Annan intended to duplicate the binding technique he saw from Kafni.

He controlled the many silver-gray light tentacles protruding from his body with difficulty and gradually entangled Rotten Man's body.

Annan wasn't proficient in grappling or joint locking [1]. He also wasn't sure how to restrict the Rotten Man's limbs, but he intended to overcome this challenge with brute strength.

Annan sent out 30 tentacles to wrap the Rotten Man without any reservations. His focus was on every joint of the target's fingers, and most importantly, covering the target's mouth.

Of course, this series of actions was more than just restricting the Rotten Man.

After Annan lost his perception of spatial distance, he could pinpoint the opponent via the subtle movements through the tactile sensation transmitted by the light tentacles wrapped on the target.

Annan stopped maintaining the [Notion Rain] spell.

Even so, the drizzle in the sky didn't stop immediately. It was still falling sparsely, but Annan lost his senses via the drizzle as a medium.

However, it didn't matter anymore. He had pinpointed the Rotten Man's location using the tentacles already.

Immediately after, a silver-gray shimmer flashed in Annan's eyes.

A thick gas wall emerged silently behind Rotten Man – [Impeding Wall]!

Rotten Man was deeply trapped inside the Impeding Wall.

The speed of his upward flight was significantly reduced in an instant.

Like a pulse, Annan's bursts of gray light spread outwards, but they were still pushing the Rotten Man upward.

The two of them were just like that, hanging high in the air in a strange state as if time had stagnated.

“—OMG, this isn't a Reverse Lotus [2], but a Stand [3]!”

“—Aww.”

“—Wait, you're seeing it that way too.”

“—Maybe they're having fun in a world we can't see...”

“—Hmm, I think the tentacle version of Annan is more handsome than the hedgehog version.”

“—Nonsense, obviously the hedgehog version is cooler!”

“—Aren't the light blades cool? It's like a better Jedi.”

“—I think Annan is beginning to summon the [Universe of Endless Blades]...”

I am the bone of my sword

Steel is my body and fire is my blood

Annan couldn't last long.

The Rotten Man was deeply trapped in the Impeding Wall, while Annan locked His fingers together tightly with tentacles. It took a lot of effort to move and the never-ending negative energy storm gradually tore at his flesh. Soon, he became irritated.

The Rotten Man simply used the Impeding Wall as a fulcrum behind him to grab Annan's light tentacles. Then, he turned his wrist slowly but firmly, trying to drag Annan towards him.

Ha, I finally did damage to Him! Hahaha! Annan was enthralled.

Before Annan was dragged too close, Annan sensed an assaulting lemon and citrus scent coming from the blood oozing out from the Rotten Man's body.

This scent made the Rotten Man in Annan's eyes slow down incredibly.

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Wait, this isn't a mere illusion.

The fragrance had indeed greatly increased Annan's perception. He opened his panel and noticed that his Perception attribute rose at an alarming rate every second.

But, Annan soon noticed something was wrong. The world in front of him became increasingly slow and gradually became static.

The whole world in front of Annan fell into almost complete stillness in the end. He could feel his existence, but he couldn't even move a finger. He would need to exert all his focus and energy to do this simple movement coherently. Otherwise, the thought of "lifting a finger" in his mind would disappear in a split moment.

What the hell is this?

Gold VIP experience or superhuman drug?

Annan's thinking became clear and active.

However, the whole world before his eyes was completely still.

Is this Rotten Man's final trump card?

Annan finally realized the Rotten Man's approach in combat.

He was almost the complete opposite of the Venerated Skeleton.

He didn't believe in the deterrence of "fear," "inhibition," and "despair." Instead, he used people's desires to manipulate people.

He tempted mortals with immortality and rebirth, rather than threatening people with death; He utilized sleepy and relaxing aromas to make people tired, not stench to make people dizzy; He used warm, ambiguous touch to obscure people, not pain.

Even if he could do all these things, the Rotten Man was more willing to use people's desires.

Just like now, overdosing on thinking acceleration could be poison.

Even after Annan thought about everything clearly, the outside world remained unchanged.

He could only rely on his last willpower through a long and continuous conflict in his mind to cancel his light tentacles, light blades, and [Chaos Spell: Denial of Life].

While maintaining the [Impeding Wall], Annan fell downward exceptionally slowly in the long and endless world.

