

The Righteous Player(s)

C475– Ritual– Sniffing The Door Of Secrets –

Chapter 475: Ritual: Sniffing The Door Of Secrets

“[...Sniffing the moonlight with blood, granting the vision of the afterimage of the secrets roaming the world. But to follow the path, we must first determine the three paths of seeking knowledge, death, and liberation].”

Nefertari whispered the occult knowledge to activate the ritual, “I offer the 'subject seeking knowledge', opening up the door of secrets—”

With her whisper, the ritual called “Sniffing the Door of Secrets” was activated.

The Mysterious Lady's aura permeated the ritual area.

The stars of the sky appeared in front of Nefertari's eyes, in a trance.

They moved thousands of times faster before Nefertari's eyes on mysterious trajectories. Her attempt to see those trajectories gave her a headache.

Of course, she knew that this was the influence of the “Gravity of the Stars”.

It was an Advanced Influence that belonged to the Mysterious Realm. If left unchecked, she might slip into a difficult nightmare.

The simple ritual she held would naturally not summon the deity's will. However, her aura was enough to bring corresponding influence.

And influence was a residue of power.

This was the test that the upright deity gave to the ritual users, and it was also a blessing to those who were capable.

The three “knowledge worms” gradually stopped wiggling.

The knowledge worms were gradually dyed into a clear moonlight hue through the three yellow crystal lights.

Nefertari cut her right index finger with an iron dagger.

She squeezed a drop of blood onto the head of one of the knowledge worms.

“Firstly, [Secret Eye is a real organization];

“Secondly, [Secret Eye does not exist];

“Thirdly, [Secret Eye can be said to exist, or it can be said not to exist].”

After she gave three options, the blood-stained knowledge worm slowly crawled toward the yellow crystal at 10 o'clock direction.

What this meant was that the answer was the third condition.

It was somewhat expected.

Nefertari nodded silently.

She squeezed out another drop of blood and asked at the same time:

“Firstly, [Secret Eye has another name. 'Secret Eye' itself is just its nickname];

“Secondly, [Secret Eye is not an organization, but something else];

“Thirdly, [Secret Eye no longer exists, and the person bearing its name is not the orthodox successor].”

These were the three possibilities she came up with.

Each knowledge worm could be used in this ritual to ask a question requiring picking one option among three. The ritual host could ask a question at most three times in a row. However, even though it was a selection of three options, it was possible to get four answers and even more from the question. If all three options were wrong, the worm would stay put.

With the established “three” certainties, countless possibilities were eliminated.

This was also the concept of “Mystery” that Mysterious Lady would uphold—

This time, the worm crawled toward the 6 o'clock direction and finally crawled toward the light in the 2 o'clock direction with some hesitation.

This meant that the answer was the first option but might have something to do with the second option.

Since it was a disguise, there was no need to continue to question the “Secret Eye” identity. Since they came with a mask, taking it off must not be easy.

So, Nefertari continued to narrow down her doubts:

“Firstly, [Secret Eye came here to take away my or my friend's assets];

“Secondly, [If Secret Eye is not here to take away my friend's and my assets, then what Secret Eye will do may endanger our lives];

“Thirdly, [In the case that Secret Eye does not meet the above two possibilities, it is now worthy of trusting or temporarily worthy of trusting.]”

Since it was Nefertari's last chance to ask a question, she was sharp-witted in adopting a small trick.

She combined two similar answers even though the third option might have six possibilities lurking in it.

Since there was a lot of information to process, the worm hesitated this time, obviously dumbfounded.

The worm thought for a while.

It hesitated and paced around the ritual circle. In the end, it climbed slowly in the 10 o'clock direction.

Seeing that the knowledge worm picked the third option, Nefertari was relieved.

“They are friends rather than foes, Nieusel.”

Nefertari concluded to the friend next to her, “They may be a subordinate of a certain organization or some big shots and came here under that name. But, we can rest assured with the organization at present.

“Oh...and you may speak now.”

After three inquiries, the ritual will automatically end.

It seemed they would not offend this ancient and mysterious organization for the time being.

If the other party came here for their money or life, Nefertari could not be reassured even if they were only “temporarily harmless”.

But in the third question, the first two options were ruled out. Only in this way could Nefertari be friendly to them.

“As expected of Secret Eye, it is really secretive.” Nieusel sighed.

Nefertari frowned and muttered in a low voice, “It's strange...”

Since their purpose of coming here is not to seek money or life, and they are worthy of trust, why did the knowledge worms hesitate at the end?

Nefertari was a little confused.

This organization calling itself “Secret Eye” does not covet our property, and what they do will not endanger anyone's life.

Under this premise, it should be trustworthy because there is no conflict of interest.

But why does the knowledge worm think that the other party may not be trustworthy?

Haih, forget it.

Let's act according to the answers instead of being indecisive.

Nefertari made up her mind.

“Are they waiting at your house now?” She ordered rationally and in great detail, “Then Nieusel, give 'Secret Eye' the second-level authority. They can go anywhere except for the forbidden area and my house, but don't tell them about it. Bring some snacks and small gifts to welcome them. Send it as your apology for leaving without saying goodbye and as compensation for asking me to test them. Don't tell them about the last part.

