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Chapter 193 - 192: The Physiological Structure of the Human Body_1

Fatty scampered off to retrieve the lantern.

As Gu Mian waited for Fatty to bring it back, he saw the door of the distant green house suddenly crack open, and a green figure crawled out.

Mr. Green truly was a green man now; Gu Mian saw that even his face had turned green, apparently from anger.

He glared indignantly in their direction. However, when his eyes met Gu Mian's, his expression became more restrained.

By then, Fatty had returned with the lantern. Mr. Green straightened his clothes and strode towards them.

Fatty noticed Mr. Green, whose face had also turned green, and exclaimed, "Eh? Mr. Green is out! What's wrong with his face?"

Gu Mian shook his head earnestly. "I have no idea."

As Mr. Green approached, Fatty leaned over to Gu Mian and whispered, "Doctor, when I was fetching the lantern, I noticed many of the lanterns above us have gone out."

Gu Mian looked up at his words.

It was just as Fatty said: many of the lanterns that had once shone brightly above them were now extinguished.

Gu Mian followed the line of lanterns overhead with his gaze, looking into the distance. He found that the faraway lanterns hadn't suffered the same fate; it seemed only the ones directly above them had mostly gone out.

At this moment, Chu Changge suddenly broke the silence. "It's been this way since we came out of that green house."

"Eh?" Fatty frowned in confusion. Had it been like this earlier? He hadn't noticed.

By now, Mr. Green had quickly reached Gu Mian's side. He also seemed to have noticed the problem with the lanterns overhead; he had glanced up at them several times on his way over. Despite looking repeatedly, he didn't ask any questions, as if he had expected it.

Mr. Green stopped, cleared his throat a couple of times, and then looked up to ask, "Did you cut her hair?"

Gu Mian glanced down at him. "Didn't you go in and see for yourself?"

Mr. Green choked on his reply, his face instantly turning even greener.

Gu Mian continued, "But it wasn't me who did it; it was Chu Changge."

Off to the side, Chu Changge adjusted his glasses and dusted his sleeves. Sharp-eyed Mr. Green noticed what seemed like hair clippings still on his sleeve.

"Alright, alright," Mr. Green waved his hand dismissively. "I just wasn't paying attention for a moment... Don't ever do something like this again. You know this is a real-world activity; nothing can go wrong."

As he spoke, he glanced up at the extinguished lanterns overhead, a look of lingering fear on his face.

Chu Changge's voice suddenly came from the side. "Do you know why this section of lanterns above us suddenly went out?"

Mr. Green turned to look at Chu Changge. He saw a strange gleam in the eyes of this outwardly amiable man, as if he were plotting some conspiracy.

Seeing Chu Changge's expression, Mr. Green flinched violently. "I know nothing! Don't ask me!"

His denial was a dead giveaway. Judging by his attitude, he definitely seemed to know something.

However, Chu Changge wasn't in a hurry. He continued slowly, "While the three of us were in that green house, we seem to have discovered some interesting things."

Mr. Green's eyebrows shot up as he looked at the group before him. "What did you find?"

Chu Changge adjusted his glasses. "As far as I know, at least five people entered before us. However, when we went in, we didn't find any trace of living people. You also went in, so you probably didn't see anyone alive either."

Mr. Green seemed to swallow hard.

Fatty stood nearby, clutching the lantern, apparently lost in thought.

Gu Mian, meanwhile, looked up at the lanterns still glowing overhead.

These lanterns were attached to lines strung across the sky—lines that, at first glance, somewhat resembled power lines pulled from utility poles.

"But then we discovered that the people who went in didn't just vanish into thin air," Chu Changge continued. "They didn't disappear; they were swallowed by that house."

As he spoke, he glanced towards the green house.

In the darkness, the unpleasantly colored building resembled a grotesque beast crouching on the ground—a repulsive sight.

"We noticed a pitted and uneven area on the ground. Upon closer inspection, a protrusion shaped like a hand was visible there. However, it wasn't long before this protrusion slowly vanished. I believe those were the people killed by the ghost, their corpses subsequently being swallowed by this house."

"Actually, when I first entered this event," Chu Changge added, "I realized the layout of this place is different from before..."

Gu Mian was already deep in thought. He remembered Chu Changge mentioning when he first entered this event that the layout here was different from before.

However, he racked his brains but couldn't recall when Chu Changge had ever come to Hengdian alone.

The two had met in an orphanage. Although their dream of being childhood sweethearts was ruthlessly shattered, their relationship had remained amicable afterward.

Gu Mian genuinely couldn't remember Chu Changge ever visiting here by himself.

"Some places have been altered," Chu Changge was still speaking. "At first, I thought it was a simple alteration, but now it doesn't seem to be the case."

The altered places seemed to have awakened a 'devour' function, one that could consume players' corpses.

Gu Mian couldn't help but think of plant growth. Plants also need fertilizer to grow, and animal corpses are the best kind.

This also aligned with their previous speculations.

This event was indeed sacrificing players to supply some unknown entity.

So, what exactly was it supplying?

Fine beads of sweat appeared on Mr. Green's forehead. He took a small step back. "Why are you all so paranoid?"

Gu Mian had always felt Mr. Green wasn't very intelligent; he'd sensed it when they first met in the instance.

This was because he seemed to misuse idioms constantly.

He probably had one of the lowest IQs among the game's NPCs. He couldn't even lie convincingly; all his thoughts were written plainly on his face.

"Alright," Mr. Green said, anxiously trying to change the subject, seemingly unsure how to cover his tracks. "It's past ten now. You guys should hurry up and solve the lantern riddles. I'll follow."

The event would last until midnight, meaning it would end in less than two hours.

As Mr. Green spoke, he started walking in the direction of the female ghost. But after just a few steps, he noticed something hanging around her neck.

His eyes widened as he stared at the small megaphone around the female ghost's neck. "How did you hang this thing on her!"

Gu Mian shrugged. "I think it looks pretty good."

Mr. Green was speechless.

Without further banter with Mr. Green, Gu Mian and the others began searching for the 'bath' mentioned on another lantern:

Find a bath by the water with skeletons. Hold a skeleton and sink to the bottom. What change will occur to the skeleton?

It turned out that the bath was not easy to find, especially one with skeletons.

They walked a considerable distance without finding any such bath. Chu Changge, however, seemed to have discovered something else.

Just as Gu Mian was about to duck into a small nearby house to see if there was a bath, Chu Changge suddenly leaned over and whispered, "Have you noticed there's something wrong with these lines holding the lanterns above us?"

Hearing this, Gu Mian looked up. Indeed, there seemed to be a problem.

The lines from which the lanterns hung varied in density—some sparse, others closely packed. After observing them carefully for a while, Gu Mian was reminded of something.

"Like blood vessels," he rubbed his chin. "If this event absorbs players' corpses and converts them into nutrients, then those nutrients must be transported through these blood vessels."

If he combined all the previous clues: this event devoured players' corpses; these lines looked like blood vessels; all the lanterns were connected by these lines; and a ghost parasitized each lantern... So, those nutrients were delivered to the lanterns through these lines, making the ghosts stronger!

So that's how it is...

Realizing this, Gu Mian subconsciously asked, "If that's really the case, where is the heart?"

Fatty's eyebrows jumped, and he quickly shot a discreet glance at Mr. Green, who was lurking far behind them.

Fortunately, Mr. Green was too far away to hear this sentence, which sounded dangerously like, "I'm going straight for the heart."