

Righteous Ps 131

The Righteous Player(s) Chapter 131

When Delicious Wind Goose hurried back home and entered Mist Continent again, it was almost dark.

He found that Wandering Child and Lin Yiyi stayed in their room, drank tea, ate snacks, and watched the live broadcast.

Noticing that Delicious Wind Goose woke up, Wandering Child glanced over with disgust.

“You're slow, Old Goose. You've been offline almost the whole day.”

“You're not a Wind Goose, but a clumsy penguin.”

“No, it's more like a delicious fried goose.”

Wandering Child and Lin Yiyi mocked in conjunction.

Delicious Wind Goose was a little bit ashamed and furious, “Fuck off, you two. I'm going to see Mr. Chen.”

“Mr. Chen?”

Wandering Child was a little surprised, “The one who was demoted from a higher position to a lower position on our platform?”

Everyone had their circles.

The three of them were more familiar with each other. On the one hand, the three of them did well in games. They would not drag each other down, and they even had common topics. Another reason was that the three of them now lived in Shanghai. It was convenient for them to get together offline.

The two people, Delicious Wind Goose and Wandering Child would often meet before entering a game. Even though one played card games and the other played MOBA games, their ages were still close, and they were all popular streamers.

Eighteen of the forty players in this first batch of the closed beta were streamers from the Fighting Cat Streaming Platform.

These players had a few acquaintances who had good gaming skills in their real life.

But none of them were able to receive the closed beta invitation.

It was a pity.

Among the Eighteen Arhats (18 Top Trending Streamers) on this Fighting Cat Streaming Platform, the most popular streamer was certainly Delicious Wind Goose.

Delicious Wind Goose was a well-known card game streamer. While ensuring the entertaining vibe of the stream, he could still stably demonstrate his skills. In a particular card game's ranking, he had consistently ranked within the Top 50. The most notable feature was when Delicious Wind Goose didn't

play according to the game's meta [1], but a loyal “warrior” class deck player. He even participated in the professional league. His highest achievement was attaining the Top Four.

He persisted in the warrior class deck because of his habit of being a warrior when playing MMORPG in the past.

Moreover, in reality, Delicious Wind Goose was a fan of armorer combat sport. He was at a high level, almost able to participate in the competition with various countries.

His anchor was indeed the warrior profession.

It was fair to say that Delicious Wind Goose was the core streamer of the card game genre in Fighting Cat Streaming Platform. His popularity had stably retained at the Top Five.

Compared with half-dead streamers like Wandering Child (Child God) and Glutinous Rice Balls (Jiu Er), Delicious Wind Goose's popularity in streaming granted him significant influences.

The influence was probably enough to affect the platform executives.

Wandering Child's expression turned a little serious for a while.

“What's with the demotion?” Delicious Wind Goose couldn't help but laugh out loud. He patted Child God on the shoulder, “Old Chen! It's Beer Chen, your former esports teammate!”

“Fuck?!”

Child God was shocked, “I know he has a good family, but I didn't expect it to be so good. No wait, I have to find him to alter my contract!”

Although it sounded like a joke, Delicious Wind Goose nodded in agreement, “You should, Child. I have already told Old Chen that our group of people who had entered the game 'Mist Continent.' Those streamers in the Fighting Cat Streaming Platform should alter their contract since they need to reduce the streaming hours every day.

“I have already altered my contract. My daily required streaming hours have been reduced by half. That game... No, the work of exploring and growing in that world is much more important than our streaming work.”

“Okay, I understand.”

Child God nodded thoughtfully, “Then I will publish a post on the forum and tell them.

“Thanks, Old Goose.”

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“Nothing. You will face this problem sooner or later. We can't procrastinate on this. Let's resolve it early.”

Delicious Wind Goose sighed, “But just to avoid his salary being lowballed, I told Mr. Chen about Mist Continent.”

“How much did you reveal?”

“About half of it. I used the narration of VR games, and we are alpha testing the games. I kept the rest of it a secret.”

Delicious Wind Goose shrugged and said helplessly, “If I tell the truth, people will not believe it.”

“En, that is reasonable.” Wandering Child nodded.

To be honest, if Old Chen was not one of the closed beta players... If someone told him that clicking on a mobile app could directly project his consciousness to the other world, he would not believe it.

“However, he promised to keep it confidential for us. From the look of it, he seemed to believe it. At least he showed deference to me or probably you too. He won't push our salary down too much. The required stream time for every month is reduced to half. The contract fee is temporarily deducted by only a quarter. If the duration comes back to normal after one year, the previous contract will be recovered. Otherwise, if our streaming duration remains halved, the salary will be reduced to half.”

It was more like taking an extended vacation.

Within a year, the salary was only reduced by a quarter while the streaming duration was halved. Old Chen's attitude seemed sincere.

Delicious Wind Goose added, “However, the premise is that we have to increase the penalty for job-hopping or signing contracts with competitors. Moreover, if there is other information about Mist Continent later, we should contact him as soon as the confidentiality period has ended.”

“That's for sure.”

Wandering Child agreed, “If this game can generate an invitation code, I will be the first to give it to Beer Chen.

“This guy has a much better view of the bigger picture than me. He is witty too.”

“The most important thing is that if we can bring the boss into 'that world,' we can ask for more leave, right?”

Lin Yiyi blinked her eyes and couldn't help but smile.

Wandering Child glanced at Lin Yiyi with some envy, “Sometimes, I envy you. Your time is free, let alone disappearing for a few days. Even if you go missing for a month or two, no one will come to look for you.”

“No, no, no, if I went missing for a month or two, someone will come to look for me.” Lin Yiyi retorted.

“Speaking of it, what about Jiu Er?”

Delicious Wind Goose asked curiously, “Why are you both still here? Are there any instructions you need to convey to me?”

“Jiu Er has entered the dungeon instance. Her progress is great. She reveals a new map that we haven't seen before. I'm guiding her now. Feel free to continue your chatters.”

Lin Yiyi stared at the live broadcast screen in the void and said casually, "We have discussed it and plan to have a shift system. We don't know about the erosion rate yet, but it is better to control it.

"This dungeon instance is troublesome. We need someone giving instructions outside. Otherwise, it will be too hard to tackle.

"We challenged the dungeon last night, and you guided us. Then, it's time for you to enter the dungeon today. Let's watch the live broadcast and take a rest outside."

After that, Lin Yiyi pointed to the bread and fruit on the table, "Don't go out. Hurry up and eat something, drink some water, and lie down."

"When we are offline, the body here will not accumulate hunger and toilet needs," Delicious Wind Goose couldn't help but complain, "Otherwise, I think I might have wet the bed now."

"Oh, yes, Old Goose. One more thing."

Wandering Child suddenly asked, "Don Juan is back. We haven't messed with that affection rate store just in case. We're all waiting for you to have a look. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Then I don't want to enter the dungeon instance. I can't access the forum in the dungeon instance."

Speaking of the main business affairs, Delicious Wind Goose's expression became serious, "You should visit the store. Your affection rate is the highest, right? Then you can see most of the features.

"No matter what is in the store, don't be rash. Remember to take a screenshot, post it and let me take a look."

"Alright." Wandering Child nodded in response.

[1] Most effective tactics available during that point in time.

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Wandering Child walked directly to Freezing Water Port city lord's residence.

The other two players on guard duty looked at Wandering Child and let him enter directly.

The two players did stand straight on guard professionally with their eyes sharp and their expressions solemn.

But their minds wandered off, watching the live broadcast taking place in the forum.

Being able to subconsciously make a solemn expression while the mind wandering elsewhere could be an extraordinary talent in a sense.

But before coming, Wandering Child had already published a post announcing his first experience trying out the newly opened affection rate store function. Therefore, the two players were much more alerted and waited patiently for a long time.

After entering the city lord's residence, Wandering Child saw Annan in the living room drinking tea and reading the newspaper, as if he was living an elderly retirement life.

Somewhat unexpected... It's almost time for dinner, but the Wizard Salvatore with panda eyes like Gaara isn't here.

This is strange.

At this time, shouldn't the former mayor also read and hang around this place?

Wandering Child vaguely felt something was amiss but didn't overthink about it.

The players didn't even know what kind of trouble Annan and Salvatore encountered during the eight hours while they were offline.

Wandering Child approached and greeted Annan respectfully, "Feudal lord."

