

Righteous Ps 411

The Righteous Player(s) C411– Nightmare– Wolf Kiss

Chapter 411: Nightmare: Wolf Kiss

[The Dream Elixir has reverberated.]

[You're now entering the dream world.]

[Dream key detected.]

[Detected the existence of Dream Key: Annan·Austere-Winter.]

[Searching for nightmares. No keywords available...]

[Nightmare found.]

[You're falling into a nightmare. A dungeon instance is being generated...]

[Detected that the current dungeon instance has a unique property: Phantasm]

[When a different person enters this dungeon instance, varying changes will occur.]

[This dungeon instance will have different changes upon every new entry.]

[The total soul erosion rate of the team is 2%. In addition, the dungeon instance difficulty increases by 2%, and the nightmare's mutation probability increases by 2%.]

[Dungeon instance difficulty is labeled "Distorted".]

[Warning: Relevant elements are detected. The nightmare has been mutated—]

[This dungeon instance has "3" save points. Death does not increase the erosion rate, and the challenger will be kicked out of the dungeon after 3 deaths.]

[This dungeon instance provides a storyline with decryption rewards.]

[Dungeon instance clearance reward: Increases the starting profession by 3 levels]

[Dungeon instance decryption reward: Element (Brilliance) awakening depth increases by 20%]

[Loading completed.]

After Annan consumed the elixir, he quickly fell asleep on the bed.

When he slowly woke up and opened his eyes because of the familiar feeling of falling, the data stream in front of him began to dissipate gradually.

"Yes, I will fall into the abyss one day." Annan heard a familiar yet unfamiliar cold voice ringing in his ear.

He reacted immediately—it was his own voice.

Or rather, it was Annan's voice.

"My body is burned to the ground, my teeth have rotted, and my flesh has decomposed.

“But until then, I will walk with the light.”

Hmm, it seems like an Austere-Winter poet wrote this poem.

Such thoughts flashed inside Annan's mind.

But the nightmare was already loaded before Annan could think further about it.

When he opened his eyes again, he found himself curled up in the corner at the end of the alley. The freezing air put him in a lethargic state, occupied with soreness all over his body.

His starting health was at 90%.

En?

Annan, who had just entered the nightmare, was stupefied for a moment.

Is this my nightmare? Is it me?

No way, right?

“...Eh.” Annan sighed.

He suddenly reacted.

Although this was his nightmare and the body's age was similar to his, it was not his body.

When Annan was about to stand up, he suddenly realized that the shape of his spine was different from ordinary people's.

This was more like a canine spine than a human.

Annan looked down, only to find that his skin was also covered with a thick layer of gray-white hair. Both arms and legs were wolf-shaped. Only the fingers were more human-like than wolves.

He even had a big fluffy, gray-white tail.

Upon closer inspection, he realized it was a female body.

Am I a wolf?

No way, am I a Frost Beast? It doesn't seem right either.

Annan thought about it.

He felt his spine and flesh transform. The tightened muscles in his arms and legs slowly relaxed, the fur on his hands and face faded, and his fingers became white and slender, becoming more human-like. His figure gradually resembled the shape of a human.

However, his feet were noticeably non-human, and his fluffy tail and ears had not disappeared.

Annan stood up this time and felt around the tattered and flimsy clothes on his body.

Through the touch, he realized that this body was full of bruises and abrasions left after being beaten. However, his bones and internal organs were not seriously injured.

“Isn't this too thin?” Annan murmured, “What is this, a werewolf?”

Why does something like this appear in my nightmare?

It was an outfit befitting for spring and autumn. Strangely enough, Annan did not feel very cold.

Maybe it was because of the hair that had covered his body.

But just then, Annan heard footsteps.

It was the footsteps of an adult male.

His pupils shrank instantly, and his body subconsciously curled up, crouched down, and looked up.

It was completely different from human vision.

The moment Annan sensed the danger, the whole world in front of him instantly turned into a pure yellow vision.

Time seemed to flow twice as slow, and colors became blurred and unclear.

The outline of what was still moving in front of him became bright.

An old-fashioned-looking old man approached Annan.

He wore a turtleneck tan windbreaker, a dark brown top hat with beaver fur, a cane in his hand, and heavy plush boots.

At the moment their eyes met, Annan saw the introduction mission of this dungeon instance.

“1496, December 30.

“Your name is Bella. You're a werewolf with no parents and no last name.

“As we all know, the Frost Beast is a monster that looks like a wolf and is born by devouring spiritual powers such as hope, love, loyalty, happiness, and so on. The werewolves were the aboriginals before the Old Grandmother came to this land.

“There is no blood relationship between the 'Werewolves' and the 'Frost Beasts'. The only similarity is that they both look like wolves.

“But that doesn't stop the people of Austere-Winter, who suffered from the Frost Beasts, from hating and discriminating against werewolves.

“Mortals are unable to resist the plague of the Frost Beasts. So in the Austere-Winter Dukedom, the existence of transcoders must be made public. They have the responsibility of fending off Frost Beasts' assault.

“If you want a higher social standing, you must either become a transcoder or a ritualist. Bella, who is still a young girl, is always bullied by the villagers. She made up her mind to 'become a transcoder or a ritualist', 'become a big shot', and 'get ahead of other'. She recklessly left from St. Alexius Province to Frostwhisper Province during the winter year.

“This nightmare can be interpreted as Bella's dream or her delusion. She doesn't know swordsmanship, she doesn't know how to hunt, she doesn't know how to read, she isn't physically outstanding, and she doesn't have a witty mind. At the same time, she has a thin body and a mediocre temperament. Only her appearance can be regarded as “performing”.

“With her talent, identity, and ability, it is impossible for her to embark on the path of transcendence through her strength. No ritualist is willing to recruit a stupid apprentice. At most, she can only become a private pet for those with a special hobby — a rare person interested in a werewolf girl.

“However, Bella is not willing to accept such a fate.

“There was only one thought in her not-so-smart head: She wanted to be a person of high social standing.

“She is willing to pay any price for this.

“She is willing to endure all suffering.”

After these words dissipated, a line of words appeared in front of Annan's eyes again.

[Main mission: Become a transcender.]

Immediately, words of smaller font appeared under the main headline.

[Join Winter's Hand.]

[Complete the “Wolf Kiss” training.]

[Have a face-to-face conversation with Annan·Austere-Winter.]

Chapter 412: Werewolf Bella

Is he talking to me? Annan pursed his lips.

Wait a minute... He's interested in me.

Whether the “Annan” in this dream was in his first life, he could confirm it as long as he got to have a face-to-face private conversation.

After all, there were some things that only the “Annan” knew.

For example, the content of his previous life, such as things on earth.

If he could gain the “Annan's” trust in this era, it would help him to get some vital information.

But before that, he had to work on the missions first.

Be part of the Winter's Hand?

Annan came back to his senses and watched the old-fashioned old man vigilantly.

Is he from the Winter's Hand?

It looks like it.

The people of Winter's Hand have no emotions at all.

Clatter.

The crisp sound of the cane hitting the ground had a strange rhythm.

“Don't worry, puppy. I'm not your enemy.”

The old man stopped five meters away, lowered his head, and made a calm, emotionless voice to Annan, who was crouching on the ground, “You want power, right?”

“Do you want to be a transcender?”

“Yes.” Annan whimpered, and he couldn't help but avoid the eyes of the old man and lowered his head.

[TN: We will refer to Annan's possession as Bella's body as “she” from here onward.]

When “she” raised her head again, she had already adjusted her emotions and substituted herself into Bella's identity.

Those dark golden wolf pupils were full of hesitation, vigilance, and hope.

This was precisely in line with her current personality.

Annan played “Bella”, a werewolf girl who yearned for power because of being bullied.

She traveled to Frostwhisper Province in search of a change but ran into obstacles everywhere. Her wallet was stolen. When she became penniless, she could only survive by stealing food. But the other beggars had eyes on her because she was carrying food. Even though she snatched a piece of territory by relying on the werewolf's innate strength, she could barely sleep by relying on newspapers and rags. Thus, she was not living in a comfortable state.

This was the possibility Annan analyzed from the clues he found on Bella's body.

Her clothes were shabby, and an exposed laceration was inflicted during a previous fight; her earliest wounds were nearly healed. Some wounds were only a day or so old, so she should have been in a fight twice recently. Since she was not very hungry, she should have eaten last night. Since there was a rag on her body when she woke up, she should have won the fight.

Judging from those clues, she was particularly good at fighting, and she was alone. Considering her IQ, she might even be foolish enough to ask about how to become a transcender before being targeted by the Winter's Hand.

The reason why the Winter's Hand did not approach her at the very beginning was to thoroughly investigate Bella's ancestry for the past few days.

There would only be someone approaching her after ensuring she was good to go.

