

The Righteous Player(s) C431– Advancement– Victory Knight –

Chapter 431: Advancement: Victory Knight

[Nightmare has been purified.]

[You have purged the nightmare with a designated identity. Your evaluation ratings have increased.]

[You have escaped from the rewritten nightmare. Your evaluation ratings have increased.]

[You have collected seven fear fragments. Your evaluation ratings have increased.]

[You have eradicated Danton's mind imprint. Your evaluation ratings have increased.]

[You have made Danton admit his failure. Your evaluation ratings have increased.]

[You have looked within yourself. Your evaluation ratings have increased.]

[You have purified the nightmare at the first attempt. Your evaluation ratings have increased significantly.]

[You have performed a powerful purification. Your evaluation ratings increased significantly.]

[Comprehensive Evaluation — S+]

[You're given 18000 points of Shared Experience, Perception+1.]

[You have ascended, Will+5.]

[Dungeon clearance reward: Your initial profession is increased by 3 levels]

[Among the currently owned professions, it is detected that the profession (Silver Knight) is the first to be mastered.]

[Hidden plot you have decrypted: 100%]

[You may receive the first stage reward (obtained when completion reaches 90%).]

[You may receive the second stage reward (obtained when completion reaches 100%).]

[The current purification progress is 63/63. The nightmare is terminated.]

[Based on the nightmare region, you have acquired the Silver Sire's holy light engravings.]

[Current total engravings: 63 (Silver Sire)]

It has come to an end.

Annan took a deep breath and opened his eyes.

Aside from the deadly "Spider Thread" nightmare with a dead end, this was indeed the most arduous nightmare Annan had ever experienced.

This was a distorted level nightmare.

The nightmare left behind after the death of a Gold Rank transcender had almost trapped Annan in it.

What about the more advanced nightmares?

According to the Paper Princess, there were higher tiers of nightmares above the Distorted difficulty level. A distorted nightmare was born after the death of a Gold Rank transcender.

Then, would the more powerful the Truth Rank transcender, as well as the saints and the deities, leave nightmares after death?

Those nightmares were collectively referred to as [Otherworldly Level].

That was the highest nightmare level in this world.

In this case, they were not so much a nightmare but a "dream world". When souls were related to "truth", the nightmare formed already had the characteristics of belonging to the world.

It was no longer a projection of information obtained from the dream world.

Just like the hole that appeared in glassblowing. The soul had opened up a small world in the dream world.

It was an eccentric, chaotic, nightmare world with unique properties.

It was uniquely different from other nightmares. The otherworldly level nightmare was not in this world at all. This world was just a key or a door.

Being killed in an otherworldly level nightmare was a true death. Moreover, it was much more difficult to resurrect the person if he died in another world.

That was the precise reason that powerhouses at this caliber would dart to the depths of the mist when they died.

After all, they were all able to act in the mist.

The purpose was to prevent otherworldly nightmares from appearing within the Great Barrier, leading to devastating disasters.

This also explained why searching for and recovering sacred bones was challenging.

In most cases, the retrieval of sacred bone not only required the task of venturing deep into the mist. There was a need to clear a nightmare at the otherworldly level to retrieve it.

Luckily, the sacred bones had consciousness.

As long as they were not suppressed or sealed, they would look for their host when qualified people appeared.

“I managed to purify a distorted nightmare upon the first encounter. Even though it's worth celebrating, I shouldn't be too proud.” Annan got up from the bed, adjusted the pillow, leaned on it, and said softly, “Give me all my decryption rewards... Eh?”

At this moment, Annan suddenly saw that there was an “Available to be advanced” prompt behind [Silver Knight], and the prompt blinked intermittently.

That was the prompt to confirm the assignment of 3 level points.

Then, Annan focused his attention on the prompt and saw a new line of text emerge.

[Silver Knight LV20 + 3 (Available to be advanced): Victory Knight LV3 (Main attribute: Constitution/Will)]

[Key words: Resilient, endurance, resistance]

[Proficient: Environment (Nightmare), Resist Negative Status, Brawl]

[Advancement requirements: Will and Constitution have to be above 20; Strength and Agility lower than 20. You're required to fail over 100 times in a row, even without committing a mistake and then proceed to attain victory. Your previous nightmare rating has to be above A. This profession can only be attained through the knight-type profession's advancement.]

Is this a new profession advancement?

Annan hesitated for a moment.

This profession seemed to be on the path toward the [Tank] aspect.

He also remembered that the mastery of the Silver Knight profession included “fighting alone” and “besiegement” aside from nightmares. This should correspond to the Silver Knight's healing ability and overpowered fighting capability based on money.

For Annan, he was indeed incompatible with spendthrift warriors like Silver Knight. It was a valid option only when there were no other choices.

After all, advancement into a Silver Knight would only dispose of two skills, [Silver Hand] and [Silver Blade]. Nothing else would be lost. Those divine arts were exchanged through the system, and the [Silver Knight] profession only provided high Constitution bonuses.

Each level promotion of Silver Knight would increase 2 points of Constitution by default and then randomly add 1 point into one of the three physical attributes: Strength, Agility, and Constitution.

Such a high Constitution bonus was superb in Bronze Rank. However, Annan soon found it weak at Silver Rank, with “Frostwhisper” as a comparison.

It's decided! Annan hesitated for a moment but clicked on the advancement.

After all, he was not a good fit for Silver Knight.

After all, Annan was a direct descendant of the Old Grandmother and would return to Austere-Winter Dukedom sooner or later. At that time, it would be hard to explain to the Old Grandmother after returning as a Silver Knight.

Moreover, the advancement requirement of the Victory Knight was difficult.

If it weren't for Danton's killing intent this time, it would be impossible to fulfill the conditions.

The rarer the profession, the more Annan wanted to try it out.

Even if Annan drew an SSR card [1] that was not quite practical, it was a much happier result than a more practical regular rarity card.

Annan believed that to be a player's instinct.

Luckily, this profession did not disappoint him.

LVL 3 Victory Knight upgraded Annan's attribute panel in this manner:

Attributes: Strength 15, Agility 16, Constitution 37 (+5), Perception 49, Will 31.

Each level promotion of Victory Knight would add 2 points of Constitution and 2 points of Will!

This was indeed a better Silver Rank profession than Silver Knight.

The common feature of the Silver Rank profession was that the Will attribute would be improved when leveling up.

That was because the ascension from Silver Rank to Gold Rank had a rigid Will attribute requirement.

This was one of the reasons why Captain Alexander had not advanced into Gold Rank so far.

Still, the Victory Knight's skills did not disappoint Annan.

Chapter 432: Curse: Heart Of Sisyphus

Annan carefully checked the skills of the Victory Knight.

“...This profession is not bad.” He was amazed by it.

—As expected of a rare profession.

Hundreds of failures consecutively without committing any mistakes, but attain success in the end. Annan even doubted that there would even be ten people in this world who had advanced in this profession.

Victory Knight LV23: [Austere-Winter Swordsmanship LV10 (Max)], [Frost Sword LV10 (Max)], [Parallel Comprehension LV1], [Victory Will LV1 (Max)], [Brilliant Sword LV1], Available Skill Points 3

The first tier [Silver Hand] and [Silver Blade] had become two new skills, [Victory Will] and [Brilliant Sword].

Victory Will was a passive skill that only needed one level to reach its maximum capacity.

The skill effect was that when the sum of Strength and Agility was lower than the Will attribute, the user got to utilize the Will attribute as a skill check [1] instead of the Strength or Agility attribute once a day.

For every 10 points of the Will attribute, an additional chance to use [Victory Will] would be given. Currently, Annan's Will attribute was 31, which means he could activate the ability four times a day.

This was also the first skill that Annan noticed where the attribute growth had to be suppressed to trigger the effect.

There was no doubt that this was a superb skill.

It was so strong that it scared Annan a little.

The ability signified the chance of “temporarily doubling the Strength or Agility attribute” several times a day.

As a matter of fact, the [All-out Blow] swordsmanship ability consumed three times the stamina, so it could only temporarily increase the Strength by 30%.

However, even if [All-out Blow] raised the Strength attribute by 30% ten times, it might not be as decisive as the effect of a 100% increment brought by the [Victory Will].

On the other hand, Brilliant Sword was a skill related to both Will and Constitution attributes:

Its description read, “Burning your will to its limit, increasing damage immunity related to the Will attribute (currently 31% saving throws [2]) and storing all damage taken. Using this skill again will send out a brilliant slash that delivers the damage stored; the lower your health, the greater the power of the light slash, reaching its peak when your health is lower than 30%.”

This skill could only be used once a day and was a true “ultimate move”.

Simply put, being attacked during the preparation phase of the attack would increase its damage and deliver a brilliant blow.

Its most remarkable value was that the preparation duration for the attack was flexible.

It was considered a guided spell.