Annan raised his head slightly and noticed that it was the Wandering Child. He gave a lighthearted smile, "It's you. Have a seat. You don't have to stand up and talk."

—This was naturally from Annan's acting skills.

After all, Wandering Child had already achieved the affection rate (1200/1500), so Annan naturally had to make a trusting expression.

It could be regarded as real-life role-playing, and it sounded pretty high-end.

By the way, Annan hadn't decided what the next level of affection rate should be called.

After friendliness is followed by trust, right? What's the level should I call after trust?

In short, I just need to have as many levels as possible.

Annan liked the way the players tried their best to increase the affection rate. However, in reality, the players succumbed to an endless grind [1] to earn the NPCs affection rate.

I don't need to worry too much about this.

After all, Annan would soon take away their affection rate back.

"Um..."

Wandering Child sat aside, tangled.

He didn't know what he should say to activate the affection rate store.

Annan smiled and pretended to be an NPC to see what else this group of silly kids could do.

In the end, Wandering Child couldn't help but apply for off-site assistance.

He glanced at the post he posted and read, according to Delicious Wind Goose's guidance, "Feudal lord, I have already felt it. Our Freezing Water Port is facing some hardships and dangers. I am eager for more power so that I can't serve you more.

"Although the nightmare will greatly improve our strength, we are now in some predicament."

"Oh? What kind of predicament is it?"

Annan's expression became slightly serious, "Do you want me to offer you advice?"

Wandering Child froze for a moment.

He glanced at the post and quickly replied, "Yes, feudal lord. I think you will know more about gallery nightmares. At least you will know better than us."

"Yes, I do have more secret information here." Annan nodded slowly.

He glanced at Wandering Child and muttered in a low volume, "Let me think about what kind of help I can give you."

As he said, words suddenly appeared before Wandering Child's eyes.

Wandering Child quickly activated the video recording:

[Free medical assistance (consumption of 100 affection rate, limited to friendly and above)]

[Learning the history of Freezing Water Port 10/10 (consumption of 200 affection rate, limited to friendly and above)]

[Learning the political relationship between the Noah Kingdom and Austere-Winter Dukedom 5/5 (consumption of 500 affection rate, limited to friendly and above)]

[A decent job with stable income 5/5 (consumption of 500 affection rate, limited to trusted and above)]

[Important information about Painter Amos 1/1 (consumption of 1000 affection rate, limited to trusted and above)]

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[Taboo! Secret knowledge about the Venerated Skeleton 3/3 (consumption of 1200 affection rate, limited to trusted and above)]

[Taboo! Advanced knowledge about Transcended profession 5/5 (consumption of 1500 affection rate, limited to trusted and above)]

[Limited! Freezing Water Port resident identity certificate 40/40 (consumption 2000 affection rate, limited to trusted and above)]

What the hell is the last option!

Wandering Child was taken aback.

The 2000 affection rate... I can only get it after maxing out my affection rate. It will empty out my affection rate and put me at the bottom immediately.

This is even more expensive than the Transcended profession intelligence...

Earning knowledge with the affection rate store is too expensive! Why are there 3/3 and 5/5? Does it mean that it can be sold multiple times? Or does it mean that everything you say is incomplete every time?

Can the product be out of stock?

Do I need to wait to get the information I want?

But soon, Wandering Child reacted.

The information sold in this affection rate store should assume that the players would communicate and share information.

In other words, this information was not bought by one person.

It was something the players collectively wanted and bought together.

Those players who watched the Wandering Child live broadcast quickly reacted.

Delicious Wind Goose immediately said, "Buy the information about the painter! You can only afford this. As long as we can get the complete information, we won't lose the affection rate!

"No, Child God. Ask what exactly is the resident identity certificate!"

Delicious Wind Goose reacted quickly and corrected it.

Wandering Child opened his mouth and asked probingly, "Feudal lord, what if I say I want a resident identity certificate?"

Annan raised his head and looked at the Wandering Child in doubt.

His attitude became a little colder, "Do you want to invite people you know to Freezing Water Port? I have no problem with that. I can even give them a proper identity. But I don't accept anyone. I need a guarantor."

As Annan explained, a prompt flashed before Wandering Child's eyes:

[The current affection rate is not enough to purchase a resident identity certificate (Freezing Water Port).]

[Please try to purchase the closed beta invitation code after accumulating more affection rates.]

After an abrupt silence, the players' forum exploded directly.

"Fuck!"

"Fuck! Child God! You're so smart!"

"What! I can buy an invitation code!"

"Can I buy forty slots? Is it limited to one purchase per person?"

"Teach me how to earn affection rate! I want to bring my wife in too!"

"Fuck off to whoever posts the comment above me!"

"Yeah! Fuck Off!"

Ignoring the chaotic forum, Wandering Child hesitated for a long time. Is it the priority to buy the secret information that guides for progression, or continue to save the affection rate and buy the invitation code directly?

In the end, Wandering Child finally made a decision.

If it were ten years ago, Wandering Child might choose to continue to save up the affection rate to buy the invitation code or use it to buy intelligence to gain Transcendence.

But, he had a brighter idea now.

Anyway, he didn't have any friends he wanted to bring into this game.

It was better to gain early advantages and contribute to everyone.

"I hope you can tell me important information about Painter Amos."

Wandering Child asked Annan seriously.

Annan nodded, "Sure."

-Damn, if I don't point it out directly, these dummies don't know that this was an invitation code.

As the planner, Game Master, novice guide, and faction leader, Annan cursed in his heart.

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"Painter Amos's full name is Amos Morrison. He believes in a false deity whose name cannot be said. I won't say anything in particular. I think you have an idea in your heart."

Annan's expression became slightly serious, and he said softly, "Painter Amos sacrificed his daughter, Elle Morrison, to the false deity."

Hearing Annan's words, the players' attention went elsewhere else,

"The Venerated Skeleton? Why does it sound like a counterfeit of the Lich King..."

"—Lich King (like Mist Continent)."

"—Then, this is not Amos. This is Arthas."

(TN: Warcraft reference)

"-But Amos didn't kill his dad."

"—Elle: My father, from the day I was born, all the Freezing Water Port fish were whispering your name, Arthas."

These players like to make up nonsense.

Annan glanced at the bullet text and almost laughed.

To avoid laughing, his expression became more serious, "This is a story that happened forty-five years ago. In fact, Elle Morrison was originally called Elle Buckel. When she was seven, her mother, Clara, remarried. Elle's surname changed to Morrison at that time."

Annan didn't mention the death of Elle's biological father.

This was the news Annan saw in the newspaper, but this information wasn't verified yet. As for now, none could be sure that it was 100% true.

After all, Annan had already seen the man named Buckel in the hidden ending, which Lin Yiyi revealed.

Not only was he not dead, but he was also an Edict Wizard.

Annan could only reveal information he could be certain of and reveal the correct plot to the players.

It helped avoid the trouble for the players stuck in the wrong direction so that Annan didn't need to send anonymous bullet texts and babysit the players.

“But after all, Elle and Amos are not related. For a young lady, the tall Amos with a good figure is irresistible, especially because he is also a well-known painter.”

Annan paused slightly when he said this.

He turned his head, pretending to be a little bit shy and innocent, and said softly, “So it's reasonable for them to have a child...”

“—Uh-huh.”

“—Fuck, wait?!”

“—Things just went south!”

“—What a father!”

“—Wait, they aren't blood-related.”

“—Although not related by blood, Elle is still underage, right?!”

“—I suddenly wanted to call the police...”

Hearing such a piece of breaking news, the bullet text in front of Wandering Child exploded instantly.

The comments were threefold just now!

So Annan committed the subsequent bomb, “But Elle's child wasn't given birth, but miscarried at six months.

“If you reckon it back, Elle... En, the date of her having a romantic relationship with Amos should happen during her sixteenth-years-old birthday.”

Wandering Child was startled slightly.

He immediately remembered the dungeon instance he had tackled early that morning.

“In the dungeon instance level of “Gallery: Elle Morrison,” it seems to be the day when Elle celebrates her sixteenth birthday?”

Doesn't that mean...

Thinking of this, Wandering Child quivered.

Luckily I ran fast enough.

“About a month after Elle's abortion, she suddenly disappeared. After a while, her body pieces were found hiding inside the Morrison Gallery's frame and mixed in paint too.

“The fetus corpse was made into a specimen. It was stored in the gallery's basement.

