

Collapse 201

Chapter 201 - What happens if you feed a Venus Flytrap with feces? _ 1

"I'm sure what you just threw wasn't some kind of attack-specific item!" Guigu exclaimed as he jumped out of the closet and quickly strapped on the Night of Roses.

Fatty's voice came through, "Who cares, anything's useful if it works."

Immediately following, Han Shan and Chu Changge also hopped out.

Fatty grabbed a nearby chair and fiercely smashed it onto the forehead of the nearest person.

"Holy crap, a forehead assassin?" Guigu exclaimed, ducking around in the back, carrying the Night of Roses.

The chairs in this room were old, not as hard as a human skull. The one Fatty swung had shattered completely, its legs scattering across the floor.

The person who was hit seemed dazed, giving Fatty the chance to snatch the machete from his hand.

Once Fatty held the machete, a panel popped up.

[Blunt-Edged Machete]

[Description: A machete that is blunt on both sides]

[Function: Can be used to attack people, but it is highly unlikely to result in a fatality]

It seemed like this thing was brought out of an instance.

Fatty didn't pay much attention to these details. He charged forward, swinging the machete, with Guigu following closely behind him, still carrying the person on his back.

Only a few people were searching this area. Fatty's group, however, consisted of five members. Although one of them was incapacitated, their collective combat power was not significantly different. In fact, it seemed Fatty's group was even stronger.

Logically, the others should have been coming to reinforce them, but Pi Peng was sprawled on the ground, his life hanging in the balance, and everyone's attention was focused on him.

At this moment, Fatty was swinging the blunt machete and quickly heading towards the pool.

The people nearby had been hit several times by the blunt edge, but the severity of their injuries was unclear.

Chu Changge and the others also each picked up a chair leg and were quickly approaching the pool.

Gu Mian had already climbed out of the pool and snatched the shiny pistol from Pi Peng's hand.

He didn't bother dealing with the people closing in on him. Instead, he turned his head and shouted something towards Fatty's group.

The place was chaotic, the noise overwhelming, but Fatty and the others still heard Gu Mian's yell.

"Leave this place?" Chu Changge furrowed his brows.

"We've got to leave, haven't we?" Guigu said, still carrying someone on his back. "If we don't leave, we'll be swarmed by this mob!"

Chu Changge shook his head definitively. "No, he didn't say 'run.' He said 'leave this place,' as if there's something wrong with this place."

This is the heart of the event. Theoretically, nothing should go wrong with the heart. Fatty also pondered for half a second.

But half a second was all he got; Fatty couldn't consider it any further.

It wasn't that someone had gotten up and aimed for his forehead. Instead, he felt a strong vibration beneath him.

At this moment, Pi Peng was struggling to get up, his head swaying. He felt like everything in front of him was moving.

"Damn!" Fatty exclaimed, holding the machete. "We're really having an earthquake! This event is really going after its own heart."

Are they trying to make the heart collapse and trap the Doctor here?

Guigu, clutching a chair leg, sounded confused. "What heart?"

He still didn't know the true nature of this event.

Fatty didn't have time to explain it to Guigu. He rushed towards the exit, intending to bolt through the door and escape the tower.

At that moment, he suddenly heard Gu Mian shout, "There's no time!"

The vibrations were very strong. People who couldn't react quickly enough were falling all over. Fatty, thanks to his center of gravity, managed to stand steadily. He could even discern Gu Mian's direction and see what he was doing.

He saw Gu Mian kick away a wobbly person and run towards the window.

The person who was kicked tried to reach out and grab him but fell to the ground due to the unstable floor.

"Jumping out the window? Doctor, with your luck, jumping from this window, even if it's only the second floor, could kill you," Fatty said, but his body dutifully followed Gu Mian towards the window.

He dashed past people who were trying to pounce on him and hurried over to where Gu Mian was standing by the window.

Gu Mian had a stern expression as he looked down intently.

Fatty also looked out and immediately saw the lantern line not far from the window, and the hateful ground below.

But the height of this tower wasn't typical; the second floor was as high as a four or five-story building. Of course, if someone in prime physical condition chose the right posture for landing, they might escape unharmed.

But Gu Mian had no illusions about his own luck. If he were to take the leap now, the others would likely see him landing head-first.

Moreover, it seemed that nobody present was physically fit enough to jump from a four or five-story building without getting injured.

"Don't panic!" Just then, Guigu suddenly held up a key.

Gu Mian looked at it and recognized it as the No.3 Key from the Mysterious World.

Using this Key would generate a door that lasted for ten seconds. Upon entering, one would be randomly teleported to any location in the vicinity.

"At this point, there's no place worse than here," Gu Mian said amidst the vibrations. "But I highly doubt we'd teleport from the second floor of this tower to the fifth."

"It could also be the sixth floor," Fatty added.

"Who cares!" Guigu cursed. "I'm using it now! The moment the door appears, get in immediately!"

The shaking was getting worse and worse. Gu Mian could even hear something cracking.

The people behind them still seemed to be attempting to charge over, but the intense shaking made it difficult for them to move.

Fatty's voice came from beside him, "What if we don't like the place we end up in? Can we teleport back?"

Guigu's harsh voice came through, "Dream on!"

He had already used the No.3 Key. A pure white door appeared in front of them.

Without hesitating, Guigu pushed Han Shan through first. "Lieutenant, you go first..."

Anyway, even if he went first, it wouldn't be by much; the door could only last a maximum of ten seconds.

At this point, Fatty imitated Guigu's earlier action, pushing Gu Mian and Chu Changge through the door one after the other.

Then he too planned to quickly dive through the door and escape. As he was about to enter, he casually asked, "By the way, Guigu, all of us will teleport to the same place, right?"

Guigu's familiar tone and voice immediately came from the side, "Dream on!"

What the hell?

Fatty was shocked. He immediately wanted to pull his foot back and ask for clarification, but his body had already stepped through the door ahead of his thoughts, and then he vanished.

Seeing that everyone had gone in, Guigu, carrying the Night of Roses on his back, quickly dashed in. As he went, he said, "We'll be split up soon. You try to find a place to hide."

The Night of Roses weakly agreed.

Chapter 202 - List of Shut Down Extended Edition Instances_1

Gu Mian had already stepped out of the portal.

However, he didn't see the person who had entered before him.

Weird... Gu Mian muttered, looking back, but there was nothing behind him.

The person in front was gone, and no one was following from behind...

In an instant, Gu Mian understood. Don't tell me everyone who enters this portal gets teleported to a different place?

Before he could ponder for long, an enormous crashing sound echoed from afar.

Only then did Gu Mian take a look at his surroundings.

A secluded alley, modern buildings, flickering streetlights—this clearly wasn't Hengdian.

He had been teleported out.

The definition of 'nearby' is indeed quite vague... Gu Mian thought while looking in the direction of the sound.

But before he could make sense of it, the game interface suddenly updated.

He noticed a change in the announcement section.

Two new announcements.

[Notice of Early Activity Termination]

[Temporary List of Suspended Game Instances]

Looking at the title of the first announcement, Gu Mian thought, The Heart has collapsed; of course, the event has to end early.

One glance at the second announcement told him nothing good had happened. The title was rather bizarre, but Gu Mian obediently started with the first one.

[Notice of Early Activity Termination]

[Dear Players: Due to special circumstances, the 'Lantern Festival' instance has ended prematurely. Players in the event area have been forcibly removed, and the area will be temporarily sealed for cleanup. We apologize for any inconvenience caused. Affected players will receive compensation. Due to an unforeseen incident during the event, some instances will be temporarily suspended. During this period, players will be unable to enter these suspended instances. A list of suspended instances will be publicized via announcement.]