So at this time, Annan must not be eager to agree immediately.

That would only make them question her motives.

With Bella's character, she should now...

“But, who are you?” Annan questioned, “Being so secretive... I can't trust you!”

It was reasonable to show excessive vigilance and appropriate self-abandonment when she was just attacked and hurt.

The old man did not doubt Annan's actions.

There was still no expression on his face. His pupils were cold, and his expression was stiff like a puppet.

“I'm from the [Winter's Hand].” He said calmly, raising his right hand hidden in his sleeve.

On the thumb of his right hand, there was an icy ring that exuded cold air.

When the old man raised his hand, the air in the alley immediately became cold. Annan couldn't help but start to shiver. The gray hair on her skin grew back again, and she felt a little warmer.

“How can I trust you?” Annan's voice was a little louder at first. However, the more she spoke, the less confident she became. Her voice gradually lowered, and there was a vague sense of fear.

Of course, those were all an act.

But at the next moment, the old man reached out his hand and pointed at her.

Annan suddenly felt her emotions calm down for a moment.

It was like a sedative with her mind going blank. All her emotions were stripped away.

If she were an average person, she might have completely lost her ability to resist at this time. But Annan was used to the Reversed Winter Heart and was unexpectedly fine with it.

But she certainly was not stupid enough to show it at this time.

At this moment, the old man asked her calmly, “How much are you willing to give up for power?”

“I'm willing to give up anything.” Annan kept her expression calm and narrated in a low voice.

“Anything—that statement doesn't carry much weight.” The old man also responded in the same calm and unwavering tone.

His pupils were deep and blue. There seemed to be a surging chill visible to the naked eye.

Clatter.

The old man struck the floor with his cane and said calmly, “Are you willing to give your soul for the path of transcendence?”

“I would.”

“Can you promise to keep all secrets?”

“I can.”

“Can you give all your feelings and never fall in love with anyone in this life?”

“I can.”

“Are you willing to slaughter innocents for orders?”

“I would.”

“What about the women and children?”

“If it's a suicide mission, are you willing to do it?”

“What if it's high difficulty with a 90% chance of death?”

“I can give it a try.”

“If I ordered you to do it, would you go?”

“I will.”

So far, Annan had thought about how “Bella” would possibly reply so as not to answer too affirmatively and not be accepted.

After all, the Winter's Hand was a state secret service agency, not an assassin organization. They would incline to have a more upright view, which was better and more reassuring.

But then, the old man's question gave off a bad feeling to Annan, “Are you loyal to the Grand Duke?”

What is this question?

Loyalty — what's the point? Loyalty is nurtured. No one is born loyal.

Unless...

Annan replied after giving it a brief thought, “I can be loyal if I'm needed to.”

“Great.” The old man nodded quietly.

He raised his cane slightly and pointed at Annan.

“Hold my cane and stand up. Homeless puppy.” In a voice without the slightest emotion, he replied calmly, “From now on, you are under me.”

“Yes!” Annan held the cane and stood up.

He felt that the chilling touch in the depths of his heart was taken away. Suddenly, a feeling of excitement several times stronger than usual poured out.

He was stunned.

The previous technique was probably not just for lie detection. A considerable part of the reason was to build a good favorability upon the first encounter.

The old man withdrew his cane and asked calmly, “Your name is Bella, right?”

“Yes! My name is Bella. I have no last name.”

“Then Bella — I'm your teacher. You don't need to know my name. Just call me 'teacher', get it?”

“Yes, teacher!” She wagged her tail and leaned forward, her voice full of excitement, “When can I become a transcender?”

“You have to pass the 'Wolf Kiss' test first. You will be the ones walking with the Frost Beasts. If you can't tame a Frost Beast, you don't deserve to be a Winter's Hand.”

The old man turned around calmly and turned his head slightly back.

There seemed to be a faint blue light flashing in his deep eyes, “I warn you one last time. The [Wolf Kiss] may kill you.

“If you leave this alley with me, there will be no turning back and giving up.”

“I've made up my mind.” Annan said seriously, “Do you need to teach me anything, teacher?”

“No. You'll have to survive the [Wolf Kiss] first.” The old man answered briefly and turned to leave.

Annan followed without hesitation.

His heart moved slightly.

Wolf's kiss...

Do you mean getting eaten by the Frost Beasts?

Chapter 413: We're Only The Enemy Of Evil

Annan followed the “teacher” out of the narrow and dim alley.

She raised her head and looked at the gray sky.

Annan noticed a gray-white barrier in the sky far away. It looked like the frost formed through the condensation of the morning dew outside the window in the middle of winter.

On the outside of the frosted shell, the whistling blizzard could be faintly seen with the naked eye.

Annan knew that this was not the cursed barrier the Old Grandmother erected. Instead, it was the heat regulatory barrier the Storm Tower's Edict Wizards had installed.

In the center of large cities, there would be a semi-automatic device called [Large Barrier Generator].

It was a semi-automatic ritual run by the Edict Magic to refill the barrier. It prolonged its original duration from lasting only three days to an indefinite period. The barrier could be maintained when the materials were continuously replenished.

Annan heard from Father Vasily that the Austere-Winter Dukedom's barrier was fully automatic. It involved one of the many pieces of knowledge that many ritualists did not want to publish: “Ritual doesn't necessarily need 'humans' to participate” to suppress the growth of ritual automation technology.

“Ritual automation” was a considerable technology level in Austere-Winter Dukedom and the Papal Kingdom. Unfortunately, this directly put many ritualists out of work.

They could not even find other jobs.

If a ritualist lost his job, it was effectively the same as losing the “necessity of existence”. After all, every ritualist was dangerous. No one knew how much knowledge they had in their minds and whether they would execute a dangerous ritual someday or bring a severe distortion to the environment because of a failed ritual.

There were indeed some rituals that could only be performed by humans. But this was because there were special conditions that “must be performed by living beings with self-awareness” in some rituals.

But the effect of the ritual was correlated to its cost.

Considering the cost, the poor Austere-Winter Dukedom couldn't use an overly powerful barrier to shield the entire city. Although this barrier was called the “Heat Regulatory Barrier”, its primary function was to isolate cold winds and blizzards.

The chill oozing from the ground was not dispelled. Instead, the barrier was like a giant, transparent glass cover.

Even so, these large cities had become Austerian's last hope.

What was used to stop the curse of the Gray Mists was the frigid blizzard that could freeze even the curse.

Since the blizzard could freeze curses, it could also freeze ordinary people, beasts, and crops into death.

As a result, the subway usage rate of Austere-Winter Dukedom was dozens of times more frequent than that of other countries. In this case, it was fair to say that the subway was inclined toward civilian usage already.

The subways of other countries were utilized in the import, export, and transportation of transcoders in and out of the country. In the Noah Kingdom's case, they had started to build an above-ground railway dedicated to the domestic transport of goods and people.

However, for Austere-Winter Dukedom, not even the transcoders could travel from one city to another alive, let alone the ordinary people.

Another weight in the circumstances [capable of freezing curse] was that the transcoder would not be able to replenish their mana in the blizzard.

Even the metals would be cracked in the never-ending blizzard, not to mention that the blizzard's temperature here was even lower than that in other countries. So it was even impossible to build an above-ground railway.

Many corpses were buried in the snow of the wild.

Most were illegal transcoders driven out of the city and left to fend for themselves. Ordinary people could be beheaded if they committed capital crimes, but not the transcoders.

If they were to die, they would cause trouble for the people in the city.

But the expulsion from Austere-Winter in the winter year was the same as sending a person out in a canoe with a day's worth of food and water from the ship. Again, the mortality rate was evident.

Ordinary people could only take the subway.

But “Bella,” who was played by Annan currently, was different.

It was difficult for werewolves to purchase subway tickets, and Bella was a werewolf who had no money.

If Annan had guessed correctly, Bella had faced the never-ending blizzard, walking step by step in the land covered with heavy snow across dozens of miles. She must have come from one barrier to another.

Annan did not know how Bella did it.

But anyway, the “teacher” brought Annan to the subway station.

It was not the same as the subway station in Annan's memories.

Inside the brass-colored station, there was a faint roar that sounded like an old factory. The water traces on the ground were slightly frozen. When someone walked on it, there would be a creaking sound.

The crowd gathered in the hustle and bustle, chattering among themselves. White mist rhythmically spewed out of their mouth and nose as they breathed.

Although it was a civilian subway, the people here were well-dressed.

In other words, they only came here to take the subway after they had dressed up.

Annan, dressed in shabby clothes, appeared out of place.

“Is this your first subway ride?” Looking at Annan, who was looking around, the old man glanced at Annan.

There was no emotion in those cold eyes.

Annan showed a silly smile and responded sincerely and enthusiastically, “Yes, teacher!

“This is the first time in my life that I have taken the subway!” Her loud voice caused the people around her to look over with slight disgust.