“In addition, in the Morrison Gallery's basement, there are still some corpses of wanderers, including a well-known art critic, Sir Absalom Flagg.”

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Annan explained, “A long time ago, he was a critic of Morrison's paintings. But more than half a month before Elle's birthday, he suddenly became an avid supporter of Morrison. Four months after Elle's birthday, he went to Freezing Water Port to participate in Mr. Morrison's painting exhibition. That is the time when Morrison's Gallery was founded.

“But he did not arrive and disappeared. His body was found in the basement, so there is reason to suspect that Morrison didn't only kill Elle.

“Later, when the officials seized Morrison Gallery, they found a very dangerous Ball of Flesh burning with colorful flames. This Ball of Flesh brought huge destruction. Even if Transcended assisted the officials, they suffered heavy casualties.”

The bullet text paused and then ran rampant:

“Isn't the level which Sister Hyphen revealed? That hidden level?”

“What! That Ball of Flesh is the fetus?”

“It seems to be called Angelo.”

“Hey, am I the only one who cares about Elle? Such a beautiful girl ended up in this fate! I feel so heartbroken!”

“Fuck off with your heartache. She isn't fond of you anyway.”

“That's all the information that I can tell you.” Annan took a deep breath after the long narration.

Annan looked at Wandering Child with a serious expression, “You can share this information with them. But you can't tell outsiders. Many of the information can't be revealed to the public. If I found a leak, then you shall take full responsibility for that. Do you understand?”

After Annan finished speaking, a prompt box appeared in front of Wandering Child's eyes:

[This information's confidentiality level is “secret” and is allowed to spread among the players. In case of an information leak, part of the affection rate will be deducted.]

Upon hearing this, Wandering Child nodded, “I understand.”

He really understood the repercussions.

In the morning, there was some confusion in the dungeon instance. After receiving Annan's information, the Wandering Child was suddenly enlightened.

However, Wandering Child was still vaguely confused.

He still remembered that he had a clear feeling of a foreign entity in his body and chills in his abdomen after waking up back in the dungeon.

Is that a fetus?

That seems so impossible.

Elle can't have the fetus take shape in one day even if cheat is turned on, right?

Or...

That fetus doesn't belong to Morrison, but the Venerated Skeleton?

Wandering Child wanted to ask what exactly was "the Venerated Skeleton."

But unfortunately, his affection rate was used up.

For the rest, I should have my comrades resolve it.

On the other side, Delicious Wind Goose pondered.

After a long thought, he nodded thoughtfully.

"I got it."

He murmured, "I think that we can complete the level this time."

"Let's go, Uncle Goose."

Lin Yiyi waved her fist from the side, smiled, and cheered, "If you complete the dungeon, I will treat you to seafood tonight!"

"Do you have money?"

Delicious Wind Goose was a little surprised.

Lin Yiyi shrugged, "Jiu Er said it. If she is not the first to clear the dungeon, she will bring us to have seafood barbecue, crab barbecue, beer, and whatnot."

"She looks confident."

When Delicious Wind Goose heard Lin Yiyi's words, he laughed, "Well, reserve the table!

"She dares to enter the dungeon so early. I'll tell that idiot girl the importance of intelligence!"

After Wind Goose commented that, he lay down again, closed his eyes, and said softly, "The Venerated Skeleton."

"I am listening."

The low and hoarse voice sounded the moment his sentence ended.

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Soon after Wandering Child left, Annan put away the book in his hand.

He didn't plan to read it in the first place.

He just wanted to appear "I'm busy, don't bother me" so that these players wouldn't come over and chat or request a mission.

Why do the players keep bothering me? I don't know what to do as well.

Annan sigh.jpg

Annan made himself a cup of tea, brought a plate of pastries, closed the door, lit the lamp, and leaned against the bed happily.

Salvatore stayed up all night in the basement to prepare the reagent. Annan felt uneasy as he watched the live broadcast and ate snacks at the same time.

It might be due to the thinning conscience deep down in Annan's heart was struggling desperately.

But still, Annan opened up the live broadcast happily in the end.

"...Eh?"

Annan realized that Jiu Er seemed to be in a dungeon instance he hadn't seen before.

"Ha...ha...ha....."

Jiu Er panted heavily, leaning against the wall and looking back vigilantly.

She wasn't using Amos's body this time.

It was the body of a homeless man who was about fifty years old and had a haggard-looking face.

Who is this? Where is this? Annan was a little surprised.

Annan quickly skimmed through the bullet text history, then selected Jiu Er's live broadcast video. Then, using the bullet text as the timeline reference point, he fast-forwarded the video and watched it for a while. Soon, he realized what happened.

Annan quickly understood what was going on.

Jiu Er entered this dungeon through the nightmare's second level.

In theory, it was the simplest level in the whole nightmare.

Its name was [Gallery: Feast For The Hungry].

The way to enter this level was simple. However, many people couldn't calm down and think under "Brother Sledgehammer's" pursuit.

Jiu Er realized that that tomato might be the critical prop [1].

But it wasn't within reach. If the dungeon challenger went to the next level, they might not be able to come back.

In other words, the item critical to grab the tomato must be on this level.

So after she put on the blood-stained windbreaker, she turned back.

—Indeed, she turned back.

Seeing the crack in the wall smashed by the sledgehammer, Jiu Er walked directly in. It was the entrance to the “Gallery: Elle Morrison” on the third floor.

Within that place, she found a long bloody dagger.

Then Jiu Er turned back again. She found that with the dagger in hand, the tomatoes could be taken away.

She originally wanted to go to the third floor like this, but she turned back for the second time due to the peer pressure from the bullet text.

This time, there seemed to be nothing at the end of the passage.

With Jiu Er holding a dagger and tomato, when she approached the falling chandelier, the death flag here was removed.

Yesterday, other players had explored this location.

But when they turned around and approached the falling chandelier, countless shadows under the chandelier dragged them in, allowing the chandelier to tear them into pieces. It was all due to the lack of the critical item: Tomato.

However, when Jiu Er returned with the tomatoes, the shadow did not appear.

After that, she moved a little closer and triggered the cinematic graphics (CG).

In real-time, it just so happened that Jiu Er was put under a chase. Hence, there was nothing else noteworthy.

“Let me stick through the CG cutscene.”

Annan did not hesitate to play the CG part of the video.

It was different from experiencing CG by himself previously.

Annan was now observing painter Amos from a third-person perspective from the shoulder.

Amos wore a white robe stained with blood, holding a tomato in one hand and a knife in the other. He slowly approached the falling chandelier under the gaze of countless portraits.

Amos staggered, but he was not as scared as he was in the third level.

Annan saw Amos staring under the chandelier, breathing heavily.

It was like looking at something that ordinary people couldn't see.

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Finally, he sighed in a low volume, "Sorry..."

As Amos spoke, with a trembling right hand and a knife, he slowly cut a slit on the tomato in his hand.

Only then did Annan notice-

The extra rosy tomato was full of bright red plasma.

It was like a fountain, with a steady stream of blood pouring out. Amos raised it high with his trembling left hand.

The blood ran down his arm and dripped on the floor. The shadow under the chandelier was like a living thing, sipping the blood on the ground.

The blood contained in the tomato was dozens of times larger than its volume. The volume was like the blood of several adults.

Finally, the tomatoes gradually dried up.

On the innermost side, there laid a tongue.

The tongue and the skin of the tomato cut in half seemed to form a mouth, resembling a smile.

"Hehehehe..." Annan heard the girl's deep laughter again.

It was exactly the same laughter he heard when Annan was on the second floor before Brother Sledgehammer attacked him!

Only this time, the laughter was more evident, as if it sounded right behind him.

The shadow finally sucked up the blood on the ground under the chandelier.

Wait, it was not completely sucked up.

There were still traces of it.

The leftover blood squirmed on the ground and formed a string of intermittent words,

"Look...your...back..." Amos read it out. Immediately, he breathed in cold air while panic struck. He shivered and looked back subconsciously.

At the end of the corridor where he had just walked out was radiating a disturbing blood-red glare.

Since the chandelier fell, the wall where the portraits were hung became dim. Somehow, there were some glimmers, at least to the extent that the portrait above him became visible.

There were portraits of men, women, and children with weird smiles.

Suddenly, all the portraits became Amos himself!

All of them became Amos himself, looking up at the dim environment with a panicked face!

Just like how he was at that moment!

