

Righteous Ps 351

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 351**

“Goodbye then, Your Excellency Don Juan.” Priest Louis nodded quietly to Annan.

He wasn't particularly excited nor blamed Annan's participation which relieved him from an extended duty.

He just accepted the fact calmly and was grateful to Annan.

“I knew this day would come,” Louis said when Annan came to the door.

In fact, Louis didn't expect Annan to clear the nightmare in one go at the very start.

Annan completed “Nightmare: Gallery” even without prior experience with it. The only help he had was Louis's less detailed strategy.

From that time on, Louis knew that the time he would return to the capital would be much sooner than he anticipated.

Before Louis came to the Freezing Water Port, he was already prepared to “purify the nightmare at Freezing Water Port until he was 40 years old”. Worse still, he expected to die of old age here if he still couldn't resolve this nightmare by then.

The church had a “ten rankings” to set apart the difficulty of nightmares, and the difficulty came in ascending order from 1 to 10. Moreover, the nightmare's ranking wasn't based on the number of available levels but on “the efficiency and stability of purifying the nightmare with divine arts”.

For a priest, the difficulty of nightmares wouldn't necessarily match up to his level. Even for priests of different faiths, the difficulty of the same nightmare could vary drastically.

Bronze Rank's nightmare could be in the difficulty of the first three levels. Theoretically, Gold Rank's nightmare would have the difficulty of minimum, Level 7.

Lewis, for example, once cleaned up a Silver Rank nightmare with a difficulty level of seven.

He spawned as a Silver Rank Destruction Wizard in prison dedicated to containing Transcended in that nightmare. He wore a straitjacket and a shock-resistant helmet with an eye patch on his head. At the same time, his hands and feet were bound in shackles, his fingernails were stripped and restricted with tight bandages, and his curse vessel was stripped off. Worse still, he even had three batches of guards, each batch on eight-hour shifts, to watch over him.

The purpose of that nightmare was to kill or subdue at least one guard within eight hours, find and retake his curse vessel, and then escape from the prison.

This was undoubtedly a nightmare of great difficulty.

Louis had no idea how to resolve this challenge.

As he entered that nightmare, he was already chained and tied to a chair by his watcher.

At the same time, his watcher was playing cards with another watcher and two prisoners.

All of a sudden, Louis heard the sound of silver coins.

He immediately used the divine art, [Money Counting]. Even with no vision of the silver coins, he had the coins' location on the table imprinted in his vision. Then, he received feedback on the specific positions of the four people on the gambling table.

Then, he immediately activated the [Tax Appraisal], which highlighted the four people. Immediately after, he cast [Tax Levy], and two silver coins on the designated table flew towards him. One of them turned one into a [Sharp Object] and the other into [Silver Light Dust].

The rest of the battle was over in ten seconds.

Afterward, Louis held the [Sharp Object] in his right hand and 5 silver coins in his left hand. With enough weapon disposal, he quickly defeated his enemy, reacquired his curse vessel, and fled.

Although the warden reacted immediately and called upon the ballista, the nightmare was successfully cleared when Louis rushed out of prison.

Moreover, it was a solid nightmare purification that cleared off the remaining dungeon entry count in one fell swoop.

This process took no more than 3 minutes.

What Lewis was proficient at was this kind of nightmare.

His greatest strength was that he would always be fearless, calm, and determined.

In many cases, the priest could not clear the nightmare, not because the nightmare was too hard. After all, the priests had "cheats" to assist them. While Transcended power couldn't be utilized in nightmares, they could borrow the deities' power directly through holy light engravings.

It was like getting powerful equipment and a lot of consumables from the advanced players through mailboxes or face-to-face transactions when a specific function had not yet been released for the new players.

In this case, the priest's failure in clearing the nightmare was most likely not because of the difficulty but simply because of a decision-making error or a simple personal mistake.

But Louis was different.

He had always followed his instincts without hesitation, let alone doubt his decision-making.

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When ordinary people saw bullets coming, they would subconsciously think, "do you want to dodge to the left or the right" and the outcome was that they would stand still in the center. On the other hand, Lewis would dodge in a fixed direction the moment he realized he was being attacked, no matter if it was the optimal choice.

It was precisely because of this character that Priest Louis would accept this mission.

Indeed, he wasn't issued to complete this mission.

Instead, he took the mission proactively.

This was a nightmare that had not been purified in 50 years. As long as the dungeon challenger failed, he would lose his memory. Thus, he couldn't utilize the advantage of a priest to clear the nightmare. As a result, even the Silver Hand's emissaries hesitated to do this mission.

Louis was the first and only priest to sign up for it.

Not because of being hot-blooded, nor because of wanting to be promoted for this merit. When he heard "no one wanted to come", he thought he had the responsibility for it. Thus, he came to Freezing Water Port and then realized that it was a dead end. Still, he didn't regret his choice. Instead, he stayed in this place calmly and continued to purify the nightmare while going through his physical training as usual.

Louis was the true "hero" compared to Annan, who had completely lost his "fear".

That was why he became Salvatore's friend.

The senior had a high standard for making friends.

"Goodbye, Priest Louis. You are a true knight." Annan said softly, "At the next time we meet, I will call you Knight Louis."

"According to Silver Knight's rules, you are now my senior. So just call me Louis." Louis replied earnestly, "I also admire your wisdom and courage. Please be sure to notify me through Silver Sire Church when you arrive in the capital."

He stood in front of Annan like a massive mountain. Annan could only reach his chest.

Annan smiled gently and nodded, "I will."

Louis didn't look back, turned around, and jogged away with his luggage on his back.

He still didn't take the carriage at Freezing Water Port in the end because he was not urgent on time. This happened even much earlier than he had expected. Thus, he decided to start running from the North Sea Territory to exercise and recover his physical fitness and then follow along and help the caravan. He would then slowly take the carriage intermittently to the capital.

"He's a good boy." Bishop Daryl appeared silently behind Annan and sighed, "It's just a pity that such a character is not popular in the Silver Sire's Church."

"Are you talking bad about Silver Sire?" Annan chuckled.

"I'm just seeking truth from the matter. Silver Sire doesn't care much about His reputation. He only recognizes money and interests. If you are capable, even if you point at His face and scold Him, He would even treat you to a meal provided you have evidence and reasons for it."

Bishop Daryl continued talking about Silver Sire's secrets as if it wasn't a big deal.

He sighed, "A child like Louis, who is silent and determined, may be more in line with the characters of the Bone Burying Grandma and the Silent Lady."

“Just like the Venerated Skeleton?” Annan replied casually.

Hearing the name at the Freezing Water Port, Daryl suddenly paused and looked back at Annan.

Nothing abnormal happened.

It was only then that he finally reacted that the Gallery Nightmare was purified.

Old Bread couldn't help but laugh out loud, “Yeah, it's over. I almost forgot.”

“It isn't a problem anymore. When I report this to my superior, no one would be stationed to protect the Freezing Water Port anymore.”

Annan replied casually, “How are you going to leave this place? I have to let you know in advance that Yiyi is a Transcended. She can't go abroad directly by boat.”

“Then, I shall go to Treasure Diamond Island first. We plan to take the carriage to the south tomorrow and spend a week to arrive at the South Fort. Then, we will take the subway to the submarine city and then transfer from the submarine city to Treasure Diamond Island, which will take about a day. After arriving in the United Kingdom, it is much more convenient to travel. We will reach the destination in two or three days. You can also complete Miss Yiyi's advancement on the way.” The chubby bishop squinted and replied casually.

Annan thought about it, “That will be about eleven days?”

“Let's round it up to two weeks. I should be able to give you an update by then.” Daryl counted the time, “You will be departing within five days. So, when you arrive at the capital, I should still be on the subway or at Treasure Diamond Island. When you arrive at the capital, settle down safely first and then look for the Paper Princess. After that, I should be able to give you more information in three days.”

“Then, it's settled.” Annan nodded.

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 352**

“I have taught you everything.” The old man sat in the shadows against the wall, and the evening light came in through the fence of the window, illuminating only half of his chin.

The old man's hoarse voice sounded much weaker compared to yesterday, “How much do you remember now?”

Delicious Wind Goose, who was squatting in the opposite cell, replied respectfully, “I have remembered them all, and I won't forget them.”

“...Ah.” The old man sneered in a low voice, “I believe you didn't speak the whole truth.”

His low, hoarse voice was filled with a blatant air of death.

Since the old man's bowl was broken, Delicious Wind Goose hadn't seen him say a word in front of the “jailer” who delivered the meal.