Annan just stared at Rotten Man with eyes wide open.

He sketched the Rotten Man's features in his heart, engraving it deep in his memory.

Annan then analyzed all the decisions he made after he came to this world several times in his mind.

Later—

Annan completely immersed his will in his body, feeling the power at the "Truth Level" and how the elements burn and burst out of the soul.

Annan didn't know how long time had passed, but when he abruptly woke up, it felt as though he's just experienced a long dream.

When Annan's consciousness returned, he heard the Silver Sire's bright and cheerful voice.

“You lost, the Rotten Man. The Deity of Mirror and Clock is born. Stop whatever you're doing.”

“Our contract still has to be fulfilled because I didn't intervene you from fighting just now, so your believers belong to me. You don't want to go back on your promise, do you?”

“...Naturally not.” Rotten Man's low voice sounded.

Annan opened his eyes and found that his vision, hearing, touch, and sense of time had returned to normal.

It should be thanks to the Silver Sire's treatment.

At this time, the Silver Sire had His arms around Annan from behind – the Rotten Man stood in front of Him.

The Rotten Man stared at Annan as if to carve him deep into his mind.

Annan glared back without fear.

I shall remember you too, stupid eunuch.

Although Annan was incapable of feeling anxiety, loneliness, and fear, he didn't completely go crazy in this world... and yet the eternal stagnant world would remain fresh in his memory.

Since Annan came into this world, the Rotten Man was the first person who actually harmed him.

Annan grew more modest after this event.

He learned that just because he was unable to feel negative emotions or experience pain, it didn't mean he could act without any scruples.

With the last of the baby's cries, the Rotten Man's mirror image froze and disintegrated away.

And thus, there would no longer exist another who could claim the deity slot of “Mirrors”.

The old, dead mortal Michelangelo Buonaro had been reborn into a new deity, Michel Nottdamm.

Even if he wasn't yet born, he knew what had happened outside.

So the first thing he did after obtaining the authority was to deprive Rotten Man of the right to use the Mirror authority to maintain the image and kick him away.

The Silver Sire put Annan down.

Countless silver threads reached out from his cuffs and quickly wove a silver-white robe for Annan. It also blocked others' gaze before Annan was fully dressed up.

“You did a great job, Annan.”

Silver Sire felt a little worried but proudly touched Annan's head. Then, he bent down and said in a low voice, “I will come to talk to you later.”

With that, the Silver Sire turned around and looked at the mansion.

“A new fellow deity—”

He declared in a loud and cheerful voice, "Behold the Deity of Mirror and Clock!

"How shall this world refer to You?"

After a very short pause, a peculiar voice that seemed to come from an old man and a baby at the same time sounded in the room, "The Man in the Mirror." He said, "From now on, I will be 'the Man in the Mirror.'"

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...The Man in the Mirror?

Annan felt that his mind was still a little hazy, as if he had slept for too long.

He shook his head slightly, then walked over and asked Silver Sire in a low voice, "I remember there was also a deity whose name is 'the Dragon in the Mirror.' But I don't know his clergy."

"You read that from the Grinzuha's book, right?" Silver Sire chuckled and exposed Annan's more euphemistic narration.

"...Yes." Annan nodded. He was a little confused at this response..

How could he realize what my source of information was even though I only had mentioned this name?

"[The Dragon in the Mirror] is a seldomly used alias because it can be misleading. He doesn't have the authority of a mirror, and He isn't exactly a dragon. It's like how the Old Grandmother is sometimes called the [Cold-Blooded Lady] and some people will call me the [White-clothed Businessman]." Silver Sire explained.

Only the name given by the deities in the ascendancy ritual could become their proper name, and you would be heard when you call the name close to them. But even if the name "Cold-Blooded Lady" were called in Austere-Winter Dukedom, Old Grandmother would not hear it because it wasn't a name Old Grandmother granted to herself, but a nickname.

That would be an alias.

The way to refer to a deity without being discovered.

"The reason Grinzuha used this nickname was simple.. It's because the Elegant Elder is hunting the Venerated Skeleton. "The Dragon in the Mirror" hints at the Deity of Painting and Falsehood – the deity "Paper Princess," the subordinate deity of the Elegant Elder.

"But I don't think you know... She is actually a painting, a painting with life."

