

## The Righteous Player(s)

Chapter 461: "Young Genius"

"I was a... clumsy painter." Nigel sat next to Annan and whispered with his head down.

There were hardly any people on the subway to travel from the Noah Kingdom to Austere-Winter Dukedom, so they all sat in the front row of the train.

Undoubtedly, they were on a subway that was underground. However, its seating arrangement was closer to the train. It was just that they were not assigned to any seat, and they could freely choose wherever they wanted to sit.

The first-class seat in the subway was a low sofa with two rows facing each other that could accommodate two to three people. There was also a wooden table in the middle of each set. Each table had a plate of fresh fruit, a plate of dried fruit, a plate of preserved fruit, and a plate of cakes. This table could even be used for reading, writing, or painting.

Sitting across from them were Jiu Er and Lin Yiyi intrigued by the story.

Among the three players present, Suuankou could sit beside Lin Yiyi or Annan as he was the only male among them. After all, Annan was petite, so they could squeeze another person on the sofa.

However, after seeing the competitiveness in Lin Yiyi and Jiu Er's eyes and reaching a compromise (referring to no one sitting there), Suuankou, sitting next to Annan, was ruthlessly rushed to the table across the corridor by his sister.

But, he got to occupy two sofas and a table by himself, including all the snacks.

For Suuankou, it was refreshing to lie on the sofa while listening to the stories.

But speaking of it, Suuankou found Annan a lot cuter after getting those white hair. Anyway, Annan wouldn't shy away from male players. Kafni had nothing to be wary of, and Suuankou would try getting closer to Annan from time to time.

As the famous author Anderson had once said — since Annan couldn't be f\*\*ked anyway, and the actual gender did not matter, then it was better to think of Annan as a beautiful girl in his mind. Anyway, Annan looked cute and hadn't started to change his voice in puberty yet.

Like in every silly group, there would always be a lucky group of friends who were chosen by the masses and sacrificed and became a "trap" girl.

If I think about it this way, whether it's hugging Annan or sitting and chatting with Annan, isn't it the same as taking advantage of the young and lovely white-haired princess?!

I am really talented.

Suuankou was in awe of Anderson.

These days, not many people look directly at their desires like this.

Thinking about it carefully, he even wanted to call the police immediately.

Annan is only 14 years old. What am I doing!?

But looking back, Annan's charm was indeed a little unusual. Previously, it was an average level of beauty. However, after Annan adopted white hair, even Suuankou glanced at Annan repeatedly. Annan's voice seemed more alluring, and even his words became more convincing.

Is this some charisma-related ability?

While Suuankou was thinking... Nigel, seated beside Annan, was still whispering his story.

"I'm really... a clumsy painter.

"Neither my parents were painters, not even in the art industry. My father was a treasurer of a viscount, and my mother was a low-tier ritualist. They wanted me to be a transcender in the future, preferably enrolling into Swamp's Black Tower to learn Alteration magic."

Nigel looked at the table and said softly, "Because of their work, they had access to Alteration products and knew how much money they could make from it. They felt this was a safe way to make a lot of money without being busy, and the work would stay relevant for a long time. Moreover, it was a profession with the ability to harness transcended power.

"So when I was determined to become a painter, I encountered unprecedented obstacles. Not only was I not paid a penny since I was fourteen, but I was also even kicked out of the house, and naturally, I had no food. I could only go back after admitting my mistake.

"My father was still famous in our town at that time, so no one was willing to hire me for labor work. He had also spoken to the folks he knew, making me unable to find a job. I knew nothing. It was hard to support myself, and I needed money to buy paint and canvas for painting."

The middle-aged painter sighed and took a deep breath, "I was young at the time, I didn't know anything, and I didn't suffer much hardship. After experiencing hunger, I decided not to return, no matter what. Even if I were starved to death, I would not go back and apologize."

Luckily, you did not go. Otherwise, you would be dead now. Annan was silent for a moment.

The wizards at Swamp's Black Tower were all dead. It was something that had yet to be made public. Such atrocities in the country would undoubtedly lead to the decline of the Noah Kingdom's credibility, causing panic in the general public and also affecting the admissions of Black Tower. Therefore, the incident was tacitly concealed by both parties.

"What did you do then?" Jiu Er asked curiously, "Did you discover your painting talent and then sell your paintings?"

"I hoped so." Nigel smiled wryly.

Deep in his azure blue pupils was the pain that had long since subsided. The bitterness and decadent look also gave him a strange charm.

He said sincerely, "Really, if only I had talent.

"I put my only way to survive at the time on the Paper Princess. I painted like crazy, painting for 14 hours a day. First, I painted vases and fruits and continued to paint them hundreds of times. I used my greatest enthusiasm and energy to paint and then sold all the paintings to the Paper Princess in exchange for living expenses, paint and canvas money, and rent.

"In the end, I was already disgusted with paintings, and I couldn't get much money for painting. So I looked out of the window of the rented room and went to paint the scenery outside the window.

"Because I wanted to rent the cheapest house, I often moved every few months to avoid getting a cold in winter or getting a rash in summer. After all, I did not have the money to request Silver Sire's priests to cure me, so I could not fall sick.

"But thanks to the fact that I moved frequently, the scenery outside the window also changed from time to time, and there was no shortage of things to draw. The same scenery was different in spring and autumn. Before I returned to the room I used to rent, I could always find beauty that I hadn't discovered before.

"At that time, I was able to survive and continue on this path by relying on the provisions from the Paper Princess. My talent was too inferior... I worked hard for seven years to paint, finally selling my first painting.

“I was only 21 years old at the time and became a well-known genius painter. However, they wouldn't know that I worked hard on more than 2,000 scrapped paintings before I became what they called a 'genius'.

“At that time, I coveted the title 'genius' that did not belong to me because of my vanity. I always felt it was an honor and an affirmation of my future. To become a genius in the eyes of others, I worked even harder. I painted with all my power. But among the paintings I painted, I was, at most, satisfied with only one or two of them that could be sold without losing the title of a genius.”

Nigel replied slowly, “But at that time, I didn't understand anything at all.

“When I first started, I didn't know much about the Paper Princess. I thought the coins I got were all transactions that the Paper Princess conjured out of thin air using her divine power. I was satisfied with the low-quality products without the slightest desire to change them; I was even proud of myself for always being able to trade my paintings for a higher price from the Paper Princess. Then, I consider myself recognized by the Paper Princess and able to persevere in my passion to be a 'genius'.

“Until I learned from my mother that the money the Paper Princess handed over to us painters was not something she made out of thin air. It was the money she would make after painting and selling her paintings. She had given them entirely to us.

“I did not know until then how much trouble my inferior talent caused the Paper Princess.” He groaned in pain.

#### Chapter 462: Let the Hope Passed On

Nigel took a deep breath with a complicated expression, “I'm not the 'young genius painter' they preach. I'm a humble, inferior, and hypocritical person who lives by selling his dreams and passions.

“From then on, I made up my mind that I would never rely on the Paper Princess to sell and dispose of my scraps, just like how I made up my mind to not rely on the support of my parents for a living. This made my life, which was still affluent, immediately changed. It was pretty challenging. When I was earning my living expenses, I finally realized... If I only rely on my own capability, I will never grow to this level.

“Even if my family is willing to provide me with money for food and lodging, even after I settle down into a stable life, and even after I can practice as hard as I do when I live outside... It already costs a large amount of money just to buy canvases and paints necessary for practice.

“When I really couldn't draw anymore, I was forced to start selling scraps. At that time, people would say that my talents were exhausted, and the masters would publicly criticize my painting attitude for being too perfunctory.

“Countless people would reprimand me. People who had bought my paintings had also written to express their disappointment. However, only I know that these scraps were my true level. Even the masterpieces that touched people's hearts were regarded as perfunctory works by them.

“But every one of my paintings is painted with all my strength... I really didn't... I didn't treat it perfunctorily...”

After he finished speaking, he sighed deeply, “It's just that I'm too incompetent... that's it.”

This was not a story worth hearing.

The story was covered with tears and dust.

Just thinking about it made him tired.

“And then?” After a brief silence, Annan asked softly, “How did you break free from it and become a famous painter?”

“It's a long story,” Nigel said slowly. “When I was at my worst, I found an old book. It's written on the ritual of how to summon the Venerated Skeleton...”

Hearing this, Annan and Lin Yiyi raised their heads and looked at each other.

They had keenly captured something.

Jiu Er immediately interjected, “And then? Did you use the ritual?”

“No, because my mother warned me that the ritual was fake.”

Nigel shook his head, “When everyone scolded me, I finally returned home in embarrassment. But beyond my expectations... My parents did not laugh at me, nor did they force me to be a wizard.

“I also hesitated for a long time and finally gave up this opportunity. I chose to trust my mother and admitted my lack of talent. So I found a job doing accounting and went out to work.

