

Collapse 221

Chapter 221: I Really Am An Angel_1

Angel Slaughter swore she had never doubted the huge guitar on the Doctor's back.

She originally thought that the big guitar would be some special item, but it turned out not to be the case.

It was just a simple, attribute-free weapon.

Although it looked rather ferocious, that ferocity didn't enhance it at all; it just made it look a bit scarier.

The Doctor got off the vehicle, walked over to the vendor who had a broad smile, and set down the finely crafted guitar case.

Behind him was the soldier known as "Lieutenant," following the Doctor like someone eager for a spectacle. And a spectacle was, indeed, about to begin.

The Doctor opened the exquisite guitar case and pulled out something astounding. Angel Slaughter saw the smile gradually fade from the vendor's face.

The vendor on the ground seemed to want to escape, getting up and running in the opposite direction without even collecting his things.

Gu Mian took a big step forward and grabbed the person who was trying to flee. "What's the rush?"

Guigu, who had been trailing behind, caught up, panting, "The chainsaw is out! Only a fool would stand still and let you saw them!"

Gu Mian didn't say much, but reached for the vendor's pocket.

He remembered Angel Slaughter mentioning she had seen something like a photograph in the vendor's pocket.

Sure enough, he felt a card. The texture was very familiar, the same as their work permits.

The captured vendor was still struggling, but Gu Mian ignored him, carefully examining the card in his hand. It was a colorful card with the Arabic numeral "1" on the front. A special item?

[No.1 Car Warehouse Access Card (One-time use)]

[Description: Generated from the instance 'Wacky Train Escape'. In this instance, this access card can be used repeatedly but only to open the restaurant warehouse door of No. 1 Car.]

[Function: Opens any door that can be opened with a card.]

[Note: Important things should be said twice! In the 'Wacky Train Escape' instance, this item can only be used to open the restaurant warehouse door of No. 1 Car.]

Wonderful.

Gu Mian glanced at the vendor still struggling in his grasp.

The instance was actually quite benevolent to this team, giving them a special item right off the bat. Presumably, the other members also had these access cards that were, in fact, special items.

At this time, Angel Slaughter also came running over, panting heavily. She had already heard the conversation between Gu Mian and Han Shan over the intercom, so she knew this vendor's identity.

This made her a little worried.

Angel Slaughter looked at Gu Mian apprehensively. "What are you grabbing him for..."

"Of course, it's to find a way to survive the instance," Gu Mian said, still holding the vendor and looking down at him. "Player?"

The vendor swallowed. "Wha...What player? I don't understand what you're talking about."

"You all see? He admitted he's a player," Gu Mian said, looking up at the others.

Guigu also swallowed. "I don't think he actually admitted to that..."

Ignoring him, Gu Mian continued, "Everyone should know this is a horror instance. Every player who enters is threatened with their life. Our team's threat comes from passengers who have become ghosts. But what about their team?"

"Killing passengers means they won't be attacked by passenger ghosts. They just need to swap out the person selling things at each station. That's a bit too easy, isn't it?"

Han Shan frowned. "They should also face threats in this instance."

"Of course," Gu Mian nodded. "That threat is us."

Guigu said, "Could you not drag out the 'us' like that? It's kind of creepy..."

Angel Slaughter asked, "Their threat is us?"

Gu Mian responded, "Yes. Our train fell into a death trap the minute someone ordered raw meat. But don't forget there's another safe train next to us where deceased passengers won't turn into ghosts, and that train will ultimately reach the terminal. Once our original train is in a death trap, boarding the one next to us is our only real choice."

Guigu was taken aback. "So that's how it is! Even in a death trap, there's still a way out... That's why the train stops so frequently—it's a constant reminder that there's another train they can board."

Gu Mian rubbed his chin. "However, us boarding their train isn't a good thing for them. They should also have the rule, 'Two players cannot be in the same carriage; otherwise, one will be randomly eliminated.' That's why they've tried so hard to prevent us from discovering their train."

Unfortunately, their train has already been discovered.

The next thing to do is...

"Gu Mian held the train conductor hostage"—Guigu believed that many years later, when he recounted this event, he would feel the same surge of intense emotion as he did now.

He knew he might not be using the idiom correctly, but it was the only one he could think of at the moment.

Aside from the unlucky vendor selling things outside, the players on the other train stayed inside their carriages, refusing to come out. The rule 'Two players cannot be in the same carriage; otherwise, one will be randomly eliminated' restricted Gu Mian's group. They couldn't just rush in to fight, yet they couldn't delay for too long either, because the other train might depart at any moment.

So Gu Mian rushed in and held the train conductor hostage!

Fortunately, the vendor outside was in charge of No. 1 Car. With him out, No. 1 Car was naturally empty.

Guigu saw Gu Mian, chainsaw in hand, rush into the darkness opposite, where a train was indeed hidden.

Then he rushed into No. 1 Car. The conductor's room, of course, wasn't directly connected to the carriage; a thick iron door—who knew just how thick—separated them. But such obstacles were nothing before a chainsaw.

Guigu saw Gu Mian carve out a doorway and rush in. Those outside heard a series of bangs and crashes.

Even the other players inside the carriages on that train started yelling, some of their voices vaguely familiar.

A short while later, he re-emerged, dragging a man who was clearly the train conductor.

He casually tossed the conductor aside and patted his white coat. "Alright, now we don't have to worry about the train leaving."

Guigu felt his face stiffen. "But don't trains usually have an autopilot system?"

He'd never been a train conductor; it was just a gut feeling.

At this, the train conductor on the ground—a middle-aged man whose hair was starting to turn white—lifted his head. "This devil hit the emergency stop button in the cab!"

After a pause, he added, "And smashed the controller!"

Chapter 222: Instance Evaluator Number 10086 at Your Service_1

"Gu Mian had kidnapped the trainmaster, slapped the emergency brake button in the driver's cabin, and finally destroyed the controller with a chainsaw." In a nutshell, this was Gu Mian's performance in this instance.

Guigu remembered that the "Instance Evaluator" role had been implemented. An evaluation would be given after each instance, though the evaluator might not always appear.

But that didn't matter now; what he was worried about was Gu Mian's instance evaluation rating.

Everyone knew that a train was typically unusable if its driver was dragged out of the cabin, the emergency brake button was hit, and the controller was destroyed.

Moreover, the instance didn't seem to have an auto-repair feature that players could witness.

The night breeze was chilly, slapping against the faces of everyone present and making them feel a slight cold.

"What are we supposed to do now?" Guigu heard an uneasy and confused voice from one of the carriages, likely from another group of players.

But they didn't stay cold for long.

After a few moments of eerie silence, a panel Gu Mian was very familiar and comfortable with popped up.

[Warning!]

[Important prop damaged in the 'Whimsical Train Escape' instance detected. The instance will be unable to continue running.]

[Player instance evaluation will be conducted in advance. After the instance evaluation concludes, players will be forcibly removed from the instance...]

Han Shan stared at his panel, his expression unchanging; he didn't seem surprised by this outcome.

Meanwhile, Guigu quietly gulped. This Doctor certainly lives up to his reputation.

Legend had it that no instance Gu Mian experienced survived. Guigu didn't know if this rumor was true or false, but now it seemed very likely to be true.

Soon, everyone's panels started to change, each becoming unique.

Han Shan focused on the transparent board in front of him.

[Instance Evaluator No. 18997 at your service. First, we sincerely wish you a happy life.]

[Detecting your game nickname as 'Han Shan', your game code as '1008611', you are currently in the 'Whimsical Train Escape' instance.]

[We will now evaluate your performance in the instance. Please wait...]

[Player Han Shan:

Low performance as a conductor, instance score +8 points;

Participated in instance decryption and successfully discovered the secrets of the two trains, participation rate 15%, instance score +33 points;

Cool-headed reasoning, instance score +20 points]

[Total instance rating for player Han Shan: 61 points]

[Instance Evaluation Level: C+]

[At this rating level, instance rewards are Game Coin *400, Lucky Roulette *1 spin, Attribute Points *3, special item 'Train Master's Glasses']

Meanwhile, Guigu was staring at his own panel with a grim face.

[Instance Evaluation Level: D-]

[At this rating level, instance rewards are Game Coin *80, Attribute Points *1, special item 'A Roasted Rabbit']

His attention was entirely focused on the next two lines. Even though it's true I didn't do anything in this instance...