[February 19, 2019, 11:13]

[From: 'Game Planners Admired by Players']

What the hell? Gu Mian stared at the last line, lost in thought. This game actually has planners?

He didn't dwell on it for long before moving on to the next announcement.

[Temporary List of Suspended Game Instances]

Whoa, this title sounds pretty intimidating. And it's a temporary version. Don't tell me they're going to release an extended list later?

He continued to look down.

[The temporarily suspended game instances are as follows:

Crazy Game City

Evernight Town

The Defiled Art Museum

Close Your Eyes (Beginner Version)

...]

There wasn't actually an instance named 'Ellipsis'; the list was just incredibly long. If it were included in a novel, it would reek of padding the word count, so Gu Mian only skimmed it.

A quick glance showed that forty to fifty instances had been suspended this time.

Gu Mian looked towards Hengdian. "I didn't expect a single event collapsing to cause dozens of instances to be suspended along with it... Is it because the ghosts from the event can't return to their instances, so they had to be suspended?"

"In that case," he mused, stroking his chin, "it seems Mr. Green's plan to escape into the real world has fallen through."

At that moment, his friend notifications were constantly going off.

Gu Mian glanced and saw that Fatty and the others had already sent him over a dozen messages.

"Doc, I'm out."

"Doc, we're scattered."

"Doc, where are you?"

"Doc, it's so dark here, I'm kinda scared."

"..."

Fatty alone was responsible for almost all of them.

Gu Mian scrolled to the very bottom of the message interface to see two messages from other people.

One was from Han Shan: "Don't forget our agreement."

The other was from Chu Changge: "Meet at the inn."

Gu Mian looked at Chu Changge's message, then at Fatty's, sighed, and started replying to Fatty: "Where are you?"

...

By the time the three of them finally managed to regroup, it was already past one in the morning.

It had to be said, that rascal Fatty sometimes had even worse luck than Gu Mian. He'd been teleported directly into a derelict, locked warehouse, and Gu Mian had to go to great lengths to get him out.

The innkeeper seemed rather shocked that all three of them had returned alive, but that hardly mattered now.

"I got out a step too early," Fatty lamented, sitting on the sofa and looking at the announcement ruefully. "I didn't get any compensation!"

Gu Mian glanced at him. "Don't sit there looking so glum. Someone out there is probably having a much harder time than you right now."

He was talking about Mr. Green.

That poor little guy was probably wandering around somewhere with his logistics female ghost right now.

"Let's put that aside for now," Chu Changge said, pushing up his glasses. "Let's take stock of what we obtained from this dangerous event."

Actually, there wasn't much to take stock of—just three items.

[Mind Amplifier]

[Penguin Brand Cough Syrup (Single-use)]

[A Head of Lush Hair (Single-use)]

If the cleaver Fatty had snatched counted...

At this, Fatty had already taken the [Dull-edged Cleaver] from his inventory. "This should count too."

Alright then.

Four special items from one event; it sounded like a lot.

But after excluding the useless [Dull-edged Cleaver] and the [A Head of Lush Hair (Single-use)] obtained through special means, only two remained.

One of them was still around the female ghost's neck, who was now lost somewhere out there.

So, it turned out the only useful item they had obtained normally from this instance was the [Penguin Brand Cough Syrup].

Fatty couldn't help but have an existential crisis. "This is all we got from an event where we could have actually died?"

Isn't this too much of a loss?

Gu Mian stated matter-of-factly, "It's not a loss. Even though actual death was possible, you didn't die, did you?"

Fatty choked. "But I risked death..."

Just then, Chu Changge's voice came from the side. "No, we might have obtained one other thing from this event."

"What?" Fatty looked at him, puzzled.

Chu Changge pointed towards the window of the adjacent bedroom. "A female ghost."

Fatty was aghast and immediately turned to look.

There, a terrifyingly-figured female ghost had, at some unknown point, climbed up and was now pressed tightly against the outside of the window, completely still.

Although she wasn't moving, Gu Mian could still hear a faint voice from outside the window.

"No one saw me climbing the building, no one saw me climbing the building, no one saw me climbing the building... right?" —From the [Mind Amplifier]

Chapter 203 Game Instance Evaluator_1

Gu Mian went to great lengths to get the female ghost from outside into the house.

Now, the female ghost stood rigidly in the middle of the living room, while Fatty stared thoughtfully at the gaping hole in the screen door.

Will the owner ask us for compensation? he wondered.

Gu Mian's attention, however, was completely captivated by the female ghost.

It seemed she was here to deliver a letter this time.

This was because, in addition to the Mind Amplifier Gu Mian had put on her, a letter also hung around her neck.

The envelope looked very crude, but Gu Mian recognized it at a glance as Mr. Green's property.

A green seal marked the flap of the envelope.

This unlucky ghost really couldn't return to the instance as she wished... Gu Mian mumbled to himself as he reached out and took the envelope hanging from the female ghost's neck.

Fatty leaned over, curious as well.

This was a letter Mr. Green had written to Gu Mian. The content was simple, just eight words:

"Do not attend the next event."

Gu Mian: "..."

"No sorrowful accusations, no heart-wrenching curses, but the letter seemed to scream 'man-eater' between the lines..." Fatty began his cryptic interpretation.

Gu Mian ignored him and looked at the female ghost standing there.

She hadn't moved at all, apparently with no intention of leaving.

This situation persisted until the next morning. The moment Gu Mian opened his eyes in bed, he saw the female ghost still standing in the living room.

It seemed she hadn't moved an inch all night.

Fatty was currently sitting in the living room, having a staring contest with her. However, since the female ghost's face was completely hidden by her hair, it was impossible to tell whose eyes were bigger.

Fatty's wok had been thrown out during the previous night's event, and he hadn't had time to retrieve it before leaving, so now he could only wield his chipped machete to keep up appearances.

"Alright," Chu Changge said, ignoring the female ghost in the living room. "Let's discuss yesterday's event. I've made a discovery."

Fatty's lips trembled. "Is it really okay for us to discuss this in front of this female ghost?"

"If my guess is correct," Chu Changge adjusted his glasses, "we'll likely be spending most of our time in her presence in the days to come."

"Can we throw her out?" Fatty asked.

Gu Mian shook his head. "She'll just climb back up on her own."

Fatty was silent for a moment, then said quietly, "I guess Mr. Green wanted to keep an eye on us himself, but this busy man doesn't seem to have any free time."

He had mysteriously vanished several times during the event, apparently busy with other things.

"Alright, enough about that," Chu Changge interrupted their conversation. "Let's first talk about what we discovered in the event."

Without giving Gu Mian or Fatty a chance to interject, he continued, "You all should have seen the game announcement. A mysterious game planner appeared in this announcement."

Fatty chimed in, "It's 'The Game Planner revered by the players.'"

Gu Mian scratched his chin. "Anyway, whatever the adjective is, he's a game planner. Speaking of which, I remember the comment sections under some official game blogs are usually filled with remarks about the planner's mother." Although, the planner for this global game might not even have a mother...

Chu Changge continued, "Since this game has a planner, it might have other things too. Yes, I'm referring to the organizers."

"During the event, I mentioned that this game might not have just one organizer. Different organizers have different objectives, which leads to the discrepancies between game instances and events. One faction prefers players to complete tasks and then evolve; this faction should control the instance resources."

"The other faction is more inclined to kill players and let the ghosts in the instances evolve; this faction controls the event resources."

"For now, I've only identified these two different objectives. Of course, this game might have more organizers, but I haven't noticed them yet."

Chu Changge paused. "However, on the whole, these organizers likely share common goals as well."

Fatty nodded with an air of importance. "I know: to kill the Doctor."

Gu Mian: "..."

