

Righteous Ps 361

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 361

“He draws terribly.” Delicious Wind Goose commented without hesitation.

Before seeing the Paper Princess in person, Delicious Wind Goose thought highly of that painter.

He could even grasp a hint of magic from the portrait. By just admiring the face and figure of the Paper Princess, Delicious Wind Goose could stare at the portrait for a long time.

Delicious Wind Goose believed that the newspaper's editor must think so too. That was why it was put on the front page of the newspaper.

However, Delicious Wind Goose finally realized the truth when he saw the Paper Princess with his own eyes.

It turned out that copying the Paper Princess's appearance already made it a top-notch “magic painting”. Even Delicious Wind Goose's willpower was utterly defenseless against the real Her.

For some unknown reason, the passers-by around them seemed unable to see him and the Paper Princess. They just walked on the road as usual.

The so-called “famous painter” Nigel Elliott painted the Paper Princess's portrait “like an ordinary person”.

It might be weird to say that.

Although the drawing struck about 90% similarity to Her appearance, the indescribable beauty and the essence of Her being “the anchor of beauty” were not shown at all.

Not only the Transcended Delicious Wind Goose, but even ordinary people also would never be fascinated by this painting.

It felt like Her quality was beyond “undermined” at this point, like those merchants who sold an inferior product which they would soak the product in water to make it seem bigger in size.

“He had tried his best.” The Paper Princess just gave a gentle chuckle. While feeling Her drawing board with Her backhand from behind, She explained, “He is not a Transcended, and he accidentally saw my face. When he regained consciousness, I had already left.

“His image is recreated with a brief 'impression' of me. I have also seen his paintings, and they are quite good. His observation skills are also commendable. After all, he restored the vague impression of me through a short glance. This skill alone is enough to show that his talent is pretty good.”

The Paper Princess defended the painter quite seriously.

Although the painter was not here and could not hear this conversation, the Paper Princess didn't scold or criticize the painter either.

Delicious Wind Goose suddenly sensed something vaguely.

That seemed to be “love”.

Of course, it was not directed at the painter but the love of all painters.

—The Paper Princess is fond of painters.

Is that why She is called the Paper Princess?

For some reason, Delicious Wind Goose was reluctant to call the deity “She”.

“Let's forget about that. Take a look at your portrait.” The Paper Princess took out a painting.

She smiled and handed the painting to Delicious Wind Goose.

What's the worth of my appearance? I've seen too much of myself in the mirror. Delicious Wind Goose complained in his heart.

But he was obedient, took over the painting, and politely unfolded the scrolled artwork.

After he saw the painting clearly, he was stunned.

It was indeed his appearance. Delicious Wind Goose recognized it at a glance.

But other than that, everything else was different.

He wore a city guard uniform, but the Paper Princess painted it into a worn but clean red monk robe. He stepped on the snow barefoot, with scars on his feet.

His eyebrows were dyed with white frost marks, and the eyebrows were deeply locked, revealing endless anguish and hesitation. His back was tall and straight; his shoulders were firm and broad. There were subtle scars and abrasions on the top of his head. His expression was silent, and his eyes were determined.

His left arm hung inside the monk's robe, and his clenched fist showed his troubled state and wavering in his heart. On his right hand was a handful of dark red blood which he placed in front of his mouth, but he did not drink it.

He stared at the rippling pool of blood in his hands, lost in memories and contemplation.

Behind him was the scene of sunset and snow. Shadows hit his profile, framing his chin.

The scene was illusory.

Delicious Wind Goose looked at this “self” and could even vaguely feel “what he was thinking” as if he was the monk of the Cup-holding Lady,

What kind of art is this? Delicious Wind Goose was greatly shaken.

His first reaction was to take a screenshot first.

“How much do I have to pay if I want to buy it?” Then, he asked hesitantly, “Are my feelings so intense?”

“In my rulebook, I give as I pleased. But you only get one chance.” The Paper Princess said softly, “I won't tell the buyer how much each painting is worth. I'll only sell you if you give more than it's worth. But if you can't, I'm not going to take your money. Instead, I'll give you a free souvenir worth the price you paid earlier.”

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“As I said, I'll give you a 50% discount. You can buy it at half its value, and I'll sell it. Right now, the painting doesn't have a name. I'll give you another 50% discount if you can name it with my approval.

“As for your sentiments here, it's not exaggerated.

“This is a proper fiction. I will extract, abstract, and purify this conflict of emotion, desire, and will to better display the beauty I have seen. Here's the outcome. It is the crystallization of your desire and will. If you look at this painting and meditate daily, your willpower will also be improved by feeling this anguish.”

The Paper Princess showed an elegant smile and said calmly, “The so-called painter is a profession that captures the ubiquitous 'beauty' in life and then refines and manifests it.

“A work should have a life, at least that's my opinion.”

“You're an amazing painter.” Delicious Wind Goose exclaimed sincerely.

This was his first face-to-face conversation with the deity of this world.

The Paper Princess' airy presence deeply impressed him.

If it weren't for his complete ignorance of painting, he would be devoted to the Paper Princess by now.

Are the deities of this world such charismatic beings? Delicious Wind Goose thought of the Rotten Man and Silver Sire he had encountered previously.

Needless to say, the Silver Sire had excellent quality too.

Even the Rotten Man who was an enemy and a “mob creep”, Delicious Wind Goose felt the grace, calmness, and amiableness exuding from Him despite being unable to look directly at Him given the tremendous pressure.

“But I don't have any money.” Delicious Wind Goose said helplessly, “Can I buy on credit? Or exchange it for an item of equivalent value?”

“I don't accept any delayed payment, but barter is allowed. Under the witness of Silver Sire, I will consider the item on its expected value fairly.”

The Paper Princess said with a smile while urging, “Let's name it first.”

“I can't think of a good name.” Delicious Wind Goose was silent for a long time but answered honestly, “All I can give is this—”

He spoke and patted his belt.

There were ten metal bottles the size of lighters.

“Ten bottles of Demon Blood...” The Paper Princess frowned slightly as if She could see through Delicious Wind Goose.

She thought for a while, then asked again, “Why don't you try to come up with a name first?”

Delicious Wind Goose captured a clue as soon as she said these words.

The value of ten bottles of Demon Blood should be worth more than 25% of this painting but less than 50%. Of course, it was confusing for Goose to calculate it.

The purchase price of Demon Blood was less than 10 pounds, but a bottle of Demon Blood could be sold for 80 pounds in the capital; these ten bottles were given to Delicious Wind Goose as a deduction of pay at the value of 300 pounds.

But in any case, offering a higher price was still a good move.

At the very least, Old Goose could get a gift of equivalent value if he failed to purchase the painting.

Rationally speaking, it was a more rational choice to exchange for a gift rather than a painting of no use.

However, Delicious Wind Goose still wanted to give it a try.

“[The Monk Before the Cliff]. What do you think about this name?” He frowned at the painting, pondered for a long time, and then asked tentatively.

The Paper Princess tilted Her head and thought for a while.

“If someone else gave the painting that title, I wouldn't sell it.” She narrowed Her eyes, showing a cute smile that reminded Delicious Wind Goose of Annan, and laughed softly, “But since you named, the name itself is another level of contradiction. From this point of view, the value of the painting has been enhanced.

“In the case of equivalent conversion, I will accept the gift you gave,” said the Paper Princess. She reached out to Delicious Wind Goose's belt.

At the next moment, Delicious Wind Goose felt the bottles inside of his belt suddenly all disappeared.

“I'm leaving, little brother. We may meet again depending on our fate.” The Paper Princess' voice sounded.

Her figure disappeared as if everything that happened was a dream.

The moment Delicious Wind Goose's eyes left the Paper Princess, he noticed that his memory of the Paper Princess's appearance in his mind quickly faded. Not a single bit of it remained in the blink of an eye.

This may be the “defense mechanism” the brain trying to relieve Goose of the deity's pressure for self-protection.

Delicious Wind Goose was silent. Instead, he carefully rolled the painting into a scroll.

The passers-by around also cast curious glances at Delicious Wind Goose, who was wearing a city guard uniform and holding a painting s.

croll

I should stop patrolling first.

It's my priority to find Yokai Sensei to get his help in hiding this painting.

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The Faceless Poet froze slightly because Annan's attitude toward Her seemed distant and indifferent.

Then, She quickly realized something.

The girl with the crow mask blurted, "Have you lost your memory already?"

"Why do you say that?" Annan raised his eyebrow.

Pretending to be as casual as possible, Annan asked casually.