However, she did not have any special reaction to it. Instead, she did not care about the sight of passers-by.

Annan did not lie either.

This was indeed the first time Annan took the subway in this “life”.

The old man reached out his hand to grab Annan's arm and let her lean against him, while the other hand inadvertently revealed a cold ring while silently raising his head and scanning the crowd.

When the passers-by around saw the ring, their expressions suddenly changed. They turned around immediately, pretending that they did not see anything. Even the chatters had faded for a while.

Although Annan knew it was impolite to speak at this time, Annan still asked curiously out of the need for acting, “Teacher, are they afraid of you?”

“Yes.” The old man answered straightforwardly.

There was no emotional fluctuation in his pupils.

He took Annan into the train that had just arrived and took a seat in the front seat of the first cabin. He had hidden Annan further in at the seat by the window.

After being seated, Annan continued to ask, “Why? They didn't commit a crime.”

“Because they know they're not perfect.” The old man replied slowly, “They all know they may commit crimes in the future. That's why they are afraid of me.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes.” The old man replied calmly, “You have to make them fear you like this. The more afraid they are, the less they dare to commit a crime.

“You also have to keep in mind that we are not righteous but the enemy of evil.”

Annan raised her head the moment she heard this sentence.

Annan suddenly felt the world around him turning scarlet in the blink of an eye.

Intermittent shouting, roaring, and crying came from all directions as if he were plunged into the deep water of chaos.

It felt like an old TV with a poor signal.

The bustling subway station shuddered a few times. Then, the scene disappeared utterly, turning into a dim room.

The surroundings were narrow, dark, and damp. It was more like a bathroom than a ward.

His body turned into a man in his twenties. At that time, he was only wearing underwear, his hands and feet were tied back, fixed on a chair, and he was gasping for breath.

It felt like he just woke up from a nightmare.

“You're awake?” A sullen, eunuch-like voice sounded behind Annan, “Then, let's continue... Mr. Danton.”

The Righteous Player(s) C414– The Escape Room Of Death & Fear

Chapter 414: The Escape Room Of Death & Fear

With that gloomy voice sounded, the surrounding lights turned on instantly.

Annan narrowed his eyes narrow subconsciously because of the sudden glare.

Is this Danton's nightmare?

Even though I was informed that I could be traveling back and forth in multiple nightmares, this is still a little hard to adapt to.

Is there a mission?

At this moment, Annan opened up the system panel:

Health: 95%

He was startled.

Not because it was low, but how could it be so high?

His avatar was being tortured.

Suddenly, a splash of cold water came without warning, soaking Annan's body instantly.

His hair went utterly wet, and the sudden cold water irritated his back to the point where his muscles tensed. But he was still unable to get up from his chair.

"...Ha...ha—?!"

Annan opened his mouth subconsciously, gasping for breath. His heart palpitated intensely.

In just five seconds or so, twice as much cold water than just now was poured onto him.

The bone-seeping chills struck Annan into suffocation for a while.

He had the illusion that he was about to drown for a moment, and then the water flow stopped abruptly.

"Wait...wait! What are you doing?" Since another wave of cold water would hit him soon, Annan asked quickly.

He suddenly fell into this nightmare and didn't even have the main mission, let alone a guide or instruction.

He did not even know what was going on!

"Be obedient, Mr. Danton." The eunuch-like voice sounded gloomy again, "This is a necessary treatment.

"Your spirit needs to be cleaned." Before Annan could think about it, icy water at the portion that exceeded the previous two splashes combined poured down!

This time Annan finally could not help but choke. The water was much cooler than the last time!

This is simply the arctic ice water!

Only then did he react that this seemed to be a "water treatment" that was once used to treat psychic influences!

But screw this ice water!

"Cough...cough..." Finally, Annan couldn't help but cough, "Wait... I'm choking..."

The water on the ground had reached his ankles.

However, more water came before Annan could rest or receive any response.

But the water did not stop this time, and the man behind him stopped talking.

At this moment, Annan suddenly realized everything.

Perhaps the purpose of Danton's coming here was to treat himself, but the “doctor” who performed the treatment wanted to kill him!

I can't sit still like this!

I will die!

Maybe, the next time water splashing on me will be boiling water...

But there are no silver coins around.

Without any hesitation, Annan tried hard to break free from the ropes that bound his wrists on both sides of the chair.

He struggled for a while and immediately found that the knot was too firm. It was unlike it was used to stop the patient from struggling, but more like it was used to kidnap someone.

Can the spell work then?

Annan quickly flashed the spells he mastered in his mind. However, he found that his head was being continuously washed with ice water, and he could not concentrate. There was no way for him to activate the guided spells and chant spells at all.

He could not even open his eyes!

Even if he opened it, he couldn't see anyone in front of him at all. His wrist was buckled down, so [Chilling Touch] wasn't an option either.

Wait, something is wrong!

At the next moment, Annan suddenly opened his eyes.

Thank goodness Danton learned the spells from the Energy Falteration School!

Azure blue's brilliance flashed from his eyes. While he lowered his head, he spat out a complicated and cold sentence, “Get out!”

[Frost Lingual]!

As the words in his mouth sounded, the surroundings suddenly became gloomy and cold.

A spatter of water turned into a sharp ice blade. It quickly flew to Annan's left wrist. While cutting the hemp rope, it also left a cut about two centimeters thick and four centimeters long on his wrist.

Annan breathed in the cold air, raised his left hand, pulled out the ice blade with his teeth, and then held the blade backwardly with his left hand. It allowed him to cut the rope binding his right wrist!

Then, it would be the ropes at the ankles. As the water level almost reached his knees, he could feel the resistance as his hands plunged into the icy water.

Perhaps because of the lack of [Frostwhisper] profession, Annan felt his tongue gradually freezing after utilizing [Frost Lingual]. His skin also developed obvious frostbite from the sudden cooling of the surrounding air.

His health was depleted to 53%!

But the good news was that he finally got up from his chair!

He looked back and found that there was no one behind him at all. There was only a closed vent at more than two meters in height. A square sewer was laid directly above him, and ice water was sloping down toward the seat.

Luckily, I responded quickly.

Annan gritted his teeth and stood up from the ice water staggeringly.

If he had just tried to communicate with the person behind him, the water might have almost touched his chest by the time he reacted.

By then, he could not untie the rope around his ankle even if he had the means.

“You can trap Danton, but you can't trap me.” Annan muttered in a low voice and said, “Frost element—”

Danton's body had not awakened the frost element, so Annan had to exchange mana for the elemental power first.

“—The frost makes thy wheel, the wall makes thy path!”

With a feeling of emptiness rising in his body, Annan unleashed a Frost Wheel, half the size smaller than him, and quickly blasted the wall.

Ahead of him was an empty, dark space. Then, the water on the ground began to flow over there.

A doubt suddenly appeared in Annan's mind.

This should be the “past” that Danton has personally experienced, right?

For a Soul Snatch Wizard, this murdering device was far deadlier. There was no way Danton could escape from it, so to speak... but how did he survive?

Also, who was planning the murder?

Or, was it just Danton's “fear for death”?

Annan summoned the panel again and noticed that his health had been drained to less than 50%, so he rushed out the cracked wall without thinking.

At the next moment, Annan was in a trance.

He felt he was standing in front of his seat in a daze. The world in front of him once again became a subway.

Am I back? That's so quick?

“Why are you standing? Sit down.” The teacher beside her (Bella) frowned slightly and said plainly.

“Yes.” Annan was about to sit down, but she suddenly froze on the spot when her butt touched the seat.

Eh?

She felt her body freezing, and she couldn't help but shiver.

After looking down, Annan saw a wound about four centimeters long on Bella's wrist.

The wound was still new. It was wet around the injury and seemed to be bleeding slowly.

Annan glanced back at the teacher and gestured her left hand.

But she realized that the teacher seemed unable to see the wound. The teacher's eyes did not even glance at the wound.

Annan opened up his panel:

[Health: 37%]

Why am I suddenly at my last bit of health?

I had 90% of Health previously.

Unless the 53% damage I suffered when I was Danton just now was taken into the calculation.

All the damage suffered in the previous nightmare fragments was inflicted upon me?

In Bella's nightmare, the damage I had previously suffered is invisible to everyone. In other words, that means there are no ways for me to heal the damage.

I'm fucked.

Why do I suddenly feel that three elixirs are not enough?

Annan suddenly realized the difficulty in this [Twisted] level nightmare.

She thought that this nightmare was too simple. After all, she had almost completed all three side missions.

Unexpectedly, the core difficulty of this nightmare lay in the “limited-time escape room at the lowest cost”.

The difficulty with the Gallery nightmare was about “solving the puzzle”; the difficulty of the Great Hunt nightmare was in the “role-playing”.