As long as Annan did not use other guided or chant spells, he could maintain his charged state. Even if he utilized other swordsmanship abilities to attack, the charging phase would not be interrupted.

If Annan had [Elves' Hand], he could use another guided spell while charging. It would not affect Annan's status, which was equivalent to a long-lasting damage immunity.

So Annan allocated all three available skill points on the [Brilliant Sword] without hesitation.

Each level increment of the Brilliant Sword did not bring about significant qualitative changes. On the contrary, it only boosted the damage mildly.

However, when the [Brilliant Sword] reached LV4, the first special effect was finally triggered:

[Effect after acquiring LV4: The damage of this skill increases by an additional 50%.]

Annan had a complicated feeling about it.

After so long, he finally looked like a Boss.

Although he had become a Berserker-type Boss, he was still a Boss to some extent.

His golden "Elite Rare" template finally had some convincing power.

"I finally have my first ultimate move. My first reliable range AoE attack skill."

Annan immediately realized the shortcoming of that [Silver Blade].

Sure enough, the new profession was splendid.

But since the skill was released in the form of a "slash", it might interact with Annan's first curse to further increase the damage.

"'Victory Knight'...?" Annan muttered to himself.

A skill could be triggered only when the attribute was suppressed or in a poor state.

Annan found them a little ironic.

"Forget it. Let's get the plot decryption rewards." Annan sighed.

Preparation in giving out rewards...

Annan's [Brilliance] had a 63% awakening depth. After the "Nightmare: The Great Hunt", Annan had already amplified it to 73%. After calculating the improvement that could be achieved through element extraction, it would be 95% by then.

After this nightmare, Annan had officially crossed the 90% threshold. Therefore, there was no need to pursue 100% awakening depth. The reason being Annan could already fully extract the "Brilliance" element within a safe range. Even if Annan burnt part of his soul, the gap could be filled up quickly.

Then, Annan had to pursue the rest of the four elements: "Wisdom", "Glory", "Beauty", and "Strictness".

Counting in the “Brilliance” element that Annan had completed its awakening ahead of time and the “Frost” element blessed upon him since birth, Annan had harnessed six elements.

Only by perfectly clearing the Distorted-tier nightmare could the awakening depth of the elements be improved stably and safely. Although the awakening depth of an element did not translate directly as the awakening progress, it could be regarded as “aptitude” to do so.

In other words, that was to inherit the awakening depth of the nightmare owner. Of course, the premise was that Annan must have the qualifications for the element. Otherwise, the relevant rewards would not be triggered.

This was one of the reasons why many transcenders suppressed their attribute before advancing to Gold Rank.

In addition to looking for the advancement ritual compatible with them, they were looking for a Distortion-level nightmare that suited them. The goal was to absorb the nightmare owner's elemental power and enhance the awakening depth. Like in the Immortal Cultivation Simulator, there was no hope for ascension if the Golden Core [3] was lacking.

At least 90% of the awakening depth could the challenger seek to complete the elements' perfect crystallization without consuming drugs. Of course, if the challenger was a Truth level transcender or a direct descendant of a deity, they were born with an element that was 100% awakened.

But, if the first stage required 90% mastery, how would the second stage trigger?

Annan thought.

After he confirmed the prompts, two notifications crossed his eyes:

[You have acquired dungeon instance decryption rewards: Element (Brilliance) awakening depth is increased by 20%.]

[You have acquired dungeon instance decryption rewards: Curse “Heart of Sisyphus”.]

“...Eh?” Annan muttered lightly.

This was the second time he was given an additional curse in a nightmare.

This is not Danton's final curse on me, right?

Annan glanced over worriedly.

Then, he went silent.

[Heart of Sisyphus (Taboo Type): You must not despair because of failure.]

[This curse is attached to you. It has no maintenance cost and is automatically triggered and released after the conditions are met.]

[Triggered when the ability check fails three times in a row and you try to make an ability check again——]

[Before this ability check is committed, all abilities you apply to it are temporarily boosted with a +1.]

[This curse can be triggered infinitely. However, the soul corruption rate will be increased by 1 each time it is activated; if it is triggered multiple times on the same ability check, the corruption rate will be increased by 2, thus a compounded +3 increment. Corruption rate will be raised by 3 when triggered for the third time, a total of +6, and so on]

[A loser's last gift and tribute — Danton]

Is this your final Hamon [4]?

Chapter 433: The Late Salvatore

“Victor?” Annan muttered.

From the nightmares Danton constructed and the traps he set, Annan realized that Danton had been struggling with the “matter of win or lose” all his life.

“Really, how boring!” Annan murmured in a low voice.

Danton was filled with a pathological paranoia about “victory”.

There was an inexplicable sense of inferiority in his heart. He might have longed for the approval of others but could not, or he had fallen to the bottom after trying his best.

It was shown from Danton's fear fragments that having his power not working terrified him.

That showed that Danton knew precisely what he was doing.

But he still dared to carry out such a risky mission even though he knew this.

He worked on stealing the country for the sake of the deities.

He did not crave immortality, so he should not believe in the Rotten Man.

“Or, his purpose is not to help the Rotten Man, but to control the royal family.”

In this way, Annan started to understand why Danton controlled the Fourth Prince for so long, but he never found an opportunity to attack Henry VIII and directly modify the king's memory.

The reason was simple.

Danton did not come to the Noah's capital because he was a fanatic in pursuit of power. He did not want to take the throne deep down his heart. Instead, he desired to toy with the royal family in his palm with his power. The victory would only be meaningful to him if he won while following the rules.

It was not an assassination attempt but lurking for more than ten years. It was like a game as he controlled the Fourth Prince to execute all his orders.

The plan was to follow the game rules and wait for Prince Philip to inherit the throne by official means.

The Rotten Man met the expectations of being the most casual deity for choosing His believers.

Even believers who did not believe in Him and used His power at will were acceptable as long as they were useful.

Or, He was as expected of a deity who even dared to offend the Old Grandmother.

Anyway, the Rotten Man had not even completed the ascendancy ritual. As a result, He became a deity without weakness. His unique characteristic was that His vitality was tenacious. However, He was the weakest and even lost to the mighty Gold Rank transcendents. At the same time, He did not care much about threats from other deities.

The advantage of being “comparatively tenacious” put Him at ease.

For example, the Venerated Skeleton's ritual area could be brought into ruins if you could venture deep into the Gray Mists and break through the many traps and barriers the Venerated Skeleton installed. On the other hand, the Man in the Mirror's ritual could be interrupted if you could travel to the past.

The Rotten Man was different.

His ritual had not been completed yet, so there was no way of disrupting it.

Therefore, He was also the weakest of all deities — only one-seventh of the divine power.

The ascendancy ritual the Rotten Man constructed was initially intended for His monarch. After the monarch backstabbed Him, He altered the ritual to ascend himself.

This outcome was that His ascendancy was not perfect.

He had to make the royal heirs of the seven countries complete the “Immortal” ritual, and he had to become the last survivor among the seven immortals to become a true deity.

Before that, he was only one-seventh of a deity.

By the way, the “one out of seven” immortal included him.

Philip's plan was to become an “Immortal” like the Rotten Man. If he did not master any transcended power before, he could instantly become a high-ranking existence among the Silver Rank transcendents with the power he was given.

“Immortal” was not just a measure of immortality.

They were candidates for deityhood, after all.

Except for not completing “four rotating wheels” and not getting “perfected element essence”, other aspects were completed. The Rotten Man had only two advantages over them.

Once becoming an immortal, the vitality would be far beyond that of ordinary deities; only other immortals who also hold the truth of “Immortality” could kill the target.

In other words, taking away the “power of immortality” that belonged to the other party.

Only a tyrant determined to cut off the royal family's blood and abandon his blood and kinship could become immortal. Therefore, the final winner would be called the “King of the Immortals”.

Annan did not know what Philip wanted to do previously.

However, he caught some ideas about it at this instance.

Judging from the situation on Danton's side, Philip should be trying to kill Rotten Man.

However, Annan did not know where his confidence came from.

But if it was understood in this way, it could explain why Rotten Man decisively gave up a Gold Rank believer and a royal heir. That also explained why Philip knew the Rotten Man's ritual but did not resist at all.

The reason being Prince Philip was taking advantage of Rotten Man at the same time.

As expected of the most disdainful deity, even his believers were more despicable than others.

The Venerated Skeleton even called Him the insiders of his [Betrayal] realm.

"What is this all about..." Annan sighed and took away the quilt to get out of bed.

Just then, the door of his room was slammed open.

Salvatore, who had an anxious face, and Alexander Captain, who had a calm face and a burly figure, rushed in.

They froze when they saw Annan, who was about to get up.

Alexander glanced at Annan carefully, then shook his head and breathed a sigh of relief.