However, he did notice a particular word usage — [already].

As if the Faceless Poet wasn't surprised or sad that he didn't remember Her, She didn't expect it to happen at this time.

If my conjecture is correct...

Then, this is the evidence for "another possibility" of me transmigrating into this world.

Maybe... I didn't arrive at the beach at Freezing Water Port immediately after transmigration.

I have three pieces of evidence to prove that for now.

In "Nightmare: White Tower", Maria accidentally mentioned that her younger brother had a warm personality, but the Austere-Winter family was born with a Winter Heart and could not feel happiness;

In "Nightmare: The Great Hunt", Annan, who was young in the past, made a similar choice to himself;

Most importantly, the "Book of Truth" only emerged gradually after a new concept was born.

The Silver Sire would not be born before "trading" emerged in civilization. Similarly, the Red Knight would not be born before "wars" happened. That was because the Book of Truth, which made them become deities, had not yet appeared at that time.

The time when the Book of Truth fragments spawned in Don Juan was much earlier than when Annan woke up.

If Annan came to this world much earlier, and he lost his memory in this world because of something, it would explain many things.

But then, another problem arose.

Five years ago, the Man in the Mirror held a taboo ritual and risked putting himself to death and then reborn as a deity because there was no new, blank Book of Truth at that time.

If the Book of Truth appeared earlier than "Nightmare: White Tower", then the Man in the Mirror seemed to have no reason to take the risk.

In the face of Annan's probing question, the Faceless Poet thought silently.

"I can't tell you." Contrary to Annan's expectations, the Faceless Poet finally replied, "It's your own decision."

"My own decision?" This unexpected answer surprised Annan.

No, wait... Annan suddenly noticed something.

He suddenly recalled another event. The last time he saw Benjamin was when he had learned from Benjamin that "the Leviathan's air" remained around him.

"Leviathan" was one of the three giant monsters raised by the Mysterious Lady.

Its status should be equivalent to the highest level of "envoy".

If this name was the same thing as the "Leviathan" on Earth that Annan knew, it should be a gigantic undersea female beast that resided on the bottom of the sea. The name "Leviathan" itself had the meaning of "crevice" and "vortex".

It might not be sensible to determine the monster's identity through its name with the possibility of committing a fallacy.

But considering the terrain where he landed, Annan could tentatively believe that the "Leviathan" of this world did indeed live in the sea.

So, what if the previous Annan was prepared for his "amnesia"?

According to Annan's typical behavior, him appearing at Freezing Water Port should be a hint. Even if he lost his memory, there was no need to come to the Noah Kingdom and the Freezing Water Port. The Rotten Man had left, and the Old Grandmother was about to wake up. Coupled with Maria's protection, returning to the Austere-Winter was a more convenient option.

Since Leviathan could send him to the Freezing Water Port, the Leviathan should also be able to send him back to Austere-Winter.

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Unless the Freezing Water Port carried a special meaning.

Annan quickly thought of something.

The unique feature of the Freezing Water Port was the only "Nightmare: Gallery".

The unique mechanism of "reenactment" in the gallery nightmare rendered the challenger losing his memory once he failed.

The reason for this mechanism was that the "gallery" was not a complete past event.

The essence of the nightmare was the projection of the dream world into reality with the soul as the cornerstone.

What was special about the gallery was that the soul that made up this nightmare, Elle, didn't die under the Venerated Skeleton's protection.

Elle could still gain new memories of what happened afterward. What happened after everyone else entered the nightmare was still a “reality in progress” to her.

Unlike other nightmares, it was a “story that happened in the past”.

In other words...

“Is it because of the enemy's attack?” Annan asked tentatively.

If he suffered amnesia, there was only one possibility for the former self and the current self to not know the truth.

Annan suddenly had the need to voluntarily discard a large number of memories. At the same time, those were crucial memories that couldn't be browsed and viewed by the Soul Snatch Wizards, so he could only opt for “factory reset”.

For example, the memory could be contaminated by something; or to achieve a particular purpose and meet a specific condition, he must forget something and return to the blank slate.

Of course, it was also possible that Annan was attacked or severely injured, and amnesia was the only way to survive.

Facing Annan's question, the Faceless Poet couldn't help but let out some sharp laughter, “That's impossible, Annan.

“You may have forgotten a lot. Let me reveal some information for the time being so that you can rest assured.

“In the Noah Kingdom, there is the Silver Sire and me. There are also two honorary deitydesses in the Underground Falteration, the Old Grandmother in the Austere-Winter, the Paper Princess in the United Kingdom, the Father Stone, the Duo-Songwriter, and three upright deities in the Papal Kingdom. If the enemy you are talking about is the Rotten Man, he is not quite worthy.

“He's too young. He doesn't even know your value to this world.”

“What's the value in me then?” Annan asked in confusion.

Judging from what the Faceless Poet uttered, it seemed like he had communicated with many upright deities.

But after hearing this, the girl wearing the crow mask paused, then shook Her head decisively, “I am the Deity of Secrets.”

“Then, can you just mention when...”

“I refuse~no~” Before Annan could finish speaking, the Faceless Poet folded Her hands in front of Her and sang an out-of-tune song loudly, overshadowing Annan's voice and forcibly interrupting Annan's words.

She looked at Annan's distressed look and gave a weird chuckle, “I was wondering why the Paper Princess suddenly came to Noah. She turns out to be looking for you. So when you want to see Her,

leave this place and head to the streets. The Paper Princess can smell you, so you don't need to go to Her.”

“But even if you say so...” I still have no memories of the Paper Princess either.

“Hahahaha, don't be like this, Annan. Forgetting is not a bad thing. Knowledge has a weight to it, and the more powerful the knowledge, the heavier it is. Unfortunately, you don't have the awareness or the capability to carry the knowledge forward.”

“Is Silver Rank not enough either?”

“Stop probing me. I won't say anything. The same is true for the two ladies. But if you are lucky enough to meet Miss Lucky, She might reveal a couple more words.”

The petite girl said with a smile. Then, Her body gradually melted into black mud again, and her voice slowly blurred, “Since it is not the time to catch up, I will head off first.

“The Noah Kingdom is not a good and safe place at this time. But since you chose to come here, it should be the Lady's plan.

“The Lady taught us that secrets lose their magic if they are told. We should let nature take its course.”

The black mud made a shrill, damp sound, laughing and blending into the ground, “Hey, I'll watch over you nicely, and I will record all of this properly!”

The Righteous Player(s) C363– The Former Annan

Chapter 363: The Former Annan

It took half a minute for the Faceless Poet to disappear completely.

The minor tremor that filled the air and gave off a tingling sensation gradually dissipated.

Even after the sensation dissipated entirely, Annan still felt a throbbing sensation on his skin.

It felt like the auditory hallucinations when he entered a quiet room after being exposed to noises for a long time.

At the same time, it felt like the shudders entering a warm room after exposure to the cold wind. The chill did not retain at skin level but seeped deep into the muscle, blood, and bone.

Such a sensation was often referred to as [Remains].

That was the origin and meaning of those [Influence].

Using a large-scale Transcended power would leave traces in this world and spawn the corresponding Influence. That was also one of the prices of utilizing the Transcended power. Like Annan's only chaos spell at the moment. He would be granted an Influence just by using it.

Like a groove carved into the bottom of a river with a stone, although it would gradually dissipate over time, it would continue to affect the surrounding world until it dissipated.

Similarly, those who hold the [Truth] were manifestations of concepts.

Their existence would alienate a specific range of the world around them via Their [Truth]. This kind of Influence on the soul level could only be felt by Transcended, who had a keen intuition and specialized in perception.

The older and more powerful the deities were, the more they could restrain their influence on the outside world; the newer deities and powerful beings who hadn't grasped the truth would destroy the surrounding.

This was precisely why the abnormal feeling inflicted upon Annan when the Faceless Poet appeared was weaker than the Venerated Skeleton. If she dedicated her attention, those traces would be hidden completely. Similar to the Silver Sire's presence, no one on the street would be able to perceive the deities.

Things like "Leviathan's remains" would still exist on the beach long after she was gone.

Unfortunately, there was a problem here.

Annan would generate [Influence] as well.

He remembered it clearly.

When he saw Salvatore's magic mirror that could reveal his soul's essence, he was directly influenced by observing his soul.

Additionally, it was an Advanced Influence.

Had Annan's soul already produced a certain degree of alienation?

But Annan's soul did not sublimate yet.

It was not just a matter of not having a vessel.

Annan's level was so low at the beginning. When he advanced to the Silver Rank, he removed many impurities in his body.