It was as though there were not portraits but countless mirrors hanging on the wall.

But unlike the mirror surface, in the countless portraits of him, behind him stood a tall, silent man with a hideous face looking at him.

...Or, perhaps they are indeed mirrors rather than portraits.

Amos stayed on the spot, staring blankly at the man holding the hammer within the mirrors, slowly raising the hammer.

At this time, all the portraits began to burn.

A circle of scorch marks appeared, burning away the "Amos and Brother Sledgehammer" on the surface, revealing another painting underneath.

It was a homeless man with shabby clothes, a lean face, rough skin, and a skinny body.

The despair of life could be seen in the homeless man's eyes.

White and sacred hand filled with hope and gratitude was reaching into the portrait.

At that moment, Amos's eyes met with the homeless man.

He felt someone pull his hand suddenly.

He stumbled forward a few steps.

At this time, the surrounding pictures suddenly changed.

The main point of view was the homeless man.

With a decent smile and gentle face, Amos stood in front of "the dungeon challenger" and made a polite invitation with his clean and white right hand.

It was different from "Gallery: Elle Morrison."

Amos had blond hair mixed with his brown curly hair.

One of his eyes was still deep blue.

—The other eye turned into a beautiful, jewel-like, clear, and charming green.

"Good morning, sir."

Amos Morrison was polite and repeated his previous words, "Can I hire you to be my model?"

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Huh, this hair and eyes...

Annan keenly noticed Amos's green and blue pupils that looked like a Persian cat.

Has Amos obtained part of Elle's body at this level?

Annan immediately realized that the timeline of this dungeon instance was chaotic.

The timeline here should be after June and before November.

Annan still remembered that there were still many skeletons beside the stillborn submerged in the wine bottle in Amos's basement. Most of these bones came from the “missing homeless man.”

—That should be the character that Jiu Er now played.

Unexpectedly, this theoretically simpler and less chaotic second-level nightmare was in the timeline a bit later than the third level.

But it still made sense.

The Level -1 nightmare that could be entered from the first layer was the ending already.

In terms of the timeline, Level -1 was of a later timeline. Before the dungeon challenger could enter the memory segment, Brother Sledgehammer would have ended the challenger's life and gave a big GG [1].

Unfortunately, when Jiu Er entered the nightmare, she did not get this information.

Otherwise, she would immediately realize which character she was playing as.

[You have entered Gallery: Feast For The Hungry (Second Level).]

[Main mission: Act as the homeless man “Amis.”]

Immediately, small texts appeared below this line:

[Complete the portrait.]

[Meet the other three homeless men.]

[At least one person survived until dark.]

What does it mean?

Seeing the side mission of “At least one person survived until dark,” Jiu Er shivered.

She looked up subconsciously. Judging from the brilliance of daylight, it was about noon now.

Because of her identity as a homeless man, Jiu Er couldn't determine whether the hunger in her resulted from not eating lunch or not eating several meals. Hence, she couldn't determine the approximate time bucket.

Painter Amos in front of her, smiled gracefully and calmly. He reached out a hand to her, “If you come to help me complete a portrait, I will get a hot bath and give you clean clothes. I will take care of your diet for three days. How's that?”

In all fairness, this was indeed a generous condition.

—If Painter Amos didn't do those things in secret.

“But... sir...”

Jiu Er imitated the homeless man's tone and said tremblingly, “I can't paint...”

“No, no, no, you don't need to paint. You need to stand in front of the canvas and wait for me to paint your portrait. It will be quite fast, about two hours.”

Amos took out his pocket watch to check the time and then smiled refreshingly, “Can you don't move for two hours? It's half-past one. It will end around half-past three.”

Jiu Er's heart sank slightly.

The portrait would be completed at half-past three.

There are still two hours before dark.

In other words, I will probably not be able to catch up with dinner.

After the portrait painting, I'm going to be put under pursuit for the next two hours.

Jiu Er's thoughts ran quickly in her mind. Soon, she promptly responded, lowered her head, and replied solemnly, “Alright, sir...”

Amis (Jiu Er) followed Amos and was supported into the gallery not far away by his shoulders.

This was a large and magnificent art gallery, probably rented or bought by Amos.

But seeing the interior decoration of this gallery, Jiu Er's PTSD struck:

This gallery had the same gallery interior she just walked through!

The only difference was that there were two spiraling stairs on both sides of the circular gallery. At the end of the gallery, the door where players enter the next level every time was in the direction of the exit.

Jiu Er thought of something.

Could it be Amos wanted to escape from the gallery?

Fortunately, this place was unlike the eerie and gloomy gallery in the nightmare.

Not only was the light bright here, but there were also some elegantly dressed guests coming in and out, stopping in front of some portraits.

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They were not surprised when they saw Amos bringing in a homeless man with a foul stench. They just greeted Amos warmly,

“Master Amos!”

“Master, good afternoon!”

“May Silver Sire bless you, Sir Morrison.”

Amos just smiled and returned the greetings, “En, hello.”

His figure was tall and straight; his smile was elegant and calm, seemingly exuding dazzling confidence. Once he appeared, he had become the focus of the audience.

He even seemed a bit... unlike a mortal.

If he and other painters appear at the same time, the crowd will notice Amos at first sight. Even those who didn't know Amos could realize immediately that he was an honorable guest at first glance.

The strong self-confidence aura in him was like a star who was always surrounded by fans.

In the dream's third level, Amos, the amiable father who painted Elle, was no longer a human.

After leaving the crowd, Amos asked Jiu Er gently, "You haven't been wandering for long, right?"

Jiu Er was shocked, almost shivering.

She calmed down and tried her best not to panic, "You... How did you know?"

"Because I see hope in your eyes."

Like a poet, Amos whispered in a melodious tone, "Such a beautiful light... It will not appear in the eyes of people who have completely lost hope in life."

Looking at the bewildered Jiu Er, he smiled and explained naturally, "When you see my guests, you will feel curious and want to explore their identities. When you see my paintings on the wall, you will want to understand what's within.

"This shows that you still have hope for this world. Truly desperate people don't care about anything anymore." Amos sighed slightly.

He raised his head a little melancholy, not knowing where to look.

His gaze was profound, and his pupils with different colors seemed to show a captivating, magical charm.

Or, perhaps they were all an illusion.

Amis and Amos went to the fourth floor. There were no guests at that place. It seemed that this place was not open to the public. There was an iron door between the third and fourth floors, which could only be opened with a key.

This fourth floor should be Amos's studio. This place was more like a luxuriously decorated living room than a studio.

There were luxurious carpets, sofas, and wooden furniture in warm colors. Some toys could be seen laid in the corner of the room, but no children were playing with them.

On the tea table next to the hall, three men in white robes and slightly longer hair sat together with a somewhat formal expression, chatting in a low volume.

They looked happy when they saw Jiu Er. A younger man waved to Jiu Er.

"They are friends who came before you to help with my painting."

Amos followed Jiu Er's gaze and explained, "This is my grand plan... feast for the hungry."

With that said, Amos walked to the wall and pulled away from the heavy red cloth to both sides.

Many huge paintings were on the wall.

In the painting were men with shabby clothes, withered faces, and hungry eyes. They looked out of the painting in different postures. Some were lying on the ground; some curled up in the corner; some bent over, squatted, and stretched their necks to look forward; some squatted on the ground, like a dog.

It was noticeable at first glance they were all homeless.

Among them, there were three paintings with the people on that painting look the same as the three white-robed men chatting over there.

Just seeing these paintings, the three of them shuddered and couldn't help but turn their heads away. They dared not look at their portrait.

Jiu Er felt a little short of breath for a while.

The person in the painting was not beautiful, but it was unforgettable.

Even the bullet text was silent for a moment.

These were not paintings at all but souls.

When Jiu Er first saw it, she even thought it was a huge window. These people were looking at themselves outside the window in a chaotic space. It was as if these people were reduced in size, staring at and assessing giants outside the window.

Just looking at these paintings was enough to feel intense and incomparable fear.

Jiu Er was even in a daze. She could see these people trembling slightly, wailing silently, drooling, staring at her in hunger.

These people within the paintings were like living things.

Like those hungry and evil spirits-

[Erosion rate: 3%]

[1] The abbreviation players tend to say at the end of the game, meaning Good Game.

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Just by staring at the slanted and huge portraits on the wall, Jiu Er felt a chill crept upon her spine.