Salvatore was frozen in place, not knowing whether to advance or retreat.

Annan raised an eyebrow and chuckled, "Are you here to save me, senior?"

"It's a pity. You're late."

"I'm late?" Salvatore repeated.

"Yes," said Annan. He glanced at the bottle of pills by the bed and threw it to Salvatore.

"I've solved the problem myself." He said, "You're not quite a reliable doctor."

Salvatore, embarrassed and clumsy, grabbed the bottle and took a closer look.

Only then did he notice that the pills in the bottle had lost their eerily dull luster, like ordinary pills. Each piece was exactly cut into two pieces right in the middle.

"Did you cleanse the curse?" Salvatore muttered.

He stood on the spot, thinking for a moment. Then, he suddenly trotted to Annan's side, held his head, and carefully looked at Annan's expression.

"Stop looking." The Shadow replied in his heart, "It's Annan."

“Can't you see? He's even more confident than before. I'm afraid he had consumed Danton. What a terrifying man.”

Sorry, I couldn't see anything. Salvatore murmured in his heart.

After all, he did not have the skills to peek into others' hearts.

But from the looks of it, Annan was in a good mood.

After inspecting for a long time, he sighed and moved his hand away, “I don't even know whether to congratulate you on your safe return or punch you. I've been worrying about you for so long.”

“Congratulate me then.” Annan laughed, “It's your fault after all, isn't it?”

“Um... yes.” Salvatore sighed reluctantly and admitted: “I'm sorry, Annan.”

“No apologies needed. Just congratulate me!” Annan laughed and said, “At least in terms of outcome, it's not bad!”

His pupils were as bright as stars, and his smile was brighter than Salvatore had ever seen.

Only then did he believe that Annan was alright, and he was relieved.

He was taken aback and was anxious about it as he brought along a mighty rescuer. At the same time, he also worked hard to make a pill that could enter other people's nightmare. However, all his efforts weren't of help.

But Salvatore still believed from the bottom of his heart that something like medicine — the fewer people use it, the more worthy it was to be a celebration.

As the medicine producer, if no one had to use his pills anymore, he should be happy but not sad.

Chapter 434: Fuzzy Truth

“Is this place Denizoya?” Lin Yiyi looked around and asked curiously.

Although the official name of the United Kingdom was Denizoya & Fildes Archipelago United Kingdom. However, the disparity in the prosperity of “Denizoya” and “Fildes Archipelago” was significant.

Previously, Lin Yiyi stayed at Treasure Diamond Island for a day to satisfy the advancement conditions.

Although she did not get any essential items, she learned a couple of pieces of information.

Ascending from “Treasure Diamond Island Guard Knight” to the Silver Rank tank profession of “Blue Guard” required the person to be at Treasure Diamond Island.

The group had to buy Treasure Diamond Island's specialty — the sapphire mirror.

The sapphire, which the people referred to, was not necessarily blue.

It was a ritual item called “sapphire mirror”, a non-curse ritual material composed of chipped gems in six colors: pink, blue, yellow, green, white, and gray. The requirement was that the chipped gemstone could not be adjacent to other gemstones of the same color.

Azure Sage's advancement ritual required the person to acquire chipped gems, mirrors, and adhesives, which were then glued together in Edict Wizard's specially made “Sinless Room”. Then, the person had to use this mirror to fall asleep with the rays of the setting sun reflected on his face.

Treasure Diamond Island's chipped gems were cheap, like grocery prices.

It was not a description, but actually at the price of cabbage!

Three-quarters of Treasure Diamond Island was composed of rich red and sapphire veins [1]. Moreover, this ore vein was cursed thousands of years ago. It would devour the creatures that touch the core of the ore vein and absorb the curse, flesh, and blood to generate new gems continuously.

This rule was later learned by the mine owners on Treasure Diamond Island. They carried out blood sacrifices to extend the life of the veins.

Treasure Diamond Island had no farmland, iron ore, or coal mine, and the only work available was mining. There were more than 50,000 native miners consistently mining gemstones. The number was limited to the registered gemstone miners, not counting the migrants from other islands who accept employment work. In the past ten years, the United Kingdom alone had exported more than one ton of gemstones and gemstone-related products, 100% of which came from Treasure Diamond Island. The difference was whether it had undergone processing.

The Azure Diamond Tower was built on the ore vein, continuously mining from the depth of the ore vein.

At Treasure Diamond Island, only rubies larger than a pigeon egg could be considered expensive; sapphires were even less worthy, generally less than half the price of rubies of the same quality and size.

If the chipped gems were under five carats, they were not much more expensive than the same amount of glass.

Their main purpose was to sell them to Denizoya's costume designers, to polish them as shiny decorations on new fashion clothes, or to sell them to the Edict Wizards as spell casting materials.

Lin Yiyi also learned that many of Edict Wizard's spells require gems and ore powder as spell casting materials.

With the idea of "buying souvenirs in travel", Lin Yiyi used all her pocket money to buy two pockets of chipped gems.

Each pocket was 150 grams.

Then, she reserved half a pocket of them as the spell casting material and would probably give everyone half a sack as a souvenir. The rest of them would be sold back to Noah. With that, she should be able to get her start-up fund directly.

Carrying more than 100 grams of gemstone was forbidden when leaving Treasure Diamond Island. Otherwise, the person had to pay some taxes. Luckily, Old Bread Daryl's reputation was useful. Many big shots knew him. Thus, no one had searched Lin Yiyi, nor was she examined by the Edict Wizards.

A big shot even gave her a flower-shaped gemstone hairpin. It was made of five flower-shaped pink diamonds and a flower heart set with many honey-yellow sapphires.

To be honest, it was pretty heavy.

Lin Yiyi dared not to accept it, but Bishop Daryl motioned her to take it directly.

So Lin Yiyi accepted the gift, like a child who said "no" to a red packet [2] but gladly accepted it smilingly.

Even for the luxurious Treasure Diamond Island, the city's urban style was like Noah's rural areas. It even felt like the infrastructure was not as good as Freezing Water Port, at least Freezing Water Port used to have a gallery and a theater despite being obsolete now.

The Elegant Elder and Silver Sire were deities who directly announced their cities. Just like the fear of the Silver Sire that might appear at any time, everyone was inclined to behave courteously, easy-going, and politely. This situation applied similarly to Denizoya because of the Elegant Elder.

The capital of Denizoya was also called Denizoya. After all, the Noah Kingdom and the Denizoya Kingdom were both countries built around the "city where a deity resides".

But unlike Silver Sire, the Elegant Elder rarely roamed the street.

He always stayed in His home.

It was a comprehensive office, appearing like any other office in Denizoya. The only difference was that the owner was an upright deity.

Many painters, writers, playwrights, costume designers, and poets who dream of becoming famous overnight would regularly send their works to the Elegant Elder. The Elegant Elder would send His comments on the splendid and poor works. Singers and the actors would also participate in the Elegant Elder's rituals like a talent show regularly... and then get roasted.

Indeed, most of them were charred.

The biggest difference between the Elegant Elder and the Paper Princess was that He had no tolerance even for a slight artistic flaw.

No matter how good the work was, the Elegant Elder always pointed out its shortcomings. Moreover, the flaws pointed out by Him tend to be critical. Therefore, the artists who heard the opinions would quickly become angry.

Unless the Elegant Elder found a candidate who was particularly pleasing to the eye, He would provide vital pointers in a friendly way.

Otherwise, He gave the most critical roast.

Still, the artist could not help much because the Elegant Elder was better than them.

In the face of a crappy singer, the Elegant Elder would display a gorgeous singing voice on the spot; when facing an actor with embarrassing acting skills, the Elegant Elder would also use the same performance to slap the candidate. Not to mention painting, sculpture, writing, etc..

The Elegant Elder was the founder and innovator of many artistic genres, a living ancestor in the true sense. He had never stopped learning, researching, and creating. New work might come out at any time. Each piece was undoubtedly the "best" of that era, and the latest art was always the "best".

The key to Nicholas' cemetery was in the hands of the Elegant Elder.

The Elegant Elder personally designed and guarded the barrier of Nicholas's cemetery.

However, according to the non-disclosure agreement, Lin Yiyi was not allowed to go to the cemetery. First of all, she must beware of the possibility that someone would take

the opportunity to release and resurrect Nicholas and steal the body in the name of checking the body. This approach was also common.

Lin Yiyi also dared not stay with the Elegant Elder.

She had seen the Elegant Elder from a distance... Wearing a beret and glasses, the thin-faced old man looked like an elderly version of Zun [3] and like Osamu Tezuka [4], who had lost weight twice.

The Elegant Elder did not seem to have a good temper.

Still, the group did not have to see it personally. After all, they only came here to confirm the matter.

Lin Yiyi and the others already knew before they left Noah as to what happened to 'Nicholas II'. Although she did not know why, the Silver Sire and the Elegant Elder were calm about this matter, which she found a little strange.