“I don't want to take the Paper Princess for granted. She is my deity and my idol. But I also don't want to live off my parents. Since I ran away from home back then, I didn't have that face of continuing painting at home as if nothing happened.”

He took a deep breath and said solemnly, “I finally... chose the Elegant Elder.”

“The Elegant Elder?”

“Yes. Since my mother said these false deities' rituals have hidden scams, I sought an upright deity for help. I put the worst and best paintings in my two years of career, together with my painting habits and many doubts, into a letter and sent them to the Elegant Elder through ritual.

“I didn't plan to get a response... but in the end, I didn't expect that the Elegant Elder actually wrote me a reply.”

The middle-aged painter sighed, “I doubt that I am someone who is pitied by the deities.

“Although the letter was full of contemptuous insults and criticisms, everything in it was an accurate comment. He circled every questionable part of my painting with a mean comment. But to be honest, his evaluations were straight to the point. In addition, there was also a painting repainted by the Elegant Elder himself, which was about my most dissatisfied painting. Honestly, that was the most beautiful painting I had ever seen.

“I will cry every time I read this letter. I question if I have the talent for painting and whether I want to go down this journey... But I gritted my teeth and practiced along with the criticism of the Elegant Elder. At that time, I really made significant progress.

“I just endured the humiliation, read the Elegant Elder's revisions over and over, and practiced over and over again. I even memorized every sentence of the letter at the end. It took me 8 years to digest the Elegant Elder's criticism. And at the time, I was 30 years old and took over my father's job.

“I was still painting as an amateur, and no one knew... People had even forgotten the viscount's treasure 'Nigel', who was famous ten years ago. Some people suspected I had committed suicide, so the poor artworks I sold were instead regarded as a painting that made a genius painter commit suicide. Their value increased ridiculously. The appreciation value was much more expensive than my proud works.

“I tried my best and spent a year painting an artwork that I was most satisfied with. Then, I sent it again to the Elegant Elder, but he soon painted me a better painting with a new criticism. But my faith could no longer be destroyed by him — I just wanted to be a famous painter. To be famous again when everyone had forgotten me, to become rich by painting, and to return the favor from the past to the Paper Princess.

“So I did another four years of penance under the advice of the Elegant Elder. I again sought approval from the Elegant Elder and was reprimanded. This was repeated twice. In the year I was 44, the Elegant Elder finally wrote me back.

“—He said, 'It looks like a pass. Let's try and see if you can sell the painting'.

“I burst into tears.”

Nigel Elliott said in a hoarse voice with deep emotion, “So after 20 years of absence from the art world, I made my debut again.

“My goal this time is simple. I want to become the painter with the most money first and return to him the money the Paper Princess once gave me with interest. Then I want to imitate the Paper Princess to travel worldwide and use my paintings to record everything I see. Ultimately, I will give up all my wealth and go to Denizoya to serve art for the rest of my life.

“Now, I have completed the first goal. After I met the Paper Princess, I gave the Paper Princess my house in the capital, all my deposits, and cash as gratitude. After all, I am now not short of money because I can at least make a living by painting.

“Next, I’m going to travel around the world. The first stop is the Coldwind Fortress in the province of St. Felix. First, I want to see the legendary cold wind rumored to cut the flesh directly. Second, is it really possible to pour water into ice in Coldwind Fortress?

“I’m going to see what the Frost Beasts are like, and I’m going to see if I see if the world changes after I’ve been drained of all positive emotions.”

Annan felt Nigel's eyes shining brightly.

It was a brilliance similar to the light in his eyes.

Today, Nigel could be called a real painter.

“Austere-Winter Dukedom is dangerous,” Annan warned in a low voice.

Nigel smiled, “I’m not going to die. My life is still precious. When I’m about to die of old age, I will sponsor a few poor students who love painting and pass on what I have learned in my life to them—

“—I will pass on the kindness that the Paper Princess gave me in the past, the hopes and dreams that she gave me.”

The eyes he looked at Annan... There was no trace of love between men and women in the eyes that looked at the Paper Princess through Annan.

Instead, it was a glowing longing.

Chapter 463: Light Ants & the Deep Submerged Layer

Some words were comforting to hear.

Especially for those who had experienced “Nightmare: Gallery” and after seeing the tragedy of Amos, they would have a deeper sentiment for Nigel's story.

They were also painters and felt the limit of their talents. Nigel's talents were even far inferior to Amos'. But, in the end, the two embarked on entirely different paths and ushered in different endings.

“I see...” Annan nodded and sighed softly.

He finally knew where that strange feeling came from.

The way Nigel looked at him...or rather, the way he saw the Paper Princess through him gave off a familiar feeling to Annan. It was only now that he finally remembered how Kafni looked at him when they first met each other.

“You're an amazing person, Nigel.” Annan exclaimed, “You have indeed lived up to the title of a master.”

“That's still too early.” Nigel shook his head.

Although he had already dedicated all his wealth to the Paper Princess, there was no regret in his eyes.

There was only reason and clarity in his eyes, like a beacon.

“I'm only in my 50's, and my journey around the world is just starting. Now I want to live the way of the Paper Princess and pass on that love, kindness, and hope.

“But I don't rule out the possibility that this idea may change. After traveling to a particular city or area, I may fall in love there. Then, my journey will end here, and I will choose a quiet and comfortable life.

“These are all possible situations, and I won't refute them; people can change, and I admit it. But, I won't repeat it, having the ideal to constrain and solidify my life until enthusiasm fades and only numbness remains.

“I wouldn't want to repeat that because that's my ideal and not my life. I'm prioritizing my life before my goals. I might have been confused about it back then, but now I have seen it clearly.”

“But as long as I remember how I feel, I will remember the hope the Paper Princess gave me. So I'll keep going like this.

The middle-aged painter scratched his fluffy and somewhat messy hair and said with a smile.



He was not resolved and not hot-blooded. It could be because he was a little shy and he spoke softer. It was not resonant and inspired.

However, it was convincing.

Nigel scratched his head again. He turned his eyes away, stared at the table again, and his voice became much quieter, "Why did I say this...? I'm sorry, Your Excellency Annan."

He was not that shy.

But looking at Annan's almost identical appearance to the Paper Princess, he felt the same embarrassment as telling the daughter the story of chasing the mother.

Even though Annan was not directly involved, Annan was close to the Paper Princess. On the one hand, it would make Nigel more willing to reveal the hidden story; on the other hand, Nigel felt more embarrassed by it.

"It's fine. I've learned a lot from you too." Annan smiled gently and comforted softly, "Thank you very much, Your Excellency Nigel."

It was not pleasantries, but Annan sincerely thought so.

As the chat ensued, the underground subway train had entered the deep submerged layer. The windows and doors were sealed entirely.

So far, no new passengers had come in. There were still five of them, and it seemed empty.

They had almost crossed the sea. If the depth was only tens of meters underground, it was impossible to cross the border.

If the slope were too steep, there would be higher requirements for the power of the engine.

Therefore, the method adopted by the Underground Federation was a downward spiral.

The passengers would enter on the top floor, which was the subway floor. Then, they would follow the downward slope and rotate an arc of about 120 to 180 degrees to descend further. After passing through the urban, plantation, and exploration layers, they would reach the deepest layer—the deep submerged layer.

The deep submerged layer was uninhabited and could not be reached through deep wells, and even the specific "route" was kept secret from other underground city dwellers. Therefore, the speed of the subway train could be directly increased to the maximum without carrying passengers or stopping in the middle.

The air here was also poisonous to ordinary people. Therefore, it was necessary to activate the isolation barrier and completely seal the train carriage when entering the deep submerged layer. It also further increased the speed without worrying about the door being overturned by the influx of air from the outside.

“Although I have seen it once.” Lin Yiyi looked out the window and murmured in a low voice, “It’s still beautiful...”

Although the train was deep underground, there was still light here.

It certainly was not sunlight or artificial light.

It was a unique creature that the underground world depended on for survival: the “Light Ants” created by the Mysterious Lady.

Light ants were similar in size to ordinary ants. They feed on feces and dirt in their juveniles. After eating a small amount of waste or a lot of dirt, they would stop eating and emit a permanent glow. The light ants that only ate feces would emit pure white light. On the other hand, the color would vary depending on the soil they eat.

After the light ants died and rotted, they would turn into sticky colloids. When the light ants and the corpses of the light ants were gathered together, they would become a solid gem called “light ant stone”, which could emit a faint glow at night.

As the light ants with various colors condensed into minerals, the light ant stones would also form beautiful light spots of different colors. The stones were one of the materials of the Edict magic. The Idol Wizards usually desired the light ant, which was also one of the important exports of the underground world.

In fact, the primary light source of the Underground Federation was light ants.

