

Righteous Ps 291

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 291

Annan opened his eyes on the bed again.

He set a limit on the dungeon entry, shutting down the players' access to this nightmare.

He could advance to the Silver Rank at any time. At present, "Silver Knight" had instead become his secondary profession. Even if he were to continue improving this profession, it only strengthened his vitality and fitness. The upgrades in this profession wouldn't provide any combat skills like how upgrading the Swordsman's level would be. There were only attribute bonuses.

Moreover, its skills came entirely from the divine art purchased via holy light engravings, which was the proof of purifying nightmares.

Hence, Annan made up his mind. The benefits of upgrading the secondary profession simply didn't worth it anymore.

It was better to give the experience here to the players first and let them adventure at a higher level for their safety.

Annan's current top priority was to attain advancement.

After dispersing the players, the entry count left in the Gallery Nightmare was running out.

He had completed the dungeon three more times in the past few days, raising the [Silver Knight] level by three levels.

There were only four entries left to the nightmare remaining.

Louis was not efficient at purifying this nightmare.

Annan kept four more entries left, basically guaranteeing that Louis would have to stay here and purifying the nightmare roughly for another month.

As for Annan himself, he was ready to depart.

Yes, of course, Annan would not be so kind enough to reveal a treasure map to some players.

There were treasures in the elf ruins outside from the item which the Child required to attain advancement.

Despite the advancement treasure really did exist, Wandering Child was only at Level 15 now. There was still a long way to go before advancing into the Silver Rank.

Annan had actually planned to reserve those treasures for his advancement.

Salvatore wrote in detail about the wizard's advancement pathways to Annan.

It was a tad bit different from the situation where [Wizard Apprentice] was guaranteed to be a [Wizard]. The need for wizards to advance was actually more complicated.

For example, the most common advancement — [Great Wizard] required the wizard to fill up all the existing spell slots and acquire proficiencies in three schools of magic. This was almost a default condition for those wizards who had graduated officially, but it wasn't an easy task for Annan, a crash course wizard.

Also, the [Great Wizard] profession could hardly meet Annan's needs. It felt more like a punishment for the wizards who didn't learn the magic of the other schools.

But, Annan didn't want to change the profession like Winter's Hand because its side effects were quite heavy.

Among the remaining advancements, there were not many options for the wizards of Energy Falteration School.

In the end, Annan chose to advance into an ancient profession—Frostwhisperian.

At first, Annan recalled the profession because the Venerated Skeleton once mentioned the surname “Frostwhisper”.

But after asking the Man in the Mirror, Annan learned more about it.

The Energy Falteration School established after the Unification War was actually a combination of two completely different professions.

Before the Unification War, they were called [Ice Warlocks] and [Silence Warlocks].

Slothful Eye and Impeding Wall were the signature spells of Silent Warlocks. They excel at resonating with the enemy or space with their indifferent emotions, silent language, and weak bodies, forbidding the targets' speech ability, spellcasting ability, range skills, melee skills, etc. All in all, they were a pure profession in controls.

The Ice Warlock was relatively easy to understand. In essence, they complied with the traditional sense of “ice magic”.

In this world, the two Transcended powers of ice and fire originated from ancient dragons. Just like Old Grandmother and Father Flint originated as enormous dragons. At least before the First Age, when humanoids had not been born and recorded in history, Old Grandmother and Father Flint were already ice and fire upright deities, respectively.

The origin of the Ice Warlock could be traced back to the Third Age.

During the Third Age, some elves received part of the power from the Old Grandmother and became [Frostwhisperian]. Since the soul of the elves was intimate to nature, the beginning of their entry into the path of transcendence was [Condensation], a curse to summon and manipulate the frost territory at Silver Rank. The elves acquired a profession similar to the priest who could communicate with the Old Grandmother, a rough equivalent to the magical branch of [Silver Knight].

Later, some Frostwhisperians thought that such efficiency was too low. There were very few elves who could carry the power of Frostwhisper, which pose a great deal of trouble in the matter of spreading this profession. So, they further diluted this curse and created the third-hand profession, [Ice Warlock].

In the end, the power that the Ice Warlocks used basically had nothing to do with Old Grandmother.

In other words, the transcended power was so weak that it could be used without permission from the Lord of Frost.

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But now, it was the Fifth Age.

In the Third Age, the Ice Warlocks who were evaluated as “weak” previously had become one of the most powerful professions. Of course, part of the reason was that they had completely changed the way of fighting.

Ice Warlocks no longer use the robes of ice silk that could be used to increase the frost power, and the scepters inlaid with blue crystal and silver.

Instead, they wielded axes and hammers.

Although this would significantly weaken their frost output, they only needed to slow down the enemy's movements compared to the previous victory condition of continuous spell casting until the enemies were frozen entirely to death. Once the new condition was met, they could just smash with their hammer. Even the giants were afraid of such a tactic.

The efficacy was much better compared to before.

After the Unification War, Ice Warlock and Silent Warlock merged because of the lack of advancement for Ice Warlocks. Another reason was that the two schools were both renegades among the ancient warlocks.

The Ice Wizards could slow down their enemies' reactions, so they picked up slow but powerful axes and hammers.

The Silencers' specialty was to limit the enemy's spellcasting, remove the enemy's protection, and shield themselves from the enemy's projectile attack.

So they wielded guns and crossbow arrows and chose to fight the enemy one-to-one.

Milord, my times have changed, but you haven't.jpg

After the ancient warlocks of the two schools merged into the wizard of the Energy Falteration School, they became more and more accustomed to this combat style of “imposing restrictions” and “relying on equipment”. After they arrived at the Austere-Winter Dukedom under the Old Grandmother's lead, they became more pragmatic every year over the next few decades.

Sure enough, the ancient profession [Frostwhisperian] was still the Energy Falteration School wizards' first choice in their advancement pathway — if they could successfully advance.

It was mainly because this profession had withstood the test of history and time since it was passed down to the present time.

Salvatore also wrote clearly on Frostwhisperian's prerequisite conditions for advancement.

Erosion must be lower than 50% with at least 3 spell slots filled. In terms of attributes, the requirements were 10 points in Constitution, 10 points or more in Will, 40 points or more in Perception. Additionally, it was mandatory to attain the affinity of one element in the frost category at more than 50%. Lastly, the advancement required Frostwhisperian's Frozen Blood and Basic Influence: Whispers of Grace.

Annan satisfied the former six requirements.

The progress wasn't much because Annan still had to satisfy many more advancement conditions.

For the remaining material and influence, Salvatore had also marked the place to obtain it.

They were in the ruins where Annan let the Wandering Child go.

The [Basic Influence: Whispers of Grace] would appear in all Elven Ruins. As long as it was a ruin that left the traces of the elves, there were usually two "Influences", [Whisper of Grace] and [Nature's Anthem]. They were also a small probability that [Basic Influence: Remains of the Soul of Silver] would appear.

The signs of it would be the whispers in Elvish language on a deserted street or a sudden singing. When that happened, it meant that both "Influences" were collected.

The "remains of the soul" was simply a haunted event as if a ghost had been following a host.

The benefits explained why Swamp's Black Tower kept the ruins as they were and even set up a barrier to seal the entrance. Then, when they needed the designated "Influences" in their ritual, they could just send someone to harvest them.

Such a place whereby the wizard tower utilized to guarantee a stable production of "Influences" was called "Influence Pool". Each of them was a vital resource shared among the members of the wizard tower.

Annan sent the Child's team consisting of 4 members to this "Influence Pool". In fact, he wasn't worried about meeting tomb robbers, nor was he worried about the monsters in it. But, there could be some neutral ghosts in this ruin. Hence, he dispatched the Half-dead Enchantress, Citalopram, to either deal with the ghosts in a friendly manner or eliminate them.

His main concern was encountering the Swamp's Black Tower's wizard.

The wizard tower only allowed its wizard to enter the "Influence Pool" and harvest the influence with a license.

If the players were in danger, Annan just needed to change their spawn point back in the home base.

When the four of them had thoroughly investigated the route, Annan could swiftly visit the ruins and hurry back to avoid encountering other people on the trip.

After all, it was still considered stealing. Although Salvatore had a high status and wouldn't care about it, Annan still didn't want to cause trouble for him.

Annan wasn't worried about being caught on the spot and sent to the Black Tower.

He was worried that when he retaliated, he might accidentally kill one of Salvatore's seniors because he couldn't restrain himself.

But for now, Annan had another “eye” for himself.

He could see through Longjing Tea's vision at any time and tell when someone might be heading to the Elven Ruins in the North Sea Territory.

The Importance of Vision.

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“...I have finally found it.” Longjing Tea took a deep breath and carefully took down a heavy book... “Edict Theory” from the shelf.

It was quite a heavy book because its book cover was neither paper nor cowhide...

Instead, it was a steel cover about 3 millimeters thick.