But when Bishop Daryl returned, Lin Yiyi realized that things might be more severe than she thought.

"It's bad, Yiyi," said Bishop Daryl solemnly.

"So, the corpse is really gone?"

"More serious than that." Bishop Daryl took a deep breath.

He touched his bald head and said slowly, "It's because Nicholas' body is still in the grave."

"The body is still there?!" Lin Yiyi was stunned.

Daryl nodded, "Not only that but there is no sign of anyone entering or leaving the barrier ...at least not in the past five years."

Annan, who observed this from Lin Yiyi's perspective, was also stunned.

He also immediately realized that the problem might be serious.

Nicholas II had regarded himself entirely as the real Nicholas. All the evidence points to him as "Nicholas". He just forgot some memories and thought he was an artificial human.

But if Nicholas had not been resurrected, then who was that Nicholas in the royal capital?

Chapter 435: The Deities Know The Radiance Is Born In The Mirror

After learning that Annan was safe and sound, Salvatore accompanied Annan for dinner before leaving.

On the other hand, Captain Alexander excused himself and left immediately after learning that Annan was fine.

Even if he was the bank's chairman, it did not mean he could stay idle. However, he was in good health, and the travels did not take much of his energy.

Instead, Salvatore was exhausted from the emergency travels.

Salvatore had come to Annan previously to deliver the dream elixir. Having another bumpy ride for this emergency had exhausted all of his energy.

At the same time, he did not have the option to catch a sleep. The sky was getting dark. If he consumes a stimulant, he might not be able to fall asleep at the designated hours.

That would be even worse.

Salvatore could only go for a walk in the garden and then go home after the stroll.

He did not even dare to eat his fill tonight.

He was wary of the lethargy coming after a meal. He might accidentally take a nap after sitting down, which could release the shadow.

After returning, I still have to check and correct the assignments I arranged a few days ago for my apprentice. Luckily, Little Hohenheim has a relatively stable personality. He is enthusiastic in his study, making notes, and such. I don't need to be worried too much.

Annan had met the child too.

He is indeed a good boy.

Salvatore was quite busy these days, so he could only arrange homework for his apprentice, hand over the teaching materials and his class notes, and let the child self-study first.

"Safe journey, senior." Annan waved at him with a smile.

Salvatore waved his hand without looking back, "It's not like I will get lost."

But you're a little wobbly.

Actually, I'm really worried.

But Annan thought about it carefully and did not seem worried anymore.

In a sense, "Vatore-senpai" was much superior to the senior. As long as the senior fell asleep, a vicious and decisive shadow would appear to take over the body. This was more reassuring than the senior, who was slow to respond and always had kindness toward people.

At this moment, crow's chirpings came from behind Annan.

"Ga!Ga—"

[You have acquired a new mark, "Advanced Influence: Caw of the Faceless Crow".]

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

A familiar system prompt appeared in front of Annan's eyes again.

This was the fourth time he had heard this voice in the past few days.

Knowing that Annan did not want to enter this nightmare for the time being, the Faceless Poet kindly had his vessel chirp twice to refresh the duration of Annan's influence.

The duration of the influence could be refreshed as long as it was repeatedly obtained before it reverberated.

The Faceless Poet seemed to take in a liking toward Annan. Whenever the Paper Princess was not around, he would appear from nowhere and chat with Annan for a while.

Black mud flowed out from the bottom of Annan's bed and skillfully gathered into that young human figure.

It was a young girl with a black crow mask, only about 145 centimeters tall, with long satin-like magical black hair wrapped around her body.

She made a high-pitched sound reminiscent of a chirp, "You're amazing, Annan. I was wondering whether to rush in to save you, but I didn't expect you to survive."

"Can you see my dreams?" The Faceless Poet first reached out a finger, placing a finger in front of her lips and making a silent gesture.

Then, she said with a smile, "I am the Deity of Records and Secrecy — a smart crow who can see everything but remains silent forever.

"Of course, if it's you, it's not like I won't spill anything."

"Are you for real?" Annan asked rhetorically.

Hearing this, the Faceless Poet let out a burst of laughter, "What secret did you see, Annan? Let me guess... Denizoya's matters?"

"Yes." Annan nodded.

He asked, "What's going on with Nicholas?"

"Previously, the Paper Princess told me that Nicholas was an artificial man with all of Nicholas' memory and knowledge and that Father Stone was watching over him. But, I later learned that there was a great possibility that the "Nicholas" was the resurrected Nicholas himself, but his memory was modified, forgetting that 'he is himself'.

"Bernardino gave me a hint. 'How many Nicholas are there?' I still don't have an answer to that."

Hearing Annan's doubts, the Faceless Poet just looked up and laughed.

Her laughter was hearty, but for some reason, it sounded like a hint of sarcasm.

"I'm not laughing at you, Annan." She explained quickly, but the smile on her face couldn't be hidden at all, "How do I put this? Ah, I can almost tell you now. After all, the plan has been completed, and you have also realized it. So I don't think we can hide it anymore."

"Now?" Annan keenly caught a keyword.

The Faceless Poet nodded.

"Yes, now," she said with a chuckle, "in fact, this matter has something to do with you."

"Me?"

"Yes. That's because Nicholas is also a 'mirror'."

The Faceless Poet replied, "It's your mirror."

—[The deities are born from the Light Realm, and they know that the radiance is born in the mirror and falls into the void.] [The Rays of the Seven Luminary have never fallen

into the mortal world], [The 'mirror' without equal weight becomes the hatching egg, and the true light will not descend from the Light Realm].

The three words Henry VIII said again appeared in Annan's mind.

Henry VIII was a man who was “similar and opposite” to Annan.

He acted as a mirror for some rituals and was used to incubate Annan's light.

In this way, only people who were “similar and opposite” to Annan were qualified to be mirrors.

In what way was Nicholas the opposite of me?

Is it because he lost his memory like me?

That's not right.

Annan suddenly remembered.

Nicholas in the past was a person who was called “demon” by Kafni. He launched massacres at every place in the capital and had no psychological burden on doing evil deeds. He even raised many evil subordinates.

However, Nicholas was quite restrained in this state.

“Could it be...” Annan suddenly understood something. He asked slowly, “Has he lost his memory of doing evil?”

“So he became a good man?”

It was just like Annan.

According to Annan's speculation, the sacred bone did not acknowledge him in his first life. Thus the reversal of his Winter Heart had occurred. Then, he cleared his memory and embarked on his second life.

The reason why he cleared up his memory was to prevent his cold memory from contaminating his feelings.

If Nicholas's experience of doing evil deeds was deleted, it could indeed restore him to “the state before evil”.

The Faceless Poet shook his head quietly, “It's quite close to the truth, but you still haven't figured out the most important part.”

“The most critical place?”

“Try to remember.” The black-haired young girl raised the corners of her mouth, “Do you still remember the nightmare you have just experienced?”

“If the remnants of Danton's will infect your mind, do you think you are still Danton or Annan?”

“It's the same. Do you think there will be no fragments of will left in the world after Nicholas's death? He's much stronger than Danton.”

Hearing this, Annan was stunned for a moment and his head buzzed.

Many scattered clues were connected in his mind.

From the very beginning, the Paper Princess did not lie or mislead the truth!

Nicholas was a person he created himself. Thus, the corpse was still in Nicholas' grave!

The memories he had forgotten, and Father Stone who watched him but let him out. How many Nicholas exist in the capital at the same time?

At first, Annan thought it was one.

Later, Annan thought there were two of them. The good watcher and the evil Father of the Demons.

Afterward, Annan thought there was only one Nicholas. The former was just the latter's memory being washed away.

However, it appeared that the answer was zero.

Not a single Nicholas.

All of them were fake.

“What's the purpose of this? Wait, I get it.” Annan raised his head and said slowly, “Your purpose is to create a 'harmless Nicholas' from the start!”

“So that's why the deities let him act and why he finds his memories are deleted so easily. That's because 'finding yourself as the real Nicholas' is what you're here for!”

“Using the imprint of Nicholas' thinking, the body of the artificial human, the memory that has been modified and completed by himself without authorization, you got an artificial human who thinks he is Nicholas!”

Annan came into a moment of silence afterward.

He stared at the Faceless Poet and asked slowly, "So, why is he my mirror?"

In Annan's vision, the Faceless Poet was not highlighted.

"Don't panic, Annan." The Faceless Poet smiled mysteriously, "Since I dare to tell you, it's not what you think.

"All I can say is that the Silver Sire and the Elegant Elder have proposed the plan; you are who you are now because you have proposed this plan.

"The causal relationship is reversed. You got the inspiration and determination to throw away the memory because you saw the whole picture of the plan back then. What I said is true because this is my [Record].