The Lantern Festival event went as far as to trigger a heart collapse just to crush Gu Mian, showing how deep their hatred for him ran.

"Moreover, if future events are all like this one... then I'm afraid the difficulty of future instances will become higher and higher." Chu Changge glanced at the female ghost beside them. "The purpose of events is to sacrifice players to strengthen the ghosts within the instances..."

Fatty suddenly interjected, "But it seems this strengthening task failed this time."

It even led to the suspension of dozens of instances.

"It can't exactly be called a failure; it's just that the event ultimately collapsed. In fact, many players died inside before the event collapsed, all becoming nourishment for those ghosts. Besides, the event must have made preparations before its heart self-destructed. It definitely transported most of the ghosts back to their instances. The remaining ones were those it didn't have time to send back."

Chu Changge said, "So, although dozens of instances collapsed this time, the difficulty of some other instances has increased."

Gu Mian recalled that not long ago, the difficulty levels of instances were no longer displayed. It turned out this was in preparation for secretly altering the difficulty.

"I predict that the game will soon release a new set of difficulty standards," Chu Changge said, tapping the table.

Shortly after he finished speaking, the three of them simultaneously noticed that the announcement board had been updated again.

It was quite something, several announcements released within ten hours.

Gu Mian looked at the announcement board on the game panel.

[Notice of Instance Difficulty Changes]

[The difficulty of some instances has been adjusted. Henceforth, all instances will no longer have clearly defined difficulty levels. Instance difficulty will fluctuate randomly. Players are advised to adapt flexibly.]

Looking further down, there was another one.

[Notice of Instance Reward Adjustments]

[Affected by the instance difficulty adjustments, instance rewards will no longer be distributed in a fixed manner. The game system has introduced a new 'Instance Evaluator' NPC. The Instance Evaluator will

assess player performance within the instance, and rewards will be disbursed at their discretion based on this evaluation upon instance completion.]

[Note: Players who die within an instance will still lose some of their acquired items.]

Fatty looked at the announcement. "I'm increasingly feeling like this crappy game was released before it was properly completed. They even conjured up this 'Instance Evaluator' thing mid-stream. Seriously, didn't this game have a closed beta before release?"

"Perhaps not. But looking at how things are going, it's also possible that we **are** the closed beta testers," Gu Mian said, touching his chin.

Fatty chuckled. "Are you kidding? Don't game closed betas usually only grant a small number of slots for a few players to test? Now, everyone on Earth has become a player. The entire world population is in this; how could it possibly be a closed beta?"

As he said this, Fatty suddenly trailed off. Then, as if struck by a realization, a somewhat horrified expression appeared on his face. "Don't tell me... we're actually closed beta testers, are we?"

Chapter 204 The Bizarre Train Great Escape_1

Even though this game is called Global Game, who knows if the servers might expand to the entire universe in the future?

Fatty thought to himself, What if the servers do become universal...

Gu Mian's voice came through, "Don't worry, you might not live long enough to see that day."

Fatty: "..."

At this moment, Chu Changge was still staring at the announcement. Gu Mian heard him suddenly ask, "Is the 'Instance Evaluator' a reviewer who doesn't show their face?"

Do they remain entirely unseen, only sending an email for evaluation after instances are completed? Or do they show up for a direct evaluation after an instance is completed but before the player leaves?

"Why don't we try an instance to find out?" Gu Mian casually suggested.

Fatty considered for a moment. I think they definitely can't evaluate in person.

As he spoke, Fatty sneakily glanced at Gu Mian a couple of times, seemingly imagining what might happen if the evaluator showed up in person.

Chu Changge adjusted his glasses. "In any case, the instance mechanism has changed a bit after this event. It's best to be cautious for the next one."

"Hmm," Fatty nodded. "I remember we're set to team up next time with that guy named Laoshizi Hanshan, right? Speaking of which, I wonder how that injured fellow is doing."

Gu Mian stroked his chin. "Once the event is over, he'll be fine. The army has medical staff and ample medical facilities. You should be more concerned about me."

Fatty turned to look at Gu Mian. "Oh yeah, Doctor, you're still being hunted by the ghost from the death warrant, aren't you? I suspect that the group who trapped us during the event was instigated by that ghost."

But why didn't it come itself? The thought had barely surfaced when Fatty found his answer. It probably figured it would die very quickly if it took matters into its own hands.

"And besides the ghost hunting me, I also have a massive IOU," Gu Mian said as he pulled out the [Massive Debt Note].

He currently owed the Nine-headed baby ten thousand Game Coins.

If he pays it back, he will earn the 'Appreciation of the Nine-headed baby.'

If he doesn't, he risks facing the Nine-headed baby's wrath at any moment. This means it could suddenly pop up and throw a fit at him. Gu Mian wasn't sure exactly how it would throw a fit.

Could it suddenly rush out and then, 'WHINE WHINE WHINE WHINE WHINE WHINE WHINE WHINE WHINE'?

However, this particular debt collector didn't seem to have any intention of showing up yet.

Gu Mian had only received this IOU a short time ago, so the Nine-headed baby probably wasn't in a great hurry.

"Anyway, I'm one unlucky doctor," Gu Mian said, flicking the IOU before stuffing it back into his white lab coat. "You all should be more concerned about me. Besides, I'll be entering an instance again soon."

As he spoke, he looked towards his game's friend page.

An unread message from Han Shan had popped up on the friend page.

He opened the message.

[Han Shan]: Set a time.

It was clear this was a very meticulous person, as he didn't even forget to add a period at the end of his message.

Gu Mian replied using his green-colored nickname: "You set it."

The other party seemed to hesitate for a moment before sending another message: How about 9 a.m. the day after tomorrow?

Gu Mian expressed no objection.

Immediately after, Han Shan sent another message: Please tell Mr. Fatty that Night of Roses is now safe.

Gu Mian glanced at Fatty, who was currently studying the female ghost. "Okay, I'll tell him."

Gu Mian hadn't originally planned to stay in this place for too long.

There were too many people, too many prying eyes, and his status was somewhat special. It was best not to wander around in crowded places.

However, as long as he didn't go out often, staying for another two days wouldn't be a problem.

The players who had gathered here over the past two days had mostly dispersed. In fact, when the event had just concluded, the number of players here had already dwindled, as a small portion of them had died during it.

...

Time passed quickly, and soon it was the 'day after tomorrow' that Han Shan had mentioned.

For the past few days, Chu Changge and Fatty had been investigating the Spirit Car.

The car Gu Mian had bought seemed to be broken, and the two were considering whether they could take it to the supermarket for after-sales service to get it repaired.

Although they could afford a new one now, it was better to try repairing it first.

The two had also asked the owner about the person in the room diagonally opposite theirs, but the individual suspected to be Xie Bi'an had checked out when the event began, and his current whereabouts were unknown.

Throughout this time, the female ghost had been standing motionless in the living room, like an emotionless pillar.

This early morning, she was, as usual, standing in the middle of the living room.

At nine o'clock, they had to meet Han Shan at a nearby ticket booth. Chu Change wasn't planning to go on this instance run and had even persuaded Fatty to slack off with him.

Gu Mian had no idea what these two had secretly plotted before abandoning him.

"Doctor, we'll wait here for you to return," Fatty said, looking a little uneasy, first at Gu Mian, then at the female ghost in the middle of the living room. "By the way, can she enter an instance?"

Theoretically, she shouldn't be able to; otherwise, Mr. Green wouldn't have had to go to such great lengths to try and get back into an instance through the event.

As he thought this, Gu Mian looked at the female ghost standing rigidly.

She had been standing here for several days, her face concealed by long, dirty hair. Blood sometimes dripped from her, making the floor very dirty each time.