In the urban and deep submerged layers, the light ants attached to the wall had formed a good cycle. If the eggs of the light ants were laid on the higher section of the crystal wall, they would starve to death. Only the light ants that hatched closer to the soil got to eat.

After devouring the soil the same volume as their size, the shimmering light ants and the crystal shell formed by their fathers and grandparents formed a colorful light veil.

This light was not intense... To use an analogy, it was the brightness of a mobile phone screen during the day. However, that was enough. After all, the underground people had a low-light vision. It was already fairly bright for them. If necessary, there would be another Green Fire or something else in the room as a light source for close-up inspection.

In the plantation layer, immense light was needed to promote the growth of crops. Farmers would use something like a bricklayer's trowel to shovel out the eggs of light ants and then throw them into the dung to bury them. It would create "light ants" with strong light. After sifting them out, the farmers would smear them on the clay again to produce a vital light source that could last for three months. It was just like spreading caviar.

The exploration layer was the largest area. It was larger than the other three layers combined. This was territory belonging to the "Digger Council".

They had multiple goals that expanded further than the exploration for more ores. They would also drill holes in the ground, excavate the remains of ancient creatures, and explore areas conducive to living, making driveways, or growing crops. For them, lanterns made of Green Fire were more convenient than light ants.

In the deepest submerged layer, the driveway was not so high. The same light would be dazzling.

It was like walking through a time travel tunnel — the fast train speed and colorful hemispherical crystal tunnel made everything look extraordinarily dreamy.

It did not take long.

The group had rushed to the bottom of the sea.

#### Chapter 464: Leviathan

The so-called seafloor tunnel was also part of the deep submerged layer.

I wonder how the Underground Federation does it...

Light ants also piled up the crystal wall that meandered to the other end.

The majority of the tunnel was embedded in the seabed. It was not a semi-circular tunnel but an inverted U-shape tunnel with an arch bridge erected vertically on both sides.

The primary soil component of the sea bottom was corpses and feces instead of soil. Thus, the light shone much brighter than when it was in the deep submerged layer. The crystal walls were polished smoothly by the pressure of the deep sea, and they were sturdy enough to withstand even the immense pressure of the ocean floor.

This "light dragon", which was meandering and making noises from time to time, had already dispersed the sea creatures from approaching.

Of course, not all deep-sea creatures would be expelled by the intense light and noise. It was not ruled out that there would be animals who could not bear it and choose to attack the crystal wall.

Just as the five people watched, a vague black silhouette like a massive whale with eight tentacles was projected on the crystal wall in the distance. As the train approached, it gradually became clearer with its size increasing.

“What is that?” Jiu Er asked curiously.

“It seems to be some kind of deep-sea creature.”

Lin Yiyi stared at it for a while. Finally, she gave up guessing and shook her head, “They are deep sea creatures. No one can see them anyway, so they just keep growing. It's unsurprising no matter what they look like.”

But soon, they felt something was wrong.

The creature first approached from the direction of the backlight, and it appeared hazy.

However, as the train got closer, they gradually saw what it was.

At least, they could roughly determine that its body length was more than 200 meters. There was no doubt that it was a behemoth!

It had been hovering above the crystal wall as if thinking about something and looking for something.

“Is it going to hit us?” Looking at the growing black silhouette, Suuankou murmured, “If it hits...”

Thinking of this possibility, the players broke into a cold sweat.

Players could be resurrected, but if that massive silhouette broke the tunnel... Annan would be buried at the bottom of the sea!

They stopped chatting and raised their heads to stare at the shadow.

They could only hope it would give up attacking the crystal wall, and there was nothing else they could do.

Or, perhaps it would hesitate a little longer until the train crossed the Black Sea and reached the northern continent!

Then, even if the tunnel was broken, it did not matter to them!

However, after the train approached, the monster became excited instead.

It turned back and stared at Annan's group.

Only then did Annan see it clearly that the creature had pale skin, six pairs of eyes, and eight huge octopus-like tentacles. Besides that, it looked like a whale or a shark.

“It seems to be treating the train like some small fish.” Annan whispered, “Everyone, be careful—”

He was not as panicked as the players.

In the worst scenario, he would summon Frost Tower the moment the crystal wall was smashed. It should protect Annan from being crushed to death instantly and buy time for rescue.

However, when the huge “undersea whale/shark” opened its mouth and wanted to bite at them.

It was swallowed by something even bigger without warning!

The new 'thing' really swallowed it.

Even as they looked carefully through the crystal wall, they could not make out what it was. There was only a massive mouth with three layers of sharp teeth, suddenly lunging the whale shark from the bottom.

The tentacle shark even struggled a little before being swallowed directly.

“What is that?” Nigel broke into cold sweat out of panic, looking in the direction where the shadow left and muttering.

The players were ashen-faced. At the very moment something was about to happen, they had even forgotten about whether they could be resurrected.

It was an instinctive fear.

However, Annan was rather thoughtful.

He was probably the only one who knew the truth among all the people on this train, including the train conductor.

That was because a prompt popped up in front of him at that moment:

[You have acquired the new mark: “Novice Influence: the Leviathan's air”.]

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

the Leviathan's air—

This was not Annan's first time seeing this influence.

According to Benjamin, the Leviathan's air was around him when he lost his memory and collapsed on the beach at Freezing Water Port. Then, Benjamin eliminated the influence in Annan, considering that he was not a transcender.

Another "Leviathan" known to Annan was an underwater female beast that appeared in Earth's mythology. The name "Leviathan" itself had the meaning of "crack" and "vortex", which was a massive sea serpent that could coil a continent.

It existed in this world as one of the Mysterious Lady's Supreme Monsters.

Annan, who had bought a lot of false tomes, already knew what those three monsters were.

It was just as Annan had expected.

The three Supreme Monsters were "Leviathan", "Behemoth" and "Ziz". Among them, the Leviathan was a "giant serpent that traverses all oceans". It could incur tsunamis at will and was the king of all sea creatures.

It was recorded in the "Book of Job", representing the three most enormous monsters in the sea, land, and air. Their prototype was the fat-headed fish, the flightless and the green caterpillar. The fat-headed fish and the flightless battled each other, which was also taken from this allusion.

The Underground Federation was a country sheltered by the Mysterious Lady.

Although she and the Silent Lady were not in the Underground Federation all year round and traveled to strange places, she would not ignore the Underground Federation entirely.

Leviathan might have taken on a mission to maintain undersea tunnels.

This also explained why the sea beast hesitated before attacking the underwater tunnel.

It was because of Leviathan's deterrence!

When Annan was cleared of memory and left Mysterious Lady, Leviathan should have sent Annan away.

Since it was the Sea King Leviathan, not the Giant Bird Ziz...

But would that mean that the place where Annan met the Mysterious Lady was on the bottom of the ocean and not some isolated island?

While Annan was pondering about it, the train passed the sea region and went into the deep submerged layer of another continent.

Although there were the same light ants, the soil component of the Austere-Winter Continent was different from that of Noah. Compared with the Noah Kingdom, which was dominated by warm colors such as red, orange, yellow, and pink mixed with blue and green tones, the crystal wall here was composed of pure sky blue and light purple. It was much more dazzling than the previous scene.

A few hours later, the train returned to the subway level.

Nigel was getting out of the car.

Chapter 465: Arriving At Austere-winter Dukedom

The group was reaching Coldwind Fortress. It was almost time for Nigel to get off.

“Then everyone, I'm leaving...”

The middle-aged painter with a hunched back nodded to the rest of the group. He also said respectfully to Annan, “I wish you a pleasant journey too.”

Although Nigel still could not figure out the true identity of “Your Excellency Annan”, he was aware that Annan and the Paper Princess should be closed.

—Annan is probably the Paper Princess's heir.

Nigel thought he should have more respect for Annan.

Until now, he did not realize that Annan was the future Austere-Winter's Grand Duke.

As an ordinary person, he never thought about it in that direction.

After all, Nigel was an ordinary painter who had never left his country and concentrated on painting, unlike the ritualist like his mother or an evil painter like Amos, who was related to the transcender. Moreover, Nigel did not even know the name of Austere-Winter's Grand Duke, let alone the name “Annan”.

He did not even know how many children King Noah had. Instead, he only knew that the king was dead.

On the underground train, Nigel also mentioned to Annan's group that he chose to leave Noah at this time partly because the king had passed away.

In his anticipation, the capital would be chaotic until the Silver Sire Holy Day. Even a painter like himself would be asked to pick a side, or else he would die in an "accident". Nigel wanted to avoid trouble, so he ran away in advance.

How did the king die? Who would the new king be? What would the future hold for Noah?

He did not know anything, but it was better to flee first for the time being.

Nigel thought so.

This was the common sense of ordinary people regarding politics.