"Since I have revealed so much, but you haven't figured out what your plan was back then, that means it's still not the time yet.

"It's going to be just fine. I'll watch over you, buddy!" After saying that, the Faceless Poet once again turned into black mud and dissipated.

Chapter 436: The Swamp's Black Tower Is Under Attack

Clarence had put on his black round-rimmed glasses. As always, he wore the same red robe that had stuck with him for many years. The light brown curly hair on his head looked fluffy and messy.

He squinted his eyes, frowning and staring at the young wizard in front of him.

The young wizard had brown curly hair draped to his shoulders. His smile was confident and bright. At the same time, he was equipped with a dark green, raincoat-like cloak. The outfit was simple and casual for the wizard's standard.

His skin was engraved with black tattoo runes and transmutation circles. The patterns criss-cross, leaving arcs and marks on his body. As such, he appeared like a stitched-up puppet bear.

If an experienced alteration wizard were here, he would have noticed that if the [skin] of the young wizard was peeled off and unfolded, it could be directly transformed into seven magic circles that fit together like gears.

"So, you have succeeded in the end." Clarence asked slowly, "[Purest Spiritual Medium] Bernardino?"

“You recognize me.” The corners of Bernardino's mouth rose. He spoke in a melodious voice that was a little artificial, “Then, it seems that I am not successful either.

“How does my young and healthy body today resemble my decayed 'shell' in the past?”

“I can see it in your heart.” Clarence replied forthrightly, “I've only seen such a cold, vicious, and dark heart in one person.

“Your body may change, but your heart won't change. It's just that the suffocating lifelessness has turned into complacent and arrogant.”

He flicked his freshly polished nails under a crisp low sound.

After the flick, the white jade nails drew a pure white shimmer in the air.

In Clarence's eyes, there were many tiny black cracks like electric sparks in the empty air where his fingernails swept over.

It was a severed fragment of fate.

When the two faced each other, a new destiny was born between them.

—Clarence will die here.

This was the future that Clarence saw.

—Bernardino has murderous intentions.

This was the mind that Clarence read.

Being approached by a high-ranked Soul Snatch Wizard at this distance put him completely defenseless.

Even if Bernardino did not take the path of soul snatching, it did not mean he would lose the resistance to the same type of spell.

But he did not panic in the slightest and calmly watched the master who controlled souls.

In Clarence's vision, countless souls had surrounded him.

“Looks like you're pretty happy with your chosen path.”

Bernardino leaned against the table. He reached out his hand to lightly grab his new hair, lowered his head, and sniffed the hair at his fingertips. Then, he said warmly, “Are you ready for advancement? Or, have you got your hands on someone's legacy?”

“The advancement from Silver Rank to Gold Rank can't be accomplished just by staying in the wizard tower and entering a dream. Talent without creativity and innovation needs the legacy left by a Gold Ranker.”

“You don't need to worry about that.”

Clarence paced to his cupboard, rummaging through the reagent shelf, and responded indifferently without looking back, “The tower master has promised me to trade [Dream Stealer] or [Mask Master] advancement ritual.”

“I remember that the legacy profession of Swamp's Black Tower should be [Fire Stealer]?”

“That's left for the Son of the Tower. I'm still a Soul Snatch Wizard, after all.” Clarence replied calmly, “But I have a high probability of advancing to the Gold Rank. The tower master is willing to trade with other wizard towers by exchanging advancement rituals and material.”

Advancement rituals for gold rank had fallen into the category of occult knowledge. They were not knowledge that could be copied at will, so they could be traded for other advancement rituals.

Although each wizard tower had its heritage, there were students from other wizardry schools.

Even if the probability was not high, developing a new Gold Rank transcender from a different school was possible.

The wizard in red rummaged and found a bottle of reagent that looked like an ink bottle. It was green and transparent; it consistently sent out light-colored bubbles even though it was well sealed.

Clarence opened it, and a strong mint aroma poured out of the bottle.

He raised his head and swallowed the cold liquid into his belly in three mouthfuls.

The sweet and refreshing taste melted on the tongue, sliding down from the base of the tongue to the bottom of the heart. Immediately afterward, a strong icy feeling rose from the abdomen and shot straight to the top of the head.

Clarence frowned in agitation as if he had ingested a mouthful of mustard.

After a while, he slowly recovered.

“Soul purification medicine?” Bernardino tilted his head and raised the corner of his mouth slightly, “It's bad for your stomach if you drink too much.”

“If your stomach hurts, you can make it up with other medicines,” replied Clarence flatly.

He turned his head and stared at Bernardino, “But you've been clinging on here. If I'm facing you unprepared, isn't it disrespectful to you?”

After drinking the medicine, a faint white halo flickered in Clarence's eyes, which was evidence that his perception and will attributes were temporarily boosted by the reagent, and he couldn't control it.

Hearing this, Bernardino chuckled, “I'm sorry, Clarence. I don't want to be too rude. But if you want to challenge me, it's best to drink the 'Heart Snatching Flask' and 'Swift Elixir' next to you.”

Clarence did not answer, just sullen and silent.

He drank the two bottles of potion mentioned by Bernardino and hesitantly took out a bottle of dark red translucent reagent like a perfume sample. After thinking about it repeatedly, he still drank it as he gritted his teeth.

It was as if he had been punched hard in the abdomen by something invisible, and his whole body shuddered. He slowly bent down with trembling, almost spitting it out.

“Are you ready, Your Excellency, the Savior of Swamp's Black Tower?” Watching this scene, Bernardino said warmly.

Clarence spoke in a husky voice, “So, you finally admitted it? You came here for troubles?!”

“That's unfortunate. It is fate.” Bernardino sighed, “If you said at the time that you are going to advance into a Spiritual Monk, I might change my mind.”

“Might?” Clarence sneered.

He slowly raised his head, and the whites of his eyes had utterly turned bloody.

Bernardino smiled, “Well, I might. But sure enough, I still want to expand my collection.”

“What the hell are you here for?”

“I'm here to find the soul of Hugo Blacktower.” The rune on Bernardino's skin instantly lit up as soon as he finished his sentence.

It was the inheritance from the Jade Tower—a treasure tailored for him by the great alchemist of the past, Isaac Flamel's soul.

— A moving Sage's Stone transmutation circle.

The next moment, the world around Clarence turned into an [Alien Land].

A dark, greasy liquid quickly spread out from under Bernardino's feet.

In the blink of an eye, it had spread across the room and passed through the walls. The vein-like runic lines were clinging to the wall and slowly growing upward.

Seeing this, Clarence showed no anger.

That was because of the last reagent he took, the “Blood of Dry Rage”.

His anger would be constantly converted into chaos power. If his rage were not enough, the reagent would burn his blood instead.

“How are my students?” Clarence jumped, dodging the black mud that was charging at him.

He jumped to the shelf behind him and asked in a low voice.

The moment he asked, he already got the answer from Bernardino's mind.

—This black mud was the manifestation of Bernardino's elemental power.

Wizards dragged into the mud would be directly refined into Sage's Stone.

And his next move is...

Clarence read Bernardino's mind.

Without hesitation, he clapped his hands.

Under the crisp clapping sound, an invisible halo centered on Clarence suddenly spread.

The books, documents, and newspapers in his office seemed to have gained life and run rampant after getting into contact with the halo.

At the same time, Clarence inserted his sharp fingernails directly into his temples.

At this time, Bernardino's jewel eyes just lit up.

Clarence was instantly happy.

I'm just in time!

The ward, enough to capture Clarence's soul instantly, was interrupted by the intense pain in Bernardino's brain just before it was activated. The opponent was half a step late.

In the next moment, countless words turned into a stream of light. Fine chains of light swept in from all directions, tying up Bernardino instantly!

Idol Spell, Pain Synchronization!

Edict Spell, Page Lock!

Chapter 437: Isaac Flamel

[Pain Synchronization] and [Page Lock].

They were all spells that did not require projectiles and could lock on a target immediately.

The reason being Clarence knew that spells with a trajectory would be intercepted by the soul under Bernardino's control.

Clarence withdrew his index finger from his temple after limiting Bernardino's actions.

He lowered his body calmly, avoiding a Soul Arrow that would shoot toward the area between his eyebrows in the next moment.

Then, he drew the line at the center of his forehead with his blood-stained nails.

It resembled a third eye.

“[Hell descends]...” Clarence chanted in a low voice, “[We are the hells of others].”

Chaos Spell: Malicious Fluctuations!

Gray waves radiated with him as the center.

The storm blew away and shattered the reagents in the study. Those transparent spiritual bodies that silently approached Clarence were also wrapped in the power of this blast wave and blown away together.

The attack was immense malice visible to the naked eye, wrapped in a violent curse.

The incantation was known to instantly drive an ordinary person crazy and make the Bronze Rank Transcender vomit to the point of being incapacitated. The attack was a materialized malicious shockwave.