Even if Annan were in his second life, he would not have "reset all his stats and skill points".

Consider what the Faceless Poet said, "Knowledge has weight" and "You don't have to carry weight yet".

Could it be that I ventured on the ritualist path in my first life? Such thoughts popped into Annan's mind.

If that were the case, then it would have explained everything.

Vasily Manning mentioned to Annan that thirteen-year-old Annan had left Austere-Winter alone a year before the Rotten Man attacked. Very few people knew about this.

Since Annan was so weak and did not have a bodyguard, how could the Grand Duke rest assured to have Annan leave the Austere-Winter Dukedom alone?

Unless Annan was not alone at all.

It was true that there were "no people" around him, but there was a deity.

The power of ritualists came from Transcended knowledge. Annan, as the successor of the Austere-Winter, was more suitable for learning this kind of knowledge than the Manning brothers. At the same time, Annan was also a transmigrator. He might have matured earlier than others. At thirteen, he gained the ability to protect himself and met many deities through the ritual. This narration was entirely possible.

That was why Annan could hold the "Ritual: Prophetic Fragment" previously, even with the shortage of materials, and completed a small part without side effects. At that time, he managed to catch a glimpse of the future.

The reason being Annan was a ritualist who had lost his memory!

Although he lost his memory about these rituals as if he had forgotten the relevant expertise, his affinity and proficiency with ritual were still there!

"So that's the case..." Annan muttered.

Old Nolan smiled and walked to Annan, "Do you have any questions now?"

Seeing his reaction, Annan raised an eyebrow and asked rhetorically, "So, you have long guessed that I lost my memory?"

This ordinary-looking old man did not withdraw his kind and gentle smile.

"It was just speculation. I wasn't sure of it previously.

"You said you would marry Kafni when you grow up when you were young. Although I was not there at the time, I heard my eldest son say it."

For real? Annan hesitated for a while.

But after thinking about it carefully, it appeared that this was indeed what he would say.

In the current situation, he role-played a handsome fourteen-year-old youth who was fanatical about earning players' rapport. If he were to role-play a nine-year-old child, Annan would capitalize on his age and identity to get benefits.

Relying on the innocent standpoint of "children's words carried no harm", he would capitalize on it to earn more rapport points and get a wife with a good appearance, status, and personality. That was indeed something that Annan would do.

If that were the case, it would explain Kafni's attitude towards him.

It seems I have to adjust my attitude toward Kafni.

Although I don't remember it now, this is what I did in the past.

Now, of course, I need to take responsibility for it.

Not to mention Kafni is cute.

But...

Annan threw a side glance at the Old Crow.

Although he did not hold any opinion on the Geraint family, their attitude in expressing that "I'm going to use you later on" still made Annan feel a little awkward.

Perhaps this was one of the aftermaths of losing the fourteen years of memory as a nobility.

The former Annan must have adapted to the situation that people would be used anytime and anywhere.

"Did you invite the Faceless Poet over?"

"No, that's not the case." The old man immediately defended, "She came here after learning that you had come to Noah's capital. Before that, I didn't know that you and the Faceless Poet knew each other.

"Of course, I don't even know that you are associated with many true deities."

In the name of Faceless Poet, I will keep this a secret. Nolan promised Annan so.

Eugene Geraint, on the side, also swore an oath to the Faceless Poet.

"Then, I would like to ask," Annan thought for a long time before asking, "How much do you know about 'Nicholas Flamel'?"

"The one from the Denizoya Kingdom?" Old Crow replied flatly, "His actions have been under our surveillance. This includes his traveling route, transactions with everyone, apprentices and assistants, and experiments.

"He tried to avoid our surveillance. But he soon discovered that the Noah Kingdom is filled with our 'eyes', and he couldn't even do that as a [Great Sage]."

"No, I mean... Do you know anything about what he did?" Annan added.

Nolan and Eugene looked at each other.

Eugene took the conversation over and asked, "Is it because he was the Jade Tower Master?"

"No, he betrayed all humanity, which nearly caused the Epoch Disaster." Annan took a closer look at the expressions of the two and suddenly smiled. "It seems that the Crow isn't all-knowing."

No wonder he was able to stay in the capital without any worries.

His Majesty the King did not know about Nicholas' story.

Although there was no stone hammer yet, they should still be wary.

Feeling Annan's harmless ridicule, Nolan smiled helplessly, "We only know what we know."

As he spoke, Eugene took a bottle of wine from the top of the wine cabinet.

The old man got up and poured Annan a glass of wine himself.

This was a wine that was green as jade. The color made it appear poisonous, but it had no taste.

“This is the 'Gift of Spring', one of the gifts of the Bone Burying Church. It's for hospitalization but not the price of intelligence.”

Nolan gave a simple explanation and then said seriously, “In addition to selling intelligence, we are also interested in acquiring intelligence.

“Please explain in detail, Your Highness. The price is negotiable.”

The Righteous Player(s) C364: The Non-existent Dice

Chapter 364: The Non-existent Dice

“The betrayer of humanity...” After Eugene sent Annan away, Nolan sat alone in the basement seat, poured himself a glass of wine, and murmured while staring at it.

His expression was complicated.

No wonder he didn't get information about Nicholas.

Unlike the carefree attitude he had shown, Nolan was suspicious of Nicholas long before Annan mentioned it — even before Don Juan went to the Freezing Water Port.

Nicholas's background was a blank slate.

Nolan confirmed it through various means.

The Old Crow didn't know why Nicholas didn't die, didn't know why he came here and didn't know how he crossed the border. He didn't even know what he possessed and was his strength stronger or weaker than before.

But the Old Crow was sure about one thing.

This man was indeed Nicholas, who “died” more than a hundred years ago.

After comparing with the information Annan provided, he had resolved many of the previous confusions:

Nicholas was a Gold Rank wizard, notably a wizard who specialized in the Alteration School. Why were there no clues on his previous inventions, research results, and alteration products?

Even the Silver Rank Alteration Wizard would leave behind great inventions that would pass down for decades, not to mention Nicholas was at Gold Rank.

Moreover, those without a “strong desire” that was determined and firm would not be able to “dye” their soul.

Embarking on the path of transcendence required almost nothing. All that was needed was good wit and adaptability, to successfully clear at least one nightmare and to have a guide willing to be a secret keeper.

As for the advancement into the Silver Rank, the challenger had to accumulate enough power. For the final step of advancement, if the soul erosion by the curse was overboard, the part of “coughing out impurities” might even be fatal.

The benchmark that determined life and death was 65% soul purity.

If more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of the soul were already corrupted by the curse, the remaining power would no longer be enough to support the soul.

Thus, the soul would collapse directly and couldn't even support the independent nightmare running. It would only merge into the nightmare that the challenger had recently purified.

As long as the erosion rate was higher than 25%, there would be a period of vulnerability and weakness after the rank advancement. Then, it would take a few days for the recovery period to officially obtain the “pure power” of the Silver Rank — the so-called “third developmental period”.

In this world, the transcendent scholars considered the process from the birth of babies to when they grow up to four or five years old, being able to run, eat, drink, and learn to speak, as the “first developmental period”. They called it “the blossoming of the mind”.

The period from twelve to seventeen was considered the “second developmental period”, termed as “the blossoming of the physique”.

The third developmental stage was “the blossoming of the soul”.

Just like the mental development of an infant to a young child and the physical maturity of a child to a young teen — after advancing into the Silver Rank, the soul had just matured. Everything involving the soul's Transcended power began at this stage.

If the soul was not pure enough, it was impossible to pass this advancement stage safely.

For the advancement into the Gold Rank, the soul rank of “dyeing”, the mortality rate of advancement ritual was as high as 15%.

Although it was less than 20%, it was actually a high mortality rate. As a matter of fact, the advancement ritual could only be done once, which the challenger could not afford to fail. Thus, they would be well-prepared with confidence before committing to it.

What stood in the way of this benchmark was “desire”, or rather “obsession”.

The source of the “hue” of the Dyed Rank was the challenger's desire. The direction of advancement must be the same as the desire. If the desire were to obtain a perfect body, the challenger would not smoothly advance into the Gold Rank in the path of Alteration Wizard; if he desired true wisdom, he could not utilize the Berserker profession to attain the advancement.

That was the true essence behind the “profession”.

The desire itself was ambiguous. Even a true warrior, who desired to die in battle and desired battle and glory, had moments of romance entangled in his mind.

The purpose of “profession” was to have an “adobe” with a rough idea.