Looking at it from the side, the inscribed calligraphy on the book's spine reminded Longjing Tea of the stainless steel soap engraved with a brand.

Rather than describing it as a book, it felt more accurate to say that it was an iron box that could be opened sideways.

But he was used to it.

This was his fifth day at Swamp's Black Tower.

When he first came to Swamp's Black Tower as a transfer student, he didn't go to class directly with other students because he had no foundation. Given his age, he didn't want to sit in the classroom with fourteen or fifteen-year-old children.

So after staying in his room for another day, he finally got the library access card from Salvatore that allowed him to go for self-study.

The Swamp's Black Tower had 13 floors of living areas, and the card gave him access to the library on the 5th and 6th floors. Below the fourth floor was the lodging area, eating area, and fitness area. From the 5th floor and above, each floor had libraries and classrooms with different access levels. The higher the floor level, the higher the access level required.

With Longjing Tea's current access level, he could take the books in the library on the 5th floor back to his dormitory. On the other hand, he could only read the books on the 6th floor and couldn't bring the books out from that floor.

At the same time, those were the resources Longjing Tea had been looking for.

He currently couldn't enter any dungeon instance, so he could only do the weekly and daily missions of “Secret Eye” every day.

[Transcribe 3 valuable books (1/3) that have not been entered into the archives yet. This mission is limited to three times a week.]

[Transcribe a spellbook (0/1). This mission is limited to once a day.]

[Transcribe a book that records occult knowledge (0/1). This mission is limited to once a day.]

Although they were scheduled to be weekly and daily missions, at Longjing Tea's current "transcription" speed, it basically took him three days to finish transcribing a book.

The "transcribing" process didn't mean copying through handwriting. Longjing Tea couldn't write the words of this world at all. He could only understand it under the automatic translation of the system.

The characters in this world were somewhat similar in appearance to Latin. With the aid of two-way translation, Longjing Tea could indeed write it out unless it was a long sentence with complicated grammar. Otherwise, the task was still manageable. The main problem was his handwriting.

He had no experience in writing this kind of text. Even if he copied it, it would take a long time for someone like Salvatore to understand it.

From then on, Longjing Tea didn't really want to write anymore.

[Transcribe] was actually a general skill under the Secret Eye faction, or rather a life skill.

When Longjing Tea activated this skill and concentrated on reading, the words he had read and understood would be highlighted green. The words he was reading and comprehending would be highlighted in yellow, and the words he had missed out or misunderstood would be highlighted in red.

When the green part of a book exceeded 95%, the entry would be completed. The lesser the words were highlighted in red, the higher the reward.

In the beginning, Longjing Tea just regarded this as a skill for gaining experience, just like typical game keys such as "mining" and "sorting".

But after he activated these skills and read a "worthwhile book" under the [Transcribe] skill, Longjing Tea immediately realized the importance of this skill.

I could utilize this function to aid my learning!

The [Transcribe] function was like a portable teacher following him around. It could remind him at the first time whether he should proceed to read or go back for revision just in case he had missed something important.

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Even if the function didn't strengthen Longjing Tea's memory, he could remember what he learned after reading "Basic Outline to Curse".

So, Longjing Tea now planned to start completing his daily mission and transcribe the spellbook.

The books on the fifth floor were all books such as "Outline", "Introduction", "Summary", and some books with low secrecy in history, mathematics, human physiology, and many other types. Many of the pages included diagrams, mainly for the foundations.

After reading the book "Basic Outline to Curse", Longjing Tea felt like he had read a set of basics and nothing special.

Anyway, he still had to read.

Then, it was better off to try to understand and learn the spells while completing the daily mission.

Longjing Tea's profession, [Wizard Apprentice], had reached Level 7.

He had two instant spell slots and one guided spell slot, but only one slot was occupied [Movement Prohibition].

At this moment, he finally figured out that the advanced requirement of [Wizard Apprentice] was to use two instant spells and two guided spells to form a spell combo. Generally speaking, he had to write a thesis on the spell combo, make some adjustment and finally send it to his tutor to check on it. After it was ensured that the spell combo consisting of four spells could be used to fend for himself, only then was he allowed to advance.

Generally speaking, the stricter, more powerful, and more practical this spell combo was, the higher the evaluation ratings would be.

Longjing Tea had no mentor at present, and the others did not need a mentor.

Although he didn't know much about spells, he had excellent game knowledge.

He had good self-awareness of his magic pathway and what abilities the players needed — control, amplification, and weakening buffs.

Indeed, this particular system was unlike what typical wizards would adopt.

From the very beginning, Longjing Tea never planned to go solo.

He had to consider how to improve his teamwork with other players.

For example, this spell was good.

[Emergency Dodge (Instant): Chant the edict so that the target who was willing to obey the command immediately interrupted the current action and performed emergency dodge. When dodging, the dodge success rate depended on the spell caster's "Perception" attribute instead.]

Below the spellbook, there were also detailed explanations and specific uses of this spell.

To put it simply, Longjing Tea could activate this spell immediately after seeing a surprise arrow attacking one of his comrades who didn't notice it. It would enable the spell target to evade the attack. Of course, the dodging speed depended on the spell target's physical fitness but evading the attack's type relied on Longjing Tea's observation.

It was in another world, but it was one of the three magical Pokemon Trainer's skills, shouting [Dodge], [Hold on], and [Stand Up Now].

Such a powerful support spell was actually just an instant spell that didn't consume much magic?

And the magicians here don't evaluate the skill highly.

Longjing Tea was stunned when he noticed this situation.

He finally realized in the end.

...I see.

No wonder these wizards have no teammates.

Each and every one of them is pretty individualistic!

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“It's fine to hire you guys.” Tate took a sip of the mead and thought slowly, “But this price...”

Delicious Wind Goose was sitting calmly in front of him with two swords on his back.

Recently, he always felt that sooner or later, he would have five swords behind him.

“The price is negotiable, Your Excellency.” Delicious Wind Goose smiled, “To be honest, I'm not afraid of you lowering the price. After all, we are on the same journey. As long as you can keep it a secret, it's still profitable for us even if the price is meager. Shelley's territory is really not dangerous. I'm here for a long-term business, and I won't take advantage of you.”

“Huh, the way you speak doesn't make you a good businessman now...” Caravan Master Tate, who had the same hairstyle as Delicious Wind Goose, smiled when he heard those words. He spoke with a strange dialect, “How can you show your cards at the beginning?”

Delicious Wind Goose laughed, exuding a calm and reliable temperament, “Hahaha! Those mercenaries will try to fool you at this time, like how dangerous is this section of the road with many potential threats ahead. They can't wait to make it seem like there's going to be a war here to fool those who don't know anything.

“But I don't think you're someone who will be easily fooled. You know the ropes.” Delicious Wind Goose laughed in flattery.

The two smiled and looked at each other.

Under the warm light, the two bright heads twinkled.

After all, the players' group followed the caravan into the city.

That was to say, the caravan they followed must have a checkpoint or a sorting center in the royal capital. So they were definitely not like those caravans running expeditions at the outskirts with no knowledge of the royal capital's situation at all.

In this case, trying to fool them with the excuse of “Jiu Er was a runaway miss from the capital” would be too risky.

What if the other party casually asked “Which family was it?” How would Delicious Wind Goose answer? Or if a young lady in the royal capital ran away from home, what if the caravan wanted to send Jiu Er back?

It was too easy to get into trouble.

So, Delicious Wind Goose simply changed his approach.

It was no longer three people escorting the eldest lady home.

Instead, the background setting was two mercenaries escorting two priests from the north to the capital. Also, it was common knowledge that the Silver Sire's priest had no personal wealth. The mercenaries had acquired the payment after receiving the church's quest.

Now, the team planned to make some extra money. While they were escorting the two priests, they planned to escort the caravan into the capital together. With that, they settle the church's quest as well. Since the priests were also in convoy, they had emergency treatments once they were in danger.

Of course, since the team had two Transcended and two Silver Sire priests, it wasn't unfair to charge some fees despite the short trip.

This plan incited the viewers to spam many comments on the bullet text.

Delicious Wind Goose and the others didn't realize at the beginning they still paid for the carriage, honestly. After they gradually realized the situation, they started free-riding in their journey. By the end of the day, when they were almost at the capital, they even planned to earn some money.

The most outrageous thing was that Delicious Wind Goose had seemingly negotiated a deal!

"Come on, brother. Try this... This is the mead concocted by a wizard. You can't buy it outside the capital circle." Tate smiled and poured Delicious Wind Goose a glass of golden mead amiably.

The offered mead wasn't too much. The amount was just right for one sip.

Tate said casually, "Delicious Wind Goose, right? That name is a bit hard to pronounce."

If you know what the name means, it won't be. Delicious Wind Goose complained in his heart.

Luckily, when these people pronounced the players' names, they were all phonetic translations.

Otherwise, the Child should be the most unlucky among the players.