The attack was useless for transcendents above Silver Rank, but it was a soul-based shock that could at least blow away the spirits with no masses.

The dense spiritual bodies gathered between him and Bernardino were instantly cleared out.

The phantoms may return quickly, but

I only need 3 seconds!

He had prepared a fully-charged [Soul-Eating Arrow] that was enough to injure Bernardino severely or even kill this opponent directly!

The next moment, he suddenly clenched his right hand.

The sharp centaur's phalanx slashed through the air as if the fingernails cut some sturdy silk thread.

That was what he saw: the fate of [Bernardino was about to be exempted from the controlling spell].

Overcoming this almost inevitable fate would take a massive toll on Clarence.

The skin all over his body cracked with blood dripping out. He was drenched with blood as if he had undergone millions of cuts by small knives.

But luckily, the moment Clarence attempted to sever this fate, he already knew the answer:

Without hesitation, he reached out his fingertips and cut open the artery in his throat.

The splashed blood suddenly slowed down in the air and turned into suspended, spherical blood droplets.

The time around the blood drop seemed to be slowed down. Bernardino's chant was also slowed down several times, becoming extraordinarily clumsy.

“You...are...not...”

Chaos Spell: Borrowed Time for the Dying!

“Jealousy makes you lose...”

Clarence's control of power was not precise after drinking the reagent. As he cut his artery, his trachea was also cut, which made it difficult to speak.

However, he exhausted all his strength and pointed his hand at Bernardino against his rapidly blurred consciousness; blood sprayed out incessantly. "Anger is your defeat... arrogance is your defeat... greed is your defeat..."

No... no...

I still have ample mana, but the blood loss is too severe.

That's all I can do... unleash the spell...

"Your soul will disperse..." Clarence cast his final spell before losing consciousness.

A pale gray shadow flew out from his fingertips.

Clarence then lost consciousness due to excessive blood loss.

Chaos Spell: Soul Eating Arrow!

Yet at this moment...

He did not have the chance to witness the [Soul Eating Arrow] go straight through Bernardino's body and hit a spirit body behind him.

The soul collided with the Soul Eating Arrow. Pain overflowed in his expression as he crystallized instantly. Pieces of him peeled off and turned into ashes in the air.

After that, it took another 3 seconds before Bernardino broke free from the [Page Lock].

"Why bother..." He sighed, "You have no chance of winning from the beginning."

His jeweled eyes lit up slightly, sucking Clarence's spirit into his belly.

Clarence's body immediately lost its life.

A spirit walked over and ripped Clarence's body off the table.

The body was about to drop into the swamp spawned on the ground.

Then, Bernardino's heart moved.

The spirit body peeled off his four fingernails and handed it to Bernardino. Clarence's body was then thrown into the black mud, waiting for it to sink.

"Centaur's phalanx..." Bernardino sneered, "Fate, and the attempt to sever it. Until the end, you still believed in this kind of thing..."

If fate could be changed so easily, how would centaurs end up where they are now?

How would you possibly end up like this?

Indeed, Bernardino did hear this statement back then.

Soul Snatch Wizard, in the pursuit of seizing the mind, was invincible in battles with those of the same level.

It encompassed the ability to read the opponent's thoughts and tactics at any time, interfere with the opponent's thinking, and silently change the opponent's tactics. Even when the fighting time was prolonged, the soul snatch wizard could directly delete all the opponent's memory, turning it into a mindless and ignorant puppet.

The only two things that soul snatch magic could not influence were "time" and "destiny".

Attacks from the future and the past were something they could not avoid.

At the same time, the power of fate was not something that could be curbed by reading the mind.

"Take a break, Clarence. When you wake up, you'll be there for me." Bernardino whispered, "Relax, friend. You are special..."

"Aside from Your Excellency Hugo, I will only take your soul."

For the current Bernardino, those useless and boring souls were no longer worthy of being his "spirit".

Soul, who pushed Clarence's body into the black mud, walked back with a blank expression and stood beside Bernardino.

If Annan were here, he would instantly recognize it as Danton's soul.

It was Danton who quietly changed Clarence's tactics, deleted the thoughts of "escape", "avoidance", and "delaying time" in Clarence's mind, forcing a Soul Snatch Wizard to launch a face-to-face assault on him.

This was also the outcome of Bernardino's dedication to holding himself back to protect the integrity of Clarence's soul.

It clearly displayed the overwhelming advantage of high-ranking wizards over the lower-ranking wizards.

"It's time to meet the tower master." Bernardino took a deep breath.

This was not the first time he had seen a creature like the “Tower Master”.

But it was the first time to challenge a living tower master.

However, his win rate was 1000 percent.

All Alteration Wizards were destined to be unable to defeat him.

He brought his strongest spiritual body with him — even without a body, he might be the strongest transcender in this era.

Behind Bernardino, a man with white hair and green eyes stood silently.

Three invisible, eternal barriers wrapped around him. That also included Bernardino.

[Track Analysis].

[Inert Refinement].

[Refractive Mirror].

This was a triple barrier dedicated entirely to Alteration Wizard.

That reason was that Isaac Flamel was the inventor of the most popular “Alteration spell” today.

He was the greatest Alteration Wizard in the world...

If he didn't have a student named Nicholas.

Chapter 438: The Mirror Of Rebellion

When Bernardino turned to leave and was about to look for the tower master, a twisted “humanoid” suddenly appeared in front of him like a ghost.

However, describing the monster with the word [humanoid] was not quite befitting.

He had no hair and not even hands. His “characteristic” could only be roughly estimated through the legs that allowed him to “stand”.

He wore a faceless black mask with a shimmering red “α” symbol. He had a jet-black cloak, and his overly slender body resembled a ghostly figure. His frame was hidden in the tightly retracted cloak.

It was like a living column rising from the silt over the Black Tower.

Seeing this human figure, Young Bernardino raised the corner of his mouth.

He narrowed his eyes and bowed deeply to the man. Then, he spoke in a slow, polite, and artificial voice, "Lord Hugo... long time no see."

"Long time no see, Bernard."

It was somewhat unexpected.

After a moment of silence, a young voice came out from under the black mask, "I haven't seen you for about ten years."

"After all, you have cultivated many amazing young people." Bernardino narrowed his eyes and said calmly in a mellifluous voice.

Due to the tan curly hair draped to his shoulders, he looked like a noble man after ignoring the horrific tattoos on his skin, composed of countless alchemy runes.

Who would have known he was the son of a fisherman?

He was a humble, lowly man who would do anything to achieve his goals.

An idiot who lost the token and all the money Father Ludwig had accumulated over the years to give him as travel expenses and tuition fees.

A person who could not do anything well and could only sell his soul in exchange for a chance to change his fate... a futile wastrel. He was an undoubted "laggard" who finally began to explore the path of transcendence after 100 years old.

Standing before him was the young and promising son of the tower, who was less than half his age back then and had lost his physical body.

The talent that everyone was looking forward to.

A genius wizard who successfully advanced to Silver Rank at seventeen.

The one who saved himself from the unfortunate hell... his only friend.

Of course, since Bernardino, who was forty-three years old, met Hugo, who was seventeen years old... He had been unable to look directly at Hugo's brilliance.

Hugo was his only friend.

But he was not Hugo's only friend, and he did not even know if he was considered a friend. Or was it just pity? Or a charity to the pitiful?

But now, everything had been reversed.

What kind of creature was the “Tower Master”? He had long understood.

He was a pitiful fellow like a hermit crab.

[Tower] continued to exist after losing its tower master. But, how long could a tower master stay alive after leaving the tower?

In Bernardino's view, freedom was undoubtedly taken away.

It was worse than losing freedom.

The tower master was a voluntary sacrifice.

The mission of each generation of tower masters was to cultivate the next heir. It was also a contract formed between the tower master and the tower. After the heir was qualified to inherit the [Tower], the tower master would put all his soul and curse into the heir's body and become one with the candidate's soul.

It was not so much a person but a “group”.

The twenty-four wizard towers brought from the East by the Mysterious Lady had always been like this. This system was passed down from generation to generation.

It was like the monster's lair.

Bernardino would be breaking this cycle.

He wanted to split and kidnap the soul belonging to Hugo and end the wizard tower's inheritance ritual!

Hugo could not do anything about it.

Have I really escaped from hell?

Maybe not.

—That's because he is hell itself.

The corners of Bernardino's mouth rose, “How do you feel when you see me here?”

“To be honest, it's not good.” Under the mask, Hugo replied in a young, cheerful and gentle voice like a young poet.

“I feel it. This is Sir Issac's [Inertia Refinement]. Have you dug up his grave too?”

"I prepared it just for you, Hugo." Bernardino said plainly, "You told me yourself back then. Issac is the founder of the Alteration School, the greatest Alteration Wizard, and the last alchemist.