"A painting?" Annan was a little surprised.

He had indeed heard the name Paper Princess before. When he was researching about Amos, he saw information about Her as well. She was a kind and silent deity.

She was the patron saint and idol of many poor painters.

If their paintings couldn't be sold, they could be sacrificed to the Paper Princess through ritual. The Paper Princess would give them some silver coins based on the effort they spent in painting, not the value of the painting itself so that they wouldn't starve to death. However, Annan remembered this name because the Paper Princess didn't manifest these silver coins with divine power, nor did She ask for them from Silver Sire... but She earned it Herself.

Indeed, She was also a legendary painter herself, roaming in various countries and streets.

"Yes, it's the Paper Princess." Silver Sire nodded.

"But I think you may not know that The Paper Princess was the first painting the Elegant Elder painted, and it is also one of the Elegant Elder's best works.

"The contents of the painting was a silver-white dragon, which was supposedly lifelike. Under the Elegant Elder's power, it can even move, roar, and dance in the painting. Its power can even affect the real world."

Having said that, Silver Sire glanced at Annan slightly before continuing, "Later, a real dragon acquired this painting.

"Unfortunately, he fell in love with the dragon in the painting. It can even be said to be obsessed...

"He completely disregarded everything in reality to spend more time with it. For hundreds of years, he only chatted with it, got along with it intimately, and watched it dance on the top of the snow-capped mountain obsessively.

"But it is just a painting after all. There is no intelligence and no soul, just responding to others according to the Elegant Elder's pre-sets.

"In the end, the dragon got the title page of the [Book of Truth], and the book was called "Falsehood and Reality."

"But he was deeply enraged by the power given to him from that book because the "Truth" in "Falsehood and Reality" clearly told him that the dragon in the painting cannot be real. Yes, the dragon can use his Truth and turn it into a more surreal falsehood, so real that it is almost indistinguishable, but he was not satisfied with this.

"The dragon rejected this seemingly beautiful proposal.

"He would rather believe that the dragon is real and believe a dragon soul is sealed within the painting. He feared and even loathed the Truth he had obtained and finally made a decision. He decided to abandon his Truth.

"Or, to be more accurate, he forcibly proved that there is indeed a dragon's soul in that painting.

"He used his knowledge and resources to construct a complete ascendancy ritual, and sacrificed his own soul. It wasn't him who was at the center of the ritual, but the painting."

The dragon used his soul, Truth, and everything in exchange for an opportunity to turn falsehood into reality forcibly.

“So, that's how the Paper Princess became a deity?” Annan blinked.

What is this?

Is the otherworld version of a 2D complex [1]?

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However, considering that the painting can move, speak, and even chat with people like an artificial intelligence, it seems understandable.

The Silver Sire didn't know about the subtle thoughts in Annan's heart.

Annan asked, “So, did he succeed?”

“He should have been successful. Although the original Deity of Falsehood and Reality has lost his soul, the painting does now possess a real consciousness and soul.”

The Silver Sire just smiled mildly, “As he once imagined, it was a cold, elegant, and kind-hearted little female dragon. That is the current Deity of Painting and Falsehood.”

It was just that he himself couldn't witness this anymore.

The Silver Sire didn't point it out, but Annan understood what He meant.

Hearing what the Silver Sire said, Annan suddenly recalled the paint given to Amos by the Venerated Skeleton.

There seemed to be some similarities between the two, but there were some differences.

In this way, “the Dragon in the Mirror” was an insulting nickname for the Paper Princess. However, it also accurately metaphorized Her.

“Why are you telling me so much about it?” Annan was keenly aware of something.

The Silver Sire nodded slowly and exhorted Annan, “The Paper Princess now lives in Noah's capital, and she wants to see you.”

“See me?” Annan was a little surprised.

Why?

I don't even know you...

“It's because that painting is a portrait painted by the Elegant Elder for the Old Grandmother.”

The Silver Sire raised his eyebrows. He wasn't embarrassed, but just smiled and said, “However, you also know the Old Grandmother's temper. She doesn't want to see the Paper Princess and doesn't think the Paper Princess has anything to do with her.

“Don't ask too much. You will find out when you get there. Just think of it as to satisfy the Paper Princess's homesickness, Annan. It is good for you to find out more about other deities. If the Paper Princess protects you, you will be safer in the capital. It will be more convenient in many aspects too.”