Thinking of this, he couldn't help but glance at Gu Mian. Gu Mian did most of the work in this instance; his evaluation shouldn't be low.

As Guigu thought this, his eyes wandered over to look at the panel in front of Gu Mian.

A single glance at the densely packed text almost blinded him.

[Instance Evaluator No. 10065 at your service. First, we sincerely wish you a happy life.]

[Detecting your game nickname as...your game nickname as...game nickname undetectable.]

[Detecting your game code as '1'...Detecting that you are currently in the 'Whimsical Train Escape' instance.]

[We will now evaluate your performance in the instance. Please wait...]

[Player: ???]

Very low performance as a conductor, instance score -25 points;

Very composed, instance score +27 points;

Participated in instance decryption and successfully discovered the secrets of both trains, participation rate 81%, instance score +91 points;

Successfully found the extra ghost in the carriage, instance score +5 points;

Obtained one special item in this instance, instance score +10 points;

Successfully boarded the other 'Time Escape' train, instance score +45 points;

Kidnapped the trainmaster, ???

Destroyed the controller, rendering the train inoperable, ???]

[Total instance rating for player ???: 153 + '???' + '???']

[Instance Evaluation Level: S]

[At this rating level, instance rewards are Game Coin *999, Attribute Points *9, special item 'Protagonist Cliff Jumping Survivability Law', special item 'The Queen's Poisoned Apple']

[Acquired title 'Train Master's Killer'; when this title is equipped, damage dealt to all trainmasters is doubled]

[Acquired passive status 'Train Killer'; when a player with this passive status boards a train, the train's accident rate will increase by 50%]

What on earth is this passive status? No matter how I look at it, it doesn't seem like anything good!

And this was the first time he'd ever seen something like a title.

The others had also clearly noticed the frequently appearing "???" on Gu Mian's panel and couldn't help but look over.

But before they could clearly read the densely packed text on Gu Mian's panel, the content changed.

[All player instance evaluations have been completed. This instance will now enter a dormant period. All players will be kicked out of the instance soon. Please prepare yourselves.]

Meanwhile, Chu Changge was in the inn, fiddling with a radio.

The radio emitted a CRACKLING static. Other than this CRACKLE, there was no other sound.

Suddenly, Fatty's voice came, "Hey, Brother Chu, the announcement has been updated."

Chu Changge didn't lift his head. "Which instance did Gu Mian enter?"

[Announcement (February 21, 11:23 AM)]

[The common instance 'Whimsical Train Escape' has sustained vehicular damage and has been sent to the repair shop. The trainmaster suffered extreme psychological trauma, and recruitment for new train drivers is underway. This instance has been temporarily suspended; the reopening date is undetermined.]

[Compensation player list: Gu Mian, Han Shan, Energetic Guiguzi, Fang Xiang, Angel Slaughter, Meng Shi Tian Ying...]

The compensation list didn't use an ellipsis. The names that followed were somewhat unfamiliar, and Fatty had no desire to read further.

Fatty tilted his head. "The Doctor and those two entered an instance called 'Whimsical Train Escape.' That name really is quite whimsical..."

"It is quite weird," Chu Changge said. He picked up the radio from the table, shoved it into the cabinet beneath, and then looked towards the living room. "Let's wait for Gu Mian to get back, then we'll leave this place."

The female ghost, capable of producing a mysterious red liquid, was still standing in the middle of the living room.

Chu Changge eyed her several times. "But we should probably get her cleaned up a bit..."

"Indeed we should..." Fatty glanced at the female ghost, his heart palpitating slightly.

She seems determined to follow the Doctor relentlessly. With her current appearance, she wouldn't just scare us; she'd be an incredibly eye-catching spectacle on the streets. We really don't want to become the center of attention.

Chapter 223 Everyone, look how 'two'

So when Gu Mian returned, he saw a pigtailed girl whose face was exposed.

She could tentatively be called a girl—if one ignored her ugly yet refreshingly unconventional face.

Luckily, though the female ghost was ugly, her features still fell within the range of a normal human's appearance.

If anyone saw her unmasked face at midnight, their first thought would undoubtedly be, What kind of extraordinarily ugly woman have I encountered?

Not, What kind of extraordinarily ugly female ghost have I encountered?

To improve her appearance, Fatty somehow procured a red dress and managed to put it on her.

Thankfully, the female ghost was thin, so the extra layer of clothing underneath was hardly noticeable.

The female ghost seemed to quite like the dress Fatty had put on her.

Gu Mian saw her blood-stained hand move slightly, as if she didn't know where to place it. Immediately, the blood stopped seeping from her body, as if she were afraid of dirtying the pretty dress.

Viewed from behind, or if one didn't look at her face, the female ghost had a rather good bearing—chest out, abdomen pulled in, head held high—much like a professional dancer on TV.

If her head were covered while walking down the street, she might even capture the hearts of many young men.

However, Gu Mian had no intention of parading this female ghost on the streets; hiding her was more realistic.

As he was thinking this, he looked at Fatty beside him. "Have you named her yet?"

Fatty, of course, knew what Gu Mian was referring to.

He nodded solemnly. "I have!"

Seeing Fatty's solemn expression, Gu Mian had assumed he'd given the female ghost some earth-shattering, awe-inspiring name. However, when Fatty opened his mouth, two very common characters emerged—

"Xiao Hong."

Gu Mian was speechless.

Oh well, Xiao Hong it is, he thought. It's not like I was planning to give her the name of a novel heroine anyway.

The wind outside howled. It seemed especially strong today, causing the derelict billboards on both sides of the road to rattle noisily.

Dark clouds filled the sky, looking as if it might rain at any moment.

Fatty glanced nervously at the sky outside. "Say, Doctor, how did you get along with those two people in the instance?"

"Quite well." Gu Mian took out the [Strange Camera] and tossed it to Fatty. "When I came out of the instance, Han Shan said it was a pity..."

A pity about what?

"A pity that such a handsome and talented individual as myself couldn't go with them." Gu Mian showed no sign of embarrassment. "He said my luck was just too terrible; anyone who teamed up with me would suffer misfortune."

Gu Mian paused here. "I just took it as him complimenting me."

Fatty said shamelessly, "That definitely was a compliment, Doctor!"

Gu Mian continued, "In any case, we can't stay in this place much longer. Although many players left after the event, quite a few have temporarily stayed. With so many eyes and ears around, we should leave here first." As he spoke, he glanced out the window.

The fierce wind battered the windows, seemingly trying to smash the fragile glass to pieces. The sky was filled with dark clouds, and if one listened carefully, a low rumbling could be heard.

Strange, Gu Mian mused, staring out the window. How did the weather suddenly change so drastically?

He remembered the weather hadn't been this bad when he left in the morning. In just half a day, it looked as though a typhoon was about to make landfall.

Staring at the dark clouds, Gu Mian stroked his chin. "Today isn't suitable for action. Let's stay here one more night and decide tomorrow."

Although it was still afternoon, the sky had darkened to resemble nightfall, making it necessary to turn on the lights to see properly.

The strong wind swept dark clouds over the city, a terrifying sight. The WHOOSHING wind echoed around, making one's hair stand on end.

If one had to use a line of poetry to describe the current scene, it was a perfect depiction of 'Black clouds bear down on the city, as if to destroy it'.

The atmosphere bore an inexplicable resemblance to Xiao Hong standing in the middle of the living room.

Fatty had already closed all the windows in the house tightly, leaving no gaps. He was now leaning on the windowsill, propping his head with his hand. "Looks like a typhoon is coming, huh? It's really inconvenient without a weather forecast..."

Chu Changge, sitting at the table, suddenly spoke up. "It's February. We don't usually have typhoons making landfall here, do we?"

Fatty paused. That did seem to be the case; typhoons generally didn't make landfall in February.

Gu Mian never watched weather forecasts. Typhoons were a rarity in Lianhua City where he lived—perhaps one every eight hundred years—so he wasn't familiar with their patterns. Currently, he was examining the three special items brought out from the instance.

One was the system reward: [Protagonist Doesn't Die After Falling Off A Cliff Law].

Another was [The Queen's Poisonous Apple].