"All alteration magic operates on Issac's model, using the concept of 'converting', 'changing', and other concepts as the underlying framework. They are all extensions of Issac's elements, and they cannot escape the fate he denied. At least 90% of Alteration spells come from his inventions in the current state.

"Even if you are now a Firestealer of the Prometheus school, you will start as an Alteration Wizard after all.

"Give it up, Hugo. You have no chance of winning. If you are willing to surrender, I will stop attacking your students. Even if I don't take the initiative to attack them, the other creatures in the tower will die here as long as we fight."

He did not come here to bring destruction to the pillars of the wizard tower.

Certainly, he would not mind replenishing his arsenal at this place if too many of his souls were consumed.

However, things went out of Bernardino's expectations.

After a brief silence, Hugo suddenly asked, "Are you in a hurry?"

"Are you fleeing from the Bell Ringer Oik? Or the Silver Sire?" Hearing this, Bernardino's face immediately turned gloomy.

He took a deep look at Hugo and then took a long breath.

Unexpectedly, he replied, "Silver Sire can't attack me. He will even help me stop Bell Ringer Oik's pursuit because I can't die at their hands."

"Why?"

"That's because I'm [Mirror]." Bernardino replied slowly, "I am the fifth hatching egg of the [Rays of Seven Luminaries]."

Hugo paused for a moment.

The red symbol on his face flashed suddenly.

"So, the Rays of Seven Luminaries are coming? Is the immaterial world about to invade?"

"He has descended, but the mirror has not broken, so he has not awakened."

The corners of Bernardino's mouth slowly rose, but the smile on his face began to dissipate.

“[Fate is the Wheel of Divine Transporter]. The Divine Transporter has not arrived on his track, and my destiny has not yet been sealed. Then why can't I fight for my future?”

“I've been following the world's trends for 40 years, but a nightmare woke me up. I know this is a fate that should not be confronted. The Rays of Seven Luminaries are the Divine Transporter. But I still want to do it. I don't care if I lose my chance for ascension.

“If I can accomplish the ascension before the Fourth Mirror shatters, my fate can be changed.

“I want to fight against my destiny. Even if it might implicate the whole world this time, it doesn't matter to me.”

He looked at the monster with the voice of “Hugo” and said slowly, “It's not the 'Spiritual Monk' Bernardino standing in front of you. It's the future Deity of Death, Bernardino.

“I'm a Deity and the World's Undertaker. There's no other choice.”

I am different from my past self.

I am a big shot.

I am a person of greatness.

The man who decides the fate of the world.

At the same time, He was also a rebellious pawn.

Bernardino looked at Hugo and declared, “To accomplish my great work, I must attain your flame.

“Do your best to resist me, Hugo.”

Chapter 439: Endless Fire

Through Hugo's previous inquiry, Bernardino already knew his opponent's stance.

He wants to buy more time, but that will be futile.

Bernardino was in a hurry, but he was not racing against just a couple of minutes or hours.

Or is it simply his stance to reject me?

“But, is there a meaning to this?” Bernardino sighed lowly.

The next moment, the walls around them collapsed inward in an instant.

The stone of unknown material had collapsed inward, transforming into dark black sharp shadow blades during the process.

That was a blow enough to sever the stainless steel armor in an instant!

However, a black half-body giant rose from the mud behind Bernardino. It suddenly extended two huge hands to grab Bernardino!

As soon as the shadow blades struck the giant, its advancement immediately slowed down.

But these shadow blades suddenly lit up with white light the next moment.

After about one-eighth of a second, the shadow blades exploded!

The shockwave alone kicked up the dust, and the “mud” on the ground was blasted into a big hole. They were not actually mud, but the realm incarnated through the power of elements.

Only the power of the same level could destroy the power of elements!

Before Bernardino could counterattack, Hugo disappeared into the wizard tower without warning, like a phantom. It appeared as if he had never appeared before.

After the explosion, the black mud giant was thinned by a large layer.

Dust from the explosion permeated the air.

Suddenly, the dust glowed in white again. The scene was like many stars lit up around Bernardino.

There came a more robust explosion than the previous attack, accompanied by waves of light and air bursting out into the surroundings!

This time, even one of the outer walls of this floor was blown through.

The surging airwaves brought by the explosion roared out. Then, like a cannonball, the explosion dispersed the clouds outside the tower!

However, just before the third explosion...

[Analysis completed.]

Issac reached out suddenly, his lips moving slightly.

[—Completed the countermeasure.]

The moment the dust floating around lit up again, they suddenly stopped in place.

In a world invisible to the naked eye, they generated a reverse alteration process at the moment of the explosion. The power of the two alteration magic canceled out perfectly, and the chain alteration ended. Thus, they become pure, powerless glitter dust.

“[Chain explosion]?” Bernardino recognizes the magic that took place.

It was not an overly complicated alteration spell per se. The only challenge was the time gap between its two explosions.

Typically, this spell was used to lay an ambush on the battlefield. After an explosion or some while later, it would explode again in place. Since the trap was triggered once, the enemy would subconsciously deem the area that had exploded as “safe”. This spell operated in this train of thought, inducing the secondary detonation in the “safe zone”.

In general, this spell required Black Fire as the spell casting material to trigger.

Hugo altered the wall material into shadow blades and induced an explosion from it. Although it was a small trick, it was indeed magic at the tower master level.

In the next moment, the floor beneath their feet suddenly collapsed.

The floor instantly turned into a dense sea of electric currents. Those who fell into it would be burned to ashes by the high temperature in the blink of an eye; the electric current would decimate its victim into powder.

However, the fighting parties did not fall.

Hugo did not dissipate the black mud entirely. Instead, they cling to the walls on both sides, and the weak points of contact were enough to support Bernardino for a moment.

It did not even exist for $\frac{1}{10}$ a second, and Issac converted them back into ordinary dirt.

There were several patches of ugly dirt on the solid black walls, floors, and ceilings, giving off a sense of incongruity.

Immediately after that, dense runes appeared and spread on the wall. There were many “eyes” on the runes of the wall. Each shot out high-temperature lasers, and the lasers were then reflected on the opposing wall.

With the reflection of the laser ensuing indefinitely, the initially sparse lasers had multiplied rapidly. In the end, the scorching lasers filled the entire corridor!

There was no doubt that this was a fatal trap.

If Bernardino came alone, he might be vaporized in an instant.

However...

[Huh, you dare to play with light in front of me?]

Even if he was in the soul state, the corner of Issac's mouth raised slightly, revealing a smile carrying a hint of contempt on his translucent face.

The dust condensed in the air around them and was transformed into spinning prisms.

When those scorching lasers were two meters away from Bernardino, they were reverted and converged to the top of the tower!

A surging stream of rainbow-colored light instantly penetrated three floors of the tower. After a short delay, it penetrated directly from the top floor of Swamp's Black Tower and shot straight into the sky!

An intense beam of iridescent light could be seen gushing out above the Black Tower, even at a distance beyond 10 kilometers.

After about 30 seconds, the light gradually dissipated.

The surrounding walls turned red.

The next alteration magic seemed to be readied.

However, Bernardino had found his way to the top of the tower.

He would blast his way out if he could not find his path!

A black flame suddenly lit up in Bernardino's eyes. The rune on his skin glowed again, and the burning rate of Sage's Stone flowing in his veins instantly doubled.

Black mud splashed out and stained the wall that the lasers had blasted.

Countless black lines pierced through the black giant's body, connecting to the silt on each floor. Immediately afterward, its body suddenly rose, like a giant spider with more than a hundred legs pulled by a three-dimensional mobile device. It grabbed Bernardino and quickly climbed to the top of the wizard tower.

The slender shadow with a dark body had no arms and no face. The tower master, "Hugo", was waiting for him in the middle of the room.

This was a top-secret place.

It was also a place of inheritance.

Only the place where the tower master and the son of the tower could come.

No wizards could imagine what the scene here was like.

There was nothing around.

Indeed, nothing.

In the black space, let alone entertainment facilities, there was not even a seat, a table, or a lamp. If it wasn't like having a hole punched in this place, but it was pitch black, and nothing could be seen.

Those things were meaningless to the tower master.

"I have seemed to damage the original wizard tower terribly." The corners of Bernardino's mouth rose, and the flat tone was marked by arrogance and pretentiousness.

"If this level of damage can bring destruction, it's not a wizard tower anymore." The tired young voice didn't come out of "Hugo".

Instead, it came out from the ceiling in the center.

The next moment, it was like ejecting a battery.

A cylindrical cabin slowly fell from above.

It flipped upside down as it approached the ground and opened the hatch.

A thick, unidentified liquid spilled onto the ground.

A human-shaped gap was revealed.

The young man, who was wet and not wearing an inch of clothing, walked out from the inside with some staggering.

The crimson brilliance flashed in the young man's eyes.