Since the Roseburg Viscount incident, Annan had hardly encountered any mortals who had absolutely nothing to do with the transcended world and the upper echelons of the kingdom.

Although Nigel was quite a famous painter in Noah, he was to the extent that the newspaper office could easily get an appointment from him. He was neither affluent nor connected to the upper echelons.

Celebrities of this level were merely "ordinary people with a bit of fame" for big shots. They were not even valid chess pieces.

Therefore, even to Lin Yiyi and the players who could take the subway, Nigel's attitude was respectful and gentle for fear of offending the underlings of some bigwigs.

"It's a pleasant journey, Mr. Nigel." Lin Yiyi said with a smile, "I wish you a smooth journey as well."

Annan sat in the same position, closed his book, nodded slightly to Nigel, and said naturally, "May Grandma keep you safe on the land of Austere-Winter."

"Yes, and may Silver Sire... Oh, the name of Old Grandmother should be praised here."

Nigel laughed and said to Annan, "May the Old Grandmother bless you too."

Then, he carried the suitcase a little tiredly.

For ordinary people, this kind of journey was strenuous. It started in the morning and arrived at the destination at 9:00 p.m.

As the train slowly decelerated and stopped, the noise of expelling gas came.



The door opened. The cold wind blew in from outside, and Suuankou shivered.

As a matter of fact, he was the only male among the three players, but he was also the only player whose Constitution attribute was less than 5.

After Nigel got out of the car, Suuankou responded quickly and crossed the corridor. He sat next to Annan again.

Although it was already 8:30 in the evening, there were still 7 people in the carriage.

Now that it's February, Noah is getting warmer very early, and the capital is not as cold as before.

The players had already put on trench coats and capes. They wore wool vests or shirts — this was a batch of “player-standard equipment” that Annan asked Longjing Tea to get at wholesale prices.

Each player was given a suite in Roseburg, and eight sets of clothes were bought in advance for all seasons of the year. These outfits would be delivered in advance when the season came. Annan intended to treat this as a bonus reward for the senior players.

It did not cost much money or effort. However, the players would feel like Annan noticed and remembered them.

When new players arrive in the future, old players would feel a sense of superiority. This sense of superiority was not at the expense of the new players' gaming experience, but the feeling was much more prominent.

“I thought Mr. Nigel would give us a painting each.” Jiu Er sighed and mumbled softly.

Suuankou also smacked his lips, obviously feeling a little disappointed, “At least he should give us a sketch or something. When he becomes famous in the future, it can be sold for a lot of money.”

“Why are you selling it? That's a lot of commemorative value.” Jiu Er retorted, “This is not something ordinary people can get. It's a souvenir when you walk away from a famous painter. Isn't it more meaningful than selling for that little money?”

“He can't draw because he's not in that mood.” Annan narrowed his eyes slightly and replied, “Nigel shouldn't be on this train for travel but evacuation. He might have faced some troubles.”

“Trouble?” Lin Yiyi showed a curious expression, “How did you notice it?”

"It's simple. When we came, the hydraulic platform had already returned to its original level. There was no staff nearby, so Nigel should have come to the deep underground level very early. Thus, something is going off here."

Annan flipped through the book and replied softly, "Wouldn't he have friends with him?"

"Even if no one but him can get onto the subway floor, they can still chat on the surface level and wait for the time to pass. It's not a good experience to wait for the train by yourself."

"Nigel is a well-known painter, and many people want to flatter him. With his cautious personality when dealing with people, he will not offend any friends. But he came to take the subway by himself and waited at the subway level directly."

"Does this mean that he sneaked out?" Lin Yiyi speculated along Annan's train of thought.

Suuankou shook his head and vetoed what his sister said, "To be precise, he doesn't want other people to worry about him."

"He came to Austere-Winter Dukedom more than just to travel. Therefore, there must be some danger ahead."

Then, Suuankou did not know what to say next.

As a mortal, what other dangerous activities could he be involved in?

Watching the players fall into silence and thinking hard, Annan couldn't help but laugh aloud, "Why doesn't he paint us a picture? The answer is simple."

"He is an ordinary person in his fifties. Since he only has a suitcase that can be carried in one hand, he won't have any picture frame, easel, or canvas. The canvas cannot be folded, and it isn't possible to store the easel and the picture frame. If he carries pens, palettes, coloring oils, and paints, there is simply no room for clothes, let alone daily necessities."

This was a problem that players in modern life would not consider.

In a world where technology pointed to the 16th century, getting around took more work.

There were no commissaries where you could easily buy water, food, clothes, shoes, and tools. There was no phone that conveniently combined wallet and ID. Medicines, drinking water, food, clothes, and most importantly... the silver and copper coins used in daily transactions were not light in weight.

Coupled with the preparations for his work, there was a limit to how much he could bring.

“The answer is simple. From the very beginning, Nigel knew where he was going and what he did not need to take. He was not 'traveling' aimlessly, wandering around, but with a clear purpose. It was more like he was on a business trip.”

Annan replied calmly, “So it's obvious. He must have been called here by someone. Since he ventures to a foreign country and keeps it a secret from his friends, it's naturally somewhat dangerous.”

Spy? Elopement? Smuggling? Treasure hunting?

Or something else?

Hearing Annan's reasoning, the players immediately came up with various speculations.

Annan glanced at them. The corners of his mouth rose, “Okay, stop guessing. Anyway, we will meet again if fate brings us together. Nigel is not the kind of person who will do dangerous things. We wished good luck. We may meet again soon.

“Let's eat something to fill our stomachs. We'll be getting off in less than an hour.

“When we get to the place, I'll invite you to supper.”

On the other side, in the tower of the storm wrapped in the never-ending storm...

Maria opened her eyes slowly, frowning slightly, and looked into the distance.

“It's Annan coming home?”

Chapter 466: Storm Tower

It wasn't that Maria could perceive Annan's presence directly.

[Winter Heart] did not offer that feature.

After listening carefully, Maria opened her eyes, “It's really Annan!”

She “heard” Annan's voice.

Indeed, auditory hearing — Maria could already hear Annan's voice by the time Annan had gotten so close to her.

On paper, the Storm Tower was situated in the St. Felix Province, which was Nigel's destination near the "Coldwind Fortress".

In terms of distance measured in a straight line, it was less than 20 miles.

Of course, that calculation was more "theoretical".

With that said, no one would be able to find the Storm Tower on the map.

The reason was simple.

The location of the Storm Tower was 3 kilometers above the exact location marked on the map.

It was unlike the Papal Kingdom, which was propped up by massive mushroom-shaped mountains and built high in the sky.

Instead, the Storm Tower hung in the empty spaces 3 kilometers above ground.

That was already close to the flight altitude of a civil aircraft.

Additionally, there was a gray-white translucent barrier, the Large Barrier Generator erected, which was also commonly known as the "urban barrier".

Thus, ordinary people could not even notice it when they arrived at the coordinates of the Storm Tower.

Moreover, the Storm Tower had a different shape compared to the traditional "tower" like the Swamp's Black Tower.

That was because the Storm Tower was upside down.

The spire faced down, and the bottom was at the top. At the top of the spire was a beam leading straight down to the wall of frost breath and many small barriers.

It appeared more like a spaceship than a "tower".

Maria sat cross-legged at the top of Storm Tower without any protection, inverted.

Her long silver-white hair exuding a bluish hue, draped quietly to her waist. She appeared as if she had ignored the storm around her.

She wore her usual white tulle skirt and a hollowed-out silver crown on her head. Compared with the previous hunt on the defected wolf girl, the number of dragon scales on her body increased further.

In addition to her neck and ankles, silver-white dragon scales appeared outside her wrist, jawbone, and calf.

Two silver-white dragon horns protruded on her forehead.

But strangely, she was upside down like the Storm Tower, but her hair and long skirt did not hang down toward the ground. It looked like she and the tower were mirror images... like mirages.

Although she was completely exposed to the Old Grandmother's frost breath, she was not engulfed by the Gray Mists.

It was not because she could avoid the Gray Mists but because the Gray Mists did not exist at this height anymore.

There were endless hurricanes entwined around the Storm Tower at the speed of reaching 200 kilometers per hour. If they were to descend to the ground, cities would be destroyed.

The hurricanes, like dragon's roars, had even distorted the sky outside the barrier. The whorl-shaped hurricane went straight to the bottom of the inverted tower, providing energy for the wizard tower.

The Storm Tower, which could fly at will, must also stay in place to extract and digest the storm power that lingered in the sky.

The storm would multiply if the tower left this air space for a short while.

This was because the elemental power polluted the surrounding world. The core of this storm was no longer this world. Instead, it was "a small part of the immaterial world" that fit into the cracks of this world.

A high concentration of elemental power was corrosive to the reality of this place.