“Are there two girls among them? Then, you bring them an agate necklace and a topaz ring. Pick those two silver ones from my dressing table and then a silver sapphire brooch for the lad. Let's see if they dare to wear it. Then, come back and tell me the news.

“Then, accommodate them near your house and find them two houses next to each other. Check how they live, and tell me the room allocation when you come back... Well, that's all.”

Nieusel replied, “Is there anything else? I made a note.”

Nefertari thought for a moment, “Wait a minute, there's one more thing—”

She narrowed her eyes, “Give them the [key].”

She added.

It's unlikely they really came to resolve the nightmare, but we should do it in case, right?

“Leave it to me, Nef.” Like a loyal dog, Nieusel nodded again and again, “I've noted them down! I'll get it done!”

Seeing him rushing away with his things, Nefertari smiled helplessly.

Above their heads...

Annan, incarnated as "Ghirlandaio", had already found his next target.

A Spirit Thief who tried to steal Annan's out-of-town traveler's "curiosity."

She was a werewolf.

What caught Annan's attention was that she looked somewhat similar to "Bella".

Report

Chapter 476: "The Scammer And The Missionary"

"Tell me, kid." Although being attacked, "Ghirlandaio" did not show any anger on his face.

"What's your name? Why did you attack me, a passer-by?" He just played with the loot he had seized and asked gently, "Who sent you here?"

It was still the amiable and quiet smile on his face, but this smile wouldn't warm anyone's heart. On the contrary, people would feel chills from the bottom of their hearts just looking at it.

The werewolf girl had her hands tied behind her head, cowering and kneeling in front of Annan. She could not help but reveal fear just by catching Annan's gaze.

Of course, she knew the existence of "transcender".

Or, to put it another way, she was already prepared that she might die in the hands of a transcender someday when she was planning to do this business.

But having this kind of intention did not mean that she would challenge the dignity of a transcender directly.

"Why, why..." Although asked by Annan, the werewolf girl had already lost her reasoning to answer this question.

Obviously, she did not see the so-called "vessel".

There was not even a piece of bronze jewelry.

But her curse vessel, which supposedly made people do what she said, had bounced away.

And why do the Frost Beasts obey his orders?

It's over. It's over...

She just trembled and murmured.

The manifested fear was reflected in the gloomy pupils.

In front of her was a crouched, translucent white ghost at Ghirlandaio's feet.

However, it was not a wolf or a dog, but a Frost Beast.

It was full and satisfied, wagging its tail like a pet dog. It crawled between the middle-aged man's legs, rubbing against his leg vigorously with its body.

The emotion that fed the Frost Beasts was naturally obtained from the werewolf girl.

After the Frost Beast absorbed her emotions, she lost the will to resist, not daring to escape or retaliate. Her spirit instantly plummeted, and she had depressed and helpless thoughts.

On the other hand, Annan played with the two crystal bells.

It was the curse vessel he took from the werewolf girl:

["The Scammer and the Missionary"]

[Type: Jewelry/mystical item (Purple)]

[Description: Two crystal bells, white and purple, are tied together. There would be no sound when any of it was shaken, but accidents would happen if both were shaken simultaneously.]

[Effect: When the two bells are shaken at the same time, "Friendship" (the effect is equivalent to the Idol spell of the same name) and "Mind Manipulation" (the effect is equivalent to the Soul Snatch school spell of the same name) would be released on the designated target at the same time; this effect could only be used once a day. The availability is refreshed at sunrise (availability today: Activated).]

[Price: When the user shook the bell, the user would draw the attention of everyone around him/her.]

—This was undoubtedly a precious curse vessel.

It was ineffective against Annan because the body of "Ghirlandaio" was immune to mind control. At the same time, it would deflect all the spells of the Prophet school and Idol below the Gold Rank.

Using Soul Snatch Magic and Idol Magic to attack Annan would result in nothing.

But it did not mean the item was terrible just because it did not work on Annan.

Its strength outweighed its price entirely. With a concealed and practical effect, even the price seemed ridiculous.

A purple-grade mystical item...

Gold items outmatched purple items. Even though the purple items were sought after, they were not as precious in comparison. It could be made through ritual material and Advanced Influence.

But even so, that was the fact.

Could a werewolf who was not even a transcender... or even a werewolf with a low status and was discriminated against in Austere-Winter be able to get her hands on this level of item?

Annan was a unique case already.

Using these two spells simultaneously when the target was unaware, it was almost guaranteed to affect even a Silver Rank Transcender.

The "Friendship" skill would gain affinity and reduce the target's wariness. It would implant the idea of "I'm pretty close to this person" if used properly. Using "Mind Manipulation" at this time would not only increase the success rate but also make the victim unable to detect that he was being manipulated. The pleasant feeling would cover up the unreasonable actions during the [Mind Manipulation].

It could be used for multiple purposes: gaining the liking of wealthy business people or nobles, making friends with a certain transcender, and even murders.