Fatty didn't dare to scold her, so he could only patiently use a mop to clean the floor.

"Speaking of which," Fatty said, gesturing with the mop he was holding as another small pool of blood gathered on the floor, "if she keeps following us, don't we need to find out her name?"

"Generally speaking, auxiliary characters in instances don't have names," Gu Mian shrugged. "Of course, this is just my guess. Anyway, she won't tell you even if you ask. Just pick any name for her."

Fatty nodded. "Makes sense. Speaking of which, Doctor, have you read any supernatural novels before?"

Gu Mian stroked his chin. "I've read a few."

Hearing this, Fatty continued, "I remember in supernatural novels, the female ghosts who faithfully stick by the male protagonist are always pretty."

As he spoke, he looked at the female ghost standing in the middle of the living room. Her face was completely covered by her hair, not a single gap visible, and Fatty didn't dare try to push it aside.

"Not just pretty," Gu Mian recalled from his limited stock of novels, "they're usually peerless beauties—so stunning they'd make fish sink and birds fall, outshine the moon and shame the flowers. And to top it off, they always have amazing figures."

Fatty eagerly anticipated the female ghost's appearance, hoping she would match Gu Mian's descriptions.

So when Gu Mian reached out and lifted her curtain of hair, the stark contrast nearly made Fatty choke.

How to describe this face?

As the saying goes, walk the night roads often enough, and you'll eventually encounter rogues.

But if you had this face, you wouldn't have to worry about encountering rogues at all.

Even if a rogue followed you while you were walking at night, you'd just have to turn around with this face, and the rogue would be scared out of his wits and flee.

This face was terrifying—not terrifying in a frightening, ghostly way, but terrifying in its ugliness.

Gu Mian silently let her curtain of hair fall back into place. Seeing Fatty's horrified expression, he commented, "Well, her features are regular, at least..."

Nine o'clock was fast approaching. Gu Mian didn't dwell on the ghost's appearance. He slung his chainsaw over his shoulder and prepared to leave. "I'm off. I hope you guys can think of a name for her before I get back."

Gu Mian walked briskly.

Not long after leaving, he arrived outside the agreed-upon ticket booth.

From afar, he saw Han Shan and Guigu waiting. It was just the two of them; it seemed Han Shan hadn't told anyone else about him.

Probably because the event had just ended, the ticket booth wasn't very crowded.

The group exchanged few words and went straight inside.

Under the ticket officer's somewhat despairing gaze, Han Shan collected a team ticket, then turned and said, "Let's go in."

This was the first instance Gu Mian was entering since the instance mechanism had changed.

And the content of this particular instance was also quite surprising.

[Instance matching succeeded, matching teammates...]

[Teammate matching successful]

[Instance: Bizarre Train Great Escape]

Looking at this instance name, Gu Mian fell into deep thought. This name really is bizarre enough.

Chapter 205 Look at this Chapter, it's short and small_1

[Instance: The Bizarre Great Train Escape]

[Content: This is a train named 'Time Escape'. It runs from 11:40 PM to 00:14 AM, operating only once a day for 34 minutes. It consists of seven carriages and passes through nine stations, with rumors of passengers mysteriously disappearing late at night.]

[Number of players: Unable to count]

[Main task: Board the 'Time Escape' train, play your role, and successfully arrive at the terminal station.]

[Note: Two players cannot be in the same carriage; otherwise, one will be randomly erased.]

Another role-playing game. This one isn't too bad.

But what's this 'unable to count' for the number of players?

Could the game system be so riddled with bugs it can't even count the players?

Gu Mian frowned slightly.

Furthermore, the 'two players cannot be in the same carriage' condition was a bit harsh. Gu Mian was certain that if he and another player were in the same carriage, the system would definitely choose to erase him.

However, there was one thing he didn't quite understand: if this game could indeed erase him directly, why bother with such convoluted ways to kill him?

"This is strange," Gu Mian muttered.

Still, he didn't want to experience being in the same carriage as other players; staying alive was more important.

Due to personal limitations, Gu Mian couldn't carry any inconveniently large special items.

So this time, Chu Changge had given Gu Mian the [Mail from Hell] he had recently obtained.

Once this item was burned, the user's living aura would disappear for ten minutes, making it easier to hide without being detected. Simply put, it was used to fool ghosts.

For this reason, Gu Mian had specifically bought a lighter from the supermarket that could be brought into the instance.

In addition to the [Mail from Hell], Gu Mian carried a few other special items: [Hemostatic Spray], [Dimension-Breaking Phone], and the [Strange Camera] Fatty had given him. He was also wearing his white lab coat and a brooch.

Other items were simply too large to bring.

While Gu Mian was still counting his special items, a light shone before him.

He squinted. It seemed the instance was about to begin.

Then, light surged from all directions, dispelling the darkness. However, it wasn't particularly bright, as they were now underground.

Gu Mian scanned his surroundings. The place closely resembled a high-speed rail station from the real world. He could see several train tracks and, not far off, a sign. Next to the sign was a bulletin board with what looked like photos of several people pinned to it.

There was a similar bulletin board on the other side of the tracks, but it was too distant to make out its contents. Not that anyone had the leisure to examine it anyway.

Everyone was sizing each other up, Gu Mian included.

Including him, there were a total of seven people there. Aside from the obvious Han Shan and Guigu, judging by the expressions and actions of the others, it was easy to deduce that everyone present was a player.

Besides these three, there was an older man, a middle-aged woman in a business suit, a young man, and a girl with long black hair.

Normally, Gu Mian wouldn't need to guess if people were players by observing their behavior, as player information was usually accessible. But this time was different. Everyone soon discovered that, for some reason, their player information couldn't be accessed.

"What's going on?" Han Shan frowned.

Gu Mian mulled over the rule again. "Two players cannot be in the same carriage." And since we can't determine if other players are in a carriage, the death rate in this instance must be quite high. Two players might end up in the same carriage completely unaware.

Moreover, they also had to play their assigned roles in this instance, so they couldn't just shout, "Are there any other players in this carriage?" before boarding.

Guigu had a strange expression. "If players end up together, it means death, and we can't be sure if other players are in a carriage. Is this instance really so hostile towards players?"

"Not necessarily," the long-haired girl beside him suddenly spoke up. "I remember the instance description mentioned this train has seven carriages. Coincidentally, there are seven of us players. That's exactly one carriage per person, so allocation shouldn't be an issue right from the start. I don't think the instance would present a no-win scenario without reason; perhaps hiding the player nicknames is a key clue..."

She paused for a moment before adding, "Of course, this is just my speculation. If you don't agree, feel free to dismiss it as nonsense."

Han Shan, at least, didn't dismiss her words as nonsense; his brow furrowed and smoothed out repeatedly. Gu Mian finally understood why Han Shan looked older than his actual age.

Meanwhile, the long-haired girl spoke again, "Could everyone share their names? Using 'hey' or 'you' is fine, but it might get confusing. By the way, I'm Angel Slaughter."

Such a childish name. She doesn't seem like an easy person to deal with...

Gu Mian would never reveal his real name unless he had a death wish, so he gave his name as 'Doctor'.

The young man's name was Fang Xiang, the middle-aged woman was Suo Qingqiu, and the older man called himself 'Your Lovely Xiao Tiantian'.

That name is quite sweet too.

These were the names they gave; no one knew if they were real.

This instance hid the players' names. Could it be because something has infiltrated their group? As he pondered this, Gu Mian subconsciously touched the [Strange Camera] in his pocket. This camera could photograph invisible ghosts, but he wondered if it could reveal the true form of a disguised one.

At this moment, the loudspeaker in the underground starting station suddenly activated.

"The time is now 11:35 PM. Train attendants, please prepare yourselves. The 'Time Escape' train is now approaching the station."