On the other hand, after being imprisoned in the dungeon, Delicious Wind Goose was provided with three meals a day. However, the jailer never gave the old man any food or even a single sip of water, making the old man's voice much weaker.

It seemed that the old man had come to his limit after surviving for so long.

Delicious Wind Goose was unable to leave much food for the old man due to being monitored while eating. He could only hide one apple for each meal and throw it over to the old man's cell after the jailer had left.

It wasn't about having more gains.

Delicious Wind Goose found it unbearable to see another person starving and parched while having his stomach filled, especially the person was his teacher.

Perhaps this was why the old man taught the Delicious Wind Goose about ritual knowledge.

The old man obviously despised Delicious Wind Goose's poor aptitude.

Still, Delicious Wind Goose also knew in his heart that what the old man said was true.

Half of his words were indeed false.

The old man had given him a total of 26 rituals of different scales and a lot of occult knowledge. Except for a few rituals that were relatively simple, the rest were quite complex.

If it was a player with scientific research experience, he might be able to understand them.

Delicious Wind Goose felt these rituals were like high school's and college's physics and chemistry experiments. He had written down the steps, but he couldn't duplicate them fully if he were to perform them hands-on.

Worse still, the knowledge he got had no picture as guidance, unlike the textbook.

The old man would erase and paint a new ritual formation on the ground every 40 minutes on average. No one could have remembered them.

Fortunately, he had the screenshot function.

Indeed, Delicious Wind Goose captured all the ritual steps through screenshots.

When the time came, he just had to follow it step by step.

Moreover, the system labeled ritual knowledge as "occult knowledge". When Delicious Wind Goose sent this knowledge to the forum, the system would notify him that he had completed the weekly mission of [Secret Eye].

By just submitting this knowledge to the Secret Eye's database, Old Goose had earned a couple of experiences.

Delicious Wind Goose then followed through with this tedious task immediately.

These rituals were divided into different levels according to difficulty and importance. After the player raises the prestige level in the [Secret Eye] faction to the corresponding level, they could check up on all the knowledge and information to their level with keywords at any time.

It was much faster than browsing one picture at a time.

As for the price, they could not release the pictures and content here through forum channels.

Of course, the players could still memorize, copy, and trade the knowledge offline. However, that would require them to spend time and master that knowledge first before teaching others. This rule applied simply because the knowledge could be passed to the others verbatim in Mist Continent, provided the sharer had already attained mastery on it.

Still, it was impossible to record the knowledge on paper.

This was one of the core rules of this world.

Knowledge contains power. Occult knowledge couldn't be recorded by ordinary people, ordinary words, and ordinary paper. If one were to write them down on paper, the paper would burn on its own; if the knowledge were carved on a wooden sign, the wooden sign would rot.

The reason was that power also meant "curse".

Mortal objects could not bear this level of curse.

For example, at the moment when the old man used the fragments of the bowl to draw a magic circle on the ground, the temperature in the cell dropped significantly. There were also magic circles that made the surrounding ground freeze and some magic circles that made the ground seep out blood on the surface.

Undoubtedly, the old man did not possess any Transcended power. But the mere fact that knowledge itself was "completely fixed in the material world" was enough to change reality.

Delicious Wind Goose was self-aware. He might not be able to remember or understand the knowledge. Taking a step back, he was satisfied as long as the knowledge could be useful.

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Unexpectedly, as the uploader of the knowledge, he gained ample experience and the right to utilize the uploaded knowledge at any time. In another sense, he had already learned it.

Unfortunately, he wouldn't be able to utilize the knowledge fully.

"Fine." The old man sighed deeply after the silence.

He reluctantly wrote something on the ground with the fragments of a bowl.

Delicious Wind Goose didn't quite see what was carved on the ground. However, he was keenly aware that the ground beneath him shook slightly.

Soon, the ground in front of the old man suddenly wriggled.

Like a living creature, the ground returned to its original form.

Not a single scratch, frost traces, nor scorch mark remained.

There were just a few lines of text.

It occurred that the old man could use his knowledge to escape if he wanted to.

Not to mention some rituals couldn't be taught in this circumstance at all, the old man never gave this brief ritual that commanded the earth to erase traces of Delicious Wind Goose.

The old man must have hidden some of his true power.

Delicious Wind Goose couldn't help but ask, "Since you have the power, why didn't you escape?"

"Why should I?" The old man asked back.

Delicious Wind Goose was stunned.

He didn't know how to answer for a while.

Seeing this, the old man laughed out loud.

It wasn't the previous sneer but a kind and gentle chuckle like the old grandfather neighbor, "You are a good boy, but you are too stupid.

"You just learn what I taught you. Aren't you afraid that the knowledge I give you is poisonous?"

"Huh, knowledge can be poisonous?"

"That's natural." The old man replied calmly, "When some knowledge is written on the stone tablet, its power is enough to eradicate a city. Yes, the secret message I wrote on the ground can even command the earth. But why do you think that your brain can be harder than a rock, and your body is sturdier than the earth?"

"Forget it. I won't scare you any further. In the knowledge I gave you, there is indeed no poison in them." The old man said, raising his head slightly.

The light originally shone on the old man's chin, but now it had reached Adam's apple. As he spoke, the sharp Adam's apple slid up and down, "My life has come to an end.

"Some grand rituals consume life, and life is the best fuel." The old man replied calmly, "You will meet such a day too."

Delicious Wind Goose couldn't help but ask, "What the hell put you in this prison?"

"What put me in this prison?" The old man sneered nonchalantly and replied in a low voice, "Everything."

He obviously did not intend to continue answering this question.

Silence temporarily shrouded the small, dimly lit dungeon.

In the end, it was neither Delicious Wind Goose nor the old man who broke the silence.

At this moment, the clicking sound of the black iron key intruded.

There were three doors to enter this place; each had to be opened with different keys.

Klaus Cass held a set of keys in his right hand, and his long sword was in the silver scabbard hung on his waist.

“Have you thought it through?” He stopped at the door and looked at Delicious Wind Goose. Then, he asked, “Did you have a good time in the same room with the dead person for three days and two nights?”

Dead person? Delicious Wind Goose was startled.

He looked up at the cell opposite him.

Sitting against the wall was the corpse of an old man that had begun to rot. Next to the broken bowl, five apples with different degrees of rot were built into a small pyramid shape and placed stably in the corner of the wall.

The brilliance of the setting sun was spreading on his neck, the sharp Adam's apple protruding upwards, motionless.

What did I see and hear previously?

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 353**

“...” Delicious Wind Goose observed the old man who had been dead for many days.

The dead body was as thin as a rake, but his abdomen was slightly bulged.

It was cold and underground, so the Goose didn't hear the humming of the flies. He could still see grayish-white moths covering the old man's face.

Delicious Wind Goose felt like something was clogging up his throat.

Is that sadness? Or fear?

Without thinking too much, he turned around as if nothing had happened.

“Yes, I have made up my mind. I don't need to waste my time here.” He turned his head and replied respectfully and humbly to Klaus, “I will tell you whatever you want to know.”

“Great.” Klaus nodded slightly in satisfaction.

There was still vigilance in his eyes.

While standing outside the cell, Klaus asked, “What do you know?”

“Don Juan Geraint at the Freezing Water Port, who is also our feudal lord, is an impersonator.” Delicious Wind Goose replied quickly, “This is what the Roseburg's Viscount said personally.”

“Alvin Barber?” Klaus frowned slightly and called the dead man by the name, “What did he say?”

“He addressed 'Don Juan' as 'His Royal Highness Annan'.” Delicious Wind Goose lowered his voice and replied seriously, “I have investigated... There is only one Annan in my knowledge.”

"I've seen Don Juan Geraint incarnating the [Frost Sword]. I'm a [Swordmaster] myself, and I certainly recognize that it's definitely the [Frost Sword] without a doubt. I don't have any further proof, but I think that's enough to prove that 'Don Juan' is actually 'Annan Austere-Winter'."

"Annan Austere-Winter." Klaus frowned slightly and murmured in a low voice, "No wonder... Well, that explains a lot."

He was silent for a while, then raised his head and said seriously, "Are you serious with what you have claimed?"

"Look for an Edict Wizard. I can swear upon what I have said." Delicious Wind Goose answered with certainty, "That's because I have no reason to lie."