Transcended had to translate the right desire into it, temper it, and refine it.

In the process of advancement, the burning fuel was one's obsession.

This was the literal process of “forging”.

It was impossible to smelt iron in an ordinary oven. To burn the soul and extract the element, it was necessary to forge a more advanced forge.

As the Cup-holding Lady said, “Human desire is the foundation that never changes.” From ancient times to the present, from the fall of the deities to the fights in the streets, there must be the shadow of “desire” in any event.

Only the furnace of desire could purify one's soul through burning.

If the obsession were exhausted before the advancement was completed, the challenger would become an empty shell that loses its sentience.

Such an empty shell was a precious and rare Transcended material.

It was often termed as the “Pupa of Death”, or the “Pupa of Human Face” — like a butterfly that didn't break out of its cocoon in the end.

The insect that lost its body and identity could not be called a butterfly. It was in an intermediate state between a pupa and a complete metamorphosis.

The death pupa could replace any living being as a sacrifice in any ritual because of its chaotic nature. It was a good substitute even for the ritual that needed the sacrifice of a Gold Rank Transcended; even a ritual that required a specific name or a specific person could utilize the pupa as a substitute.

Each “pupa” could replace a person.

Therefore, it was also the best material for offsetting the curse.

It looked like a vegetative person, but neither the soul nor the flesh was damaged. It even had some power belonging to the Gold Rank, which allowed it to survive without food and water.

But that was merely basic survival.

Those who failed to advance into the Gold Rank would not have any desire as if they were alienated from this world.

They would take no further action, including listening, speaking, sitting, walking, eating and drinking, sleeping and entertainment, and even the instinctive drive of self-protection was gone. Even when someone poked the person's pupil with a needle, the victim would not give any reaction.

Although the body and soul still existed objectively in a healthy state, it was no different from being dead.

Nolan knew from the very beginning that Nicholas definitely had a strong “desire”.

The Gold Rank Transcended would not simply act at will. Instead, their every move was related to their obsession.

Nicholas was the only “Great Sage” in the world. He who had inherited all the pursuits of ancient alchemists would only aim for the Sage's Stone.

He had even completed the Sage's Stone.

So what more could he desire?

"I should have thought of it earlier." Nolan sighed.

What would an alchemist who mastered the Sage's Stone want?

There was only one answer.

He wanted to be the Omniscience Creator.

For a creator, the "old world" was no longer needed.

He had enough power to create a world from scratch... a world that only belonged to him.

All he needed was time and resources.

It turned out that was why Nicholas' information was utterly wiped out.

"That's the so-called 'more perfect form of human beings.'" A sharp, hoarse voice sounded in the basement.

Nolan's shadow suddenly turned into substantial black mud, surging up beside him.

A hand that formed via the black mud maliciously lifted Old Nolan's wine glass and poured it into the shadows.

Then, the head of a young man with a similar appearance to Nolan, but only in his twenties, emerged from Old Nolan's ear.

The wild and malicious smile on His face was unabashed, "What do you think, Nolan?"

"Faceless Poet." Nolan didn't get up. He still sat on the sofa, lowered his head, and greeted respectfully, "I knew you didn't leave."

Of course, he just lied.

Or rather, it was his act of keeping secrets.

After all, he was not the cardinal of Faceless Poet, but the pope of Faceless Poet.

"I think he's pitiful." Old Nolan sighed, looked at the wine, and said calmly.

"What kind of experience made him decide to create a so-called 'advanced species' that 'will not betray or be betrayed' and 'there is no misunderstanding'? What kind of tangled and complicated thoughts will make them 'engage in reproductive isolation [1]'?"

"The demi-deity who can realize the creation of life. How can everything be decided by throwing dice?"

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()x8-10 minutes

“Just send me here.” Annan followed Eugene to the south entrance and stopped. He nodded politely to the ordinary-looking but inexplicably credible young man, “I’ll stroll around. The Paper Princess should be able to find me.”

“Would that be fine? You’re still holding our payment. It may not be safe for you to be here by yourself. After all, the Paper Princess won’t find you right away.”

Eugene Geraint looked at Annan with some worry, “If I’m not mistaken, you haven’t been to the capital, right? There are many secrets and taboos here. Not to mention Austerian, even the overseas Noah people wouldn’t know about them when they come back.

“For example, our Geraint mansion is so big and so luxuriously decorated because our home is directly connected to the palace.”

“Directly connected?” Annan exclaimed.

“Yes.” The ordinary-looking young man replied.

“Do you remember that fountain?”

“The one with a lot of statues?”

“Yes,” Eugene nodded, “You should have noticed that there are many people who are not from the Geraint family because this is not the back garden of the Geraint family.

“If you go around the fountain and continue to the north, it will be the palace’s back garden.”

Eugene replied, “Did you notice the guards?”

“Those are not the guards of the count’s house. They’re the defense units composed of the Noah’s guards and secret troops.”

No wonder. Annan suddenly realized.

He was a little baffled at first. Why were there so many people in a mere count’s mansion? The wall was at the caliber of a city wall, with many patrols on the stairs. At the same time, there were watchtowers and patrols on rooftops.

Even the king’s palace was incomparable to that.

Annan was a little hesitant at the time.

After seeing the mirror gallery inside the count’s mansion, he even had the feeling that “Sir, are you going to rebel against the king?”

It seemed it was not the Old Crow’s work.

The gorgeous gallery of mirrors, massive fountain, and those stone corridors of Noah’s great heroes...

It seemed the count’s mansion was originally part of the royal palace.

From this point of view, the political status of the Crow family might be different from what Annan thought at the beginning.

They didn't seem to need Kafni as a bargaining chip to increase their influence.

Annan glanced at Eugene.

His appearance was not outstanding at all and ordinary by the standards of aristocrats, and he would blend in immediately once he joined the crowd. However, he was pretty smart.

Annan didn't say anything, and Eugene immediately realized what Annan was wary of — they made a deal. He didn't want the Crow family to use his identity to increase their influence and also increase their prestige in front of the king.

So Eugene brought Annan for a stroll, hinting that the Geraint family's political status was unique. They did not need Annan's influence.

He was indeed the most trusted son of Old Crow.

It was highly possible for the Geraint family to pass on the secret intelligence agency “One-Eyed Crow” to him in the future.

Thus, Annan immediately changed the subject and did not continue talking about the previous incident.

“The back garden of the palace? Is it the one blessed by the Silver Sire's pope?”

“Yes. Oh, have you heard of that?” Eugene was a little surprised.

Annan smiled and replied ambiguously, “I have some memory of it.”

In actual fact, I have forgotten everything.

“But I don't know if I remember correctly. The flower is of the rose family. The petals are almost transparent and pure white like jade, and the branches and leaves are the color of violets. They're so real and beautiful.”

“Ah, you are talking about the Sacred Silver Flower Field. The blessing comes from this generation of pope.” Eugene answered quickly.

“This generation?” Annan noticed his usage of words.

Eugene nodded, “Actually, every generation of the pope will bless something in the palace. This is also a tradition. In fact, almost all flower fields have been blessed by the popes. However, since there are different popes, the effects are different. Many flower fields are not ornamental, but used as magical materials.”

“The Sacred Silver Flower Field is not the closest to us but closest to the palace. The closest flower field to here is the Crystal Lake Flower Field. I can take you to see it next time.”

“Next time then.” Annan smiled.

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The so-called “next time” was a polite way of saying, “if you don't tell me, I won't take you there”.

Eugene asked again, “If you are worried, why don't I take you out of this place in disguise?”

“It's rare for you to come to the capital. I have many places I want to bring you over to. I'm afraid you won't be able to come again when you return home.”

Annan noticed that Eugene was asking him whether he would take the throne as soon as he returned home.

So he smiled and said, “Not necessarily.”

“But even if I wanted to come, my sister probably wouldn't let me. She is quite annoyed to have my presence here.”

He was reminding Eugene — I like the Noah Kingdom, but my sister, Maria, knows I'm here.

Eugene also sensed Annan's hidden meaning behind his words.

He smiled and said nothing more.

It's comfortable talking to smart people.

“There's no need for disguise.” Annan joked, “You're not conspicuous already, but you might become conspicuous by putting on a disguise.”

“Unfortunately, I'm still a child. Please don't take me to places that will make my sister angry.”

“Oh, Her Royal Highness Kafni will be angry too?” Eugene smiled, “Before the Paper Princess arrives, let me show you around.”

He kept walking, and Annan followed behind him.

He just brushed off Annan's comment not to follow him, and Annan didn't say anything about it too.