Safe? Is there anything safer than the Silver Sire's protection in the Noah Kingdom?

So, does the Paper Princess want to see me, or do you want me to meet the Paper Princess?

Annan gradually figured out the meaning behind those lines.

No, why do you want the Paper Princess to protect me?

Is the Silver Sire not planning to come forward?

“Do you want me to see the Paper Princess, or do you want me to go to the royal capital?” Annan blinked and realized what the Silver Sire's hinting at.

He decided to ask straightforwardly rather than guessing on his own, “If you want me to return to the capital, should I visit in the name of Don Juan or Annan?”

This would be Annan's age advantage. He would be considered sensible if he abided by the rules. Otherwise, he would only be deemed as frank, and no one would mind it.

Of course, there might also be an advantage in his good looks.

“Naturally, you should adopt the identity of 'Don Juan Geraint.' Come when you are free and do me a favor. It's not a rush. You can wait until the Spring Hunting Season. It will be best though if you can make it before May.”

Silver Sire smiled as he bent down in front of Annan and said in a low voice, “You don't have to be too scared. I will get Little Henry to capture those Rotten Man believers in these few months. In the Noah Kingdom, there shall be no more of them left.”

“Can I ask what favor you are asking for? I have to make preparations in advance so that I won't be clumsy and add more trouble to you,” asked Annan politely.

“It's not a big deal.” Silver Sire gently hugged Annan's waist and whispered with the corners of his mouth raised, “I'm asking you to take the place of Don Juan to attend Little Henry's funeral.

“While doing that, warn those with coveting ideas in the name of the Geraint family. The Noah Kingdom is in chaos. Rotten Man thought his plan was secretive, but he didn't even know why Henry would ignore him.”

Silver Sire grinned and smiled kindly, “I have once promised them that I won't directly interfere with the internal affairs of the royal family and the nobles.

“You know, I always keep my words.”

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As the baby's cry echoing in the sky faded away, the Silver Sire stepped back into the beam of light and left.

After that, Salvatore took Lin Yiyi and Delicious Wind Goose and walked out of the estate at No.44 Clear Water Street.

He was relieved when he saw that Annan was safe, then immediately asked in a hesitant, low voice, "What happened to you just now?"

"I saw you suddenly stopped moving, and then you fell..."

"I almost died." Annan took a deep breath and adjusted his white robe's collar, "We can talk about it after we head back."

"Ok." Salvatore nodded, being tactful, and didn't continue to pry too much.

Hu... Annan took a deep breath.

He thought he had enough tricks so that maybe he would have a chance to wound or even defeat the Rotten Man.

He also fantasized about how much experience he could gain in that way.

But the reality had proved that Annan could only survive in front of Rotten Man for up to three minutes. That only happened thanks to the Silver Sire's deterrence to prevent the Rotten Man from using his powerful moves.

Nevertheless, this adventure had earned Annan quite a few rewards.

[Silver Sire's Favor]

[Type: Equipment/Armour/Clothing (Gold)]

[Defense: 3 (equivalent to a thick leather armor)]

[Efficacy (Defense): Cut]

[Vulnerability (Defense): Stabs, blunt attacks]

[Description: The silver silk robe that the Silver Sire has woven is light but tenacious, with a divine essence that can't be ignored. Priests whose rank is in bishop and above can recognize its origin.]

[Effect: When "Annan·Austere-Winter" wears it, he will be immune to conceptual curse below the Silver Rank.]

[Effect: Wiping your eyes with the clothing would activate the ability [Detect Poison] for 10 minutes. The ability is the same as the one that is accessible by the [Hunter] class. Likewise, wiping your hands with it will activate the ability [Purify Poison] for 10 minutes. The effect is equivalent to the [Idol] class spell with the same name.]

[Effect: The clothing can be automatically repaired by consuming silver coins.]

This was the most useless Gold Rank equipment Annan had ever obtained or even seen.

Its greatest advantage was that this piece of equipment didn't have any restriction to use.

The ability to detect and purify poison could be used at any number of times in a day. Its texture was like a silk nightgown, but it could resist any cut from basic sharp objects and act like thick leather armor. Even if this piece of equipment was damaged, Annan could consume silver coins to repair it again.