"It's quite complicated to say my name. You can call me Goose or Old Goose. That's what my friends call me." Delicious Wind Goose took a sniff and replied casually.

Judging from the aroma of the mead, the alcohol concentration should be pretty high.

Being a player, Delicious Wind Goose wasn't afraid of poisoning.

So, he didn't have any restraint as he raised the glass and took a sip.

The taste is surprisingly good. It's sweet and mellow.

"What kind of alcohol is this?" Delicious Wind Goose couldn't help but ask.

"It's called [Honeylip], and it's a mead made by the wizards at Black Tower, so its production is quite limited." Tate said cheerfully, "In addition, it can be used for beauty and aphrodisiac, so it is in great demand. The price is always high, at least five pounds."

Hearing this, Delicious Wind Goose smacked his tongue.

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Then, did that sip just now cost about a dozen of silver coins?

Thinking of this, he felt that this mead tasted better.

After I get offline, I have to buy some of those meads and enjoy myself...

Seeing Delicious Wind Goose still yearning for it, Tate smiled and poured half a glass of the mead to Delicious Wind Goose, "Old Goose, I supposed you're not from Noah."

"You're right." Delicious Wind Goose nodded, "But I had lived in the Noah Kingdom for a long time before I became Transcended."

"Then, where is your hometown?" Tate asked curiously.

Delicious Wind Goose didn't answer, just pouted to the east.

Caravan Master Tate heard those words and guessed, "Austerian? No, you don't look like them... Are you from the United Kingdom?"

"Why don't you guess that I'm from the Papal Kingdom?"

"The Papal Kingdom — Ha!" The corners of Tate's mouth rose when he heard the words, and he almost laughed out loud.

But he pondered a little, "Well... it's still possible. So, refugees from the Papal Kingdom?"

What do you mean by the Papal Kingdom refugees?

Hearing the novel and unfamiliar words, Delicious Wind Goose jotted it down in his heart.

But Delicious Wind Goose just smiled mysteriously and said nothing.

The information that I manage to probe is quite enough.

Let's sign the contract first so as not to stir up any trouble.

Tate was silent at this moment.

He subconsciously tapped his index finger on the table, sinking into deep thoughts.

"Hey, Old Goose." He suddenly touched his bald head and sat up.

The breath of alcohol filled the room with Tate's long exhalation.

Caravan Master Tate squinted at Delicious Wind Goose and lowered his voice, "Would you like to make more money?"

...Um?

Delicious Wind Goose was slightly surprised, "What?"

"Help me smuggle some goods."

Tate whispered, "What do you think of this mead?"

“They're great. Mellow and sweet... What's the matter?” Delicious Wind Goose replied subconsciously.

When Caravan Master Tate heard those words, he squinted his eyes and smiled.

“Brother...” He lowered his voice and said in a low voice, “But those are counterfeit products.”

“Counterfeit products?” Delicious Wind Goose was startled.

Bro, why do you tell me this?

Are you selling fake meads? Is it fine for you to reveal it to me?

“You should sign the contract first, and then we'll go into details,” said Tate. Then, he brought the contract to Delicious Wind Goose.

Delicious Wind Goose looked at it, and a glimmering panel appeared in his vision.

The system directly extracted the content in the contract and listed them down for him.

Seeing the contents of the contract, Delicious Wind Goose's pupils shrank slightly.

Did I accidentally land on a gold mine?

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There was nothing wrong with the contract itself, and it was indeed the official contract the Church of Silver Sire issued.

Roughly speaking, there were three notable points:

Number 1, abandoning the mission halfway was not allowed.

Number 2, the transaction must be kept confidential.

It seemed pretty abnormal to have these two conditions.

But what had alerted Delicious Wind Goose was the third condition.

The reward was a total of 300 pounds — or rather “ten samples”.

Delicious Wind Goose believed that one could easily make a few thousand pounds simply by selling fake alcohol.

The taste of this mead was indeed quite good and could be regarded as the top grade among the alcohols he had ever drunk.

As a knockoff brand of Swamp's Black Tower, there was no need to worry about sales. Although the reward of 300 pounds was a bit outrageous, it did seem reasonable.

It was the part that said “ten samples” that Delicious Wind Goose realized something was wrong.

What sample? Is it the fake meads?

Why didn't they dare put it in the contract?

Moreover, the value of a sample was at least more than 30 pounds with this pricing. Considering that there was not much sales channel for it, the actual value might have doubled.

But isn't this bottle of mead only priced at 5 pounds?

Before Delicious Wind Goose had the chance to think about it further, he had moved on to the last page and signed his name unhesitantly after quickly glancing through it.

His overly decisive demeanor made Tate a little surprised, "You're not going to read the contents of the contract?"

I have actually sneaked a peek at it.

Although Delicious Wind Goose said this in his heart, he let out a mysterious smile instead.

"No need, brother. I trust you... I also think it's safer for me to sign this contract." He shrugged and pointed to the reward column.

What he hinted at was straightforward.

Now that I know your secret and sign your contract, we're a team.

No matter what the contract was about, it didn't become safer after signing it.

Upon seeing this, Tate smiled without saying anything.

He first opened his wallet, took out a thin piece of jade at the thickness of three chips, and stamped it on Delicious Wind Goose's name, "Old Goose, tell me your full name..."

"Delicious Wind Goose." Delicious Wind Goose had gone through something like this before, so he managed to answer eloquently.

A green light flashed faintly across the jade piece, indicating that the name was correct and the contract was valid.

Seeing this, Tate finally laughed and filled Delicious Wind Goose's wine glass.

"You're smart." Tate exclaimed, "Looks like I've found the right person this time."

He then said smilingly, "Let me fill you in then... from the beginning.

"On the surface, we sell alcohol. But everyone knows that we can't make much money just by selling alcohol even if we have our own manor. There isn't a need for us to come to the capital to sell it.

"Although there are a lot of wealthy people in the capital, there is one other thing— when caravans enter the city, they have to pay a security tax worth 5% of the total value of the goods. That so-called security tax is the labor price paid upon the cargo inspection, where goods are carefully and thoroughly inspected to ensure that there are no flaws. If I were really selling alcohol, I might as well sell it across the capital's peripheral area instead of just selling them in the capital.

"To convince Stilwell Shelley to give us a pass to the city without inspection, I first have to convince him that my merchandise does make money and can generate profit."

Tate took a sip of the self-produced “fake alcohol” as he spoke. He then said smilingly, “This alcohol is an excuse.”

“But you didn't really come to the capital to sell these fake alcohols.” Delicious Wind Goose realized something.

Tate nodded slowly, “Correct. Now is the most chaotic time for Noah's Kingdom and hence the most profitable time. If I sell fake alcohol at this time, I can indeed make a fortune. I will have unlimited money for the rest of my life... but so what?”

Having said this, Tate smiled self-deprecatingly, “I'm still just a caravan master.

“I can be rich, but what's the use of simply having money?”

“...and?” Old Goose probed.

“And, look at this.” Tate said, smiling mysteriously at Delicious Wind Goose.

He took out a bronze reagent bottle from his sleeves. It looked a bit like a lighter but resembled a military water bottle.

Delicious Wind Goose vaguely had a sense of the situation.

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When he held the reagent bottle handed by Tate, a window popped up in front of his eyes.

[Demon's Blood]

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

[Description: A specialty product of Natta County, an elixir that was condensed and refined using a living demon as its material. The roar of the soul can be heard upon opening the bottle cap. After consumption, the concentration level of the curse in the user's body will be raised to its maximum.]

[Effect: After drinking, Erosion rate +89%, LV+6 (depending on the current level)]

[Unique feature: The level increment effect only affects those in Bronze Rank and below.]

...Erosion rate +89%, LV+6? Delicious Wind Goose was slightly startled. He quickly opened up his own status panel.

His current Erosion rate was 11%, and his [Swordmaster] profession was at LV 14.

In other words, he could rise directly to the peak of Bronze Rank after drinking this drug.

Looking at this description, it should be able to upgrade ordinary people directly to this level upon drinking it — from Level 1 to Level 20 instantly.

But the side effect was the erosion rate would also instantly be filled.

Annan, who had been silently watching the screen, was slightly taken aback after watching this scene unfold.

The peak of Bronze Rank and 100% erosion rate... What is this thing used for?

If the erosion rate is filled, wouldn't you become an irrational demon immediately?

Or, is this thing used for poisoning your target?

Annan quickly posted a bullet text and asked anonymously,

“—Ask him where this drug comes from?”

“Be careful not to drink it.” Tate warned, “This is the [Demon's Blood]... Have you heard of this?”

“Those living in Natta County?” Delicious Wind Goose was silent for a moment and asked tentatively.

Tate looked at him in surprise, “Not bad... What else do you know?”

“Just that.” Delicious Wind Goose answered honestly, “This is all I know.”

“Simply put, you will turn into a demon's poison once it is consumed. For Transcended, it is an irresistible poison. The best outcome of drinking it is going insane.”