And the one he had snatched was the [No.1 Car Warehouse Access Card (One-Time Use)].

Fatty now spoke up, puzzled, "That's right. Typhoons shouldn't occur in February."

Regardless of how strong the typhoon outside might be, it couldn't deter Gu Mian from inspecting his special items.

[Protagonist Doesn't Die After Falling Off A Cliff Law]

[Introduction: This is, in fact, a secret manual—a blue-covered book. On the cover, written in black ink, are the large characters 'Protagonist Doesn't Die After Falling Off A Cliff Law'... No, wait, that seems to be eight characters.]

[Function: When the holder of this manual falls from a high place, there is a 60% chance they will not sustain any injuries.]

It seemed like a good item, but Gu Mian knew it was useless to him.

Considering his luck, he'd definitely fall into the other 40%, he thought.

Useless items go to Fatty—that had long been Gu Mian's guiding principle.

Thus, Fatty was hit by a blue-covered book that came flying his way.

Gu Mian then turned his attention to the next special item.

[The Queen's Poisonous Apple]

[Introduction: An apple created by the Evil Queen. This item is also known as 'The Princess Must Die.']

[Function: If consumed by a princess, she will be instantly poisoned and die. It cannot cause harm to ordinary people.]

Reading the apple's properties left Gu Mian completely stumped.

Even if I wanted to use this thing, I can't find a suitable target, he thought.

A princess? Unless I start digging in the ground now, perhaps I could unearth one who's been cold for a very long time...

It's a shame the current theme doesn't seem to be tomb raiding, Gu Mian mused. Otherwise, I could definitely take Fatty and a skilled young man tomb raiding.

For the entire afternoon, Gu Mian remained preoccupied with the question: Where on earth am I going to find a princess?

The sky grew increasingly ominous. Periodically, they could hear the sounds of a crowd stirring outside their door. Many players who had participated in the event and hadn't yet left also realized a typhoon was about to make landfall and were now searching for shelter.

Of course, the average person couldn't afford the one hundred coins per day for a room. Consequently, most players opted to rent a single room with seven or eight others, just to ride out the typhoon.

The innkeeper made a fortune this afternoon and had even considered raising prices. However, he was likely threatened, so the prices ultimately didn't increase.

By true nightfall, the small hotel was packed with guests. Players unable to rent rooms had even begun to occupy the lobby.

By now, the sky had become incredibly terrifying. Fatty had never seen such weather in his entire life.

It was as if thick ink were roiling across the sky—utterly pitch-black, with the wind howling ferociously.

Fatty looked at the sky and shivered. "I don't know why... but I have a really bad feeling about this..."

The first floor of the inn was filled to capacity with players who couldn't book a room.

The innkeeper hurriedly shut the front door of the inn and locked it from the inside.

The glass door didn't obstruct the view, allowing the crowded people in the hall to observe the situation outside.

Dark, inky clouds rolled across the sky. Strong winds whooshed, battering the door and threatening to shatter its pathetic glass panes.

Outside, it was pitch black. The street lights were out, and the crowded people in the hall could only peer outside by the weak glow of the inn's electric lamps.

Someone's quilt, forgotten on a balcony, was whipped through the street by the wind, finally slamming violently against a nearby tree.

Trees along the greenbelt leaned precariously under the fierce wind, looking as if they might snap in half at any moment. Yellow dust, stirred up from some unknown place, swirled through the air, as thick as fog, obscuring everyone's vision.

The lock on the front door wasn't very secure. Every so often, a gust of wind would force it open a crack, allowing a chilling draft to sweep into the hall, making people shiver.

Even though winter was apparently over, the current temperature felt even colder than the coldest winter day. Many inadequately dressed people began to shudder, their terrified gazes fixed on the swirling yellow dust and the pitch-black sky outside.

A panicked voice came from the crowd: "Is this a sandstorm or a typhoon?"

Another voice answered: "Who knows what the hell is going on? How can there be such strong wind in February... By the way, doesn't this look like the end of the world in movies?"

"Stop talking nonsense!"

Left with no choice, the innkeeper lowered the outer security door. The hall became slightly warmer.

Those who had been shivering slightly breathed a sigh of relief.

The wild wind continued to hammer savagely at the security door. From inside, it sounded as if some monster was battering it from the outside.

It sounded terrifying.

However, the current situation was much better than before; at the very least, no one could see the horrifying scenes outside anymore.

"Damn weather..." the innkeeper muttered, rubbing his hands—frozen from the effort of lowering the door—as he surveyed the hall, packed with players who hadn't paid a dime.

Even if these people aren't staying in rooms, by occupying the hall, they should still pay some sort of protection fee, right?

He was about to open his mouth to say this, but closed it after seeing the worn and worried expressions on everyone's faces.

Oh well, they're only staying for one night. It won't be much of a loss to me.

With these thoughts, the innkeeper sat down behind the counter, listening uneasily to the wind roaring outside. The wind had been blowing for several hours and showed no signs of stopping.

Looks like tonight will bring strong winds and heavy rain.

Just as the innkeeper was lost in thought, a woman holding a child approached him, apparently with a request.

He immediately became alert. This place isn't a shelter, and I'm certainly no hypocritical philanthropist.

Watching the woman approach, the innkeeper said preemptively, "If you're here to ask for something, I don't have anything."

The woman's face reddened slightly, but she hurriedly explained, "No... I just wanted to ask if you could leave the lights on tonight. We're a little scared..."

Just as she was speaking, a violent gust of wind slammed into the security door outside, making the players in the hall shudder.

The child in the woman's arms buried her head, clearly frightened.

The innkeeper glanced at the child in her arms—a girl, about four or five years old.

He paused for a moment, then said, "Alright. With all these people here, it's not safe to switch off the lights. We'll leave them on then."

The woman quickly thanked him and then led her child back into the crowd.

Meanwhile, Gu Mian and the others were by the window, looking out at the sky. Xiao Hong, who had previously been propped up in the middle of the living room, had been forcefully placed on the sofa. This way, they'd avoid the awkwardness of stumbling upon the ghost in the living room if someone got up to use the toilet in the middle of the night.

"Doctor" Fatty looked quite uneasy. "Should we sleep with the lights on tonight?" he asked.

Gu Mian replied nonchalantly, "Whatever. I can sleep whether the lights are on or off."

Chu Changge had no objections. "As long as you're happy."

Every now and then, the sound of something hitting the ground could be heard from outside the window. Visibility in the street was extremely low, but from the window, they could still sporadically see debris being tossed about in the sky by the wind.

Footsteps were occasionally heard in the corridor as well.

All the rooms on this floor were occupied. Perhaps finding the first floor too crowded, some people had moved into the corridors of the upper floors.

Fatty peeked through the peephole and saw several people bedding down on the floor in the corridor.

He didn't pay much attention to the people sleeping in the corridor; he just prayed for this bizarre weather to pass quickly.

They still needed to pick a fine day to set out on their journey.

In fact, even if they stayed here, they wouldn't face any financial pressure. Gu Mian had received a thousand Game Coins from the last instance, and they had gotten an additional thousand as compensation. The Game Coins they had recently acquired were enough for them to stay for twenty days.

But staying here isn't a long-term solution.

Amidst his prayers, Fatty uneasily drifted off to sleep.

However, he hadn't slept for long. At least, it felt like he hadn't.

The sound of something shattering echoed throughout the room.

Fatty, who had been sleeping restlessly, was jolted awake. He sprang up from his bed. "What happened? What broke?"

But no one responded to him.

Soon, Fatty noticed something was wrong.

He had specifically implored Gu Mian to leave the lights on while they slept, but now the room was pitch black. It was so dark he couldn't see his hand in front of his face. Not only was the room pitch black, but the living room area was also shrouded in darkness. He could see nothing and, at first, hear nothing...

Wait! There's a sound!

Fatty twisted his head in the dark, turning towards the direction of the sound.

It was the sound of RUSTLING rain. The downpour sounded fierce, drumming rhythmically against the window. The rain, which had been brewing all day, finally began to fall in the middle of the night. The intensity of the downpour almost made Fatty wonder if it was hailing outside.

Fortunately, the light switch in the inn had been thoughtfully coated with luminous paint, allowing Fatty to find his way to it in the darkness.