Its effect wasn't particularly effective in battle, but it was a helpful item in day-to-day life, especially against poison assassinations and to nullify curses.

The Silver Sire seemed to be suggesting Annan wear this outfit as often as possible.

Annan became immersed in his thoughts after realizing this.

This clothing seems to be used in distinguishing a friendly relationship with the Silver Sire.

Hmm, it seems like the Silver Sire doesn't intend to have his church pay extra care in protecting my life after I enter the royal capital.

Annan quickly realized the Silver Sire's goal.

Silver Sire dedicated a "token" to me, signaling to his church not to be involved with me on the surface.

Instead, the Church is expected to appear hostile to me, or rather Don Juan Geraint.

The senior members of the Silver Sire Church, including the sly senior bishops, would naturally learn from Annan's clothes that he was actually an ally. The junior rank priests hostile to him wouldn't recognize the clothing, and if they caused trouble for him it would make this alternate identity or act more real.

What does the Silver Sire want to do in this play?

Soon, Annan also picked up another sign when the Silver Sire asked him to seek the Paper Princess just now.

– No matter what Annan did, the Silver Sire wouldn't get involved.

At this moment, the door was pushed open again.

It was Benjamin who came out of the house.

He was completely different from a few minutes ago.

At that instant, Benjamin exuded an intense and out-of-this-world aura. A peculiar and visible heat shimmer surrounded him, which looked like the air above a barbecue grill.

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There was a brilliant flame at the back of his eyes, so bright that none couldn't look directly at it. His strong presence made him even more eye-catching than deities.

Benjamin held a mirror in his arms facing outwards, but it didn't have a complete reflection.

The background in the mirror was the same as the outside world, with the only difference being that no one was shown in it.

Indeed, it could even reflect the walls and houses behind Annan and the group, but they were seemingly transparent and not reflected on the mirror.

At this time, Annan suddenly noticed something.

Benjamin had a golden ecclesiastical ring at his left ring finger — the kind of ring that was big and flat and could be used as a stamp.

His initial silver ring was nowhere to be found.

So, Benjamin has successfully advanced to Gold Rank?

“Annan...” At this moment, in the mirror that Benjamin was holding in his arms, a strange voice that sounded like both an old man and a baby at the same time came, “Thank you so much. I was able to hear everything you did for me just now.”

No problem, I didn't put much thought into this.

Annan hesitated to speak and remained silent.

He looked curiously at the mirror in Benjamin's arms.

So, is this the Deity of Mirror and Clock, the newly born false deity “the Man in the Mirror”?

Speaking of which, where is the baby?

“I can't think of what I should give you to be worthy of this kindness. After all, you don't have any particular needs right now.”

The Man in the Mirror continued to speak in that peculiar voice, “Then, I shall give you this mirror first. No matter what you need or if you have any questions, use it to call me.

“You know my two names. In front of this mirror, you will summon the past me if you call me by my past name, but you can summon the present me if you contact me by my current name.

“When I feel the debt is paid off, I will leave.” Benjamin handed over the mirror after the Man in the Mirror finished speaking.

A few lines of texts before Annan's eyes:

[The Man in the Mirror's Newborn Mirror]

[Type: Accessories/Tools (Gold)]

[Description: After the Man in the Mirror became a deity, the first mirror he came into contact with has extraordinary remembrance value and a sacred essence that cannot be ignored.]

[Effect: Calling the real name of the deity in front of the mirror will not consume the corresponding mysterious knowledge and summon the reflection in the mirror (Warning: Please hold the corresponding ritual first to confirm that the other party does allow this special summoning ritual.)]

[Cost: People who look at this mirror lose one hour of lifespan per second. Each person loses up to 24 hours of maximum lifespan per day.]

When Annan saw this, his expression immediately changed. He turned the mirror inward, facing his body.

After seeing everyone leave the house, Benjamin closed the door behind him.

There was only a *click.* The newborn Michel Nottddamm and the Nottddamm couple from two and a half years ago disappeared.

Benjamin then raised his hand.

The house became distorted as if it was absorbed into a black hole. It flowed quickly toward the center point, with its shape and color distorted at a speed visible to the naked eye. Then, the subject began to elongate again.