Just as elemental power could easily destroy material or energy defenses, Annan's [Frost Sword] was fatal to the Bronze Rank and Silver Rank Transcender even before he advanced to become a transcender.

Ordinary things that did not have the elemental power could hardly resist any other elemental power.

If the concentration of the elemental power escalated, it would pollute an area and transform the surrounding into an environment suitable for its element.

The fourth-generation tower master of the Tower of Storm, Artaste Frostwhisper, was a formidable transcender.

She was revered as the Storm's Eldest Daughter — the founder of the profession: “Daughter of the Storm”. She could fly from the westernmost side of the continent to the easternmost side in three breaths.

This feat was equivalent to flying from the Noah Kingdom to the Papal Kingdom.

She could destroy a town with one blow. In fact, that was the town of the elves, which was a city protected by curse energy.

She could also listen to the words coming from the wind and hear the conversation of a designated person at a distance of more than 30 miles. Not to mention she had other abilities like summoning the wind and rain, changing the weather, summoning lightning storms, and other abilities.

One day, she acquired the Book of Truth called “the Anthem of the Storm and Heart”.

Everyone thought she would become a Storm Deity. Some people had even built shrines for her in advance, and some were competing to be her pope.

But for some reason, such a powerful transcender had her ascendancy ritual fail.

It was an irreversible failure that directly led to her death. The Book of Truth she had compiled was also scattered back into the world. At the same time, Artasta did not even leave her soul behind. It was the kind of death that destroyed both the body and soul.

Before she died, the elemental power lost control. It was about to condense an infinitely increasing hurricane — Artasta's sense of mission as the tower master made her send the Storm Tower up from the ground. It soared beyond the Great Barrier and was inverted in the sky. At the expense of her soul, she arranged the ritual to erect a core that used the power of the never-ending storm to replace the energy that typically came from the leylines as the wizard tower's power supply.

The storm power was naturally incomparable to curse energy.

But after the end of the Third Era, the curse energy had become obsolete. The Storm Tower had become the only “main tower” that could activate all the abilities of the wizard tower of the old era.

Over the past few hundred years, the Storm Tower had deviated from its anchor point.

One of them was to end the Blood War.

The Daughter of the Storm of that generation brought the storm's power to the sea surface. It was a storm that lasted seven days and six nights, forcing the hot-blooded to calm down.

Another time the Storm Tower was utilized was to destroy the Necromancer Alliance.

Every time the Storm Tower left its anchor point, the scale of the storm would increase tremendously. After leaving twice, it had doubled in size from the beginning. No one knew the limits of the Storm Tower. Thus, from the end of Blood War until now, the Storm Tower had never moved.

In the current state, the Large Barrier Generator of Austere-Winter Dukedom was built around the Storm Tower.

The unfortunate death of Storm's Eldest Daughter was undeniably a time bomb to Austere-Winter Dukedom and even the whole world. Still, it could also exist as a steady stream of energy if used properly.

Those who could inherit the power of the Daughter of the Storm would immediately become a formidable Gold Rank transcender.

The qualification was simple: Edict Wizard, female, Silver Rank, and most importantly — possessed the divine blood.

Although it was not necessary to have the blood of the Old Grandmother, it must be the direct bloodline of the deities. Otherwise, human beings would be unable to withstand the elemental power infused into the body during the inheritance process.

Only the heirs of the deities could pass this damage to the ancestors and survive the trials of inheritance.

“Vasily Manning!” Maria opened her eyes. Her eyes were full of dissatisfaction.

Why was Annan coming to Austere-Winter, but I hadn't been notified?

Didn't Vasily say that Annan went to the Noah Kingdom? Didn't he say that he would help Kafni inherit the throne?

Why did he come to Austere-Winter at this time?

She was unprepared!

She was still cultivating in the Storm Tower and could only leave at the end of the month.

Moreover, she had only been here for two days!

Maria immediately had a bad mood.

If she knew that Annan would be here this month, she wouldn't return to Storm Tower.

The crackling lightning throbbled uneasily in her eyes. The moment Maria had a bad mood, her hair flew up. An uncontrollable storm spread rapidly around her with her at its center.

Vasily, just you wait!

Maria chose a person to blame without hesitation.

But what about Annan?

Of course, Annan couldn't be wrong. He was a good boy, and he definitely had something to do when he came to Austere-Winter.

I just don't know if Annan will leave within a month...

No, even if he leaves Austere-Winter Dukedom, I have to look for him!

I haven't seen Annan for too long. After the maintenance work of the Storm Tower this time, I don't have to come back for half a year. No matter where Annan is, I can go after him directly.

"Wait for me, Annan..." Maria muttered anxiously.

#### Chapter 467: Natta County

Sure enough, Maria did not possess the "storm" element.

As Annan's sister, her soul element was naturally "frost".

As the Daughter of the Storm, she was not required to go through the soul burning process to absorb the "storm" element.

Instead, her mission was to appease the living storm.

The Daughter of the Storm was the most peculiar tower's daughter.

They were priestesses who worshipped the concept of "storm" itself.

The elemental power surging within her would only be Artaste's storm element.

In the past, the mission of Storm Tower was to suppress extreme weather: tornadoes, typhoons, tsunamis, thunders... natural disasters that were difficult for human beings to fight against, and only the pure "language" power could resist.

But since Artaste, the essence of Storm Tower had changed.



It still inherited the most ancient and orthodox language power spell, the predecessor of the current Edict spell.

But now, the mission of each generation of the Daughter of the Storm had evolved “into absorbing and preserving the ever-expanding elements of the storm.”

Right above the Storm Tower was the space crack connected to the immaterial world.

The escaping elemental power must be collected to ensure that the storm did not further erode reality. If the storm were allowed to expand, this crack would become bigger.

The Daughter of the Storm did not need to burn her soul to increase her depth of the storm element. It could reach a higher realm even beyond the limit of 100%. However, it would alter her soul tremendously.

Until the end, the soul would grow to the extent that the body could not hold it. Only death awaited it. After all, only a sentient brain could store the elemental power.

The overflowing elemental power born after their death could further erode reality. Thus, the Daughters of the Storm would throw themselves into the crack above and die in the immaterial world at the critical point.

This meant that they died without a whole body.

This was also the responsibility of a transcender.

Thus, only responsible girls would be acknowledged during the Daughter of the Storm selection.

To solve this problem...not to die after receiving this strength, the solution was simple.

The power of such a high element concentration had already satisfied one of the conditions of the ascendancy ritual. As long as she could become a deity and become a “living pillar of the world”, she could completely control the concept of storm and suppress this curse that had been passed down for hundreds of years.

However, the [Anthem of the Storm and Heart] was lost since the Storm's Eldest Daughter perished.

The Storm's Eldest Daughter was a transcender who lived in the early Yaselan Empire and a transcender who lived in the middle of the Third Age.

At the end of the Third Age, the Anthem of the Storm and Heart appeared sporadically several times. At that time, there were still elites holding the anthem from time to time in the historical records.

After the end of the Third Age, there came 200 years with no historical records.

Since those 200 years had ended, the Anthem had never reappeared in this world.

It was like the anthem had disappeared out of thin air.

The anthem still existed in this world — Prophet magic could confirm this. However, its specific location had been lost. Only those who hold the storm element could see it. The Truth Fragment would not manifest until a qualified person appeared.

It was even possible that someone hid the anthem. As long as the person who held it was not dead but had been living somewhere after a complete collection of it, it would hinder the Book of Truth from appearing.

But how did the person who possesses the anthem to live so long?

Why hadn't the person holding it ascended yet?

That was all a mystery.

To take a step back, the Storm's Eldest Laughter, who was almost the incarnation of Storm, failed in the ascendancy. Could the other Daughter of the Storm as her heirs succeed in the ascendancy with this Book of Truth?

However, Maria remained fearless in this situation.

She was just regretful that she couldn't get the Book of Truth.

When the unqualified were born, the Book of Truth would only circulate on different “seeds” in the form of page fragments.

The birth of qualified people alone was not enough to make the Book of Truth fully manifest at once — it was just that it could be manifested.

The number of sacrifices must also be sufficient.

Just like the sacrifice that gave birth to “light” was the “mirror”.

That was because [light is born from a mirror].

However, Maria had no idea what the sacrifice that gave Storm would be.

That must be occult knowledge hidden in the storm realm.

As the Daughter of the Storm, Maria knew that the entire [Anthem of the Storm and Heart] was four pages long. One page was the truth about wind, and the other was the truth about thunder and electricity; the remaining two pages remained unclear.

However, even if she just obtained a page or two... Even if it was only one page, she would try the ascendancy ritual.

It was much better than waiting to die.

Annan arrived at his destination...

On the other side...

Delicious Wind Goose, Dove, Anderson, and Yokai Sensei, four players and a cat, had also arrived in Natta County.