He didn't think Gu Mian or Chu Changge would have been considerate enough to turn off the light for him in the middle of the night, and it certainly couldn't have been the ghost sitting on the sofa.

But who turned it off isn't important right now. Better turn the light back on first...

With this thought, Fatty flicked the light switch.

But the expected light didn't come. The rainstorm outside continued to pound against the ground and windows.

Fatty, not giving up, pressed it a few more times, but still to no avail.

Just then, he suddenly heard a scream from the corridor, followed by other voices.

"The power's out in our room!"

"Us too."

"There's no electricity in the hall either!"

Upon hearing this, Fatty froze. A power outage? Could it be because of this hellish weather?

Just then, he heard the sound of something being snapped open, immediately followed by a blinding white light that filled his vision.

Fatty covered his eyes and took a moment to adjust. A few seconds later, he dared to squint at the source of the light.

It was Chu Changge, holding a flashlight from which the light emanated. It seemed he had just woken up too.

Then Fatty saw Gu Mian standing by the window.

He saw Gu Mian, clad in his white coat, standing by the window and looking outside.

After a few seconds, Gu Mian turned his head, a strange expression on his face. "The power's out."

Fatty nodded. "Doctor, you don't have to tell me. Everyone outside is shouting about it."

"No," Gu Mian shook his head, his expression still strange. "I mean the whole city is without power."

The whole city is without power?

Fatty felt his scalp prickle. "Doctor, don't scare me."

His hair practically standing on end, he rushed to the window. Just as he thought... even late at night, there were usually several houses with lights on, but now, the outside was pitch black. There was nothing.

There seemed to be a faint light in the distance.

Fatty craned his neck to look toward the light and realized it was the supermarket established by the game.

It really is... a citywide blackout...

No, a citywide blackout... or a worldwide blackout?

Chapter 225 Gu Mian's Great Battle with Thunder King! _1

Noises erupted from the first-floor living room, rapidly spreading through the entire inn.

Hasty footsteps, shouts, and cries mixed together, but were soon drowned out by the wind howling outside.

The windows in the corridor had been shattered by the fierce winds.

The sound Fatty had just heard was a window breaking.

At that moment, a violent wind, carrying a downpour, swept through the entire corridor. People temporarily resting there screamed and ran towards the staircase. The doors at the stairwell were continuously blown open and slammed shut by the gusts, striking the walls and making a considerable racket.

Heart pounding, Fatty peeked through the peephole. "The entire city has lost power—is it temporary?"

Gu Mian shook his head. "I'm afraid not."

Just then, a bolt of lightning suddenly flashed, striking near the roof of their dilapidated building and making Fatty tremble.

Naturally, this terrifying thunderclap also startled others. Gu Mian heard panicked cries from the first floor; the sounds rose and fell with a strangely melodic quality.

This was quickly followed by the innkeeper's voice, "Everyone calm down! Don't panic!"

Gu Mian looked outside again.

The wind that night was incredibly strong. The streets resounded with continuous crashing and banging as heavy objects were blown about.

Taller trucks, likely due to their large surface area, had toppled and crashed onto the roadside. As for the small three-wheelers and electric cars, they were being blown about as if driven by ghosts.

The windows kept vibrating, as if they would shatter at any moment.

Fatty reached out to pull Gu Mian back. "Doctor, stay away from the window..."

Gu Mian took a step back, then looked at the game's announcement panel.

There was nothing on the announcement panel.

Just then, a sound like something collapsing came from the distance. A heavy THUD echoed, quickly followed by several more similar sounds.

"Damn it!" Fatty cursed. "It's really a typhoon! Isn't it abnormal for a typhoon to occur this month?"

Gu Mian rubbed his chin. "When things go against the norm, there's bound to be mischief afoot."

Gu Mian glanced at the wall clock. It was 2:35 A.M., usually the perfect time for sleep. However, he suspected no one could rest now.

Thinking this, Gu Mian turned to Chu Changge and Fatty. "Do any of your player friends live outside this city?"

Fatty thought for a few seconds. "There's that female celebrity... Xiao Qiao. She should be in the capital right now."

Gu Mian nodded. "Ask her about the situation there."

Fatty worked with great efficiency and immediately brought up the friends panel.

He clearly hadn't expected the other party to be just as efficient. Not even five seconds after he sent the message, a reply came.

Xiao Qiao: Our area is being hit by strong winds, and it's raining.

Xiao Qiao: The whole building I'm in has lost power, and there's nothing that emits light within my field of vision except the in-game supermarket...

Seeing these two messages, Fatty's lips trembled.

At this point, Gu Mian was also sending messages to his friends.

He didn't have many player friends, but he could always think of one or two when needed. Captain Feng from the Lianhua City police station was still on his friends list.

His reply was also immediate.

Just as Gu Mian finished asking about the situation, Captain Feng's reply arrived.

Lianhua City East Police Station Captain Feng: Don't even get me started. I was asleep and got woken up by a dozen or so people all messaging me about strong winds and power outages.

Lianhua City East Police Station Captain Feng: This fierce wind started suddenly tonight, like a typhoon. It was so abrupt; we've never had anything like this here. Now, all of Lianhua City has no power. From what you're saying, it sounds like you're experiencing strong winds too?

Gu Mian looked at these two messages, thought for a moment, then closed the friends panel.

Fatty, still in shock, remembered to nag him, "Doctor, you haven't replied to him yet..."

Gu Mian: "..."

Chu Changge's voice came from the side, "It seems this is a large-scale typhoon combined with a power outage. It could be a regional blackout, a nationwide one... or even more likely, a global blackout."

Meanwhile, the noise from downstairs was still very loud.

Gu Mian could hear the innkeeper desperately trying to maintain order, but curses and cries kept erupting, for a moment almost drowning out the wind outside.

Fatty got goosebumps. "A global power outage... what's about to happen?"

What was going to happen?

It was obvious.

Gu Mian rubbed his chin. "Typhoons making landfall simultaneously in vastly distant locations across the country, followed by total power outages..."

What could it mean?

Heavy rain pounded against the windows. The sky was occasionally illuminated by menacing lightning, its flashes lighting up Xiao Hong's face on the sofa, making the atmosphere even more terrifying.

Chu Changge looked at the windows, which were continuously vibrating under the battering winds. "This power outage, I'm afraid it won't be restored."

Fatty scratched his scalp nervously. "Without electricity, wouldn't people start dying?"

Modern human life is almost entirely reliant on electricity. A life without it... was simply unimaginable.

Chu Changge continued, "This is Earth's doing."

Of course, this global game could influence the real world; it was just that most people hadn't considered it from this angle.

Gu Mian touched his chin again. "I guess there should be some interesting new items in the supermarket related to this power outage."

At this, Fatty seemed to understand something. "Electricity?"

Gu Mian lowered his hand. "Most likely. But of course, they won't sell electricity directly. Only the Thunder King would do that. I estimate power will be available in another form... like power cards, for example."

Of course, such items might not be available in the supermarket and could only be obtainable from instances.

Gu Mian remembered the game's original purpose: to facilitate human evolution. Humans evolved from apes due to danger and resource scarcity, and it seemed Earth intended for humanity to repeat that path.

In an era of scarce resources, people would fight for supplies, continuously developing their physical potential to achieve evolution.

Chu Changge glanced out the window again.

The wild wind and heavy rain showed no signs of stopping, each seeming to outdo the other, neither willing to abate. The unfortunate players could only huddle together, shivering in terror on this horrifying, rain-lashed night.

Gu Mian felt his chin once more. "This time, it's electricity."

Fatty was stunned for a moment, then repeated, "This time?"

"Yes," Gu Mian nodded. "I suspect Earth will continue to reclaim things. Eventually, we'll only be able to get necessary supplies from the supermarket or instances. This time it's electricity. What's next?"

Fatty gasped. "Speaking of which... with this typhoon hitting such a large area, won't a lot of crops be destroyed?"

Chapter 226 Gugu Spirit's Great Battle with Thunder King! _1

If there still was a news broadcast, Gu Mian figured the television anchorwoman would have been sternly reporting about the nationwide typhoon landfall.

Gu Mian didn't watch television much, let alone the news broadcast, but each time he turned it on to the news channel, he would be struck by the seriousness of the anchorwoman's face on the screen.

Unfortunately, there were no more news broadcasts now.