Train attendants? Gu Mian instinctively glanced towards the bulletin board not far away, where photos were neatly posted.

Chapter 206 Goodbye, Mom. I will set sail tonight - 1

Indeed, all their photos were posted on the bulletin board.

To be more precise, they were their work badges. The photos of all seven of them were neatly printed on items resembling meal cards, and not one was missing.

Guigu, standing beside the board, noticed his work badge. "Ah, am I the attendant for Carriage No. 1?"

There were no names on their badges; only a single line below the photos identified their roles.

Gu Mian stroked his chin. Each of the seven of them should play a different role, right?

As he looked at each badge, he saw:

Underneath Guigu's photo, it said, "Attendant of Carriage No. 1."

The middle-aged man, Xiao Tiantian, was identified as the "Attendant of Carriage No. 2."

Han Shan was the "Attendant of Carriage No. 3."

Gu Mian was the "Attendant of Carriage No. 4."

Angel Slaughter was the "Attendant of Carriage No. 5."

The middle-aged woman, Suo Qingqiu, was the "Attendant of Carriage No. 6."

Fang Xiang was the "Attendant of Carriage No. 7."

All seven of them were attendants, just in different carriages.

Guigu was taken aback. "What's going on? We're all train attendants?"

A strange expression surfaced on everyone else's faces.

Angel Slaughter pinched his forefinger. "All seven of us are attendants... That's a bit odd."

Although this was a role-playing instance, Gu Mian hadn't expected such uniformity in the available character roles.

Just then, the young man, Fang Xiang, seemed to notice something. "Hey, look up there."

Upon hearing this, Gu Mian looked up.

The underground departure station was vast and empty. The platform they stood on was over a meter higher than the tracks, giving them a clear view of an LED sign.

The LED sign displayed the time and the name of the station.

Glancing at it, Gu Mian saw the time in the top right corner of the sign: "11:36 p.m."

The departure time for the 'Time Escape' train was 11:40. The train would surely arrive a few minutes early to give passengers time to board.

In the middle of the LED board, a few characters glowed, and everyone was staring at them.

"Departure Station: Shicha Sea."

Clearly, this was the departure station for the 'Time Escape' train.

"It's strange," Xiao Tiantian, his balding head craned as he looked around, said. "This is the departure station, right? We should be able to see the train here."

But this was a Mysterious Dungeon, so nothing here followed conventional rules.

Angel Slaughter was still touching his forefinger. "You're right, there's something strange about this departure station. Not only is there no train, but there are also no passengers waiting. It's as if we're the only seven people here."

Just then, Guigu had a sudden thought. "Come to think of it, this train, including the initial and final stations, will make stops at nine stations, right?"

At his words, the others reacted as well.

Fang Xiang also looked quite surprised. "This instance didn't give us specific player numbers... Don't tell me there are other players waiting at those stations?"

That would make things very difficult.

If two players were in the same carriage, they would be eliminated. If other players were waiting at those stations, then things would get very interesting.

Just then, they suddenly heard a distant WOO-WOO sound.

Gu Mian had heard this sound many times before; the train was close.

Han Shan frowned, staring in the direction of the sound. It came from a pitch-black tunnel, its destination unknown.

Simultaneously, an announcement from the overhead loudspeaker echoed along with the WOO-WOO sound.

"All attendants, please have your work badges ready for boarding. The work badge is an important credential for accessing the restaurant in your assigned carriage. Please do not misplace it."

Gu Mian knew that every carriage on a high-speed train had a food counter, usually with a small room behind it.

This train was apparently similar. However, it seemed one needed to swipe a card to enter the kitchen here.

While thinking about this, he glanced at the work badge he had just taken down from the bulletin board.

On the back of the work badge were some rules for train attendants.

Moreover, they were itemized with great precision.

[1. Attendants should replenish the restaurant's supply promptly.]

[2. Attendants should strive to meet customer orders...]

Before Gu Mian could finish reading, the sound from the dark tunnel grew louder, and the front of a train appeared in everyone's line of sight.

Then, the front of the train swiftly passed them, bringing a somewhat chilly wind. Gu Mian stared intently at the train's dark windows. Did I just see a figure inside?

This is the departure station; why would there be people inside?

Soon, the somewhat eerie train ground to a halt.

Looking at the train in front of him, Gu Mian noted that each carriage was quite long; each one could accommodate around seventy or eighty people.

A door stopped directly in front of Gu Mian and then rumbled open.

He glanced at the carriage information beside the door. This was Carriage No. 3.

And the attendant for Carriage No. 3 was Han Shan.

Han Shan, frowning, walked over and took half a step forward, seemingly wanting to investigate the situation inside.

However, the door was quite a distance from the passenger area, making it difficult to see clearly inside. From his position, he could only see the restroom diagonally opposite and the corner of what looked like a food sales counter.

But after only a moment of hesitation, Han Shan stepped into the carriage.

Guigu seemed to be holding his breath for Han Shan. He only breathed a sigh of relief after Han Shan stepped inside unharmed.

Han Shan, still frowning deeply, urged, "All of you, get into your carriages quickly!"

Only then did Guigu react. He looked up at the LED display; it was now 11:38.

In two minutes, this train would depart!

Suddenly, the others grew anxious. They had to board before 11:40, or they would be left behind.

Gu Mian's assigned carriage, No. 4, was right beside him. He took a few quick steps and boarded it.

Guigu also broke into a run towards Carriage No. 1.

Fang Xiang instantly began to lament.

His assigned carriage, No. 7, was the farthest away. It would take some time to reach it.

"I'm done for! I have to run!" he exclaimed, sprinting towards the rear of the train.

Just then, he noticed the LED display above him showed 11:39.

Slow down! Slow down!

He had never so desperately wished for time to slow down.

Fang Xiang, panting heavily, continued to dash forward. The rear of the train still seemed quite far, and he had less than a minute left.

Just then, he heard a sound from the nearby train, like a PSSHT of releasing air. Hearing this, Fang Xiang knew the train was preparing to depart.

Chapter 207 Gugu Online Asking for Votes_1

Damn it!

While desperately running forward, Fang Xiang glanced sideways at the car beside him.

The entrance to the sixth car was right in front of him. The attendant of that car was a middle-aged woman named Suo Qingqiu.

Quick-witted, Suo Qingqiu had started moving toward the sixth car as soon as the train stopped, so she was already inside.

Fang Xiang looked at the door to the car ahead and gritted his teeth.

If I'm sure I can't make it in time, the door to the sixth car is my last chance. All the cars are interconnected; I can board the sixth car first and then pass through it to reach the seventh. But the game rules also state that if two players are in the same car, one will be randomly eliminated. If I jump into the sixth car, either Suo Qingqiu or I will definitely die. However, if I don't jump on, there's a high probability I won't make the departure time. Failing to board means the main task will be an immediate failure, resulting in on-the-spot death.

The train was beginning to move slightly. Fang Xiang knew he probably couldn't make it to his own car, so he fixed his gaze on the approaching sixth car.

Staying here means certain death. If I jump into the sixth car, there's only a 50% chance I'll die, but Suo Qingqiu in the sixth car might suffer an undeserved disaster.

What should I do! As he sprinted forward, he stared at the entrance to the sixth car, now almost within reach.

Jump on... Jump on...

Fang Xiang struggled internally. This isn't just a game. Even if you don't die in the instance, the game is closely linked to our lives in the real world. Every time someone dies in the instance, they randomly drop items. In this world, where resources are gradually becoming scarce, losing these items is definitely a bad thing. Even if it might harm others, I can't worry about that now. I have to worry about myself first... As the saying goes, 'better them than me.' At least if I jump on, there's still a sliver of hope!