They would not tear off others' faces like that. It was a tacit understanding between intelligent people.

Eugene's existence did save Annan a lot of trouble.

Eugene did not restrain his presence. As long as he followed Annan, no one dared to approach them. There might not be thieves or beggars in the palace, but there would be troublesome people around.

Annan's perception was sharp.

At this distance, Annan could distinguish the danger and hostility of the other party at the moment when he was being targeted.

But those guys who had ulterior motives on Annan had their eyes overflowed with unavoidable fear and awe when they saw Eugene.

This also made Annan realize this young man, who was extraordinarily warm and friendly to him, did not seem to be a kind soul.

“Speaking of which, are you satisfied with the payment?” Eugene walked ahead and asked.

Annan shrugged and was about to answer.

His vision was overwhelmed with white light. The brilliance had seemingly submerged and destroyed his whole world. There was nothing else but a white glare.

He immediately realized it was an illusion.

But before Annan could do anything, he felt his left shoulder lightly tapped from behind.

Annan was surprised.

At this distance, his perception should have detected the person behind him.

But even though he was tapped, he still didn't detect anyone behind him.

"Excuse me for a moment, okay?" It was a surprisingly gentle and slow voice.

Annan turned around, attempting to observe the identity of the incoming person with his naked eye.

The man appeared 27 years old, much younger than Annan had expected. He was wearing a brown jacket with many pockets and a small pocket watch about 4 centimeters around his neck. The pocket watch was placed in the chest pocket.

With a gentle and lonely expression on his face, he wore white silk gloves on both hands, and a complex five-color magic circle was drawn on the back of his hands. The black part seemed to resemble a magic circle. However, the combination of the red and blue lines appeared to be another magic circle. On the other hand, the red and purple lines constructed another magic circle too.

"Before you asked that, you have disturbed me, sir." Annan responded politely.

"It's fine." The young man had neither malicious nor good intentions. He smiled indifferently like a deity, spread his hands, and a white silk-like light lingered between his fingers, "I'm not asking for your consent either.

"Please come with me, will you?"

"—I don't think so." Again, a cold female voice sounded in the white world.

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Annan realized that this gentle young man who suddenly pulled himself into the hallucination was the Nicholas he mentioned to Nolan previously.

Speaking of the devil...

He appeared gentle and melancholy with a harmless appearance, like a melancholic youth who adopted an artistic style.

However, He was not so courteous when He spoke. There was a hint of deity-like compassion and arrogance with Him.

However, the person Nicholas was facing at the moment was a true deity.

Annan felt strange fluctuations in the space when he heard the cold female voice.

The faint and chaotic yellow traces, like transparent lemon-colored jelly, quickly emerged in the pure white space.

It was as if the world in front of them was a white canvas, and someone was scribbling in the air with a paintbrush full of dark yellow paint.

Several arcs imbued with a mystical sense of aesthetic to them had surrounded Nicholas. At first glance, it appeared like petals drawn with calligraphy were blooming around Him. However, it was a different painting style than His, making it unique and beautiful.

A white-haired girl who could only be described as “gorgeous” was like being sketched out of thin air by someone with a paintbrush. She quickly acquired a body composed of black and white lines, and then She was painted in color.

“Are you the Paper Princess?” Nicholas replied plainly, “Long time no see, Lady Paper Princess.”

“Nicholas?” The Paper Princess frowned slightly and warned, “He's not Don Juan Geraint, but Annan Austere-Winter. Back away, or I'll attack you.”

“Actually, I have no hostility toward Your Highness Annan, Lady Princess.” The young man smiled warmly.

Even though He said so, He did not stop what He was working on His hands.

The pattern on the back of his hand looked like a rose with complex colors.

Different petals had different colors — black, red, blue, purple, and yellow; they were evenly distributed on each petal. All petals and adjacent petals were not in the same color. Immediately after activating patterns of different colors, different magic circuits were formed.

As the black, purple, and black, red, and blue circuits of His hands were lit up, the white silk-like light that lingered on the tips of His fingers previously turned into a constantly expanding translucent light cluster as if it had come alive.

It resembled a balloon with air blowing into it. The light group quickly expanded into a new form, like a massive copper bell. It wrapped Nicholas in it.

However, when the light group continued to expand, it came into contact with the faint yellow traces imbued with the calligraphy vibe.

The moment it came into contact with the dim yellow traces lingering in the air, the inside of the light group was fixed on the spot as if time had stopped.

At this time, the Paper Princess had appeared beside Annan.

“Back off, Annan.” The Paper Princess spoke in a cold voice.

She turned Her back to Annan and stood in front of Annan. Her left arm hung straight down, and her left hand held a brush about 24 centimeters long as if wielding a long dagger in an inverse grip.

Annan noticed that the brush was dyed with dim yellow paint.

Her right hand was raised horizontally, completely shielding Annan behind her.

Between the fingers of Her right hand, She held a red pencil and a pen dripping with azure blue ink.

After the faint yellow trace suspended the light group, the Paper Princess utilized her hand flexibly like a dance.

Dark blue thunderclouds quickly accumulated in the sky.

Under the thundercloud, the crimson hue of the thunder quickly began to accumulate. Dark red terrifying thunder entwined in the clouds. There was a stench in the air, just like the breeze after heavy rain.

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And after just a few seconds, a crimson lightning bolt fell from the sky. It slammed on the light group, shattering it instantly!

A huge roar sounded at the same time as the lightning fell!

There was even a slight tremor evoked on the ground.

After the scarlet thunderbolt dissipated, crackling red electric sparks fluttered in the air.

At the same time, the azure blue frost was quickly drawn on the ground. The dark blue ice shackles spread up from the ground, fixing Nicholas's feet to the ground and spreading upward.

At this time, the second red thunderbolt in the sky had already begun to accumulate.

However, the circuit on the back of Nicholas's hand began to flicker rapidly.

Or, instead, it was switching rapidly.

The illusory light group shattered by the crimson thunder protruded several sharp white distorted light trails from the wreckage that was about to dissipate. Then a sharp blade appeared at the front part of the light trails and darted toward Annan like a hound on its own.

Like the traces on a circuit board, the distorted light paths spread rapidly in the air, trying to avoid the Paper Princess and stab Annan.

But the strange thing was Annan didn't feel the slightest killing intent from them.

Could it be that Nicholas really has no intention of killing me?

So what is he doing now?

In the face of Nicholas's actions of disobeying her words, the Paper Princess was unfazed. Her majestic air was unperturbed.

She raised the paintbrush in her left hand and quickly added a few strokes in the air.

The dim yellow traces landed in the air at the same time, stagnating the few light paths delivered. More time was suspended as the murky yellow color spread toward the light trails. There were several light

trails before the dim yellow color spread. It continued to split from the end of the light trail and flew towards Annan!

“What the hell are you thinking?” The Paper Princess frowned slightly.

Another short-handled brush spawned in her right hand.

As she swung the brush in her hand, dozens of metallic paint dots flew out, turning into steel shields in the air. It fell on the spreading and chaotic paths of light with incomparable precision.

With the sound of one after another squeaking noise of corrosive acids, the steel shield was pierced by the light path in the blink of an eye. But as these shields shattered and disappeared, the sharp light trails that passed through the shields were also turned into white paint and fell to the ground.

But at this moment, Annan looked over again. Nicholas had disappeared into this pure white space. The shackles made of ice on the ground had turned into wet, cracked clay.

However, Nicholas's sudden escape did not seem to surprise the Paper Princess.

She just put a few pens back around her waist, turned around, and squatted in front of Annan with some concern.

The moment Annan saw the Paper Princess, he was also stunned by the “beauty” that transcended ordinary people's perception. But he quickly came to his senses, without the hallucinations and new influences Old Goose was afflicted with.

It was like Annan was used to this “beauty”.

It inexplicably became reasonable at this instance.

Since Annan was a copy of this beauty, he even possessed the element of “beauty” that he had not fully awakened yet.

What surprised Annan was the first reaction of the Paper Princess. She came over and touched his head and then reached out Her hand to pinch his face.

“Are you all right, Annan?”

The Paper Princess looked at Annan, caressed Annan's hair lightly, and asked softly, “Did he hurt you?”

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“No. You came very timely.” Annan smiled and replied briskly.

He didn't ask where Nicholas had gone or how the Paper Princess got here.

Annan spoke softly and thanked the Paper Princess politely, “Thank you for coming to save me. I don't know what will happen when He takes me away.”

Hearing this, the Paper Princess showed a gentle smile.