They were all [Twisted] or [Distorted] level of nightmares. The nightmare tentatively named [Wolf Kiss] was composed of countless “escaping rooms” or other dangerous rooms.

Damn, is this the other-worldly Cube [1]?

Annan gritted her teeth, shivering in her seat to keep warm while having her mind racing in thoughts. Her heart, stimulated by the ice water, was beating fast. There was a faint sore at it.

She only had three lives and depleted half of them at this time.

He could withstand about six trials if used reasonably, provided that the “Wolf Kiss” ritual would not deduct too much health.

Let's wait for the next death escape room.

Annan could not figure out its specific rules and mechanisms by only experiencing it once.

I have to do it again.

Just once is fine...

The Righteous Player(s) C415– Young Annan & Dmitri

Chapter 415: Young Annan & Dmitri

They did not stay long on the subway.

After all, they were moving within the city. The teacher led Annan off the subway after a 20 minutes ride.

After exiting the subway station, they were already at the gate of the Grand Duke's Residence.

Annan was a little surprised.

Austere-Winter's Grand Duke allowed a subway station to be built before his gate.

Wouldn't it be noisy? With so many people coming in and out of the subway station, it would still be quite loud even when there was still some distance from the Grand Duke's Residence gate.

With people coming and going like this, it was difficult to keep the place safe as well.

Annan noticed that Austere-Winter's Grand Duke's Residence was much smaller than the Noah Kingdom's Palace.

The Grand Duke's Residence was rectangular. It appeared to have the width of a street. There were about fifty windows per floor.

The height of the residence reached three floors. Only the innermost section had four floors, forming a white tower.

There were many circular columns arranged outside. Each column had a four windows gap between them. Soon, Annan realized that the wall rotated about five degrees at each subsequent column. Therefore, it presented a flat arc that bulged outward.

Annan followed the teacher to a narrow door on the right.

The old man reached out his right hand and tapped the heavy black iron gate with a ring exuding cold air.

With a muffled sound, the narrow metal door that was only two people wide opened inward on its own.

“Enter.” The old man answered briefly, then walked in with Annan.

Annan followed closely behind the old man. She did not see the old man doing anything in particular, but the door closed again automatically after she passed through.

What? An automatic door. Annan commented in his heart.

After passing a narrow corridor with frescoes on the walls and ceiling and metal soldier statues on either side, Annan followed the old man into the side door.

It was a small garden.

Annan saw a small fountain in the middle. A white trace extended from the fountain to the east, west, north, and south, dividing the area into four rectangles.

It was relatively wide here, about the size of an ordinary city square. It seemed the place was much bigger than how it looked from the outside. Surprisingly, this place already had ten main doors, even not counting the side doors.

The innermost building should be the Austere-Winter's Grand Duke's quarters.

Where does the Old Grandmother hibernate?

Is it at the back of that building?

Or underground?

Annan remembered that when the Old Grandmother hibernated as a dragon. However, Austere-Winter's Grand Duke's place was too small. She even wondered if a dragon could be stuffed here.

This place was a little bigger than the viscount's mansion in Roseburg — just a little bit. Plus, that included dedicated areas for governing purposes.

Of course, Annan also understood that the Austere-Winter's Grand Duke had a different natural environment than the Noah's Kingdom.

The city of Austere-Winter Dukedom was built under the heat regulatory barrier. There was not much living space. If the Austere-Winter's Grand Duke family occupied too much space, fewer civilians could be accommodated.

What happened now was to allow more people to survive.

Even the nobles had cramped dwellings.

Annan could even see the desk inside from the window. Even for the Grand Duke's Residence, the three buildings outside served as the government office building.

The four-story, one-street-long section was the Austere-Winter's Grand Duke's house. This was probably the only dwelling for the Austere-Winter family.

At this moment, it seemed that the [Winter's Hand] might also live here.

For the ruler's family, this place was too narrow. The Grand Duke's dwelling was so limited that it lost the viscount's mansion.

Travelers from other countries could not help but compare their royal palaces with them and feel complacent that their country was bigger than the Austere-Winter Dukedom.

But the Austerians were not ashamed of it. Instead, they were proud of it.

That was because they had leaders who truly loved their people.

It was indeed their pride.

“—Stand up, Annan.” Just then, Annan suddenly heard someone calling “his” name.

She looked over there reflexively.

But she found out that two people were standing there.

One was Dmitri, whom Annan had met in “Nightmare: The Great Hunt,” and the other was the young Annan.

He looked similar to Maria, but with short hair that only reached the shoulders. Maria's hair draped down to her waist. Other than that, they were almost indistinguishable.

In their hands, one of them held a bladed sword. Indeed, it was not a wooden or a training sword but a bladed metal sword that could be used in combat. The only difference was that Annan held the sword in both hands, while Dmitri only held the sword in his right hand, with his left hand in his pocket.

The young Annan coughed softly, stared at Dmitri closely, and quickly got up.

“Young Annan” did not look at her but spoke coldly, “Again!”

The voice made Annan dazed for a moment. In this blurred moment, “he” thought it was Maria from “Nightmare: White Tower”.

After all, hearing his voice differed from hearing it from the other's perspective.

The next moment, what surprised Annan was the tip of Dmitri's sword shining with a cold, crystal-colored light.

As the blade moved, frost traces painted the air. Traces of crystal light were left in the air, drawing elegant paths one after another.

That's [Frost Sword]! Annan recognized it instantly.

It was completely different from the Frost Sword Annan used.

Dmitri's pace was like fencing, moving back and forth rhythmically.

The young Annan's blade was also quickly stained with pale white marks from the Frost Sword. However, the damages were only at the degree of LV1. Only light frost marks that were barely visible to the naked eye could be seen.

The young Annan appeared as if using a greatsword. While spinning the sword above his head like a helicopter, he lowered his body and charged forward.

This was the [Bodyguard Swordsmanship] that Annan was good at!

However, Dmitri's figure flickered like a phantom before Annan's eyes.

As Dmitri took a step back, he pointed out the long sword and tapped at the young Annan's sword.

Frost traces glued the two swords together. At the same time, Dmitri easily broke the balance of Annan's footsteps. With that, the young Annan couldn't help but fall forward. The sword that was initially protecting his head section was thrown back to his waist.

Immediately after, Dmitri took a step forward. He pointed the cold blade at young Annan's neck, backhanded!

He wouldn't be able to dodge it!

The young Annan loses his balance, and it appears as if he is rushing to the blade with his neck. How could he avoid this attack?

At this moment, Annan took a step forward subconsciously.

Not trying to "save himself", but subconsciously did not want to see a child die in training.

But the old man pressed on her shoulder.

Before Annan could ask, the young Annan instantly crouched and stood on both feet like a cunning young wolf. At the same time, he sent out one of his hands and slapped Dmitri's right inner wrist from the bottom up.

The mysterious technique of utilizing body weight shook Dmitri's grip on the sword.

At the same time, the young Annan suddenly spun in a circle. Instead of a slash, it felt more like flinging his sword.

With the attack incorporating the spiral momentum, Annan's blade collided with Dmitri's blade, and the sword in Dmitri's hand was instantly knocked away!

That's [Disarm]! Annan realized immediately.

This was one of the starting skills that Annan had mastered.

But for Annan, [Disarm] was just a technique that forced the opponent to release the weapon when the opponent showed a flaw. It was not so fancy at all.

Wow!

In my childhood form, did I have so much combat experience?

But just when Annan thought "he" was going to win, Dmitri suddenly stepped sideways and took a step forward.

Frost traces spread silently to the ground from under Dmitri's feet. His slender legs assaulted the knee socket of Annan's right leg, hooking Annan's right leg and staggering him forward. After that, he happened to step on the icy surface smoothly.

It was a fluent and light kick from the side. Dmitri's attack glued Annan's knee socket to the ground, leaving Annan only half a meter away from the ground.

Then, the young Annan fell to the ground in an embarrassed manner.

The frost traces on the ground returned to Dmitri's feet again.

He kicked his blade up lightly and held it in his hand again.

“Stand up, Annan.” Dmitri spoke again.

The young Annan caught a couple of breaths before getting up again.

The real Annan next to him was dumbfounded.

No wonder Annan fell to the ground during the swordsmanship sparring...

Is the Austere-Winter family so good in combat?

The Righteous Player(s) C416: The Protectors Of Austere–Winter

Chapter 416: The Protectors Of Austere-Winter

This exquisite fighting technique...

If Annan could grasp it when he transmigrated to this world... or when he just awakened his memory, Annan could defeat ten opponents at once, no matter if they were bandits or mercenaries.

He did not even realize that the Frost Sword could adhere to and drag the opponent's weapon. He still did not understand Dmitri's technique of reproducing Esmeralda Blood Freeze.