In the blink of an eye, Benjamin turned the house into a towering giant tree with a lifespan of at least a hundred years at the original location of No. 44 Clear Water Street.

The balance achieved by the original "mirror ritual" was naturally broken.

Annan realized something again.

The ritual has a similar approach to the Rotten Man's and the Venerated Skeleton's ascendancy.

Since they don't have the Truth, they can only obtain the temporary Truth with ritual. But, they cannot afford to have the ritual terminated, and it is easy to destroy if left alone.

So the Venerated Skeleton put His ritual area in the Gray Mists, under the wreckage of the kingdom. The Man in the Mirror hides the ritual in the "other past" that didn't happen.

If other people want to reach the ritual area, they have to use time and the power of the mirror and rebuild the mirror ritual to reach the past two and a half years ago.

Both of these powers are under the Man in the Mirror's control. Therefore, it is difficult for others to achieve that.

It's like keeping the safe key locked in the safe, forming a paradox loop that can't be overcome.

I see...

Annan looked at Benjamin. With this, he could now confirm that Benjamin became the new deity's pope and the secret keeper for this new deity's curse.

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A towering giant tree had fully transformed from the house at No. 44 Clear Water Street.

Under Benjamin's alteration magic, the giant tree that morphed from the house became more and more realistic.

In the beginning, the bark was too clean, thus appearing unusual. Typically, a tree wouldn't have smooth bark after reaching this size.

At this moment, the symmetrical giant tree gradually changed and leaned on one side. The bark became lumpy, showing progressive signs of natural weathering.

In the end, even sparse grass grew around the tree. There were traces of moss near the roots, and specks of dust surfaced on the leaves.

After sealing the ritual, Benjamin turned his head over and nodded to Annan, “Your Royal Highness Annan.

“I will leave the rest to you.” What he meant was to have Annan explain the “giant tree that appeared suddenly.”

Of course, this wouldn't be a challenge for Annan.

There weren't many residents at Clear Water Street. Additionally, it wasn't an area dedicated to the wealthy but a temporary residence assigned to officials. Essentially, the Viscount Mansion was located at No. 11 Clear Water Street, while No. 1 to No. 10 were the centralized office area in Roseburg.

Just like Mr. Nottdamm would choose to buy a house elsewhere, other officials had similar preferences.

Otherwise, it would be too easy for Roseburg's viscount to search their house for contraband. Also, it was a challenge to do many things under the viscount's watch.

Since the viscount “had died by accident,” they were even more afraid to live near Clear Water Street for fear of being mistaken by others that they were involved in this matter or being chosen by Annan to be the martyr.

In general, there weren't many families residing in this street. Annan could easily craft an excuse to brush off the matter when the neighbors came to this place.

“No problem, Master Benjamin.” Annan nodded politely.

The corners of his mouth raised slightly, revealing a gentle smile, “Or, should I call you, Pope Benjamin?”

“That will be fine, too.” Benjamin nodded.

As time passed, the transparent flame enveloping Benjamin gradually subsided. Although his presence was still dazzling and he would always stand out, the initially glorious aura as he walked out of the house gradually faded.

Annan thought of something.

Is this the feeling you get when the soul is ignited and the elements are perfected after attaining the Gold Rank soul?

Is this what it looks like when the soul burns?

“Then, I will leave first... Your Royal Highness Annan.” Benjamin didn't look at the others but said respectfully to Annan, “If you have anything, please call out to the Man in the Mirror.

“If there is anything else that needs my help, He will contact me.”

“Wait a minute, Sir Benjamin. I have a question...” Annan grabbed Benjamin's sleeve and asked in a low voice.

Benjamin interrupted Annan, “I know what you want to ask.”

“I did see you back then, but I did not know why you were there.” Benjamin's vague reply confused the rest of Annan's party.

However, Annan already understood what Benjamin wanted to express.

When Benjamin left the boat, He did see Annan who was unconscious by the sea, but Benjamin didn't know where Annan came from.

Annan asked, "So, do you have any clues?"

"All I can confirm is..." Benjamin pondered for a while, then slowly said, "At that time, there is the 'Leviathan's air' lingering around you."

"...Leviathan?" Annan was startled.

A name that I haven't heard of.

Is this some kind of "influence"?

Benjamin nodded and confirmed, "Yes, it is one of the three Supreme Monsters of the Mysterious Lady.