Tate smiled, “What we're selling... is actually this.

“This thing now costs 80 pounds a bottle in the capital.”

“...80 pounds?” Delicious Wind Goose was a little surprised.

“But the purchase price is less than 10 pounds.”

Tate smiled and said maliciously, “If you want, you can try to visit Natta County yourself.”

Annan naturally knew what the caravan master meant.

But for Delicious Wind Goose, who was not familiar with the geography, he could only remain silent.

It was fair to say it was a wise choice. You make fewer mistakes by saying less.

However, even if Delicious Wind Goose didn't know anything, he realized from the item introduction that he might have bumped into a storyline quest that had not been activated.

Who the hell is buying these drugs?

“What should I do?” The words instead turned out this way as they reached his mouth.

Tate chuckled and said, “It's very simple. Our mead is sold in different boxes to different people.

“Even if we get the tax exemption, it's just a guarantee that we'll be able to enter the city. Of course, we still have to let the security go through the things... But at this time, our goods are recorded as [Honeylip] in Sir Stilwell's report. You'll sit in carriage No. 5 then, and I will give you 24 bottles of [Demon's Blood].

“Don't get out of the carriage after the inspector leaves... Just take out the only black box, which is the third box, pour out a glass of the [Honeylip], and pour a bottle of [Demon's Blood] into it. Remember, you can freely pour any amount of the alcohol, but only one bottle of [Demon's Blood] can be poured into a bottle of alcohol.”

Tate smiled and said, "You have signed a contract certified by Silver Sire, and you are our accomplice in any law. It's best not to do anything weird. After this is done, I will give you 300 pounds or 10 bottles of [Demon's Blood]. You can make your pick. I'm just warning you — if you get caught, it's a death sentence at the very least."

"Death sentence?" Delicious Wind Goose's heart skipped a beat. He then asked, "Why? Just for selling poison?"

"No." Tate replied, "It's for selling poison to the royal family. Or, you might add the charge of attempted murder of the royal family. But this doesn't matter."

"You'll know when you deliver it anyway — the two dozen poisoned alcohol in the third box of the fifth carriage is the Third Prince's order. I've always been his most loyal supplier."

The bald businessman smiled and said, "That's why I said, now that it's the most chaotic time for Noah's Kingdom..."

"It's also the time for us ordinary people who have nothing but money in their pockets to rise in power."

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Annan instantly knew that Delicious Wind Goose was about to make his contribution when Philip Noah's name was heard in the conversation.

Delicious Wind Goose didn't know the situation in Natta County, nor what a demon was... He also didn't know of the existence of the Fallen path.

He didn't know the tense situation within Noah Kingdom's royal family, let alone heard of Prince Philip's name.

This was probably why that bald head chose him as his partner.

Delicious Wind Goose simply didn't know anything.

It was impossible to rely on acting skills to deceive these old fritters.

There were many loopholes in Delicious Wind Goose's words, but he didn't notice them because of his lack of general knowledge.

For example...

The Silver Sire's priests did not need an escort at all.

Priests did not have profession levels, but that didn't mean that they couldn't protect themselves.

Even if Priest Louis, a rambo who was nearly 1.9 meters tall, weighed more than 200 pounds and trained his physical strength through push ups and jogging every morning was taken out of the equation...

Other priests couldn't be short of that one or two bodyguards.

The essence of holy light engraving was a voucher to purify nightmares and also a "reputation currency" given to believers by deities.

The things it could buy were naturally not limited to divine art.

They could also buy some permanent or long-term passive abilities. When coupled with the curse occasionally obtained when purifying nightmares... They indeed wouldn't be as powerful as a wizard, but those abilities made sure that they could defend themselves.

Bread Daryl would be an example.

When Annan first met him, Bishop Daryl had a technique of suddenly appearing and then suddenly disappearing before Annan. Until today, Annan still didn't know what its principle was, what divine art it was, and how he could break free from it.

He remembered that when Bishop Daryl first appeared, it was as if they were pulled directly into the inherent barrier — whether it was the cool breeze before the heavy rain or the passers-by on the street, nothing could see him.

Only Annan and the players could see him.

If this kind of divine art were used for assassination, any number of guards would be useless.

Divine art such as [Eternal Youth] and [Clanging Object] was all “one-dollar” divine art that could be purchased with only one engraving.

[TN: One-dollar store is the concept of selling all the varieties of goods at one dollar.]

This was not because their output was too weak. On the contrary, these priests had the healing ability that could instantly recover minor injuries and significantly speed up the healing of serious injuries. There was also a divine art for long-range attacks by turning silver coins into bullets; none of them were insignificant.

In actual fact, those were considered special perks.

Only three holy light engravings were needed to acquire basic self-protection and working skills.

It was like a practical skill that could be acquired with ease at the headline of the skills tree, but also efficient at its later stage.

The three Silver Sire holy light engravings that Annan acquired could be considered his personal savings. The holy light engravings could be activated to increase the effect of Divine Art when left unspent. It was a type of resource that “could lay eggs”, hence it wouldn't be a loss.

As for the holy light engraving of the Tragedy Writer, Annan had been looking up information recently to see what divine arts he could buy.

After all, he wasn't a true believer in the Tragedy Writer.

If he purified the nightmare again in the future, he wouldn't be able to continue getting His holy light engraving again. So it was better to simply spend it on a practical “one-dollar divine art”, and increase his combat effectiveness in nightmares.

But the Tragedy Writer's divine art was too unpopular and fancy. Luckily, some short-term buffs were indeed practical.

Annan was also hesitating which to buy.

Now that he saw the information provided by Delicious Wind Goose, he finally made up his mind and chose a temporary blessing that he had eyed a long time ago.

[Blessing: Prediction of Murder (Minor): The target who will be killed in half an hour will be marked red in your vision (this blessing would be valid for one year)]

As for those similar to the Silver Sire, Annan also saw blessings such as Constitution+3, [Hardened Skin], and [Permanent Poison Detection].

Why would he even need a mercenary escort if he was indeed a senior priest?

Aside from those two shameful rookie priest players, other senior priests would probably be much more capable than a new Transcended like Delicious Wind Goose.

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—But that baldy didn't expose Delicious Wind Goose's lie and instead immediately agreed to cooperate with him.

Generally speaking, would someone still proceed to engage in such dangerous cooperation after realizing the other person had told a lie? Plus, Delicious Wind Goose was not some old friend of his and had only met an hour ago.

...Unless he didn't care who Delicious Wind Goose was or what he would do in the capital.

He just wanted to catch a Transcended who wasn't sensitive to this information.

“You're still not careful enough, Old Goose...” Annan sighed.

Is this Gold Rank item so handy?

Altering a demon into a reagent wasn't something a standard Alteration Wizard could do.

Regardless, the demons still came from Transcendeds. They were not some pure substance such as “crystal,” “flame,” or “metal,” nor were they some elemental life.

The ability to refine a Transcended into a reagent... Annan had so far only known of one.

— The Sage's Stone of the Hermetic School.

It was also a Gold Rank item.

But the perfect quality of Sage's Stone was an item leading to the divine ascendancy called “perfect element essence”.

If Silver Rank Transcendeds could be mass-produced, it made sense to be a Gold Rank item.

The reagent for mass-producing demons was obviously not up to par yet.

Then there was only one possibility left.

It wasn't a Gold Rank “consumable”.

It was a Gold Rank “poison”, or a Gold Rank “ritual material”.

It could be seen from the fact that [Demon's Blood] didn't need special processing to be poured directly into mead without having its qualities be ruined... That baldy was already very good at making this “poisonous mead”.

Delicious Wind Goose didn't notice a problem here.

Tate claimed that he had always been a supplier of the demon's blood.

So, where did all the [Demon's Blood] go?

To be more precise—

Where is the guy who previously delivered the demon's blood to Philip?

Why is a mere passerby handling this matter?

Annan didn't ponder on this on his own.

After he noticed something was wrong, he immediately went to Kafni.

She was the person most likely to know about this matter among all the people he could contact.

As expected, Kafni indeed knew about this, “...The demon's blood.”

Kafni's expression was a little complicated, “I do have knowledge of it, but how did you hear about this?”

“I got this information from Delicious Wind Goose.”

Annan then briefly summarized what he had seen through the live broadcast to Kafni. After that, he simply changed the live broadcast to be a more understandable explanation — a contract.

“I see...” Kafni thought for a moment, then nodded slightly.

She whispered to Annan, “His Royal Highness Phillip has always been buying that kind of mead that is mixed with the demon's blood. Except for the few times they were used, the rest was made into ritual material. As for what material it is, you have seen it before.”

“I've seen... it?” Annan was a little surprised.

Was it at the banquet?

Kafni nodded softly and said affirmatively, “You saw it when you came to the Noah Kingdom.

“I don't know if you still remember it, but Your Royal Highness Philip was constantly eating candy.”

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Phillip was indeed eating candy most of the time.