He assumed the Meteorological Administration had become an empty shell too, so players in the future would probably face more natural disasters—without any weather forecasts.

The night was still very dark; the only light outside the window came from a distant supermarket.

The players downstairs were still shouting and chattering. The wind and rain outside hit the windows ceaselessly, making Gu Mian suspect that the living room window might be smashed by the wild wind.

"Speaking of which..." Fatty shivered in the darkness. "Doctor, I'm feeling a bit cold..."

It was February. The bitter winter had passed, and no one was wearing heavy down jackets or padded coats anymore.

Gu Mian knew Fatty wasn't usually afraid of the cold. This time, he was just wearing thermal underwear, a mustard-colored turtleneck sweater, and a green coat similar to a military overcoat, complete with a hood.

Fatty often emphasized to Gu Mian that his sweater was light brown, not mustard-colored. But Gu Mian still thought mustard-colored was easier to remember.

This hotel didn't provide heating, but wearing such thick clothes inside usually meant one wouldn't feel cold.

But at this moment, Fatty felt as if he was frozen through, like being outdoors amidst heavy snow. The surrounding walls seemed useless, and cold air enveloped him, cold enough to almost freeze the water in his glass.

The piercing wind seemed to have blown through the room. Cold air swirled around the three of them, and Fatty felt his limbs turn icy, wishing he could wrap himself in his quilt immediately.

"Shit," his teeth began to chatter involuntarily. "This is too cold, isn't it?"

Even Fatty felt cold; those people in the corridors and the living room felt an even more bone-chilling cold. It was as if they had just been pulled from a freezer. They didn't care whether they knew each other or not and leaned on one another, trying to gain a tiny bit of warmth.

At this temperature, no one could last long by huddling together for warmth. Some people's hands and feet had already lost feeling. They would probably have a mental breakdown before their bodies even froze stiff.

It was too cold!

Even if the surrounding walls could block the cold wind, it was still too cold!

Gu Mian looked at Fatty, whose teeth were chattering from the cold. "Go back and get under your quilt."

"Okay." Fatty, eager to dive into his quilt, agreed immediately. But as he turned to go back to his room, he suddenly realized Gu Mian wasn't wearing much either.

Fatty glanced at the Doctor beside him.

He was wearing a black low-neck sweater, revealing almost to his collarbone, and a white lab coat on the outside that didn't seem to offer much protection from the cold.

With his teeth chattering, Fatty asked, "Doctor, are you secretly wearing a heat pack without telling me?"

Where would I even find a heat pack? Gu Mian thought, then shoved him gently. "Go on, wrap yourself in your quilt."

Fatty nodded quickly in agreement, then glanced at Chu Changge beside him.

Ha!

This guy was wearing even less than the Doctor.

Just a brown turtleneck sweater, not even a coat, yet Chu Changge wasn't visibly shivering or chattering his teeth.

Fatty grumbled as he quickly retreated under his quilt, "This is the first time I've realized you guys aren't afraid of the cold at all..."

Gu Mian, however, wasn't very afraid of the cold; the current temperature only made him shiver slightly. Not only was he resistant to cold, but he also wasn't much bothered by heat.

He was the kind of person who would only feel a tiny bit hot wearing a sweater in midsummer. Perhaps because life had often dealt him a tough hand, heaven had gifted him a physique that stayed warm in winter and cool in summer.

It wasn't summer yet. Gu Mian figured that when summer did arrive, that scamp Fatty would probably shamelessly cling to him, using him as a human ice pack.

Fatty, not yet at the stage of shamelessly clinging, had already closed his eyes, wrapped in his quilt.

But even in bed, he wasn't quite settled. "Doctor, the noise outside is still so loud. What if the windows in the room are smashed by the wind and glass shards fly in and stab me?"

Gu Mian looked at Fatty, who was curled up tightly in his quilt. "Shall I put Xiao Hong on top of you? That way, the glass shards could only stab her, not you."

Xiao Hong, who was propped up on the sofa, twitched a bit, as if wanting to protest this suggestion.

But the Thought Transmitter hanging around her neck ultimately didn't voice any opposition.

Upon hearing this, Fatty immediately shook his head in refusal. "Never mind, never mind."

After refusing, he seemed to settle down to sleep. Soon, Gu Mian heard snoring from the bed. Although Fatty claimed to be nervous, he fell asleep faster than anyone.

The windstorm still raged outside. The living room windows looked as if they could shatter at any moment. Chu Changge glanced at Gu Mian. "Are you not planning to sleep tonight?"

Gu Mian looked at the time. "It's already past two in the morning. Even if I went to sleep now, I'd only get a few hours."

He paused, then added, "Besides, I don't need much sleep."

Chu Changge seemed to have no intention of sleeping either. He stared out the window. "Do you think this wind will stop by dawn?"

"I'm afraid not," Gu Mian shook his head. "And judging by the current situation, it's likely to be very chaotic here tonight. We'd better stay awake to handle any emergencies."

At this moment, loud shouting erupted from downstairs again. The hotel owner, his voice hoarse, seemed unable to suppress the crowd's panic. Someone downstairs was heard yelling something like, "On what grounds?!"

Immediately after, chaotic footsteps echoed in the first-floor lobby.

Judging by the sound, it was the disorganized shuffling of hundreds of feet.

Then came the sound of a crowd of people rushing up the stairs.

The hotel owner was standing in the middle of the first-floor hall, arms spread wide, like a peace envoy calling for love and justice amidst a war. But such envoys usually end up riddled with bullets.

The hotel owner was slightly luckier; he wasn't riddled with bullets, merely pushed to the ground by the crowd rushing up the stairs and stepped on a few times.

People in the hall, panic etched on their faces, were running towards the stairs.

A clamor rose from the crowd.

"If we stay here, we'll freeze to death!"

"Go to the rooms upstairs! It's definitely warmer there than here!"

"Why should they be the only ones allowed to stay in rooms? We want in too!"

The owner lay on the ground, clutching his waist. Every now and then, someone stepped on his back. Occasionally, less agile people tripped over him and fell on top of him.

The owner cried out in misery, feeling as if his back was about to break.

At this moment, he suddenly felt something grab his clothes. Before he could react, the person forcefully pulled him out of the surging crowd.

The owner gasped for breath a few times, then looked up gratefully. Before him stood the woman who had been holding a child earlier.

Chapter 227 Gugu Dies, Readers Battle with Thunder King! _1

Facts had proven that panic always resulted in riots.

And yet, another fact proved that using violence to quell violence was indeed an effective method.

The irrational players on the first floor swarmed up, seemingly attempting to commandeer all the rooms in the hotel.

Gu Mian and Chu Changge had just finished preparing when they heard chaotic footsteps at the staircase. They were moving fast, already storming up.

The room where Gu Mian and the others were staying was near the staircase, so the people who came up were battering the doors nearest to them.

As everyone knew, this hotel was quite old. Even the room doors were worn from years of neglect. With several people slamming together, a door creaked open within a short time.

At this moment, Fatty, lying on the bed, seemed to be awakened by the noises outside. Rubbing his eyes in confusion, he looked towards Gu Mian.

Footsteps were already approaching rapidly from their direction.

Chu Changge frowned.

Before Gu Mian, who stood beside him, could react, a tremendous sound, loud enough to shatter the windows, echoed from the direction of the staircase.

Gu Mian recognized this sound—it was a gunshot.

Fatty, who was rubbing his eyes, was obviously startled by the sudden gunshot. He almost rolled off the bed; thankfully, he managed to keep his balance.

"What's happening!" Fatty exclaimed from the bed, his eyes wide. Gu Mian swore he had never seen such perfectly round eyes before.

Meanwhile, terrifying screams and the sound of hurried footsteps echoed from the corridor. It seemed the gunshot had indeed caused substantial damage. Following that, Gu Mian heard three words—"Get out."

It sounded like the voice of the tenant whose door had been battered down; the gunshot was probably fired by this courageous tenant.

It was a woman...

Immediately, all sounds on this floor vanished. None of the people present seemed to have any armor to combat firearms, so they unanimously backed down.

The rioting crowd fled. However, the voice that had uttered those three words sounded vaguely familiar...

For some reason, after hearing this voice, Gu Mian instinctively thought of an "electric bike."