As long as the host's social skill was adequate and did not stir up suspicion out of social awkwardness, this item was at the level of top-grade hypnotism found in other "novels".

However, the person is only using this level of an item to be a Spirit Thief...

...This is weird.

To Annan, it felt like stopping by to steal the pancakes downstairs when driving out for work every day.

“My name is Doreen, my lord.” Doreen's mood calmed down a little, at least she could speak intermittently.

The fear in her eyes still hadn't yet dissipated. After losing all positive emotions, her whole world was like hell. Any negative feelings would inflate uncontrollably.

“Nobody sent me. It's true!” She pleaded mournfully, “But, but, my lord——

“Someone told me... Yes, it was yesterday. He said that several rich businessmen from the Noah Kingdom would come here tomorrow. He did not say what you look like, and I just heard your Noah accent... I didn't intend to steal your emotions and sell them to others, but to sell them back to you...”

Werewolf Doreen's speech was a little incoherent, but Annan could catch her message vaguely.

It appeared that someone told Doreen about the itinerary of Annan's group and asked her to intercept him.

But...yesterday?

Annan frowned slightly.

It was right when they set out from Noah. But the news of Annan's trip was not told to many people. Even according to their original itinerary, they should still be in Noah at this moment.

It was because Father Stone let Nicholas go and because Kafni was about to succeed to the throne.

Also, it was Annan who came up with this idea.

Who leaked the news to Doreen?

What is his goal?

To use this curse vessel on Annan—or someone close to him? Or to make him notice her?

Was it because Doreen and Bella look alike?

That was a shame. Annan had no memory of it at all.

But in terms of age, Bella was eighteen when Annan was about nine. At this moment, Doreen appeared to be around fourteen years old. It felt a little wrong whether the explanation pointed out that she was a biological daughter or a biological sister.

Annan pondered for a moment, then asked gently, "What did he say specifically, little girl?"

"Don't panic. Take your time. Did he mention how many people? What are their appearance and characteristics? Can you tell me who he is?"

"No, no. He didn't." Doreen shook her head and said with some hesitation, "He only mentioned two males and two females. He didn't say anything else. So I'm not sure if it's right."

"That's my 'teacher'. He gave me this curse vessel."

"Do you know his name?" Annan did not have high hopes for it as he asked, "Does he have an alias or something?"

"Yes."

Unexpectedly, Doreen answered readily, "He said his name was Nicola Flame."

Doreen spoke the slightly distorted name in a voice with an Austere-Winter accent.

But Annan immediately recognized what it was.

The so-called Nicola Flame...

It was just another way of saying the name Nicholas Flamel.

Report

Chapter 477: Because You Are, So You Are Not

Is this Nicholas so anxious to die?

So, he did not want to flee while taking the role of "mirror", leaving Annan with a tail to find him?

Of course, there was another possibility.

The so-called "Nicolas Flamel" was an imposter.

After all, Nicholas left the Noah Kingdom much earlier than Annan. Moreover, Annan had never discussed with anyone else on his schedule for visiting the Austere-Winter Dukedom — especially his destination.

Nicholas was indeed formidable.

But how did he guess it out of thin air?

Since the opponent learned about Annan's destination, that person might be a wizard of the Prophet School. Otherwise, the conversation between Annan and Nigel was eavesdropped on.

Of course, saying that the opponent was an imposter might not be accurate.

After all, that person did not claim that he was indeed Nicholas.

Most people would never have heard the name.

The very few people who had heard of this name must have thought that Nicholas, who was called "Hermes II", had died hundreds of years ago. No one would believe him even if he claimed he was not dead.

People would take him as a scammer if he said so directly.

So, how did he reiterate that?

"I am Hermes II, the master of Jade Tower hundreds of years ago. I am not completely dead. If you can help me, I will be grateful after I resurrect and take control of Jade Tower."

Only a fool would believe it.

Even "Qin Shihuang" would not send such text messages these days.

[TN: Author's mockery on scam messages using a historical figure.]

Therefore, Annan was doubtful about this name. Didn't it serve no purpose to disclose this name even if the person was really Nicholas?

It was more likely that people would regard it as a duplicate name.

In this world composed of curses and oaths, "name" was important. It was an oath that carried a certain weight, and it was not something that could be easily changed.

Just like Don Juan could no longer use the name Don Juan after his resurrection.

Changing one's name at will was a dangerous and meaningless behavior in the Transcended world. Many spells could determine whether the name used by the other party was their real name. For example, the jade token of the Edict school for verifying the real name was also a popular and practical curse vessel.

The advanced spells of the Edict School and the Prophet School could even identify the target's real name directly.

This was especially true for nobles who were not transcoders. Idol Wizard might have processed their real names and made substitutes to bear the ritual directed to the name. It worked just like adding a firewall.

Although it was not 100% effective, it was more or less a layer of protection.

But if he changed his name casually and thought of it as his name, the name itself would become a loophole that could bypass the substitute that protected him from ritual.

When some transcoders said "investigate a big shot", they usually meant "investigate the alias or identity the target had used".