Although he hadn't seen it, he knew that Viscount Alvin must have called Annan "His Royal Highness", and the viscount knew Annan's true identity; he also saw Annan using the [Frost Sword] with his own eyes. Even if an Edict Wizard came to verify, he wouldn't change his statement.

Klaus frowned slightly after sensing the confidence coming from Delicious Wind Goose. Then, he was also a little hesitant.

"You are quite forthright. Why didn't you say that previously?"

"It's not that I don't want to say it." Delicious Wind Goose replied calmly, "To tell you the truth, I want to sell this piece of information for a higher price. While you made me wait, isn't that what I'm doing too? After all, this information has no value for me, but it may influence the decision of His Royal Highness Philip.

"His Highness Annan isn't the real 'Don Juan Geraint' after all, and he's an Austerian. I'm the Noah Kingdom's Transcended. My loyalty to him has no value. If it isn't the circumstances, I will not serve him."

That's true. Klaus nodded involuntarily.

He is right.

If Annan's identity was exposed, Delicious Wind Goose could not safely leave the Noah Kingdom.

The only way for Transcended to cross the border was through the Papal Kingdom's steam airship or underground railway.

This meant that even if the Old Goose served Annan and dedicated all his loyalty, it wouldn't be possible for him to move along when Annan completed his secret mission and evacuated. Worse still, if Annan were exposed, the Old Goose would be wanted.

A wanted Transcended wouldn't be able to leave Noah by any means. Even if the authorities did not hunt him down, he had to be on guard against [Hunters] while staying low in the country.

On the other hand, His Royal Highness Philip was one of the few royal heirs who offered much more perks as the boss. If he becomes the new king, the followers would soar in their careers. Taking a step back, even if His Highness Philip failed, the followers would still be recruited by the new king as long as the candidates were in Silver Rank or Gold Rank.

Once Old Goose surrendered his loyalty, he would receive better treatment than before.

Klaus couldn't help but give Delicious Wind Goose a second glance.

Klaus knew already this prisoner was quick-witted. After this talk, he found the captive simply too bright and possibly thought of the entire narration before being captured.

Smart people would tend to advance in rank just because they could resolve nightmares more quickly and perfectly.

In Klaus' interpretation, smart people liked to play petty tricks and made themselves appear more intelligent than they actually were.

Delicious Wind Goose made no secret of his plans. He even told Klaus his plans directly.

He knew the value of his intel and his worth to His Highness Philip as a calm and composed young Transcended. So even if he was left hanging by himself for two days, he didn't have the slightest fear. Then, he told Klaus the critical information directly, and he didn't worry that Klaus would kill him.

Delicious Wind Goose knew that he wouldn't die here.

He could guess that Klaus must have already reported this information to His Royal Highness Philip. No matter what he said, Klaus could not kill him or even interrogate him through violent means.

Otherwise, Klaus would be under suspicion.

That was why Klaus was standing at the cell door in the first place, keeping a distance from Delicious Wind Goose.

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He was worried that the Delicious Wind Goose would suddenly attack and subdue him. Never mind the hatred, the injury alone might make His Highness Philip doubt him.

Of course, the argument above came with the premise that Delicious Wind Goose was a Noah people.

"I take your word for it." Klaus's tone softened a lot, "You are brilliant. This is going really well. After you join us, it will surely reduce a lot of troubles for His Royal Highness Philip."

"Does your Highness Philip not have an advisor?"

"Of course there is, but not everything can be said to advisors. Ordinary people's brains are not fortified, and they don't even have the right to know about slightly deeper secrets."

Klaus approached Delicious Wind Goose's cell, opened the door, supported the Goose from the ground, and flicked away the dust for the Goose.

Klaus said earnestly, "You may be our colleague in the future. But for the sake of safety, I can't return your curse vessel to you for the time being. After all, His Royal Highness Philip still has to verify your intel and capability personally, but I think you will be fine."

"Thanks for your kind words, senior." Delicious Wind Goose responded politely.

After Old Goose walked out of the cell, he casually glanced at the cell next door and asked, "Speaking of which, who is this old man? I don't think this is an ordinary prison, right?"

"Of course not. Don't look at the fact that there are only two cells here. There are barriers here. If someone tries to break through the wall to escape, they will be killed by the electric current. The prisoners here are all Transcended... Oh, the old man is not."

It was no secret, so Klaus replied quickly, "He's a ritualist."

"Ritualist? What crime did he commit?"

Delicious Wind Goose asked, "Can you tell me? I'm a little curious."

It was expected to be a little curious after seeing his body for several days.

Klaus nodded and explained, "Actually, he doesn't seem to have committed a crime."

"No crime?"

"Yes, he was sent here by the patrols. According to the statute, a ritualist can be arrested without committing a crime because they possess the knowledge of danger. Someone owning a weapon can be disarmed, but what if they possess dangerous knowledge?"

Klaus shrugged, "If you don't want to have your knowledge cleared up, the only option is to be jailed. Of course, the Soul Snatch wizard also requires money. Usually, when they are locked up, food and drink are adequately served.

"Maybe I'll need to recruit a ritualist in prison one day."

"But you didn't dispose of the body." Delicious Wind Goose had a thoughtful expression on his face, "Is it to cause psychological pressure on me?"

"Ah, that's not it."

Klaus couldn't help but laugh and then replied casually, "I only noticed that he was dead when I interrogated you that day. In my mind, I was going to dispose of his body when I went out, but I have too many things to remember. After I went out, I just forgot. It wasn't intentional."

"Well, I think so too." Delicious Wind Goose smiled, "This wouldn't scare off anyone."

"You're right. We're all Transcended and not mortals. Who hasn't killed a few people? Putting a corpse here is nothing but putting people in disgust only." Klaus responded casually.

Delicious Wind Goose glanced at the old man's body.

I always feel like something is wrong.

Did I forget something?

As a Transcended of Silver Rank, Old Goose had undergone growth. His memory and logical thinking ability were utterly different from the mortal stage.

Would he easily forget something?

Or perhaps someone had altered his thinking?

This old man knew so much about the ritual. Even if he was imprisoned, he shouldn't be imprisoned here, right? Why wasn't there any traces of torture?

Why didn't Klaus realize something was wrong here even after Old Goose hinted at it?

Did he not see the five apples? What about the bowl? Why didn't the delivery man see the old man but didn't drag the body away?

It didn't look natural either way.

Delicious Wind Goose took a deep look at the old man's corpse, then turned and left.

Shortly after he left, the old man who had been dead for a long time and had rotted moved slightly and calmly opened his eyes.

"...Well." He reached out and picked up the top apple that was still fresh, took a bite, and chewed slowly.

After eating the apple, the old man got up.

The traces of death disappeared. His face melted silently, turned into another person in the blink of an eye, and changed again. It then shriveled, and the thin body became plump again.

His face was still changing, and he muttered, "Annan? When did he come to Noah?"

"Why wasn't I notified via letters?"

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 354**

"We have arrived." The low and respectful voice outside the carriage made Annan open his eyes silently from his drowsy mood.

He was the only one on the carriage, neither Kafni nor the cat was here with him.

I'm here already.

Annan never thought that he had journeyed so fast that he arrived one day earlier than he had expected.

It wasn't like the horse darted fast, or they took a secret shortcut. The main reason was that they didn't take a break at all.

There would be the replacement of new horses and new coachmen at every city and station. Only the man who was guarding Annan's side, wearing a crow mask and staying outside the carriage the entire time, wasn't swapped away.

Annan didn't even leave the carriage because the person in the crow mask took care of his daily needs. Moreover, the person in the "carriage covered with black cloth" was not allowed to leave.

The soft yet heavy black cloth had a texture similar to coral fleece.

The black cloth had countless “eyeballs” patterns printed. Staring at it would invoke a dizzy feeling when the carriage moved. Even when the carriage was still, it felt like the eyes were staring at the surroundings from all directions. It was a mystical cloth indeed.

Ordinary people couldn't stare at the carriage covered with this black cloth. It had high resistance against Prophet spells. No Prophet wizards could easily make out what was covered inside the fabric.

Other Transcendeds with strong perceptions would immediately avoid such a carriage. Not only would they never attack, but they would not even dare to look at the carriage as well.

The cloth symbolized that the “Three-eyed Crow was delivering intelligence for His Majesty the King”.

Every open eye on the black cloth was quite different. Behind the eye pattern embroidered on the black cloth was connected with the “Three-eyed Crow's” vision.

Aside from the two eyes embroidered on the cloth, a movable “camera” complimented the pattern, making it the “Three-eyed Crow”.