It had been a long time since Gu Mian had ridden an electric bike because, for quite a while, his electric bikes would disappear as soon as he acquired one—they were all stolen by damn thieves.

At that moment, Chu Changge paused. "Did the voice of the person who fired the gun sound a bit familiar to you?"

Fatty nodded frantically. "It sounded familiar to me too! It seemed like the one from that house in Lianhua City..."

"Enough," Gu Mian interrupted him, "Go back to sleep."

Fatty closed his mouth and buried his head under the blanket, which made the terrifying howl of the wind outside lessen slightly.

After a while, Gu Mian spoke again, "If the weather improves tomorrow, we'll check the supermarket first."

Upon hearing this, Fatty fell asleep filled with anticipation, dreaming of looting everything in the supermarket, only to be shot dead by the pursuing store security.

Fatty woke with a start the instant the bullet in his dream penetrated his head.

「It was morning now.」

Judging by the faint light outside, the sky was not as terrifying as it had been the previous day. However, vast dark clouds still roiled overhead, appearing somewhat ominous.

The rain had stopped, and the ground was damp, but the fierce wind still hadn't ceased, although it was now much less severe than last night.

Gu Mian checked the time; it was seven in the morning. "By the way," he asked, "when I went to the instance, you and Fatty went to fix the car, right?"

The Spirit Car had been damaged by him before, and it wasn't usable when he entered the instance.

Chu Changge nodded. "There was after-sales service. The salesclerk from the nearby supermarket helped fix it."

A salesclerk could do such things?

No, wait. A salesclerk helped them fix their Spirit Car? Gu Mian had thought Chu Changge and Fatty would be thrown out of the supermarket.

Chu Changge paused at this point. "But I have something to tell you."

What is it? Gu Mian looked at him questioningly.

Chu Changge hesitated. "When I took the Spirit Car to the supermarket for repairs, the salesclerk told me this car is typhoon-resistant... no matter how strong the typhoon, the car wouldn't be blown away."

Gu Mian rubbed his chin. "That's good news."

But Chu Changge frowned slightly. "However, when I went to get the car fixed, the wind hadn't started yet."

Gu Mian paused.

In that case, it seemed the supermarket salesclerk knew all along that a typhoon would make landfall tonight...

What was the connection between these strange NPCs?

"Doctor, Doctor," Fatty said, running up gleefully at this point. "The wind outside has subsided a lot! Can we go to the supermarket today?"

Fatty—a creature utterly obsessed with supermarkets.

Alright then.

Gu Mian hadn't intended to stay in this place for long anyway. Last night's riot had nearly implicated them; it was better to leave this godforsaken place as soon as possible.

When heading out, Fatty still seemed afraid of encountering yesterday's rioters. However, the corridor and lobby were empty, save for the boss sitting alone behind the counter, rolling a boiled egg over a bruise on his face.

"You're down," the boss said, noticing them instantly. "I kindly sheltered those people last night. Who knew they'd cause such trouble? Luckily, the army came early this morning, and those people have obediently cleared out."

As he spoke, he unwrapped the egg from its gauze, took a bite revealing the tender yellow yolk, and said, "Looking at your group, I guess you're checking out... This girl behind you..."

He noticed Xiao Hong following them.

The boss seemed to want to say she was ugly but ultimately held his tongue. "I don't remember her being with you."

Gu Mian glanced at him. "We took her in last night."

The boss was speechless for a moment. Don't lie to me; I didn't let anyone who looked like that in last night.

Stays at this hotel were settled daily, so checking out required no formal procedure; a verbal notification was sufficient.

Still, as they were leaving, the boss offered a few words like "safe travels." Although it didn't quite sound like a sincere well-wish, Gu Mian appreciated the sentiment.

As they were leaving, Fatty was still discussing the previous night's incident with Gu Mian. "Doctor, that voice from yesterday really seemed to belong to someone you know."

Gu Mian glanced at him. "I think everyone who knows me now wants to stab me to claim the reward from the wanted list."

Hearing this, Fatty shut his mouth, no longer bringing up the topic of acquaintances.

Because the army was stationed nearby, the streets here had already been cleared to facilitate ambulance access.

However, last night's wind had been too intense. Several trees in the adjacent green belt had been blown down. Fortunately, these trees had fallen towards the area above the steps, so Gu Mian could still drive the Spirit Car freely on the road.

However, there was one troublesome matter.

Xiao Hong seemed to love the wind immensely.

Upon seeing the Spirit Car, she happily scrambled onto the roof by herself and lay flat.

Her long hair cascaded down, dangling beside Gu Mian's car window. A gentle breeze wafted by, and Gu Mian thought he caught the scent of Rejoice shampoo.

...

Oh well, at least it didn't obstruct his view.

As he was thinking, Gu Mian fumbled for the car key but couldn't find it. "Fatty, do you have the car key?"

"Oh, right." Fatty reached into his pocket. "Didn't we go to get the car fixed earlier? I have the car key."

Just then, a familiar yet distinctly dangerous voice suddenly echoed from the hotel entrance, "Could I be cheeky enough to ask for a ride from you folks?"

Chapter 228 University Strange Tales - The Disappearance Game_1

"Since you know you're such a shameless pest, you shouldn't..."

However, before Gu Mian could finish his sentence, the newcomer strode to the car, pulled open the door, and got in.

Fatty silently observed Liu Ruyan, who had just boarded, and then glanced at Gu Mian, who had fallen silent.

Fatty remembered the woman; she was Gu Mian's landlady in Lianhua City. He hadn't expected her to show up here for the event as well.

She was dressed warmly in a black sweater dress that enveloped her snugly. Her long hair cascaded down her back, and she wore a smile...

"What a coincidence, Dr. Gu," Liu Ruyan said, looking up at Gu Mian in the driver's seat and touching her chin. "We're staying in the same hotel."

Gu Mian glanced at her. "Haven't we always stayed in the same hotel?"

"Mhm," the smile on Liu Ruyan's face deepened. "That's true. So, giving me a lift isn't a big deal, right?"

Gu Mian also smiled. "Of course not. But considering you snuck into my room twenty-nine times to turn on the gas, I think it would be better to kick you out of the car right now..."

In the end, however, Gu Mian didn't kick Liu Ruyan out of the car.

Just as he was about to move his foot, Chu Changge stopped him. "I have something to ask her."

Gu Mian retracted his foot. "Fine, go ahead."

However, he didn't recall Chu Changge and Liu Ruyan having any close connection; they had only met a few times.

The light was still dim. Despite it being daytime, the car's headlights were needed to see properly. Since there were no other cars on the road, Gu Mian naturally switched on the high beams.

Fatty, squeezed in behind the driver's seat, exclaimed, "Whoa, driving a Spirit Car with high beams on—badass!"

Gu Mian, fearing Liu Ruyan might suddenly lunge over and stab him while he was driving, had deliberately positioned Fatty behind the driver's seat to act as a shield. Fatty was thoroughly disgruntled by this arrangement.

Chu Changge and Liu Ruyan were speaking in hushed tones in the back of the car. Their conversation was so quiet that Gu Mian and Fatty in the front could barely hear anything.

However, they looked as if they had known each other for a long time.

Gu Mian glanced at the two in the back through the car's rear-view mirror. "How strange," he muttered.

How on earth did these two know each other?

Chu Changge still wore his usual blank expression. Liu Ruyan, however, seemed quite casual, occasionally raising an eyebrow as she spoke, as if she had heard something amusing.

But Chu Changge wasn't the type to tell jokes; Gu Mian and Fatty knew this very well.

Their conversation didn't last long. After just a few minutes, Chu Changge fell silent and sat quietly to one side.

Liu Ruyan, on the other hand, rested her head on one arm, leaning against the car window, seemingly lost in thought.

At this moment, Gu Mian finally had an opportunity to speak. "We're going to the supermarket. Are you going too?"

Liu Ruyan looked up at him and smiled. "Yes, wherever you go, I'll go."

How terrifying!

At this point, Fatty spoke up, his tone laced with confusion. "Speaking of which... Miss Liu, is it alright if I call you Miss Liu?"

Liu Ruyan smiled. "Of course, you can call me whatever you like."

Although a beautiful woman's smile was captivating, an inexplicable chill ran down Fatty's spine. He paused for a moment before continuing, "Didn't you see that thing on the roof when you got in?"