[TN: Steven's ability allows him to decrease the temperature of his blood to freeze targets. (link)]

As a matter of fact, Dmitri was not a transcender at all.

In other words, the technique fell into the “skill” category, just like [Frost Sword]. It was not the utilization of transcended power.

Moreover, that fluent swordsmanship with kicks.

Annan was confident that even an ordinary Silver Rank transcender, who was not proficient in combat, would not be able to defeat Dmitri in close combat.

Also, Dmitri was using a one-handed sword only.

Dmitri did not utilize an extra crossbow or shield with his free hand. Instead, he had one in his pocket.

Suddenly, Annan noticed that he was watching his younger self and Dmitri for too long.

Annan's heart suddenly tightened. In a low voice, she asked the old man and brushed off the suspicion, “Is that Austere-Winter's Grand Duke?”

[TN: I will describe Annan as “she”, since Annan now possesses Bella.]

“That's His Highness Dmitri.” The old man replied calmly and emotionlessly, “Next to him is His Highness Annan.”

“Can I...”

“No, you can't.” Before Annan could say anything, the old man refused indifferently, “After you pass the [Wolf Kiss] ritual alive, you will naturally get to meet his highnesses.”

Hearing the old man's voice, Dmitri turned around.

His long, pure black hair fell to his waist. However, it was slightly different from his hairstyle on the Noah Continent. Dmitri had braided his hair.

However, he was clean with no trace of dirt and dust to be seen. The serious frowning expression was still there, like in Annan's previous memory.

He glanced at Annan, who was a werewolf at the moment, without saying anything or asking her name.

Dmitri just turned around and looked at the old man. “Is this the one who traversed the blizzard?”

“Yes, Your Highness.” The old man nodded.

He did not pay a formal greeting to Dmitri, nor did not say any honorifics. Instead, he replied calmly, “If it's fine, I'll take her for a 'Wolf Kiss'.”

“Go.” Dmitri frowned and nodded slightly.

The young Annan on the side also looked over calmly. The real Annan just happened to look over.

For a moment, their eyes met.

For some reason, Annan felt a chill in her heart after being stared at by “him”.

Annan held her breath.

The seemingly weak body was unexpectedly divine.

It was reminiscent of the deities. Those were indifferent and clear gazes.

Others might not realize it, and they might think that was a well-behaved appearance of “seriously and quietly listening”.

It was something only Annan could perceive.

That was definitely not what he had seen before.

It was definitely not the look that Annan would have.

At this moment, Annan realized that he was a completely different person before the memory loss despite sharing the same memories on Earth.

The influence of Winter Heart on personality was far too significant.

They might have the same knowledge and the same soul in their bodies.

However, reversing the Winter Heart could determine his course of action.

If the current Annan was like a fearless “Adventurer”, then Annan in the previous life was like a “Demon King” with no compassion and empathy.

Those were eyes indifferent to life, power, and the world.

Annan did not doubt that the previous “self” might destroy the world.

Is this me who acquires the Winter Heart?

It was not like an ignorant young child trying to inherit this talent and responsibility, but having the positive emotions frozen over time.

Annan was still a little lost, but he felt his shoulders were being held down.

She woke up and followed the old man inside the building, “Bella.”

The old and indifferent voice from her ears brought her back to reality, “The fate of the Austere-Winter family is already heavy. Don't let them remember the names of the dead, and don't let them talk to the dead.

“We are the Protectors. We are not only protecting their bodies but also their minds. Since birth, they have not felt joy, hope, courage, or love. The Frost Beats feasted on their emotions since birth.

“Do you understand the pain?”

“I don't understand, teacher.” Annan was silent for a while but answered honestly.

She really could not empathize with it, but she was aligned with this possibility.

“Of course, you don't understand.” The old man said flatly, “But you will soon understand.

“Why did the Winter's Hand devote allegiance to the Austere-Winter Family? We have full respect for them because we have tasted the bitterness of despair. If you have not experienced it, you will not understand.”

With that, the old man opened the corridor door with the ring again. “Go in. It's right at the end.”

He announced, “Come in, Bella.”

Annan noticed that the corridor was dark and deep, with no lights.

The old man took the first step and walked in.

Before being engulfed by the darkness, he turned his head to give Annan a nonchalant look and motioned her to follow.

Is there really an end?

Annan grew suspicious of it after the old man's warning.

She remembered that the old man mentioning the “Wolf Kiss” ritual was capable of killing a person.

This dark corridor was too suspicious.

Will a Frost Beast lunge at me when I'm halfway through the corridor? Then, there comes the chase event.

Annan was silent for a while but stepped inside.

But right after he walked in, the door behind him suddenly creaked and closed on its own, making a muffled thud.

The next moment, Annan suddenly felt the world around her turning scarlet in the blink of an eye.

It's the familiar feeling.

But this time, I haven't sat down yet...

Those sentences just popped into Annan's mind.

He heard the intermittent screaming, roaring, and crying in his ears, coming from all directions.

It was like a TV with a bad signal. The world around him was noisy and jittery.

After a few moments, Annan fell into a trance, realizing that he had fallen into a long corridor.

The corridor was unusually pure white, reminiscent of a girl's fair skin.

At a position about one meter below, it looked like the skin scorched by fire, browned, charred, distorted, soaked in blood, and even dripping grease could be seen.

At the end of the corridor was a large piece of a pure red curtain five meters high. It was also clean and pure red, just like the corridor's walls.

Annan had become a middle-aged man dressed as a detective.

He wore a beret with a pipe in his mouth. He also held a heavy cane with a steel core in his right hand.

"I see." Annan narrowed his eyes slightly and took a sip of his cigarette.

This body seems proficient in analytical thinking. He is worthy to be a detective.

I should take advantage of this perk to sort out my thoughts.

This time Annan did not trigger the dream crossing mechanism when he sat down. Instead, he fell into his nightmare when he entered the corridor.

So, do I fall into someone else's dream when the surrounding environment fits the scene of a particular nightmare fragment?

Previously, the old man put Annan in the subway train's front row. Annan entered the nightmare the moment the subway door closed.

During that moment, the space in front of Annan shared the same distance as he was from the wall in that "treatment room".

With that inference, the length and width of this corridor should also be similar to the corridor at Austere-Winter's Residence. Annan could take this opportunity to verify this hypothesis. However, he had to leave this nightmare first, so he temporarily noted this conjecture in his head.

The treatment room was blurred. In comparison, it showed that this corridor was not a memory “remembered” by the deceased.

Come to think of it, they did not have a soul at all. How did the dream world download the relevant information?

It was just their mental imprint — an abstract, deep fear hidden in a curse or stored in their mind.

What Danton dreaded was the treatment... So, was he suffering from a mental illness?

Did that happen after he became the Soul Snatch Wizard?

Or was it before?

If these nightmare fragments were the things that the dead feared, it was unsurprising for anything that happened in the nightmare. It would be illogical, resembling a real “nightmare” in sleep.

“What will it be this time?” Annan exhaled a smoke ring and murmured in a low voice, “Fire? Demon? Or what?”

But fortunately, there was no immediate danger in this place at the start, unlike the last nightmare fragment.

So, he decided to check his status panel in the end.

Health 100%. Awesome.

I have a dagger and a pistol with six bullets.

I don't have a mana pool, so this body is not a wizard. The muscles aren't well-trained, and there is no trace of swordsmanship.

Is it a hunter?

Or lurker?

Regardless, Annan did not know any skills in those professions.

He only knew that he had three silver coins in his pocket.

“Ah.” The corner of Annan's mouth rose slightly, and he grabbed one of the silver coins without hesitation.

“Tribute to the silver coin, Lord Silver Sire.”

He kissed the silver coin and said in a low voice, “Bless me—”

So Annan no longer hesitated, raised his head, and walked forward.

The Righteous Player(s) C417– Mr Detective's Fear

Chapter 417: Mr Detective's Fear

Annan narrowed his eyes slightly and walked forward slowly.

He puffed his cigarette, and his mind gradually became clearer.

Fragments of information quickly connected in Annan's eyes.

This could be the curse effect held by the host of this dream.

Can smoking improve thinking? Is it a pipe? What gas is inhaled?

Wait, it doesn't matter.

Annan quickly interrupted his thinking from deviating too far.

Is the inclination to deviate from the main thinking path a component of the curse?

Hmph.

"This is weird." Annan snorted softly and stroked the stubble on his chin.

The middle-aged male detective spoke charmingly and methodically, "A real detective? Sure enough, it's a [Hunter] type profession.

"How much curse does it hold that it influences my behavior patterns? Hmph, it doesn't matter."

Annan forced himself to stop thinking again, reaching out and gently touching the white wall beside him.

This is not an illusion.

When Annan came into contact with the wall, he immediately recognized that the wall was soft.