As the player who participated in the mission the most, Delicious Wind Goose had successfully advanced into Silver Rank. He was also the first to acquire the Silver Rank profession among the players.

He did not choose the unpopular and rare professions, given his character.

Otherwise, he would focus on something else rather than choosing the warrior profession.

Being a warrior was the most common and staple profession in almost all games.

And, it was his pursuit to play with an ordinary profession.

Moreover, Swordmaster hardly got any advancement, so its profession advancement would not be underwhelming.

Therefore, when Lin Yiyi, who had reached the critical point at the same level, was still trying to get the designated gems, he had already advanced.

Therefore, the advancement of Delicious Wind Goose was also simple.

The new profession's name was — Sword Saint.

The advancement could only come from the two professions, [Swordmaster] and [Sword Dancer]. It was a profession that extracted the strengths of many swordsmanships and elevated its swordsmanship to the limit.

Unlike [Swordmaster], Sword Saints could not fight in armor. They could only wear the most common cloth armor. At the same time, they had to swear not to put poison on their weapons and not to alternate their profession to any other profession.

As compensation, Sword Saints would gain exceptionally flexible mobility and devastating attack power—and the real secret was that the Sword Saints had two “switches”. That would allow them to convert the Strength attribute to the Agility attribute and vice versa. They could manipulate how much the attribute shifts, and there was no limit to using it.

In addition, Sword Saints could also accumulate energy resources called “Qi” through meditation, which enabled them to slash out powerful penetrating sword energy. The upper limit of Qi was related to the Perception attribute. The Sword Saints, with a solid will, could instantly exchange positions with their sword energy. As for the number of times to activate this ability, it was closely related to the Will attribute as well.

Thus, there was a high demand for the four attributes: Strength, Agility, Perception, and Will. However, there were only these three skills available to them. Other than that, there was no other ability given to them.

Undoubtedly, it was a simple profession with high damage output.

With Anderson as the “guard”, Dove and Chocolate taking on the role of the [Hunter] and [Thief] profession, and Yokai Sensei as the Silver Sire Priest, the four of them formed a five-person team with one Tank, one Healer, one Hunter, one Thief, and one DPS.

[DPS: Damage per second. The powerhouse of delivering damage.]

—Indeed, it was a team of five.

Only in this way could they effectively adventure the game, the currently known most difficult dungeon instance — the birthplace of Demon Blood, Natta County.

#### Chapter 468: There Are No Taboos After Sunset

Natta County was the westernmost city in the Noah Kingdom.

It was best known for the fact that half of its downtown was exposed outside the Great Barrier of the Noah Kingdom.

A bird-eye view would display a sharp contrast:

At first glance, the city on the east side was no different from the Noah Kingdom's other cities.

At the very least, the difference wasn't exaggerated.

Crowded slums, noisy and dilapidated shopping streets, rumbling factories and mills, and vast wheat fields outside the city.

There were young girls selling flowers on the street, little boys and old men as beggars, and men with broken limbs who looked around at the rich people walking on the streets.

Instead, there was only one difference.

Natta County had no city guard, no police department, and no church.

This was a lawless city with three underground gangs in charge of the city.

Although chaotic and sinful, it was a living city, after all.

But the west side was different.

On the west side of Natta County, gray, rotten, dark green sticky mold clung to the surfaces of buildings. Even the rock tiles lost their color and turned dull gray. No one would stay there without any extra protective measures.

The ornamental plants on the street had withered. The withered white shrubs and trees had become dry and brittle as if they were untreated for decades. The carcasses of small animals scattered on the ground—such as dead mice, hedgehogs, and wild ducks. They had swelled up into clumps of wiggling meat that sat quietly like potted plants; all reaching the height of knees.

But the strange thing was that the factory outside the city on the west side was still running.

However, what it spewed was not grayish-white steam or dark yellow exhaust gas.

Instead, it emitted a thick blood fog.

The sky was covered with blood mist, and the clouds were dyed scarlet. This scarlet would penetrate the clouds at sunset and dye the evening light on the “East City District”.

This indicated that the carnival of blood and gunpowder was about to begin.

After sunset, there were no taboos.

In the dark alley, a gunshot rang. “Bang!”

If it were the other cities in the Noah Kingdom, the city guards would have been attracted to this place at this time.

But no one came to take a look.

Yokai Sensei grinned and frowned as he handed the smoking, rusted flintlock pistol to Delicious Wind Goose behind him.

Beneath his knees was a youth whose hands were severed, and his head exploded.

Before the youth's skull bit the bullet, there were already two bullet wounds on his forehead.

Yokai Sensei fumbled through him and found a gray metal foil like a horseshoe, three copper coins, an empty syringe, a small bag of bullets, and a small aluminum can of "Black Fire".

Liquid Black Fire was a high-ranking alternative to gunpowder. It was more stable than gunpowder, and it would fire devastating bullets. After throwing the aluminum can of "Black Fire" and hitting it with a bullet, it became a bomb.

That was dangerous equipment.

Luckily, just moments before the opponent shot, Dove suddenly jumped out behind him and kicked him on the back of the head, knocking him out directly.

"...As expected of Natta County." After playing with the flintlock pistol seized from youth, Delicious Wind Goose muttered, "Even such a young child would engage in robbery."

"You call this a robbery?" Yokai Sensei took out a silver coin and tapped the bullet wound on Anderson's left arm, "If it weren't for Anderson knocking you away, you would have died already, even when you have just entered the city."

"Stop blabbering. Heal me!"

Anderson covered his arm and called out with grinning teeth, "Heal. It's a bruise, and it didn't hurt the bones...but maybe it hurt the tendons. My arm is twitching."

"Let's rest first. Who knows what's going on here? Use the healing conservatively."

Yokai Sensei said casually. As if tossing a stone, he flipped the silver coin onto the wound with precision.

The glinting silver coin melted into a ball of light when it touched the wound. The bullet wound on Anderson's arm healed immediately. Although it was a little uncomfortable, it was able to function normally.

The wound was roughly taken care of.

It would take a little more than two silver coins to recover from this injury fully.

Luckily, Yokai Sensei was not plagued with the “obsessiveness toward healing” commonly found in priests.

Before entering the Mist Continent, he was a righteous healing trebuchet.

[TN: Trebuchet as the metaphor of showering the heals.]

Of course, he had now become a righteous healing glitter.

[TN: The coin is glinting, thus the nickname.]

This time, they went to Natta County to adventure the unexplored part of the game. Of course, they brought a lot of reserves—an overloaded elite squad of four people, one cat, and about 120 silver coins.

Serious injuries, such as broken limbs or large-scale fractures of ribs, would take about 10 to 12 silver coins for an immediate full recovery. This meant that they had a reserve of healing resources of about 10 Health Bars.

He was not so much a priest but a “human-shaped health potion”.

If it was a fatal injury like having the heart pierced, it was better to leave them to their demise rather than wasting the resources.

Anderson did not have the divine art ability to treat critical injuries like that yet.

Once it involves organs and the brain, the amount of silver coins needed increases exponentially.

This was the amount that they had gathered together with other players. Only then could they accumulate an adequate amount of silver coins. At the same time, nearly 40% of them were contributed by Longjing Tea alone.

“Should we look for a place to stay?” Yokai Sensei glanced at Dove and asked, “Let's find an inn. I'm a little hungry.”

“No.” Delicious Wind Goose sneered, “You're pretty courageous to live in an inn in this place. Do you dare to eat what's served inside? Regardless of whether we will be turned into minced meat as food, I think these silver coins will be gone tomorrow. “

[TN: Reference to the Water Margin.]

“Then, what shall we do?” Anderson frowned, “Are we still stuck with dry food and jerky? Where can we go offline tomorrow if we don't have a bed?”

“Are you stupid? Now you can go offline without a bed.”

Delicious Wind Goose squinted his eyes, “Hear my proposal... If you are not busy, the four of us should not go offline for the next two days. Whoever wants to eat, drink and poop can quickly go offline but return immediately. The rest will guard him.

“Are any of you busy?” The three people and one cat looked at each other, but no one spoke.

Anderson replied, “I don't have any issue with it.”

“Great,” Delicious Wind Goose nodded immediately, “Then, that's decided for now.

“Let's revise our missions. Our main objective is to live here for a week, overcome three nightmares, and set up a teleportation waypoint for the rest of the players... preferably completing the mission within ten days.

“The reward level of the three nightmare dungeon instances, the experience in the dungeon instance, plus the extra reward experience of the teleportation waypoint. The experience points given will raise Anderson and Dove to about Level 16 and 17.

“The good thing about Natta County is that there are many wild transcendents and demons here. Most of the transcendents in Natta County are felons. We don't have to worry about the laws and the guilty from our conscience for this place. My suggestion is to get Level 20 and advance to Silver Rank as soon as possible.