She felt that her consciousness seemed to be immersed in water, and it became difficult to breathe. The surrounding air turned scorching as if she was stewed.

Under the intense anxiety, her bones crunched. It was like an iron bar attracted by a magnet. Her bones wanted to break out of her body and cast on those oil paintings.

“...Hungry...”

“I want.....”

“Absolutely... stop...”

“Flee...immediately...”

In the hot air, Jiu Er heard fine whispers, seemingly many people were whispering to themselves in low voices at the same time. In the end, she couldn't hear anything.

“What's your choice?” Amos's clear voice sounded behind Jiu Er.

At the moment when Jiu Er heard him, she woke up instantly from the hallucinations.

Under that short illusion, she noticed that her erosion rate had risen silently by 3%.

“While you're enjoying the fine experience, you lost three points of sanity.”

“Wait, does everyone who sees this painting have their erosion rate increase? Isn't it unavoidable to have the erosion rate rise every round? Isn't this level too dangerous?!”

“—No, I think it will only rise the first time we see it...or maybe it won't happen anymore.”

“—Am I the only one who didn't feel the horror of this painting?”

“—To be honest, I also...”

As Jiu Er's erosion rate increased when she looked at the picture, the players watching outside became rowdy, and bullet text was posted continuously.

...A bunch of bastards.

You are just bullying me that I can't interact with you now...

Seeing a group of bullet texts that laughed at her barraging, Jiu Er was annoyed.

She had made up her mind.

No matter what, she would scam all these bastards into this nightmare as long as she could get out alive!

This live broadcast couldn't convey the fear she had just now.

I need to make them all take a look at this painting personally!

Jiu Er believed that if the other players had their erosion rate increased, they would help bring other players in.

She muttered in her heart and replied in a low volume, “Very...very shocking.”

“Yes, you still use the word shock...” Amos was surprised.

He couldn't help but laugh.

Obviously, this homeless man wasn't brown-nosed or pretending to give a sincere evaluation, which delighted him.

Amos walked up to Jiu Er and asked casually, “What is your name?”

“...Amis, my name is Amis.”

Jiu Er endured nausea that had not yet dissipated, recalled the earlier moment, and replied.

Fortunately, the time was not long.

Although interrupted, Jiu Er could still remember the “name.”

“Alright, Amis. Stand in front of the frame.”

Amos whispered. His voice was calm and confident, “I will make you famous all over the world.”

After Amos said that, he held the homeless man's shoulder and pushed him forward.

Jiu Er vaguely felt that the person in the painting sprayed his hot breath on her face.

She shivered and looked at that wall. But at this moment, she couldn't feel the burning sensation again.

That wall was composed of at least 17 portraits of different sizes. Its lower right corner had an empty frame.

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No, strictly speaking, it should be called a “black frame.”

Within the frame, the paper wasn't painted entirely black.

The bottom layer looked like the shadow on a wall corner. It didn't seem like a painting when placed in the corner of the wall. Rather, it was a dark gate leading to the abyss.

In other words, it seemed like a picture frame that initially housed a portrait, and the person inside had escaped.

“Stand here, Amis.”

As Amos spoke, he took out the black frame behind Jiu Er.

On the contrary, after pulling out the picture frame, Jiu Er noticed that pitch-black lay behind this painted frame. The dark and dull wall was revealed.

It was like being smoked by charcoal.

The creepy, uneven, and bottomless pitch black was creepy.

Subsequently, Amos put the frame on the shelf not far in front.

He strode back again, leaning on Jiu Er's body and crouching slightly, trying to look forward.

After that, Amos stepped back and looked up and down but still smacked his lips in dissatisfaction.

He pondered for a while. From the nearby wall, he took out an empty shelf that was used to house those frames.

“Give me one hand and hold this shelf— Yes. Make the other hand slightly curled up. I want that timid feeling. Slightly raise your head as if looking inside. Imagine that you are supporting yourself on a window and look inside.”

Amos explained carefully to Jiu Er.

Hearing this, Jiu Er already understood what kind of posture Amos wanted.

—It gave off the feeling of a naughty kid looking into the toy store through the transparent glass window.

Seeing Jiu Er's new posture, Amos's eyes lit up, "Yes! That's it. Don't move. Keep your posture... Imagine that you are hungry and inside the window is food just served in someone else's house."

With that, Amos quickly began painting.

But what happened next was different with the portrait painting at the nightmare's third level shown in Wandering Child's stream.

Jiu Er originally thought that this was just a test of endurance. She would pass as long as she stayed motionless.

But after Amos began to paint...

Jiu Er felt a strong discomfort.

She wanted to move, but her body was imprisoned and couldn't move at all.

Bullet text gradually realized that something was wrong.

The homeless man, played by Jiu Er, became more and more real. It was like there really was a hungry homeless man lying by the window and peering inside.

It wasn't something that "acting" could accomplish.

It didn't even look like an actual homeless man anymore.

Because a real homeless man would never have such clear emotions on his face. The mixture of timidity, hunger, greed, and malice was an abstract homeless man image that only existed in painting art.

For the broadcast viewers, they could see Amos's hand moving quickly to complete the painting.

It was almost like a digital printer. Without any hesitation or amendment, Amos continued to paint quickly as if he was not painting according to an image but embodied the image already formed in his mind into reality.

The bullet texts were amazed by Amos's art.

Annan had witnessed it before when Amos painted a portrait for Elle.

But these players hadn't seen it before.

At that moment, the homeless man painted by Amos was more exquisite than Elle's portrait.

As the portrait gradually took shape, Jiu Er felt that her body was still unable to move, her consciousness steadily blurred, and everything in front of her was elongated.

At this moment, she heard Amos's warm and soft whisper sounded in her ears,

“You...

“Are you hungry now?”

At the next moment, Jiu Er lost consciousness without any warning.

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When Jiu Er woke up again, the portrait was completed.

“Thank you very much, Mr. Amis. Come and take a look at the portrait I drew for you.”

The warm and confident voice of Amos suddenly sounded beside Jiu Er.

The homeless man was taken aback, raised his head, and looked around.

The homeless man found out that Amos had appeared behind him, pushing the painting back to its original position.

The other parts of the painting were covered under a red cloth. Only this small place was exposed and allowed for Jiu Er to see it in person.

Jiu Er took a closer look at the exposed part of the painting. She realized that Amos had not drawn the prop shelf into it.

There was a homeless man with messy hair and shabby clothes. One hand reached forward, and another curled under his ribs. His eyes were mixed with confusion and cruelty; his hunger and malnutrition could be seen from his shriveled ribs and sunken abdomen.

He stood there crouched, giving the impression of a hungry wolf standing up.

His eyes were green!

Jiu Er looked at the homeless man as if he was about to step out of the painting in the next moment. Although the homeless man in the painting was theoretically her, she still couldn't help but feel crippling fear.

She even seemed to see the homeless man's eyes moved slightly in the painting!

It gave off a feeling like she was walking alone in a dim alley, noticing that a strange man followed her through the shadow which a street lamp projected.

It wasn't that Jiu Er was afraid of ghosts.

—But she was more afraid of humans.

For no reason, Jiu Er was panic-stricken—

She almost screamed out loud.

But she managed to muster up her reasoning to force her voice back into the throat.

Jiu Er just smiled awkwardly, “I don't know why but I'm a little...a little scared...”

“That's alright, Mr. Amis.”

Amos smiled confidently, "I want this feeling. Your portrait will be placed together with other people's portraits. This is a set of paintings. I want to use them to express homelessness like you; the hunger and helplessness of the unfortunate people. Presumably, this will also get people to pay more attention to the rights and interests of the homeless. It will be more helpful to your future life."

Shut up with hunger and helplessness...

This is horror, evil, and untrustworthy!

Jiu Er almost retorted out loud.

But she thought about it carefully. Anyway, she was not Amis. So there was no point arguing with Amos.

"Yes, you are right."

Jiu Er lowered her head in humiliation and said submissively, "This is indeed an outstanding masterpiece..."

It was like those in customer service apologizing despite complaining in the heart.

It felt so low and humble.

Though, Amos was very satisfied with this answer.

Painter Amos asked Jiu Er, "Would you like to try... looking at this group of paintings? The paintings you saw before have part of it missing, which cannot fully express the emotion I want to express in this group of paintings. Your painting is the last of these eighteen portraits."

"...No, no, it's fine."

This will hurt my health.