Xiao Hong was still obediently lying on the car roof, her long hair trailing down beside Gu Mian's window. Anyone who wasn't blind could see the red figure on the car.

Yet, Liu Ruyan had paid it no mind, not even glancing up before getting into the car.

"The car roof?" Liu Ruyan asked.

Fatty nodded. "Yes, the car roof."

Seeing Liu Ruyan's reaction, Fatty couldn't help but wonder. Could it be that no one else besides them could see this female ghost? If he'd known that, he wouldn't have gone to all the trouble of dressing her up.

But soon, Fatty's suspicion was dispelled.

Liu Ruyan glanced at the window beside Gu Mian. "Oh, that. I've seen her before, so I wasn't too surprised."

What in the world?

Fatty's eyes widened. Seen her before?

"Mhm," Liu Ruyan nodded, her head still propped on her arm. "It was the night the event ended. She seemed to have climbed to the wrong window and ended up plastered against mine."

Fatty: "..."

Then, as if recalling something, she continued, "I remember that night, seeing her stuck to my window, staring at me. But after a few seconds, she started shouting, 'Wrong one, wrong one, wrong one!' and then accidentally fell. I leaned out to look; she fell pretty hard."

Gu Mian: "..."

Did she really have it that rough?

But Liu Ruyan was also quite bold. Not only was she unfazed by a ghost plastered to her window, but she even peeked when it fell...

Gu Mian had no desire to associate with this audacious woman who had snuck into his room twenty-nine times and turned on his gas.

As he turned the steering wheel, he said, "Once we get to the supermarket, we'll go our separate ways and find our own mothers."

Fatty asked, puzzled, "Doctor, you don't have a mother, do you?"

"Shut up!"

Liu Ruyan chuckled, resting her head on her hand, but said nothing.

Meanwhile, Chu Changge, sitting beside them, seemed to be pondering something, a rare, peculiar expression on his face.

Gu Mian really wanted to ask what the two of them had been secretly discussing, but before he could voice his curiosity, the supermarket was already in sight.

"Almost there," Gu Mian said, turning the steering wheel. "I'll park over..."

But before Gu Mian could finish his sentence, a strange, semi-transparent panel suddenly appeared in front of him. He instinctively slammed on the brakes.

Immediately after, Fatty also noticed a panel appear in front of him—it was the same kind of panel they had seen before when triggering special instances!

"Damn it!" Gu Mian exclaimed. "I just got out of an instance yesterday! I haven't even had a chance to enjoy a moment of peace, you bastards!"

In the midst of the chaos, Fatty heard Chu Changge, who was beside him, say, "Retrieve the car first."

Fatty immediately understood. Just as they were about to enter the special instance, he quickly gestured, pulling the Spirit Car into his inventory.

Then, THUD.

A dazed female ghost fell from a height of over a meter, landing hard on the ground.

She got up, turned her head, and looked around in a daze. But by then, there was no one in sight; everyone from the car had entered the special instance.

The cold wind still howled.

She stood rooted to the spot, motionless, as if waiting for them, yet uncertain if they would ever return.

Meanwhile, Gu Mian and the others had already begun the teammate matching process.

[Triggering special instance 'High School Mystery: The Spiriting Away Game']

Fatty's voice came through: "Just from the name, you can tell this instance is no ordinary piece of work!"

[Instance Introduction: This instance is part of the 'High School Mystery' series. Special items obtained in this series of instances can be used in conjunction.]

[Number of Players: 6 to 10]

[Insufficient players detected. Randomly supplementing teammates. Loading...]

[Successfully matched teammates. Current number of players: 8]

Chapter 229 Gu Gu's Battle with the Mysterious Game_1

[Special Instance: High School Ghost Stories: Disappearance Game]

[Instance Participants: 8 people]

[Instance Mission: Role-play as a student and successfully survive for four days in the instance.]

This instance mission didn't mention a thing about the "Disappearance Game."

Fatty's voice came from the side, "During our first mission, we were at least teachers. Now we have to play students and be bossed around... Seriously though, can we even pass for students with how we look?"

Gu Mian replied, "You certainly can't, but I can."

After all, Gu Mian had only just graduated, so passing as a college student was easy enough. But passing as a high school student... that might be pushing it...

But typically, wouldn't "high school" refer to middle school or high school?

As Gu Mian was pondering this, a burst of light appeared before his eyes.

Fatty's voice from beside him had vanished at some point, replaced by raucous, playful shouts. Gu Mian was very familiar with these sounds; break times during his middle school years were always filled with such clamor.

He looked around. Indeed, he was now sitting in a classroom, in the second-to-last row, right next to the window. It seemed protagonists in anime always sat in this spot.

Bright sunlight streamed in through the large window to his left, making one feel a bit drowsy. The scattered books on the desk were a dazzling white under the sunlight.

The temperature was a little high; the desk was already warm from the sun.

It seems to be summer.

In the classroom, some students were studying, some were resting their heads on their desks, and others were fooling around. Everyone wore the same school uniform: girls in blouses and short skirts, boys in shirts and long pants.

Given how hot it is, they should be wearing shorts. But the principal probably figured no student wanted to see boys' leg hair, and perhaps also felt that baring hairy legs would be detrimental to the school's decorum, so he specially outfitted the boys in warm and safe long pants.

Gu Mian glanced down at his own clothes. He too was now in a shirt and long pants. Such a pity I can't show off my beautiful legs.

Although his clothes had changed, he could still see the shirt's properties. The name displayed was still "Blood Clothes Wrapped in Resentment."

Presumably, to fit the instance, my white coat changed its form...

As Gu Mian was thinking, a voice came from the desk in front of him, "Hey, Gu Xiao, Gu Xiao, are you even listening to me?"

Clearly, they're calling me. My name has changed to Gu Xiao in this instance.

Gu Mian looked up to see an unfamiliar boy smiling at him, though the smile was somewhat complex. He seemed to be holding a mobile phone. This probably isn't a player.

Judging by the students' age and the classroom setting, this is most likely a high school. But I remember my high school didn't allow phones.

The smiling boy, while speaking, stuffed the phone in his hand into Gu Mian's. "I downloaded the game for you. You can give your character a name first... But don't secretly play it during class, and definitely don't let the teacher confiscate your phone!"

Looks like this high school doesn't allow students to bring phones either.

Upon hearing the word "game," Gu Mian instinctively thought of the four words "Disappearance Game" in the instance's name.

It's almost certain that the game this boy just downloaded is the "Disappearance Game" from the instance name.

Disappearance Game... as the name suggests, a game one might disappear from if they play it.

He touched his chin and muttered, "I was actually considering not downloading this game, but it seems it got downloaded as soon as I entered here."

Not even a sliver of a chance to resist.

Still thinking, Gu Mian smiled at the boy before him and took the phone. "Don't worry, I won't secretly play it during class."

Gu Mian had played many role-playing games, so he could quickly immerse himself in the role. Although I still haven't quite figured out what's going on right now...

As he thought this, he looked down at the phone in his hand.

The phone was similar to contemporary smartphones, but it was extremely hot to the touch, probably from being left in the sun for too long.

The not-so-large screen was filled with a riot of colors. It was a game.

A pixel game with pretty terrible graphics.

It resembled the Mario games Gu Mian played when he was very young. The in-game character was crudely drawn; its head was a square formed by a few thick black lines, and curves were merely suggested by a few dots.

The game's scene was set in a classroom, where a simply-dressed character in a student uniform stood quietly behind the desk in the second-to-last row by the window, seemingly waiting for Gu Mian to name it.

This scene...

Gu Mian looked at the phone screen, then raised his head to look around.

This uniform...

Gu Mian glanced at his own student uniform.

This position...

The second-to-last row, by the window.

Exactly the same.

This game, whether it's the scene or the clothes, is exactly the same as the real world.

Even the little character's position in the game is the same as where I am now, though one is sitting and one is standing.

The only difference is that the game screen currently shows only one little character, the one in my position. The other people in the classroom don't appear in this game.

At the bottom of the screen was a line of text.

[Please enter your nickname: _____]

The boy in front of him said, "This is your character. Give him a name."

Although he still didn't fully understand what was happening, Gu Mian reached out a finger and gave the little character in the game a cute name: "Gu Gu."