Roughly speaking, it gave off the feeling of the skin. In terms of muscle density and fat density, the person was not petite, but not fat either, probably slightly chubby.

"This thinking ability." Annan bit his lip when he realized that his mind was racing.

Why does the white wall immediately give me a sense of "girly skin"?

Shouldn't the thinking pattern generally start with the wall color being 'lily' or 'cream' or something?

"There's only one reason. This is the first time I've entered the body of a transcender whose mind far surpasses mine."

Annan said calmly, "It's like how I possessed Bella's body and acquired the werewolf transformation ability and dynamic vision. After I acquire the body of a detective, do I also have his ability to think and analyze?"

"It turns out that this nightmare is about focus. I should still focus my attention. The thinking deviation may not be the side effect of the curse, but my will is not adapted to this level of thinking speed. After completing the thoughts, I subconsciously think further—

"No, calm down. Let's continue to analyze this place..."

“I instinctively make associations to other things because this body has superb analytical thinking.”

Annan stopped, squatted lightly, and reached out to touch the skin that seemed to be scorched by fire.

Sure enough, the sensation was the touch of the skin after being scorched.

He turned his head and squinted at the pure red curtain fluttering in the distance.

It was indeed a charming and pure red.

Compared to the curtain on the stage, it had no heavy shadow; if it was compared to the silk skirt, it had no reflection.

“Is that blood? No, it's fire. That explains the scorch marks on the walls.”

Annan murmured in a low voice, speaking out to limit the speed of his thinking, “When I reach the corridor's end, will the curtain turn into flames and block the way?”

“But why are the scorch marks closer to the ground when the curtains are hung high?” Annan stomped lightly.

The texture feedback told him it was an old wooden floor under his feet. With the lack of damp proofing [1], the moisture on the floor was terrible.

Since it was detailed to this extent, it was not fabricated out of thin air.

Is it different from Danton's Nightmare?

This is what Mr. Detective has been through.

“Strange.” Annan whispered, “Why haven't there been traps yet?”

According to his reasoning, this nightmare section should be composed of one escape room after another. Moreover, it should be a deadly trap based on the nightmare's host's character.

For example, Danton's weakness as a Soul Snatch Wizard was the lack of direct attack. Thus, there was no living person in his nightmares at all. The continuous pouring of ice water stopped him from using any complex spells. The eunuch's voice might be his fear of the Rotten Man. The gradual death trap corresponded to Danton's overly conservative character.

Indeed, Danton had an overly conservative character.

Danton had controlled the Fourth Prince for several years. If he took a little risk, he could try to plot and control Henry VIII.

But he never made a move in the end.

On the one hand, it was because of obeying Rotten Man's orders. On the other hand, it should be his prudence. Or rather, the indecision that was based on timidity.

Well, since this is the detective's fear of death.

What kind of trap will it be?

“I'm standing here thinking, and I have collected so much information. But time doesn't seem to have passed at all. I even took a few steps forward, but there was no reaction. It is too calm.”

It is as if I was deliberately left here to think.

Could it be that?

Annan's heart suddenly tightened.

He no longer hesitated and suddenly trotted forward.

His boots tapped on the wooden floor, making a series of noises.

Along the way, there was no sudden attack, and everything around was unusually calm.

But the sense of danger in Annan's heart also became stronger.

After approaching the pure red curtain, he did not try to get under it.

Silver, slender blades protruded from Annan's fingers.

Annan raised his right hand forward while turning sideways.

What he had seen before, the match between the young Annan and Dmitri, came to mind.

The swordsmanship skills that belonged to Dmitri had revived from the depths of Annan's memory.

The blade was not covered with crystal-colored frost.

However, the incomparably light cuts formed a perfect arc in the air.

Without hurting the blade incarnated through the [Sharp Object] skill, Annan cut off the curtain blocking the path with a few slashes.

Unexpectedly, the curtains instantly burned and turned into threatening flames after they fell to the ground. The curtain that had not been cut off in the air also burned. The flames visible to the naked eye completely blocked the entrance.

Even though Annan backed away subconsciously, he could not escape the rapidly spreading flames.

That scorching heat was not the ordinary flame burning on a wooden floor. Instead, the reaction felt like a lit match falling into gasoline on the ground.

The fire spread so fast that it was unstoppable and irreversible.

If Annan did not cut the curtain, he would be enveloped in flames when he tried to slip through the curtain.

But even so, I can't survive this at all!

Just as Annan was thinking about how to escape, another voice appeared in his mind:

Does Mr. Detective fear flames? Why? What's up with the skin on this wall?

“You're so noisy!” Annan yelled and threw the smoking pipe away.

The thought acceleration brought about by the pipe was irrelevant.

There was something else more pressing than that.

While stepping through the sea of fire, he quickly took off his jacket and held it around his head. In addition, he did not forget to put the remaining two silver coins in his trouser pocket.

There is no time to drench myself with water. I have to rush through this place!

Annan endured the burning pain on the soles of his feet and dashed forward in the corridor that turned into a sea of fire.

He held his jacket up and crashed directly into the door that was burning with flames!

There was no pain.

But the jacket burned directly.

After rushing through the door of flames, Annan quickly ran to the wooden steps behind the door, took off his jacket without thinking, and swung a few times in the air to try to extinguish the flames.

Luckily there were no flames on the steps.

But the more he swung, the more intense the flames.

What is the pattern? What does this flame foretell? That corridor—

“Damn, is this brain sick!?” Annan couldn't help but complain.

He threw the unsalvageable jacket directly behind him, kicked open the wooden door, and raised the [Sharp Object] in his hand.

Don't move. That was what was in his mind.

But after seeing everything clearly, Annan's pupils shrank instantly.

He was not in the basement at all.

Annan had a misjudgment since he did not feel any shaking movement.

I'm in the cabin.

This is a blazing passenger ship.

Chapter 418: The Untouchable Fire of Reasoning

Annan realized something was wrong the moment he broke through the door.

The smell of alcohol, burnt, blood, and gunpowder...

At the moment of catching these smells, Annan figured out everything.

No doubt a group of pirates had already landed to plunder this place.

These pirates utilized alcohol and fire arrows and quickly dismantled the resistance coming from the sailors.

The sailors just held their heads in their hands, stopped resisting, and allowed the plundering.

The reason was probably straightforward.

They had to put out the fire as soon as possible. Otherwise, all the people on the ship would die in the sea.

So they did not even have the will to fight. If they could not satisfy the pirates as soon as possible, they would all die here as time passed.

It was just a merchant ship.

The ship was not designed to defeat pirates but to put on more people and goods.

The pirates did not kill them at all. Instead, they were hustling people and cargo on deck.

Probably some agreement was reached. After moving part of the cargo, the sailors would still have time to put out the fire.

Annan saw a chubby woman in her twenties with fair skin looking at him in horror.

She was being towed onto the pirate ship by two pirates.

“Dad!” She looked at Annan and shouted.

But why?

That doesn’t seem like a desperate cry for help but consternation and fear.

“—Ugh.” Suddenly, Annan couldn’t help but hold his throat due to the intense suffocation.

He gasped for breath, but the world in front of him suddenly became hallucinatory.

The world around him was quickly dyed with many strange colors — cyan, blue, green, yellow, and purple. The colors changed rapidly, and a strong sense of suffocation came from his chest.

Intense dizziness overwhelmed Annan and put him to the ground.

“Yo, it’s a Master Transcender.” Someone sneered, “He seems to be a priest.”

After Annan broke through the door, he was immediately noticed by the pirates holding the silver blade.

But the pirates were surprisingly calm.

Being stared at by a transcender, they did not even panic.

Annan looked over but couldn’t even see their faces.

Their faces were blurred, like the passers-by in a dream.

The eyes of ridicule stared at him from all directions.

“Even the barrier can’t stop your curiosity?” The pirate sneered, “It’s the high seas here.”

“You’re courting your death.”

At that moment, Annan realized the detective’s fear.

He was a stowaway, or possibly a transcender who had broken the law in another country.

He could not use the subway, so he chose to board this passenger ship to cross the border.

But for Mr. Detective as a transcender, the dense air of the Gray Mists over the high seas was untreatable and poisonous. Thus, he could only stay at the bottom of the cabin with the sealed barrier.

Unfortunately, he happened to be plundered by pirates.

The plunder might not have happened. After all, those pirates did not even have faces. Their faces would be recorded in the nightmare if it was real history.

It was not something that happened after all. Instead, it was a hypothetical nightmare made up of nothing but fear.

Instead, this was the detective’s “hope” or “fear” that a pirate would kidnap his daughter.

Is it because his daughter is already dead? Or is it because his daughter died from the fire, or something else...

In short, the outcome must have been his daughter found dead on the upper floors.

He knew this clearly, but he couldn’t leave that corridor, and he could only think quietly.