She rubbed Annan's cheeks up and down with Her hands and pinched his face again.

“Yes, finally, you have grown up a little.” The Paper Princess showed a satisfied smile and persuaded with a stern face, “But remember to eat more.

“Although the Noah Kingdom is not as cold as Austere-Winter, it won't be much different in winter, and your body is weak. If you don't eat enough, you may catch a cold.

“Especially, you have to eat more meat. You are still growing, you don't have to worry about your figure, and exercising is much healthier than dieting. Are you exercising every morning and evening? Since you have advanced to the Silver Rank, how is [Frost Sword] doing? Have you dropped your training?”

Hearing the Paper Princess' words, Annan showed a baffled expression.

Why do you sound like you're close to me?

I'm not hungry.

The relationship between the Paper Princess and me doesn't seem like the one between “peers”.

It came off as an empathetic feeling from elders, like how Silver Sire previously treated Annan.

But there were subtle differences.

When Silver Sire talked to Annan, He was much more cordial and polite than the Paper Princess. It felt like a neighbor or some relative who always kept a distance. He would only praise but not reprimand Annan.

However, the Paper Princess's attitude toward Annan was like a sister, mother, or teacher.

“What's the matter, Annan?” The Paper Princess touched Annan's head worriedly because Annan did not speak.

She put her hands on Annan's head as if massaging his head. Then, She stroked his smooth hair repeatedly and skillfully. Annan squinted his eyes obediently, standing there without resisting.

For some reason, Annan felt this scene was a little familiar, like it had happened many times before.

It appeared as if he was close to the Paper Princess.

However, that should be unlikely.

Annan had previously learned from Silver Sire that the Old Grandmother always had mixed feelings about this new deity born from Her own portrait.

It was not enough to say that the Old Grandmother hated her, but She had clearly shown Her dislike for the Paper Princess.

Therefore, the Paper Princess did not go to Austere-Winter Dukedom.

If the Paper Princess and Annan were acquainted, it would only have happened during the year he traveled around. Therefore, the Paper Princess should be among the deities who protected Annan at that time.

The Paper Princess was a false deity who traveled all over the place and would not stay in one place for long.

She would travel worldwide, walking between reality and the imaginary world. She would sell Her paintings to support the poor painters who believed in themselves.

But the situation did not seem only like this.

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Although the Old Grandmother was distant from the Paper Princess, the Paper Princess seemed to care about the Old Grandmother.

Annan did not think much of it.

He shook his head and asked probingly, "Do you know that I may lose my memory?"

"You told me that." The Paper Princess nodded and was about to say something when suddenly, as if She had remembered something, She said apologetically, "Ah, sorry. Unfortunately, I can't tell you the details right now. It might affect your determination."

"Determination?"

"En, it has something to do with the sacred bone. That's all that I can say." The Paper Princess not only did not doubt Annan but comforted, "Don't overthink it. You made the decision after discussing it with everyone. They had to consider it on multiple angels and thought things wouldn't go wrong.

"Everything is within our plan, and it hasn't gone off the rails so far. So you don't have to be too nervous. Even if you lose your memory, you will get more than before."

"Am I trying to get the approval of a sacred bone?" Annan frowned, "Am I not a Transcended in the past? But how do I advance to the Gold Rank if that's the case?"

"Ah, I have to mention this to you." Hearing this, the Paper Princess suddenly remembered something and added, "You don't have to rush to advance into the Gold Rank. First, you need to get your sacred bone, and then... You don't need to sign a covenant. Just getting it is enough. It is vital to promote into the Gold Rank in the case of possessing a Truth and the sacred bone.

"Since you now have the reversed Winter Heart, you're qualified to sign a covenant with several sacred bones; at the same time, you have also got a rainbow-colored soul, and the sacred bone that matches you will look for you on its own and reach you sooner or later. You just need to follow your heart."

Although She said, "That's all I can say," the Paper Princess couldn't help but leak a lot of information out when Annan asked.

You did not seem to keep anything secret.

You're leaking too much more than a sieve. Even if I do not ask in detail, I already have a general idea.

So that's the situation. Is it for the sacred bone?

This is indeed quite possible.

The former Annan was afflicted with the [Winter Heart] for thirteen years. He had undergone tremendous changes in temperament, which was enough to affect his mind, change his character, and make him no longer recognized by the sacred bone.

This message was likely to be true, but that might not be the entire case.

According to his character, he would definitely not tell all the information to the same person.

In particular, he would not casually tell others the information far beyond their limits.

Giving someone a treasure map full of traps was a crime of murder, too. It was enough to ruin a person's life when the goal was beyond the limit of the other party's capability but desired.

Although Annan occasionally took advantage of others and often plotted against his enemies, he would not hurt his friends.

So Annan could conclude that what the Paper Princess knew must not be the complete version. She would be worried for him. Thus, what she knew must be "the safe version that She did not need to worry about Annan".

I still have to ask Silver Sire for the specifics.

I should help Silver Sire deal with Rotten Man's problems first.

With Silver Sire's character as a businessman who liked to not reveal the entire case in His words, the matter of dealing with the Rotten Man might have something to do with Annan's previous plans.

"Paper Princess, do you know the person just now?"

"He is Nicholas, the second Hermes, the leader of the Fallen path. Many Fallens were born through his work. I heard that the Shadow Demon is also with you. The Shadow Demon is his student." The Paper Princess shook her head and warned, "You'd better stay away from him. He's a dangerous and crazy man."

"But is he important?" Annan asked in a deep voice, "Right?"

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Chapter 368: Poison Dust

Annan saw what had happened clearly.

When the Paper Princess fought Nicholas previously, She did not focus on eradicating the opponent, which was strange.

The Paper Princess did not manually equip those pens from the waist but floated into Her hands instead. In the blink of an eye, the pens could paint an image with the color She wanted and quickly outline the desired graphics on the air.

This meant that the Paper Princess could launch several attacks at the same time depending on how many pens She harnessed.

The Paper Princess did not attack Nicholas directly. Her purpose was to expel Nicholas, not to kill nor punish Him. She did not even deal any serious blow, as if She was afraid of Him getting hurt.

Nicholas and the Paper Princess seemed to know each other, judging from their exchange of words.

Hearing Annan's question, the Paper Princess couldn't help but praise, "As expected of you, Annan...

"Even if you lose those occult knowledge, you can still accurately make out all of this." As the Paper Princess spoke, She couldn't help but pinch Annan's ears again, shaking his head slightly from side to side. She then rubbed his hair vigorously, leaned in, and took a deep breath of Annan's scent before finally letting go of Annan.

The Paper Princess couldn't help but show a beautiful and relaxed smile on Her face as if Annan had healed her.

She changed Her squatting position to half-kneeling, hugged Annan's back and pulled him into Her arms, and then casually caressed his hair, "But, you don't have to be too nervous. He has notified his presence in the Noah Kingdom to the Elegant Elder and has a special mission.

"As his watcher, Father Stone is also in the Noah Kingdom now. That's why He pulled you here to avoid Father Stone."

"Where is this place?"

"This is a nightmare that hasn't yet taken shape. It's located between the real world and the dream world. In fact, it is an alteration product lost in history and now becomes Nicholas's unique technique. If you are interested, I will go to him later and ask for it."

The Paper Princess obviously did not mind Nicholas and just said casually, "When He was making the Sage's Stone... You should remember Sage's Stone, right? When He collected materials, He also collected some Transcended souls that had not yet turned into nightmares. Then, He cleverly made blank nightmares that could suck in the consciousness of others at any time.

"It's like letting others have a seamless nightmare with reality with the target being its protagonist. There's no storyline and no curses in the nightmare. When Nicholas recruits his students, He will go through this nightmare and recruit the qualified candidates of the Fallen path."

"So, we're in a nightmare?" Annan was a little surprised.

Annan's system did not trigger a prompt when entering a nightmare for the first time.

Or was this the reason why there was no "main mission" because there was no curse in this nightmare?

No wonder Annan could not feel the killing intent.

Killing Annan in a nightmare really wasn't a big deal, especially this kind of blank nightmare without a curse. Even if Annan died here, it would not corrupt his soul.

But the problem was...

"Then why did he attack me?" Annan was puzzled.

It made absolutely no sense.

Or...

“Does what he's going to do have anything to do with me?”

“No, not at all. You don't have to worry about him attacking you at all. He can't do that yet.”

The Paper Princess said with certainty, “The mission he came here is related to the elves.”

Elves?

Is it about the curse energy?

Annan frowned slightly.

But he soon realized something.

It should not be.