“The underground world is rich in resources but also dangerous. Compared with the unknown beasts, human beings are much more vulnerable. After hunting down a sufficient number of illegal transcendents, we refrain from the rank advancement at this place. Instead, we retreat directly through the teleportation waypoint, head back to the capital, and advance in a safe place.”

“Got it.”

Anderson concluded, “Kill some monsters, find nightmares, and clear the dungeons.”

Yokai Sensei added, “Also, find a place to sleep, at least not to worry about losing money.”

Dove let out a meow.

“...No, having a place to sleep in peace is impossible.”

Delicious Wind Goose was calm, “We should be prepared for the worst, having our money and gear could be lost at any moment.



“I smell lust here... This place is full of deceit, betrayal, rage, and jealousy.”

Chapter 469: It Is Common Sense To Take All The Missions Coincide With Our Journey

Although Delicious Wind Goose did not become the Holy Grail Knight, he still chose to serve the Cup-holding Lady.

He endured his desire to advance to the Holy Grail Knight and caught Cup-holding Lady's attention, granting him holy light engravings.

In fact, this was also one of his plans.

In other words, this could also be regarded as Delicious Wind Goose's test on Cup-holding Lady.

For other upright deities, this might be annoying to Them.

But what the Cup-holding Lady liked most were the children putting themselves on the brink of danger.

Instead, she started paying attention to Delicious Wind Goose.

Delicious Wind Goose suspected the abnormal appetite and sexual desire that appeared from time to time in the past few days was because the Cup-holding Lady was watching.

Delicious Wind Goose traded these holy light engravings for three months of [Smell of Desire] before heading to Natta County.

He could accurately smell the “desire” aura emanating from others.

This would give him the upper hand when negotiating.

But he had miscalculated, whereby the sinister thoughts filled this city everywhere.

Every inch of this land was stained with desire and blood.

It was like hell on earth.

“Be careful. But, we don't need to humble ourselves unless necessary.”

Delicious Wind Goose said slowly, “At max, I will drop to Level 20. For the rest of you, you can only drop to Level 10 at most. Yokai Sensei has no Transcended profession yet, and your death has no punishment. Worse comes to worst, we will brute force our way out. “

“Okay, got it.” Yokai Sensei shrugged, “Don't worry about it too much. For now, we should find something to do since we're free. 48 hours... Should we massacre this place? Or can we join some forces?”

Even though his original goal was to be a healing tank...

After getting so many silver coins, Yokai Sensei still couldn't resist the temptation. He had saved up holy light engravings and wanted to buy Divine Art “Clanging Object”.

Shortly after entering the city, he seized another flintlock.

In the current state, Yokai Sensei was confident about skirmishes.

Although the flintlock only had a single shot and was inconvenient to be reloaded, he could hold the flintlock in his right hand and the silver coin in his left hand to release [Clanging Object]. Within twenty meters, he had the confidence to defeat two opponents instantly.

Well, it was possible to equip every part member with a flintlock, except for Dove & Chocolate.

If Delicious Wind Goose and Anderson had a flintlock gun each, they could reduce the enemy's manpower by four the moment they entered the fight.

Anderson would protect Dove. With her rapid-fire ability, her pet could kill one person every two seconds, even when it was the pet possessing her body. Of course, this was limited to a distance of fewer than 30 meters.

For transcender enemies, Chocolate's ambush would be deadly.

A serval with three times the strength of an adult male could easily snap off the enemy's neck.

After Dove advanced to the “Beast Summoner”, the Serval would acquire a stable [Sneak] ability.

Sneak could be activated in a third of a second and get out of sight from everyone. Chocolate that controlled Dove's body could use three seconds to guide and directly recall the cat to within ten meters of it. This did not necessarily mean a defense measure, but it could also be regarded as a “redeployment”.

Although Anderson only had an ordinary [Guard] profession, he was the guard with the highest success rate for parries.

The “Guard” profession had an ability called “Perfect Block”. The specific effect was that if the user performed a full block immediately before the attack hit, the damage would

receive a parry penalty. The penalty scoring was equivalent to half of the higher attribute between Strength and Agility.

In other words, since Anderson had 18 points in the Agility attribute, if he perfectly parried an enemy's attack with 20 points of Strength, then the remaining damage he received would be regarded as only 11 Strength in the attack.

If the enemy's Strength attribute were less than nine, he would be immune to the damage.

Coupled with the curse "I will not back down" that he held, when he blocked in front of his teammates, he could be immune to the knockback, knockdown, and knock-up effects of this attack at the cost of taking twice the damage. In addition, it allowed him to protect the party members at the back.

As a simple and reliable tank, Anderson did not need fancy skills or abilities as long as he could sustain the damage for his teammates.

The team did not have Noxus Wine with the highest attack power, Sister Hyphen as the strongest Parry and Tank, and the only Mage — Longjing Tea. However, the current team, composed of four people and one cat, remained the most potent urban warfare combination players could come up with.

Dove's participation did not seem to be fully capitalized. In this environment, the Serval was stronger than its owner.

A team capable of attacking fortifications, Boss Monsters, clearing mobs, remotely sniping, and ambush — the players came together to form this lineup, not just to purify nightmares.

The players were accustomed to accepting all missions before going to a destination.

In addition to Annan's mission to "set up the teleportation waypoint", they also received an additional mission from Salvatore:

"—If you're going to Natta County, try to get a few bottles of Demon Blood. Even just one bottle is fine. I'll make each of you a bottle of powerful reagents that can temporarily boost your attributes as a reward. Also, I will pay you at the market price. If you have additional bottles, I will buy the rest at the market price.

"—Oh, by the way, it's better to collect some demon materials. Blood, eyeballs, horns, internal organs... It will do as long as they are complete. I will give each of you a bottle that contains preservatives. Just throw whatever you get into it. When you return, I will give you money or a reagent according to the quantity."

The mission spelled at least one bottle of Demon Blood and enough "materials".

The latter condition was manageable. Since it was in Natta County, there would be demons.

But the former mission...

“To get Demon Blood, we must establish a good relationship with the local gang organization. This is not something ordinary people can make.”

Delicious Wind Goose glanced at the ordinary moon in the sky and said slowly in a low voice, “In other words...you need to gain some faction reputation at least to the level of [Respect]. Only then will it be possible to get Demon Blood.

“It's best to get more of them and sell them to Salvatore. At least, we should not let those players who support and invest in us lose money.”

“There are three gangs here. [Rotten Meat Gang], [Red Dead], [Mushroom Eater].”

Yokai Sensei took the flintlock and ammo from Delicious Wind Goose before asking, “Where are we going?”

“It can only be the [Red Dead]. I have already investigated beforehand.”

Delicious Wind Goose did not think too much and immediately replied, “Although [Mushroom Eaters] are the primary producers of Demon Blood, they are also the only gang that domesticates demons.

“For us to get the materials, let's exclude this option.

“The [Rotten Meat] is a gang full of prostitution, gambling, and drugs. Judging from the name, there may be cannibalistic customs. Even if Dove doesn't come, we can't enter.”

Delicious Wind Goose said solemnly, “Although it is a game, this is another real world. We have to maintain an appropriate moral bottom line.

“As for [Red Dead]...these illegal ritualists and transcendents who manufacture and sell arms are all made up of felons. I speculate that their higher-ups are spies sent by other countries or rebels of the Noah Kingdom. What they're doing isn't quite right.

“They've been making firearms in their factories at Natta County, and the firearms they're making are of high quality. They can even produce 'Black Fire'. But the problem is that they have the most transcendent. If Natta County doesn't have firearms, this place would have been unified long ago. But instead of doing that, they sold the guns to other Natta County people at a higher price.”

Delicious Wind Goose said slowly, “In my analysis, they are not planning to stand out. A chaotic Natta County and an orderly Natta County are entirely different. The chaotic

Natta County is just useless and dangerous garbage, and the latter already has the value of being noticed and used.

“The leader of 'Red Dead' is most likely using this gang as a cover to do something secretly. I will post these analyses on the forum later, but the truth has nothing to do with us. We don't want to explore blindly, asking for trouble. This is the hidden plot that the later players need to consider, we just need to complete our mission and pave the way for them.

“Another reason is that they have the lowest level of restraint on the lower and middle ranks, with few rules other than limiting internal conflict — including fighting other gangs or looting and killing neutral parties.

“Let's attack a stronghold of the [Mushroom Eaters] first. We kill them all, preferably hunting a few demons. Then, we throw their bodies out and rest for a night. The [Mushroom Eaters] will take revenge, and we will have Dove using your ambush abilities to kill them all.

“After this matter, we will seek out the [Red Dead]. In this way, we carry some [weight] in their eyes. Only then, we can ask them for Demon Blood and the nightmares' keys.”

Delicious Wind Goose narrowed his eyes and frowned deeply.