He could only stand in place and think calmly. Unfortunately, he could not do anything else, just like a real “detective”. The “flame” blocking the exit was to prevent him from seeing the truth with his own eyes; the scorched wall indicated that his daughter died “due to fire”.

Even if he knew everything, he could not save or kill anyone — [The Predicament of the Aware].

...Damn it...how is this brain...still racing at such a moment...

Annan’s consciousness gradually became blurred.

Is this what a transcender feels after entering the Gray Mists?

Heartache and shortness of breath;

The voices around you distort and become distant;

The color of the world in front of me becomes strange and dazzling;

There is a strong, endless metallic sound in the brain like tinnitus;

The skin seems to be on fire, and the pain ensues—

Am I not turning into a demon?

It's even possible to have the curse burning me to death.

I will most likely lose my first life here.

Such thoughts popped into Annan's mind.

If Annan wanted to escape, he had to analyze the truth of the "fire" and stay in place, wait for a while, or simply be burned to death by the flame.

But that was not what Annan wanted.

"In that case..." Annan coughed suddenly and spat out a piece of an internal organ.

Since living is no longer possible, I should kill my enemies with no reserve!

He raised his head, and his pupils shone with a dazzling glow.

It was the sparks when the overflowing curse and the soul struck each other.

Consume one silver coin and activate [Eternal Youth].

Annan regained some strength.

He jumped out suddenly, beheading the nearest pirate with one slash!

Boom!

At this moment, Annan was shot in the abdomen and thigh in two gunshots.

At the moment when the pirate's head had not yet landed on the floor, the last silver coin in Annan's hand ignited the brilliance.

Silver Blade!

The [Sharp Object] in his hand suddenly shone with dazzling brilliance.

In the blink of an eye, the silver weapon turned into a splendid silver light held in Annan's hand.

With the blow that Annan slashed with all his strength, a silver blade about three meters in length, like a crescent moon, quickly slid across the deck against the waist of "Mr. Detective". It divided all the pirates, crew members, passengers, and masts into two!

"Cough..." Annan's mouth was overflowing with blood.

He looked at the "daughter" whom he had cut in half, and a thought flashed through his mind.

Not because of the fire of reasoning but because I recklessly rushed out of the safe house and killed her along with the unknown murderer.

Will Mr. Detective be satisfied with such a thought?

“Probably, not...” Annan murmured and knelt on the deck where he was alone, gradually turning into a gray-black stone.

The next moment, Annan woke up suddenly.

She felt herself kneeling at the beginning of the dim corridor.

After entering the corridor, did I not even take a single step?

But my posture is the same as before entering the Detective Nightmare. So I should note this down.

I don't know how long it has passed. Based on the previous nightmare jump, it should be just a moment.

Annan touched the back of her left hand.

Sure enough, the wound on the back of her hand was gone.

She opened her status bar again:

Health: 100%

Soul Corruption Rate: 2%

My corruption rate hasn't increased? Well, that's normal too. After all, they are imitated Gray Mists.

[TN: Erosion will be referred to as corruption from here onwards.]

However, since my health suddenly returns to full, is it because I have already died once?

Does the save point mechanism work like this? There is no longer a re-challenging mechanism, just fully restoring my health. So, that's how it is.

Taking a deep breath, Annan stood up slowly.

“It's the Wolf Kiss ritual, right?” She quickly cleared Mr. Detective's memory from her mind.

Maybe something related to this could be encountered again in the future. But now, for Annan, the most important thing was to complete the nightmare of Werewolf Bella and let her be promoted to a transcender.

I still have two lives left, right?

Annan no longer expected himself to resolve the mystery revolving around the dungeon instance at once.

At first, he also thought, “since this is his nightmare, maybe he can decrypt it 100% in one shot”. But after dying once, Annan had calmed down.

He had lost one life even when none of the side missions were completed.

It was not an instant-death event with no skills involved but a genuine challenge imposed in the dungeon. Even if Annan challenged the dungeon again, he was not confident of clearing the dungeon in full health.

How would he know if the flames would spread to him even when he stood still in the “Mr. Detective” dungeon?

“Maybe I should bring players into this nightmare?” Annan muttered.

But what’s the use of this?

So, I get to see how they deal with the dungeon on a live broadcast.

However, there was no value in this move for Annan. What Annan needed to decipher was Bella’s nightmare or his nightmare. The nightmare fragments of the dozens of innocents would be different every time he crossed into other nightmares. The real value for to have the players in this dungeon was to study “how to avoid triggering nightmare jumps and lose health meaninglessly”.

“Well, this is considered a Rogue-like Horror Game. The players may like it. Horror game without a clear and direct route.”

In a sense, it was the same type of nightmare as the Gallery Nightmare.

Then, let’s get the players to find the specific locations that can trigger the nightmare jumps.

If Annan’s inference was correct, the type of nightmare that would be triggered should be the same in the same “type of place”.

Let’s first go and see what the [Wolf Kiss] ritual is and what it will offer.

Worse comes to worst, I can try to see if it is possible to team up with the players!

If I can form a team of four people and one person has three lives, it is equivalent to twelve lives.

This thought filled Annan with determination.

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 419

Annan walked slowly and cautiously in the dark corridor.

After she concentrated, the world before her stretched long and wide again. Her vision was complimented with a dim yellow hue, and the speed of time seemed to slow down tremendously.

This place was the residence of Austere-Winter's Grand Duke. Therefore, it was unlikely that there would be any enemies.

But after all, the job she “applied for” was the Winter's Hand.

As the official transcender agency of the Austere-Winter Dukedom, which also served as the secret service, maintaining vigilance might add merits to the interview.

However, there was a movement in front of Annan's eyes the next moment.

Is it really coming?

Annan narrowed her eyes slightly, and her hands silently turned into bestial claws.

Although it was a dark corridor, a human-shaped silhouette could be seen moving due to the werewolf's vision.

It appeared to be about 1.7 meters or so, and the figure was relatively thin.

Although he disappeared from Annan's vision immediately when he stopped, the man made a move again as Annan got closer.

He reached out and grabbed Annan's neck silently.

There's no killing intent.

Is it part of the exam?

Annan did not stay passive in her thoughts.

The moment the man reached out and grabbed Annan, she immediately swiped in front of her and crouched.

She tightly hugged the opponent's calf with both hands, then immediately got up. Utilizing the strength from her waist, she leaned backward and threw the man to the ground.

"Ugh...!" The man groaned in pain.

"It's fine now, Bella." The old man's flat voice sounded in the darkness, "He has no malice."

"Yes." Annan replied obediently.

Otherwise, she would not just throw him only.

However, the Wolf Kiss ritual would have to be postponed if the man caught her.

After all, she had to undergo a certain amount of training before going to the "exam".

The light filled the narrow corridor again as the old man squeaked the door open.

Annan saw the young man lying on the ground, groaning as the sun illuminated the place.

It was a young man with light brown hair, fair skin, and freckles on his face.

He appeared to have thin cheeks, and the cheeks had even sunken inward. His spirit did not look good, and his forehead was bruised and bleeding from Annan's backward throw.

But when he stood up, his gaze towards Annan became somewhat eager.

"Hi, my name is Thoreau Nick." The young man made a low, indistinct voice and extended his right hand slightly toward Annan as if he wanted to shake hands but did not dare.

Meanwhile, he kept staring at Annan's face.

The strange eagerness made Annan feel a little awkward.

I beat you up, so why are you so enthusiastic about me?

Is this person a pervert?

“He's your senior. Like you, he hasn't passed the Wolf Kiss ritual. You two will work together in a moment.” The old man on the side spoke without a hint of emotion, “Just like you, he is also a homeless person.”

“Are you a werewolf too?” Annan heard the “teacher” and looked at the pale and thin man.

She whispered, turning her right hand back into a human hand, and shaking hands with Thoreau Nick.

“No, he is not.” The old man replied coldly, “Even in the entire 'Winter's Hand' organization, you are the only werewolf.”

“I'm the child of a murderer. Both of my parents are murderers. They died very early.” Thoreau Nick whispered shyly, “I don't have the money to study swordsmanship, so I go to make money. However, when I have the money, the teacher still won't let me learn it because of my low social status. So, I secretly learn it from the side.

“But in the end, I was discovered and was beaten out by the teacher.

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“Teacher said if I learn swordsmanship, I will use it to kill someone. Later, when they spread the word, it became that I would definitely kill a person. So, they kicked me out.”

“Driven out?” Annan froze for a moment, then realized that it meant being exiled out from the barrier.

“After that?” She asked subconsciously.

It was the old man standing behind them who answered Annan.

He put his two hands on the shoulders of Thoreau Nick and Annan, respectively, and replied calmly, “I picked him up later. I saw that he had an excellent talent for the path of transcendence, so I led him to this path.”

“Yes!” Thoreau Nick's voice was a little louder.