After all, no matter how cautious a person was, as long as he had done some shady deeds, most of them had used aliases. If the name was only used once or twice, it was almost certain that the name was unprotected by a substitute.

As long as you find a way to get the other party's pseudonym, you would have the opportunity to designate him as a ritual subject. It opened up many possibilities, whether it was entering his dream, checking on his memory, making him impotent, giving him bad luck, or directly cursing him.

In the same way, there was no point in faking someone else's name.

If the imposter used the name of Salvatore, the ritual would react differently when the ritual host was thinking about the face of the imposter, thinking about what the imposter had done, and then activating the ritual based on this name. The ritual would either fail or pull the imposter into it. The original person would not be implicated.

So no matter whether the other party was Nicholas or not, it was possible to find him as long as he left his name.

So, should I give it a try?

Annan was contemplating.

After knowing the other party's name and what he did, it was not a problem to use a ritual to locate him directly. Annan also knew the rituals available for this purpose.

But what if this was a trap to mislead Annan or even to locate him back in reverse?

After all, this name was too easy to get.

Annan even suspected that Doreen might be the bait itself.

After all, Doreen and Bella look alike.

Although Annan could not remember whether Bella was close to him back then, what she had done, and whether she was still working at Winter's Hand, it must have meant something since the other party chose Doreen specifically.

Anyway, "The Scammer And The Missionary" fell into Annan's possession. So, it was still a win, especially since the item was quite handy.

...The question now is, which floor is the opponent on?

Annan sighed and put the crystal bell away.

Before Annan could identify his opponent's goal, he would be more cautious.

Let's find a way to detain Doreen first and then hand her over to Sister Maria. Then, I can even hand her over to Old Goose.

Delicious Wind Goose was knowledgeable in the ritual aspects. At the same time, the players were not afraid of death. If this was a trap, Annan could just let Delicious Wind Goose bite the bait—at worst, Annan had to give Old Goose thousands of affection ratings as compensation and rewards afterward.

"I may need to stay with you for a while, kid."

"Ghirlandaio" looked at the werewolf girl with her hands tied and kneeling in front of her and said gently, "You should know that the current situation is that someone wants to trouble me, and I am innocent.

"If I kill you here, then the trouble you caused me will be over. But if I don't find out about the situation, new problems will await me later.

"I'm a lazy person. I plan to settle it once and for all. You should go with me for a while and accompany me to investigate your teacher, Nicholas. If you are innocent, I will let you go and apologize."

Annan's message was that if she was involved in it, it was just a matter of killing her later.

But after hearing these half-threatening and half-kidnapping words, Doreen, trembling with fear previously, gradually calmed down.

She could tell that Mr. Ghirlandaio did not want to do anything to her just yet.

He was not like those big shots who were easily offended just because he was shamed or had been calculated by others. He would not kill an insignificant pawn just because he was annoyed.

Mr. Ghirlandaio seems quite sensible.

The tranquility born from reasoning gave people chills just by looking at it.

As for being restricted in personal freedom and being threatened with death...

Was there any value in the freedom of a werewolf?

When the Frost Beasts ate her emotions, she thought she would die there. It turned out that when she was on the verge of dying, Mr. Ghirlandaio ordered the Frost Beasts to stop, saving her life.

If Mr. Ghirlandaio wanted her death, she would already be dead.

Thinking of this, Doreen felt that there was nothing to be afraid of.

She plucked up her courage and asked, "Aren't you afraid that I am sent here by someone?"

Hearing this, "Ghirlandaio" showed a cheerful smile.

Ghirlandaio reached out his hands and supported Doreen to her feet slightly.

"—Because you are, so you are not."

Ghirlandaio lowered his head, pressed his forehead against Doreen's, and said with a smile, "This sentence is philosophical. You won't get it."

What does he mean?

Doreen froze, lost in thought.

She thought about it seriously for a long time and felt as if she understood something, but also as if she did not understand anything.

But, but... it seems so cool.

I hope Mr. Ghirlandaio won't kill me.

Doreen prayed silently in her heart.

Report

Chapter 478: Ike Searing-fang

It went exactly as expected for Delicious Wind Goose.

After showing off their strength last night, the people from “Red Dead” approached early this morning.

The talk went well for the players from the start.

After all, the management of “Red Dead” was loose. It was not a strict organization. After confirming that the players were interested and had no intention of joining other organizations, the negotiation was done.

The “Red Dead” organization had a loose arrangement on the outside and tight management on the inside. They were not afraid of spies coming in. After all, peripheral members had almost no access to any information and had to work for nothing.

As to who would become an internal member, it all depended on their actions. However, the “Boss” had the immediate decision. Their identities were even kept secret. Even the other peripheral members would not know which of their members were internal members.

But the strange thing was that the internal members were united. Not to mention the hidden spies who joined in advance, there were even no bribed betrayers among them.

Many people thought the Boss, or perhaps someone under him, was a Great Wizard proficient in Prophet School and Soul Snatch School. Thus, there was such a tight organizational structure.

However, things went beyond Delicious Wind Goose's expectations.