Jiu Er immediately refused.

Her instinct had been frantically alerting her to avoid it.

Jiu Er's keen intuition told her that if she saw the complete set of paintings "Feast for the Hungry," she might die here or go crazy directly.

Then, she suddenly recalled something.

She asked respectfully, "Master... Excuse me, what time is it?"

"Well..."

Amos looked up at the clock in the room and gestured with his chin, "5:10 in the afternoon. Are you hungry?"

"Let me prepare food for you?"

He said this to the three homeless men in white clothes as well.

Then, Amos smiled at Jiu Er and replied, "Would you like to take a shower first? The bathroom is over there. There are clean clothes in it."

Having said that, he didn't wait for Jiu Er to reply and left straight away.

“Tchi...” Jiu Er smacked her lips in disgust.

Should I take a bath?

To clean this dirty and smelly homeless man...

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Even the bullet text had expressed their aversion,

“I should head off now, bye-bye.”

“Brother, remember to notify me when she finishes bathing!”

“It's a pity. If the video here can be sent outside, I would like to record the 'female streamer Fermented Rice Ball bathing video' and post it on the Internet. But, when they click on the video, they will find that it is an old homeless man's movable 4K Ultra HD Video with a 360-degree view.”

“Sir, I have called the police!”

“Who is this pervert? Come forward! Don't just send bullet text and hide! Go to the forum and publish a post about it!”

Before the bullet texts further occupied jiu Er, the three homeless men in white robes rushed to Jiu Er's side after Amos left.

“Uncle Amis! Why are you here too!?”

It was the youngest of the three who spoke.

Of course, he was the youngest, but he was already about the mid-20s.

“Fuck, you still run into acquaintances in this situation?”

“It's normal. These are all homeless men from the Freezing Water Port. This place is already small, and it's normal to know each other.”

Jiu Er was silent for a while and didn't reply. Of course, she couldn't reply because she didn't even know the name of this person. At this time, the eldest man grabbed the shoulder of the homeless man “Amis” a little nervously, lowered his voice, and asked, “Did you feel something wrong?”

“Just now, did you feel that your body could not move at all?”

“...You'll felt the same too?” Jiu Er was surprised.

She just thought she was in a CG.

She didn't expect others to feel this way similarly.

“...I feel something is wrong.”

The old man sullenly said in a low volume, “Don't eat... too much tonight. Remember to stay awake and don't fall asleep.”

He originally wanted to say, "Don't eat."

But he hesitated and changed it to "Don't eat too much."

Because he also understood Amis's difficult situation.

They had not eaten till full for a long time.

If someone promised to give them three days' worth of food and then let them die, these homeless men would agree after some hesitation.

They were all "useless people," after all.

It was the youngest homeless man who didn't care at all, "What are you scared of? I've been here for three days. It isn't warm and cozy. I'm about to leave now... Look. Did anything happen to me?"

"You are old and cowardly. If Master Amos wants to harm us, do you think we can escape? Or can the police believe it after we go out?"

"Do you think our lives are more precious or the master's?" The young man was critical of his words.

But what he said was the truth which the rest couldn't refute.

After a brief silence, the last person said, "What the senior said is that we should be more cautious."

The one who spoke was a homeless man who appeared to be fifty years old and had a haggard face. His accent was weird and sounded like an out-of-towner.

He was the most normal-looking person among the four people, including Amis. After putting on his white pajamas, he did not look like a homeless man but a tired clerk.

The young man shook his head disapprovingly.

"It will be three days in total. Do as you please. Forget it; I'll go to the bathroom. Uncle Amis, don't take them too seriously." He said, leaving the room first.

His intention wasn't really to go to the toilet, but more like avoiding the chatter with the rest.

Jiu Er was also a little surprised.

This young man's behavior did not look like a homeless man.

In other words, the four people present were not strictly like homeless men.

Jiu Er was silent for a while, then asked in a low volume probingly, "Up to now, we can only work together."

"Let's talk about it. What are your identities? Don't lie to me. Everyone should be able to see through it."

After Jiu Er said this, there was a sudden silence.

The middle-aged man said slowly, "You're right. Then, let's start with me."

"I'm a murderer."

The older man was startled when he heard it.

He looked up at the middle-aged man, then at Jiu Er.

After a long silence, he also said, "I... was a murderer."

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—Are you a murderer?

—Coincidentally, you are also a murderer?

Jiu Er was stunned for a moment in the conversation.

Is this a coincidence?

Or is it inevitable?

At this moment, a scene suddenly flashed in her mind.

"She" looked inward through the window and was shooed away.

"She" took a knife and got in through the window.

The knife was dripping with blood, and the body fell to the ground. "She" held a heavy bag of silver coins in her hand and smiled triumphantly.

She smiled sullenly like a hungry wolf.

—This "self" was the homeless man "Amis"!

Worse still, the look of climbing through the window was the same as the posture Painter Amos drew!

Jiu Er went silent for a while, then replied in a low volume, "Actually, I too..."

Hearing Jiu Er's expected answer, the middle-aged man and the old man came into silence.

The three of them were rendered speechless for a while.

They didn't know whether to trust each other or not.

But Jiu Er knew that if she didn't tell the truth at this time, the other two would grow suspicious of her. So, to belong here, she would even say "Me too" even if she did not kill someone.

Jiu Er looked at the rest and recalled the painting that belonged to them both.

The old man in the painting was not so old yet. He was crawling on the ground and blocking the alley door with vigilance like a dog. Behind him was a richly dressed fat man with his throat cut and bleeding.

The middle-aged man in the painting looked flushed from drinking, holding a stone in his right hand, wanting to smash it forward heavily!

...Indeed. Jiu Er's heart sank.

With no surprises, this should be what they looked like when they committed murder.

Did Amos meet them by chance... instead of bringing them here on purpose?

At this moment, the three of them suddenly heard a miserable wail,

“—Ughah~!”

The sound approached quickly from far to near. But it stopped abruptly in front of the door.

—It was the voice of the young man who just left!

The three of them looked at each other. Then, Jiu Er and the middle-aged man walked to the door as soon as possible.

But soon, Jiu Er realized that the old man hadn't followed, so she looked back.

The old man's first reaction was finding the empty wooden shelf that Jiu Er was supporting her. After holding it firmly with his hand, he kicked it hard. Then, after a few more violent pulls, the old man got himself two long wooden sticks with broken short handles.

He saw Jiu Er approaching and paused slightly.

The old man looked at Jiu Er with his squinted eyes and silently handed the other weapon over.

He leaned over to Jiu Er and didn't look at her but whispered, “You go ahead. I will guard you from the back.”

Jiu Er nodded.

She naturally knew that this old man was not a kind soul. Having the old man going last was risky.

But even if she knew it in her heart, she shouldn't retort at this time.

Because after learning from each other that the three were murderers, the trust between them was already shaky.

Jiu Er's mission goal was to let at least one person live until dark.

The difference she had from Wandering Child was...

In her mission, there was no such thing as “survival.”

In other words, as long as one person escapes, it will be her victory.

—Even if that person was not her.

“Death by Daylight...” Jiu Er murmured.

She didn't like playing this game because fear always got her, and then she lost her mind.

But she never expected that after she entered a horror game, yet she would be able to maintain her sanity. Instead, she started thinking and acting quickly and even reacted faster than her usual self.

Are human's potential forced out like this?

At this moment, Jiu Er heard the door opening sound.

That middle-aged person should have the best physique among them.

He tried very hard to open the door, pulling and pushing. The wooden door made a pitiful muffled noise. He even pushed open a small slit several times, and then the door closed again. It was like being hung by a slender and fragile door bolt or someone on the other side wanting to close the door desperately.

Suddenly, the middle-aged man's movements stopped.

Because the three of them all heard the eating sound from outside the door.

The man munched happily, eating and drinking.

It even became noisy as well.

Just listening to these actions made Jiu Er's stomach even hungry.

"Who is it?"

The middle-aged man asked vigilantly.

But the people outside seemed to ignore him completely, still wolfing down the food.

Unable to bear the pressure of fear, the middle-aged man couldn't help but open the door.

But the moment he pushed the door...

The sound outside the door suddenly disappeared.

In front of them, it was not the hall. To be more precise, it wasn't the original hall...

It became a long corridor that was pure red. Small paintings were hung on both sides. There was a wall lamp in between the paintings for each section on the wall.