Annan had a vivid memory of it.

He would chew a bunch of toffee after every few sentences.

He peeled the wrapping quicker than cracking a melon seed.

Annan could even recall the smell of it when he closed his eyes now.

Should he say it was lucky he didn't eat it?

But, Annan also confirmed at the time that the candy was not a curse vessel.

"I do recall that." Annan nodded and asked, "What exactly is that candy?"

"It's the ritual material of His Royal Highness Philip." Even though Kafni knew that Philip was the one who had plans to kill her, she still politely called him "His Royal Highness".

Kafni was always this polite to everyone.

She explained softly, "He's not like us... He doesn't believe in Silver Sire. Instead, he is a devout believer of the Cup-holding Lady.

"As for Rotten Man, I think he's just trying to use Him."

He's using a deity...

...Wait, it is indeed possible.

Annan squinched his eyes, lost in thought.

Although he and Philip had only met once, Philip didn't seem like an idiot judging on the interaction at that time.

His speech was eloquent, his plans were reliable, he was proactive as a person, he had great courage, and he had a youthful appearance. In essence, he gave off a favorable first impression, and he had his own loyal underlings.

Such a person obviously had an ambition of his own.

He also wouldn't be easily fooled.

Rather than saying he was a "Rotten Man believer" or that he "took advantage of the Rotten Man", Annan believed they were working together.

"Don't you think that His Royal Highness Philip is much younger than he looks?"

Before Annan could continue asking questions, Kafni then whispered, "This is a ritual of the Cup-holding Lady, called the 'Sacrament of Blood'. This is a ritual that all Cup-holding Lady believers carry out over a long period... Every day, they would consume refined food containing the blood of any creature to make their own blood healthy.

"And if you used special blood for the ritual, there would be some special effects. For example... rejuvenation."

Kafni said earnestly, "He completed his ritual by making toffee with mead that was mixed with the demon's blood. As long as he continued to take it, he would stay young forever... However, he would age rapidly as soon as the consumption is discontinued.

“This toffee is also the antidote for His Royal Highness Philip's curse.”

“...curse?” Annan heard a familiar phrase, “Is he a Transcended?”

“No, he isn't. He hates Transcendeds. He had once fallen into a nightmare as a normal person and acquired a curse. He could since then remain energized at all times even without sleep, but his lifespan would deplete at twice the speed.”

Kafni added, “His Royal Highness Philip is not a Transcended, nor a ritualist. He's also not a priest. However, although he is just an ordinary person, he could utilize rituals very skillfully to achieve his goals, no matter if it is to restore his youth or to kill someone with a curse...”

“...Did you mention rejuvenation?”

“Yes.” Kafni nodded heavily, “Philip once signed a contract with a particular deity. He sold half of his life in exchange for a specific ability. But as to which deity and what ability it was... I do not know. He also never told us.

“I was very young at that time, and I don't remember very clearly. But I remember that His Royal Highness Philip became very old at that time, and he was getting older with each day. In the end, he seemed to be almost dying of old age.”

“I don't want to grow old. By just having to experience it once, you will never...” The words Philip said at the time suddenly played in Annan's heart.

...No wonder. Annan was taken aback.

No wonder Philip would say such a strange thing like “just having to experience it once”.

It's because he did get older before.

Annan asked, “Did he tell you about his contract with the deity?”

He still had some doubts.

For someone like Philip, who habitually lied, Annan was suspicious of every word he said.

Kafni frowned slightly and tried hard to recall before answering with some doubt, “I don't quite remember it. I think he was the one who said so. Our situation here is a bit different from your family. If we were particularly enthusiastic about another sibling, everyone — including the King, would be wary of you. His Majesty always disliked his children forming factions, so the relationships within our family are relatively shallow. We don't usually visit one another, nor would anyone show much concern, even if someone was in an unfortunate circumstance. Because His Royal Highness Philip wanted to keep the ability he got from that ritual a secret, it wouldn't be right for us to ask him.

“Within less than a year after that, His Royal Highness Philip gradually became younger again. Very few people cared about this matter afterward.”

Is this how the situation is like in the Noah Kingdom's royal family?

Should I say that it is indeed a family with a lion as its emblem?

...I still have to be skeptical about this statement, then.

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Annan nodded and then got lost in thought.

He gradually became clear about the attitude he should maintain towards Philip.

This fellow has sold half of his life to get something. There is no doubt that he is a lunatic even if he conducted his own ritual.

The “life” in the ritual always referred to the first half.

If it was an ordinary person, their blindspots in knowledge itself were enough for them to be deceived.

But Philip was a prince. He couldn't possibly lack this knowledge.

He even handed that weird candy directly to Annan at the time.

...Um, wait a second? Suddenly, Annan realized something.

He looked up and asked Kafni, “If someone else ate his candy, what would happen?”

“Nothing much I guess, aside from feeling happy and calm. After all, it is made of blood and milk. But because everyone is disgusted by it, no one would eat it.”

“Blood?” Annan was stunned.

The [Demon's Blood] made from demons... It's more proper to call it the Demon Juice, right?

Annan suddenly realized what was wrong.

Annan himself had learned the effect and the source of the [Demon's Blood] through the system panel.

There were Edict school spells that could seemingly analyze the item.

But, there was a shortcoming to the magic.

From Salvatore's understanding of that hammer, the item analysis magic had its limitations, unable to investigate the item's effect. However, it could still find out about the item's names.

Annan asked without hesitation, “Kafni, do you know what the [Demon's Blood] does?”

“...Isn't it used to strengthen the properties of the object itself?”

Kafni was a little frightened by Annan's suddenly raised voice and was a little stunned.

As expected.

Annan was silent for a while, then asked, “Did he tell you that?”

“Have you ever drunk his mead?”

“No, Your Highness. I've never drank his mead, nor would I eat his candy.”

The corners of Kafni's mouth rose as she replied with some contentment, "Rest assured. The children in our family would be continuously faced with kidnapping and assassination attempts before we could remember anything. My earliest memory of assassination happened when I was five. The snacks and black tea I was having at the time had been poisoned... I am greatly experienced in the ways of identifying poisons."

"No, I mean."

Annan said slowly, "The [Demon's Blood] isn't really just the demon's blood. Instead, it is a product that came from alteration arts with the scientific name [Demon's Blood]. Its main ingredient is the soul of the demon. The person who consumes the [Demon's Blood] will have their erosion rate raised to its maximum. Even an ordinary person will directly become a Transcended at the peak level of Bronze Rank but will soon become an irrational demon due to the curse's erosion. Did you know about this?"

"Even if the toffee is extremely diluted... If you eat it in large amounts, it will probably increase the erosion rate."

"Your erosion rate is so high... Could it be that you've drunk the poisoned mead without you noticing it?"

"..." Hearing Annan's words, Kafni suddenly fell silent.

She shook her head slowly.

Her tone gradually became solemn. Finally, she reached out and took Annan's hand.

She rarely called Annan by his first name, as she asked softly and eagerly, "Annan... don't go to the capital, will you?"

"...What's wrong?" Annan asked.

"Indeed, I haven't eaten anything from His Royal Highness Philip, but I have received some boozy chocolate from His Majesty."

Kafni said word by word, "At that time, I had become a Transcended. Not long after that, I almost lost control because of the high erosion rate. Finally, I set foot on the Fallen path under the guidance of the teacher in my dream."

"The teacher later sneaked me out to hunt illegal Transcendeds. I only refused to follow his orders when he wanted me to hunt the wizards from Black Tower. Because at that time, I could already resist that person's mind control without the teacher's help. But my father's mind was still being controlled. He didn't know anything, and he just lived in the dark... I also couldn't let him know too much because that person would know everything he knew."

"So he didn't know that I'm a Fallen, and that I've killed people, or that I have a terrifying alias of the 'Shadow Demon'."

"The effect of the [Demon's Blood] is not just as what Philip said; I don't believe anything he says when it comes to food and magical materials. I specifically asked the teacher for help, but the teacher's answer and that of His Royal Highness Philip was the same."

Here, Kafni took a deep breath.

She calmed down her emotions before saying slowly, "The teacher who led me on the Fallen path, which I have mentioned to you before, is the Nicholas Flamel that you were looking for.

"The 'Great Sage' of the Hermetic School."

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"—Hmm, it seems that Uncle Goose is about to suffer."

"—Does this count as triggering the main storyline ahead of time?"

"—Delicious Wind Goose: I was terrified at the time."

"—Does Uncle Goose need support? We're also in Tasque County; the soonest we can get there is in one day."

Forget about it. It isn't like Old Goose is preparing for a fight. Instead, his mission is to sneak into the royal capital.

You're just adding trouble. Don't get him exposed. Seeing bullet text here, Longjing Tea grinned.

He replied courteously, "Only go when Old Goose asks for support. Calm yourselves if you just want to join the fun."

Longjing Tea sighed helplessly and closed the book he was reading.