It happened after they had a rough discussion about “joining the Red Dead”.

After confirming that they were willing to join Red Dead, the person who came to talk to them suddenly changed the subject. He asked Delicious Wind Goose, or perhaps the whole group, to go to the fort sternly.

Delicious Wind Goose only found out after asking.

It was said that the “Boss” instructed them before the group went out. If Delicious Wind Goose were willing to join them, he would be directly promoted to a core member. The three people who came together with Delicious Wind Goose would also be promoted to internal members.

...But why?

The players were baffled.

If it happened not long after they first came to Mist Continent, they might have thought that they were blessed with the protagonist's plot armor since they were the players.

However, after recognizing their status, they knew that they would be, at best, playing a supporting role.

At the same time, the players had not met the boss yet.

The “Red Dead” even knew they came to Natta County with ulterior motives.

Why would the Red Dead's leader invite them into the core of the organization when they had never met before?

If the other party could predict the future, would they not know their purpose?

In the end, the players made a decision after a discussion.

The conclusion they gave was not to spread out.

It was better to be wiped out all at once than to be defeated individually. Even though the players could brute force their way out at any time, they could also pay some sacrifice and teleport away anytime. However, Natta County was not a safe place after all. Even if a single person acquired the “Red Dead” nameplate, the person might still be unable to get food, clothing, housing, and transportation if he was not smart enough.

So although they felt something was wrong, they still went together to the “Red Dead” base in the end.

Then, they successfully met the “Boss”.

To their surprise... one of the most influential people in Natta County was not a wizard.

Delicious Wind Goose was ready to face a dark spell caster like the Gul'dan [1] type.

It turned out to be Gul'dan, indeed.

But it was Gul'dan with his clothes off—

“Here, you can call me 'Boss'. You can also call me by my first name, Ike Searing-Fang.” The person who spoke was a burly man with golden curly hair.

He was smoking a cigar, and his voice was calm and charismatic.

Ike wore a yellow linen gown with sleeves rolled up to the elbows and an off-white waistcoat with many pockets. This outfit looked like an engineer and a reporter.

His skin was bronzed, and his exposed skin was covered with scars. He was extremely muscular, and his figure was about the same size as Delicious Wind Goose or even

more exaggerated. He had an inverted triangle figure like a superhero in the comic book.

At the same time, he was one head taller than Delicious Wind Goose, about 1.9 meters tall.

His arms were firm like a sailor... the kind who loved spinach [2].

But what was most familiar to Delicious Wind Goose was that Ike Searing-Fang's pupils looked like flowing lava, giving off a "bright dark red" feeling. He also spat out a faint white mist that smelled of sulfur when he breathed.

—The most important thing was a heavy gold chain around Ike Searing-Fang's neck. It looked like a bunch of mahjong tiles.

With this body type, could he be a Soul Snatch Wizard or a Prophet Wizard?

Delicious Wind Goose was confident Ike could crush Yokai Sensei with one punch!

Except that Anderson might take three punches to kill, the three of them weren't enough to contend with him.

More importantly, Delicious Wind Goose had seen this last name in a nightmare: the very nightmare that made him a transcender.

There, he met a Destruction Wizard named "Arthur Searing-Fang".

His pupils and the sulfur smell in his breathing were similar to the man named Ike!

"Stop looking at me. I'm not a wizard."

Ike, who called himself "Boss", grinned and exhaled a plume of white smoke mixed with the smell of cigars and sulfur. The cinnamon smell almost covered up the scent of sulfur...

But as it happened, Delicious Wind Goose had a keen sense of smell.

"I can't tell you about my specific profession. But I'm definitely not a wizard."

Ike Searing-Fang smiled lowly and spoke in a charming, masculine voice, "I think you must be very curious. Of course, I'm not a wizard, but how can I judge that you are credible?"

No, I'm not curious at all.

We're just here to spend our day, Boss...

Delicious Wind Goose thought that from the bottom of his heart.

But he remained expressionless on his face and nodded slowly.

His body was about the same size as Ike's. The silver bracelet on his wrist looked intimidating if he did not talk much and pretended to be cool.

“To tell you the truth, this is a ritual we held. It's also a large-scale artificial nightmare created by me myself.”

Ike said slowly, “I need you, Delicious Wind Goose. You are a Silver Rank transcender who has just advanced or a ritualist who has seen a true deity. The most important thing is that you are not a wizard. So, you perfectly meet the victory conditions of this ritual.”

Why must it not be a wizard?

Why me?

Delicious Wind Goose was suspicious.

But he did not ask much.

Presumably, the other party would not say it out either.

Delicious Wind Goose said directly to the point, “So, what should I do?”

Ike grinned, revealing an unabashedly happy smile, “Don't worry. You'll know when the time comes.”

Three hours later...

The four of them were respectfully invited into a luxurious villa with the “key” provided by Ike.

Of course, this luxury was also quite relative.

Compared with the villas they had seen in the capital, it was naturally not as good.

But in Natta County, Delicious Wind Goose believed this might be the best thing Ike or “Boss” could come up with.