The kingdom's intelligence agency didn't need to scatter their forces all over Noah's territory but still monitor the country quietly and closely.

These eyes weren't only found on the black cloth of the carriage. Some were embroidered on the neckline, cuffs of someone's clothes, the backs of the hands, foreheads, etc.

Through a simple ritual, the host could control the opening and closing of the eye pattern. Even though only one eye could be activated at one time, the Three-eyed Crow allowed them to monitor a large area of territory by rapidly switching the monitoring vision.

Attacking and monitoring the carriage covered with black cloth was the same as trying to steal and rob while there were police a few meters away and watching.

“The carriage is quite high. Please mind your steps.” When Annan got off the carriage, the man in the crow mask said respectfully, reaching out to support Annan.

The carriage that was more than half a meter high was indeed challenging to get off.

Still, Annan was not a soft and feeble young noble.

However, Annan didn't push the man away. Instead, he leaned his weight toward the man and carefully landed on the ground with the man's support.

Then, Annan nodded with a slight smile, “Thank you.”

“This is my mission.” The young man wearing the crow mask immediately took a half step back, bowed back to Annan, and replied in a deep voice.

Of course, he was well aware that Annan respected him.

He had already brought Annan over, and this act was to show kindness to Annan.

If Annan didn't accept his kindness, Annan would push away his hand and get off; if Annan were politely keeping a distance, Annan would not borrow his support but only hold his hand as an act.

Of course, the officials knew that Annan was Transcended and couldn't possibly fall. At the same time, it was a rude gesture to have an unknown male servant who hid his face to give support to an unfamiliar son of the Grand Duke.

In fact, this was just a simple test.

Annan quickly discovered the Crow's intentions and made a friendly response.

The hidden line was I need your help.

Although Annan didn't speak it out, his eyes said so.

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“Please come in with me.” The man with the crow mask nodded and replied in a low voice.

Annan quietly followed behind the young man while looking around at his surroundings.

After leaving the carriage, he felt a wet, cold wind blowing across his cheeks.

It was different from the Freezing Water Port.

Annan sighed silently.

It was slightly different from what was agreed with Silver Sire before.

Annan didn't wait until the spring hunting season to enter the capital. In other words, the Rotten Man believers had not yet been weeded out.

That said, it was still winter.

However, the Noah Kingdom in winter was not cold.

The weather was different from the Freezing Water Port and Roseburg. Although the Noah Kingdom was cloudy all the year-round, the temperature was generally around 6°C, even during the Noah Kingdom's January night and early morning.

For Annan, it wasn't cold at all.

However, the chill made him turn his shoulders and neck with some discomfort.

Even if a “bed” was provided on the carriage, sitting there for more than a day would make Annan a little sore.

The Geraint family's mansion wasn't too big.

Perhaps it was because every inch of land and money in the capital was limited. The Geraint family's mansion was similar in size to the viscount's mansion in Roseburg.

No matter the design or the decoration, the Geraint family's mansion was distinct.

Also, Annan glanced at the edge of the courtyard.

This was the first time he had seen such a heavily guarded noble's courtyard.

From the watchtower alone, Annan saw six guard posts. Outside the courtyard, there was a thick, sound-proofed marble wall. The guards were armed with guns. Annan saw more than 300 guards at first glance from his angle.

These guards exuded a different air from those recruited at Roseburg.

Even the soldiers on the Roseburg side did not seem as disciplined as the “guards” of the Geraint family.

The forces garrisoned here were expressionless and stern, seemingly a recognition of the Geraint family.

Annan was currently in the backyard.

Behind him was a massive fountain accompanied by statues three or four meters high on both sides.

Below each statue was a stele made of black jade. It was engraved with the name, family, and achievements of the statue's owner.

Even though this was Geraint's backyard, most of these statues were not from the Geraint family.

The person standing at the door to greet Annan was a young man about 1.78 meters tall, with a shapely body, black hair, and black eyes.

He had an ordinary look but had a straight stature. He didn't hunch even a slight, giving off a sense of reliability.

Annan could see that this young man was somewhat similar to Don Juan at first glance.

When the young man saw Annan's face, he was slightly startled, especially when he saw Annan's blue-green pupils; he was even a little lost in thoughts.

But he reacted quickly and offered Annan his hand politely, “Welcome, Your Highness Annan.”

The man spoke in a calm and charismatic voice, “May I introduce myself...

“I'm Eugene Geraint.”

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 355**

Is he Eugene Geraint?

Don Juan's second brother?

Annan couldn't help but glance at the man one more time.

But he still couldn't see what was different about this man.

He was just plain in a scary way.

In fact, he was so “ordinary” that it was almost magical.

Annan glanced over and couldn't even remember any special features. After Annan looked away, he felt that the face of “Eugene” in his memory quickly became blurred.

“Ah, sorry.” Eugene quickly realized something, apologized to Annan, and invited him to the palace behind him.

It didn't seem like Eugene did anything but Annan suddenly remembered what Eugene looked like.

He didn't say much, just glanced back at the courtyard and followed Eugene into the house.

Although the count's mansion was not massive, the courtyard was terrifyingly large. The promenade with many marble statues spanned hundreds of meters long, and the diameter of the fountain was more than forty meters. It felt almost like an artificial lake.

The internal structure of the count's mansion surprised Annan even more.

Pushing open the gate leading to the mansion in the backyard, what entered Annan's eyes was a long corridor more than 10 meters high, 10 meters wide, and about 70 meters long.

It wasn't the tiles that filled up the walls on both sides of this corridor but mirrors.

Less than 1/10 of the wall was occupied by the standard mirror. Otherwise, the mirror would be in different colors, including dark blue, red, purple, and yellow, all of which at different angles. It wasn't a flat surface, but there were some protrusions here and there.

The size, color, and layout of these "surfaces" looked natural. At first glance, Annan found them to resemble the colored stained glass of a church. However, the glasses didn't form any image but merely the refraction of light that sent out multiple colors of light.

There was a pure gold chandelier just above the gallery of mirrors with lighted white incense candles installed on it.

The gentle light was refracted by countless glass pieces with different reflectivity and transparency, giving the mirrored corridor a brilliant and dreamy brilliance.

The rainbow here was like a fog. It was visible and reachable.

Even Annan couldn't help but be in awe when he saw this scene.

"Without a doubt, this is truly an art." Annan exclaimed, "It's so beautiful."

Eugene just shrugged and said indifferently, "Yes, it's indeed quite shocking at the first encounter. You may feel dizzy after watching it for a long time.

"Compared to this, I think your beauty shocked me further, Your Highness."

Eugene respectfully and politely praised, "Although I have heard that Your Highness Annan and Her Excellency 'the Daughter of the Storm' looked the same during childhood. I was still surprised when I first saw you—what an outstanding appearance.

"How on earth do you imitate my younger brother? His appearance is much more ordinary than yours. Except for the same black hair and blue eyes, you both are two different people."

"So it's easy to reveal my flaws." Annan commented jokingly, "Those I want to deceive can see through my disguise; I can only deceive those who 'tell another lie and still be deceived'. What can I say? This is the worst disguise ever."

“Not really. In fact, not many people know Don Juan or have seen you. It's just a coincidence.” Eugene turned around and explained to Annan seriously, “For most people, black hair and blue eyes are the unique characteristics of Don Juan.

“After all, this is not the United Kingdom. In places where the portrait isn't populated much, hair color and eye color, plus scars and fancy clothes, are all the characteristics to recognize a person. There is no need to be the same as others, as long as you have gone through the important traits. Even if two people have different heights, weights, and appearances, it is not too difficult to disguise as another person.”

“Oh, those aren't really my expertise, unfortunately.” Annan smiled and replied humbly.

After all, he wasn't the bald head who could disguise as anyone after swapping clothes. [TN: Hitman reference.]

It appeared as if Annan's looks had greatly improved his rapport with Eugene. Eugene had been chatting with Annan leisurely for the rest of the journey. It was a casual chat, so Annan was also cooperative in talking to Eugene.

Annan's incomparable acting skills and the flattering replies of “Ah, it's amazing” and “Is there such a saying?” made his rapport points build up even further with Eugene.

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Then, Annan quickly noticed something.

Eugene gave Annan a different feeling than the other Geraint brothers.

Eugene didn't have the cunning and decisiveness of Ferdinand Geraint nor the academic rigor and timidity of Don Juan Geraint.

Instead, he gave off the vibe of a “politician” to Annan.