The Elegant Elder, as an ancient upright deity, would not allow the curse energy to reappear in the world.

But besides the curse energy, was there anything special about the elves that the deities had noticed? Weren't they a civilization that was useless except for their curse energy?

Judging from the title of “Second Hermes”, the Paper Princess knew what Nicholas had once done.

Although this “Hermes” was not killed, He was imprisoned. Annan was a little surprised but soon found it understandable.

After all, Nicholas was a true genius.

It would be a waste of his talent if He were directly eradicated.

For the crimes that Nicholas had committed, there was a need for a deity to keep an eye on Him.

Even though that was the logical explanation, Annan always felt something was not quite right here.

It felt like he had missed out on something.

“Can you reveal more information to me?” Annan asked eagerly, “I want to know more so I can rest assured.

“I won't ask about my past.”

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His voice became more tender and soft. Finally, he asked the Paper Princess softly, almost coquettishly, “I just want to know what Nicholas came to Noah for, Paper Princess.”

The Paper Princess had revealed more important information previously. If Annan asked for less critical information, there was a high probability that She would reveal it too.

As long as a person leaked a little information, He would inevitably reveal more clues. This had to do with their nature and had nothing to do with virtue.

The Paper Princess was a little overwhelmed.

Compared to the stern Old Grandmother, the Paper Princess was more of a gentle elder who doted on children.

She said helplessly, "It's about poison dust. He came here to create poisonous dust."

"Poison dust?"

Annan heard this for the first time. He immediately asked, "What is poison dust?"

"A special weapon made from the pure-hearted Fallen. To demons and those alien species, those poisons are equivalent to corrosive acid to ordinary people. Just touching it will cause immense damage. At the same time, it does not bring harm to humans."

Alien species? Annan's heart tightened.

Speaking of which, are the players considered aliens?

So, what about me?

"I think he is trying to see if the poison dust is effective or to collect something from you. After all, you are also half an other-worldly being."

The Paper Princess said thoughtfully, "I will accompany you during your stay in the capital. If you feel any discomfort in the future, remember to tell me as soon as possible and don't hide it. Promise?"

"En, okay." Annan replied obediently.

So the Paper Princess stood up and reached for Annan's hand.

She opened Her right hand, and the giant pen hanging from Her waist appeared in Her hand. It was a huge long brush like a two-handed sword.

It looked like one of those big brushes the old man used to write on the ground in the park.

As the Paper Princess raised it high, the tip of the brush was dyed with pure ink.

Like a falling sword, the Paper Princess flipped her wrist and slashed it straight down!

At the next moment, the ink fell straight from the sky. The ink that soared to the sky had divided the world into two.

The nightmare space filled with infinite white brilliance was quickly shattered from the middle by the ink column that reached the sky.

The space here did not shatter like glass.

Instead, they were like the clear water soaked in ink. The released ink eroded it in the blink of an eye, spreading further and further. The world filled with light was corroded. It became thin and transparent by the gradually melting ink traces and finally disappeared altogether.

It was like a white fog covering the night sky. The stars and moon became clear again when the white fog dissipated.

Then, Annan lost his vision a little before returning to the real world.

It was as if just a moment had passed.

Eugene was still in front of Annan, walking forward, muttering, "Actually, I think father's payment to you is a bit too little. For this information... Eh?"

He seemed to notice something as he spoke and looked behind him vigilantly.

At the moment Eugene saw the Paper Princess, his pupils shrank slightly, and then he bit the tip of his tongue without hesitation — the pain made him immediately break free from the hallucination.

Then, he bowed his head respectfully, looked at the ground under his feet, and addressed her honorable in the title, "Paper Princess."

"You can go back now." The Paper Princess said coldly, "I'll accompany Annan."

"...Yes." Eugene was silent for a moment and replied respectfully.

He shook his head helplessly and did not dare to retort or even look at Annan. At this moment, the Paper Princess was still holding Annan's hand and standing beside him.

Eugene was afraid that the moment he saw Annan, he accidentally glanced at the Paper Princess.

The Paper Princess held Annan, who had just reached Her chest, with Her right hand. She stood on the street with a casual expression.

She seemed to notice it and glanced behind Her.

The corners of Her mouth rose slightly as if She saw something.

Annan looked at this scene and found it quite familiar.

Ya.

This was precisely what Annan saw from that ritual in the "fragments of the future"!

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Nicholas, who was sitting on a chair, slowly opened his eyes.

There was neither malice nor goodwill in his calm lake green eyes but deity-like gentleness and compassion.

He stretched his neck, slightly soothing the stiff neck from sitting still for a long time.

Nicholas exhaled lightly. He reached out, pulled his long white hair back, and tied it into a ponytail. Then, he pushed the instruments on the table aside, picked up a pinky-thumb-sized bottle containing a sky blue reagent from the reagent rack, and drank it.

At this moment, a calm and dull middle-aged male voice came from behind Nicholas, "Where have you been?"

"I just went out for a while." Nicholas reached out, wiped the corner of his mouth, then turned around and replied softly.

There was no living person behind him.

There was only one plaster statue of human height sitting on the ground. The distressed expression on its face was reminiscent of a philosopher whose eyes were slightly closed, thinking about something.

But, the statue looked up and glanced at Nicholas.

The dull middle-aged voice poured out of its mouth, "You drank the 'Soul Healing Potion'. Is your soul hurt?"

"En, I was injured by the 'red' and 'yellow' of the Paper Princess. But, it's not a big problem. Although She also took out the 'blue' pen, She didn't use it to attack me."

Nicholas replied calmly, "My soul is orange. So it's not a big problem to sustain a 'red' attack."

"How did you irritate the Paper Princess?" The stone statue made a dull voice, "She has a good temper."

"I saw Annan." Nicholas smiled slightly, took out another tube of pale yellow oily reagent, drank it, and said softly, "So, I went and greeted him."

"Annan Austere-Winter?" The stone statue paused before continuing, "Has he come to Noah?"

"En, just recently. But unlike what you told me before, Lord Father Stone, his soul is not snow-colored but rainbow-colored."

"That means his ritual was successful." Father Stone said calmly, "But it has nothing to do with your work."

"Work in peace, and don't get in touch with Annan."

"But my job is to make poison dust. Annan is the most well-known other-worldly being, right? I'll need some of his blood and soul fragments to be sure that poison dust is also effective against outsiders."

"Don't think about it too much. Your job is to make poison dust, and that's all. Regardless of Annan's special circumstance, even if the poison dust is effective against other-worldly beings, it's not an excuse for you to attack them. Swordsmiths won't use people to try their product. You're close to offending the taboos."

Father Stone said flatly, "Also, even if you got his blood and soul, are you only going to use it for experiments? Don't forget how your creator died. Don't forget how the inheritance of Hermes was cut off. Don't underestimate the memory of the deities."

"—Don't try to overstep into the taboo."

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“Okay, I get it. I won't make the mistake that my Father made.” Nicholas sighed helplessly, “So tell me, Lord Father Stone. So what are you going to use for the poison dust? You asked me to make this thing, constantly changing the formula but never telling me your purpose. It's unnecessarily increasing my workload.

“I need to know its use and purpose. It's a very legitimate demand. You don't know much about Hermetic alchemy, but I do.” Hearing this, the statue behind him was silent for a long time.

Then, the humanoid statue stood up and walked behind Nicholas.

“Speaking of which, it's time.” Father Stone said in a deep voice, “Do you know how the elves perished?”

“Is it because of the magic power?” Nicholas replied fluently, “Using the curse as a transmission medium, we want to extract the world's power as an energy source. It is an incomplete power of creation, a limited degree of 'the ability to achieve what you want'.

“What the curse energy can extract is the blood of the world. The curse energy can be recovered naturally, but with the expansion of the elves and the use of curse energy, it gradually weakens the world's barriers. Consequently, our world gradually overlaps with another world, and thus is cursed by the world.”

“So, that's all you have learned?” Father Stone nodded and said calmly, “It's mostly accurate. I want to make some corrections.

“This world is originally colliding and overlapping with other worlds. Nightmares are not something that only these epochs have. Our world has many [Book of Truths] as the backbone of the world, and Father Flint let us imbue the power of the elements into our flesh. Thus, it is even more difficult for other worlds to oppose us.

“It doesn't matter whether it's the immaterial world, the dream world, or the other worlds at the end of the dream world. Only after the curse can weaken the barriers of our world will there be occasional 'world collapse' accidents that permanently banish a creature from our world to another world. That means—”

“In other words, without using the curse energy, there will be creatures from other worlds that are exiled to our world?” Nicholas quickly realized the meaning Father Stone hinted at.