Ike requested that the player could try to purify the nightmare he designed. It would be best if they could pass the level.

What the hell are they going to do?

How did he do it, artificially creating a nightmare?

He is not a wizard, but how can he achieve that?

And what does that even mean?

Delicious Wind Goose was puzzled.

It looked like some kind of conspiracy. But the other party was too frank, which made them a little undecided.

And...

That was a nightmare!

It was the element for the teleportation waypoint that granted experience and level-up rewards.

The nightmare itself was pretty interesting too.

It was quite enticing.

The courage as players also stopped them from backing down before trying.

After all, they could be resurrected.

After the players discussed it, they planned to have three people enter the nightmare to see the situation themselves.

They could use it to establish a teleportation waypoint if all went well.

Of course, just in case... they could not have the entire team enter the nightmare.

They left the only priest, Yokai Sensei, in charge of the vigil.

Yokai Sensei's duty was not to protect his comrades.

Instead, when the enemy launched an assault, he would strike first to kill all his teammates.

He was the priest of the upright deity, and there was no way he could be controlled.

However, if the curse vessel of a transcender were stolen, the person would lose most of his transcended abilities in an instant.

It was a safety precaution even though they thought there was no point in plotting against them or kidnapping them. At the same time, it was highly probable that Ike was Gold Rank. Even if he weren't, it would not be difficult for him to deal with them.

But this place was Natta County, after all.

The players could not trust the others easily.

“Are you ready?” Dove had exchanged eyes with Anderson.

“Don't worry. I'm watching.”

Yokai Sensei patted the gun and said in a deep voice, “I think you should start a live broadcast. We should let the free players spectate you, and that feature helps keep a record of it.”

Delicious Wind Goose nodded and turned on the live broadcast readily, “That makes sense.”

He then cuffed the metal bracelet on his wrist and leaned back. For some reason, the metal bracelets looked like handcuffs, but nothing connected the two cuffs.

This was the first time players entered an unexplored nightmare while actively using the “dream key” as an item.

Based on Ike, this seemed like a nightmare that enabled a party-finding feature or something like that.

A nightmare that three people could enter together—

“This seems to be called a [co-op nightmare].”

Delicious Wind Goose muttered, his consciousness gradually becoming blurred.

His first reaction was: This boss did not scam me. So it's really a nightmare?

Between drowsiness and waking, he felt his limbs bound by inexplicable power. It was like being chained to a cold chair.

—Suddenly, he trembled and woke up.

Report

Chapter 479: Nightmare: The Wizard Among Us

Man-made nightmare?

Annan saw something that interested him from the panel showcasing the Old Goose.

The only person Annan knew who could create nightmares was Benjamin.

Moreover, Benjamin's starting goal was mastering the relevant knowledge of nightmare science. His initial wish was to save Evelyn from the infinite loop of nightmares. Therefore, he had been studying nightmares since becoming a wizard.

Benjamin undoubtedly had a solid foundation in nightmare science.

He was even proficient in the four schools of Soul Snatch, Alteration, Shaping, and Idol at the same time. For this reason, he dropped all other schools in exchange for specialization.

At the same time, the four magic schools he had mastered were the only four related to nightmare science.

Therefore, Annan was not surprised that Benjamin could artificially create nightmares.

But what made Ike Searing-Fang create nightmares?

He had no relevant skills and was not even a wizard.

“...Interesting.” Annan pondered for a long time.

He took Doreen to a nearby hotel, got a room, and ordered lunch in advance. Then, he proceeded to watch the nightmare in Delicious Wind Goose's adventure.

In the players' team composition, each team would have at least one player who was good at conquering nightmares. It would prevent the team from getting stuck when they encountered nightmares. After all, they could not call for backup then.

Natta County was crucial because it involved the high-value specialty — “Demon Blood”. To ensure the smooth establishment of the teleportation waypoint in Natta County, Delicious Wind Goose's primary role was to tackle the nightmare since he was the foremost explorer of “Nightmare: Gallery”.

This was also why Delicious Wind Goose, the most potent combat force, could not stay watch for the night and must enter the nightmare.

If the goal was to clear the nightmare and sort out information, Delicious Wind Goose was even more valuable than a priest.

As the Silver Sire's priest, Yokai Sensei's skill in solving nightmares could only be regarded as above average. It could be said that it was close to the nightmare decryption level of an NPC. It was definitely not his turn to be the pioneer of the game.

After researching at least one nightmare clearance route, it would be more beneficial to let him come in and use his life to test other routes.

At present, among all the players, the most efficient in clearing the nightmare were the two professional puzzle solvers, Suuankou and Longjing Tea. They were specially recruited in the second phase. Then, the ranking proceeded to Delicious Wind Goose.

Although Delicious Wind Goose's size looked quite intimidating, he was a serious card game streamer. In terms of brains, he was much brighter than Wandering Child, Jiu Er, and Lin Yiyi.

Seeing that Delicious Wind Goose would engage in a co-op nightmare and turn on the in-game live broadcast after a long absence, the players from other places would enter Old Goose's live stream channel whenever they were free. Most of them had activated the full immersion feature in their viewing experience. This immersion was a new content recently updated, allowing the spectator to observe nightmares from the first-person perspective with detailed senses.