The flames swept through the whole body in the blink of an eye. It was like a magic show. The nutrient solution on his body was transformed into a complex and mysterious robe.

“You really haven't gotten old...” Bernardino squinted his eyes slightly and sighed in a low voice, “Immortality in exchange for freedom. Do you like it?”

“My goal was never immortality.” Hugo replied calmly, “The mission of the Alpha Tower is to provide the world with the fire of wisdom. Just like the original tower master, Lord Prometheus.

“Immortality is just a 'tool' that allows me to perform my duties until I find an heir.”

After spitting out Hugo, the entire wizard tower seemed to have lost its energy and gradually stopped running.

In other words, Swamp's Black Tower, the “Alpha Tower”, had stopped the power supply of all other functions and facilities. Instead, it had given all its energy to the tower master, Hugo.

“I have never expected myself to beat you with a mere projection.” Behind Hugo, a pure crimson flame roared, “I just don't want to burn my students to death with my own hands.”

A half-body humanoid made of never-ending flames rose from the ground. Hound-like claws surrounded Hugo in the middle, turning the surrounding environment into a never-ending sea of fire in the blink of an eye.

The entire Black Tower was like massive upright firewood, ignited from top to bottom and burst into flames after a delay of several seconds, instantly releasing terrifying light and heat.

The surrounding swamps and plants were all scorched by the surging flames.

The dazzling brilliance released by the tower-shaped torch could be seen throughout the kingdom.

Alteration Wizard was never short of attack methods.

They were just afraid of whether their attacks hurt their teammates.

How terrifying an unscrupulous Alteration Wizard could be? No one dared to imagine.

This was also why Salvatore's “Shadow” must always be treated vigilantly and sealed.

“Since you have killed all my students, you also set me free.” Hugo's voice was cold and rational in the sea of fire, “If you want my soul, then you can try. If you want to escape from your destiny, then let me kill you.

“If it's just buying time, I'm pretty confident with myself no matter how long it will be.”

Chapter 440: Sacred Fire

The Purest Spiritual Medium's invasion of the Royal Palace left behind twelve unscarred Silver Rank transcendents' corpses;

At the same time, Kafni just happened to finish her craft on [Curse Vessel: Light-concealing Ice Cube] for Annan;

Annan had acquired Frostwhisper's unique Silver Rank spell [Frost Tower] too;

Also, Annan possessed Old Grandmother's real name to substitute the requirement of [Advanced Influence in the Frost Realm].

In addition, Annan learned from “The Eighth Analects On the Sunray” not long ago that Mr. Ray's real name was Baldr.

With those conditions met, Annan's preparation for the ritual [Chill of the Winter Sun] was coming to an end. If Annan acquires either “Blizzard Weather”, “Hailstorm Weather”, or “Heavy Rain Weather”, he could initiate the ritual.

At the same time, the ritual would operate at its optimum capacity.

Annan was confident that there were very few of [Frostwhisper] or [Winter's Hand] who could acquire a near-perfect “Chill of the Winter Sun” in Silver Rank like him.

Annan had already invested a lump sum of 150 order mana points last night, which was also the night Henry VIII died. He made a thirty-meter-high “Frost Tower” in the backyard of the Geraint family with immutable ice.

Indeed, the tower was imposing and mountainous.

It could be categorized into three layers.

Annan had already sent the crew to transport the dead bodies to the third floor, which was closest to the sky.

The order mana value would be fully restored in the early morning of each day. If Annan wanted to, he would build a tower as high as 40 meters, but that was pointless.

After all, Annan's only goal was to capitalize on the temperature up there.

If it weren't for the concern of lining up the corpses, a height of 90 meters would suffice.

However, the entity could not be addressed as a tower at that height.

As Annan realized, its area seemed to be fixed. Or perhaps other elements were limiting it.

The tower was 22 yards in diameter.

This happened to be Annan's [Frostwhisper] level of profession.

In other words, if Annan invested 50 mana points to it, what he had summoned could not satisfy the condition of being a [Frost Tower] at all.

It would be 20 meters in diameter and less than 10 meters in height.

At best, it was more like a frosted casserole pot.

Because of this, Annan realized that ordinary Frostwhisper could hardly use this skill.

After all, Annan's mana value was quadrupled to them.

Either the candidates were elves having order mana values like Annan, or they had to amplify their magic through rituals.

That said, the magic involved was a Chanted Spell.

It was necessary to conform with the Ritual Spell's benchmarks to have a proper result.

An inferior version of Frost Tower would falter in its sturdiness and aesthetic value. It could only be used as a portable fortress to defend against stray arrows and fireballs.

But Annan did not want to put his tower in the Crow's residence either.

This was entirely a spell that could be used as a portable base and storage warehouse.

Instead, Annan only wanted to observe at a safe place what this "Frost Tower" was and what its internal structure was like.

Also, how strong of an attack the tower could resist.

It seemed Annan was quite satisfied with the experimental results.

The tester was the Paper Princess.

She simulated an attack equivalent to a single blow from the Silver Rank Destruction Wizard, and the Frost Tower was barely damaged. Then, She simulated a slash equivalent to a single blow from the Gold Rank swordsman. Unsurprisingly, the Frost Tower was cut.

However, the sword energy only cut through one side of the wall. It could not penetrate and escape on the opposite side. Instead, the tower was left with a scar about 4 centimeters deep on the opposite side.

This meant that after the attack passed through the Frost Tower, the attack power of a “Gold Ranker” would be reduced to Silver Rank level.

Of course, the attack of the Gold Rank Destruction Wizard would not apply in this situation.

In terms of damage output alone, the Destruction Wizard would outperform the other transcendents since that was their specialization.

Since the Gold Rank swordsman could sever the wall of Frost Tower under a single slash, one blow from the Gold Rank Destruction Wizard was enough to decimate the tower directly.

“But, this funeral happens too fast.” Salvatore whispered to Annan, “The king just passed away yesterday, and the funeral is immediately held today?”

Salvatore and Annan were in formal attire. They sat on a bench by the Silver Sire Fountain.

He wore a unique outfit dedicated to Black Tower's Son — a long, solid black cape with a high stand-up collar that looked like Lelouch's [1].

Annan put on the outfit, [Silver Sire's Favorite]. It was a white robe with texture and material like a veil. Although it did not look formal, anyone who recognized the outfit would know what it signified.

There was no outfit more solemn than this.

It happened that those outfits were in black and white. Thus, it would not pose any etiquette problems at the funeral.

“Even though the king died yesterday, the actual statement is that Henry VIII has been in a state of critical illness for a long time.”

This funeral was probably prepared for a long time.

Annan sneered, “It seems they are in a hurry.”

It now appeared that it was not just about Prince Philip.

Even Princess Royal Elizabeth was probably looking forward to her father's death.

“Eh...” At this moment, Salvatore felt his heart twitch.

He had a vague feeling of unease.

He looked around, then to the southwest.

He could see a raging fire in the sky over there.

The scorching fire and smoke formed a column that penetrated the sky.

Salvatore stared intensely at the fire, his brows furrowing.

“What's wrong?” Annan realized something and turned to look at Salvatore.

“That seems to be in the direction of Black Tower.” Salvatore murmured, “Did something happen to Black Tower?”

“The tower master is still there. Since there is a tower master in charge, what can go wrong?” Annan replied casually.

However, at this moment, a clear voice sounded beside Annan, “There is indeed an incident at Swamp's Black Tower.”

Annan turned around and looked at the man who sat beside him. The man had a slender face, curly hair in the middle, and a monocle, complimented with a bright and sunny smile.

Initially, the bench could only fit two people. However, it became a little crowded when three people sat on it. In other words, Annan was small and thin, so he leaned toward Salvatore, barely able to have a seat.

“Pardon me... What happened to Black Tower?” Annan asked in the shoe of Salvatore.

After all, the being he was asking was an upright deity.

Although Salvatore was the son of the tower, he had not succeeded it. Facing the Silver Sire, Annan had more say than Salvatore.

In the past, the seniors took care of him quite well.

Since something happened at Salvatore's side, it was time for Annan to help.

Silver Sire glanced at Annan and Salvatore, who looked a little urgent.

“In fact, Swamp's Black Tower is already on the verge of destruction.” He said slowly, “Except for you, Von Hohenheim and Longjing Tea.

“Maybe all Black Tower's wizards studying there are dead.”

Salvatore's pupils suddenly tightened.

He skipped the pleasantries; he immediately put his hand on Annan's leg and leaned his upper body toward Silver Sire, “Please tell me more. What happened? How can I help?”

“The Purest Spiritual Medium' Bernardino is trying to complete [the Creation feat], further perfecting his [Sublime Avatar]. In doing so, he must get the [Sacred Fire].”

The Silver Sire said slowly, “You should know what the [Sacred Fire] is, right?”