Having made up his mind, Fang Xiang continued running toward the door.

He was now approaching the door of the sixth car. He turned his head, intending to get an early look inside. If that Suo Qingqiu was blocking the door, he would have no choice but to wait here for death.

At this thought, a flicker of determination crossed Fang Xiang's eyes. If he was truly blocked outside, he would fight his way on.

He clenched his hands into fists, ready to strike at any moment.

However, just as Fang Xiang's gaze entered the sixth car, he froze.

Suo Qingqiu was indeed standing at the door, but she showed no signs of being on guard.

Fang Xiang saw only anxiety on her face as she watched him, her mouth moving as if she were saying something.

He heard it. It was, "Hurry up and run!"

Seeing Suo Qingqiu's worried expression, Fang Xiang's legs suddenly felt as if they were filled with lead. He couldn't move an inch toward the sixth car.

From a distance, Gu Mian saw the attendant of the seventh car suddenly veer off course. The man stopped abruptly, then, as if he'd finally realized something, sprinted like a mad rabbit toward the last car.

Gu Mian watched Fang Xiang's retreating figure. "What a strange guy."

The train was slowly moving, as if it could accelerate and leave at any moment.

Then Han Shan's voice suddenly came from the side, "He was trying to jump onto the sixth car just now."

Gu Mian was startled by the sudden voice. He looked in the direction it came from and saw Han Shan standing not far away.

Gu Mian was the attendant for the fourth car.

Han Shan was the attendant for the third car.

Their cars were adjacent, so they could chat across the clear dividing line between them.

As long as no one crossed the line, they could all remain good friends.

Gu Mian glanced at the line near Han Shan's feet. "You should stay further away from this side. What if you accidentally trip and fall over here?"

Han Shan rubbed his forehead. "That won't happen..."

The train was now humming, and the door in front of Gu Mian slid shut, blocking his view.

Gu Mian didn't know if Fang Xiang had managed to board the train in the end. He looked away.

Just then, he suddenly heard a sound from above.

It sounded like electrical static. Gu Mian and Han Shan looked up and saw a speaker on the ceiling emitting a mechanical voice.

"The train is now in motion. All attendants, please return to the dining car to take inventory of supplies."

"The train is now in motion..."

The message repeated three times before stopping. Gu Mian subconsciously glanced at the counter not far ahead; it was probably the dining car counter.

However, this counter wasn't his; it belonged to Han Shan in the third car.

The dining car for the fourth car was at the rear. To get there, he would have to pass through the passenger section in the middle of the car.

Since boarding, Gu Mian had remained standing by the door and hadn't yet had a chance to look inside.

After hearing the broadcast, Gu Mian glanced at Han Shan, said nothing, then turned and headed towards the passenger area.

Upon entering the passenger area, Gu Mian noticed many people were already seated; about half the seats were occupied.

This is strange. This is the departure station, so where did all these passengers come from?

Gu Mian frowned slightly. The passengers looked no different from ordinary people. Some were napping on the small tables, while others read newspapers, holding vacuum flasks. Everything seemed perfectly normal.

Gu Mian had already hung his work badge around his neck to identify himself.

I've never seen an attendant on a train wearing a white lab coat and carrying a large guitar before. My own outfit must look pretty suspicious.

However, the passengers didn't seem to mind. As Gu Mian walked through the passenger area, a few people glanced up at him but quickly looked away, apparently unfazed by the attendant's peculiar attire.

Strange train, strange passengers.

Gu Mian pondered this as he walked toward the rear of the car. He could already see the dining counter, and there seemed to be something on it, perhaps a menu.

He walked over quickly and picked up the A4-sized paper that resembled a menu. However, its contents were not quite what he had imagined.

Then, the first line of large characters caught his eye.

[Overview of 'Time Escape' Train – Fourth Car]

[Attendant: 1]

[Passengers: 31]

Gu Mian continued reading and found the dining car supplies listed below.

[Penguin Orange Juice Soda: 3 bottles]

[Ice Factory Drink with Fruit Bits: 2 bottles]

[Ka-Bang Popcorn: 2 buckets]

[Secret BBQ Burger: 1]

[Tomato-Flavored Potato Chips: 3 bags]

[All-Tomato Sandwich: 1]

There weren't many supplies, just these few items.

Gu Mian was a bit taken aback looking at the list. So, we attendants also have to handle sales?

Speaking of which, the announcement just now did tell them to take inventory of the dining car supplies.

Thinking of this, Gu Mian suddenly remembered something. He recalled that one of the rules on the back of his work badge was: [Attendants should do their best to fulfill passenger orders.]

As this thought crossed his mind, he reached for the work badge hanging around his neck.

Indeed, that rule was written there, along with others...

Chapter 208 108 Rules for Crew Members_1

Gu Mian stood beside the counter, looking down.

[1. Attendants should replenish the pantry regularly]

[2. Attendants should do their best to fulfill passenger orders and must not refuse orders]

[3. Always carry your work badge; it is the only key to unlocking your designated car's pantry]

[4. Attendants in each car can communicate via intercom]

Intercom? Where is the intercom?

Just as Gu Mian was wondering, he suddenly heard a familiar voice from behind the counter.

"Hello? Lieutenant, Lieutenant, can you hear me?"

The voice was unmistakably Guigu's.

He often addressed Han Shan as 'Lieutenant,' as if he wanted everyone to know that Han Shan, in addition to being an attendant, also held the rank of lieutenant.

Gu Mian then went behind the counter and found the intercom lying quietly inside a drawer.

Luckily, Gu Mian had used an intercom before, so he knew how it worked.

He pressed the button on the side and said, "Alright, stop yelling. Your Lieutenant is on board; he was standing right next to me just now."

Guigu immediately fell silent.

Then, Han Shan's voice came from the intercom, "I'm at the rear of my car. Has everyone else boarded?"

No one responded.

The intercom fell silent.

Guigu's puzzled voice came through, "What's going on? Can only the three of us communicate on this thing?"

Just as Gu Mian was about to say something, a girl's voice came from the intercom. It was Angel Slaughter. "I can hear you. Can you hear me?"

Gu Mian replied, "Yes."

Angel Slaughter sounded relieved. "S-sorry... I didn't know how to use this thing at first. I just pressed some buttons randomly and wasn't sure if you could hear me. I'm glad you can."

Guigu's voice came from the intercom again, "So the other three who haven't made a sound just don't know how to use this, right?"

Han Shan said, "No. It's possible one of them didn't make it onto the train."

"Didn't make it on? Who?" Guigu asked, sounding confused.

Just then, Gu Mian heard Fang Xiang's voice through the intercom, "I'm on board."

His voice was weak, as if he was panting. He said that one sentence and then fell silent, apparently needing to catch his breath.

Then, Suo Qingqiu's and Xiao Tiantian's voices came through one after the other.

Suo Qingqiu said, "It's good Mr. Fang made it."

Xiao Tiantian, in Car No. 2, got down to business. "Speaking of which, did any of you see the list on the counter?"

Gu Mian glanced at the A4 paper beside him. "Yes. It lists some snacks and things."

Come to think of it, 'all-tomato sandwiches' should count as a snack, right?

Xiao Tiantian's voice continued, "No... I mean the passenger count on the list..."

His voice was faint, and he deliberately lowered it, as if afraid of something.

Hearing the tone of Xiao Tiantian's voice, Gu Mian sensed something was amiss.

He glanced at the list on the counter and saw the first few lines:

['Time Escape' Train Trip Overview for Car No. 4]

[Attendant: 1]

[Passengers: 31]

Sure enough, Xiao Tiantian's even fainter voice came through. "The passenger manifest for my Car No. 2 says there are thirty-five passengers, but... but..."