It's getting dark... Let me head downstairs to get another book to study in my own room.

He had been reading in a library for a whole day.

After realizing that he had a learning aid plug-in, Longjing Tea opened up the forum and left the streaming channels playing in the background while he transcribed the spellbooks.

Even if he wasn't watching, he could still listen to it.

As a child, he liked to turn on the TV while doing his homework.

Longjing Tea was the type that would be more efficient if there were a little white noise in his environment.

"What are you doing? Your name is... Longjing Tea, right?" A hearty voice came from behind Longjing Tea, "Are you still reading at such a late hour? So hardworking."

"Teacher Clarence." When Longjing Tea heard this voice, he immediately got up and held his hands together in front of his chest. Then, he bowed slightly to the person behind him and gave a student salute.

This was an etiquette that could also be used by students who had books and materials in their hands.

The person who appeared behind Longjing Tea was a young man with an amiable air and a thin figure.

He wore light and thin round-rimmed glasses, a heavy cape made from dark red cloth of an unknown texture, and a red robe. Aside from the mismatch of colors, he looked like an oversized version of Harry Potter.

Clarence was also a tutor at Swamp's Black Tower. He was just about to have his last class of the month before Longjing Tea started here, so they had met a few days ago.

Yet it wasn't expected that he was still here after several days had passed.

Is this voluntary overtime?

Unlike his seemingly amiable air, Clarence was a tutor of the Soul Snatch school.

After the last tutor of the Soul Snatch school defected, Clarence, who was previously his student, had recently accepted the job of a tutor.

Clarence was a little surprised as he saw the spellbook with a steel cover on the table, "I recall this book "Edict Theory" to be quite difficult...

"Are you constructing spells?" Clarence said somewhat apologetically, "Did I interrupt you?"

"No, no." Longjing Tea let out a soft voice, a skill he had learned to pretend to be a good boy in school.

He lowered his head and replied politely, "I was just about to leave... Unfortunately, I don't have enough authority to take it away, so I'm going downstairs to pick up another book to read in my room."

"That's easy." Clarence replied cheerfully, "Give me a piece of paper."

He reached out to receive the notebook paper from Longjing Tea as he spoke and then put it on the table.

He reached out his right index and middle fingers with long fingernails and lightly tapped the paper on the table.

The paper seemed to have melted— It instantly turned into liquid and reassembled into another sheet of paper. The original blank paper was now covered with text.

Longjing Tea witnessed the entire process clearly.

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It was a "Temporary Book Lending License".

Clarence used his right index finger to sign in the lower right corner. It sounded like a gel pen scribbling across the table. A name that seemed to be engraved appeared on the paper like scars.

Clarence's distinctive feature was his well-manicured, four long nails on his right hand aside from his thumb.

The four nails were over three centimeters long. They didn't curl, nor were they yellowish, but instead remained white, clean, and firm.

Longjing Tea heard from Salvatore that Clarence's four nails seemed to have been carefully cultivated using potions made from centaur's hand bones, which could interfere with the Prophet magic and serve as a high-quality spell casting medium.

To protect these four nails, Clarence basically couldn't do any heavy work. Even holding a pen to write was inconvenient— he preferred to use the Shaping spell to reshape the “paper” into a saved template directly. Otherwise, he would use the same magic he displayed right now and engrave the texts onto the paper.

As he retrieved his long nails that reminded Longjing Tea of Freddy [1], Clarence adjusted his glasses and said gently, “You should just take this book with you.

“Although there aren't many students who needed “Edict Theory” in the tower, you should take precautions as there are also not many books from the Edict school here. If a higher authority wizard wants to borrow it, it's going to be troublesome for you.”

“...Thank you, Teacher Clarence.” Hearing this, Longjing Tea became more solemn and thanked him again.

Clarence waved his hand, “It's no problem. Unfortunately, I can only help you up to this point. Swamp's Black Tower doesn't have a tutor from the Edict School that could help you, and you can only rely on self-learning.

“If you happen to see Tutor Carl, you can ask him how to construct a complete spell cycle. Although he didn't specialize in Edict school, he is the only Great Wizard here who has mastered Edict spells. If that doesn't work...”

When he said this, he couldn't help but raise the corners of his mouth, “You should learn [Reveal True Name]. There is nothing wrong with learning this spell, and you'll have to learn it sooner or later. After you learn this, your exams will become a little easier.”

“[Reveal True Name]...”

“Yep, this is a common spell used to verify names, and the usage rate is almost comparable to the Alteration spell that uses [Wind-to-water] alteration to make clean drinking water. The jade tablets made with this spell are also necessary regardless if it is for some high-end clubhouse guard or for signing contracts.”

Having said this, Clarence shrugged, “Of course, it's better to do a spell cycle. Generally, Edict Wizard wouldn't have much combat power even when they have reached Bronze Rank... They would rest in the wizard tower and work until the Silver Rank before heading out.”

Is it possible that this school consists of only medical students?

The kind of work that required several years of internships and even guaranteed a master's degree.

Longjing Tea complained in his heart.

But it was hard to come across tutors. Having this rare encounter with Tutor Clarence, Longjing Tea asked, “Teacher Clarence, if I don't pursue a combat manner in an individualistic manner, do you have any spell recommendations?”

“What do you mean by that?” Teacher Clarence asked.

“It's like this, teacher. Before entering the Swamp's Black Tower, I had a few close friends. They were all capable Transcendeds. So I'm learning the Edict spell to help them. It was also then that I had the opportunity to be brought here by Senior Salvatore.”

Longjing Tea recounted the process of being invited to Mist Continent in words that Clarence could understand.

The first time he met Clarence, Salvatore had reminded him — Do not attempt lying to a Soul Snatch wizard. Not only were they very sensitive to the lies, but lies were also meaningless to Soul Snatch wizards who could see emotion.

Some experienced Soul Snatch wizards could even switch their mind-reading abilities on and off at any time with small movements such as blinking or flicking their tongues.

So what Longjing Tea said was also true; it was incomplete.

Hearing his question, Clarence frowned slightly, “You want to help your friends, huh, let me think...”

“I want to learn [Emergency Dodge]. What do you think?”

“Yeah, that's fine.” Contrary to Longjing Tea's expectations, Clarence nodded and pointed to the book “Edict Theory”. “This book is a bit outdated. It would be best to digest the evaluation of some spells in it with a grain of salt. For example, the latest viewpoint claims that [Emergency Dodge] is a good emergency spell.

“Because when encountering a more complicated danger, many people do not know whether to dodge to the left or the right. Instead, they will freeze in place and delay time. As a result, the victim couldn't escape from the attacks that could have been avoided.

“It's better to develop a habit of using [Emergency Dodge] on yourself as soon as you encounter danger. From the traditional viewpoint, you may end up falling into a deadlock after using the spell because you didn't know the position or state you'll be in after you dodge. But if you take into account that the other party's attacks would mostly be premeditated, the enemy would not know which way you'll dodge if you yourself don't. In the end, this is a good spell choice.”

Longjing Tea nodded again and again as he quickly understood.

To put it simply, it was to simplify the dodging manner such as [Arrow keys + roll] or [Jump] into a [Dodge Key] so that one could dodge by pressing it.

That's convenient.

It would be even better if I could add bullet time when dodging...

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Longjing Tea didn't expect Clarence to give so much information about another school and spells that he had not learned before.

Could he be that legendary type who enjoys going through strategies... No, going through dissertations?

Or are there some sort of paper journals or newspapers within the wizard circle?

After thinking for a while, Clarence answered, "Since you have a few friends, I would recommend the spell [Truce]."

"No, no, no. There aren't actually as many as 'a few'..." Longjing Tea complained.

Among this batch of players, only two were good old friends of his — Delicious Wind Goose and Wandering Child.

In a strict sense, the others would probably be regarded as his subordinate employees.

Hearing this, Clarence couldn't help laughing.

He obviously realized that his sense of humor was not quite suitable to be shown in front of students. Clarence then coughed a little to suppress his laughter and continued to explain solemnly.

"About this spell... It could forcefully separate the fight into two ends according to their factions. Your teammates would be pulled to your side, and your enemies would be pushed towards the direction away from you.

"After the separation, an air wall that can block attacks will form between the two groups. The strength and speed of the force and the flow and thickness of the air wall would differ depending on each person's strength.

"But this spell wouldn't change the arena, nor would it prevent the generation of another arena. So, you could first let your friends set up traps outside the battlefield. Then, you could use this Edict spell as you position yourself at the casting point in the trap or battlefield. That way, you could send all your enemies into the trap. This is quite a good combination, except that it is a little difficult to be used alone."

Clarence chuckled and said, "Although I don't know much about Edict spells, I do know about the current mainstream system. For example, edict wizards produced by the Storm Tower in Austere-Winter Dukedom are particularly good at this kind of strategic warfare.