Jiu Er just was about to go forward, but the old man stopped her.

She looked down and saw a puddle of blood at the door. In the corridor, there was also a lot of blood ticking on the ground.

Jiu Er boldly squatted down and touched it.

She noticed that the blood was warm.

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"I'm not going there!"

The middle-aged man, who looked courageous previously, was frightened up; he screamed and backed away, "If you want to go, you go!"

Jiu Er and the old man persuaded the middle-aged man for a while but to no avail.

The middle-aged man made up his mind that he won't leave.

The two of them looked at each other and decided to go out and have a look.

They locked the middle-aged man in the house and left him alone in the room, with each wielding a wooden stick.

“...Look at the painting.”

The old man squinted his eyes and whispered to Jiu Er.

Jiu Er assessed her surroundings.

Many picture frames were found hanging on both sides of the corridor, depicting the same person.

—It was the young man who just left.

Every painting had a subtle difference.

It seemed to be a few seconds apart. Then, the duo noticed the young man was running forward quickly.

The paintings on both sides were like cameras with timed continuous shooting mode, and the young man's every move was branded into the painting.

Blood fell on the floor in the middle of each painting intermittently.

Jiu Er and the old man walked forward side by side cautiously. One was on the left, and the other was on the right, tacitly avoiding the bloodstains in the middle.

But they went far away, and nothing happened.

It was just that the paintings on both sides were getting scarier.

Blood seeped from the painting's back, flowing downward.

The more they went forward, the more blood would be stained. The young man in the painting gradually turned into a running clump of flesh and then gradually turned into a skeleton.

The duo walked to the end with trepidation.

But suddenly, the duo discovered that the door at the end was fake.

It was a painted door on the wall, a fake door!

This end of the corridor was the midpoint of a T-shape!

Looking to both sides from the fake door's location, the duo noticed two different corridors and two half-open doors.

Just as the two of them were discussing in low volume how to leave, a scream suddenly came from behind them.

It was the middle-aged man's voice!

But when Jiu Er turned around, she was taken aback.

The paintings on both sides became portraits of “Amis” and the old homeless man smiling sinisterly!

The paintings near the two of them became bloody. Jiu Er could vaguely see that the portraits in the distance seem to be quite normal.

At the next moment, the lights in the far end of the long corridor suddenly began to go out in pairs.

The candlelights across the corridor extinguished slowly at first, and then it got faster and faster.

In the blink of an eye, the duo was engulfed in total darkness.

Before Jiu Er screamed, the candlelights suddenly lit again.

At the end of the corridor, it became the fake door of the T-shaped corridor again.

It was as if they just left the room and hadn't gone anywhere.

It was just like...

An hourglass that was turned upside down.

Jiu Er looked to both sides and found that she was back to where she started. There were no passages at all on both sides. Behind her was not a wall with a painted door but a door with door handles and gaps.

It was as if they moved back to the door of the studio where the middle-aged man screamed just now.

But at this moment, the door behind them was closed tightly.

The old man tried vigorously to open the door, but he couldn't open it at all. It was like someone on the opposite side shutting the door desperately.

Suddenly, Jiu Er heard the sound of liquid flowing.

Bright red blood began to overflow from the door's crack.

Like saliva...

It was little at first, but then the blood seeped out violently, pouring out from all the door's crack as if to drown everything.

“—Ughah~!”

The old homeless man was so frightened that he screamed and ran towards the false door at the end without looking back.

Because he knew-

Although it was a fake door, there should be this T-shaped corridor end revealing two passages!

From there, there might be a way to escape!

Jiu Er originally wanted to run with the old man.

But she suddenly saw a line of bullet text,

“How come the old man ran like that young man?”

Wait, will all this be an illusion?

Jiu Er was alerted.

So she didn't run forward.

Instead, she ignored the sea of blood that reached waist level. Then, she reached out her hand and carefully touched both sides of the wall.

Although she felt something, she calmed down and was no longer afraid.

Because it didn't give off the sensation of the wall.

It felt like touching the drawing paper.

And it was hollow too.

What happened could have been a projected illusion.

“You fucking know how to mess with us!”

Jiu Er finally couldn't stand it. She cursed out loud, venting the fear and anger in her heart.

She no longer hesitated, raised the wooden stick, and poked it hard against the wall!

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Jiu Er only attacked twice and easily pierced a hole in the wall.

At a glance, she noticed that it wasn't the typical hole on the wall.

Rather, it showed signs of punctured “paper.”

The moment Jiu Er stared at the hole, she suddenly felt a trance.

After a brief period of absent-mindedness, only darkness remained in the corridor. However, it wasn't completely dark this time. She could vaguely see the sunset light coming in through the paper.

It appeared like having the TV screen drilled through.

The sea of blood, previously poured out of the door crack and submerged her halfway through, had disappeared at some point.

“...What the hell?”

Jiu Er looked back at the door that was pouring out blood.

But she was stunned for the next moment.

Because she finally saw what it was-

Yes, it was indeed a door painted on the wall.

The blood that gushed out was also painted on the door!

But it seemed to be some kind of strange paint. Only when one caught a glimpse of it could realize the proper form. Any long stares would result in the disguise being hidden.

The picture frames on both sides of the corridor were also drawn; the bloodstains on the ground were also drawn.

Even the two rows of lights were drawn too.

This was not a narrow corridor but a space formed by two rows of large, standing papers!

Jiu Er's first reaction was to look at his fingers. When he first went out, he had touched the blood on the ground to check on the blood temperature.

At that time, she should have left some bloodstains on her hands. At the very least, there should be some residue in the nails.

But, there was nothing in the end.

On the contrary, there were traces of red paint on her pants.

Undoubtedly, all that had happened was nothing but an illusion.

After the three homeless men went out, everything they saw was an illusion.

With merely some graffiti, it put Jiu Er into an extremely real illusion.

She could even feel the warmth of blood!

She indeed felt and used the door handle. Moreover, she felt the blood pouring from the door crack and even the textile sensation of the wall.

It wasn't until she had doubts in her heart that she touched it again. Only then, she verified that it was but a piece of paper.

But the problem was if these were all fakes, illusions, and special effects, did everything cease to exist?

The humans I meet should be real, right?

Where did those three people go?

Jiu Er looked at the way she came and was lost in thought.

“—My God! Magic Pen Amos!”

“—Master Amos, please draw me a girlfriend.”

“—Master Amos! Quickly draw me a dozen girlfriends (ridiculous high pitch).”

“—Master, you are the master. I'm deeply impressed. Please do me a few favors.”

“—Master Amos, do you have any plans to work in the company?”

“—I gotta say this. All of you are disgusting.”

Finally, when no one was around, Jiu Er couldn't help but complain, "Are there no admin and moderator?"

Nonsense! How could that be?

Seeing this, Annan couldn't help but retort, "I'm the super moderator here!"

It's just a pity this super moderator is busy...

Annan thought about it, then closed his mouth again.

In the subsequent footage, there was nothing worthy of Annan's special attention.

Jiu Er did not turn back but broke through the "wallpaper" and escaped.

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It wasn't until ten minutes later that Amos found that the boundary he had set was broken. He let out an angry shout, wielded a silver revolver, and looked for Jiu Er's traces.

In fact, Jiu Er didn't run away but was nearby.

Because she realized that since Amos needed to use an illusion to intimidate them, it meant that Amos could not control them all. After she broke through the wallpaper, Amos did not realize it for a long time. This told her that Painter Amos was incapable of monitoring them at all times.

So Jiu Er turned back after escaping.

She hid in a nearby cabinet.

Fortunately, Amos was relatively blind. After he took out the gun, he hurried to the fourth floor.

This also made Jiu Er realize that the stairs leading down to the second floor might have disappeared.

After Amos left, she hurried over.

As predicted-

The space layout in the hall was all upside-down and chaotic.

Jiu Er ran around but did not find the stairs leading downstairs. The illusion should have hidden it, but Jiu Er still couldn't crack it for a while.

When Amos finally went downstairs, she found a place to hide again.

"—This feels like Dead by Daylight gameplay."

"—No way, this hunter is too noob, right? But, with such loud footsteps, I think I can deal with it easily."

"—Brother, this ghost has a gun..."

"—Erm, that's true too..."

"—It's okay. The goal is to stall time. Hiding in the cabinet is enough to tackle the dungeon?"

“—It's just a peekaboo game.”

After this was the beginning of the footage.