In his eyes, Annan seemed to see a sparkling flame. “Only the teacher is willing to take me in, and only the teacher is willing to teach me the knowledge of killing...”

It was a light yet fanatical voice, “The teacher is my benefactor! For the teacher, I can even offer my life!”

“Murdering is an untouchable line for civilians. But for us, killing is just one of the means,” said the old man slowly.

There was no expression on his face. His deep pupils were cold as ice, “But you must never kill people for fun. Those who let their desires inflate can't pass the Wolf Kiss ritual.”

“Yes, I understand, teacher...” Thoreau Nick's voice suddenly became much lighter.

He lowered his head, and his eyes became uncertain and cowardly again.

But facing him like this, the old man did not react.

Sensing that this was an opportunity, Annan could finally spit out the doubts in her heart, "What is the Wolf Kiss ritual?"

The old man was silent for a while, then turned away silently.

Thoreau Nick reacted quickly, hurried over, winked at Annan, and motioned her to follow quickly.

They followed the old man through two corners and entered the basement.

Annan immediately sensed an intense chill.

It was like stepping into a cold room... No, it was even colder than that.

Even when walking, Annan could feel creaking at her knees. Her joints were screaming like a computer turned on in the cold winter or the fan making a whirring noise.

She subconsciously wrapped her whole body in fur and couldn't help but hunch her waist and try to curl up.

To Annan's surprise, neither the old man nor Thoreau Nick reacted to the chill.

The old man seemed to ignore the cold altogether. Thoreau Nick's hair was starting to frost, but he did not complain or was surprised.

Suddenly, Annan realized something.

This was probably where the Old Grandmother hibernated.

After they got down to the bottom, the old man turned on the light and said plainly, "We have arrived."

After a short delay, the iconic light green sparks of the "Green Fire" ignited, leaping across the room.

Then, a bunch of bright orange-yellow light bars illuminated the entire basement.

Annan's pupils shrank slightly, crouching on the ground. Her tail wagged uneasily.

Although Annan guessed long ago that this might have something to do with the Frost Beasts, she never expected that there would be so many of them.

It almost felt like a chicken farm.

They were now in an underground warehouse of about one hundred square meters.

The wall was painted red, and a large "3" was labeled on the wall.

There were seven rows and seventeen columns of iron cages on the four walls.

Each cage was one meter wide, one meter high, and three meters deep. In each cage was a translucent, pale white wolf soul like a soul beast.

After the lights came on, the Frost Beasts, lying on their backs, stood up from their cage and opened their eyes.

Their pupils were incomparably pure ice blue.

“The so-called Wolf Kiss ritual is to let you sleep here after the Frost Beasts are released.”

The old man said slowly, “After you fall asleep, you will enter a nightmare, in a state of completely losing positive emotions. The nightmare is composed of your memories of the last few days. As long as you break free from this nightmare, you will pass the Wolf Kiss ritual, and you can become an excellent transcender.”

Hearing this, Annan was suddenly stunned.

She realized a severe problem.

The Righteous Player(s) C420– Nightmare– A Dream Within A Dream

Chapter 420: Nightmare: A Dream Within A Dream

“Awesome.” Annan whispered, “I’ve come to understand everything.”

It was a crucial topic.

First of all, it was impossible to re-enter the second nightmare whilst in a nightmare. A nightmare was a projection of the soul coming from the dream world. Although it was so real that it could even be seen as another trajectory in history, it would not affect reality.

A projection naturally should not produce another projection.

In other words, it was impossible to enter a new nightmare while in one.

This was also the primary way to distinguish between nightmares and reality.

The reason why Annan appeared in this nightmare with many nightmare fragments intermittently appearing was that the original nightmare had a unique mechanism bound to it.

It was about the “Unique Property: Phantasm”.

It had nothing to do with the “distortion” that occurred in the nightmare.

Since the nightmare was already distorted, it meant that some parts of this nightmare were altered, resulting in some unexpected changes that could not be duplicated.

Annan even searched for a long time to find out where the “distortion” of this nightmare happened.

He was very concerned about it.

Back then, in “Nightmare: Reflection”, the nightmare had undergone “unrepeatable” changes probably because Evelyn was still stuck inside the nightmare.

In other words, the Evelyn in that nightmare was not the Evelyn extracted from the dream world after her death, but the Evelyn who had not truly become an undead.

If Annan went into that nightmare again, many traps would be different.

Therefore, it was essential to study the distortion in nightmares.

But just for a moment, Annan realized with hindsight where the distortion of this nightmare had happened.

This nightmare was a completely unsolvable dead end.

“Hehe...hahaha...” Annan suddenly couldn't help but laugh.

For him, that was a great joy.

That was the satisfaction of solving the mystery.

Not the emotion from knowing that his happiness was about to be devoured by the Frost Beasts.

Smelling fresh “joy” and “satisfaction”, the Frost Beasts were restless, scratching the edge of the cage, and there was a lot of noise in the originally quiet basement.

The old man's movement to release the Frost Beasts suddenly stopped.

He turned around suspiciously and looked at Annan silently.

He did not speak but had already questioned Annan without words.

Annan just waved her hand and restrained her smile.

“Teacher,” she asked respectfully, “How do we become transcendents?”

“You need to survive the Wolf Kiss ritual first.”

“No, I mean. If an ordinary person wants to become a transcender, what does he need to do in the end?” Annan asked.

The old man fell silent for a while, then replied, “After accumulating enough power, he has to enter a nightmare.

“Like you, who can traverse through blizzards, and Nick Thoreau, who has been trained. You two have reached that standard.

“So you need to survive the nightmare once at this time. You will use the curse power from the nightmare to corrode and perforate your soul. Through the 'hole' punched by the curse, you can continuously obtain the curse power from the outside world. Only those who can restore their curse power over time can be called a transcender.”

“—That is to say.” Annan chuckled, interrupting the old man's words.

He straightened up slowly and said calmly, “If I want to become a transcender, I have to overcome a nightmare, right?”

“Right.”

“But, that's impossible,” said Annan calmly.

The voice belonging to Annan overlapped with the voice belonging to Bella and sounded underground, “Because this is my nightmare.”

The next moment, the nightmare started to shake. Its magnitude was not severe, like a minor earthquake.

Whether it was the silent old man like an iceberg, or Thoreau's Nick with his head lowered, they all became stagnant, like puppets.

Soon, the ceiling collapsed into pieces, smashing open the cage that bound the Frost Beasts.

But the Frost Beasts did not take the opportunity to attack Annan but whimpered and hid in the cage as they huddled in the corner. A few others ran out of their cages and tried to escape outside.

But there was nothing outside.

Therefore, Annan would never be able to achieve the main mission of [Becoming a transcender].

Why was Annan able to master all the abilities belonging to werewolves immediately after entering this world? Like in the separate nightmare fragment, he had the detective's power as soon as he possessed the body.

In fact, during Annan's previous entry into "Nightmare: White Tower", he did not have the slightest bit of the original owner's ability to deceive and read minds; when he entered "Nightmare: Gallery", he did not master the artist's artistic talent, and he even did not understand those paintings.

There was only one answer.

In essence, this nightmare that Annan had entered into wasn't his nightmare.

This world was false and superficial.

"Why did you make me Bella instead of myself? Because even you can't understand me."

Annan sneered, "Why do you let me see Danton's fear of death? What are you implying to me? What are you trying to tell me in Mr. Detective's nightmare fragment? Are you warning me to discard the superfluous rationales? Do you want me to act on my body's instincts?"

"But who gave me the instinct of the body?"

This was a nightmare that Annan could never achieve the main mission.

A side mission itself required access to the nightmare within one.

Also, a nightmare of having a dialogue with "self" in a nightmare.

"What are you trying to tell me? What are you trying to mislead me?" Bella's persona soon left Annan's voice, reverting to his clear and transparent voice.

His face and skin that belonged to Bella started to disintegrate.

Only the face belonging to "Bella" remained.

Annan picked it up and threw it into the air.

Bella's last piece of skin gradually turned to ashes in the air.

He stared at the disintegrating nightmare and the empty air.

Evelyn was the “relevant element” that caused the “reflection” to be distorted back then.

So, what was the detected “relevant element” that distorted his nightmare?

There was only one answer.

Annan looked at the empty sky and calmly asked the last question, “Since you have trapped me here, what are you trying to do?”

“Dream Stealer, Mr. Danton?” At the moment when nothingness disappeared, a few lines of words that had been obscured for a long time appeared in front of Annan's eyes.

That was his real main mission.

[Main mission: Wake up]

Immediately, a large piece of small fonts appeared again under this line of words:

[Escape from the edited nightmare (Completed).]

[Collect at least seven fear fragments (3/7).]

[Find and kill the residual consciousness of Dream Stealer Danton]