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"Considering that you were not a Transcended at that time, I removed the remnants of this influence."

—The Leviathan's air.

Annan muttered, remembering the new name he learned.

I finally have some new clues...

The reason why I didn't die after getting thrown into the sea could be because I have the Mysterious Lady, or at least the "Leviathan's" protection. He carried me to the vicinity of the Freezing Water Port.

The "Reverse Inscription" on my soul should have been carved at that time.

Then, Annan asked again, "This will be my last question. Do you know about inscriptions?"

Upon hearing this, Benjamin paused slightly. Then, he nodded and shook his head again. "I can't describe it as I "know about" them, and I can only say that I "heard about" them."

Benjamin said slowly, "Inscriptions are an ancient knowledge lost in the Second Age. You can consider that a type of occult knowledge. More so, it is of the highest level. [TN: Occult knowledge, in this context, usually refers to the use of deity names or lost languages to activate magic. Previously, I have translated them as mysterious knowledge but we will stick to occult knowledge from now on.]

"Only those ancient false deities or the twelve upright deities born before the end of the Second Age know how to use inscriptions.

"The curses in this world all emerge in the form of some ancient rune. As the highest level language, the Inscription's effect will be taken priority first for any phrase. Hence, the Inscription is also the 'power that alters the curse'. Those Transcended with lethal curses can only hope for an Inscription to prevent their demise.

“Its existence isn't a secret. The cost of using this extraordinary feature isn't too high. That's the reason why many churches use the designated 'inscriptions' as one of the highest-level rewards. Also, it's because only the pope or deities can engrave them.”

“Different deities have different inscription fragments. The only one who has mastered all inscriptions is the Mysterious Lady, who has the alias of 'the Supreme Linguist'.”

Benjamin glanced at Annan and added, “If you have needs for inscriptions, you can entrust it to the Man in the Mirror. He can go and learn them from the Mysterious Lady.”

“I don't have such a need for the time being...” Annan shook his head slowly and asked, “In other words, can every curse be engraved with an inscription?”

“Yes, but this does not mean that the curse will become stronger; it may become weaker. The power of inscription is reflected in the 'knowledge of oneself'. Each curse can be engraved with one inscription at most. Once it is engraved, it can't be modified. The choice of the inscription will directly change the curse they have established.”

Benjamin gave a slight pause. He probably already guessed why Annan asked this. So he immediately added, “All Transcended power in this world comes from curses. So those 'innate special talents' are a kind of curse.

“It's just that these curse runes don't float on the surface but are engraved in the soul. In other words, they are 'born Transcended'. This is because when they are born, they have already received the first curse. The effect is like being afflicted with a curse 'that will always be effective until death'.

“This curse won't attract the curses deposited in the gray mists but will only accelerate their growth. Another advantage of it is that you can engrave an additional inscription.

“Not on the surface, but in the soul. Beware that this also brings risks while it's a great opportunity. The inscription engraved in the soul will inevitably change the soul's essence. This will directly change their talents.

“I'm afraid that only the Mysterious Lady can figure out the effect of the inscription and what role it will play in different curses.”

I see. Annan nodded.

He probably had an idea about how he obtained the Reverse Inscription now.

Considering the residual influence of the “Leviathan's air”, this was probably the inscription that Mysterious Lady personally engraved for him.

In other words, from the time when “Annan Austere-Winter” was thrown into the sea to when Annan herself woke up from the seaside, something must have happened.

This incident saved Annan and granted him the Reverse Inscription which the Mysterious Lady engraved for him, transforming the original “Winter Heart” into a brand new bloodline ability that no one had ever possessed.

Ha, Benjamin was being so modest when he said that he didn't know much, but he clearly knew a lot.

“Thank you very much. I have no other questions.” Annan recollected his thoughts and replied respectfully to Benjamin.

Benjamin added in a low voice, “I heard your conversation with the Silver Sire...

“If you want to go to the capital, remember to summon the Man in the Mirror first. I can temporarily change your appearance. Also, if the Fourth Prince wants to return to the capital...

“Remember to remind him that the Geraint family will only obey the king's direct orders, no matter what.”

And it doesn't matter who is sitting on the throne...

Annan understood the second half, which Benjamin didn't speak out loud.

He nodded, “I understand.”