There could be a possibility that Annan wasn't building a good rapport with Eugene, but Eugene made him think that their relationship had improved.

Annan's acting skills were outstanding, and he had a considerable understanding of the minds of others. Still, he felt that the smile on Eugene's face was indeed sincere and happy.

Annan felt that Eugene spoke to him with sincerity and from the bottom of his heart.

In a short time, Annan became “friends” with Eugene.

As Annan improved his rapport with Eugene, Eugene also made himself appear more trustable to Annan.

In other words, Eugene seemed to have ways to connect with others easily, gain their trust, and build a good rapport.

These three sons of Old Crow seemed talented.

Annan couldn't help but be in awe.

After walking through the corridor filled with glasses, the surroundings became normal. Of course, this normal was more of a relative interpretation. The luxurious decoration at the caliber of the Palace of Versailles [1] made Annan wonder if the count's mansion was part of Noah's palace.

Even Noah's palace, which Annan saw in his nightmare, was far less artistic than the count's mansion.

The place was more ornately decorated than the palace.

What is the situation with your residence?

“Where are we going?” Annan asked.

Eugene answered at once, “To see my father. He is expecting you personally.”

“Master Geraint...” Annan muttered.

Annan showed no signs of timidity nor hesitation after being about to meet the wise man who secretly controlled all the secrets of a kingdom.

“You can also call me 'Old Crow' like them, Your Highness.” A gentle voice came from Annan's side.

An old man with an ordinary face, figure, and voice said happily, “I actually like this title.”

When did he arrive?! Annan was caught in surprise.

“Greetings, Lord Geraint.” Annan raised his brows and politely greeted the old man, “I'm Annan·Austere-Winter.”

“Nolan Geraint.” The old man reached out and shook hands with Annan.

Annan felt the warm and steady grip from the old man's palm, realizing that this old man was far more robust and vigorous than he seemed.

He didn't even notice when the Old Crow approached him.

If Nolan wanted to assassinate him, he would be dead by now.

Is this the capability of the kingdom's top agent?

But when Annan looked at the old man's face, he was startled.

He had seen the old man's face before.

It was the “passionate local old man passing by” who gave Delicious Wind Goose a newspaper that day!

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 356**

I see. Annan glanced at the smiling and kind old man thoughtfully.

Long before Delicious Wind Goose came to the capital city, Nolan knew where and who he came from.

“As expected of the legendary Three-eyed Crow.” Annan sincerely praised, “I don't even know where the 'eyes' are hidden.”

They must have seen Delicious Wind Goose talking to Annan at Freezing Water Port or Roseburg. When Delicious Wind Goose entered the city with the help of the caravan, he was also under the surveillance of a Three-eyed Crow.

Any graffiti with an eye pattern might be a surveillance camera set up by the Noah Kingdom's secret intelligence agency "One-Eyed Crow".

It was even possible for the Three-eyed Crows to use ordinary paints without curse properties to cover up the graffiti and turn it into another pattern as a disguise.

The eye pattern would still function if the strokes were not cut off or covered.

Conversely, the surveillance would cease to function once the pattern was severed.

In other words, the eyes were "a surveillance system that failed as soon as it was discovered".

But even so, Annan still didn't realize where Delicious Wind Goose was exposed.

What an advanced approach.

The "One-Eyed Crow" deeply understood the truth. As long as the spy was not in contact with the target from beginning to end, the spy would never be exposed.

They only need to draw patterns on the hem of the clothes of passers-by, the corners of unnoticed walls, or even the leaves of a certain tree, and they could continuously monitor an area. These tasks could be arranged "before the target had reached the place".

This was equivalent to a spy camera with indefinite use.

The first person to create this kind of intelligence system was truly a genius.

In the face of Annan's comments, neither Nolan nor Eugene relaxed.

They even respected Annan's tone even more.

"As a fourteen-year-old Silver Rank Transcended who has never gone through intelligence study, the little crow in charge of installing the 'eyes' has to be punished if you manage to seek those 'eyes' out."The old man replied gently.

Hearing this, Annan was surprised.

He finally knew why the Geraint family was so polite to him.

Although he was the son of the Grand Duke, he was not a Noah civilian after all.

What the Crows cared about was his rank advancement speed.

They were probably the only ones who knew that it took Annan only over a month since he ever set foot on the transcendent path to reach Silver Rank; they were also the very few who knew that he held the Book of Divine Transporter.

For them, Annan wasn't just "the heir of the Austere-Winter Dukedom", but "the future subordinate deity of the Old Grandmother".

At the same time...

"I'm afraid part of the reason is because of this outfit." Annan chuckled.

He raised his sleeves and wiped his eyes.

When Annan raised his eyes again, there was a silver spider web pattern looming at the bottom of his pupils.

He was wearing the [Silver Sire's Favourite].

The silver robe, like a silk nightgown, was soft in texture.

The texture of the other clothing in this era was not enough to satisfy Annan.

However, this robe from Silver Sire was comfortable.

The robe was befitting of any weather, no matter walking against the cold winter wind or as pajamas with an extra layer of quilt on the bed.

After Annan acquired the skill of self-cleaning, he never took off the robe.

The robe was apparently of little use in Roseburg.

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However, any bishop of the deities could recognize the origin of this suit in the royal capital.

Given by Silver Sire himself, it was the proof of an upright deity's adoration just like its name, "Silver Sire's Favourite".

Unexpectedly, the Crow family recognized this robe.

"Yup, you're right." Nolan nodded gently, "That's because I'm actually a cardinal of a certain deity. I already knew that Silver Sire adores you. It will be smooth sailing on your path to becoming a deity.

"So, there's no need for you to hide Her Royal Highness Princess Kafni in Roseburg."

"..." Annan was silent for a moment.

Nolan was right.

Previously, the Geraint family said that "two people would be allowed to enter the capital together". At first, Annan thought that this was a place reserved for his guard, and he also planned to let Dove and Chocolate go with him.

But Kafni came after him.

Only then did Annan realize that "the two people" in Geraint's message were referring to himself and Kafni.

In other words, the two of them were summoned to the capital without any guards.

Annan subconsciously grew more vigilant upon the realization.

Although this was Eugene's message to Annan in the letter, he would tell Kafni about it directly if she were to ask.

It was not a secret after all.

The Crow was only subordinate to the crow. The new king was not yet on the throne, which meant that anyone could be the new king. They would not be biased toward any party and thus unwilling to offend any party.

So for Kafni, no matter what she asked Eugene, she would get a reply from him. Even if he couldn't say it, he would directly tell Kafni that "this matter couldn't be said".

Annan was a little wary.

The Crow family was friendly to him at this moment.

Don Juan and Benjamin were friends with him too. He was also favored by the Silver Sire, recognized as one of the few direct descendants of the Old Grandmother, helped the Venerated Skeleton further His truth, and did the Man in the Mirror a favor.

At the same time, the Pale Princess and the Tragedy Writer paid close attention to him.

However, Annan still retained appropriate caution toward the Crow family.

After all, he didn't know the attitude of the crow family.

He couldn't let Kafni take risks either.

He had the Silver Sire's and the Paper Princess's protection, but not Kafni.

Silver Sire didn't even care about her grandfather's life, let alone a little girl like her who had no says among the deities.

At the same time, Annan wasn't just worried about the safety of Kafni.

If there were witnesses of Kafni Noah visiting Roseburg and then the Crows' mansion, it would implicate Kafni and even the political arrangements of the Crow family.

Hence, Annan asked Kafni not to go to the capital for the time being. Even Dove and Chocolate were forced to stay in Roseburg for a while.

After all, Annan couldn't refuse Kafni but invited another woman with a body and appearance similar to Kafni with him who had a worse status and strength than she at the same time.

—Although that lady's soul was actually a cat.

After giving it a quick thought, Annan decided how he should reply, "I can't bring her here for now."

Annan said calmly, "I can't let Kafni take risks. Her mother is the Rotten Man's believer. A Gold Rank Soul Snatch Wizard specializes in memory reading and modification.

"I cherish the memory of being with her, so I won't put her life at risk.

"I will only invite her over after eliminating the unfavorable factors." It was an upright answer.

Hearing this, Old Crow narrowed his eyes slightly. "Removing the unfavorable factors? So, do you mean..."

"I will wait until Silver Sire's plan to eliminate all Rotten Man believers in the territory is completed." Annan smiled slightly and asked back, "Don't you already know about it?"

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 357**

Although Annan didn't know what the Old Crow wanted to accomplish with "Kafni", her strength and prestige were limited.