"The ability to manipulate space like this is the characteristic and advantage of the Edict School. This is because you guys can often master different degrees of space manipulation ability from the Bronze Rank to the Silver Rank. That is one or two levels earlier than other schools with space manipulation abilities such as Falteration, Idol, Shaping schools.

"If you're concerned about the fungibility of this school of magic, you can work in this area." The elegant and easygoing wizard, who was wearing round-rimmed glasses, made serious suggestions for improvement.

"Thank you so much, teacher!" Longjing Tea responded quickly and respectfully.

He didn't even think that he would actually get some helpful advice.

It wasn't that he doubted Clarence's professionalism.

It was mainly that Clarence's temperament had always made Longjing Tea a little uneasy.

Clarence's temperament was the type who would immediately become invincible just by a quick reach to stroke his hair, throw his glasses, and change his hairstyle without any sense of disharmony.

Plus, Clarence's voice was vaguely similar to that of the hot blue man [1]...

Longjing Tea put aside these disturbing thoughts for now.

He changed the subject, "But, Teacher Clarence... Haven't you already finished your classes for this month?"

"Yep, but I still have something to do here hence tentatively moving next month's classes over to this month."

Clarence nodded with a warm smile, "I have a curse vessel to make, but I lack some materials and influences. I've sent out a commission to look for them in various influence pools. I'll only be leaving after they have returned and I'm done making the curse vessel.

"Until their return, I'll come over to the library every day after class. If there's anything you would like to ask me, you can wait here until around this time... I'll pass by this place on my way to the eighth floor."

"Thank you so much, Teacher Clarence." Longjing Tea thanked him respectfully again, saluted, and left, "I shall be on my way with this book then."

"Okay, remember not to go to bed too late." Clarence nodded with a smile, his voice gentle and dignified.

After Longjing Tea left, he looked at Longjing Tea's back with interest.

...It's not like you have any ill will towards Black Tower. So what are you nervous about?

"But, about Elven Ruins..." Clarence smacked his lips.

I hope your friends are alright.

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After all, the people who had gone to collect influences at the ruins this time are some unsophisticated blockheads.

Longjing Tea, who was completely unaware of Clarence's mind-reading, only felt the cold sweat dripping on his back after he had left the library.

He didn't dare to make any movements, show any expressions, nor dared to ask for details.

He was afraid that Clarence would detect something wrong and reveal the players' whereabouts at Elven Ruins.

He had just teased those fellows watching the stream being a hindrance. It would be funny if he himself caused unnecessary problems.

Longjing Tea was the type who didn't like being held back by others and hated even more to be one who held others back. So even if it were a team online battle game where everyone was defeated, he would be the only one from the crowd getting through each level seriously.

At the same time, he was always strict with himself, and he was also bluntly strict with others.

It was just that Longjing Tea had not met Soul Snatch wizard, hence still not having enough vigilance and attention in the face of Clarence.

In the face of ordinary people who had not completed Transcended advancements, the Silver Rank Great Wizards could read their thoughts without even having to cast any spell.

He had been walking all the way calmly towards his dormitory. After shutting the door, he finally opened up the forum and posted an update with great anxiety.

“—Urgent, urgent, urgent! It seems the team from Black Tower has already set off to the ruins! @Wandering Child @Wandering Child @Wandering Child.”

Quickly, Wandering Child replied, “Is the news confirmed?”

Longjing Tea: “I didn't dare to ask in detail as he was the big boss of Soul Snatch school. But he had sent more than one team to collect the [Influences]. So there is a high probability that some of them will head over there!”

Wandering Child: “I see then, take care of yourself. Watch out for Soul Snatch wizards!”

Longjing Tea: “Understood. I will not be turning off the live streams starting tomorrow, nor will I ask anything deliberately. After I'm done learning the skills, I will read some general geography and history books. Then, I will title the live streams according to the book titles and upload them directly to my personal space. If you have any information to inquire on, you can come to my space to check.”

Yiyi: “Okay.”

Jiu Er: “If possible, remember to help check information about demons... It's a little urgent.”

Longjing Tea: “No problem, I will try my best.”

After agreeing to the mission of collecting information, Longjing Tea let out a deep sigh. Only then did he gradually calm down.

His palms had been unknowingly soaked with sweat.

On the other hand, Annan had visited Old Vasily.

“...Your Highness, you want to make a curse vessel?”

Vasily frowned slightly, “It can be done, yes. But do you have any influence on you?”

“I still have two influences on me.”

Annan glanced at it and replied, “They are both low-levels. One is the 'Infinitely Overlapping Echoes' of the Mirror Realm, and the other is the 'One Step Ahead' of the Blade Realm. The one from the Mirror Realm is about to produce an echo... I don't know what these can do, so I came to you to ask for your opinion. I'm collecting materials and preparing to advance, so I've to suppress my nightmares' entries recently.”

“Infinitely Overlapping Echoes... Is it the influence of a new deity? I've never heard of this, and I'm not sure what it can do. But if it's just to prolong the influence...”

Vasily pondered for a while and quickly replied to Annan, “Let me then tell you about the capabilities of a basic ritualist first. If an influence is about to expire, you can add it to any ritual of deities from the same realm. At the end of the ritual, the influence's time limit is reset... In other words, the influence would have been depleted, and you will get a brand new influence. That way, you won't be pulled into a nightmare by the echo.

“This is how we stack and store influences on the body. Of course, the formula on how to use two or more influences to synthesize influences of other realms would be much more complicated...”

“But 'One Step Faster' is a useful neutral influence. The Blade Realm is a neutral realm that is not controlled by any deity, so deities in realms such as 'murder', 'forge', and 'sword' can also generate 'One Step Faster'.

“'One Step Faster' can be used to make a handy one-off curse vessel — the Blade of Retaliation.”

Old Vasily laughed, “I already have the materials here, and I can make it now.

“Or... Do you want to try it yourself?”

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“The principle of making a curse vessel is not hard. The difficulty lies in choosing the right ritual material and formula.”

Old Vasily looked at Annan, who had just finished setting up the ritual area. Under the altar, he provided a detailed instruction, “Typically speaking, we add the 'base material', 'influence' and 'curse material' into it and carry out a ritual based on the formula.

“The base material itself can't participate in the ritual. Otherwise, it will ruin the ritual. The 'curse vessel formula' will list the proper material and influences that protect the base material from being consumed.

“If the base material is chosen correctly, you can get a curse vessel after the ritual.”

Following the formula given by Old Vasily, Annan drew a seven-pointed star under one stroke on the ground. Given his strength attribute, his hand was firm, keeping the lines straight.

But even so, for a heptagram to be qualified, each angle must be greater than 24 degrees. So even if Annan had drawn on scrap paper dozens of times before, he couldn't guarantee that he would succeed this time.

If I still can't make it work this time, I have to summon the players to help me draw it... Annan complained in his heart.

While he was concentrating on drawing the line, Old Vasily was still explaining eloquently,

“The influence determines the properties of the curse vessel. It may be consumed, but not necessarily. It generally plays a catalytic role in the designated realm. The remaining unused curse after the ritual

directly determines the power of the curse vessel. According to this principle, if you want to improve the quality of the curse vessel, you must either use a stronger curse material or use a ritual with the lowest possible consumption.

“In the process of making a curse vessel in a neutral realm like the Blade Realm, the most commonly used ritual is Lady Luck's ritual series with 'seven' as the key number.

“The Lady Luck is the deity of luck and accident. All the rituals in the luck realm have a fixed failure rate of 7% every minute. So what we have to do is trigger the ritual successfully, communicate with the deities, and extend the ritual's time so that it fails and terminates itself.

“With 'Basic Influence: One Step Faster' as a sacrifice, we need to sacrifice 'uncoagulated blood that affects Transcended' as a catalyst and apply the curse materials of 'rust extract of rusted bronze swords that has stained with blood', 'seven pieces of air-dried heart valves from any Transcended creatures', 'the bloody saliva of a freshly decapitated pigeon', and 'a piece of nape's skin from a lynx that has lived for more than ten years.

“First, fill the area in the center of the altar with your blood, then stack the heart valve on the blood, and use the pigeon's saliva as the glue between the heart valves. Then, add another layer of pigeon saliva on top before adding the nape's skin of the lynx.

“After that, drop the rust extract on the top to designate a ritual area. After registering a ritual area, the ritual can last for half an hour. To prevent failure, use any sharp tool to penetrate it immediately, activating the ritual. The blade must be fixed vertically until the ritual is over, so it is better to make the blade fixed on soft ground.

“If all goes well, you can proceed to 'Ritual: the Lucky Sanctuary', a simple sanctuary ritual where you designate the effect to take place in three consecutive hours in the coming week. If you would have been assassinated within those three hours, then coincidences will keep appearing around you for these three hours, avoiding the people who are trying to kill you.