It was like the collision of two ships.

If it would inevitably lead to damage to one part, then the mist world would gradually recover after stopping the curse of curse energy. Then, the creatures in the immaterial world or the dream world might be exiled here from the fragmented world. It worked just like the creatures here being exiled to other worlds.

For the world, this was undoubtedly a victory.

But for the mortal creatures living in the world, compared to “losing a few strangers forever”, “terrifying creatures descended from another world” were a terrifying disaster related to their vital interests.

“It's better if you understand.” Father Stone glanced at Nicholas, extended a hand made of stone, and patted his shoulder, “The dream world is still relatively stable. But the immaterial world has gradually

begun to break down in recent years. The scale of the current invasion is still relatively small, so the Red Knight and the Silent Lady can still stop it. However, as the immaterial world is broken, more and more immaterial world creatures will fall into the dream world and the real world.

“But this may also be an opportunity for us. You know, the 'real Sage's Stone' is the blood of the immaterial world.”

“That's why you woke me up?” Nicholas said in a low voice with a complicated expression, “Because I inherited the memory and ability of my father?”

“Because he is the 'Second Hermes' and you are the 'Second Nicholas'.”

Father Stone replied flatly. His tone did not change in the slightest, just like a real stone statue, “Hermes was able to collect the power of elements and artificially create Sage's Stone. You may also be able to transform the invaders from the immaterial world into Sage's Stone. What we need is not a Hermes poisonous dust that can effectively kill all other-worldly beings, but a portable device that can 'extract the power of the immaterial world through these other-worldly creature corpses'.

“Since immaterial world creatures will inevitably fall into our world, then what we have to do is not to think about how to reduce the impact, reduce the disaster but whether this matter can be turned into a favorable situation. In the end, the answer we concluded is — yes.

“If the remains of immaterial world creatures can be made into something similar to the Sage's Stone and feedback to our current world through the curse shaft of the elves, the power of the elements flowing in the world can be further enhanced. In the future, not only the Gold Rank Transcended, it's possible to kick start the element's power at the Silver Rank.

“Even, maybe... someday, we'll be able to dispel these mists and let the sun bathe the earth again.”

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 370

“By the way, Salvatore.” Clarence was sitting in front of the experimental table, carefully polishing his long nails, and said casually, “Do you know that your little junior has come to Noah?”

“Noah? Did you mean the capital?” Salvatore was at another table and raised his head in surprise, “I know about this, but how did you find out about it?”

“Is it strange for me to know it?” Clarence smiled. “I'm from the Soul Snatch School.”

He smiled, reached out the index and middle fingers of his right hand, gestured to his own eyes, and pointed to Salvatore's eyes, “I also know what you knew.”

“You learned it from Longjing Tea, right?” Salvatore realized immediately and chuckled softly.

Clarence shrugged, “Yeah.

“Although I had warned him not to think wildly in the presence of Soul Snatch Wizard, he dwelled deeper into the thoughts, even more detailed than before I warned him.”

“That requires special training.” Salvatore smiled helplessly, “You're just bullying the children.”

“They deserve it.” Clarence adjusted his glasses and put forward the opposite point of view sternly, “It's better to have me bully him than to have his memory search cleaned by other Soul Snatch Wizards after leaving the academy.”

“I don't think so.” Salvatore scratched his shaggy hair. There was a troubled expression on his lazy face, “If you keep scaring them like this, they probably won't dare to approach you.”

“If he doesn't have a channel to gain experience against the Soul Snatch Wizards, how will it turn out after leaving the Black Tower?”

“I don't want to care anymore.”

Clarence snorted and complained in annoyance, “They don't take the class seriously, and they don't have the patience to practice blocking the peeping eyes and fake their thoughts. Even if other Soul Snatch Wizards alter their memories and minds, they ask for it.”

“Don't put it that way...”

“We're not short of the Soul Snatch School in Black Tower. There are so many books about the Alteration School here. They won't study it once they realize they could not master the arts. Your Alteration School doesn't lack tower masters, but our Soul Snatch School is short of smart people with the capability and self-control. Either they're ill-hearted, stupid, or a fool with ill intentions. Other schools don't pay attention to the confrontation with the Soul Snatch School.”

Clarence complained, “But if I change their minds and they sense it, they will assume it's because I have a higher rank, and they can't do anything about it; if they don't sense my magic, they don't even realize their minds are being altered.”

“How am I supposed to teach them?”

“Alright, alright, calm down.” Salvatore helplessly patted Clarence's shoulder and comforted him, “That being said, you have to consider their ability to absorb the learning.”

“If they do not master this ability in the end, then all their efforts will be in vain. As a tutor, besides your knowledge and capability, the 'teaching method that allows the students to comprehend and learn' is a test of teaching skills.”

“It's easier said than done,” Clarence grunted and flicked his freshly polished nails.

As the noise of bones clashing with each other had sounded, the white jade-colored nails made of centaur's finger bones drew a pure white shimmer in the air.

In Clarence's eyes, the air his fingernails swept across produced tiny and pure black cracks.

Centaur was a race that could peep into the future directly with their own eyes and pluck the strings of destiny with their hands. What was portrayed was their innate ability.

But it was precisely because of this that the centaurs developed the timid and indifferent character.

They possessed the ability to see the destined outcome from the start. They could peer into the future direction when they attempted to change their future. This robbed away their perseverance to fight against their fate.

Everything was just “things that have not happened yet”.

Once they got used to “what they saw was bound to happen”, it was difficult for them to have the courage to fight for the future.

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Thus, they lost the great joy that came from persevering to the end;

They lost the tenacity and will that came from adversities;

They also lost the “transient and meaningless happiness” in the unknowns of their life journey.

For the centaurs, the little surprises and joys in the future were “meaningless” compared to the goal at the end. But if everything were to follow through to the “final destination”, everything would become meaningless.

At the same time, when the whole clan had the future vision, the individual level of prophecy magic could not generate a greater advantage within the clan. The outcome was the opposite of the natural gift. The centaur's eyes were snatched as a tool for prophecy rituals. On the other hand, the centaur's finger bones could be used as tools to facilitate the changes in fate.

In a sense, the centaur's cowardly and indifferent character was caused by their talent.

“Without power, peeping into the future is useless like the centaurs.” Clarence said in a low tone, “For these students who have no talent and no realization, my advice is not to let them graduate.”

When he said this, he glanced at Salvatore with a smile, “Speaking of which, Salvatore, you have now advanced to the Silver Rank. Although you are an alchemist, you should also get yourself some students.

“When you start having students, you should know how I feel.”

“Not really.” Salvatore said confidently, “I've thought about this day for a long time, and I'm looking forward to it. When Teacher Benjamin taught me, I thought about what I would be like with students in the future.

“Although it's impolite to say that, Teacher Benjamin doesn't care about us.

“I thought at the time that if I became a teacher in the future, I would not be like him. I have to answer my students' questions patiently — in addition to teaching them spells, I also teach them to conduct themselves.”

Salvatore looked at Clarence and replied seriously, “Seriously, Senior Clarence. They are only fifteen-year-olds kids. We have to teach them 'how to think', 'how to live their lives', and 'how to learn'.”

“Fifteen years old is not young, and Master Benjamin was...” Clarence hesitated.

The mental state of Master Benjamin at that time was not quite right. If he did not kill you at that time, it showed that you were pretty good.

But, Salvatore definitely would not understand these words.

He shook his head and changed the subject, "Okay, Salvatore. How's Valtore going?"

"What else? Black Tower life is so orderly. How could I let her out?" Salvatore was clearly in a good mood, "If my life can always be orderly like now, I'm gratified."

"In that case, I suggest you see the new batch of students first. When I approached Longjing Tea previously, I encountered a talent with the traces of overcoming his fate. Not only is his talent superb, but also his will and perseverance are notable."

Clarence suddenly thought of something and said to Salvatore, "It's the youngest child... the ten-year-old one."

"Oh, you see highly of him. But why? Is he not suitable for the Soul Snatch School?" Salvatore looked at his friend in surprise, who was also a senior he respected.

Clarence had been looking for his heir.

Longjing Tea was one of his favorite students.

It was a pity he did not choose the Soul Snatch School. Also, Longjing Tea was indeed a better fit for the Edict School.

Since he pointed out the talent with great potential to me, he must be a genius for the Alteration School.

Salvatore suddenly became interested, "Then what's his name?"

"His name is Von Hohenheim." Clarence replied.