Her value was nothing more than "the only daughter of the Fourth Prince", "Nicholas Flamel's student", and "Annan·Austere-Winter's friend". It wouldn't end up well for her if she were involved.

As Kafni's friend, Annan wouldn't allow this.

Kafni trusted him and relied the problems with her teacher, mother, and her curse on him. As long as something went wrong, she would be in an irreversible troubled state.

Annan couldn't allow himself to screw things up.

Thus, Annan's reply threw the pressure back on Nolan.

If the Old Crow acknowledged Annan's words, they had to act and kill Kafni's mother. Otherwise, it would be a gesture of "the king trying to turn his back on the Silver Sire's command and act as he pleases".

However, if the Old Crow claimed to have no knowledge of this, it meant the king no longer trusted them. The intelligence-gathering ability and political status of the Crow Family were no longer adequate to intervene in the following matter.

As a result, they couldn't continue to ask Annan for the rest of the information on the matter, nor could they ask Annan for help in this regard. Had the Old Crow chosen to remain silent, the outcome would have been the same.

As long as he didn't admit it, One-Eyed Crow would have to carry out the mission of monitoring, capturing, and even assassinating the prince's wife. At the same time, Annan had the right to refuse all his demands. It was the mission Silver Sire arranged for Annan. The act of him hindering Annan would be equivalent to offending an upright deity.

There was only one answer left for the Old Crow to pick.

The old man smiled wryly, "Why do you have to do that? If she doesn't want to go back to the capital for the time being, so be it.

"We're already arranging our plan to assassinate Margaret. After returning to the capital, the Fourth Prince spoke to us and allowed us to carry out this plan. After leaving behind the documents and evidence, he agreed to wash away the relevant memory of this process."

However, there would be implications and aftermaths.

His memory was deleted. Hence, the Fourth Prince would not be allowed to be in contact or learn about Margaret's assassination.

Nolan added, "To prevent the 'Dream Stealer' Danton from making a desperate move and threatening Your Majesty or His Highness Albert, we must lure Danton out. At the very least, he has to be drawn away from His Royal Highness Albert."

"I see." Annan narrowed his eyes slightly, "You plan to use Kafni as the bait."

The Crow Family seems to know everything.

They knew what the Fourth Prince didn't know.

I'm afraid Danton has already long been exposed.

However, he is a threat that cannot be easily eliminated, a Gold Rank Transcended, notably a Soul Snatch Wizard.

Anyone speaking to him would have their memory easily read and modified. Even if the Crow Family could control the Transcended who could get in contact with His Majesty the King, he would leave significant damage to the kingdom out of desperation—for example, driving a few people crazy and murdering a couple of people.

Worse still, if Danton wiped the memories of several ministers clean, including those secrets buried in their hearts, the Noah Kingdom would fall into turmoil.

A Gold Rank Transcended who infiltrated the palace was far more dangerous than a bomb. So even though the Crows had already seen through everything, they didn't dare to make a move.

There was only one chance to stop Danton.

If the Crow Family were to fail, the outcome would be devastating.

During the conversation, Nolan had brought Annan into the basement and closed the door.

"Feel free to get seated. You know there's only one 'Dream Stealer'. No one knows how far is his capability. We only know that he can't modify the memories of people he hasn't gotten in touch with."

Nolan sat on the sofa, put his hands on his knees, and said calmly, "The safety of the Fourth Prince, the safety of His Majesty, and the safety of the high-ranking officials of the kingdom are more important than the safety of the Fourth Prince's daughter."

Annan sat on the side sofa with Eugene Geraint sitting beside him just as Nolan explained their priorities.

Annan wasn't angry at all about such indifferent words.

In Nolan's position, he did precisely the right thing.

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As long as their plans failed, the entire kingdom would be in turmoil at a minimum. If a little girl with no special skills could be used as bait and eliminate the risks, it was doable even though she had the royal blood.

It was undoubtedly a correct move, but...

"In this world, not everything has to follow the correct way." Annan smiled gently, "I don't think it's not enough just to be correct. I want it to be perfect."

Annan spoke calmly, with his face brimming with confidence.

The aquamarine pupils reflect the ceiling light, giving off a bright outlook.

"...As expected of you." Nolan sighed after a moment of silence, "If only a young man like you could be born in Noah."

"That's not impossible..." At this moment, Eugene blurted out.

When Nolan heard those words, he appeared surprised, and he showed an understanding look later, "That's true. By the way, you and Her Royal Highness Kafni seem to..."

"..." Annan was speechless for a moment.

Damn.

Is this a trap?

What a mistake.

As expected of the Old Crow, he has planned his every move.

Annan didn't believe it was Eugene's quick wit. If Nolan wouldn't let him speak, how could an intelligent man like him dare to turn the subject into a strange topic when Annan talked about serious business with his father?

As long as Annan responded, forcing the Old Crow to be his ally and revealing their plan, Nolan would blurt that out sooner or later.

From the standpoint of a "friend", it seemed not enough to explain why Annan would do so much for Kafni.

It was in the Crow Famil's interests to use a young girl as bait to abduct the unstable bomb or the Fourth Prince himself. At the same time, using this young girl to ally with the only heir of the Austere-Winter Dukedom and the Old Grandmother's future subordinate deity was a great bargain.

His Majesty the King had always dreamed of unifying the five kingdoms and rebuilding the Great Barrier.

If they managed to establish a royal marriage with the Austere-Winter, the Noah Kingdom would have completed  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their goal.

Austere-Winter was a "traditional place" and had a different culture from other countries. Even for a Grand Duke, it would be strictly monogamous.

Kafni was indeed cute.

However, Annan couldn't agree to it openly before the Old Crow. It was different from Annan's attitude of being "vulnerable". If he admitted this matter, he had put his weak point in the hands of the Old Crow.

Annan replied calmly, "This is just a promise I made with her. I thought you knew about it."

"A promise?" Hearing this, Old Crow was stunned for a moment.

Annan nodded earnestly, "When she calls for help, I will rescue her. This is my promise as a man."

"Is that so..." Old Crow was silent for a while, then nodded slightly, "I understand.

"Did it happen when you and His Highness Dmitri visited?" the old man asked curiously.

He didn't know much about the promise.

However, that was expected because there was no such promise at all.

Annan made it out at the spur moment.

Annan asked rhetorically, "I'm curious. I've heard 'that Old Crow is some deity's cardinal bishop'.

"I've answered so many of your questions, so can you satisfy my curiosity? I just want to know, which deity will a great man like you serve?"

"It's fine to tell you about it. If you ask Merlin Manning's brother, he'll tell you directly." Nolan smiled warmly and replied, "I'm the believer of the 'Faceless Poet', the subordinate deity of the Silent Lady and the Deity of Records and Secrecy."

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 358**

"...the Deity of Records and Secrecy?" Annan was surprised when he heard those words, and then he asked, "Isn't the Faceless Poet the Deity of Funerals and Records?"

"The Skeleton Crow, which Old Vasily summoned previously, was the Faceless Poet's envoy. The requirement to summon the Skeleton Crow was "the Remains of the Silent Funeral".

Speaking of which, the Geraint family emblem also seemed to be a crow.

"That's a secret, Your Highness Annan." Nolan smiled.

"Actually, there is no 'Funeral' realm in the Faceless Poet's clergy. There is no such thing as the Funeral Deity.

"Burial is deemed a 'gift to send off the dead', which is close to the central realm under Bone Burying Grandma. Even the Bone Burying Church itself has rituals related to funerals.

"Only the subordinate deities of Bone Burying Grandma are allowed to hold the Truth in this aspect. There's no way to get it. Even the Book of Truth doesn't make an exception. The 'Burial' custom was established when the first civilization came about. Even though the Faceless Poet is old, He is not ancient enough to get into that.

“Those in other faiths consider the Faceless Poet the Funeral Deity because He generates 'the Remains of the Silent Funeral'. But in fact, His focus is not on the 'burial' itself but on the essence of 'being the audience of the burial' and 'keeping silence'.

“The 'silence' aspect falls under the realm of secrecy. Since the Faceless Poet is the founder of the Transcended tradition of 'secret keeper', He became a deity because of this. Therefore, all his believers will also have to keep this secret for Him.”

I see. Annan got it.

The truth “Secret” itself is a “secret” that the believers must keep.

Sure enough, getting many of his believers to keep the secret will reinforce the Truth.