“—I'm the first!”

“—I'm at the front row to the Old Goose's live stream.”

“—You guys came here so fast. Don't you even have to go to work?”

“—Obviously, those who can watch the live broadcast don't have to go to work.”

“—I heard Old Goose turned on a live stream, and I just went online. The biggest advantage of this game is that I don't have to miss anything because I have to sleep.”

After Delicious Wind Goose gradually woke up, he opened his eyes and found a lot of bullet text flying in front of him. The players were chatting happily, and the chats had even blocked his view on the mission list.

Immediately, he turned off the bullet text feature indifferently and calmly.

I'm just asking you to watch it. Why did you all come here to chat?

After closing off the bullet text panel, Delicious Wind Goose finally saw the nightmare prompts in front of him:

[This dungeon instance difficulty is hard.]

[This dungeon instance does not provide plot introductions and no decryption rewards.]

[Dungeon instance loading has been completed.]

No rewards for solving the mystery in this nightmare?

Delicious Wind Goose was slightly taken aback.

He looked around and quickly realized where he was.

He was in a narrow room, sitting on a heavy metal chair.

Judging from the roughness and dullness of the skin on his hands, "he" seemed to be a middle-aged man in his forties. At the same time, he was not a noble nor a wizard. Instead, he was likely a farmer or fisherman and not a transcender.

The environment around Delicious Wind Goose was dim. There was only one window hung high in the room. This place looked like a prison cell.

His hands and feet were chained to the chair, rendering him unable to move.

In front of him was a complex but medium-sized bronze machine. This machine was about the size of an induction cooker. There was a round tray in the middle, decorated with thick and long white candles full of scales.

On the side close to the Delicious Wind Goose, 13 long-handled buttons stick out.

The keys looked a bit like the white keys of a piano. The numbers "1" to "12" were written on one side, while a simple, circular rune was drawn on the other side. There was also a single button on the far left that said "Spell".

With the assistance of the dim light, Delicious Wind Goose noticed a big [3] painted on the left side with blood-like red paint on the wall in front of him.

A piece of paper with the word "Lurker" was pinned on his right. The words were written in large fonts.

What is this?

It doesn't look like an escape room game, and isn't this a co-op nightmare? Where's my teammate?

Is this the Werewolf game [3]?

When Delicious Wind Goose thought of this, a glimmering panel suddenly flashed in front of him:

[Main mission: Win the "game".]

Immediately afterward, three additional conditions appeared below:

[At least one person in the team survives to the end.]

[The victory conditions of the whole team cannot conflict.]

[Don't let the "Idol Wizard" win.]

Before Delicious Wind Goose could finish reading the prompts, a familiar voice came beside him.

It was the voice of "Ike Searing-Fang"!

"Everyone. It's our game time again!"

His voice seemed to be coming out of a loudspeaker. It sounded in the room repeatedly, producing a slight echo.

"Your identities have been randomly assigned, so let's cut to the chase. This time, there are 'newcomers' participating in the game. According to the old rules, I will explain the specific rules of 'Ritual: Unification War' to newcomers!"

Ike himself has participated?

Is that why he invited the four of us into the nightmare?

Delicious Wind Goose put on a solemn face, and he focused again.

Soon, under Ike's explanation, Delicious Wind Goose understood the rules of this so-called "game".

It was not complicated.

This was an elimination game involving twelve people participating ritual.

None of these twelve could cast a spell, and they were imprisoned in these twelve rooms.

But under the rules, eight of them could imitate the wizards of the eight schools and had one unique skill to "imitate the wizard's spell-casting".

The identities of the other four were Swordsman, Lurker, Hunter, and Priest. What made the game unfair was that only the wizard had the skill. The remaining four belong to the "villagers" faction.

The ritual would last four days and three nights.

As for the rest of the rules...

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Chapter 480: Ritual: Unification War

In Ike Searing-Fang's description, the rules were not complicated.

Wizards could activate a “skill” every night or kill someone. If he chose to kill, he would not be able to use his ability.

If two wizards decided to kill each other that night or one of them chose to do nothing for one round, it would be considered a stalemate. Neither of them would die.

Villagers could also choose to kill.

If a villager fought with another villager or if the defender chose to do nothing, a stalemate would come in; if a villager fought with the wizard or if the villager chose to do nothing when attacked by a wizard, the villager would die;

The villager could only kill a wizard if the villager acted after the wizard and the wizard had chosen to attack other people;

The first person would be the killer if multiple people kill one person simultaneously. The second person would see the body and be able to know who the murderer was.

During the day, everyone would get a one-minute speaking opportunity according to the order of actions last night;

After everyone had finished speaking, there was a three-minute private chat time. The player could press the button to select someone to initiate a private chat. If the other party agreed, he had to press the button to establish a private conversation. After hanging up, the person who made the call could not make another call that day but could answer other people's calls.