“But this ritual is only valid for those who 'use a weapon' to assassinate you. If it is an indirect method such as poison, curse, etc., it will not trigger. If someone hires an assassin, Your Highness... this ritual only allows you to know the hired thug instead of being able to detect the real murderer behind the scenes. Though, it's of great use as a warning beacon — telling you that there are assassins seeking your life.”

Old Vasily reminded fluently, “I shall repeat it again, Your Highness. The base material that can participate in the ritual without being destroyed is the 'blood-stained weapon', which is added at the final step. As long as the blade is soaked with blood before it touches the two other liquids, the ritual won't destroy it until the blood is dried.

“Your Highness, after connecting to Lady Luck, remember to keep silent. When the ritual fails automatically, the curse vessel will be finished.”

“I see.” Annan nodded, carefully covering the seven air-dried heart valves with the nape of the lynx. Old Vasily had provided the Transcended materials, but the pigeon's saliva must be fresh after death.

To collect the saliva from the dead pigeons, he had to urgently buy a large number of pigeons from the merchants in Green Water Street, enough to hold a pigeon feast at night to feed everyone in the viscount house.

As for the blood-stained knife, Annan did have a weapon here that could be used as a base material to “forge”.

That was the curse vessel he got from [Nightmare: Gallery], the Blood-stained Kitchen Knife.

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Following Old Vasily's instructions, Annan dripped the extract onto the nape.

Before getting to this step, Annan didn't see any indications. If it wasn't for Old Vasily asking him to continue, he even thought he had failed somewhere.

But after the extract was dripped on the nape, Annan suddenly felt a strange heat.

There was a burning sensation at the back of his heart, but there was no pain. Instead, it felt more like the warm burning sensation of taking a bath with pepper water.

After the heat settled quickly, it began to flow upwards to the back of Annan's neck.

Strictly speaking, this was Annan's first ritual.

“Quick, Your Highness!” Old Vasily hinted.

Without a second thought, Annan nailed the already prepared “Blood-stained Kitchen Knife” through eight layers of material and nailed it straight into the ground.

Boom.

The steady stream of heat on Annan's neck suddenly disintegrated. It was like being pierced through the abdomen by a knife... A warm feeling soaked through the back of the neck.

The heat that poured into his brain put him into a strange hallucination.

A slideshow of fast-flowing images appeared before his eyes.

Even though Annan's Perception attribute had attained the Transcended level, he could barely see a few snippets.

The ground in front of Wandering Child melted and collapsed;

Delicious Wind Goose squatted in the dungeon, and in front of him was a skinny old man;

Annan stood in front of Kafni, with his right hand slightly sticking out;

Philip Noah gulping the candies;

Then, the final scene stopped with a teenage girl Annan had never seen before.

She had a square sketching board and held Annan, whose height only reached her chest, with her right hand.

As if noticing the prying eyes, she frowned slightly and glanced back.

Annan noticed that she had icy blue vertical pupils and long, smooth silver-white hair without any other color or mess. Her face was somewhat similar to Annan's, but her temperament was rather cold.

The most striking feature was the two white dragon horns on her forehead that protruded upward like lightning.

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Annan hadn't seen the details in that snippet yet.

The picture floating in front of his eyes began to rewind at several times the original speed.

He felt his consciousness suddenly “fall back”.

It was like when he was standing on the street, he was suddenly bumped by someone and took two steps back, and then he woke up instantly.

When Annan opened his eyes again, he happened to see the “Blood-stained Kitchen Knife” standing on the ground, emitting unpleasant blue smoke. Those cursed materials had all been burned to the ground, and countless shallow knife marks had also broken the blood-soaked seven-pointed star.

The system notifications appeared belatedly, with only three short prompts:

[You have consumed “Basic Influence: One Step Ahead” in the ritual.]

[You have consumed “Basic Influence: Echoes of Infinite Overlaps” in the ritual.]

[Ritual: Prophetic Fragment has failed due to “missing key material”.]

“...What?” Annan was startled.

“Vasily, this ritual seems to have become a ritual called the 'Prophetic Fragment'.” He hurriedly asked, “The influence of the Mirror Realm has also been consumed. Is everything going to be okay?”

“What?” Vasily was also a little surprised.

He stepped forward, squatted down, and thoughtfully checked on the ritual area, “So that's the case...”

Later, he smiled and said to Annan, “You didn't suffer any loss. Anyway, your goal is to make a curse vessel, and the combination of two influences will make it stronger.

“The Prophetic Fragment is a complex ancient ritual that requires advanced influence. It is the age when the 'Prophet School' hasn't yet been founded in ancient times. The children, who were chosen by the ritual to be divine and responsible for playing the role of 'Prophet', see snippets of the future through this ritual.

“This ritual even requires the construction of a special building as the ritual area, and the ritual itself will last for more than three days. The material we are preparing now cannot support the completion of this ritual at all.

“But looking at it now, the influence of the two realms of 'mirror' and 'blade' can be catalyzed by a certain component of the 'Lucky Sanctuary' ritual, and become 'Advanced Influence: A Fleeting Bubble'...”

Vasily muttered, taking out a notebook and quickly jotting it down.

He did not know exactly under what conditions this influence was given birth.

After all, the mirror image was the realm under the new deity “the Man in the Mirror”. He had basically never stepped on the mortal ground, and naturally, there wasn't much of His influence. This influence was perhaps even rarer than the “Fleeting Bubble”.

But anyway, I should also jot it down first.

Annan also asked Vasily for a piece of paper and quickly wrote down all the future snippets he saw from the hallucination, just in case he had forgotten it all, like waking up from a dream.

After a short silence, they quickly noted down everything they wanted to record.

“How long have I been in the ritual?” Annan asked casually, “I don't feel like it has even taken five or six seconds.”

“What an exaggeration,” Vasily couldn't help but laugh. “It's been about three minutes since you passed out.”

...That's really fast.

It's a pity that I can't get to hear Lady Luck's voice at this time.

If Annan were to hear Lady Luck's voice, he would probably get another “Luck” realm influence. For example, “Lady Luck's Remains”.

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It would be a little troublesome, but Annan was also curious.

After all, he had only heard the voices of two upright deities so far.

Aside from the incomprehensible dragon language of Old Grandmother, Annan at least had a clear idea of the Silver Sire's situation.

From the title, “Lady Luck” might be a cheerful deity. This familiar name made Annan a little curious about her.

Seeing that the unpleasant green smoke on the kitchen knife was gradually dissipating, Annan stepped forward and picked up his beloved small kitchen knife.

Then Annan discovered that its name had changed.

[Annan's Boning Knife]

[Type: Weapon/Tool (Purple)]

[Description: A sharp boning knife with countless mirror images, which may never be depleted.]

[Effect: Every time this item is thrown, you can choose to throw it in the form of “mirror image” or “main body”. When it's thrown in “mirror image” form, it still deals the normal damage to the enemy, but the mirror image disappears after completing the attack. It works the same as the Prophet school's spell [Mirror Image Throw]. After the boning knife's mirror image shatters, it resurfaces in the wielder's hand.]

[Effect: The holder will suffer from curses “Painting Destroyer”, “Extraordinary Throw”, “Retaliation”.]

[Painting Destroyer: If the holder sees a portrait of a middle-aged woman while wielding the [Annan's Boning Knife], he must throw the boning knife out within 3 seconds. Otherwise, the holder will be injured by the kitchen knife.]

[Extraordinary Throw: When this item was thrown, it would automatically search for enemies in a small area as if the Edict school spell of the same name was applied.]

[Retaliation: When the enemy has locked on the holder and the attack has not yet hit, the holder can throw this item at the attacker. This item will automatically lock on the attacker, and the flight speed will be increased by three folds as if activating the blade realm divine art “One Step Ahead”.]

—The curse vessel was actually named after Annan!

“Wait, this strange effect...” Annan saw that the knife stopped oozing out blood, and the shape had changed slightly. The most important thing was that the blade of the boning knife gave a chilly glimmer.

It's really strong...

When I'm about to be attacked, I can throw this item out immediately.

Facing the enemy who dared to attack him, Annan could hit the enemy as long as the throw's trajectory wasn't too off, given the effect of [Retaliation] and [Extraordinary Throw].

So, it works just like a shield counter?

Also, the curse vessel made with [Infinitely Overlapping Echoes] seemed quite powerful.

The special effect of the Mirror Realm was actually infinite throws!

Although Annan could only throw one at a time, the knife would return to his hand like a boomerang.

Annan suddenly had some evil thoughts in his heart. He wanted to get some benefits from the Man in the Mirror.

Although this function wasn't particularly useful, it made things more convenient.

The weapon was underwhelming at the start. After the enhancement from the curse, it had become a Purple Grade bonding knife. He almost couldn't hold back and add the occult knowledge of Old Grandmother into the weapon.

I wonder if this kitchen knife can slow down the opponent with the influence extracted from Old Grandmother...

Annan looked at the powerful weapon he just got with stars in his eyes.

For some reason, this kitchen knife always gave him the illusion of “Should I make some equipment to strengthen my defense”...