Thus, the Faceless Poet is much better than the Venerated Skeleton who made His believers betray others and the Rotten Man who made believers castrate themselves.

However, Annan quickly realized something was wrong, “Then, why are you telling me about this?”

Annan didn't adopt the faith toward the Faceless Poet, and he easily got this answer: the secrets the Crows were supposed to keep.

Facing Annan's question, Nolan replied calmly, “In this respect, it is because 'secret keeping' itself is a contradictory Truth. If you want to 'keep secrets', you must obtain the secrets first. However, obtaining the secrets itself conflicts with 'keeping secrets', which the first-hand secret holders have to comply with.

“Thus, the secrecy is in the act itself, but not in the outcome. The more people know the secret and are willing to keep silent about it, the stronger the power of our faith.”

“On the other hand, the Faceless Poet has told me to do my best to protect you.” Nolan smiled and replied gently, “So don't worry about it. I had plans previously arranged for Her Royal Highness Kafni, but our Geraint family will try our best to protect you in the royal capital.

“Of course, if you let us 'protect Her Royal Highness Kafni as you did', we will comply with that order.”

The old man promised so.

What?

Why does Faceless Poet do that?

Annan frowned in confusion.

He didn't remember having any connection to the Faceless Poet.

In his memory, the only thing he would be related to the Faceless Poet was when he led the players to destroy His Skeleton Crow.

So are we acquainted just because of that?

Isn't that an ill-fated relationship?

Annan was lost in thought.

Just then, Annan heard a loud crow chirping from outside the house.

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The sound even penetrated the basement wall and reached Annan's ears.

At the same time Annan heard the crow's chirping, he felt a strange vibration coming from the tips of his fingers, quickly spreading to his arms.

It was like touching a roaring machine with his hand. The soreness was accompanied by a warm current that quickly ran through Annan's body.

An invisible power flowed through Annan's body, seemingly going through Annan's muscular and blood circulatory systems.

When the peculiar power flowed from Annan's fingertips to the soles of his feet, it turned into a comfortable and even slightly drowsy warmth. It felt the warmth coming from the campfire after curling into a ball next to it when he was drenched because of the rain.

[You are blessed with the Faceless Poet's gift. The required exercise time to promote each point in Strength, Agility, and Constitution attributes is deducted by -30%. The effect will be lost once the designated attribute reaches 20 points.]

[You are granted a mark, "Advanced Influence: Caw of the Faceless Crow".]

[If you don't remove the mark in time, you will fall into a random nightmare with the keyword "record" after seven days (Difficulty: Distorted).]

Annan suddenly saw black liquids flowing in through the gap of the basement door from the outside.

A peculiar pressure felt upon Annan.

Annan was confident with what he was feeling at the moment. It reminded him of when he first met the Venerated Skeleton—the strange sensation after encountering the false deity's true body.

Strangely enough, the upright deity wasn't too nerve-racking.

After these liquids flowed into the room, they gathered together again. It became vicious at speed visible to the naked eye and piled up into a human figure.

"I haven't seen you for a long time." The black humanoid's voice was thick and turbid, as if multiple different voices were ringing simultaneously. The figure flickered on and off like a TV image with a poor signal.

This is so strange.

How come it's a bit like Valtore, the senior's shadow? A wild thought popped into Annan's mind.

[TN: A quick reminder that Sal refers to Senior Salvatore himself, while Vatore refers to the shadow.]

Facing this strange black human figure, Nolan took Eugene to stand up from the sofa. The old man respectfully put one of his hands on his chest and bowed quietly to the black figure.

After about two seconds, the black mud successfully morphed into a human form.

She looked short, only about 150 meters. She wasn't wearing anything, but only Her long satin-like hair draped down like a black waterfall behind Her. Her hair was seemingly alive, wriggling, and covered Her body completely.

The only accessory She had was the black crow mask on Her face.

“Long time no see, Annan!” Unlike her youthful appearance, the strange and magical young girl spoke in a bright and sharp but not so pleasant voice, “I almost forgot what kind of body I should use to greet you!

“Why did you come to Noah without notifying me?”

“Faceless Poet?” Annan whispered the name.

Not many people could make Nolan feel nervous just by showing up in the heavily guarded basement of Geraint's mansion.

Seeing Nolan's respectful expression now, Her identity was quite apparent.

But the problem was that Annan didn't know Her at all.

He had never seen Her before!

Strangely enough, the Faceless Poet was familiar with him.

Could it be that the one who became affiliated with this false deity was the past Annan?

## **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 359**

Delicious Wind Goose wore the standard leather armor of a city guard and wandered around the Noah Royal Capital.

He was now roaming and mapping the city in the name of “patrol duty”.

While mapping out the path, Old Goose was occupied with thoughts.

He had successfully reported the information given by Annan to Prince Philip.

The previously forfeited meads were delivered to Prince Philip too.

With that, he had completed the two missions assigned to him.

Not only did he complete the contract he promised with the consul of the chamber of commerce, but he also successfully used the information given by Annan to mislead the Third Prince and influenced the prince to alter the plans.

At the same time, he had acquired Prince Philip's trust too.

Or rather, a certain level of trust.

But in any case, a mere Bronze Rank Transcended could hardly prove useful to Philip.

Fortunately, Delicious Wind Goose's profession was [Swordmaster].

This was a swordsmanship school that could learn the sword skills of other professions and quickly improve themselves.

After learning about Delicious Wind Goose's abilities, Prince Philip gave pertinent suggestions for the Old Goose's future growing direction.

He had suggested Delicious Wind Goose pick up the faith in the Cup-holding Lady and advance into a Holy Grail Knight.

It was an advancement mixed in with priesthood, similar to the Silver Knight.

After learning how to use various weapons, the Goose realized that “the human's will” was the most potent weapon. By restraining his desires, he could obtain the pure power of the grail.

The “grail power” possessed by the Holy Grail knight was mighty even among all upright deities' knights.

Simply put, it was an additional “energy deposit mechanism”.

When the Holy Grail knight worshiped the Cup-holding Lady, he could choose one of his “attributes” as a “vessel”. This vessel could be changed once a day, after which the “Blood in the Cup” would be emptied, but it would not disappear overnight until the following blessing.

The attributes that could be altered included “strength”, “energy”, “focus”, “accuracy”, “vitality” and so on. It would work as long as it was the ability the host's body readily had.

Once selected, this blessing imposed on the attribute would be continuously consumed, just like how strength was consumed when raising dumbbells or how the focus was consumed when going through documents.

The consumed attribute would be stored.

Depending on the holy light engravings and the user's self-control, the proportion that could be stored varies. Generally speaking, it was about 70% to 200%.

In times of emergency, like physical strength was thoroughly exhausted, mental power to focus was lacking, or life was at stake, the user could utilize the “blood in the cup” to replenish himself.

The grail power could be used to enhance and reinvigorate the body.

However, it wasn't an overpowered ability, nor was the ability limited.

Instead, it was simple, stable, versatile, and powerful. That was what Delicious Wind Goose preferred.

The only constraint was that he would inevitably get the additional curse of “maintaining a pure body” when advancing.

However, if this condition was violated, it didn't clear off the hard-earned levels. Instead, the Goose would become a “Fallen Knight”.

He would lose the “grail power” but gain the “blood power”. It worked like the vampire: to replenish his physical strength and temporarily enhance his abilities by sucking the blood of others. However, this ability was much inferior to the grail power.

In other words, the grail power was “virgin” in nature.

Only those who had never been in intimate contact with the opposite gender could harness the grail power.

Delicious Wind Goose was certainly not a virgin.

A man like him could definitely get a girlfriend, given his excellent family background, good humor, high education level, and solid physique, coupled with the advantages of high emotional intelligence and good looks.

Although he was now a bald monk and “neckless” because of his fat, he was once a youth with lush hair and well-proportioned muscles.

However, the body the players used in the Mist Continent appeared to be “absolutely pure”.

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When he accepted Edict Wizard's lie test, Prince Philip asked the Edict Wizard to check on the other qualities of Delicious Wind Goose.

It appeared that Old Goose had killed less than ten people since birth, had never been in intimate contact with the opposite sex, rarely lied, took on little exercise, had never ingested poison, and had never been cursed.

After such a result came out, Prince Philip finally regarded him as part of his team.

The process seemed to be the “political review” of this world.

It recorded everything the reviewee had done, like an invisible list of “achievements”. Although Edict Wizard couldn't see this list directly, he could check on any of them and get a rough idea under Delicious Wind Goose's permission.