After the private chat period, everyone could vote to execute one person within one minute. The one who got the most votes would be executed. A stalemate would put the vote invalid.

“Idol Wizards” could reveal their identities and activate special victory conditions. After the private chat period, they could choose to make a concluding speech or decide not to speak. This was because the “Idol Wizard” had a unique winning condition.

The player would choose their faction in this “game” similar to the Werewolf Game.

There were three victory conditions—

If there were a murderer who successfully killed two people and survived to the end, all those who have murdered would win. The innocent people who had not killed any people would lose;

If no one among the killers had killed two people, then all innocent people who had not killed anyone would win in the end, and all the murderers would lose.

The unique victory condition of the Idol Wizard was to use a skill after actively revealing his own identity and guess the "four identities" of two dead players and two alive players. As long as the answer was correct at the end of the game, the Idol Wizard got to win and all the rest would be counted as lost.

"Here announce the 'spells' held by all wizards in this round of the game:"

Ike's voice sounded from all directions, "Prophet Wizard, get to check a person's specific school every night.

"Edict Wizard can check whether a person has killed someone every night.

"Energy Falteration Wizard will not be affected by Soul Snatch's or Destruction Wizard's skills. Active use of spells can cause the designated target's action sequence to be delayed until the end.

"The Soul Snatch Wizard can permanently silence a 'puppet' and control the opponent's vote. He can also release the control at any time. But it is a 'simulation game' after all. The controlled person still retains his memory and will not be brainwashed. However, when the Soul Snatch Wizard has a controlled subject and chooses to kill, the murderer seen by the witnesses is the controlled 'puppet', not the Soul Snatch Wizard himself. When an Edict Wizard inspects the 'puppet', he shall remain innocent. On the other hand, when an Edict Wizard investigates the Soul Snatch Wizard, the Soul Snatch Wizard will be shown guilty.

"When a Destruction Wizard is killed, he will blow up the person who killed him. When he is voted out during the day, he can choose one person to blow up to death.

"Shaping Wizard can change into another identity. He will be given the identity and killing record that is the same as the target and synchronized. This record is valid till the end. However, Shaping Wizard will not get the opponent's skills. If the Alteration Wizard uses his skill, he can resurrect the first person that will die that night.

"Idol Wizard has two lives. In other words, the killer can achieve the victory condition of two kills as long as he kills an Idol Wizard. However, the identification number and identity of the person who kills the Idol Wizard will be revealed in the next day's early morning. If the Idol Wizard is killed by a puppet controlled by Soul Snatch Wizard, the Soul Snatch Wizard himself will be exposed.

“Your voice has been processed, and it won't sound like your original voice. But when you speak, the button corresponding to the number will flash. Remember the number on the left side of the room; that is your number. The paper on the right side of the room displays your identity. Whether you use a skill or choose to kill, you just need to press the corresponding button. If you leave the seat, it will be regarded as suicide.

“Those who die in this 'game' will also be killed in reality. However, the loser will wait here and enter the next round of the game, and the winner... will become the real wizard!”

It was almost as he expected at the beginning.

—It was really a Werewolf game [1].

In other words, it was the “Wizard Among Us” rule formulated by “Ike Searing-Fang”!

Delicious Wind Goose suddenly thought of something. He glanced at the identity plate on his right.

Lurker... It is a villager card.

Undoubtedly, that's the worst identity in this game!

“Tsk...” Delicious Wind Goose took a cold breath.

...Damn it, why!

Anything is fine. But, please, at least give me a wizard card!

Annan frowned slightly.

He noticed another matter.

Why is this ritual called the “Unification War”?

The commonly known “Wizard War” was an elite war that had swept the world, but it was not very large in scale. Whether it was an alchemist or a necromancer, Ice Warlock, and Silence Warlock, they all lost their legacy in that war. Instead, they merged in multiple formats of three-in-one or four-in-one and formed the so-called “school”.

Before the Unification War, varying wizard towers had only one core profession as their legacy. Professions such as Ice Warlock and Silence Warlock were not born in wizard towers but from the folks.

At that time, the mages and warlocks were not completely dependent on the organization formed by the wizard tower. Instead, the spell casters in the wizard tower were a minority.

But things changed after the Unification War.

The Eight Great Schools of Wizardry were formed during the Unification War.

After the Unification War, spell casters combined lores together. It was impossible for the Silence Warlock to learn Ice Warlock's spells, let alone learning alchemy. However, there was no "profession" barrier at this stage. They would be able to find relevant books if they wanted to learn.

Although this was a knowledge inheritance mechanism that relied on the wizard tower, it also led to the fact that all spell casters must depend on the wizard tower to obtain sufficient training.

From a historical point of view, although the Unification War caused great chaos that year, it promoted modern magic's prosperity.

This ritual Ike Searing-Fang held was a "Wizard Among Us" game called [Ritual: Unification War]. If the winner could become a wizard, it meant that this ritual was effective.

In other words, he really borrowed power from this ritual.

Then, the situation of the Unification War back then might be more complex than what was recorded in the history books.

...Let's continue watching.

There will be answers to all the questions after this nightmare is cleared.

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