After Amos went downstairs, Jiu Er quickly ran to the fourth floor.

She panted hard, leaning against the wall and looking back vigilantly, lest Amos would come back again.

Annan checked the time.

It was already 5:35 p.m. Jiu Er was being evasive and kept finding different spots to hide. Finally, Amos started to wonder whether Jiu Er had escaped.

If without any accidents, the search should go on until dark.

—So the winning condition was to wait until the sky went dark?

“Everything should be alright. It seems that Jiu Er will be able to clear the dungeon tonight.”

Annan whispered approvingly and posted his first bullet text for that day:

“—You can do it! Big brother with a prosthetic leg!”

“This is a picture frame, not a prosthetic leg!”

Jiu Er was so annoyed, “Do you still want to see me on prosthetic leg?!”

But by this time, Annan had closed Jiu Er's live broadcast room.

He was multitasking, watching the live broadcast while reading the forum.

Many posts popped up in each refresh; these posts shared Delicious Wind Goose being efficient in tackling the dungeon. There was a high possibility of him passing the level without losing any life too. He should be the first one among the players to clear the dungeon!

Did he go online later than Jiu Er but progress faster?

Is the information I gave you so helpful?

Annan clicked on Delicious Wind Goose's live broadcast room with great interest.

The title of his live broadcast was arrogant and concise:

“If I don't clear the dungeon, I won't go offline.”

“Cool, he has quite the courage...”

Annan exclaimed, “I didn't expect to see players racing against each other in pioneering the game.”

I miss the thrills.

Annan noticed that Delicious Wind Goose didn't choose the recently discovered second-level nightmare with a more straightforward strategy.

Instead, he walked the old path which Wandering Child headed – the third nightmare.

“Let me explain how to enter the fourth-level nightmare. I have studied for a day. I can clear this level. If I die on the fourth level, don't say that Uncle Goose is trash. This is a new map. In my next life, remind me that I have already done the opening once,” said Delicious Wind Goose confidently.

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Delicious Wind Goose didn't have any fear when he saw the hanging frames with weird chuckles.

While walking slowly, he explained at the same time,

“I watched your live broadcast last night.

“I noticed that some of you also want to go to the fourth level nightmare. But why can't you make it? The reason is simple. While you are moving forward, you will not know where to go when you are halfway down the path. The sledgehammer who appeared suddenly caught up with you like a teleport.

“There seems to be only one way, which is to enter Elle's dungeon. Don't you think so?”

Delicious Wind Goose said and walked to the opened window.

He took the letter outside the window.

But he didn't read it right away, nor looked back.

Instead, he closed the window immediately and put the lock up carefully.

As he turned his head, the lightning fell at the same time.

The hanging picture frames had also become corpses hanging from the beams!

But Delicious Wind Goose did not look up.

He did not look out the window, nor did he look at the corpse. Instead, just holding the letter and remaining on the spot, he said in a low volume, “I watched all the third level nightmare videos, and now I fully understand the mechanism of this level.

“This level has a timer mechanism.

“Brother Sledgehammer is relatively slow. He is not a ghost, and he can't go through walls.

“From the time the wind blows and opens the window, Brother Sledgehammer will appear behind you in forty-three seconds. I watched all the videos three times with a stopwatch in my hand. So I won't be mistaken even for a second.

“At this time, there is a small chance that you will be able to run through as long as you continue to run at full speed. But this will worsen the injury. You will enter the next floor at minimal health because the corridor on this floor has been lengthened. Forty-three seconds are not enough for you to reach the next level. That's how you died.”

“Child God was hammered to death by the window because he read the letter on the spot. Worse still, he kept turning back and forth, which wasted too much time.”

As soon as Delicious Wind Goose finished his sentence, his shadow elongated.

So Delicious Wind Goose stopped hesitating, jumped forward, and started jogging.

Brother Sledgehammer was behind Delicious Wind Goose and smashed the window with a hammer.

But since Delicious Wind Goose jumped forward, this hammer could not directly crush his head.

With the wall as obstacles, Brother Sledgehammer couldn't catch up with Delicious Wind Goose like he was indoors.

Brother Sledgehammer could only be silent, hammering the glass and the wall to pieces. But, he struggled to turn over and jump indoors.

Seeing this, Annan had already understood Brother Sledgehammer's train of thoughts.

Since Brother Sledgehammer would always spawn behind him, Delicious Wind Goose targeted a place where "there was light behind him" and "the opponent could attack him even across obstacles" while he stuck close to the wall.

In this way, Brother Sledgehammer would get stuck outside the house.

Delicious Wind Goose, relying on the abrupt light of the lightning outside the house, dodged away when the hammer fell. Some players did escape the first hammer strike. But their bodies were injured, and they couldn't run fast enough. Brother Sledgehammer could easily catch up and deliver another hammer strike.

But "Brother Sledgehammer" couldn't go through walls.

He was just an ordinary Edict Wizard without the ability to strengthen physical fitness. He only had a mighty curse vessel sledgehammer.

This meant that it was difficult for him to get in from the window.

Whether he walked around from the front door or parkoured in through the window, it would give Delicious Wind Goose time.

With that, Delicious Wind Goose didn't have to bear the pain and run wildly.

Using the time that Brother Sledgehammer was delayed, he could instead jog forward at a slower speed with a smaller price to pay. At the end, when Delicious Wind Goose entered the next level, his health would inevitably be higher compared to other dungeon challengers running at full speed.

"This middle-aged player may be a genius."

Annan's eyes lit up a little, and he murmured.

It had almost been a week since the closed beta started.

The players had not yet embarked on the Transcended path.

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However, several of the forty players Annan initially selected had already begun to show their prominence.

Everything went according to Delicious Wind Goose's plan.

He ran to the corner smoothly. Brother Sledgehammer was still some distance away from him.

Just in case, he didn't investigate anything. Instead, he just jogged forward. After all, he could investigate when he watched his video recording later.

The players and Annan, who were watching the live broadcast, saw what was there.

There was another diary on the display cabinet where the tomato was placed.

Annan could tell at a glance that it was Elle's diary in the nightmare!

So, that's the case. Annan suddenly realized.

If Delicious Wind Goose was greedy, he could grab the diary and run.

In this case, even if he didn't enter the third-floor nightmare, he could still learn the most critical information from the diary.

But Delicious Wind Goose still played safe.

In other words, he subconsciously chose a more cautious and safe approach to tackle the nightmare.

This was different from the other three front-line players who pioneer their path in the nightmare.

As Delicious Wind Goose opened the door and rushed over, he entered the fourth nightmare.

He was the first to successfully entered the fourth level of the nightmare, even after considering Annan.

At this place, there was a sudden change.

“—Wait? Isn't this place?”

“—Wait, Uncle Goose, don't go forward in a hurry!”

“—Fuck, is this dual-slot mode [1]?!”

“—Dual-slot mode. Such fatality.”

The bullet text had such a big reaction because many of them had watched Jiu Er's live broadcast.

After Delicious Wind Goose pushed open the door on the third floor, it was no longer the previous hall that appeared in front of him.

It was a deep passage.

—It was the T-shaped passage that Jiu Er just smashed!

Both sides of the passage were dark red, and the ceiling and floor were light browns. But there was still a heavy red carpet on the ground. This place seemed to have only read at first glance.

Two lights next to Delicious Wind Goose went lit, illuminating the small area around him.

Other than that, there was nothing else...or rather, nothing could be seen.

Delicious Wind Goose also realized that something was wrong, “Why did you all overreact?”

“—Fermented Rice Ball also entered this map in the nightmare on the second floor!”

“—This is all fake, an illusion! Mutter 'this is fake' in your heart, and try to see if you can push the wall away?”

“—No! The illusion should be the second level that happened in history. This is a nightmare. Maybe it's real...”

“—Old Goose, you are in a T-shaped corridor. When you get to the innermost side, there are two forks on the road. Once you reach an end, there may be dangers once you turn around. Blood will rush out through the door's cracks.”

The bullet text frantically advised Delicious Wind Goose.

The strategies flooded Delicious Wind Goose.

Annan also sent a bullet text over and maneuvered Goose as if he was the controller for the Goose Claw Machine:

“Old Goose, take a look at the content of the letter. Is there any difference from what Child God saw?”

[1] A method of communication between a Nintendo DS game card and a Game Boy Advance game cartridge by inserting both into the same Nintendo DS system.