Delicious Wind Goose got the above evaluation in the end.

If not for the people he killed, he would still be in a pure state where he had never killed anyone.

Seeing his qualities, Prince Philip immediately recommended him to take in the faith of the Cup-holding Lady.

“Cup-holding Lady has mastered the whole realm of 'lust'. Abstinence is naturally part of it.” Prince Philip introduced enthusiastically, “The Cup-holding Lady likes people who are indulgent, but She is in favor of those who are abstinent.”

Through Prince Philip's narration, Delicious Wind Goose roughly understood the other notable features of this profession.

The Holy Grail knight was a profession that focused on the Will attribute.

In addition to the grail power, they also had the strange ability of “increasing their attributes by one point every time they successfully resist a negative state from a new source that uses Will as the ability check factor.” The attribute increment was capped at 40 points.

The negative status afflictions included charm, fear, confusion, lethargy, rage, and other mental states. Everyone could add a point to the Holy Grail Knight's attribute as long as the ability imposed was considered a “negative status”.

Conversely, if the Holy Grail Knight failed to resist the negative status, he would suffer a considerable temporary -2 debuff at the Will attribute. Worse still, this debuff was stackable.

The weakening effect was like a curse and would not regenerate naturally. The restoration could only occur through a ritual, atonement through Cup-holding Lady's priest, or simply purifying the curse via Mr. Ray's priest.

This ability made many of the Holy Grail Knights powerful but also made them vulnerable to premature death.

Apparently, the Cup-holding Lady encouraged the Holy Grail Knights not to practice abstinence blindly. Instead, She wanted her knights to proactively resist the outside world's temptation through willpower.

In other words, She tempted the knights to challenge themselves.

Delicious Wind Goose managed to see through the system.

This growth mechanism was a temptation to overcome “abstinence”.

Those tempted by it had simply fallen into a trap.

Those who played with fire would eventually get burned.

The Holy Grail Knights couldn't escape the control coming from the Blood Grail Church because of the need to atone.

In turn, the knights placed themselves under the power and control of others.

What was pure had once been controlled by what he desired. So the Holy Grail was grasped by the blood in it.

Thus, a conceptual cycle was formed.

“I'm feeling like the Tang Seng [1] right now.” Delicious Wind Goose complained.

If it weren't for his vigilance, he would have simply believed in the Cup-holding Lady.

After all, She was also an upright deity, and there should be no problem with Her origin.

It was just that She seemed to have a naughty side.

“She likes to test the people's willpower, encourages the people to use will in resisting the temptations, and enjoys people's succumbing to their desire.”

Isn't this an evil deity?

Delicious Wind Goose thought about it for a long time and finally decided.

“I still want to try it out.”

He wanted to see if his willpower, which he was proud of, could successfully resist this deity's prank.

This was also the “desire” that was not deeply looked into in his heart.

### **The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 360**

Just when Delicious Wind Goose made up his mind. He felt something abnormal as if he was stuck in a bullet time event [1].

Delicious Wind Goose noticed his surrounding time and space quickly grew stagnant. However, no one seemed to notice it at all. The passersby didn't seem to react to the situation.

It felt just like the flow of time was slowed down until it paused.

The next instant, after time was utterly stopped, Delicious Wind Goose suddenly regained the ability to move.

Old Goose used all his strength to break free of restraints previously, but it didn't work.

However, after the surrounding world returned to normal, Delicious Wind Goose couldn't hold back his strength, so he immediately staggered and fell forward.

But before he fell, he felt someone grabbing onto his shoulders, pulling him back with ease.

“I'm so sorry, brother.” What sounded behind him was a gentle and elegant female voice, “I've caused you a little trouble.”

Delicious Wind Goose turned around, only to realize that there was another person who stood silently behind him.

However...

Is that really a human?

She had silver-white hair that hung down to the waist. There were silver dragon horns decorated with dark blue spiral patterns, looking like a screw; the horns protruded upward like lightning. Silver dragon scales were faintly visible on the collarbone, under the ears, and on the temples.

Most importantly, Her resemblance to Annan came close to 70% at the very least.

She appeared to be a seventeen years old art student, but there was a mature air around her. Her breasts were a size or two bigger than Sister Hyphen's artificially oversized ones through character customization.

Is she Annan's sister?

It seems I have heard of Annan having a sister.

Such a thought popped into Delicious Wind Goose's mind at the first moment.

Delicious Wind Goose felt his mind gradually become stagnant.

His mind was filled with the breathtaking beauty of the girl in front of him.

A “beauty” at the conceptual level.

She was so pretty that it was almost illusory.

She had a face similar to Annan, whose appearance was worthy of praise. However, the beauty became shocking when it came to the girl in front of him.

Delicious Wind Goose was well-aware that “beauty” differed in different eras.

In some eras, slender and weak girls were beautiful; in another era, people might prefer a more healthy and fit woman.

Some civilizations regarded beard as beauty, some cultures believed long hair as beauty, and some societies considered bald as beauty. Under different living conditions and social environments, people's definitions of “beauty” would be different.

In other words, “beauty” was the “classification” of the opposite sex or the same sex by the subconscious in human genes that was more conducive to the current living environment.

In a world where food was generally scarce, people who could gain weight were deemed more beautiful; in a society where people at the bottom would consume large amounts of high-calorie food, people had begun to pursue a well-proportioned body shape.

Delicious Wind Goose, immersed in the illusion of “beauty”, felt the girl in front of him pretty by all standards.

A monster that existed only in “fantasy”.

It was precisely because of “She being beautiful” that Annan, who was similar to Her, was regarded as nice-looking.

The girl was by no means a human.

But I can't really think.

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Even my thinking has gradually become sluggish.

The feeling of being stuck in this halted time and space was broken when the girl spoke again.

Although the girl's voice was pleasant, it was at the level common in this world.

But the moment She spoke, the “balance of beauty” was broken.

It was as if Her silent state was Her true perfect form.

Delicious Wind Goose regained his sanity the moment She spoke.

The girl smiled and said, "I'm really sorry. Your expression just now was so fascinating. I couldn't hold back for a while, so I drew a picture for you. Do you want to buy this picture? I can give you a 50% discount."

Her expression was mixed with vigilance and contempt but self-discipline and indulgence simultaneously. She looked complacent and arrogant but modest and prudence at the same time, seemingly striking the unity of contradiction and opposition.

"I can see from your steps that you're a self-disciplined knight who is trying to use his own will to resist temptation. Let me guess, are you going to pick up the faith in the Cup-holding Lady?" The girl, who was at least 70% similar to Annan, asked with interest.

Hearing the word "painting", Delicious Wind Goose realized something.

Only then could he withdraw his gaze from the girl's face.

After looking closely, he realized the girl was indeed carrying a drawing board behind Her.

Although it was only a drawing board, it felt inexplicably like a shield.

Ten pens of different sizes and models were hung on the belt on Her waist. In addition to the four pens caught between Her right fingers and the three pens caught between Her left fingers, She had a total of seventeen pens, all of which were like sharp swords.

She seemed to be both a painter and a warrior.

"Are you the Paper Princess?" Delicious Wind Goose remembered the deitydess he had seen in the newspaper a few days ago.

Although She wasn't an upright deity, She was the subordinate deity of the Elegant Elder.

This explained the bullet time and the power of Her appearance to break the Goose's will.

Old Goose respectfully looked at the ground and asked.

It wasn't flattery.

It was just that he was afraid of the appearance of the Paper Princess and did not dare to look directly at the "beauty" close to the Truth.

Delicious Wind Goose even doubted his previous decision.

Is the tenacity of standing up and regaining former glory after a considerable setback such a treasure in this world?

The Paper Princess noticed that Delicious Wind Goose averted his eyes but was not annoyed.

"Oops...Did you see me in the newspaper?" The Deity of Beauty just smiled and put the seven pens back into the pen pocket at Her waist.

She wore a pure white robe that was unadorned. There were four white belts of different thicknesses and materials on the waist. Those pens of hers all hang on the various belts.

But that didn't make her look simple.

Instead, no touch-ups could ruin the equilibrium of beauty in the Paper Princess.

Perhaps only the Elegant Elder himself could design the dress for her.

Facing the words of the Paper Princess, Delicious Wind Goose thought of the Paper Princess's portrait painted by "the famous painter Nigel Elliott".

At that time, he couldn't help but sigh, "The Paper Princess was so beautiful".

But now, Delicious Wind Goose has only one thought.

Did he paint it properly?