Compared with the past, the bald, burly man had begun to show a condensed and dangerous aura.

—It was just like the painting that the Paper Princess gave him.

## Chapter 470: Let's Forget About Lockpicking & Barge In Through the Wall

1 a.m..

It was already bedtime.

In Noah's other cities, those still wandering around at this time were considered criminals.

However, in Natta County, the streets and alleys were still lively.

Players saw three shabby-dressed children armed with a crossbow each, shooting poisoned arrows at a man who just passed the corner; he also saw an old man with white hair and a white beard pushing a small cart. There was a small sack struggling slightly; the players also saw a woman's calf in red high-heeled shoes, which fell alone beside the trash can.

But in fact, Anderson and the rest of the players initially thought that Natta County would be more chaotic and lively at night. For example, the house would be demolished, robbed, or something. They did not expect to only encounter such minor events after walking through half of the city.

Upon giving it a deeper thought, it made sense.

After all, Natta County did not suddenly become like this. People's hearts were full of unrelenting panic and fear.

And they had adapted to the life here.

Those who want to stir up something big must have done it. There were no "civilians" here anymore. Everyone knew each other, and a tacit understanding had formed.

Or it could be interpreted as the forces here had already reached a "stalemate".

Unless there was an opportunity to break the balance... For example, having new influencing figures or attractive and easy targets from outside. Otherwise, the situation was relatively stable.

There were even two groups of people who attacked them.

The first group consisted of three men, each armed with a flintlock and a good machete at their waist, seemingly robbers; the second group consisted of five people: two with rifles, two Bronze Rank Transcenders, and a petite, old ritualist. Their goal seemed to be capturing the players.

Ultimately, these two groups only pushed the players to replenish their equipment and ammunition and dirtied Dove's fur.

The first group did not even have time to fire a single shot.

They only stared at the Yokai Sensei, who was fumbling for money.

As a result, the silver coin in Yokai Sensei's hand suddenly turned into a beam of silver light, and the clanging shock wave severed one of their upper bodies. Blood sprayed the area.

They did not expect a Silver Sire Priest to come to Natta County. When the enemy was in a panic, Dove, who had already sneaked behind them, stepped on one of them and broke the target's neck. At the same time, she lunged at the remaining enemy with all her strength and slapped his temple with one paw.

The three opponents were killed swiftly.

After gradually getting used to killing actual humans, the transcender's power was displayed solidly.

Although the second group seemed much stronger, their death was worse.

The reason being Delicious Wind Goose had participated.

After Delicious Wind Goose saw the opposing ritualist take out a bottle of frog viscera on the street, he immediately recognized that the opponent wanted to “summon the paralyzing cloud”. Thus, he immediately reacted.

Before both sides could react, Delicious Wind Goose, who was silently at the back of the team, lowered his body slightly. He converted almost all of his Strength attribute to Agility and reached Anderson instantly with a flicker.

Anderson even subconsciously wanted to raise his shield.

But before he could raise the shield, Delicious Wind Goose had already drawn the blade out from its sheath.

The sword body shone with dazzling silver light, wrapped in a moonlight-like sword energy.

—This was the [Steady Sweep] from Bodyguard Swordsmanship, which was used when assaulting in a single direction while under siege.

But under the blessing of [Sword Saint] ability, the released sword energy pierced through the five people with a single slash.

The five enemies were severed in half in an instant.

Those were all one-hit kills.

The corpses of the two transcenders began to dry up and disintegrate, leaving behind a dagger and an empty potion bottle.

This was the “nightmare key” the enemies left behind.

“Fuck, is Silver Rank so strong?” Anderson looked dumbfounded, “You weren't like this before you advanced!”

If Delicious Wind Goose was his enemy, he could not defend against this blow at all.

Unless he knew Old Goose's trajectory long ago and made a prediction at least one second in advance, his reaction speed could not keep up with Delicious Wind Goose's movement speed.

Delicious Wind Goose took a deep breath, and the dark red rune on the back of his right hand gradually faded.

“It's a curse,” he explained.

Delicious Wind Goose's initial “Lucky Roll” had saved his life several times. However, the new curse obtained during the advancement stage gave him a massive boost despite its usage being limited to specific scenarios.

His newly acquired curse was called [Unrelenting].

Delicious Wind Goose could not “turn back and run away” in the state of “blade out of the sheath”. It was like the pawn pieces in Chinese chess. The player could not move them diagonally but only forward. At the same time, the pawn pieces could not retreat. Otherwise, just like the pawn chess pieces, Old Goose's power would plummet and even his muscles would wither according to the distance he fled when he turned his head back.

Although Old Goose could not look back, things like “jumping back” and “rolling backward” were still allowed.

If Old Goose wanted to turn back, he had to put the sword back into the sheath or throw the sword directly on the ground.

On the other hand, as long as Delicious Wind Goose kept charging forward with the blade out of the sheath, the damage of his next blow would be boosted depending on the moving distance and time. The upper limit was a three-fold boost.

This was why he had always stayed at the backline of the team.

If the enemy came from behind, Delicious Wind Goose could turn around and unsheath, finishing off the enemy first. With that, he would not be concerned about protecting the backline while fighting in the front.

If the enemy appeared from the front and his teammates could not defeat it, he could use the distance from the backline to the frontline of the team to launch a [Charge]. That would activate the curse to increase the power of his first “Sword Qi”.

This was their pre-agreed tactic.

To fully exercise the curse, Old Goose needed to charge at least a distance of about 60 meters. This distance would create about a 40% to 50% boost.

Having something was better than nothing.

“Neckless. How much sword energy did you use?”



Dove seriously sent a private message to Delicious Wind Goose, "Your charge distance should not increase the power so much."

Delicious Wind Goose glanced at the cat calmly and replied, "It's still plenty. I still have 8 "bars" of qi energy."

Anderson also frowned, "So, you have depleted two bars of energy? Wouldn't it be a waste?"

Delicious Wind Goose had to meditate for three hours to accumulate one sword energy bar.

At the same time, he could store 10 bars of energy at most.

The players were certain that there would be no time for Old Goose to slowly meditate and recover his energy in the first few days before arriving in Natta County. It was not like the mana pool that would recover naturally with the sunrise and sunset.

This was why they adopted such a tactic. They would have the tank and the healer at the front and the melee damage output profession at the back.

This was to provide that [Charge] distance to Old Goose to compensate for power and conserve sword energy.

"Being able to act first and keep us in good shape is the optimum approach." Delicious Wind Goose was calm, "Our resources should be used at such times. Sometimes you can't be greedy."

He squinted his eyes and glanced ahead. Then, he said in a low voice, "We have remained stealthy so far, and that's important."

"Half a street ahead is Rotten Fang No. 21. If we make too much noise here and they notice us in advance, we will lose the advantage of making the first move. Then, we will have bigger trouble."

The closer the team was to the critical moment, the calmer Delicious Wind Goose became.

There must be someone patrolling near the target.

They were not designated to guard against the player team but the other two gangs.

Dove entered the [Sneak] state to take out the lurking sentries. Under the protection of the night, she silently moved along the wall and advanced.

She detoured for about 15 minutes and silently eliminated a hidden sentry and a stationed sentry. Then, she posted a screenshot on the forum.

“—Their sentry system works in pairs. There are two hidden sentries and two stationed sentries. We can't get around the last hidden sentry. They are inside with the target. I detoured around twice and still couldn't get in. They are watching the stationed sentry at the front corner. On the other side, the stationed sentry is looking in the direction opposite to ours. I have marked the exact location.

“Since the stationed sentry doesn't look in our direction, they may not notice us. Do we use my main body to eliminate the lurking sentry? The sound of the broken window might attract attention instead... Or should we launch a frontal assault directly?”

Dove asked Delicious Wind Goose.

Anderson turned to look at Delicious Wind Goose, “Boss, what should we do? We didn't bring any rogue with us.”

How to pry the door in?

Or should they go in through the window?

To be honest, Old Goose was a little nervous too.

In the previous few large-scale events, his participation was far from the height the rest of the players perceived.

Since he had to take on the role of a defender ins this attack... even an attack with assassination elements, he began to doubt whether he could do it well.

“You don't need to shoot the arrow. Instead, we should charge in directly.” Delicious Wind Goose narrowed his eyes slightly, “You guys sneak in first. Then, I will rush over from here and unleash three bars worth of sword energy at the wall. A sword attack with a three-fold boosting effect should be able to simultaneously smash the wall and kill those standing behind it.

“Then, the rest of you immediately confront the enemy. Chocolate, your target is the stationed sentry left outside and then you will proceed to back us up. Everyone else follows me in through the gap!”

If there is a way in through the wall, ignore the windows; if there is a way in through the window, ignore the door.

This was what Brother Sledgehammer taught him.