Xiao Tiantian began to stutter.

Gu Mian instinctively glanced at the passenger area.

Since the dining area of each car was at its rear, from this angle, he could only see the backs of the passengers' heads.

"But... but there's one extra!" Xiao Tiantian finally managed, his voice filled with terror and anxiety.

"One extra?" Guigu gulped.

The passenger area wasn't far from the dining counter. He could easily see them from his position, meaning they could just as easily see him if they turned around.

A chill ran down Guigu's spine.

He lowered the intercom's volume slightly and cautiously checked the passenger count on his list.

['Time Escape' Train Trip Overview for Car No. 1]

[Attendant: 1]

[Passengers: 32]

"Thirty-two passengers... Don't tell me I have an extra one here too?" Guigu muttered, sneaking a glance towards the passenger area.

Just then, Han Shan's voice came through the intercom, "Everyone, pay close attention to the number of passengers in your respective cars."

Angel Slaughter added, "Right. We should count the people in our own cars."

Guigu chimed in, "Then let's count the passengers in our cars first?"

If every car has an extra person...

At this point, Fang Xiang, who had only spoken once since boarding the train, suddenly said, "I... My leg is injured. I might need to rest for a bit before I can move... It hurts a lot."

Han Shan paused for a moment. "Alright. The rest of us will count the passengers in our cars. Any objections?"

No one objected.

The train was now speeding along. Gu Mian glanced out the window and saw they were already above ground.

The train traveled on elevated tracks, passing dilapidated houses below.

It was late at night, and a full moon hung in the pitch-black sky.

There was an electronic clock beside the counter. Gu Mian glanced at it: 10:43 p.m.

The entire train journey was thirty-four minutes long, with nine stops including the origin and destination. That meant it would stop roughly every five minutes.

Gu Mian frowned, adjusting the guitar on his back. "This is strange," he muttered to himself as he walked towards the passenger area. "Isn't this train stopping a bit too often?"

It was almost eleven at night, and some passengers appeared to be dozing.

Some leaned back in their seats, resting; others held newspapers, apparently reading.

No one paid any attention to Gu Mian, the attendant in a white coat with a guitar slung over his back.

Gu Mian walked lightly down the aisle, observing the passengers.

Actually, he didn't need to. Gu Mian had excellent eyesight; he could count the passengers with a single sweep of his gaze from the rear of the car.

He was only walking the aisle to get a closer look at them.

This time, Gu Mian scanned the car carefully several times. Sure enough, just as Xiao Tiantian had said—

There was one extra!

An extra passenger in the car!

Gu Mian frowned and turned to go back. But halfway there, he overheard two passengers whispering.

"Hey, Xiao Mei, have you seen the news? It seems like a lot of people have been encountering paranormal incidents lately."

Gu Mian looked towards the sound and saw it was a girl with a bob cut, likely a high school student.

The girl with the bob cut was talking to another girl with a ponytail next to her.

Gu Mian perked up his ears.

Xiao Mei bit her lip, lowered her head slightly, and then said softly, "Actually..."

"Actually... when I was boarding the train, I think I saw someone who looked exactly like me!"

Gu Mian halted.

This is... the extra one?

Chapter 209: Drinking Bubbly Orange Juice Soda That Made Me Happy_1

There's an extra person identical to her?

Gu Mian specifically looked at this anxious girl. She had a high ponytail and wore glasses. He heard people nearby say her name seemed to be Xiao Mei.

Without lingering, Gu Mian continued towards the rear of the carriage. He muted the intercom.

Because the intercom might blare out unreliable things like, "There's an extra person in my carriage, there are really ghosts here!"

So, Gu Mian deliberately muted it when he checked the carriages.

He felt the intercom in his pocket and then headed towards the rear of the carriage.

At that moment, a man's voice suddenly came from behind, "Conductor?"

Gu Mian turned to look.

The voice came from a middle-aged man, wearing glasses, looking gentle and refined.

At first glance, this man seemed to share a similar style with Chu Changge and Han Shan. Considering his age, he leaned more towards Han Shan.

Because Han Shan looked older.

"Can you get me a bottle of soda, orange flavor?" the man asked.

Gu Mian had never been a waiter, but he still remembered the second rule for conductors.

[2. The conductor should try to meet passenger orders and should not refuse orders.]

Thinking about this rule, Gu Mian immediately agreed, "Okay, no problem."

In fact, this passenger, who looked as old as Han Shan, could only have orange-flavored soda, as there were no other flavors in the dining car's warehouse.

Soon, Gu Mian returned to the restaurant counter at the rear of the carriage.

From here, he could see the next carriage, which was likely where Angel Slaughter was located.

Gu Mian glanced over and saw the long-haired girl standing in the aisle of the passenger area, apparently talking to a nearby passenger.

Then, she seemed to notice Gu Mian in the carriage ahead and looked up in his direction.

Gu Mian saw her expression turn somewhat strange.

Her gaze didn't linger. She nodded to a nearby passenger and then also began walking towards the rear of her own carriage.

Gu Mian held his work badge and moved towards the warehouse behind the restaurant counter.

Above the warehouse door was an aluminum-like plaque. Gu Mian looked up and read: "No.4 Car Dining Car Warehouse".

The warehouse door indeed required a card swipe to open. Gu Mian swiped his card on the reader by the door and heard a BEEP.

The door opened.

Simultaneously, an announcement played overhead:

"Attention all passengers, we are approaching the second stop, Qianying City. The train will stop for one minute. Passengers planning to disembark, please prepare in advance."

Gu Mian glanced at the speaker overhead. They were about to reach the next stop.

Qianying City... The name made him furrow his brow.

The name of this second stop is quite eerie.

For some reason, hearing this name made Gu Mian subconsciously recall the Nine-headed Baby IOU he had drawn.

The dining car's warehouse door was now open. Without further thought, Gu Mian stepped inside.

The dining car's warehouse wasn't large, only about a dozen square meters.

It was quite empty and very clean.

Gu Mian saw two rows of freezers, two in each row, lining the walls on either side of the room—a total of four large freezers.

They resembled the chest freezers used for selling popsicles in convenience stores from his childhood. However, upon closer inspection, these were longer and evoked a strange sense of déjà vu.

These freezers... Gu Mian took a couple of steps forward, observing them. They're just like the cold storage units in our hospital morgue.

If they contained bodies, the resemblance would be uncanny.

Lost in thought, Gu Mian approached one of the freezers to his left, intending to lift the lid and see what was inside.

Just then, Fang Xiang's voice came through the intercom, "Guys, have you all counted the people in your carriage?"

Fang Xiang's voice sounded a little weak; after all, he had just been running for his life. Gu Mian figured he would sound weak too, under the circumstances.

Immediately after, Xiao Tiantian's slightly terrified voice came through, "I... I have the same problem! My passenger list says there should only be thirty-five people in this carriage, but I've counted over and over, and there are clearly thirty-six!"

Han Shan's calm voice followed, "Same here. The list shows twenty-five people in my Carriage Three, but I counted twenty-six—one extra. Gui Guzi, what about your carriage?"

"Reporting, Lieutenant!" Guigu's voice startled Gu Mian. "I've got an extra one too!"

"Lieutenant?" Angel Slaughter's voice interjected. "Are you... military personnel?"

Gu Mian retorted sarcastically, "You really never miss a chance to flaunt your unique status as Lieutenant, do you?"

Guigu countered, "Isn't that Fatty who's with you always calling you 'Doctor, Doctor'?"

Gu Mian touched his chin, offering no rebuttal as he couldn't immediately think of one.

He was holding the intercom in one hand, the other poised to lift the freezer lid. "A passenger requested an orange-flavored soda. Besides the orange-flavored soda, I've also discovered something else interesting..."