What a cute name...

The boy in front clearly saw the name Gu Mian had entered. He frowned. "Right, since you just downloaded the game, you don't know how to play yet, do you? This little character, you can't make it move by tapping the screen. You have to move yourself, and then it will follow your movements in the game... But... I've heard some people say this little character might also move on its own?"

No wonder the game screen and the real scene are identical.

The boy paused at this point.

Gu Mian looked up at him thoughtfully.

After a moment, the boy finally said, "Gu Xiao, I know you're brave, but you'd better not play this game too much. If you notice anything wrong, uninstall it immediately... You know, right? The seniors who disappeared last month still haven't been found."

Of course, I'm not stupid enough to ask dumb questions like 'Which seniors?' or 'Who disappeared?' at a time like this.

He forced a smile. "I'll try out the game's functions first."

As he said this, he stood up and, holding the phone, took a few steps forward.

Sure enough, the little character in the game moved along with me.

Gu Mian glanced back at the worried-looking boy in the front row, then turned and strode towards the door.

I need to see what I look like now!

Chapter 230 The Attack of Anti-Pornography Squad_1

It was still the ten-minute break between classes.

In high school, restrooms were usually located at the far left end of the hallway after stepping out of a classroom. Gu Mian kept his phone hidden in his pocket and planned to head left as soon as he stepped out of the classroom.

Theoretically, school restrooms in a horror instance should have mirrors.

But as he stepped out, he bumped into someone unexpected—a person, or to be precise, another student.

There were quite a few students in the hallway, with people constantly moving in and out of classrooms.

Bumping into classmates when stepping out of the classroom was quite normal. However, bumping into a cowering, timid student who had a damn pair of handcuffs on was decidedly not.

Moreover, Gu Mian discovered he could access this handcuffed student's player panel.

[Zi Liang]—that was this timid student's player nickname.

Gu Mian had seen plenty in his life. What kind of scene hadn't he witnessed? But starting out with a pair of handcuffs? That was a scene he truly had never encountered...

Zi Liang had obviously realized that the person he bumped into was also a player. His eyes lit up. Although he was a little confused about why this player's nickname was green, now wasn't the time to dwell on such things.

"Um, this was an accident... C-can you help me?" Zi Liang flinched, trying to hide the handcuffs on his wrists, and asked timidly, his face flushed with embarrassment.

He was clearly hoping Gu Mian would help him remove the handcuffs. He'd hidden them quite well; if Gu Mian hadn't been so observant, he might have missed the shiny metal on his wrists.

Although Gu Mian was also very curious about what kind of accident led to these handcuffs, he knew this wasn't the time to discuss such matters.

Gu Mian glanced back at the classroom nameplate on the wall. It read, 'Arts Stream, Year Two, Class 3'. Without further ado, he turned to Zi Liang. "Go wait in the restroom first."

Zi Liang was very obedient. Hiding his hands, he ran off towards the restroom; it seemed he already knew its location.

Watching his retreating figure, Gu Mian turned around and walked back into the classroom.

Leaning beside his desk was a guitar bag. Of course, he knew this exquisite guitar bag didn't contain a guitar, but rather a helpful tool for cutting handcuffs.

This was an art students' classroom, so Gu Mian's current identity was that of an art student; carrying a guitar wasn't anything strange.

He quickly walked towards his guitar bag and slung it over his shoulder. Seeing this, the student at the desk in front of him asked in confusion, "Huh? We don't have a break until this afternoon. Are you going back to the dormitory now?"

A break this afternoon? Gu Mian had obtained an important piece of information.

He glanced at his deskmate in front. "No, I have something to attend to for a moment. I'll be back right away."

With that, he slung his exquisite guitar bag over his shoulder and briskly walked out of the classroom without looking back.

The deskmate in front seemed to want to say something more, but Gu Mian had vanished in an instant.

Class time was probably approaching, as the students in the hallway were all heading towards their classrooms.

When Gu Mian reached the restroom, there was hardly anyone left inside.

Perhaps to prevent students from hiding in the restroom to smoke secretly, the stalls in the boys' restroom had no doors.

As Gu Mian entered the restroom, he saw a timid head peek out from the innermost stall. Upon seeing him, the person immediately scurried over, somewhat excitedly.

This timid head belonged to none other than Zi Liang, the one with the handcuffs.

This Zi Liang, despite looking quite respectable with his glasses and cultured demeanor, was acting furtively, like a thief plotting something.

Zi Liang looked at the guitar bag Gu Mian was carrying. "Is that a guitar?"

Gu Mian shook his head slightly. Sure enough, the restroom in a Mysterious Dungeon had a mirror. Upon entering, to his left was a row of washbasins, and above them, a large, wide mirror. Gu Mian saw his reflection in the mirror also shake its head through his peripheral vision.

He put the guitar bag down, just about to take out its contents.

Just then, a bell suddenly rang. Based on Gu Mian's many years of school experience, this should be the warning bell.

Hearing the bell, Gu Mian suddenly remembered the phone in his pocket. As he thought this, he pulled out his phone. He hadn't exited the game; the phone screen still showed the game interface.

When Zi Liang, who was nearby, saw this game screen, his expression became a little unnatural. He opened his mouth as if to say something, but then he noticed something amiss with the screen. "Huh?" Gu Mian had noticed it too.

The little figure in the game moved in sync with the person playing it in reality. Since Gu Mian had moved to the restroom, the game screen naturally switched to the restroom as well. The screen now showed a top-down view of the restroom.

Although restrooms are common locations for supernatural events, nothing had happened in this one yet; it was the number of people that had changed.

Back in the crowded classroom, the game screen had only shown one little figure—the one representing Gu Mian.

But now, an additional little figure had appeared on the screen.

It stood opposite Gu Mian's little figure, and the two figures looked identical. However, since the little figures had names above their heads, Gu Mian could still distinguish which one was the character he had registered.

On the screen, one little figure was Gu Mian's registered character, [Gu Gu]. The name above the other little figure was [Liang'er].

One didn't even need to think to know this was definitely the character name Zi Liang had registered. But this name was truly... hard to describe. The two little figures were positioned a slight distance apart.

Zi Liang, still handcuffed, looked at Gu Mian's phone screen with a peculiar expression. "I thought this was a single-player game. How can we players even meet?" It seemed he had also downloaded this game; his phone was probably in his pocket.

Gu Mian noticed that the little figure representing Zi Liang in the game wasn't handcuffed, and his own little figure wasn't carrying a guitar. It seemed this supernatural game couldn't recognize items held by people in reality.

At that moment, a line of text suddenly appeared at the bottom of the screen:

[The warning bell has already rung. You should return to class now.]

Immediately after, the two little figures also began to converse.

[Gu Gu: Why are you here too?]

[Liang'er: Same as you, here to take care of some business.]

These two little figures seemed to know each other. Regardless of why these two newly registered characters knew each other, their previous two lines of dialogue were truly bizarre.

What business could one possibly have in a restroom? Eating shit?

At this point, Zi Liang had looked up, his gaze fixed on the vibrant green 'Doctor' title next to Gu Mian's nickname, "Speaking of which, Doctor, can you open these handcuffs for me?"

Gu Mian glanced at the slender chain on Zi Liang's handcuffs. "Shouldn't be a problem." Then, Zi Liang saw the Doctor before him pull something not very exquisite out of that elegant guitar bag...

After the sound of something like a small motor, the handcuffs on Zi Liang's hands snapped and fell apart.

It was clear that this handcuffed, dumbfounded student badly wanted to curse, something like 'Holy crap!', but he swallowed the words back down.

Gu Mian glanced at the two metal rings still on Zi Liang's wrists. "Do you want these sawed off too? I guarantee I won't hurt you."

Zi Liang hurriedly waved his hands. "No, no, that's fine."

Gu Mian glanced at his phone screen again. The two little figures remained motionless, probably because he and Zi Liang hadn't moved either. Seeing the little figures were still, Gu Mian looked up at Zi Liang. "It was crowded and chaotic earlier, so I didn't ask. But now, can you explain what's going on with these handcuffs?"

"It's rather embarrassing," Zi Liang scratched his head, looking awkward. "When this game started, I was in the middle of being handcuffed by the Anti-Vice Squad..."