But at that moment, a mechanical voice rang out again.

The voice blared from the overhead speaker, from both ends of the carriage, and even from the intercom:

"Attention all passengers, we have arrived at the second station, Qianying City. The train will stop here for one minute. Passengers wishing to disembark, please do so promptly."

The overlapping mechanical announcements were so loud they made Gu Mian's ears ache. He adjusted the guitar on his back, sensing the train had come to a halt.

There were no windows in the warehouse, so he stepped out and looked through the windows of the passenger area.

He saw that the second station was an open-air platform. It was still completely dark outside, with a few solitary lampposts barely illuminating the area.

Gu Mian held the bottle of orange-flavored soda he'd taken from the freezer in one hand and the intercom in the other. "Just to confirm," he said, "we've arrived at the second station. Can everyone verify they're still alive?"

A few seconds later, others spoke up, confirming they were still alive.

Two-ninths of the instance had passed, yet it was still so peaceful—truly remarkable. For a moment, Gu Mian even began to doubt if anyone would actually die in this instance. Or perhaps... the real danger is yet to come?

Han Shan's voice came through the intercom, "Doctor, what were you about to say?"

Han Shan knew he couldn't call Gu Mian by his name directly, so he followed suit, also calling him "Doctor."

Gu Mian gestured with the orange-flavored soda in his hand. "I was saying..."

But just then, Angel Slaughter's voice burst through the intercom, "Have you guys seen outside yet!"

Chapter 210 Vulgar Novel_1

Outside?

What about outside?

Gu Mian raised his eyes to look outside. From his angle, he could only see a small, empty piece of the platform outside Carriage Four.

There were no passengers waiting outside, which was normal since it was past eleven-thirty at night. It wasn't strange that no one was waiting for the train.

However, when Gu Mian looked at the passenger area, he noticed something else: none of the passengers in the entire carriage seemed to intend to get off. Everyone was sitting quietly. He wondered if it was the same in the other carriages.

Angel Slaughter's voice soon followed, "On my side, in the direction directly facing Carriage Five, there's a person."

A passenger getting on?

Upon hearing this, Gu Mian, carrying his orange soda, headed for the passenger area and stopped at the carriage door.

Although no passengers were getting off, the carriage doors were still open.

Gu Mian stood at the doorway, looking in the direction of Carriage Five.

At this moment, he could clearly see the person Angel Slaughter had mentioned. Under the dim light, someone was indeed crouching on the platform.

Indeed, they were crouching right in the middle of the platform.

In front of the figure, there seemed to be a spread of colorful items. Gu Mian stared intently and noticed what appeared to be bottles and cans among them.

Seems like a vendor?

At this time, Guigu's voice came through the walkie-talkie, "What are you guys seeing? I'm too far away; I can't see anything."

Gu Mian, still carrying the orange soda, replied honestly, "I see a dark figure, looks like they're tending a stall? The stall is colorful, and it looks like they even have delicious orange soda there."

Guigu: "..."

Fang Xiang's somewhat faint voice came through the walkie-talkie, "Is there someone outside?"

Then Gu Mian heard some movement, as if Fang Xiang was trying to get to the window to look. But the moment he shifted, a sharp intake of breath and a groan came through the walkie-talkie, "HISS! Can't move for now..."

That sharp intake of breath, if accompanied by the phrase 'utterly terrifying,' would be a scene straight out of a fantasy novel.

However, no one uttered 'utterly terrifying' this time.

Then, the mechanical voice echoed from all directions again, "The train will depart in another thirty seconds. Passengers wishing to disembark, please do so quickly."

Hearing this, Gu Mian glanced back at the passenger area again. Still, no one seemed to intend to get off. How strange.

He then turned to look at the crouching figure on the platform again.

This blurry figure was now lifting its head, as if waving at them.

Angel Slaughter's voice came through again, "Look, isn't that thing waving at us?"

Suo Qingqiu sounded a little scared, "It won't suddenly rush us, will it..."

The doors of all the carriages were wide open, so if someone wanted to rush aboard, they couldn't be stopped.

The scene was indeed somewhat unsettling: a dark figure squatting on the dimly lit platform, apparently tending a stall, its hand waving in a strange arc.

However, this strange scene didn't last long. After a short while, the train began to move again.

With a POP! the carriage door slammed shut, nearly hitting Gu Mian's nose.

Gu Mian silently touched his nose and stared out the window.

The train was now picking up speed. The view of the platform receded rapidly. After a few seconds, the squatting figure SWISHED past his vision.

The person seemed to be packing up their stall to go home. Gu Mian noticed a large black bag next to the colorful items; it looked heavy. The figure was currently struggling to drag the black plastic bag at its feet.

At the same time, the mechanical voice echoed overhead again— "Next station: Rongcheng City. Passengers intending to disembark, please prepare in advance."

Rongcheng City?

Gu Mian frowned. This city appeared in many novels and was the hometown of numerous protagonists.

He even thought that if he took a stroll through Rongcheng City, he might bump into seventeen or eighteen protagonists.

Of course, Gu Mian couldn't get off now to go looking for protagonists; after all, he still had to play the role of a train attendant.

Speaking of Rongcheng City... He remembered it had appeared in a previous instance.

As he mulled this over, Gu Mian glanced at the passenger area, wondering if any passengers were preparing to get off at the next station.

But just as he turned his head, he met a pair of wide-open eyes—it was the man who had asked for a bottle of orange soda.

The man wasn't making any frightening faces; he was just staring intently at the orange soda in Gu Mian's hand, as if he'd been waiting for a very long time...

Gu Mian coughed, a little embarrassed. This bottle of orange soda seems to have been in my hand for a long time.

He walked towards the man.

But just then, a middle-aged woman sitting by the aisle suddenly stood up. Gu Mian glanced at her.

The woman's figure had lost its shape, and her face was somewhat haggard. She was currently walking towards the rear of the carriage.

The dining counter and the restroom were in that direction.

Gu Mian noted her briefly, then quickly walked over to the man who had ordered the soda. "Sir, your orange soda."

The seated man looked up at Gu Mian, glanced at him, then reached out to take the orange soda. "Thanks."

And that was all.

Gu Mian stood there, hesitating for a few seconds, wondering if he should ask for payment.

Normally, ordering food on the train required payment. But now they were in an instance, and Gu Mian wasn't sure if, in this instance's world, train catering was free or not.

But the man in front of him seemed to have no intention of paying at all.

Gu Mian waited a few more seconds. Certain the man had no intention of paying, he turned to leave.

But just as he turned, he suddenly spotted Han Shan standing rigidly in the middle of the carriage ahead.

Han Shan was standing at the rear of his carriage, looking this way. He was positioned right in the center; a few more steps forward would take him over the potentially fatal 'dividing line.'

Gu Mian glanced at the line not far from Han Shan's feet, then looked up at his contorted expression.

Every time he saw that contorted expression, Gu Mian suspected Han Shan was in some kind of trouble.

However, after interacting with him for a while, Gu Mian realized this was Han Shan's normal expression. If Han Shan's face ever relaxed and he appeared at ease, Gu Mian would definitely suspect he'd been possessed by a ghost.

But this time, it seemed Han Shan really was in trouble.

Gu Mian had now reached the front of his own carriage, facing Han Shan.

He stared at the deeply frowning man. "Bro, your frown is so deep it could squash a fly."

Although, it wasn't as if there were any flies around for Gu Mian to actually place on Han Shan's brow to be squashed.

Han Shan touched his deeply furrowed brow, and his frown deepened further. "A passenger just came to the counter to order food..."

Judging by his expression, the passenger had clearly ordered something extraordinary.